

The Aesthetics of Consumption in the Age of Electrical Reproduction:
The Turntablist Texts of DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist

Michael Phillips

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Department of English
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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ABSTRACT

With new technology come new possibilities for the creation of artistic works. The invention of sound recording towards the end of the nineteenth century enabled musical performances to be “written” in the same manner as traditional, printed literature. The status of records as a form of writing and, moreover, as the material for further writing is demonstrated in the work of two hip hop artists, DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist, who assemble new, heteroglossic texts out of a wide array of sampled records.

Two concerts by these artists, Product Placement (2004) and The Hard Sell (2008) – both of which have been memorialized on DVD – serve as fruitful examples of the potential for artistic production enabled by technology. Indeed, the genre of turntablism, which involves the live manipulation of vinyl records, requires the usage of technology in ways not intended by its original developers – a recurrent theme throughout the history of sound recording. By transforming the turntable from a passive playback device into an active compositional tool, turntablism, as exemplified by these performances, collapses the distance between consumption and production and so turns the listener into a performer. Furthermore, the exclusive usage of 45 rpm records as the source texts for the two sets dramatizes theories of intertextuality while simultaneously tracing the constraints placed on such artistic piracy by the copyright regime.

These texts entail more than just their cited musical content; they also involve visual components. These include not only the video imagery that accompanies and comments on the records being played, but also the physical performance of the DJs themselves and the spectacle of the attending crowds whose response to the music constitutes part of the text itself.

Following a theoretical and historical background that will situate these works within the history of hip hop and literature in general, this study will explicate these two multimedia texts and reveal how they demonstrate a concern not only with the history of sound recording, but also such issues as the influence of technology on cultural production, the complication of authorship through intertextuality, and the relationship between culture and commerce. Above all, however, both the form and content of these two performances also serve to highlight the value of physical media as historical artifacts in the face of increasing challenges from incorporeal digital media.

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I – GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Writing in 1962, Marshall McLuhan describes in The Gutenberg Galaxy how the development of the electronic mass media fundamentally challenges traditional concepts of literature. Beginning with the principle that “any technology tends to create a new human environment” (7), McLuhan makes the argument that the proliferation of electronic mass-media has undermined the privileging of printed, verbal texts and constitutes a return to a pre-print, oral culture which sees texts not as ossified objects, but rather as performances inseparable from the media through which they are disseminated. To explain this, McLuhan cites Albert Lord’s 1960 study of oral tradition, The Singer of Tales: “The term “literature,” presupposing the use of letters, assumes that verbal works of the imagination are transmitted by means of reading and writing. ... [Yet, t]he Word as spoken or sung, together with a visual image of the speaker or singer, has meanwhile been regaining its hold through electrical engineering” (10). Consequently, electronic media have altered human expression in such a way that the conception of literature itself has broadened to encompass more than words. Indeed, just as Gutenberg’s development of movable type caused standardized texts and authors to emerge from the anonymity of the oral-manuscript tradition, the development of electronic technology – for example, that of sound recording – in the twentieth century has allowed for the production of new forms of “literature”, i.e. the ability to preserve performances as recordable and reproducible texts. As such, these new text objects are now subject to the same commodification and reification that the printed word underwent with the development of the printing press.

By looking at these new electronic texts – specifically in this case, two recorded performances of DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist, turntablists whose art is created from the live manipulation of extant texts found in the form of 45rpm singles – insight can be gained into the way material technological developments have altered our traditional concepts of literature, textuality, and authorship. The sample-based popular music of turntablists such as DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist offers in its very form a resistance to the reifying nature of mass-(re)produced art by calling attention to the commodified nature of contemporary popular music and playing with it. By transforming the turntable from a passive playback device into an active compositional tool, turntablism, as exemplified by the concerts memorialized in the Product Placement and The Hard Sell documents, collapses the distance between consumption and production and so requires the listener to become a performer.

It should be noted, however, that the work of turntablists and samplers such as DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist is more than just the simple transformation of the consumer into a producer; rather, the turntablists at work in these two texts are consumers *par excellence*. DJs, particularly sampling DJs, have to demonstrate a virtuosity of consumption: they have an extensive, specialized knowledge of music history and the archive represented by the crates of old vinyl records in the basements of used record stores. Moreover, they have an ability to pick out individual sounds which are not only valued musical texts in and of themselves, but also can be used in the sampling text by virtue of their fitting with other sampled works. Consequently, the DJ's art is based on a faculty for collection of texts and the subsequent selection of specific texts for citation in the sample-based work.

Furthermore, because sampling involves the appropriation of the myriad anterior voices at work within the sampling text, the turntablist texts of DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist also embody ideas about intertextuality and heteroglossia. Mikhail Bakhtin analyzed the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky to reveal the novel author to be a mediator of the many different voices present within the text, and his analysis is presciently suited to examining the texts of turntablist DJs, which create a polyphonic dialogue between the disparate voices organized under the aesthetic logic of the phonographic stylus. More materially, however, this practice of appropriating anterior voices through sampling has been challenged by accusations of piracy and the violation of authorial intellectual property rights by the sound-recording industry and the copyright regime. These challenges – which, as will be shown, often result not only judicial punishment through levied fines and royalty charges, but also the physical destruction of these transgressive texts – raise questions about authorial originality and the limits to which cultural producers can claim ownership of their works. Moreover, as will also be shown, much of the contemporary debate over the intellectual property rights of sound recordings echoes earlier debates regarding copyright at the inception of the printing industry, and, furthermore, the issue of piracy has been a perennial concern for the record industry.

It is not just the form of the art of turntablism that raises important issues, however; the semiotic content of these musical works also more explicitly deals with these same issues. In A Theory of Semiotics (1976), Umberto Eco describes how musical systems can be described as semiotic systems but nonetheless present “the problem of a semiotic system without a semantic level (or a content plane)” (11). Eco does concede that some musical signs can indeed have “an explicit denotative value” citing, for example, the trumpet call in the army as a sign for the command to

charge. This semantic value is the result of an overcoding of a secondary, arbitrary meaning to the musical utterance¹. Something similar occurs in the texts of samplers such as the two performances to be analyzed in this study. The relocation of a musical utterance from its original context to its placement within the heteroglossic sample-based text causes an overcoding of meaning on to the sampled text, often with ironic intent. For example, when Public Enemy sampled James Brown's "Night Train" in their composition "Nighttrain", the hopeful message of Brown's 1962 "original"² – which expresses the hope for a better life by migrating from the segregated southern United States to the cities of the north – is ironized and subverted when juxtaposed with the nightmarish, contemporary world of black life in the northern cities that Chuck D describes in the rapped verses to the Public Enemy song.

With the exception of a brief appearance by the rap group Jurassic 5 (for whom Cut Chemist was a producer and DJ) in Product Placement, there are no rappers during these sets to provide the kind of ironized commentary on the source material such as that offered by Chuck D in "Nighttrain." Nonetheless, the inclusion of many of the tracks in the two DJ sets comes with an implied comment on the sampled material. The usage of an instrumental cover version of Led Zeppelin's 1969 hit "Whole Lotta Love" raises questions about the idea of originality: though the Led Zeppelin version of the song is generally seen as the "original," a sample from an LL Cool J song – "I Need Love" – obliquely refers to the Willie Dixon song "You Need Love" which served as the inspiration for the Led Zeppelin track and indeed generated a lawsuit that resulted in Dixon being assigned a songwriting credit for the song. Still, as will be shown in the exegesis of this section of Product Placement, musicologist and critic Robert Palmer notes that Dixon's priority as the point of origin for the composition can be equally called into question since much of Dixon's track was borrowed from earlier blues songs which, being part of an oral tradition, have no specifically assigned author in the traditional sense.

Although it consists of a string of seemingly unrelated records, Product Placement centres thematically on the advertising industry. The links between hip hop and commercial advertising are addressed by the early 80s hip hop pioneer Steinski in a recent interview where he explains how his background in advertising prepared him for his work in hip hop: "It's pretty much the same thing,

¹ Eco's semiotics has been invoked to describe how musical texts can have semantic value aside from any lyrical content. For fuller discussion of musical semiotics – which exceeds the limits of this study – see Eero Tarasti's Signs Of Music: A Guide To Musical Semiotics or, for an examination of the semiotics of popular music, chapter 6 of Richard Middleton's Studying Popular Music.

² The usage of "Night Train" in "Nighttrain" will be examined in greater detail below; however, it should be stated here that Brown's 1962 "original" is itself a cover of an earlier 1952 version of the song.

message is message. ... And so the idea of creating enthusiasm and getting a message across is pretty much the same thing” (Patrin). DJ Shadow also claims that the first sounds heard by children are pervasive advertising jingles so that an individual’s exposure to music is constantly mediated by the commercial sphere (Wilder 24). This usage of commercial music is ironized and subverted by the turntablists. For example, the use of “Cooking With Gas,” an 1988 advertising jingle credited to the National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation advocating the use of natural gas for cooking, removes the work from its commercial function and re-aestheticizes the advertisement, transforming it into just another tune to dance to. This follows Adorno’s declaration that “every pleasure which emancipates itself from exchange values takes on subversive features” (“Fetish Character” 39). It is precisely this anterior commercial function, as well as the track’s ersatz pastiche of early 80s hip hop, that gives the piece its aesthetic value as humorous kitsch.

Whereas Product Placement uses commercial advertisements as the objects of its free play to make an implicit criticism of the intertwining of aesthetics and commerce, The Hard Sell issues a more explicit polemic in its tribute to the materiality of vinyl records. The very name of the performance once again raises the issue of marketing. Indeed, the set begins with an introductory film – made as a pastiche of mid-century educational films – detailing the history of the vinyl record and its legacy. During the concert, the music is accompanied by video clips that dramatize a battle between a seemingly sentient, anthropomorphized jukebox and a cloud of digital MP3 players as an attack on the perceived impersonality of digitally distributed music which lacks the fetishistic appeal of physical records.

Because The Hard Sell concert is staged at the venerable Hollywood Bowl, the DJs take the event as an opportunity to legitimize their particular art form in the very culture industry it aims to critique. As the program director of the venue states, mainstream audiences such as those who frequent the Hollywood Bowl “don’t appreciate what a DJ’s doing and don’t understand that they’re musicians and these [turntables] are instruments.” Aside from being an hour of danceable music, The Hard Sell also serves as a potent manifesto of the art of turntablism. Indeed, there is a triple meaning to the show’s title. Not only does it follow Product Placement’s critique of advertising and the commodification of the culture industry, it also describes the function of the DJ as a taste-making purveyor of music. The show’s MC, Kim Fowley, explains in the concert film’s introduction while holding up a 45 sleeve to the camera: “Welcome to The Hard Sell. Twenty-first century trivia. People you’ve never heard of daring you to sit in your room or in your theatre to try and figure out

if you're being entertained or educated. What is a hard sell? [shouting] HARD SELL IS EMPHATIC: I LOVE THIS MUSIC. I WANT YOU TO LOVE IT TOO!"

As such, both of these DJ sets as documented and memorialized on their respective DVDs constitute a reading of not just the history of hip hop and sample-based music, but also of the history of the recording industry itself. Both sets have a polemical function in that they serve as manifesto-like explanations of the turntablist DJ's art. Indeed, the specific aim of The Hard Sell in particular is to demonstrate the artistry at work within the genre of hip hop in answer to the perennial question, as voiced in the brief film that frames and introduces the set: "At the end of the day, aren't they really just playing records?" Part of the aim of the two sets is to demonstrate how "playing records" can indeed be seen as a form of artistic production. More materially, the two sets also critique the industry's constant concern with piracy with an aim towards justifying the appropriation of texts – musical or otherwise – as a form of textual composition.

Because of this successive layering of meaning onto the sampled texts, these two performances can be analyzed like any other, more traditional literary text. The exegesis of both of these recorded performances (themselves re-performances of extant recorded performances) will constitute an explication of the audio, visual, and verbal material. The thematic links between the music itself (including, where possible, the genealogy of the 45s themselves) and the accompanying visual images will be explored with an aim towards delineating the many cultural references made within the two sets as well as the constructed relationships between individual tracks. Most importantly, however, the two performances will be shown to be illustrations of the various critical theories and perspectives as they express a postmodern, ludic resistance to the commodification of the culture industry as well as potent examples of the shift from the print communicatory regime to the post-print regime of electronic communications.

Before the exegesis, however, it will be necessary to outline some of the issues that serve as themes in Product Placement and The Hard Sell. As such, this introductory section will first analyze how technology – primarily the printing technology of early modern Europe – has affected conceptions of authorship before showing how similar concerns are at work in the more recent history of recorded sound. A history of hip hop as a musical genre and the literary tradition of intertextuality will also provide a grounding for the specific analysis of the two turntablist texts that forms the main body of this study, particularly as it relates to ideas of literary intertextuality that have been foregrounded in the postmodern era.

II – THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. Technology and The Author

1. Benjamin, records, and aura.

It is a self-evident proposition to state that changes in technology create changes in art works by opening up new processes for artistic production and altering or rendering obsolete old ones. The invention of the phonograph record at the end of the nineteenth century, for example, radically and irrevocably changed the nature of musical performance. For the first time, individual performances of music could be reproduced and transmitted to a mass audience. Prior to this development, the only means by which a musical composition could be transmitted was through its notation. In other words, a performance itself could not be memorialized, only the composer's written instructions on how to reconstruct that performance. Though certainly a development towards the memorialization of musical texts (as composed, however, not as performed), musical notation constitutes not so much a writing *of* music as writing *about* music.

The mechanical reproduction of musical performances allowed for the first time the transmission of artistic performances not only through space, but also through time. One no longer had to be in a cathedral or a concert hall to hear a symphony or chorale piece performed; one's own living room could be transformed into a concert hall through the technology of the phonograph. As Walter Benjamin, in his seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" (1936), states: "Technical reproduction can place the copy of the original in situations which the original itself cannot attain" (21). These situations include not only the sundry living rooms of contemporary listeners, but also all living rooms to come. Although Benjamin does not develop this idea at length, the existence of mechanical reproductions of performances means that the performance is no longer tied to a specific historical incidence: it is made mobile in time as well as space since a recording of a performance made in the 1930s can still be heard today wherever there is a functional record player.

Benjamin argues that these reproductions destroy the "aura" of an artwork precisely through this new temporal and spatial mobility which detaches the work from "the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place" (21). The reproduced performance is no longer a unique, historical occurrence since it can now be infinitely reproduced in a variety of

different contexts (albeit according to varying degrees of fidelity, a question that in the digital age has become somewhat moot). Consequently, the reproduced work removes itself from its own tradition, destroying the original and leaving in its place a potentially endless series of copies: “the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for unique existence” (22). One recording of a single particular performance allows for that performance to be infinitely re-performed. While each of these re-performances reconstructs the same “original” performance, they each occur in their own particular historical and spatial context which inscribes a certain specificity on the reproduced work. Therefore, what Benjamin describes as the “simultaneous collective experience” as exemplified by the crowd viewing a painting at a particular time in a particular place becomes a fragmented collective experience diffused through time and space.

Certainly Benjamin does identify how changes in the production and reproduction of works of art change the nature of the artwork itself; yet he does not elaborate on how the transmission of works of art becomes a form of artistic production in and of itself. Much of the focus of Benjamin's essay is on the medium of film, a medium dependent on means of mechanical reproduction for its very existence. He argues that the aura of the actor's performance is destroyed by the camera that allows the performance to be reproduced. The relationship between the audience and the screen actor – as opposed to that between the audience and the stage actor – is constantly mediated by the camera and therefore “the film actor performs not in front of an audience but in front of an apparatus” (30)³. For the actor, the technological apparatus of the film camera takes the position of the audience for whom he is performing. Similarly, the recording made of the actor by the camera supplements – that is, replaces – the actual, historical performance made by the actor. In other words, the audience does not see the actor so much as they see the camera's reading of the actor's performance. This reading is of course complicated by the fact that it is itself a composite of different readings as mediated by the director and editor. This analysis extends easily to musical performances as the sound engineer and producer occupy the same space with regards to the listener as the cinematographer and director do for the film viewer. What is happening in both these cases is that the original performance is not destroyed, but rather deferred. The performance is now the

³ In an earlier version of the essay anthologized in *Illuminations* as “The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction” (trans. Harry Zohn), Benjamin phrases this point rather differently, examining the issue from the audience's rather than the actor's point of view: “The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera” (*Illuminations* 228). He nevertheless goes on to remark that “[c]onsequently the audience takes the position of the camera” making the reciprocal identification between the three elements (the camera in between audience and performer) equivalent.

act of recording, composing, and then transmitting that original performance. The authors of these new works are not those whose performances are recorded, be they actors or musicians, but rather the organizing principle that arranges the different performances together. It is in this sense that we think of a “Steven Spielberg film” or a “Brian Wilson recording.”

Benjamin’s analysis, however, is focused on the way in which the technological developments affect the work itself and its reception by a now greatly multiplied audience. Aside from his examination of the roles of the film director and editor in assembling and thereby authoring a film, he does not emphasize the way in which technological reproduction concurrently affects the authorship of works of art. The remarks on the audience’s identification with the film camera go some way to an analysis of this phenomenon, but the line of thought is dropped, particularly in the second version of the essay published in 2008. Elsewhere in the essay, Benjamin does note how the mass production of newspapers, for example, has produced a movement from a mass of readers, via the letters to the editor section, towards a mass of writers: “Thus, the distinction between author and public is about to lose its axiomatic character. The difference becomes functional; it may vary from case to case. At any moment, the reader is ready to become a writer” (33-34). Here Benjamin seems to be prefiguring Barthes’ death of the author at the birth of the reader, yet he also observes that, in the capitalist West at least, the large amounts of capital necessary to produce a motion picture, for example, precludes the masses from participation in the artwork except as consumers.

Nonetheless, Benjamin’s discussion of the way in which film is constructed – that is, authored – in the editing process points towards an analysis of the effects of technology on authorship. Certainly, a given medium will inherently condition both the form and content of the work (in Marshall McLuhan terms, its message). As such, it is not too far a leap to suggest, in a reconfigured paraphrase of McLuhan’s famous statement, that the media is the author. While this phrasing may be somewhat of a glib overreach, it is the purpose of this study to analyze the ways in which technological developments – in particular the progress of sound recording technology since the late nineteenth century – have complicated the traditional notion of the author particularly with respect to the position of the author as the point of origin for a work of art.

2. The author and print.

The concept of the author as it is conceived in the modern sense is tied to the idea of property, in particular literary property. The author's name is invoked to establish an ownership of the text in question. In his 1971 lecture, "What Is an Author?", Michel Foucault states that texts with authors "are objects of appropriation" (124). Yet this appropriation was not, initially at least, instituted to protect the author's right to control the dissemination of a text (as the contemporary copyright regime would assert), but rather to circumscribe any possible transgression attendant to a text. A name attached to a text made the interpellated individual responsible for any transgressive effects of a text: "Speeches and books were assigned real authors, other than mythical or important religious figures, only when the author became subject to punishment and to the extent that his discourse was considered transgressive" (124). Furthermore, Foucault asserts that the institution of our contemporary copyright regime was bound up in this idea of curtailing transgression: "But it was at the moment when a system of ownership and strict copyright rules were established (toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century) that the transgressive properties always intrinsic to the act of writing became the forceful imperative of literature" (124-125). It is because of this normalizing requirement that the author's name shifted from an invocation of authority and proven discourse (as in pre-modern scientific literature; see Foucault 126) to a title of ownership.

In his analysis of the effects of printing on literature in particular and culture in general, Marshall McLuhan also links the formation of author to the development of copyright laws. Unlike Foucault, however, McLuhan, following on the work of Harold Innis, also points to a specific, material cause for this development, namely the invention of the printing press and its standardized typography. To this end, McLuhan in The Gutenberg Galaxy (1962) cites a 1945 study by H.J. Chaytor: "Not so readily appreciated is the fact that association with printed matter has changed our views of literary art and style, has introduced ideas concerning originality and literary property of which the age of the manuscript knew little or nothing, and has modified the psychological processes by which we use words for the communication of thought" (qtd. in McLuhan 108). In McLuhan's analysis, the author as a point of origin for a text came into conceptual existence as a consequence of the material development of printing.

The invention of printing and typography produced a series of conditions that allowed for the emergence of the figure of the author as the "owner" of a text, itself now conceived as a piece of

literary property. When printing enabled the mass-reproduction of standardized texts, it also concurrently created the idea of a market of consumers for such texts. According to McLuhan, it gave birth to the very concept of a reading public distinct from the producers of these texts. By contrast, manuscript culture was more participatory and did not so radically distinguish between consumers and producers of texts. Indeed, the material conditions of manuscript production necessarily conflated these two categories to a degree. To the copyist of medieval manuscripts, producing a copy of a book was bound up with consuming that same work: “The medieval student had to be paleographer, editor, and publisher of the authors he read. ... Moreover, until printing the reader or consumer was literally involved as producer” (118, 120). In other words, reader-producers reproduced copies of texts for other reader-producers.

Each individual book produced in this system represented a plurality of writers who had been engaged in the transmission of the text through a process of copying. McLuhan asserts that “authorship before print was in large degree the building of a mosaic” (162). The medieval text represented not the expression of a particular individual, but rather the expression of knowledge as a whole as it is handed down by the manuscript tradition. Manuscript books, often being compilations of different works by a multiplicity of authors, complicate the process of assigning an authorial name as a point of origin:

To the medieval scholar, the question: Who wrote this book? would not necessarily mean or even primarily mean: Who composed⁴ this book? It might convey that the inquiry was for the identity of the scribe not of the author. And this would often be a much easier question to answer, for in any abbey the characteristic hand of a brother who wrote many fine books did remain traditionally familiar for generations. (qtd. in McLuhan 163)

The question of style here remains solely at the tactile, physical level: the literal style of the handwriting. Through standardized typography, which tends to efface the idiosyncracies of handwriting, however, the question of style for the printed book becomes a question of style of content, not necessarily form.

Because of this method of production, manuscript texts tend to be more unstable from copy to copy as the scribal process inevitably introduced variants – either as a result of unintentional errors or intentional “corrections” – from their source material. The text is in a constant state of becoming. In his 1995 study of the effects of print on English Renaissance lyric poetry, Arthur F.

⁴ Precisely what is meant by “composed” here remains somewhat vague. The context of the passage suggests that “composition” is identified with authoring, but the connotation of compilation and the ambiguity of this distinction usefully remains.

Marotti sums up the problems of authorship and textual malleability as they pertain to manuscript texts and their multiple writers:

In the system of manuscript transmission, it was normal for lyrics to elicit revisions, corrections, supplements, and answers, for they were part of an ongoing social discourse. In this environment texts were inherently malleable, escaping authorial control to enter a social world in which recipients both consciously and unconsciously altered what they received. Those who prepared poetry anthologies for publication were not usually composers of verse, but compilers of manuscripts often added their own poems to the commonplace-book miscellanies or poetry anthologies they made. In the manuscript environment the roles of author, scribe, and reader overlapped ... What modern idealistic textual criticism, from an author-centered point of view, regards as “corruptions” we can view as interesting evidence of the social history of particular texts. The manuscript system was far less author-centered than print culture and not at all interested in correcting, perfecting, or fixing texts in authorially sanctioned forms. (135)

The manuscript text, then, does not have a controlling point of origin in the same way that an authored, printed text does. Rather, it is in a continual state of becoming, subject to the truncations, emendations, and commentary of subsequent copiers such that there is no finalized version but rather a plurality of texts. This plurality produces in aggregate not a definitive text but an ever-evolving continuum of tradition.

The manuscript author is not a fixed individual but, just like the plurality of texts produced by scribal transmission, exists as a continuity of various writers, each of whom is also simultaneously a reader. In his study of medieval writers, J.A. Burrow cites a passage from the thirteenth century Franciscan monk St. Bonaventure⁵ to explain the multiplicity of “authors” in a medieval text:

There are four ways of making a book. Sometimes a man writes others’ words, adding nothing and changing nothing; and he is simply called a scribe [*scriptor*]. Sometimes a man writes others’ words, putting together passages which are not his own; and his called a compiler [*compiler*]. Sometimes a man writes both others’ words and his own, but with others’ words in prime place and his own added only for purposes of clarification; and his

⁵ Fittingly, the passage itself as quoted is of complex authorship. It originates in Bonaventure’s proem to his commentary on a work by Peter Lombard (*Sentences*). Burrow’s citation, however, is taken from Northrop Frye’s 1957 translation in his *Anatomy of Criticism*. The passage, as it appears here, is therefore a citation of a translated citation of an excerpt from a commentary. Furthermore, following the citation, Burrow comments that “Perhaps Bonaventure should have added the *translator*” to his fourfold schematic of writers (31).

called not an author but a commentator [*commentator*]. Sometimes a man writes both his own words and others', but with his own in prime place and others' added only for purposes of confirmation; and he should be called an author [*auctor*]. (31, bracketed italics in Burrow)

It should be made clear, however, that none of these four categories are mutually exclusive. Scribes would often make subtle revisions, omissions, and additions, sometimes even of their own work, such that all four "ways" as described by Bonaventure could be exhibited by a single individual operating within the manuscript system.

Manuscript texts, therefore, do not carry with them an originating author-figure to whom they served as vehicles of individual expression. Though Bonaventure's *auctor* is indeed a specifically named personage, the words attributed to such an author are not expressive of a particular subjectivity, but rather invoke a certain, established discourse. As Foucault puts it: "Statements on the order of 'Hippocrates said...' or 'Pliny tells us that...' were not merely formulas for an argument based on authority; they marked a proven discourse" (126). In other words, the presence of the *auctor* in the text does not identify a point-of-origin for a written utterance, but rather establishes a text's legitimacy. The *auctor* then is not the (re-)presentation of a creating individual through his or her created text, but rather a field of legitimacy produced by the text's reception within established discourse. In his survey of the history of authorship in The Author, however, Andrew Bennett, drawing on the work of Burrow, A.J. Minnis, and Burt Kimmelman, does point to an appearance of the modern author-figure in the works of the late fourteenth century poets Chaucer, Langland, and Gower, all announce themselves as poets in their own works. Here, then, is an emergence of the author as distinct personality.

Without delving too deeply into the constructions of authorship in the works of these Middle English writers, it is worth noting that in the case of Chaucer, particularly with regards to The Canterbury Tales, the role of the author is already complicated. In The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer himself appears as a character within the text and his authorship, such as it exists within the conceit of the work, is one of a compiler of others' tales. The Chaucer that appears within the text does actually tell two tales, though one – the versified "Tale of Sir Thopas" – is interrupted by the Host who declares to Chaucer, "Thy drasty rymyng is nat woorth a toord!" (VII.930). The prosaic "Tale of Melibee" is the longest of the tales and is of a considerably dryer tone than the other tales. In both cases, Chaucer appears to be ironizing and deprecating his own voice in an instance of authorial self-effacement and distancing his work as compiler of stories from his work as composer. As Bennett notes, "In this respect, Chaucer's adoption of the role of compiler is in fact a knowing

‘disguise’ for his own presence as a self-conscious author. Indeed, we might go further than this and suggest that is the very modesty by which he explains his humble position as ‘compilatio’ that is itself an *assertion* of authorship” (42, italics in original). The distance Chaucer creates between his narrational self and his real self therefore opens up a gap out of which Chaucer’s actual authorial presence can materialize. In a truly Derridean play on the author, Chaucer’s self-effacement of his own author-function allows for the manifestation of his authorial voice as a negative presence in between the writer (the historical Geoffrey Chaucer) and his writing (the narrator Chaucer). Again, Bennett summarizes the effects upon the reader of “the elaborate authorial game that is set in motion in The Canterbury Tales”:

To put it simply, a large part of our enjoyment of The Canterbury Tales, a major aspect of the modern pleasure we take in Chaucer’s poem, is our ability to perceive a gap between the characters and the author, a gap that allows us to construct, in the irony, allusions, digressive formulations, asides, textual figures, and in the exploitation and deformation of a host of literary conventions, a sense of an author. (42)

The works of the late fourteenth century poets such as Chaucer demonstrate an early surfacing of the individual author out of the anonymity of oral tradition. It functions as more than just a designation of authority (*auctoritas*), but rather as an expression of a particular person’s writing. It was, however, through the printing press that this conception of the author – inaugurated perhaps by these fourteenth century poets – became the ubiquitous author-function that governs the reception of the text in the modern era.

With the development of the printing press and standardized typography, texts became more stable as printed texts ossified and reified the text into a more consistent version. The continual process of revision attendant to the scribal process is arrested as the text settles in to final, definitive version to be identically reproduced by the press. As Elizabeth Eisenstein states in her study The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe, “No manuscript, however useful as a reference guide, could be preserved for long without undergoing corruption by copyists, and even this sort of ‘preservation’ rested precariously on the shifting demands of local elites and a fluctuating incidence of trained scribal labour” (78). The question of textual preservation is also a question not just of textual drift produced by copying, but also of the durability of the materials themselves.

Traditionally, duration through time and space were held in opposition. A stone tablet may endure for many centuries, yet it is constrained in its mobility whereas a papyrus scroll can be easily transported but is also much more subject to degradation over time (see Innis 33-34). As

Eisenstein notes, however, “After the advent of printing ... the durability of writing material became less significant; preservation could be achieved by using abundant supplies of paper rather than scarce and costly skin. Quantity counted for more than quality” (78-79). Because of the abundance of relatively faithful copies enabled by the printing press, the threat of textual loss is reduced. To this end, Eisenstein cites a letter by Thomas Jefferson: “How many of the precious works of antiquity were lost while they existed only in manuscript? Has there ever been one lost since the art of printing has rendered it practicable to multiply and disperse copies? This leads us then to the only means of preserving those remains of our laws now under consideration, that is, a multiplication of printed copies” (80). Jefferson’s optimism may be somewhat overstated as texts have disappeared even in the post-print era, but nonetheless, through standardized printing and mass-reproduction of texts, the greater duration of texts through both time and space is achieved. Moreover, this multiplication had the effect of democratizing knowledge by drawing it out from the treasure chests and vaults and into a wider public sphere. As such, the duration through time is facilitated precisely by expanding a text’s spatial existence through multiple and standardized copies.

Eisenstein is careful to note that this standardization of the text did not necessarily mean that texts were disseminated with full fidelity; certainly textual errors could still be made, and, indeed, because of the mass-reproduction of the text inherent in the act of printing, such errors would be propagated on a much wider scale than a single scribal variant: “However late medieval copyists were supervised – and controls were much more lax than many accounts suggest – scribes were incapable of committing the sort of ‘standardized’ error that was produced by a compositor who dropped the word ‘not’ from the Seventh Commandment and thus created the ‘wicked Bible’ of 1631” (50-51). Eisenstein notes that while lists of errata had to be issued to correct variants introduced by sloppy typographical composition, these errata implied by their very issuing a theoretical “standard” text from which the error deviates: “The very act of publishing errata demonstrated a capacity to locate textual errors with precision and to transmit this information simultaneously to scattered readers” (50). Such correction – standardized correction of standardized errors – could only be possible with printed authors⁶. Earlier, scribal authors had no authorial text

⁶ Eisenstein’s views here – which complicate her earlier, more simplistic statement that printed texts are (generally) transmitted more faithfully than manuscript texts – could be expanded by taking into account variants to the physical text produced through the printing process. Though not “errors” in terms of content as in the “wicked Bible,” variants in the formal aspects of the text-object also alter the way the text is received. As McGann notes: “We must turn our attention to much more than the formal and linguistic features of poems or other imaginative fictions. We must attend to textual materials which are not regularly studied by those interested in ‘poetry’: to typefaces, bindings, book prices, page format, and all those textual phenomena usually regarded as (at best) peripheral to ‘poetry’ or ‘the text as such’”

against which copies could be judged: “The fact remains that Erasmus or Bellarmine could issue errata; Jerome and Alcuin could not” (50). As such, though early printed books may not have been exact reproductions of their originals, “they were sufficiently uniform for scholars in different regions to correspond with each other about the same citation and for the same emendations and errors to be spotted by many eyes” (51). Though not wholly free from variants, the printed text had a stability previously impossible in the manuscript process and because of this new found textual stability, the text can become the individual expression of a definite originating figure: the author in the modern sense of the word.

In contrast to the heterogeneity of medieval texts, the printed book produced a unity of style that became characteristic of the individual, private author. In describing the concept of the author-function in the pre-print era, McLuhan cites E.P. Goldschmidt: “One thing is immediately obvious: before 1500 or thereabouts people did not attach the same importance to ascertaining the precise identity of the author of a book they were reading or quoting as we do now. We very rarely find them discussing such points” (161). Indeed, a book written in the manuscript tradition could conceivably represent a plurality of writing voices. Foucault’s theorization of the development of the author-function as it pertains to literary texts supports this view:

Even within our civilization, the same types of texts have not always required authors; there was a time when those texts which we now call “literary” (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author. Their anonymity was ignored because their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity. (125)

Foucault also notes here that, by contrast, “scientific” texts did indeed require an author’s name in order to authenticate the discourse contained within. It should be noted, however, that such a process would not have been to delimit a point of origin for a statement, but rather to accentuate its “truthfulness.” Foucault states that the respective conditions for the authorship of literary and scientific texts has reversed since the advent of the modern age: “scientific texts were accepted on their own merits and positioned within an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification” while “at the same time, however, ‘literary’ discourse was acceptable only if it carried an author’s name; every text of poetry or fiction was obliged to state

(13). The importance of such formal and material concerns is demonstrated in the careful pagination insisted upon by James Joyce in the publication of Ulysses (see McKenzie 47-51).

its author and the date, place, and circumstances of its writing” (126). It is with print, therefore, that the author-as-individual comes into being.

Whereas manuscripts are – to employ McLuhan’s phrasing – heterogenous mosaics, printed books are an amplification of the individual voice which becomes reified therein. The printed book functioned as an extension – both temporal and spatial – of the private author since printing “provided the physical means of extending the dimensions of the private author in space and time” (161). Because standardized typography enabled texts to be reproduced relatively free of the variants introduced through the scribal process, the voice of the private author could now be faithfully transmitted through space and time by a multiplicity of circulating standardized copies. Through a contemporaneous (1605) citation from Francis Bacon, McLuhan notes that Martin Luther’s use of the printing press to propagate reformation ideas was indicative of the importance of individual style and eloquence (230). Eisenstein makes a similar, but more thorough, argument with regards to Montaigne’s *Essays* in which the French author presented himself not as an “ideal type” as was generally customary in books of the time, but rather as “a solitary singular self”:

By presenting himself, in all modesty, as an atypical individual and by portraying with loving care every one of his peculiarities, Montaigne brought this private self out of hiding, so to speak. He displayed it for public inspection in a deliberate way for the first time. ... He thus established a new basis for achieving intimate contact with unknown readers who might admire portraits of worthy men from a distance but felt more at home with an admittedly unworthy self. Above all, he provided a welcome assurance that the isolating sense of singularity which was felt by the solitary reader had been experienced by another human being and was, indeed, capable of being widely shared. (57)

Eisenstein here connects the standardization of the text with an amplification of the individual voice: a kind of serialized intimacy in which the psychological existence of the author (as a historical, biological individual) can be effectively broadcast to a disparate audience by means of the printed book. The mass-production of texts enabled by the printing press allowed for what Eisenstein describes as “intimate interchanges” (57) to be reproduced and disseminated over space and through time.

Paradoxically, this new individualism is predicated on the homogenization and standardization effected by typography. McLuhan makes the argument that printed literature – with its concomitant use of the vernacular – marked an extension of the private medieval confession into public space and functioned as “a public address system that gave huge power of amplification to

the individual voice” (237). This individualism, however, is enabled by the homogenizing effects of standardized typography. In order for this newly constituted individual to communicate with other individuals through printed works, the reading public has to be conceived as a mass of discrete, yet undifferentiated, atomized individuals. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault describes a similar effect on the individual as a result of the shift of the penal system from spectacular punishment towards conditioned discipline. In Foucault’s view, individuals’ status and value are determined by their conforming to an established and standardized norm against which an individual asserts their individuality as a deviation from that norm: “Like surveillance and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age. ... It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system a formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences” (184). Foucault here is describing how the standardization of a norm reconfigures the masses into a serialized aggregate of cellularized individuals each of whose individuality is a received status within the register of individuals. The subject becomes an interchangeable part within the social machine made in the image of the assembly line: “The individual body becomes an element that may be placed, moved, articulated on others. Its bravery or its strength are no longer the principle variables that define it; but the place it occupies, the interval it covers, the regularity, the good order according to which it operates its movements. ... The body is constituted as a part of a multi-segmentary machine” (164). Writing over a decade before Foucault, McLuhan makes the same soldier analogy and attributes the rise of individualism to the introduction of mass-production technology that, as is certainly the case with printed books, allows for repeatability and standardization. The serialized atomization of equivalent individuals is the extension of the principles of movable type and replaceable parts to social organization: “In a word, individualism, whether in the passive atomistic sense of drilled uniformed soldiery or in the active aggressive sense of private initiative and self-expression, alike assumes a prior technology of homogeneous citizens” (251). Both McLuhan and Foucault point towards the apparent paradox that an individual can only be registered as an individual within a homogeneous system of individuals produced by normalization and standardization.

Just as it standardizes texts, print also has the effect of regulating language. Indeed, by propagating the use of vernacular languages, print led to a standardization of those vernaculars, creating out of plurality of English, French, or German dialects, a single English, French, or German language (McLuhan, Gutenberg 269-276). More fundamentally, the concept of incorrect usage

becomes visible through print as “another aspect of the uniformity and repeatability of the printed page was the pressure it exerted toward ‘correct’ spelling, syntax, and pronunciation” (McLuhan, Understanding 159). In The Gutenberg Galaxy, this same formulation is stated more pointedly: “Nobody ever made a grammatical error in a non-literate society” (285) and: “Print altered not only the spelling and grammar but the accentuation and inflection of languages, and made bad grammar possible” (277). McLuhan attributes this normalization to the shift from an oral/aural understanding of language to a visual wherein the inflectory differences between spoken languages are attenuated in print. To explain this principle, McLuhan cites William Ivins’ 1953 work Prints and Visual Communication which describes the normalizing effects of translating sound into visual symbols:

Each written or printed word is a series of conventional instructions for the making in a specified linear order of muscular movements which when fully carried out result in a succession of sounds. These sounds, like the forms of the letters, are made according to arbitrary recipes or directions, which indicate by convention certain loosely defined classes of muscular movements but not any specifically specified ones. Thus any printed set of words can actually be pronounced in an infinitely large number of ways, of which, if we leave aside purely personal peculiarities, Cockney, Lower East Side, North Shore, and Georgia, may serve as typical specimens. The result is that each sound we hear when we listen to anyone speaking is merely a representative member of a large class of sounds which we have agreed to accept as symbolically identical in spite of the actual differences between them. (qtd. 154)

Here Ivins is describing how language has been conditioned by the same normalizing processes as individual subjects in Foucault’s Discipline and Punish. Just as Foucault identifies his normalization of subjectivity with the panoptic expansion and permeation of the prison throughout society at large, McLuhan uses Ivins’ analysis to show how print’s inauguration of the assembly line method of production has equally reshaped society and culture in the model of the assembly line: “The mechanization of the scribal art was probably the first reduction of any handicraft to mechanical terms. That is, it was the first translation of movement into a series of static shots or frames” (153). Indeed, the central thesis of The Gutenberg Galaxy is that the standardized typography of print has altered human perception of space and time and allowed, for example, the mechanical linearity of Newtonian physics. In his follow-up, Understanding Media, McLuhan carries on this line of thought:

Typography has permeated every phase of the arts and sciences in the past five hundred years. It would be easy to document the processes by which the principles of continuity, uniformity, and repeatability have become the basis of calculus and marketing, as of industrial production, entertainment, and science. It will be enough to point out that repeatability conferred on the printed book the strangely novel character of a uniformly priced commodity opening the door to price systems. (161)

For McLuhan, this standardization is bound up with the transformation of language “from a means of perception and exploration to a portable commodity” (Gutenberg 195). The modern concept of the author is inaugurated by the simultaneous birth of the reading public that can consume the newly mass-produced commodities. Professional authors in the modern sense therefore emerge in parallel with the rise of the mercantile class and the increase in literacy that stimulated the market for printed books as the Middle Ages turned into the Modern Age. With specific respect to England, Bennett cites the emergence of a middle class after the English Civil War. During this period, the court poetry written by gentleman authors at their leisure declined and the concept of writing for money was destigmatized (46-49). Printing therefore not only produced authors, but also did so by producing a public to whom those books could be sold, thus necessitating the very concept of marketing: “The manuscript book comes into being at the demand of the purchaser: the printed book anticipates an uncertain desire, which it must quicken. Printer, bookseller, and eventually author must become the producers of desire” (Loewenstein 64). In other words the development of printed books and their market necessitated the inauguration of consumer society. As McLuhan writes: “So with print Europe experienced its first consumer phase, for not only is print a consumer medium and commodity, but it taught men how to organize all other activities on a systematic lineal basis” (153).

Because literature was now seen as a commodity, it now could also be seen to have an owner. The modern concept of copyright, by which textual producers can claim ownership and control over a text, is direct result of this new commodification. As such, a brief history of copyright will reveal how its evolution has focused on questions of not only who owns a text, but also debates over what exactly is being “owned” in that process. Moreover, these debates have been structured less by aesthetic questions of what constitutes authorship and more by the economic needs of the printing industry as copyright has generally existed as a means to preserve the printing industry’s ability to be able to profit from the sale of their products.

3. Copyright and authorship: author as owner.

Beginning in 1557, the London Stationers' Company had a monopoly on the printing of all books in England. In order to be able to print a book legally, a member of the Stationers' Guild submitted a manuscript to the guild and, after he paid a registration fee, the text was exclusively licensed to him. This licensing process served two distinct functions: it enabled the Crown to prevent the publishing of ideologically questionable works while simultaneously safeguarding the printers from illicit competition (Loewenstein 28-29). Copyright, as it was originally conceived, therefore was not instituted to protect authors' ownership of their intellectual property, but rather to protect the political interests of the state and the economic interests of the nascent print industry. Indeed, authors in the period generally received, if anything at all, a nominal one-time fee for the rights to print their works (Feather 169). When the Stationers' Company monopoly lapsed in 1694, the printers appealed for a continuation of the licensing system, but, in a gesture of public relations, they tried "to confer a veneer of altruism on their proposal by casting their appeal for security as an appeal on behalf of authors" (Loewenstein 14). Despite this superficial appeal to the rights of the author, the concept of writing as property owned by its putative originator (and not simply its disseminator) was yet to emerge over the next few centuries.

The 1710 Statute of Anne responded to the stationers' appeals by reinstituting exclusive patents for printing, although these monopolies were limited to fourteen years (twenty-one years for books by ancient authors or books already in print at the time of the law's enactment)⁷ (Loewenstein 218). Throughout the eighteenth century, a legal debate arose in England over interpretation of the 1710 Statute. By referring the copyright of a work back to its author after a period of fourteen years, did the statute imply a common-law property right for an intellectual work on the part of its author prior to its publication? Was copyright law therefore a protection of the property rights of a work's owner (whether that be an author or his licensed proprietor, the printer) or the economic rights of the printing industry? For the former to be the case, the traditional conception of property would have to be revised in order to account for property not tied to a material existence.

⁷ As Loewenstein describes, the original preamble to the bill indicated a desire to restrain the publication of "Books and other Writings, without the Consent of the Authors thereof," and it reflected the stationers' use of the appeal to the rights of the author in their petition. In the final version of the bill, however, this phrase is changed to "Books and other Writings, without the Consent of the Authors or Proprietors of such Books and Writings." This change, which Loewenstein attributes to the unrecorded machinations of the stationers, conflates the rights of the author and the printer, who by virtue of the license would be the "Proprietor" of a text (see Loewenstein 217-218).

In a 1769 case⁸, Judge Richard Aston implied that “real property is no longer the model for all property” (Loewenstein 16), but this modernization of the concept of property was countered when a subsequent case⁹ was brought to the House of Lords in 1774. Arguing against an implied common law right of authorial property over an idea (such as would be represented in a text) in the Statue of Anne, Sir John Dalrymple made the following statement: “What property can a man have in ideas? [W]hilst he keeps them to himself they are his own, when he publishes them they are his no longer. If I take water from the ocean it is mine, if I pour it back it is mine no longer” (qtd. in Loewenstein 18). Dalrymple here is envisioning ideas as a kind of intellectual commons quite in opposition to the modern concept of an idea belonging to a person. Indeed, Dalrymple’s opinion anticipates the project of contemporary file-sharers who view cultural products as part of the public domain. When a work is published, it leaves the private space of the author’s mind and enters into a public space where its further dissemination is now beyond authorial control. Moreover, the traditional view of Dalrymple splits the text in its incorporeal, ideational sense from its realization in a material object (the book) and argues that property rights – really the exclusive rights of reproduction and distribution – only pertain to the printer’s physical (re)production of the ideational text.

The conception of ideas as property is made possible by the commodification of literature enabled by the standardization of the printing press. In Marxist theory, capitalism transforms the activity of the worker into an object, which can then be bought and sold like any other commodity. By exchanging reified labour for capital (either in the form of wages for labourers or, in the case of authors, the nominal fees charged for the reproductive rights of the text), workers become alienated from the products (whether real or ideational) of their manufacture. As Marx writes in the first volume of *Capital*: “A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour” (320, qtd. in Lukács 86). Lukács furthers Marx’s analysis by observing that this relationship between workers and their labour structures industrial societies: “The fate of the worker becomes the fate of society as a whole; indeed, this fate must become universal as otherwise industrialisation could not develop in this direction. For it depends on the emergence of the ‘free’ worker who is freely able to take his labour-power to market and offer it for sale as a commodity ‘belonging’ to him, a thing that he ‘possesses’” (91). Lukács’s argument recalls McLuhan’s thesis

⁸ Millar v. Taylor

⁹ Donaldson v. Beckett

that industrial society and its attendant commodification is predicated on standardized type which served as the prototype for mechanized production.

Because of this alienation of labour by which the commodity becomes separated from its producer, the commodity can be conceived as the property of the author only at the moment where this property is transferred from the author to the market (in the case of the text, this transfer is publication by a printer). It is worth noting that the early appeals on the part of the printers (supposedly on behalf of the producing authors) for copyright laws focused on extending their purchased right to the text which constitutes in effect a transferred ownership indicative of the commodified structure of textual production and publication. Furthermore, the exclusive association of particular authors with particular publishers has the effect rendering not only the text but also its producer into a commodity. Loewenstein describes this arrangement as one “in which a publishing house has a product line within which authors are made to function as brand names” (48)¹⁰. This commodification of the author supports Lukács’s description of the worker becoming an object in the process of production:

And by selling this [labour], his only commodity, he integrates it (and himself; for his commodity is inseparable from his physical existence) into a specialized process that has been rationalised and mechanised, a process that he discovers already existing, complete and able to function without him and in which he is no more than a cipher reduced to an abstract quantity, a mechanised and rationalised tool. (Loewenstein 166)

If the author only has rights over a work insofar as he or she can transfer via sale those rights to the publishing industry, it becomes clear that authorial copyright can only exist in the reified world of mechanized industrial production. Moreover, this production regime developed in tandem with and as a result of the standardization and mechanization begun with first use of movable type, the first assembly line. It is at the moment of printing that a text is separated from the continuity of tradition – a form of public domain – as it existed within manuscript culture and becomes a reified, commodified object with a particular existence of its own.

¹⁰ One can see a contemporary instance of this phenomenon as it applies to musical records with the 1995 release of the Neil Young album Mirrorball. The backing group for the record was Pearl Jam who, by virtue of being signed to Sony and not Young’s Reprise label, could not be credited as “Pearl Jam” lest it interfere with Sony’s exclusive license to publish works by the b(r)and. In a compromise, two tracks recorded during the sessions which featured Pearl Jam singer Eddie Vedder on lead vocals were released separately by Sony as the EP “Merkin Ball”.

4. The electric author.

The history of printing's effect of literature offered above is of course somewhat of a simplification of the myriad issues involved in the shift¹¹, yet even in these broad strokes, it suggests the material effects that technological development has had on cultural production, in particular that the conception of an author and his or her reading public is a product of the mass-production initiated by the assembly line of the printing press which creates the separate categories of the producing author and the consuming public previously less distinct in the era of manuscript culture. Whereas the development and the ramifications of the commodifying and standardizing effects of print is the central thesis to McLuhan's Gutenberg Galaxy, in Understanding Media McLuhan examines how the electronic media of the twentieth century have affected our perceptions of culture as well as its production. In this work, he makes the oft-quoted statement, "The medium is the message," by which he means that a new medium as a product of technological development conveys a message not only in its content (for example, a printed book will convey the message of the writing it contains), but also in its form: "What we are considering here, however, are the psychic or social consequences of the designs or patterns as they amplify or accelerate existing processes. For the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (24). As described above, the change effected by printing – its message – was the reconceptualization of cultural production into a market where commodities are exchanged between producers and consumers. The then-new electronic media carried a different "message", one which constitutes an opposition to and a reversal of the compartmentalized specialization and linearity of the printing, industrial age.

The erasure of physical distance by the immediacy of electrically mediated communication has had the effect of shrinking the world from a wide field distended over space to a global village in which spatial organization is irrelevant: "Many analysts have been misled by electric media because of the seeming ability of these media to extend man's spatial powers of organization. Electric media, however, abolish the spatial dimension, rather than enlarge it. By electricity, we everywhere resume person-to-person relations as if on the smallest village scale" (Understanding 225). As such, McLuhan sees the development of electric media as a return to a pre-print, indeed pre-literate,

¹¹ Both McLuhan and Innis, for example, make detailed analyses of the effects of both writing and printing on conceptions of time and space which do not require full explication here.

society free from the mechanized, specialized fragmentation that constitutes the modern realm of the Gutenberg Galaxy:

[F]or the electric implosion now brings oral and tribal ear-culture to the literate West. Not only does the visual, specialist, and fragmented Westerner have now to live in closest daily association with all the ancient oral cultures of the earth, but his own electric technology now begins to translate the visual or eye man back into the tribal and oral pattern with its seamless web of kinship and interdependence. (Understanding 58)

Whereas printed media tend to produce homogeneity and uniformity, the electronic media, such as television, radio, and the telephone, tend towards heterogeneity in much the same way as manuscript culture (see Gutenberg 250). As such, the electric media allow for the emergence of previously subaltern voices as a result of the decentralization that sees the nationalities produced by print devolve into more “tribal” identities:

After three thousand years of specialist explosion and of increasing specialism and alienation in the technological extensions of our bodies, our world has become compressional by dramatic reversal. As electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village. Electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree. It is this implosive factor that alters the position of the Negro, the teen-ager, and some other groups. They can no longer be *contained*, in the political sense of limited association. They are now *involved* in our lives, as we in theirs, thanks to the electric media. (Understanding 20)

This increased participation as a result of the interdependence mandated by the new global village has led to new forms of expression that have complicated the heretofore traditional concepts of author and audience. Just one of these forms – turntablism – constitutes the focus of the present study.

McLuhan argues that twentieth century electronics created new media that he refers to as “cool media.” These media, exemplified by the telephone and the television, are those that, in contrast to so-called “hot media,” enlist the participation of the recipient of the message in the production of the text:

There is a basic principle that distinguishes a hot medium like radio from a cool one like the telephone, or a hot medium like the movie from a cool one like TV. A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in “high definition.” High definition is the state of being well filled with data. A photograph is, visually, “high definition.” A cartoon is “low definition”

simply because very little visual information is provided. Telephone is a cool medium, or one of low definition, because the ear is given a meager amount of information. And speech is a cool medium of low definition, because so little is given and so much has to be filled in by the listener. On the other hand, hot media do not leave so much to be filled in or completed by the audience. Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience. (Understanding 36)

McLuhan's categories of hot and cool media – categories, it must be emphasized, that are not necessarily mutually exclusive: any given media can be “cooled down” or “heated up” – anticipate Roland Barthes' call for writerly, as opposed to readerly, texts in S/Z:

Why is the writerly our value? Because the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text. Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between its author and its reader. This reader is thereby plunged into a kind of idleness – he is intransitive; he is, in short, *serious*: instead of functioning himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a *referendum*. Opposite the writerly text, then, is its countervalue, its negative, reactive value: what can be read, but not written: the *readerly*. We call any readerly text a classic text. (4)

Here, Barthes' valuation of the readerly text is inseparable from his project for the death of the author whereby the reader is reconstituted as the locus of meaning in a text. Unlike McLuhan, he does not associate readerly or writerly texts with media, that is to say, with the technological apparatus that enables a specific form of textual production. Nonetheless, for Barthes' readerly text to come into existence, the print regime – what McLuhan terms the Gutenberg Galaxy – and its attendant emphasis on the author as the producer of commodified textuality has to be reconfigured – in McLuhan's terms, “cooled down” – to allow for the emergence of the reader as producer.

The invention of the phonograph in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did to musical texts/performances what printing did to literature in the late Middle Ages and early Modern Period. While McLuhan in both The Gutenberg Galaxy and Understanding Media views electronic media as a return to the orality of medieval manuscript culture, the phonograph record constitutes somewhat of an anachronistic holdover from the print era. McLuhan acknowledges this seeming paradox: “Certainly the phonograph as a product of industrial, assembly-line organization and

distribution showed little of the electric qualities that had inspired its growth in the mind of Edison” (246). However, beyond noting that subsequent technological developments such as high fidelity recordings (which he identifies as “the recovery of tactile experience” (247)) and stereophonic sound (which undoes the fixed point-of-view characteristic of not only monophonic sound, but also, as noted earlier, typographic print¹²), McLuhan offers little insight into the contradiction towards which he points.

Certainly, the groove as inscribed on the phonographic record is linear. Though it appears in its physical form to be circular, it follows the same segmented linearity as movable type, proceeding in a direct path from one recorded utterance to the next in the sequence. However, this linearity is complicated by the use of records for turntablism and sampling in which the linear groove is turned into a loop. To the turntablist who disrupts the sequential playback of a record with his hands, a tactile quality is restored to the aural experience of listening to a record and the play of the ears and the hands is conflated into one creative act.

5. The digital author and hypertextuality.

Throughout his work, McLuhan emphasized the ways in which technological change conditions cultural production. As a result of his particular historical existence, McLuhan could not account for changes yet to happen after his life, in particular the reshaping of textuality by the digital technology. Nonetheless, in Understanding Media McLuhan does point to the possibilities for further change already latent in electronic media:

Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man – the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media. (19)

¹² McLuhan describes stereophonic sound as being “for music what cubism had been for painting, and what symbolism had been for literature; namely, the acceptance of multiple facets and planes in a single experience” (Understanding 247). Undoubtedly, by presenting a recording in multiple dimensions, stereo creates a heterophonic listening experience, but it might be more important to note that it centres the point-of-view on the listener relative to whom all the individual sounds in the stereo recording are located. As such, stereophonic texts are more “readerly” or, perhaps one should say “listenerly”, in that the fixed point-of-view is shifted from utterer to apprehender.

McLuhan's ideas here – with the reference to “the final phase of the extensions of man” – takes on a millennial aspect, but his thesis remains the same: “Any extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex” (19). It therefore remains to be seen what will be the consequences for authorship and textuality in the wake of the digital revolution.

To answer this question, two broad theses may be stated. First, the technology of the Internet has increased access to the category of the author. Benjamin's prediction that the letters to the editor section of the newspaper would lead to an erosion of the distinction between author and public has seen its fulfilment in the further democratization of writing and authorship enabled by the institution of the Internet. Now any individual may be published through writing blogs, contributing to online discussion forums, or helping to assemble community-generated texts, whether they be the earnest work of Wikipedians or contributors to humorous websites such as LOLCats in which users submit their own content based on repeated memes.

Second, at a more fundamental level, not only has the Internet enabled more people to become (self-)published authors, but the very form of the digital hypertext also shifts the locus of textual production to the consumer who apprehends and makes use of the textual material. In No Trespassing, Eva Hemmungs Wirtén cites the photocopier as a conceptual precursor to the Internet's transformation of the consumer into a producer: “The copier enables the swift compiling of information; the collecting of one chapter here, another one there, not only in order to simply redistribute them to a class of expectant students, but to recombine them and make a new, more useful tool. In one stroke, the copier makes the old author extinct, while at the same time laying the foundation for another to appear” (73). This reader-centred view of textual production finds a fuller expression in the development of hypertextuality with the advent of personal computers in the late twentieth century. In his 1993 essay, “Hypertext and the Laws of Media,” Stuart Moulthrop declares: “Because it is no longer book-bounded, hypertextual discourse may be modified at will as reader/writers forge new links within and among documents” (2509). The hypertext then is not produced solely by its putative and provisional “author”, but also by the connections consumer-users find within and between different nodes of the hypertext: “In hypertext systems, this ethos of connection is realized in technics; users do not passively rehearse or receive discourse, they explore and construct links. At the kernel of the hypertext concept lie ideas of affiliation, correspondence,

and resonance” (2513). It seems, then, that the hypertext fulfils the Barthesian project of birthing the reader at the expense of the death of the author¹³.

The digital hypertext undoes the textual stability offered by print, which codifies and embodies the text into an ossified, objective product. Not only are hypertexts subject to constant revision – Wikipedia, for example, allows users to view the diachronic history of each page’s serialized revisions by a plurality of different contributing authors – but are also produced in large part by the consumer’s navigation of the myriad links embedded within the hypertext. The hypertext eschews the prescribed linearity of the printed book in favour of an ever-changing web structure constructed in accordance to the different apprehensions by individual consumers:

In this narrative, linearity in itself is no assurance against inattention or memory. For that we would need a different conception of what constitutes stability within the new media – a conception involving the reader in the act of observation and selection. Stability in electronic environments, I want to suggest, comes from the literal construction of the object of study rather than its interpretation – for that is what we are doing, constructing the page (and forgetting past pages, the pages we have passed over) as we move selectively through the developing web archive. (Tabbi 214)

In the digital hypertext, information is reconceived as a flow: it is no longer contained in an object with which it is identified (i.e. the book), but rather exists in a state of becoming. As Tabbi writes, in hypertextuality, there is “[n]o page, only descriptions of possible pages whose realization is up to the reader” (208).

¹³ Early hypertextual theorists took a utopian view of the new technology, believing that it offered liberation from traditional economic and social institutions. As the Internet has developed and has taken an increasing visibility in cultural production, this utopian vision has proven to not necessarily be the case, as media companies and their governmental supports have sought to exert control over the web. Even as early as 1993, Moulthrop describes McLuhan’s predictions for the liberating effects of such “cool” media as television and radio were undone by later developments:

Radio, for instance, begins in interactive orality (two-way transceiving) but decays into the hegemony of commercial broadcasting, where “talk radio” lingers as a reminder of how open the airwaves are not. Television too starts by shattering the rigid hierarchies of the Gutenberg nation-state, promising to bring anyplace into our living rooms; but its version of [the] Global Village turns out to be homogenous and hegemonic, a planetary empire of signs (as we say in Atlanta, “Always Coca-Cola”). (2519)

Moulthrop therefore envisions a similar possibility for the then nascent hypertextuality. Referring to the early hypertextual project of Ted Nelson, he writes: “According to the economic logic of late capitalism, wouldn’t the Xanadu Operating Company ultimately sell out to Sony, Matsushita, Philips, or some other wielder of multinational leverage?” (2519). Certainly, the current debates over control of the Internet – forcefully demonstrated in the controversial SOPA and PIPA bills being debated in the American Senate – support Moulthrop’s questioning of McLuhanite optimism.

B. Intertextuality

1. Introduction.

The making of texts out of texts, such as is demonstrated by sample-based hip hop, is a practice commonly associated with postmodernism. Juvan cites intertextuality's relatively recent foregrounding in literary theory as an effect of postmodernism: "Overall, intertextuality came to the fore in humanities scholarship not only owing to text theory but also because it succeeded in capturing prominent features of contemporary artistic production – its ontological pluralism, constructivism, self-referentiality, and consciousness of the end of history-as-progress." (83). In his discussion of the postmodernity of intertextuality, Manfred Pfister declares that within the myriad conceptions of postmodernism, the common denominator is "the element of the parasitic" which is bound up with such traditionally postmodern concerns as the condition of epigonality in the present era and the experience of the world not as some *a priori* reality, but rather as series of reflected images with no specific, concrete referent:

Postmodernist culture presents itself as a playful *mis en scène* of pre-given materials and devices, and these may be taken either from the imaginary storehouse of pop artifacts yet untouched by High Culture (Jameson 1984), or from the repertoire of modernist aesthetics and practices. In a world experienced as totally contingent and random; under the setting sun of the *fin de millénaire*, when history appears to have reached its end and when all that seems to be possible is some post-historical afterpiece, some carnivalesque postlude; in a political blind alley, in which the economical, ecological and ideological contradictions, particularly in the most advanced Western societies, increasingly come to be regarded as inaccessible to, and insoluble by, rational analysis and instrumental planning; on a level of consciousness that no longer allows us to regard reality as something to be experienced directly and immediately, as it reaches us always pre-structured by language, pre-formed by culture and filtered through mass media. (208)

As the citation within the above quoted passage indicates, this view of postmodernist intertextuality reflects Fredric Jameson's assertion that, in the postmodern era, pastiche is the dominant form of artistic production: "in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum" ("Consumer Society" 1965). The failure to recognize this possible impossibility is also

central to Lyotard's critique of modernism's tradition and avant-garde: "What all intellectual disciplines and institutions presuppose is that not everything has been said, written down or recorded, that words already heard or pronounced are not the last words. ... [They] also forget the possibility of nothing happening, of words, colours, forms or sounds not coming; of this sentence being the last" (198).

In an essay originally written in 1967, author John Barth described what he termed as "the literature of exhaustion": "By 'exhaustion' I don't mean anything so tired as the subject of physical, moral, or intellectual decadence, only the used-upness of certain forms or the felt exhaustion of certain possibilities – by no means necessarily a cause for despair" ("Exhaustion" 64). In a later, 1979 essay, Barth clarified his definition to avoid its misinterpretation as a lament for the death of literature:

The simple burden of my essay was that the forms of modes of art live in human history and are therefore subject to used-upness, at least in the minds of significant numbers of artists in particular times and places: in other words, that artistic conventions are liable to be retired, subverted, transcended, transformed, or even deployed against themselves to generate new and lively work. ("Replenishment" 205)

Artistic conventions, then, are limited and subject to exhaustion. They can be replenished, however, through the infinitude of possible recombinations. Nonetheless, when compared to the stark epigonality articulated above by Lyotard and, to a degree, Jameson, Barth's essays take the view that far from being complete, literature can continuously renew itself through such processes of rearrangement of otherwise static forms. It is in *how* these elements are arranged that one can distinguish between different modes of intertextuality.

2. T.S. Eliot and The Waste Land.

Pfister differentiates modernist intertextuality from its postmodern counterpart through their respective treatment of the literary canon. Modernist texts, such as T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land, draw on canonical sources for their pre-texts: "The intertextual dialogue may involve pretexts from a wide range of epochs and cultures, but even with this wide range it is always the canonized and 'classical' texts that are clearly privileged" (Pfister 218). Still, like the postmoderns, Eliot uses The Waste Land and its dense layers of allusion to evoke a sense of epigonality at work in the literature of the early twentieth century. Eliot's intertextuality is constructed as a lament for the sterility of

contemporary art in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, contrasting the high culture of previous eras with the banality of mass culture. Postmodern intertextuality, on the other hand, sees the potential exhaustion of literature as an occasion for play. Eliot's *Fisher King* takes the fragments of contemporary and past culture and "shore[s]" them "against [the] ruins" of modernism as if he were erecting a wall to fortify this last bastion of (reconstituted) culture from the ravages of an oceanic tide of sterilizing mass culture. Eliot's cynicism regarding mass-culture as a colonizing force on the literary canon is shown in *The Waste Land* when Ariel's song to Ferdinand in *The Tempest* ("Those are pearls that were his eyes") is transformed into "that Shakespeherian Rag" (II.125-128). The "Shakespeherian Rag" with its added syncopation to the Bard's name indicates a travestying of the high art of the English literary canon by reconfiguring Shakespeare's poetry into the machined rhythms of a banal pop song. Thus, Eliot sets up an opposition between the high art of the canon and the low art of popular mass-culture. The dense layers of allusions to classical and biblical works that characterize *The Waste Land* are precisely the fragments that Eliot shores up against the ruins he saw around him in the modernity of the early twentieth century.

Postmodernist artists – whether they be Oulipian poets, culture jammers, or turntablists – on the other hand are content to play in the ruins with the deconstructed edifices providing the building blocks for new constructions, and, as such, they do not make the same radical differentiation between high and low art as do moderns such as Eliot: "On the contrary, postmodernists write from the perspective of deconstructing value hierarchies, including those from modernist high culture, and for that reason popular culture's myths and clichés attract them" (Juvan 85). The Wu-Tang Clan producer, The RZA, does not make a qualitative distinction between children's cartoons and classical compositions when considering their respective usages in his sample collages. Similarly, in *Product Placement* and *The Hard Sell*, all manner of different musical genres and forms are juxtaposed and put in dialogue with no explicit comment on their relative artistic merits. Where the modern laments the colonization of high art by popular forms, the postmodern plays in the egalitarian, polyphonic dialogue between texts with de-emphasis on aesthetic judgement of the intertextual fragments being used.

3. Centos.

The emphasis on dialogue is commonly associated with postmodern conceptions of intertextuality rooted in Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and dialogism.

Historical studies of intertextuality, however, reveal that it is a condition that has permeated literary history. Indeed, while intertextual studies in their contemporary form may have been inaugurated by Kristeva's work on Bakhtin in the late 1960s, the characteristically postmodern playful bricolage with pre-extant texts can be seen at multiple moments in Western literary history. An early anticipation of turntablism's pastiche is the late classical form of the cento, in which poetic works were created by recompiling and rearranging extracts from previous works, most notably Homer and Virgil. Etymologically, the Latin "cento" is defined by Oxford as "a quilt, blanket, or curtain made of old garments stitched together" and is related to the Greek term for a "piece of patchwork, rag" (Kellett 79). This etymology speaks to the textual nature of the works as a weaving of disparate strands into a new whole and points to the immanence of prior forms in a newly (re)constituted gestalt. The centonist Ausonius offered this definition of the form: "from disconnection, continuity; from many, one; from seriousness, play; from foreign, ours".¹⁴ The governing principle of the form then is the maintenance of a coherent unity despite the fragmented nature of the text.

In her survey of the history and reception of the cento form, Marie Okacova places the origin of the practice in the Greek oral tradition whereby individual rhapsodes had to memorize "the vast stock of epic material", and their subsequent individual reperformances took this material and "refashioned in each and every performances in a way similar to the centonists" (1). However, whereas these oral poets' individual performances were variations – or versions – of an ideal oral text, the centos of Late Antiquity reworked the source material in such a way as to completely alter the original and to produce a completely new work. Okacova identifies two broad groups of centos. Byzantine Greeks took verses from Homer and rearranged them to form Biblical narratives while the Latin writers of Late Antiquity did the same to Virgil. In both cases, highly regarded pagan poets are put into the service of expressing Christian doctrine. This calls to mind Bede's description of the (re)consecration of pagan temples in seventh century England. Rather than destroy these temples, early Church authorities realized that they could be used instead to sway the pagan populous towards Christianity: "For if these temples are well-built, they must be purified from the worship of demons and dedicated to the service of the true God. In this way, we hope that the people, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may abandon their error and, flocking more

¹⁴ The original Latin is "*de inconnexis continuum, de diversis unum, de seriis ludicrum, de alieno nostrum*" (qtd in Okacova 3, and in Kellett 79). Kellett translates the last term as "originality by means of plagiarism", which, while characteristic of the form, undermines Ausonius' emphasis on the appropriation of another's discourse. Moreover, the Latin original turns on the ambiguity of *alieno* and *nostrum*: by incorporating another author's text into a new pastiche, the *alieno* is taken from its original context so that in order to become *nostrum* the *alieno* must be alienated.

readily to their accustomed resorts, may come to know and adore the true God” (Bede 86-87). The recasting of pagan works (or temples) into Christian stories signifies a simultaneous break from and an affirmation of a prior tradition.

Whereas the Christian centos retained the exalted seriousness of the originals, the pagan centos took the elevated verses of Homer or Virgil and recast them as playful, humorous examinations of everyday life. For example, the anonymous De Panificio uses verses from Virgil to depict the baking of bread. Unlike their high-minded Christian contemporaries, the pagan centos are seen by Okacova as more faithful to the playful means of the form itself: “In point of fact, the pagan centos, whose rather frivolous topics are perfectly consistent with their frolicsome mechanics of composition, appear to be more consonant with the ancient understanding of the role and purpose of the patchwork texts than the Christian cento interpretations of Virgil actually are” (2). Above all, Okacova stresses, these centos are concerned with a carnivalesque play with formalist conventions.

The prevalence of the cento form in Late Antiquity is characteristic of that period’s formalism: “Without much exaggeration, we can speak about the cult of form adhered to at the expense of content and actually lying at the very root of the cento technique” (Okacova 2). Indeed, the anonymous cento De Alea appears, by its title, to be about games of dice, but due to the expressive limitations inevitably incurred when using the borrowed language of Virgil, “not even the very subject matter of the cento can be determined beyond doubt because of the poem’s inaccurate and metaphorical wording. Whether the piece really portrays dicing, as its title suggests, and likens it to a combat between armed forces or whether it rather describes a kind of athletic – presumably gladiatorial – competition held in an amphitheatre simply remains unclear” (2). What is clear, however, is that cento’s meaning is not derived from the resultant work, but rather from the method in which it is constructed. In the preface to his Cento Nuptialis, the centonist Ausonius describes centos as being a form of sport or play (“*ludere*”) and that his “frivolous work” (“*frivolum et nullius pretii opusculum*”) should be received with “laughter more than praise” (“*ridere magis quam laudare possis*”) (2-3). The laughter with which the audience receives the cento is the same attitude with which the cento regards its sources: an ironic travestying of canonical texts in which the centonist delights in the free play, the turning of high art into a game. Indeed, Ausonius depicts the cento form as “a kind of literary free play” and compares it to an ancient Greek game resembling the modern jigsaw puzzle (3).

Because of their derivative, playful nature, centos have been derided by critics from antiquity to today. In his *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, Tertullian considers the “defamiliarizing methods of cento composition” to be “practically heretical” (4), the objection being that the centonists are doing to Virgil what heretics do to scripture¹⁵: using canonized doctrine to support a meaning not in the original text (Kellett 81). In his 1933 survey *Literary Quotation and Allusion*, E.E. Kellett uses the cento form as an example of the worst kind of quotation, going so far as to label it “quotation gone mad”: “It exhibits every fault which the wise quoter ought to avoid: pedantry, ostentation, obscurity, over-ingenuity: and might well have been included by Addison, along with lipograms and acrostics, in his specimens of False Wit” (77). Aside from critiquing centos for their excessive formality, Kellett devalues the form precisely because it is concerned more with the free play involved in its production than with the aesthetics of its expressed content, comparing “this quaint and curious sport” with “the making or solving of crossword puzzles” (77), and when describing a Latin cento that used Virgilian hexameters to describe events from the Old and New Testaments, he laments: “It is appalling to think of the amount of labour that must have gone to the making of this huge trifle” (83). His criticism that the large quantity of work required in the production of the poem was not commensurate with the trifling result inadvertently reveals that artistry of the cento was in its formalistic production: the work exists in its process, a continual state of becoming, and the reader approaches such a text in the same manner.

In order for the cento to be apprehended as a cento, readers need to be aware of its construction, and, as such, they were expected to have knowledge of the original source material (hence the reliance on such canonized authors as Homer and Virgil). As Okacova notes: “In reading a patchwork text, one is simply supposed to negotiate its meaning with constant reference to the source material. The readers of the Latin centos are therefore expected to approach these ‘verse jigsaw puzzles’ with profound knowledge of Virgil’s poetry; otherwise, they cannot relish the unique interplay of meanings, which contributes to the richness and complexity of the narratives told” (4). In other words, in reading the cento, the reader has to retrace the intertextual work of the centonist (to this end, Kellett notes, Ausonius produced a cento for the Emperor Valentinian and, “in the

¹⁵ Kellett’s commentary on Tertullian’s remarks here contains a curious typological anomaly which may or may not be an error: “Similarly, [Tertullian] goes on, heretics stitch out of *Scripture* doctrines as little agreeable to its true sense as the works of these poetasters are to the *Iliad*” (81, emphasis added). Kellett, speaking for Tertullian, is implying that the recombination of elements (whether they be lines from Virgil or Christian doctrine) constitutes a breakage – a rupture of Scripture – from established, authorized tradition. Though, as stated above, the inclusion of old works in new constitutes a continuity at the same time as it signifies a paradigmatic, formalist shift, Kellett’s criticism of the cento also points to the carnivalesque reversal in which the lofty poetry of the classical canon is de-elevated into humorous mundanity.

margin, for the benefit of the Emperor, are given the references to the despoiled passages” (79)). In every individual reading of a given cento, the act of reading is itself a repetition of the (un)original writing as the “thoughtful reading of such a cento text requires the reader to recognize the means of its production as well as to actively participate in the centonists’ skilful play with language. Seen through the lens of modern reception theories, the reader reproduces and complete each particular cento through interpretation and concretization” (Okacova 4).

This points to a contradiction within the rules of the form as set out by Ausonius. One of the principles of the cento is that it produces a new unity out of disparate fragments: “The emphasis here is again on the neat coalescence of the individual so that the piece could give the impression of an organic whole, which conveys a distinct meaning” (Okacova 3). Yet, at the same time as the centonist tries to erase his or her authorship by concealing the fragmentary nature of the text behind a created unity, the “meaning” of the works, as Okacova notes, is “determined by the allusiveness of their phrasing and patchworks texts’ interactions with the base text” (4). Once again, a form of Western art is pointing to its own mask.

Although prevalent in the late Classical era, centos continued to exist well into the modern period. In their historical outline of the cento, Theodor Verweyen and Gunther Witting cite Reinhart Herzog’s assertion that the parodic cento met its demise “at the beginning of early modern times” and this death is initiated, in Herzog’s view as paraphrased by Verweyen and Witting, by “the decline of mnemonic faculties dependent” as the school curricula of the day shifted away from memorization of classical texts¹⁶ (qtd. 167). Nonetheless, Verweyen and Witting counter Herzog’s assertion with examples of cento-like texts throughout the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and into the early modern period, including a mention of the wide usage of ironized quotation in Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* which they describe as “put[ting] the cento to the severest test, the test of ridicule” (172). The authors also identify the continued usage of the cento mode in the twentieth century by way of the example of a 1924 poem by the communist writer Erich Weinert “Einheitsvolksleid”: “In his cento Weinert accordingly dissects with malicious intent those texts which articulated the identity of a certain social class. Once the deconstruction is achieved he combines the scraps into a contrasting and comical puzzle so that derision ensues” (173). Weinert is therefore following the mode of the cento as laid out by Ausonius: his appropriation of the source texts serves to deconstruct those very texts by recombining their utterances into a travesty of themselves. The

¹⁶ While Verweyen and Witting dispute Herzog’s assertion, it is tempting nonetheless to associated this presumed decline with the development of print that occurred around the same time, a development that continued the Thothian project of writing by further externalizing memory away from the human mind and into material text objects.

cento transforms quotation from an affirmation of the quoted's authority into a subversive parody by reinscribing a layer of irony on to the putative original.

4. The mobile.

A cento-like quality to Erasmus's Adagia is identified by Richard J. Schoeck who identifies the Dutch humanist as "the most intertextual of prose writers and perhaps also of poets, certainly of the Renaissance" (182). In the introduction to the Adagia, Erasmus declares his project "to interweave adages deftly and appropriately" (trans. and qtd. in Schoeck, 183), a declaration that explicitly signals Erasmus's awareness of his own intertextuality and points to the assembled and recombinated nature of his work. Furthermore, the Adagia, which take as their pre-text the homilies found scattered throughout Greek and Latin literature, in turn serves as the pre-text for later works by Rabelais, Montaigne, and Burton. Indeed, as Schoeck points out, Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy does not just follow the Erasmian form of assembling a highly variegated source material, but also uses it as a more literal source for quoted material. It therefore becomes impossible for the literary historian to disentangle the two works, "with many of Burton's individual quotations being also found in the Adagia, which may have been for Burton both the index in going to a *locus classicus* as well, perhaps, as in some instances his direct and only source" (187). Instead, Erasmus's Adagia is inextricably linked not only with its pre-text source material, but also with the texts that use it as a pre-text. This linkage should not be viewed as direct lines of content/form transmission, but rather as a cloud of citationality in which the discrete boundaries of the texts, both quoted and quoting, become blurred and indistinct.

To conclude his analysis of Erasmus's intertextuality, Schoeck presents a model for literature based on the infant's mobile:

A mobile (largely innovated by the American sculptor William Calder) describes a type of hanging sculpture consisting of parts that move, especially in response to air currents, for these parts are usually hung by wire from the ceiling or from other parts. Take, then, a number of mobiles in a room of this size, and imagine that there are several lines coming down from the ceiling, and on each line there is separate little set of suspended objects, a system of mobility, of potential interdependence, of varying movement. Within each set or system there is relationship: movements occur as a result of energy somewhere else in that system, doubtless initiated by an external force, such as a current of air – or a great social

event, or a challenging new concept, to extend our analogy in the world of thought and letters. But in a room this size it is likely that there are already connections that we do not see – a tug or push over there, unexpectedly there is movement over here; and we may not have known that there was a connection. Connections, we must think, can always be made between two systems; and in fact there is a larger galaxy of interconnections always potential. It is almost impossible to conceive a limit to the possibilities of systems of mobiles within this galaxy. (189)

This model of the galaxy of mobiles views the intertextual links between texts not as a system of hierarchical influences, contrary to the otherwise arborescent structure of mobiles, but rather, to employ a term from Deleuze and Guattari, as a rhizomatic structure in which all texts interplay with each other in an infinite series of combinations. A kind of literary “butterfly effect” emerges in which a subtle change introduced into the system at one point effects all other points within the system.

Schoeck’s model illustrates how the intertextual interaction between texts is not simply a one-way transmission by which the pre-text influences its successor. Rather, intertextuality puts texts in dialogue with one another. In his analysis of the literary practice of allusion as a form of intertextuality, Udo J. Hebel observes that

Traditional studies of *allusion* are all too often primarily concerned with the identification of the alluded-to referent and do usually not lead to a reinterpretation of the latter. In the context of the Bakhtin-renaissance, intertextual approaches to *allusion* have emphasized the dialogic nature of the relationships between alluding texts and evoked referents, i.e., the consequence that any allusion involves a commentary about the text, person, or event called up. (139)

In a brief 1951 essay on the literary precursors to Kafka’s The Castle, Jorge Luis Borges identifies several texts which prefigure elements in the Kafka novel. Borges observes that each of these works – a paradox of Zeno, an ancient Chinese fable, two parables by Kierkegaard, a poem by Robert Browning, a short story by Léon Bloy, and another short story by Lord Dunsany – does not resemble any of the others, yet they are brought together by their shared usage in The Castle (Borges specifies no presumed intentionality on Kafka’s part). It is only through Kafka’s text that the intertextual relationship between the putative source texts can be perceived.

Consequently, the reading of these prior texts is affected by the reading of the subsequent Kafka text. Borges writes:

Kafka's idiosyncrasy is present in each of these writings, to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had not written, we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist. The poem "Fears and Scruples" by Robert Browning prophesies the work of Kafka, but our reading of Kafka noticeably refines and diverts our reading of the poem. Browning did not read it as we read it now. ... The fact is that each writer *creates* his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. (365)

As Borges's example demonstrates, this rhizomatic view of intertextual relationships entails a revision of the concept of time from linear progression from one historical moment to the next to an eternal synchrony in which "all texts possess a simultaneous existence. This entails the levelling of all temporal differences; history is suspended in favour of the co-presence of the past" (Plett 25). This synchrony, which would otherwise require envisioning as a chaotic intertwining of all possible texts¹⁷, is structured by the past experiences of the reader whose own reading history will illuminate possible links between texts in the manner described by Borges above.

This rhizomatic view does not obliterate the concept of temporal priority, but rather shifts it away from the author to the reader (see Clayton and Rothstein 16). In this sense, then, Borges's essay prefigures¹⁸ the project undertaken by Barthes in his "Death of the Author" and subsequent essays throughout the late sixties and early seventies in which the reader replaces the author as "the organizing center of interpretation" (Clayton and Rothstein 21). This shift illustrates the postmodern view that all texts are intertexts grasped in a matrix of (all) other works, but that the intertextual links between texts, which exist always already as latent potentialities, manifest in the reader's perception of them, a perception that is contingent on the reader's own historical literary experience. To return to Schoeck's metaphor of the galaxy of mobiles, the reader's activity as a reader is the "current of air" that moves and produces change within the galaxy of intertextuality.

This model of intertextuality as proposed by Kristeva (following Bakhtin) and Barthes becomes increasingly visible with the advent of digital technology which, like print several centuries prior, has produced radical changes in the nature of textual production and reception. The digital

¹⁷ In an earlier essay ("The Total Library," 1939), Borges envisions an archive of all possible writing latent within the orthographical symbols of the alphabet and punctuation "whose recombinations and repetitions encompass everything possible to express in all languages" (216). This potential archive, which serves as the theoretical precursor for what Borges depicted in his short story, "The Library of Babel," is described as "the vast, contradictory Library, whose vertical wilderness of books run the incessant risk of changing into others that affirm, deny, and confuse everything like a delirious god" (216).

¹⁸ Naturally, this prefiguring of Barthes in Borges only becomes apparent after the fact: a reader's reading of Barthes has the effect of rewriting Borges's historically prior text into a retrospective prophecy of Barthes.

hypertext of the Internet as apprehended by the web surfer is an example of a text being assembled by the reader's navigation through a multitude of possible textual links:

A web surfer before her computer screen, which replaces the page of a book, catches and combines slices of heterogeneous texts (verbal, visual, and auditory) from distant, scattered sources. Intangible simulacra of segments belonging to one or more textual wholes change before her gaze. These fragments are not dependably connected to one another in advance; only the pulses of the surfer's desire arrange them into an aleatory (inter)textual syntax or narration. (Juvan 1)

In this sense, then, the digital hypertext as embodied by the Internet, unfolds according to the desires of the individual reader. The unravelling of the hypertext becomes therefore a game undertaken by the reader, not theoretically dissimilar from the "Choose Your Own Adventure" books in which young readers enact a plurality of possible narratives by selecting different outcomes for the protagonist – identified with the reader by means of the second person point of view – from a series of given options.

The game structure of the hypertext, however, does not just apply to the user's play within the text, by which the hypertext is constructed according to the desires of the reader, but also to the production of works that are assembled through hypertextual procedures. Precisely this sort of play can be seen in the poetry of the Oulipo school that uses mathematical operations to make new works out of old. For example, the $n+7$ procedure replaces words in a poem with other words seven references down in the dictionary to produce an entirely new and different (albeit derivative) work. The pleasure, for the Oulipian writer, lies in the playful transformation of the text that confounds and decants the author's "intentional" meaning in the original text and replaces it with the unauthored play of words. The Oulipian writer is not concerned with expressing some "truth" or idea; rather, the game of language is undertaken for its own sake. As the Oulipo motto states: "An Oulipian author is a rat who himself builds the maze from which he sets out to escape" (Roubaud 36). Genette identifies this game-ness as a condition of hypertextuality itself:

One could even go so far as to say that every form of hypertextuality entails some kind of game, inherent in the very practice of reusing existing structures; at bottom, whatever its urgency, tinkering¹⁹ is always a game, at least to the extent that it produces and uses an object in an unforeseen, unprogrammed, and thus "unlawful" manner – true play always entails some degree of perversion. Using and processing a (hypo)text for purposes foreign to its

¹⁹ In the original French, "tinkering" is *bricolage*.

initial program is likewise a way of playing with it, of having fun with it and making fun of it.
(399)

Here, Genette is identifying the “play” of the hypertext with its subversion of – its playing *with* – its sources. However, this play can also be extended to the pleasure taken in the quotation and usage of extent texts itself.

With regard to the turntablist hypertexts to be analyzed in this study, this gaming applies to just the subversion of particular texts, but also to the inclusion of tracks because of their inherent pleasurability. The DJ mix therefore functions in some part as a hypertextual catalogue of moments where the DJ-as-reader has exclaimed, as Barthes describes, “that’s it for me!” (Pleasure 13), and, moreover, by reproducing these tracks within the DJ mix, the DJ-as-writer/performer hopes to transfer that *jouissance* to the set’s audience. Consequently, this second order audience also exclaims “that’s it for me!” not only at the cited text (the track being played) but also at the DJ’s reading and citation of that text.

Although the objects of this study are indeed musical texts, literary models of intertextuality have been engaged so far, as musicological analyses of intertextuality are insufficient to explore fully the textual operation of these works. Whereas musicological approaches are adept at analyzing the harmonic and rhythmic components of a composition, a more literary analysis will reveal the implicit semantic overcodings that result from the recombination of various musical (which includes lyrical contents) extracts in the sampling hypertext.

Still, Genette’s theories of intertextuality are applied to musical texts in Serge Lacasse’s “Intertextuality and Hypertextuality in Recorded Popular Music.” Lacasse’s work, however, focuses on cataloguing different forms of musical intertextuality ranging from melodic quotation of anterior compositions in jazz performances to various parodies and pastiches of particular genres. The form of musical intertextuality that is most relevant to the performances at hand is what Lacasse describes as “autosonic quotation”:

[A]utosonic quotation is intimately linked with recording techniques. Its nature can be illustrated by a practice commonly used nowadays: sampling. When we import a sample taken directly from a recording into another (for example, a drum loop), what is common to both recordings is of a physical nature. What is shared is not so much a “sameness of spelling” (to borrow an expression used by Goodman when characterising allography) as a “sameness of sounding”. (38-39)

Lacasse does go on explain that despite this “sameness of sounding”, autsonic quotation often involves an alteration of the source material, but his focus here is exclusively on musicological considerations: “one can speed [autsonic quotations] up or slow them down, loop them, modify their spectral content (through equalisation), add reverb, echo or flanging to them, etc” (39). While Lacasse’s work is certainly useful for understanding different types of musical intertextuality, there is no analysis of how autsonic quotation can be used to transform or comment upon the meaning of the sampled work. Conversely, in his analysis of other forms of musical intertextuality, Lacasse describes how translations of a composition from one genre to another can function as a travesties “that aim to ‘debase’ the hypotext” (43)²⁰, yet he stops short of providing a similar analysis for autsonic quotation. As such, Lacasse reveals the limitations of musicological analyses for dealing with sampling, as the substantive transformations effected by sampling cannot be fully and adequately described in terms of beats and pitches, but rather need to be examined in their contexts (historical, social, political) and semantic overtones (implicit in the case of musical samples, explicit in the case of vocal samples).

Nonetheless, Lacasse’s assertion that “autsonic quotation is intimately linked with recording techniques” highlights the fact that this particular form of musical quotation is contingent upon the memorialization of the performance in the coded grooves of the record, that is, contingent upon its being written. However, because popular music such as that most often sampled by hip hop DJs is not transmitted through written musical scores, musicologists such as Richard Middleton have declared such popular musics to be “aural and oral” forms in which “there is little sense, finally, that performances going under the same title make up a distinct class of events related in a consistent to a pre-existing ideal form” (60). Here, Middleton appears to fall into a false, McLuhanite dichotomy which sees the technologically driven move away from the printed score as a return to an earlier, oral culture associated with the folk tradition. Instead, the emergence of recorded media has simply substituted the notational writing of the ideal text (the score) with the (electro-)mechanical writing of material performance (the record). Indeed, he cites a quotation from the producer Bill Laswell²¹ who states that “tape memory has replaced composition” (62), but elsewhere Middleton fails to ascribe to records the same “literary” status as notational scores.²²

²⁰ Lacasse uses as examples the Mike Flowers Pops’ transformation of Oasis’s “Wonderwall” into a pastiche of 1960s lounge music and Walter Murphy & The Big Apple Band’s disco arrangement of Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*.

²¹ Laswell’s remix of music from Miles Davis’s electric period, *Panthalassa*, is analyzed in depth by Middleton.

²² Middleton’s concern, however, is largely with the status of the musical work which in the post-recording era is no longer a finalized, albeit ideal, object emanating from the controlling figure of the authorial composer, but rather is now

5. Stigmergy.

To further our understanding of intertextuality, it may be useful to borrow a concept derived from biology that has recently been applied to management and computer systems: stigmergic collaboration. Stigmergy was first coined by the biologist Pierre-Paul Grasse in 1959 to account for the highly complex systems produced by otherwise simple organisms such as wasps, ants, and termites. As Elliott describes: “A highly complex nest simply self-organises due to the collective input of large numbers of individual termites performing extraordinarily simple actions in response to their local environment” (1). Heylighen provides a succinct description of Grasse’s findings:

The basic idea is that a termite initially drops a little bit of mud in a random place, but that the heaps that are formed in this way stimulate other termites to add to them (rather than start a heap of their own), thus making them grow higher until they touch other similarly constructed columns. The termites do not communicate about who is to do what how or when. Their only communication is indirect: the partially executed work of the ones provides information to the others about where to make their own contribution. In this way, there is no need for a centrally controlled plan, workflow, or division of labor. (7)

Theraulaz and Bonabeau expand on this theorization:

Each individual is a direct source of stimuli for the other individuals. This mechanism opens the way for an indirect coordination of individual activities. The processes that regulate such interactions are not limited to the direct influence of the stimuli produced by individuals. Indeed, each animal’s activity is organizing the environment in such a way that stimulating structures are created; these structures can in turn direct and trigger a specific action from any other individual from the same species that comes into contact with them. (103)

Each individual action on the part of the termites generates stimuli for further action by other individuals within the collective.

What sets stigmergy aside from other forms of collaboration is that it is not directed by a central, controlling intelligence, but rather arises organically as the result of the inputs of a vast array of possible agents. Perhaps the clearest example of this phenomenon in the human – as opposed to arthropod – world can be seen in the realm of the Internet with a particular emphasis on the development of open source software and consumer generated texts such as Wikipedia. Although

a “work-in-progress” always susceptible to revision and re-work-ing, a condition that is exemplified, for example, in the multiplicity of versions enabled by dub-reggae (61-62).

contemporary studies such as those of Francis Heylighen focus on more recent, Internet-based textual phenomena such as Wikipedia, the same logic can be applied to literary production in general. Each textual utterance in the literary tradition is analogous to the individual termite randomly dropping bits of mud around the nest. Through the process of literary influence, however, these individual utterances – be they a line of poetry, a musical performance, or the usage of a literary trope – provide a stimulus for further utterances in which the initial utterance is reconfigured, built upon, or copied. This array of utterances can then recombine into a more complex structure, the accrued corpus of the literary canon here standing in for the termite mounds. Stigmergic collaboration accounts not only for instances of direct influence – where a writer has consciously appropriated or been stimulated by a given work in his or her creation of new, consequential work – but also accounts for the “anxiety of influence” inherent in the literary canon. As Elliott remarks, “In formulating a theory of stigmergic collaboration, it is important to note that the social negotiation that takes place during collaboration may be implicit and unknown to the participants” (2). While individual writers may (or may not) consciously act upon their influences, the larger network of links between individual works – what Julia Kristeva calls intertextuality; what T.S. Eliot calls tradition – is not the product of any specific consciousness, collective or individual. In other words: Schoeck’s mobile has no intelligent designer.

The individual actions of specific writers and artists constitute but the uncoordinated accumulation of mud particles by termites. Certain figures, tropes, and conventions are reused by various writers, and their serial reuse reproduces and reifies them until they become termite towers of their own. An example of this might be seen in the adoption by the genre of fantasy in general of specific elements from the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. Large elements such as the creation of orcs as non-human antagonists²³ and smaller elements such as the idiosyncratic pluralization of “dwarf” as “dwarves” were initiated in Tolkien’s Middle-earth legendarium, but have since become staple elements of fantasy literature not by any specific design but rather from the aggregate of individual borrowings from Tolkien’s work.

The idea of stigmergic collaboration as an undirected intertextuality seems to run counter to the intensely designed assemblages of texts embodied in Product Placement and The Hard Sell. What it does reveal, however, is the undermining of the individual author as the originary producer of textual content. Instead, the locus of artistic production is shifted, along the lines of Bakhtin’s

²³ Certainly Tolkien – a noted scholar of Anglo-Saxon literature – did not coin the term “orc” which comes from an Anglo-Saxon term for “demon” or “evil spirit.” Nonetheless, the specific characterization of orcs which is prevalent in much contemporary fantasy literature comes from his conception of the creatures.

conception of the novelistic author, into the arrangement of certain accrued tropes and conventions. The “originality” of the citing author is not in the creation of material, but in its usage, a usage structured by the the author’s navigation of the proverbial termite mound that is tradition. T.S. Eliot’s conception of tradition therefore approaches Barthes’ description of language in Writing Degree Zero:

History puts in [the writer’s] hands a decorative and compromising instrument, a writing inherited from a previous and different History, for which he is not responsible and yet which is the only one he can use. Thus is born a tragic element in writing, since the conscious writer must henceforth fight against ancestral and all-powerful signs which, from the depths of a past foreign to him, impose Literature on him like some ritual, not like a reconciliation. (92)

Barthes’ description here reflects a Bloomian anxiety regarding the sway inherited discourse holds over the individual writer’s language. Eliot, however, has no interest in fighting against “ancestral and all-powerful signs;” instead, the poet’s “surrender to tradition” is an affirmation of the importance of that tradition and the poet’s place therein and, more pointedly with regards to Eliot’s extensive use of allusion in The Waste Land, to the place of tradition within the individual poet.

Indeed, Eliot distrusted the concept of the individual artist since literature is the product of tradition and society. The act of artistic creation is not an expression of an individual sensibility, but rather the refinement of what has come before. Artistic value is determined in this view by how much it integrates into the whole: “The continuity of a literature is essential to its greatness; it is very largely the function of secondary writers to preserve this continuity, and to provide a body of writings which is not necessarily read by posterity but which plays a great part in forming a link between those writers who continue to be read” (Lucy 17). Thus the concept of literature is not to be defined by individual works, no matter how “great” they are held to be, but is rather defined as a relational structure that holds works together. Indeed, any great work can only be held as such insofar as the work is defined by how it relates to other works through aesthetic comparison (subjective as that may be) or demonstrated influence. Thus Eliot describes “the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written” (“Tradition” 1095). As a result, the artist’s individual voice becomes one voice harmoniously arranged within the greater, stigmergic chorus of tradition.

The Waste Land is then a wholly choral work in which no single voice holds authority but harmonizes with other, different voices and, as such, the author-function is removed from the

substantive text and retreats into the text's organization. A similar process is at work in Product Placement and The Hard Sell, albeit with the key difference that whereas Eliot, the archetypal high modernist, laments the fragmentation of culture, the postmodern turntablists use that fragmentation as a means for ludic celebration, for free play amongst the ruins of contemporary culture.

Nonetheless, in both Eliot as well as DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist, this shoring up of fragments, according to the logic of the Fisher King, whose figure recurs throughout The Waste Land, is an impetus for an imminent rebirth.

C. The History of Hip Hop

1. Origins in dub.

The intertextual nature of postmodern pastiche has its fullest expression in the musical genre of hip hop. Though precisely defining hip hop is somewhat problematic, one of the dominant characteristics of the genre is that it makes use of already extant textual elements (primarily records, but also samples from films, television programs, and commercial advertisements). Moreover, the genre has been driven by economic and technological factors which have led to the supplanting of traditional, “live” instrumentation by the use of playback devices such as turntables and, later, digital samplers to create new works out of old.

The use of pre-recorded sounds as the basis for new compositions was first established by avant-garde, modernist composers – appropriately contemporaneous with Walter Benjamin – who saw the use of sampled recordings as offering the possibility of a wider palette of sounds. In a 1937 address to a Seattle arts society, composer John Cage explained how the use of the phonograph player as an instrument in its own right opened up new avenues of expression for the experimental composer: “With a phonograph, it is now possible to control any one of these sounds and give to it rhythms within or beyond the reach of imagination. Given four phonographs, we can compose and perform a quartet for explosive motor, wind, heartbeat, and landslide” (qtd. in Brewster and Broughton, 279). While the sound of a motor is not a musical performance in and of itself²⁴, it is imbued with musicality through its selection or combination into a larger composition. It is aestheticized by being detached from its referent. The actual motor that has been recorded is no longer present in the recording; only its sound remains as a trace of the displaced motor. Modernist composers saw in this aestheticization of everyday sounds new possibilities for musical composition beyond the conventions of traditional instrumentation. At the same time, however, this usage of technology opened up new possibilities not just in the content of a recorded musical performance, but also in the process of production and these newly latent possibilities would be explored in the context of popular music by genres of dub-reggae and, subsequently, hip hop.

²⁴ The UK television show Top Gear maintains, however, that car engines do indeed constitute musical instruments, at least according to the show’s presenters’ insistence on the aesthetic beauty of engine noise. To demonstrate this belief, the show’s opening theme song (a remix of the Allman Brothers’ “Jessica”) was reconstructed note-for-note from sampled engine noises. James May, the presenter tasked with the project, refused to use autotune software to more closely match the recorded engine noises with the pitches they were intended to represent (“Season 6, Episode 11”).

Whereas the use of pre-existing records by avant-garde modernist composers concentrated on using found sounds as part of some greater composition, the earliest instance of the playing of records as an independent musical performance²⁵ occurs in the Jamaican sound-systems of the 1960s. These sound-systems were mobile speaker complexes used for outside parties. A sound-system operator – an analogue to the disc jockey – would play custom-made instrumental mixes of popular tracks over which he would “toast” improvised lyrics. It is here that the DJ becomes more than just a medium between performer and listener. Because the sound-system technology allowed for the record’s sound to be manipulated (primarily, the bass frequencies would be accentuated and reverb and echo added), the re-performance of the record became a new performance in its own right. The sound-system therefore reinscribed Benjamin’s aura on to the musical performance since it, once again, was returning the (re)performance to a specific moment and place: “When a sound-system played these one-off tracks, with a live deejay ‘riding the riddim’, the audience was hearing something absolutely unique with much the same immediacy as a traditional live performance” (Brewster and Broughton, 126).

Sound-systems represented a communalization of technology: “With a depressed postwar economy, few Jamaicans could afford to purchase recordings on a regular basis, and the enjoyment of music was a communal, public affair. From the 1950s onward, most Kingstonians enjoyed music via these sound systems: mobile outfits playing recorded music in dancehalls or outdoor clearings” (Veal 42). Live dance bands catered more towards the affluent minority and the tourist trade²⁶, while the vast majority of Jamaicans experienced music through the sound systems which grew from the tiny phonograph set up by Coxson Dodd in the basement of parents’ liquor shop in the 1950s to the “sonic powerhouses capable of delivering thousands of watts of power, producing sound that could be heard for miles around” (Veal 42).

More importantly, the recordings presented at these sound systems constitute original, unique (re)performances of prerecorded material by manipulating the sound through various equalization filters and reverb units. Furthermore, many of the records played were not final products as would be sold in a store, but rather so-called “dub plates”. Pressed on to soft acetate vinyl which would only withstand a limited number of playings before decaying, dub-plates constituted test-pressings of recent recordings quickly manufactured, often in only single pressings, by the recording studios for playback at sound systems. While acetate pressings are commonly used

²⁵ Edison’s tone tests notwithstanding. See 118-120.

²⁶ Chang notes that live bands were also undermined by the emigration of live musicians to the United Kingdom and the United States (29).

by American and European record labels for testing by music industry personnel before release, their use in Jamaica enabled producers to create alternate, often instrumental, versions of tracks for preview at sound system parties.

The very first dub composition was created by accident. As Jeff Chang reports, an operator named Ruddy Redwood was making dub-plates for his sound-system, and engineer Byron Smith forgot to raise the level of the vocal track of The Paragon's track "On the Beach," effectively creating an instrumental mix of the track. Redwood took the uncorrected acetate and played it to a dance audience that night (cutting between the instrumental and vocal versions), and the audience responded most positively. When Redwood recommended to producer Duke Reid that the instrumental version could be used as a b-side,

Reid, for his part, realized that he could cut his costs by half or more. One studio session could now produce multiple 'versions.' A single band session with a harmony trio could be recycled as a DJ version for a rapper to rock *patwa* rhymes over, and a dub version in which the mixing engineer himself became the central performer – experimenting with levels, equalization, and effects to alter the feel of the riddim, and break free of the constraints of the standard song. (Chang 30)

Instrumental versions were important to the sound system operators because they enabled toasting DJs to improvise their own stream-of-consciousness vocals on top of the instrumental backing: "the new dub plates, with vocals partially or completely removed, allowed the deejays the sonic space to improvise freely over the rhythm as would a jazz soloist" (Veal 55). The playback of a dub-plate special at a Jamaican sound-system party with the DJ's improvised toasting therefore reinscribes a live "aura" on to the studio performance, which now no longer exists as a final performance circumscribed by its memorialization on the record, but rather as part of a process of continual variation.

Often, the subtracted vocal part remains as a palimpsest on the dub version. The early dub track "Kimble" (1968) by producer Lee "Scratch" Perry illustrates this phenomenon. While the term "dub" is etymologically derived from the word "double"²⁷, the dub versions of songs are, as stated above, far from simple doppelgangers of their originals. The addition and subtraction of various parts as well as the cavernous sonic mask of reverb and echo transforms the original

²⁷ In *Dub*, Michael Veal identifies several other alternate meanings to the term "dub" such as "a style of erotically charged dancing" (as described by Max Romeo) referred to as "rub-a-dub", an emphasis on the rhythm groove of a track, as well as the recording studio process of overdubbing, that is recording a new track on top of an existing recording, often with an implied erasure of a prior element (see Veal 61-64).

performance into something else. Indeed, the multiplicity of different versions of the same original calls into question the privileged position of originality²⁸. In “Kimble,” the original vocal melody remains, but it is hidden behind the sound effects and vocal improvisations of the producer Perry. Because the original version appears to have been recorded on a two-track recorder, elements of the missing vocal performance have bled on to the instrumental track that Perry uses as the backdrop for his bizarre, stream-of-consciousness exclamations. Beneath the ebb and flow of various sound effects such as breaking glass and electric shocks, the original vocal periodically re-emerges as a reminder of its very erasure. It is still faintly recognizable, but it is broken up and fragmented by Perry’s spirited, improvised interjections. In other words, the buried vocal part reveals Perry’s record to be palimpsest in which the original has not quite been erased. The track retains its own history, but it also illustrates the distortion and alteration of that history which distances the version from its original, even while the version still contains the original²⁹.

One phenomenon that resulted from the use of dub-plate acetates by the sound systems was the concept of the “special”. These were unique mixes of tracks in which the featured singers would re-perform their vocal part and customize it to reference and extol a particular sound system. Furthermore, the multiplicity of dub-plates of certain tracks lead to the practice of versioning, “a method of serially recycling recorded material developed by producers desiring to ensure the longest commercial life for a given piece of recorded music despite economic constraints and a limited pool of musicians” (Veal 55). The economic nature of the Jamaican recording industry required bands headed by producers³⁰ to record multiple tracks rapidly in a single session. Consequently, many tracks constituted variations on repeated, generic chord progressions and accompanying basslines. Because the producers – who often were not musicians themselves – retained authorial and economic control over the recorded work, they wanted to extract as much economic advantage as

²⁸ For example, the classic Augustus Pablo track “King Tubby’s Meets Rockers Uptown” (1975) is a dub of the Jacob Miller song “Baby, I Love You So”. The Miller original and the album from whence it came (Who Say Jah No Dread) is known today primarily because of its association with its more famous derivative.

²⁹ Indeed, in some cases, certain vocal fragments were left in place at strategic moments in the track in order as a form of trademarking and means of identifying the dub with its original. As producer Mikey Dread explains: “You don’t want a man to take your riddim and go voice it straight like it’s his – you have to put your trademark in there to stop the pirates!” (qtd. in Veal 66).

³⁰ Veal notes how these various bands would take on different names depending on the label and producer for whom they worked. As producer Clive Chin explains: “Derrick Harriott, right? Him record and produce tune for himself and for the singers. But on the record now, they would be called the Crystallites. Clancy Eccles would use the same set of musicians but him don’t call them the Crystallites, him call them the Dynamics. Beverly’s now, would use the same set of musicians them, probably add one or two different [players] to the lineup – Beverly’s All Stars! At Randy’s, we called them Impact All Stars” (qtd. in Veal 47).

possible from these commodities. As such, the proliferation of different versions enabled a single recording to manifest in a multiplicity of “final” products for retail.

Not only did the process of versioning maximize profits by producing multiple products for the market, it was also motivated by a desire for aesthetic quality control. If a given vocalist’s performance was unsatisfactory, it could be stripped from the track and either replaced by another vocalist or an instrumental performance, or the track could be left just as a naked “riddim” with no substantial melodic lead part. In Michael Veal’s *Dub*, Clive Chin recalls how a certain singer was unable to sing the tune for a track. The engineer, Errol Thompson, suggested “Let’s just rub off him voice and do something with the riddim, ‘cause the riddim did wicked.” Augustus Pablo was in the studio, and, having an idea for a tune to be laid on top of the backing, he asked for a dub plate: “We give him a cut off a the riddim ‘pon a dub plate. Him carry it home and the next couple of days him come back. And it’s two cuts we took with him. I never forget that, two cuts on the same ‘Java’ riddim. And we use both of them cause the two of them is wicked!” (qtd. in Veal 57). The multiplicity of versions, then, allows for a reinscription of improvisation through and with a recorded medium.

The dub engineer then takes the improvisational strategies of the jazz soloist and reapplies them to the mixing board, reconfigured here as a musical instrument in its own right. The parallels between dub and jazz are illustrated by the memory of DJ David Rodigan who was a friend of King Tubby during the 1980s. He recalls being allowed into a previously locked room inside King Tubby’s studio wherein he saw a large collection of jazz records. As quoted in the liner notes to the King Tubby anthology *King Tubby’s In Fine Style* (2004), Rodigan observes: “Suddenly I realized that this was where all Tubby’s inspiration came from. When [he] was mixing he must have been playing jazz in his head – it was that same improvisational thing if you think about it – leaving the main theme, taking it somewhere totally different and then bringing it back” (qtd. in Hendley 8). Veal elaborates on the influence of jazz on King Tubby, citing the engineer’s work as a translation of jazz improvisational strategies to the recording studio mixing board: “All of his associates attest to King Tubby’s deep love of jazz, and it seems plausible that his sensitivity to jazz’s labyrinth of split-second creative decisions was reflected in his refashioning of the multitrack mixing board as an improvisational instrument, as well as in his pioneering of the dub remix as an act of real-time improvisation” (117). The endless variations enabled by the process of dub-reggae are analogous to the transformative variations produced by jazz improvisations on pre-extant compositions. Thus,

the dub engineer reinjects an element of live performance to the decidedly non-live production of tracks in the recording studio.

Process-oriented, dub is not concerned with a final textual object; rather, dub compositions are always in a state of becoming: “[Dub’s] pioneers devised a new system of improvisation that helped transform the recorded popular song from a fixed *product* into a more fluid *process*” (Veal 21). As dub musician and King Tubby collaborator Augustus Pablo states: “Everybody used to say our music is ‘unfinished’” (qtd. in Veal 220). Any given dub track contains within it the germinal possibilities of further versions: “[A] ‘composition’ must now be understood as a composite of its endlessly multiplying, mutating, and potentially infinite elaborations over time” (Veal 57). There is no definitive, normalized version to which the others are alterations; all versions are equally authoritative: “And that’s the beauty, too, of versioning. It’s a democratic principle because it implies that no one has the final say. Everybody has a chance to make a contribution. And no one’s version is treated as Holy Writ” (Hebdige 14). Even though for the purposes of classification within the Culture Industry, producers and mixers such as Lee “Scratch” Perry and King Tubby are assigned authorial credit for these recordings³¹, the multiplicity of dub versions enacts Roland Barthes’ proposed death of the author. The locus of authorial production is shifted from billed artist (usually a vocalist or performing band) from whom the recorded utterances originate to the mixing engineer whose work constitutes a stylized, personal reading of that performance.

2. Early hip hop.

While the Jamaican sound-systems and the subsequent genre of dub-reggae offered an initial challenge to the traditional concepts of authorship and performance, the phonograph record did not truly emerge as a musical instrument until the development of hip hop and turntablism in the 1980s. Hip hop came into being when the Jamaican sound-system concept was brought to the streets of the Bronx in the 1970s by the Jamaican émigré Kool Herc. Born Clive Campbell in Kingston, Jamaica, Campbell emigrated to New York with his parents in 1967. Campbell acclimatized himself to

³¹ It should be noted, however, that this classification is largely retroactive. The dub versions themselves were issued – often as singles – under the name of the performing artist (who may or may not have been erased from the track), but for their wider, contemporary reissue they are anthologized and sold under the name of their producer and/or mixer. This process seems to be commercially minded as the authorial name “King Tubby” carries more brand recognition today than, for example, the original credited artists such as Rupie Edwards, Vin Gordon, or Ronnie Davis.

American culture by listening to eclectic mix of records in order to lose his accent³². Nonetheless, his Caribbean roots were instrumental in bringing the Jamaican sound-system to the Bronx:

New York, specifically Brooklyn, enjoyed large Jamaican-style mobile sound systems before Herc started his parties, but he definitely brought several Jamaican elements to bear. For one, the highly influential rhyming style he and his MCs (Masters of Ceremony) used was clearly based on Jamaican toasting rather than on the elaborate couplets of the rapping disco DJs. He used an echo chamber, another Jamaican staple. Also, he was ready, in a way reminiscent of dub selectors, to treat records not as separate songs but as tools for composition. And of course, he prized bass and volume. (Brewster and Broughton 232).

The importation of these specifically Jamaican elements into the block parties of the Bronx laid the groundwork for the emergence of hip hop towards the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Moreover, while the emphasis on bass and volume as well as the inclusion of overlaid rapping points towards a definite stylistic influence of dub upon early hip hop, a more fundamental – formal and procedural – influence can be seen in the way that the Jamaican sound-system and dub-reggae both made use of previous recordings as the basis for new compositions improvised on the recording and playback technology itself.

Hip hop expanded on dub's manipulation of pre-existing records by focusing on one particular moment in the record: the break. Early hip hop such as that produced by pioneers like Grandmaster Flash, Kool Herc, Double Dee and Steinski, and others, focused on the break. Etymologically derived from jazz terminology, the break refers to "the part of a dance record where the melody takes a rest and the drummer cuts loose, this being the explosive rhythmic section of a song" (Brewster & Broughton 229). In order to maintain the energy of the dance-floor, DJs tried to extend these moments as long as possible. At a 1973 party in the Bronx, the Jamaican émigré Kool Herc was the first DJ to string together a series of breaks into one coherent sequence. In Brewster and Broughton's history of the DJ, Last Night a DJ Saved My Life, Kool Herc recalls the evening: "I would give people what I know they wanted to hear. And I'm watching the crowd and I was seeing everybody on the sidelines waiting for particular breaks in the records. ... I said, let me put a couple of these records together, that got breaks in them. I did it. *Boom! bom bom bom*. I try to make it

³² As Chang notes, Campbell's musical influences were learned from his father, Keith Campbell, who "was a devoted record collector, buying not only reggae, but American jazz, gospel, and country. They heard Nina Simone and Louis Armstrong and Nat King Cole, even Nashville country crooner Jim Reeves. 'I remember listening to Jim Reeves all the time,' Clive says. 'I was singing these songs and emulating them to the fullest. That really helped me out, changing my accent, is singing to the records'" (68).

sound like a record. Place went berserk. Loved it” (230). To Afrika Bambaataa, another early hip hop pioneer, the breakbeat is recognized by the audience and DJ alike as a moment of aural *jouissance*: “The break beat is that part that you look for in a record that lets your God-self just get wild” (Scratch). The problem, however, is that the break is only a brief moment, but the role of the DJ is to extend that moment for as long as possible. Again, Afrika Bambaataa describes this function: “As soon as that breakbeat leaves, you say ‘Ah, it’s only a minute, it’s only 30 seconds,’ you know, you want some more. That’s when the hip hop DJs come in and start making that beat, that breakbeat, that stripped down funk, span longer so you could just get crazier and crazier and crazier on the dance floor” (Scratch).

Later, Grandmaster Flash, an immigrant from Barbados (further cementing the Caribbean connection), refined the technique so that breaks could be strung together without losing a beat and while also preserving a constant tempo. Inspired by a disco DJ’s seamless extended mix of a track produced with two copies of the same record, Flash “realized that he could apply the same technique to the music he really loved – the breaks Herc was spinning. Flash wanted to lift these slices of recorded time out of the progression of time, to re-enclose a song’s break in a perfect new loop” (Chang 112). In more concrete terms, understanding that dancers needed a constant beat, Flash saw that Herc’s breakbeats abruptly switched tempos when they switched from one break to the next; however, the tempo could be preserved by extending the break through repeated repetition. With constant practice and experimentation, he evolved a technique whereby he could achieve this effect. He explains in Brewster and Broughton:

“I called my style ‘Quick Mix Theory’, which is taking a section of music and cutting it on time, back to back, in thirty seconds or less. It was basically to take a particular passage of music and rearrange the arrangement by way of rubbing the record back and forth or cutting the record, or back-spinning the record.” His supporting “Clock Theory” involved marking the record with a line on the label like a hand on a clock face to show where a chosen passage began. This let him speedily rewind the part of the song he wanted to repeat. “I had to figure out how to recapture the beginning of the break without picking up the needle, because I tried doing it that way and I wasn’t very good at it. And that’s how I came up with the Clock Theory: you mark a section of the record, and then you gotta just count how many revolutions go by.” (239; see also Chang 112-113)

The innovation of Grandmaster Flash transformed the break into a loop and thus removes the quoted musical passage from its original temporal position. Suspended in time, the break's progress is deferred, continually interrupted by its repeated return to the beginning.

This moment was the point at which the turntable, within hip hop at least, was turned “from a piece of sound reproduction technology into a musical instrument” (Batey 5). Through the juxtaposition of quoted passages from a plurality of previous works via the turntable, the resulting assemblage is a new composition in its own right. An example of this practice is illustrated in the Double Dee and Steinski composition “Lesson 3: The History of Hip hop Mix” (1986). Beginning ironically with an announcer declaring, “We gonna do a song that you never heard before,” the track immediately launches into a loop of the introductory drum solo from Led Zeppelin’s “The Crunge” (1973), which itself is a pastiche of 1970s funk: a white, British reading of African-American music. What follows is a stream of breaks from various sources such as musical songs, classic hip hop tracks, and the ubiquitous funk. The disparate source material is normalized into a common time and tempo to create a seamless concatenation of musical quotations. By making the links between the elements as subtle as possible, the DJs in these instances are attempting to erase their authorial presence by making the mixes between tracks invisible so that the listening audience cannot tell where one record ends and the other begins, even though they are aware of the assembled nature of the composition. As such, the DJs’ performance in this case is demonstrated in its very inconspicuousness.

Aside from being strung together, breaks can also be looped so that the momentary transition of the break in its original context can be suspended and repeated endlessly. The process of looping therefore changes the musical significance of the break. In its original instance, the drum break is used as a bridge between two sections of a performance. One of the most sampled and most recognizable breaks is quoted from James Brown’s 1971 single “Funky Drummer”³³. In its original context, it is explicitly signed as transitional section. In the spoken preface to the eight-bar drum solo, Brown issues some instructions to his band: “Fellas, one more time, I wanna give the drummer some of this funky soul we got here. You don’t have to do no soloing, brother, just keep what you got. Don’t turn it loose, ‘cause it’s a mother. When I count to four, I want everybody to lay out let the drummer go. And when I count to four, I want you to come back in.” The break

³³ “Funky Drummer” was originally released as a single (the lengthy piece was cut in half and placed on both sides of the 45) and was not included on an album release until 1985’s *In A Jungle Groove*, which, as noted above, was a compiled reissue of some of Brown’s most sampled work from the early 70s intended to capitalize on the newfound popularity resulting from the use of his music in hip hop records.

therefore serves a linear, teleological function that allows the performance to progress from one section to the next. In the case of “Funky Drummer”, this division of parts is important as the rest of the song consists almost entirely of an almost constantly repeated one-chord funk vamp: the break there serves as a literal break from what otherwise would be monotony.

When the break is looped by a sampling DJ, however, this progress is deferred: instead of moving forward, the break is continually brought back to its point-of-origin. To answer James Brown’s perennial question, one can be taken to the bridge, but the bridge itself leads to nowhere, creating in effect a permanent liminality. In his musicological and ethnographical survey of sample-based hip hop, Joseph Schloss describes the radical change effected by the simple act of looping:

As breaks are torn from their original context and repeated, they are reconceived – by performer and listener alike – as circular, even if their original harmonic or melodic purposes are linear. In other words, melodies become riffs. The end of a phrase is juxtaposed with the beginning in such a way that the listener begins to anticipate the return to the beginning as the end approaches. Theme and variation, rather than progressive development become the order of the day. (33)

The looped break is emblematic of the postmodern refutation of modernity’s conception of time. In the postmodern view, time is no longer progressively linear, but instead is a fragmented linearity. In his discussion of African-American music genres, Russell Potter describes postmodern conceptions of time “[a]s much ‘not yet’ as ‘not *then*,’ decidedly *after* a kind of time that constitutes itself as progressive (even if that time is still ticking); perhaps running in grand Viconian cycles of eternal return, perhaps preferring the kind of local interruption of time that takes place in a musical *sample* of previous recordings” (3; emphasis in original). The loop thus takes cyclicity as its temporal model and calls into question the very idea of progress. Similarly, Juliana Snapper observes how the formal techniques of hip hop and turntablism serve to disrupt the linear conception of time and defer the teleology of the hitherto linear groove by emphasizing its circularity: “Turntable techniques situate recorded musical performances in ways that consistently disrupt the forward motion of the record and the progress of sound playback. Contrasting versions of the same sound sequence in layered counterpoint disrupt a notion of simultaneity along a corridor of blank homogenous time” (13).

The loop then removes the sample in question from its indexed position within the teleology of its original context and suspends that moment potentially indefinitely. The repetition of the loop signifies a continual return to that particular moment such that the otherwise ephemeral sound –

always progressing to the next sound-moment on the recording in a state of continual self-erasure – is arrested in a state of recurrent (re)presence within the sampling text. Through looping, the sampler removes the sampled performance from its real-time existence (albeit a “real-time” that has already been suspended from history by virtue of its capture within the record), and when the loop is put into musical dialogue with other similarly dislocated extracts, the result is a collage of discrete sound-moments that, by layering discrete, historicized sound-moments, constitutes a reworking of time from linear progression to cyclical simultaneity in which the past – indeed a plurality of different pasts – and present are held together as one.

The use of looping in the “live” performances of block party DJs such as Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash is an irruption of the studio’s manipulation of performances after the fact – after their completion and circumscription by and within the record – in the context of a new live performance. Indeed, it would seem that such constructions would be more at home in the decidedly un-real-time of the studio, yet in early hip hop, the translation of the live DJ to the recording studio was problematic. Whereas the dub-reggae played on the Jamaican sound-systems replaced the live band with a DJ playing records, early hip hop – in its recorded instances, at least – reversed this process as live house bands emulated the DJ’s pilfered loops. The most visible example of this phenomenon is demonstrated in the seminal hip hop composition, “Rapper’s Delight” (1979), recorded by the hitherto unknown group the Sugar Hill Gang for the independent label Sugar Hill Records. Its fifteen minute running time notwithstanding, “Rapper’s Delight” became a Top 40 hit and propelled hip hop from a live phenomenon of the streets into mainstream recorded culture: “It became the best-selling twelve-inch single ever pressed. At one point, 75 000 copies were selling a week” (Chang 131). Despite its popular appeal, the success of “Rapper’s Delight” evoked skepticism amongst the hip hop community. A 19 year old Chuck D – who would later become the front man of Public Enemy – heard the track and later recalled, “I did not think it was conceivable that there would be such a thing as a hip hop record” (qtd. in Chang 130). Chuck D’s statement parallels the truism quoted by Marshall McLuhan and attributed to jazz aficionados that “recorded jazz is ‘as stale as yesterday’s news’” (*Understanding* 245). In both cases, there is a concern with the translation of a live – that is to say, oral/aural – art form into a recorded medium. To McLuhan, jazz – which emerged as a distinct genre around the same time as the development of wireless communication – constituted a reemergence of oral, performative culture in a written world, and a similar dynamic can be seen in the sound-systems of both Jamaica and New York. To put such performances on record is to circumscribe the improvisational, participatory tendencies latent

in the form. In “Rapper’s Delight” this transformation is very literal. The track itself is based on a bassline lifted from Chic’s disco hit of the same year, “Good Times”, yet the musical content of the composition was not produced by a DJ but rather the house band for the Sugar Hill label³⁴.

Whereas DJs had previously constructed and executed their mixes to create an appearance of a cohesive, single performance as if it were played by a band, this representation was itself represented by the Sugar Hill house band. As such, the oft-cited point-of-origin for hip hop is in actual fact a simulacrum of the genre. Moreover, by relocating the focus from DJ and dancers to the rapping MC, “Rapper’s Delight” made hip hop “a more passive experience than ever” (Chang 132). This process carried on in the Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five track “Superappin” in which the venerable DJ was excluded from the recording and replaced by a house band emulating his quotational mixes.

The replacement of DJs with house bands inaugurated a decline in the centrality of the DJ to hip hop. As Afrika Bambaataa stated, it “left the DJ behind” (Scratch), and the emphasis was instead focused on the rapping MC. The gradual erasure of the DJ was a consequence of the burgeoning mainstream success of the genre: “Once there were records to be produced and stars to be created, the spotlight was firmly on the visible and charismatic MC onstage, not on the guy behind the decks” (Brewster and Broughton 277). Furthermore, the development of digital sampling technology rendered the DJ’s use of records and turntables obsolete: “MCs didn’t need a DJ to make records, just a studio and a producer. Most of the first wave of rap records were made using session musicians rather than turntables, and fairly soon there was easy-to-use sampling technology which meant that anyone could loop up a sample and recreate the effects of a quick-mixing DJ” (277). It was through this new technology that the hip hop DJ entered the studio and transformed into the hip hop producer. As Schloss explains, the earliest digital samplers that were introduced to the market in the mid-1980s were intended to “expand the tonal palette of the keyboard synthesizer” (34) somewhat along the lines of the logic articulated above by the avant-garde musicians of the early twentieth century such as John Cage. A 1986 issue of Electronic Musician magazine defined the practice as follows: “Sampling allows the musician to record sounds from other instruments, nature, or even non-musical sources, and transpose and play them chromatically on a standard piano or organ keyboard. This new and emerging technology greatly expands the creative horizons of the modern composers” (qtd. in Schloss 34-35). Later models

³⁴ Brewster and Broughton also observe that the lyrical content of the track was not original to the Sugar Hill Gang rappers, but rather drawn from the raps heard at the Sparkle club where Sugar Hill member Big Bank Hank worked as a doorman (261).

went further: rather than just supplying new tones for melodies beyond a keyboard's factory presets, the SP-12 introduced by E-mu systems in 1986 applied the same principle to rhythmic, percussive sounds. Essentially the combination of a sampler and a drum machine, the SP-12 enabled producers to record individual drum sounds that could then be manipulated and sequenced into rhythmic patterns to create an artificial drumbeat, albeit one based on "real" sounds (Schloss 35). When this technology was adopted by hip hop producers, however, it was used to emulate and replace the turntable work of the hip hop DJ: "Indeed, the story of sampling is a tale of technology catching up with the DJ, of equipment being created that could do faster, more accurately and more easily what a DJ had long been able to" (Brewster and Broughton 267). Moreover, this technology made it easier for producers to make use of pre-existing material: "While the new technology was intended to shift the drum machine from synthesized, preloaded drum sounds to more realistic 'live' sounds, hip hop artists were soon using the machine to sample not their own drumming, but the sound of their favorite recorded drummers, such as Clyde Stubblefield from James Brown's band, or Zigaboo Modeliste of the Meters" (Schloss 35). The use of individual drum sounds very quickly expanded to the sampling of entire beats and even melodic phrases which could be looped and used as backing tracks for rap compositions. With digital sampling technology, the studio producer could instantly create assemblages of loops that hitherto had to be constructed in real-time by a DJ's manipulation of a record on a turntable.

Queens-based producer Marley Marl is credited with being the first to use this new technology in this way. During a 1982 remix session, Marley Marl accidentally recorded a drum sound on to an E-mu Emulator while trying to capture a vocal part and straightaway realized the machine's capabilities for rhythmic composition. As he explained to hip hop theorist and Public Enemy associate Harry Allen: "I could take any drum sound from any old record, put it in here and get that old drummer sound" (qtd. in Brewster and Broughton 267). Chang's history of hip hop, Can't Stop Won't Stop, cites this moment as an improvement of hip hop style which enabled rappers to perform over more organic sounding rhythms as compared to the mechanical beats of drum machines: "No more tinny, programmed DMX or Linn³⁵ drums, which stiffened the beat and reduced most rappers to sing-songy rhyming" (256).

However, to focus on the stylistic changes produced by this technological innovation elides the more fundamental and conceptual transformations it effected in hip hop's engagement with the history of music and sound recordings. Whereas the initial promise of sampling technology – as

³⁵ Drum machines manufactured by Oberheim and Linn Electronics, respectively.

envisioned by the equipment manufacturers – was to further the progress of music by offering new sounds to composers, its usage by hip hop artists, as initiated by Marley Marl, allowed music production to engage and incorporate the past. Bobbito Garcia, a DJ from the Rock Steady Crew, identifies this pilfering of the past as a condition of black history: “It was always a culture of borrow and take because it was a culture that was founded on a lack of resources” (Copyright Criminals). Potter goes further to suggest that the very practice of sampling constituted a re-emergence of black (musical) history from a silent, subaltern state to a more visible presence within the culture and that, through sampling, artists re-engage with their own antecedents that, as indeed was the case with James Brown and George Clinton, had been whitewashed from “oldies” radio. Citing the practice of sampling old records as “genealogical *research*” (emphasis in the original), Potter states: “In the face of this homogenized, safety-sealed version of history, hip hop brings back the musical past that many white and middle-class listeners have conveniently forgotten” (117-118). Thus, hip hop becomes an archival project, but it is not merely a library of ossified textual artifacts; rather, those records are reanimated such that they are no longer simply memorials of long completed – and thus, dead – performances, a past looked back on by and from the present. Instead, sampling enables continual re-performances of textual utterances in which the past and present are brought together into a continuous now.

Of course, such theoretical and conceptual reasonings are not necessarily the prime motives for the usage of old sounds; there are more material reasons. While critics might deride the use of sampling as “a lazy way of songwriting,” as entertainment lawyer Anthony Berman describes it in Copyright Criminals, the citation of old records is also done for specific aesthetic qualities seen in the old material. For example, when explaining why he uses certain records in his compositions, DJ Premier of the group Gang Starr cites the nostalgia for sounds associated with his childhood:

A lot of the groups that I was brought up on from the Commodores to Earth, Wind and Fire to Al Green, Curtis Mayfield, all that, the sounds they did back then, they don't do 'em like that no more. They started getting into the computer generation and newer equipment and that style died and the funk just didn't sound like it use to. There's something about that beat, it moves you in a certain way before you even hear the vocals. (Scratch).

What DJ Premier articulates here is a nostalgia for old sounds and styles now rendered obsolete by newer technologies and recording techniques. By preferring these particular sounds, hip hop and sample-based music refutes modernist concepts of progress through technological improvement.

Nonetheless, throughout the late 1980s, the technological improvement of the digital sampler opened up the possibility of making records with records, and many hip hop artists took advantage of the new avenues of musical production enabled by this technology. In Freedom of Expression, Kembrew McLeod described late 1980s hip hop as “a sort of Wild West, where there was a creative window that had been forced open by hip hop artists, a magical time when surprises were abundant on records” (67-68). The new compositional possibilities opened up by the sampler were perhaps best demonstrated in the dense sonic collages assembled by the Bomb Squad, the production team for the group Public Enemy who married the new technologically feasible sound with a shift into radical politics. To accompany rapper Chuck D’s stridently political verses, the Bomb Squad layered dense walls of sounds built up out of multiple tiny samples. Chang presents a detailed description of the Bomb Squad’s compositional process with regards to the track “Rebel Without a Pause” featured on the group’s 1988 album It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back:

Hank [Shocklee] and Chuck [D] pulled out James Brown’s “Funky Drummer,”³⁶ the not-yet-famous Clyde Stubblefield break, and the JB’s 1970 single, “The Grunt, Part 1,” which had an elemental, squawking intro reminiscent of “Blow Your Head.”³⁷ On their Ensoniq Mirage sampler, they grabbed two seconds of Catfish Collins’s guitar, Bobby Byrd’s piano and, most important, Robert McCollough’s sax squeal, sampled it at a low rate to grit it up, and then pounded it into ambulance claustrophobia. Underneath, Flavor Flav made the Akai drum machine boom and stutter. The only release came in a break that layered a live go-go groove, funky guitar, a horn-section blast and the drums from Jefferson Starship’s “Rock Music.” When Terminator X transformed Chubb Rock’s shout, “Rock and roll!”, “Rebel” staked a claim to more than soul. The effect was hypnotic and relentless. (260)

The Bomb Squad envisioned their artistic process as a form of production-line assembly with each group member bringing in individual samples to add to the mix in a jazz-like jam session. The crowded arrangement of multiple snippets blend together to form a veritable wall of noise, but this noise, not unlike the *musique concrète* of the early twentieth century, is (re)aestheticized, leading Funkadelic’s George Clinton to declare, “They made noise sound good the way Jimi Hendrix did with the feedback on the guitar” (Copyright Criminals). To Public Enemy, this noise represented the chaotic, violent existence of inner city life: a musical approximation of black life. As Hank

³⁶ Also prominently featured in the Public Enemy track “Fight The Power” used in the Spike Lee film Do The Right Thing (1989) and included on the group’s 1990 album, Fear Of A Black Planet.

³⁷ A 1973 funk track by Fred Wesley and The JBs.

Shocklee explains: “What we wanted to create was that kind of, like, reality record. You heard it out there on the streets and what you heard out in the streets was now back on the record again”

(Copyright Criminals). Yet, just as Public Enemy and other artists were exploring the new compositional possibilities opened up by this new technology, legal challenges to the practice of sampling threatened to curtail the generation of new works from old.

3. Sampling: legal and aesthetic challenges.

The watershed moment for the copyright regime’s restraint of hip hop’s use of samples was the 1991 lawsuit brought by Grand Upright Music, Ltd. against Warner Bros. Records Inc. The lawsuit resulted from a track by Biz Markie, “Alone Again”, that was built around a musical quotation of Irish singer-songwriter Gilbert O’Sullivan’s 1972 hit “Alone Again (Naturally)”. In his ruling, Judge Kevin Duffy famously invoked the Ten Commandments edict “Thou shalt not steal” and even referred the defendants – Biz Markie, his producers, and his label – for criminal prosecution for theft (“Grand Upright”). The litigation resulted not in the assignment of royalties for the track to O’Sullivan and his publishers, but rather in an injunction to prevent the further distribution of the track³⁸. Indeed, “Alone Again” is unavailable on the current reissue of the 1991 album, I Need A Haircut, on which it was originally included. The larger outcome of the case against Biz Markie as well as other, less high-profile lawsuits against such artists as De La Soul and the Justified Ancients of Mu Mu was a chilling effect on sampling as an artistic practice.

Because of sample clearance fees and the fiduciary penalties for violating copyright laws, sampling was simply no longer economically viable for record labels. For example, in Copyright Criminals hip hop historian Greg Tate cites De La Soul’s 1989 album 3 Feet High and Rising as an early instance of an artist being constrained by sample laws. The group lost most of its royalties for the record to the sampled artists, notably The Turtles whose “You Showed Me” was sampled in “Transmitting Live From Mars” and prompted a lawsuit against the De La Soul’s independent record label, Tommy Boy. From the late eighties throughout the nineties, the legal departments of record companies cracked down on sampling in hip hop records. Even in 1989, the Beastie Boys’ Paul’s Boutique cost over \$250 000 in sample clearances, which McLeod states “turned out to be a

³⁸ The Law Department of UCLA’s Music Copyright Infringement Resource speculates that O’Sullivan et al’s lawsuit was not simply motivated by a desire for monetary compensation for the appropriation of their musical work, “but rather by the potentially demeaning association inherent in defendant’s use of key music and words closely identified in the ears of the public with the plaintiff’s song.”

bargain, because if those licenses were cleared today the album would be far too expensive to release” (89). Indeed, such punitive financial arrangements led Public Enemy’s Harry Allen to declare:

Records like [Public Enemy’s] It Takes A Nation Of Millions [To Hold Us Back] and 3 Feet High And Rising, ... they’re kind of like artifacts from an earlier time that couldn’t exist today. They’re just financially untenable, unworkable records. We would have to sell them for, I don’t know, a hundred and fifty-nine dollars just to pay all the royalties from publishers making claims for one hundred percent on your compositions. (qtd. in McLeod 88-89)

To avoid such problems, hip hop composers have resorted to various strategies such as disguising samples through electronic manipulation, taking samples from obscure recordings or minor or defunct labels that are unlikely to sue, or, in a twist on the turntablist mimicry of “Rapper’s Delight”, reconstructing the cited sample with live musicians in the studio. Indeed, though it may initially seem more time-consuming and logistically problematic, this latter strategy was employed by Public Enemy for their 1995 composition “He Got Game:”

When Public Enemy wanted to sample from Buffalo Springfield’s “For What It’s Worth” for the title song in Spike Lee’s He Got Game, the fees were outrageous. Chuck D told me it was cheaper to mimic the song’s instrumentation in the studio and wheel in Stephen Stills, who originally wrote the song, and have him re-sing it. This way, they only had to pay royalties to Stills, the songwriter, and not deal with Atlantic Records, which released the Buffalo Springfield recording and demanded a steep price³⁹. (McLeod 87)

³⁹ Sampling a sound recording involves two distinct royalty fees that need to be paid. The mechanical royalty fee refers to the sound recording itself and is generally owned by the issuing record company. The publishing fee, on the other hand, is assigned not the physical recording, but to the song in its abstract form and is theoretically owned by the songwriter(s) in question. For copyright purposes, this fee is assigned to a music publishing company set up by the industry. For example, a song written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney and included on The Beatles (1969) would have its mechanical royalties controlled by EMI records, but its publishing royalties (as of 2009) controlled by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.

Because publishing rights are more often than not controlled by corporate entities on behalf of the artists, it is very possible for control of the song to be alienated from its songwriter(s). The example of The Beatles illustrates this phenomenon. In 1969, the company that controlled songs by Lennon and McCartney, Northern Songs, was bought by the conglomerate ATV Music Ltd., which was subsequently bought by Michael Jackson in 1985 (for a full description of the complicated legal maneuvering involved in the purchase, see Robert Hilburn’s 1985 article for the Los Angeles Times, “The Long And Winding Road”).

Since the rights to songs in their ideal form (i.e. the publishing rights) and the rights to their material actualization in a record were controlled by different companies, anomalous situations can result with the usage of such music. Although the Beatles, through EMI and Apple Corps., have refused usage of their recordings in commercial advertisements, Sony/ATV Music Publishing, the joint venture between Michael Jackson and Sony, has licensed the songs for commercials. In order to go around the protestations of the record company, advertisers have resorted, in a curious

The ultimate effect of the sample remains the same: Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth" is still being cited and interpolated into the composition, albeit in a way to avoid incurring the wrath of the record company that controls the earlier recording of the song.

Paradoxically, it becomes easier – legally and financially – to copy the work in full (as a cover version) than to use an extract from the work in a new work. Indeed, Biz Markie was hammered for his unauthorized use of a brief extract from Gilbert O'Sullivan's song, but when a similar case was brought against the rap group 2 Live Crew in 1994 for reworking Roy Orbison's hit "Pretty Woman" it was ruled not to be an infringement of copyright as it constituted not a quotation of the work, but a fair use parody (McLeod 83). Another example of this phenomenon is illustrated in Little Roger & The Goosebumps' reworking Led Zeppelin's "Stairway To Heaven" in which the original song's lyrics were replaced with the lyrics to the theme song from the TV show Gilligan's Island. The track was released in March 1978 as "Gilligan's Island (Stairway)"⁴⁰ and this very early instance of a "mash-up" met an instant legal challenge from Led Zeppelin. Within five weeks of its release, not only was the track removed from the market, but all remaining copies of the record were ordered to be destroyed. As Tommy Boy's Tom Silverman notes, "You have the right to cover any record as long as you don't change the words. You can cover 'Stairway To Heaven,' but if you try to change the words and make it 'Stairway To Gilligan's Island,' which somebody tried to do, Led Zeppelin will shut you down in two seconds" (Copyright Criminals). As Siva Vaidhyanathan points out, this practice seems completely counter-intuitive: "It's cheaper and easier, and more predictable if you want to cover somebody's song entirely than if you want to take three seconds of somebody's song. That doesn't make any sense" (Copyright Criminals).

What the example of Led Zeppelin and Little Roger & The Goosebumps (as well as Gilbert O'Sullivan's postulated objection to Biz Markie noted above) illustrates is that control of samples is not solely motivated by financial demands, but also by a desire to control the work once it has been offered up for public consumption. Many artists, for example, refuse to allow samples based on their distaste for *how* the cited sample is or will be used. For example, De La Soul's Posdnuop recalls being told by the record company to avoid sampling works by George Harrison: "George

echo of samplers reconstructing samples with live musicians, to using cover versions. For example the British indie-rock group Gomez's version of "Getting Better" was used in a 1999 commercial for electronics giant Philips.

⁴⁰ The song was reissued in 2000 with the title "Stairway To Gilligan's Island". Interestingly, it was featured in some live versions of The Hard Sell, although it was not played in the performance at the Hollywood Bowl as memorialized on the DVD analyzed later in this study. Nonetheless, its inclusion on the tour that followed appears to sustain the implied critique of Led Zeppelin's reaction to samplers that occurs when the instrumental cover of "Whole Lotta Love" is used in Product Placement.

Harrison don't like rap, don't mess with him. Like, we actually had a list of people not to touch" (*Copyright Criminals*). Similarly, Aretha Franklin denied Kanye West usage of an excerpt from her "Spirit In The Dark" for his "School Spirit" unless all profanity was excised from the track ("Kanye West"), and Bob James initially denied the Souls of Mischief from using a sample from his theme to the television show *Taxi* because, in the words of the Souls of Mischief producer Domino, "it wasn't how he wanted it to sound" (qtd. in Schloss 180).

Nonetheless, as much as the recording industry as claimed sampling as a form of musical theft, it has also viewed sampling as an alternate revenue stream for record labels. Just as the multiplicity of versions enabled dub producers to create multiple music products for sale from a single recording, sample licensing enables music publishers and record labels to gain revenue from both the original recording and its citation in a sampling text. Referring to the usage of Rick James' "Superfreak" in the MC Hammer hit "U Can't Touch This", Tommy Boy head Tom Silverman stated ironically, "Rick James' biggest record was by MC Hammer" (*Copyright Criminals*). A similar statement was made by Richard Ashcroft of the British rock group The Verve when The Rolling Stones claimed royalties for a sample of an orchestral cover of "The Last Time" used in The Verve's 1997 hit "Bittersweet Symphony". While The Verve had negotiated for the sample's clearance, after the track's release as a single it was determined that they used too much of the sample and that rather than being split, all royalties for the song would be given to Mick Jagger and Keith Richards (or rather the publishing company acting on their behalf). Jagger and Richards were also credited⁴¹ as the songwriters for "Bittersweet Symphony." An embittered Ashcroft later sarcastically declared The Verve's song to be "the best song Jagger and Richards have written in twenty years" (qtd. in

⁴¹ The songwriting credits for the track as listed in the liner notes to the album *Urban Hymns* illustrate the strange, convoluted legal nature of the track. Whereas the rest of the album's tracks are credited simply to singer Richard Ashcroft (with three exceptions: two tracks "Written by The Verve" and one "Written by [guitarist Nick] McCabe / The Verve) with production credit assigned to variant combinations of The Verve, Chris Potter, and Youth, "Bittersweet Symphony" is credited – rather lengthily – as follows:

Performed by The Andrew Oldham Orchestra
 Produced by Andrew Loog Oldham courtesy of The Decca Record Company Ltd.
 Vocals by Richard Ashcroft
 "Bittersweet Symphony" written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards
 Published by Abeko Music Inc.
 Lyrics by Richard Ashcroft
 Produced by Youth / The Verve
 Additional production and mixing by Chris Potter (Liner notes to *Urban Hymns* 3)

Although the sample in question only involves a portion of the track's string accompaniment, these credits imply an erasure of The Verve's contribution to the track (the band themselves provided the majority of the song's musical elements), devaluing the band's work to a simple co-production credit – a credit subordinated to Andrew Loog Oldham's prior production of the orchestral cover of "The Last Time". The credits for the earlier single release of the track, however, credit it to Ashcroft and state that the song "contains elements from" the Rolling Stones track, a crediting practice more in line with how samples are usually credited in released works.

McLeod 101). Moreover, because they now no longer had authorial control over the composition, “Bittersweet Symphony” was licenced – against the wishes of Ashcroft and The Verve, for usage in a Nike commercial.

In addition to the revenue stream opened up by the licensing of samples, the proliferation of DJ culture has created also a market for compilations of sampled tracks as evidenced by the Dusty Grooves and Ultimate Breaks and Beats series in which various obscure tracks are compiled and sold based on their suitability for sampling. These compilations are derided by established DJs as an unwelcome shortcut around the time-consuming ritual of digging. As the hip hop producer Specs explains: “People are putting out breakbeat records and stuff and that’s not really cool ... ‘cause it makes [finding records to sample] super-easy. All these kids in the suburbs can sound like they’re just the greatest producer in the world. They got all these breaks that everyone else has. So it’s just weird. I don’t think it should be that easy. It’s not meant to be easy, you know?” (qtd. in Schloss 121-122). By undermining the value of digging for sounds, break compilations violate the archival project inherent in hip hop by precluding the sampler from gaining the musical education derived from tirelessly searching through stacks of records. These compiled breaks prevent the sampler from exercising his or her judgement of taste upon the source material. Moreover, by resorting to preselected sources, the sampler who uses break records avoids the serendipity of just stumbling across a usable piece of music in the basement of record store. A disembodied voice in the early DJ Shadow work “Back To Back Breaks” (1993) admonishes the producer: “Alright, now I don’t want to hear Ultimate Breaks volumes one through ninety-nine. No Bluenote breaks, no Bulldog breaks. Just pull something out of the crate, man. Yeah, that’s good; I like that.” To just “pull something out of the crate” is to engage in a kind of sampling roulette. Furthermore, the crate – referring to the milk crates in which DJs store their vinyl collections – is a manifestation of the sampling record collector’s archive of sounds. A break record, however, is someone else’s crate, and its use represents the “biting” of someone else’s style. If DJs’ authorial presence is defined by their location and selection of source material, this authoring is then deferred when it depends instead on an other’s selection. Thus, when the listener states “Yeah, that’s good”, this statement suggests a communion of two different tastes, as if to state “I like what you like,” a communion which is rendered illusory when what is being liked has already been pre-selected.

Nonetheless, break records are indicative of how sampling has created new interest in forgotten works and artists for their own sake (and not just for the sake of further sampling). In the 1988 song “Talking All That Jazz”, the Brooklyn based rap group Stetsasonic affirmed hip hop’s

archival function: “Tell the truth / James Brown was old / ‘Til Eric and Rak⁴² came out with ‘I Got Soul’ / Rap brings back old R&B / And if we would not / People could have forgot” (qtd. in Brewster & Broughton 267). Indeed, James Brown’s funk-oriented middle period experienced a resurgence in the wake of hip hop’s 1980s emergence, which resulted in the 1986 release of In The Jungle Groove, a compilation of several originally rather obscure, but now often sampled, funk tracks from 1969 to 1971. Although marketed on the cachet given to them by virtue of being sampled, the tracks were still nonetheless constrained under Polydor’s assertion of copyright.

Similarly, a compilation issued by the De Wolfe music library⁴³ illustrates the record industry’s confusing endorsement and condemnation of sampling. Perhaps the ultimate expression of the commodification of music, library music refers to production music made by salaried composers and musicians to be used at will in film, television, and radio by subscribing companies. It is also an often sampled genre, and vintage library records from the late sixties and early seventies are an extensive vein of breaks for samplers. Responding to this new, hip hop fuelled interest in their product, De Wolfe began in the 2000s to reissue their back catalogue (mostly on compilations, though a few library records – the more break-oriented ones – have been reissued in their entirety for collectors). In their liner notes to Bite Harder: The Music De Wolfe Studio Sampler Volume 2, Joel Martin and Warren De Wolfe cite samplers as the driving force behind the reissues: “In fact, this CD would probably never have existed if it wasn’t for the obsessive crate diggers and library music lunatics that cajoled us here at De Wolfe headquarters to once again trawl through the bulging racks of LPs to seek out another batch of bullets for your sampler/turntables” (1). A promotional sticker on the CD case advertises that the record “[i]ncludes original tracks as sampled by Kool G Rap & M.O.P., High & Mighty & Cam’Ron,” thus using the unauthorized piracy of the tracks as a selling point. In the track-by-track liner notes, the compilers provide useful discographic speculation on the original recordings (which may feature such luminaries as Led Zeppelin’s Jimmy Page and noted British session drummer Ronnie Verrell, best known for providing the hyperactive drum parts for The Muppets Show’s Animal). As part of this historical context, they also note how certain tracks have been prominently sampled and reused, emphasizing that the history of a given track extends far beyond its production and into its consumption by various audiences. For example, the track notes to Simon Haseley’s “Hammerhead” state:

⁴² Pioneering rap duo Eric B & Rakim.

⁴³ Music libraries such as De Wolfe, KPM, and many others employed composers and players to create musical cues which were sold via subscription to various film and television producers for use as incidental music.

Recently used as the theme to the BBC's coverage of the 2006 Commonwealth Games, and another bullet from the 1972 Great Day album, "Hammerhead" is probably most famous for being the sample in Ric-A-Che's 2004 album cut "Thang 'Thangs" and High & Mighty's "Dirty Decibels" (Homefield Advantage LP 1999). Simon Park [*sic*⁴⁴] pulls out all the stops on the original production and the result is an expansive majestic treat with downtempo beats and big swirling strings making it the perfect hip hop tool.

In blissful irony, however, the compilers at De Wolfe advertise their products based on their suitability for use in sample-based music, yet at the same time prohibit this very use. Following the proud delineations of De Wolfe being sampled, the back of the booklet contains an explicit warning: "Unauthorised Public Performance, Broadcasting, Copying And Sampling Of This Record is Prohibited." Unusually, De Wolfe specifically lists sampling as an example of possible unauthorised use (most copyright notices do not explicitly mention sampling, which nonetheless falls under the category of unauthorized copying), anticipating the possibility of the piracy they had just spent ten pages of liner notes extolling.

Moreover, the compilers also warn the consumer against the many bootleg compilations of library music: "P.S. This is an Official Compilation of De Wolfe tracks – Please think before spending your hard earned money on illegal bootleg albums that profit from the music of others" (2). Yet, despite this appeal to the consumer to avoid bootlegs, with its Courier font and cut-and-paste aesthetic, the record's packaging is itself a pastiche of the traditional "white label" packaging of the very bootlegs it warns against (a similar aesthetic is seen in Columbia Legacy's The Bootleg Series, a collection of live performances and studio outtakes from Bob Dylan's back catalogue that, after long being disseminated through unauthorized channels, have since been reissued by the Sony subsidiary). Also, the admonition that bootlegs "profit from the music of others" is somewhat ironic when given by a library music company which, by definition, alienates the music's composers and performers from any copyright.

Furthermore, to illustrate how the copyright regime does not actually protect to rights of creating artists, the royalties charged for sample usage do not always make their way back to the person whose work is being used. An example of this is seen in the figure of Clyde Stubblefield, the drummer for James Brown during his funky middle-period. Stubblefield provided the drum parts for some of Brown's most sampled work, notably "Cold Sweat" and "Funky Drummer", the latter

⁴⁴ The track in question is credited by De Wolfe to Simon Haseley who also recorded under his real name, Simon Park (www.discogs.com). The compilation's liner notes do not clearly delineate this double-naming.

being generally accepted as the most sampled break in history. Stubblefield maintains that the beats in question were his own, that they were not scored or dictated by Brown. In Copyright Criminals, he describes how the beat used as the basis for “Cold Sweat” was just something he came up with during a pick-up jam: “That was mine. He [Brown] didn’t tell me what to play or asked me to play – I played what I felt, but he owned it.” The copyright for the musical performance rests with the song’s credited composers: James Brown and Alfred Ellis, and it is to them, not Stubblefield, that any sample-based royalties are directed.

Perhaps the most visible example in recent years of the conflict between the new modes of artistic production enabled by sampling technology and the (outdated) legal strictures of copyright is DJ Danger Mouse’s 2004 record The Grey Album which took *a cappella* verses from rapper Jay Z’s The Black Album and backed them with new instrumental tracks created by Danger Mouse entirely from samples from the Beatles’ self-titled 1968 album (commonly referred to as The White Album). Initially released for free on the Internet⁴⁵, the record attracted public attention as a result of a cease and desist order from the multinational record label EMI who control the Beatles’ catalogue⁴⁶. Nonetheless, in an instance of online civil disobedience, the album was posted to various sites on the Internet and quickly became a big success. This protest was initiated by the online activist group Downhill Battle, who organized the event “Grey Tuesday” to draw attention to the record and its attempted suppression by the major record label’s legal department. On February 18, 2004, the group announced February 24 as the day of protest and issued a call over the Internet for various websites to host the album for download. As Sam Howard-Spink recounts in his article on The Grey Album for the online journal First Monday:

According to [Downhill Battle], the day itself was a success beyond their expectations. Over 170 sites hosted the album itself, and over 400 participated in some way, most by turning their sites “grey” for the day. BigChampagne, a company that tracks filesharing activity found that The Grey Album was being searched for as often as such mainstream stars as Britney Spears and Outkast, and estimated that over 100,000 copies were downloaded on the day itself. This is the equivalent number of sales needed to achieve “gold” status – though of course this is a disingenuous comparison since the download was free. (6)

⁴⁵ The online release of The Grey Album was accompanied with a limited pressing of 3000 physical copies of the record to be sold in stores.

⁴⁶ Jay Z’s Rock-A-Fella label, which controls the rights to the *a cappella* raps used in The Grey Album, did not legally challenge the record. Indeed the *a cappella* versions of Jay Z’s compositions were issued for the express purpose of creating such remixes.

By trying to block the album from release into the public, the legal department of EMI succeeded in drawing more public attention to the very record it was trying to quash. As a result, had it been available for sale, the record would have been one of the biggest selling albums of 2004. In the documentary Copyright Criminals, the cultural historian and media critic Siva Vaidhyanathan commented on the ironic fact that in suppressing – or, rather, futilely attempting to suppress – The Grey Album, the music industry had deprived itself of a possible revenue stream:

Another of the absurdities of the music industry is that nobody made a dime, nobody made a dime from one of the most successful albums of 2004⁴⁷. And it didn't have to be that way. If we had a more rational system for dealing with samples, then perhaps somebody deserving would have been able to make a little bit of money off this amazing phenomenon. But as it turned out, we still got to dance to it and that was good.

Throughout the affair, the work's creator, Danger Mouse, maintained that it was indeed the latter part of Vaidhyanathan's analysis above that constituted his motivation, stating that it “was not my intent to break copyright laws. It was my intent to make an art project” (qtd. in Rimmer 133). The work was not produced in order to make a profit, but rather as an artistic exercise intended to make people dance. Nonetheless, the controversy that attended its public (and non-commercial) release crystallized the debate over the freedom to sample and make new works out of old.

The aim of the activist group, Downhill Battle, in this case was to draw attention to the way in which contemporary sample laws stifle musical creativity. Commenting on the fact that listeners had to resort to the illegal practice of file-sharing in order to hear the work, Downhill Battle co-founder Rebecca Laurie stated, “If music reviewers have to break the law to hear new, innovative music, then something has gone wrong with the law” (qtd. in Howard-Spink 5). The online hosting of The Grey Album served therefore a dual purpose: to disseminate a hitherto repressed transgressive work while also raising awareness about – and provoking action against – an unjust limitation on artistic production, namely the constraints of existing sampling laws built on outdated assumptions about creative production and authorship. Following the events of Grey Tuesday, Downhill Battle set up a website called bannedmusic.org (no longer maintained) with a twofold mission: “To make it impossible for the five major record labels to use legal threats to stifle music” and “To advocate for common-sense reforms to copyright law that can make sampling legal and practical for artists, and benefitting both the musicians who created the source material and sample-

⁴⁷ A possible objection to this statement would be that Brian Burton – DJ Danger Mouse himself – did indeed profit from the record as it raised his name in the public consciousness and consequently paved the way for his mainstream success through his partnership with singer Cee-Lo Green in the group Gnarls Barkley.

based musicians who are using it to create new works” (qtd. in Howard-Spink 6). The effectiveness of the latter principle remains to be seen, but the phenomenon of Grey Tuesday and its aftermath illustrates how the technology of the Internet and online distribution have compromised the ability of the recording industry to suppress such works. Whereas previous challenged works such as Biz Markie’s “Alone Again” or the Justified Ancients of Mu Mu’s 1987 (What The Fuck Is Going On?) remain out of public circulation, the decentralized network of the Internet, as demonstrated by Grey Tuesday, allowed The Grey Album to disseminate more or less freely.

Opponents of sampling still view artistic works through the lens of property rights with the credited author (more often than not represented by a corporate publishing company – in the case of The Grey Album, Northern Songs and Harrisongs) as the titular owner of the work. To repurpose that work constitutes a theft of the work from its rightful owner. In Copyright Criminals, entertainment lawyer Ken Freundlich – whose material existence is predicated on the legal requirements of sample clearance – compares sampling to home invasion: “I can’t walk in to your house, sit on your couch, go to your refrigerator and take a glass of milk out” (CC). What Freundlich fails to acknowledge, however, is that unlike drinking a glass of milk, the usage of a sample does not alienate the work from its prior author. The Beatles (or rather EMI), for example, are not being prevented from selling copies of The White Album; no consumer is going to mistake The Grey Album for either of its antecedents. Unlike the physical property being stolen from its rightful owner in Freundlich’s faulty analogy, the original work does still remain in the purview of its creator(s).

In his interview for the documentary Copyright Criminals, noted record producer Steve Albini articulates an artist-centred indictment of sampling as an (un)creative practice. He sees the author – in this instance, the credited artist – as the point-of-origin for the text, invoking romantic ideals of art as the (exclusive) self-expression of the autonomous artist. To appropriate a given text is to appropriate not just an object for later use, but the whole process of artistic creation, which to Albini, is inseparable from the historical biography of the author-function. He states: “The argument that a sampler is no different from any other instrument is absurd. It’s absurd because no other instrument allows you to simply and easily take someone else’s life’s work and put your name on it.” He later observes that by appropriating a musical text, the sampler is also appropriating “the twenty years it took the musician to be able to make the record” (Copyright Criminals). Albini here highlights the derivativeness of sample-based music while simultaneously ignoring the plurality of antecedents embedded in the “original” work of the instrumentalist. Indeed, his view is countered

immediately in the film by Parliament-Funkadelic's George Clinton who points out the derivativeness of rock music in general. His observation that "rock 'n roll is lazy: three chord blues, you know" is echoed later on in the film by Public Enemy's Harry Allen's statement: "I've never really heard a completely original musical idea by anyone. Most musicians will say that the best musicians copy." Allen's view here articulates the intertextual nature of influence and tradition expressed by T.S. Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" which holds "the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written" (1095). Consequently, to Eliot, the work of the individual poet "is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (1094). The individual personality of the poet is subsumed by the accumulated tradition in which he or she operates. Albini's fixation on the text as an emanation of the artist's "life's work", however, divorces the artist from the continuum of tradition and sets up instead the romantic ideal of the isolated, individual genius creating wholly original works. This isolation of the artist as the archetypal romantic genius ignores and erases the intertextual links that enmesh the work in a matrix of all previous and subsequent works. Furthermore, Albini's charge that sampling short-circuits the necessary artistic apprenticeship (i.e. learning to play an instrument) also ignores the fact that samplers have to undertake a different, but similar, education, an education not necessarily based on technical training in the usage of an instrument (although that is certainly true of turntablists), but rather the extensive training in musical appreciation that enables the sampler to locate prime cuts for citation. In many respects, the sampler's "training" is no different than the literary training of a scholar of literature.

Albini's view is rebutted by Shock G of Digital Underground, who is shown in the documentary playing a piano as a visible signification of his musicianship. Although mostly known for his cartoonish Humpty Hump rap persona, Shock G (born Gregory E. Jacobs) was a trained drummer and self-taught pianist. Shock G states: "Perhaps it's a little easier to take a piece of music than it is to learn how to play a guitar or something. True, just like it's probably easier to snap a picture with a camera than it is to actually paint a picture. But what the photographer is to the painter is what the modern producer and DJ and computer musician is to the instrumentalist" (Copyright Criminals). To Shock G, then, sample-based music is not directly equivalent with "live" music, but rather constitutes another form of musical art that makes use of the same materials. As such, musical samplers make the claim that the legal restrictions put on their artistic production are fundamentally different than the legal restrictions made on other form of appropriative art. As DJ

and producer Paul Miller explains: “So sampling is usually viewed as a musical thing, right? But if you look at the art world, for example, you have Andy Warhol taking photographs and painting them. You have different photographers taking certain scenes and reconstructing them digitally. It all implies a layer of collage and pulling together bits and pieces” (*Copyright Criminals*). One can make a direct comparison between sample-based music and other forms of artistic production that make use of what has come before. It seems that the copyright industry has created a special case for the recycling of past musical texts that does not exist in other artforms, a differentiation that, to some, seems spurious. As McLeod asks: “What’s the difference, really, between T.S. Eliot invoking and *directly quoting from* the Bible, Greek myths, Dante, Shakespeare, Arthurian legend, and dozens of other cultural works, and Public Enemy doing the same sort of thing with sound?” (80). Indeed, critics of the stringent controls on samples have emphasized that cultural production tends to involve the recycling of prior works. In *Copyright Criminals*, Siva Vaidhyanathan observes: “Look at how any bit of culture is made. Look at how Shakespeare made culture. Look at how every great poet, how Homer made culture. It’s about collage. It’s about taking bits and pieces of your influences and forging them into something newer and stronger.” Yet unlike Shakespeare, or even Disney, musical artists are denied access to the tradition of intertextuality discussed in the preceding section.

4. Turntablism.

By the early 90s, as a result of the visible marketability of the MC and the increased scrutiny of the copyright regime, DJs were increasingly absent from hip hop records. The project of the turntablists, then, was to reaffirm the importance of DJ and to create a new genre that was centred around the DJ as creating artist and the turntable as musical instrument. As Rob Swift of the turntablist group The X-ecutioners explains: “During the early 90s, you had club DJs, house DJs, radio DJs, mixtape DJs who did mixtapes and stuff like that. We were like, ‘Yo, we want to have a concrete identity,’ which I think Babu [DJ for the hip hop group Dilated Peoples] was the first person to actually even use the word ‘turntablist’” (*Scratch*). Indeed, as Babu himself explains, the adoption of the term was an explicit reaction to the primacy of the MC in then-contemporary hip hop. His adopted moniker, Babu the Turntablist, was an intended echo of the MC name Jeru Tha Damaja (*Scratch*). The establishment of turntablism as a genre served to demystify the DJ, to bring the figure out from behind the turntables and transform what was an often-hidden part of the

production process into a spectacle in and of itself. A large part of the turntablist's art is the display of the manipulation of the records, and whereas previous DJs took care to conceal their activities in order to prevent their routines being stolen by rivals, the new generation of turntablists that emerged in the 1990s reversed this logic and instead sought to reveal their tricks with an aim towards collaboration with potential rivals. DJ Shadow cites Q-Bert's *Invisibl Skratch Picklz* as being the first to "[take] the secrecy out of DJing": "The Picklz were the first people to be like, 'Hey, here's exactly how we do what we do. We want you to go out and do it better so that we can learn from you'" (*Scratch*).

For many DJs, the seminal inspirational moment was Herbie Hancock's performance of "Rockit" at the 1985 Grammy awards (*Scratch*). The jazz-fusion-funk track featured the pioneering DJ Grand Master DXT performing on the turntables alongside Hancock and his "keytar" and a procession of robotic dancers. The inclusion of what was still at that point a relatively underground practice in the none-more-mainstream milieu of the annual Grammy awards presented a very visible spectacle of turntablism to a wide audience and inspired multiple young DJs such as Q-Bert and Jurassic 5's Cut Chemist to begin experimenting with making music with a turntable. Indeed, the presence of DXT and his turntables on the same stage as the regarded keyboardist Hancock pointed to an acceptance of the turntable as a musical instrument in its own right on equal footing with the more traditional jazz instruments (Hancock's keytar notwithstanding) used in the performance.

Developments in turntablism that followed include the technique of scratching, which transforms the turntable into a percussion instrument; chopping, in which a melodic or rhythmic fragment is cut up and rearranged to produce a new figure; and beat-juggling, in which two identical breaks are played against each other, mixed, and then staggered in order to create new complex rhythms from one small excerpt of a recording. Thus the device that was originally designed merely to play back recordings of performances becomes in turn the locus of "original" (re-)composition and individual performance. The DJ Grand Wizard Theodor claims to be the originator of the practice of scratching, and, consequently, the first turntablist. In the documentary *Scratch*, he describes how as a youth, his mother chastised him for playing records too loudly. As she stood in the doorway of his room, Theodor rubbed the record he was playing back and forth, and, intrigued by the sound produced, he tried it with different records and then demonstrated the new practice at a party⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ Batey notes that Grandmaster Flash disputes this story (8).

5. Heteroglossia and the archive.

If capturing a performance on a transportable, reproducible medium destroyed the unique “aura” of the artwork, as Benjamin argued, then the DJ or turntablist reinscribes that aura by offering a unique, individualized playback of the reproduction. What the listener hears in the reworking of an other’s performance is the DJ’s fragmented reading of the original text. Of course, when that particular reading is subsequently recorded as a performance, it can, in turn, be mass-reproduced and, as a result, be used as the source material for another DJ’s reading. Moreover, the work of turntablists is a successive layering of elements from disparate texts that creates a new hypertext assembled from various parts.

A detailed example of turntablism’s inherent heteroglossia is to be found in the early DJ Shadow composition “The Third Decade, Our Move” (1993)⁴⁹. Here various vocal samples are arranged together to create a dialogue on the artistic merits (or lack thereof) of rap music. Like Double Dee and Steinski’s “Lesson 3: The History of Hip hop Mix”, it begins with a music hall announcer introducing the evening’s entertainment to the audience. Into the middle of this introduction, DJ Shadow inserts samples that combine to form his name: the terms “DJ” and “Shadow” are overtly culled from different sources and combined as one. The composition then gives voice to various critics of rap music. An industry spokesman is heard complaining of samplers: “They make such insignificant changes to the sound recording that it is still [...] improvement as far as we’re concerned and they have violated our exclusive rights to the sound recording.” However, an almost indiscernible cut is placed between “still” and “improvement” to subvert the industry complaint that sampling does not fundamentally transform its source material. Presumably, the spokesman originally said, “... it is still [*not an*] improvement as far as we’re concerned.” This detoured statement is then followed by a dialogue between an apparently white, middle-aged, middle-class female and the hip hop group EPMD in which, in the face of the first voice’s questioning of the artistic merits of rap music, the group defend their art form by pointing to its cultural hegemony: “They got Fred Flintstone and Barney with phat chains on [the phrase “phat chains on” echoes], y’know, with commercials, y’know, with turntables. So everybody wants to rap

⁴⁹ The track was originally released on the Entropy EP released by SoleSides in 1993, but much of the information in this section, such as the origin of the vocal samples, is gleaned from a “live” performance of the track on the concert DVD In Tune and on Time (2004). The concert performance of the track is accompanied with visual footage of the TV samples used in the track. These include footage of EPMD appearing on a talk show and Paul Shaffer’s quip from The Late Show with David Letterman.

now, you know what I'm saying? First it was like, okay, it wasn't gonna last. In 1979, it wasn't gonna last. Now it's '92 and we still kickin' it...." The phrase "still kickin' it" then echoes to fade to imply the permanence of rap music as an art form.

Throughout this exchange, DJ Shadow himself issues no utterance; the musical elements of the track consist of nothing more than a looped repetition of dense, propulsive drum beat. However, in the introduction, Shadow does allow himself to be announced in the refrain: "Tell 'em who the fuck I am: / 'The producing genius of / 'DJ' / 'Shadow'." The "I" in this instance is transferred from its original speaking subject – who is not the individual DJ Shadow – to the composition's author. His voice is that of the organizing principle that has put these disparate voices in dialogue. This constructed dialogue embodies the authorial intention of the DJ: to announce his presence within the discourse of turntablism (as "producing genius") and, moreover, to defend hip hop not just as an art form, but as the paradigmatic art form of this era. Yet at the same time, these other voices do retain some of their original context despite (or perhaps because of) their subversion under the stylus. The condescension remains in Paul Shaffer's quip: "They do what the kids call sampling," but this condescension is, in turn, condescended upon. Paul Shaffer's utterance is layered beneath the implied commentary of the DJ: that this quote is just another example of the dominant culture – as represented by The Late Show with David Letterman – "not getting it." Thus, "The Third Decade, Our Move" constitutes a heteroglossic text imbued with the double-voiced discourse theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin.

While this heteroglossic expropriation of voice is most obviously demonstrated with the use of vocal samples, the same principles apply, although more abstractly, to the use of musical samples. Turntablists manipulate recordings of performances in such a way that an entirely new performance is created from a few measures of the original. In the 1950s, writers on jazz noted that jazz illustrated the supremacy of the performer over the composer as the improvised performances of jazz musicians completely rewrite the originals from which they are derived. Winthrop Sargeant's 1959 description of a jazz soloist's deconstruction of a composed work presciently foreshadows the re-authoring that occurs in turntablism:

He varies the pattern of the melody, tortures it this way and that, leaves it for melodic inspiration of his own, returns to it again, tosses it back and forth among his colleagues who tear it up into all sorts of unrecognizable melodic shapes ... The composer, that towering artistic figure of concert music occupies here a very lowly if not entirely unnecessary role. In

the end, his composition is almost completely lost sight of, or at best serves as a mere framework on which more interesting things are hung. (qtd. in Witkin 113).

This revoicing of musical phrases can be seen in Kid Koala's composition "Skanky Panky". The track begins with a loop from an old rocksteady ska song which forms the rhythmic basis for the track. On top of this are layered a series of saxophone phrases which, by means of turntable manipulation, are cut, distorted, and stretched into various forms, often doubled-up and answering each other. While seemingly derived from one simple four note phrase, the samples are layered and stacked in such a way that an entirely new melody is created.

In an interview with the BBC, the Montréal-based Kid Koala likens his production process to a form of (re)animation in which musical elements are deconstructed and then recombined. Through turntable trickery, the temporal relationships between musical utterances (i.e. their rhythm and timing) are reconfigured and are imbued with the authorial intent of the arranging DJ:

"Making 'Basin Street Blues' was like doing an animated film," he explains, referring to his turntable cut-up of Louis Armstrong's classic number⁵⁰. "Every note on each instrument was found on different bits of records that had to be scratched in and bent. In the end you get music which sounds like the original but moves differently. Like when you see an animated character walking and there's something slightly distorted about it. I like that."

By creating works such as "Basin Street Blues" that are assembled from parts of other works, turntablists such as DJ Shadow and Kid Koala exhibit the view of writing as theorized by Roland Barthes in his essays "The Death of the Author" and "From Work to Text." Echoing Bakhtin's view that all utterances are coloured by the linguistic, extra-authorial history, Barthes states: "The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture ... the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them" ("Death" 146). In this sense, the assemblage of samples into a relatively cohesive whole fits Barthes' description of texts as, just as in Bakhtin, a plurality of meanings – none of which are inherently privileged over the other – woven together. As such, texts are produced equally in their reading, that is the reception of meaning, as in their authorial creation:

The text (if not by its frequent "unreadability") decants the work (the work permitting) from its consumption and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice. This means that the

⁵⁰ Kid Koala's "Basin Street Blues" was released as a single in 2003 by Ninja Tune and also appeared on the album Some Of My Best Friends Are DJs the same year.

Text requires one try to abolish (or at the very least to diminish) the difference between writing and reading, in no way by intensifying the projection of the reader into the work, but by joining them in a single signifying practice. ("Work" 162)

What Barthes argues for in these essays is for the elevation of readers as the determinant of meaning since it is they and not the author who are the focal point of the communicative utterance: "a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author" ("Death" 148).

The postmodern DJ, then, embodies this practice by conflating the act of listening to a performance with the production of a new, reconstituted performance. The sampling DJ consumes music like any other listener, but that consumption is transformed into production, the two occurring at the same time. The absorption of music is in itself a creative act. By manipulating the record on the turntable, the DJ inserts his or herself into the recording, and the hitherto listener is turned into an active participant in the work. Mixmaster Mike, the DJ for the Beastie Boys, describes his turntablism as a form of jazz improvisation with the record drawing him into equal standing as a member of the group he is playing: "I grew up listening to jazz and funk and I wanted to be a part of that movement. And, in another way, instead of just being a listener" (Scratch). The RZA, the producer for the hip hop collective the Wu-Tang Clan, explains how the act of consumption leads directly to and is concurrent with musical production as the commodified product is internalized by its listening subject: "If I'm walking down the street and see a Peter Pan vinyl sitting on the ground, a man selling it for a dollar – I'm buying that. If I see a Flintstones record for a dollar – I'm buying that. Anything. I buy it, I listen to it, and start hearing the phrases inside of it. And then, I'm sampling it" (190). Not only does The RZA express a democratic acceptance of all cultural products (children's cartoons are held up right next to the Wu-Tang's beloved kung-fu films as well as classical pieces sampled by The RZA), but he also refutes the concept of the reader-listener as a passive entity on to which the work is projected. Indeed, the DJ in this instance conflates consumption and production.

As Brewster and Broughton write in their history of the disc jockey: "A DJ is a consumer of recorded music: he buys a record and listens to it, just like anyone else might. However, because his audience is listening to it too, he is also, at the exact same time, making a product -- the performance of the music contained in that record" (23). As such, the DJ's art is predicated on a virtuosity of consumption that parallels the more traditionally conceived instrumental virtuosity of the turntablist.

The DJ's creative act is focused upon the selection of materials for bricolage; the DJ's talent is the ability to identify moments worth remembering and then to reassemble these selected moments, dislocated from, yet still retaining the memory of, their original context. Thus, through the turntable and the sampler, the DJ achieves the playful transformation of a material work into a woven text as theorized by Barthes. By equating the playing of a record with the playing of an instrument, the DJ collapses the distance, in Barthes' terms, between reading and writing. Thus the listener has the option of (re)writing the aural text for and with his or her own experience.

This concept can be extended to its epigonal conclusion which implies that in the postmodern era, there is no longer any room for originality: any possible sound has not only been already created, it has already been recorded and, like the non-musical sounds used by the modernist composers of *musique concrète*, sits waiting to be found. In an interview for the documentary Scratch (2001), DJ Premier articulates this worldview when he explains how his search for sounds to sample, a practice known in the hip hop community as "digging", he is searching for sounds that match the sounds in his head. This conception of originality echoes the epigonal views articulated by Jameson and Lyotard above.

The practice of sampling reinforces the view that there are no longer any original sounds left to create. In 1988, acting under the various aliases of the KLF (Kopyright Liberation Foundation), the JAMs (the Justified Ancients of Mu Mu), and the Timelords, Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty observed that popular music in general was nothing more than the rewriting of old, proven hits. Following the success of their single, "Doctorin' the Tardis", which combined elements from Gary Glitter's "Rock 'n' Roll, Part II" and Sweet's "Blockbuster" with the synthesized theme music to "Dr. Who", the duo published The Manual: How To Have A Number One The Easy Way which outlined their formula for popular success:

It is going to be a construction job, fitting bits together. You will have to find the Frankenstein in you to make it work. Your magpie instincts must come to the fore. If you think this just sounds like a recipe for some horrific monster, be reassured by us, all music can only be the sum or part total of what has gone before. Every number one song ever written is only made up from bits of other songs. There is no lost chord. No changes untried. No extra notes to the scale or hidden beats to the bar. There is no point in searching for originality. In the past, most writers of songs spent months in their lonely rooms strumming their guitars or bands in rehearsals have ground their way through endless riffs before arriving at the song that takes them to the very top. Of course, most of them

would be mortally upset to be told that all they were doing was leaving it to chance before they stumbled across the tried and tested. ... The complete history of the blues is based on one chord structure, hundreds of thousands of songs using the same three basic chords in the same pattern. Through this seemingly rigid formula has come some of the twentieth century's greatest music. (15-16)

To Drummond and Cauty, familiarity is privileged over originality. Indeed, in stark contrast to modernism's desire to break from tradition, contemporary popular music's appeal is located in its familiarity to the listener since it requires that the mass-produced work will automatically fall within the musical language of the untrained listener.

Consequently, artistic expression is relegated to what Jameson refers to as the Nostalgia Mode. In "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Jameson describes George Lucas's Star Wars (itself a source of inspiration and reference throughout the career of DJ Shadow) as a pastiche of early twentieth century science fiction serials such as Buck Rogers in the 25th Century motivated by a desire to return to the imagined past (although in the case of Star Wars, this "imagined past" is in actuality a past vision of the future):

Star Wars, far from being a pointless satire of such now dead forms, satisfies a deep (might I even say repressed?) longing to experience them again: it is a complex object in which on some first level children and adolescents can take the adventures straight, while the adult public is able to gratify a deeper and more properly nostalgic desire to return to that older period and to live its strange old aesthetic artifacts through once again. (1966)

Although it is questionable just how much of Star Wars's audience – even during its initial theatrical run – were fans of its serialized inspirations (in much the same way that the audiences for Product Placement and The Hard Sell are too young to have been fans of the sampled tracks when they were originally released), in both cases the fetishization of the old form (the science fiction serial and the 45 rpm record) is based around its being a "strange old aesthetic artifact" as both seek "to reawaken a sense of the past associated with those objects" (Jameson, "Consumer Society" 1966).

This same desire to return to an imagined past is also manifested in sample-based hip hop with its heavy emphasis on using sounds from the 1970s because of an aesthetic preference for sounds which could not be created with today's studio technology. Schloss cites this nostalgia as one of the main reasons why hip hop artists sample the past: "Samples, especially those taken from records released in the 1970s often have distinct timbral qualities that distinguish them from more recent digital recordings. These include the compression and distortion common to analog

recording, which is often favorably contrasted with the ‘crispiness’ of digital” (70-71). Lena goes further to assert that samplers specifically target vintage sounds as a means of recuperating a historically distanced sound: “Older funk and soul songs often also offer what are deemed qualitatively ‘better’ sampling opportunities as these samples add a unique texture due to the particular conditions under which they were recorded” (304). Not only does such a desire necessitate the practice of sampling (due to advances in studio technology such as digital recording, those particular timbres can no longer be replicated), but it also points to a concern with history and the historicization of sound. The sample is chosen because it retains what Benjamin would term the “aura” of the original performance at a given time and in a given place. Lena continues: “Particular recording studios (and even certain rooms therein), certain recording machines, instruments, and performers have a sonic signature that is unique and desirable, and these are often impossible to imitate” (304). The selection of samples from such sources is a means therefore of tapping in to that aura (or at least its trace) held in reserve in the record.

This nostalgia also illustrates a re-engagement with the past and affirms that sampling is a historical act. In the documentary Scratch, DJ Shadow, referred to by his peers as the “king of digging,” explains the reverence for the past implicit in his search for new old sounds in the basement of a used record store that he calls “an incredible archive of music culture:

Just being in here is a humbling experience to me because you’re looking through all these records and it’s sort of like a big pile of broken dreams in a way. Almost none of these artists still has a career, really, so you have to kind of respect that in a way. If you’re making records and if you’re DJing and putting out releases, whether it’s mix tapes or whatever, you’re sort of adding to this pile whether you want to admit it or not. Ten years down the line, you’ll be in here, so keep that in mind when you start thinking like, “Okay, yeah, I’m invincible, I’m the world’s best” or whatever, ‘cause that’s what all these cats thought.

Here DJ Shadow emphasizes the ephemerality of mass-produced music. While the mass-(re)production of a performance that has been mechanically captured allows for that specific moment to be preserved in the stasis of a vinyl disc, the overwhelming plethora of recordings subsumes the individual performance in an anonymous sea of standardized recordings.

It is the role of the DJ, then, to rescue certain sound-moments from the current of the past and recast them in new forms. Writing in the Village Voice, Greg Tate describes sampling as “an archival project” and proclaims that: “Hip hop is ancestor worship” (qtd. in Sanjek 616). As such, the sampling of a musical text constitutes an engagement with the history imbued in the text-object.

The latent memory of the text-object is awoken and activated by its inclusion in the sampling text. Recorded performances are resituated in a newly constructed reordering of previously discrete sound-moments. The project of the samplers is therefore revealed to be a historiographic one, one that dramatizes the sampler's engagement with the accrued musical history of the record archive. In an analysis of DJs' engagement with the past as embodied by records, hip hop historian Jeff Chang describes how sampling DJs confront the accrued musical history of the record archive and shape it into a narrative of their own design:

We're here in this record store, and in a lot of ways it's a repository, it's an archive of what came before. I mean, records – literally their name: "records", right – you're encoding history into the grooves, right? So DJs, by taking these records and playing them back are giving us snatches of our history. They are giving us a reinterpretation of that history to us in the present day. (Copyright Criminals)

The reinterpretation described here by Chang is the historiographic function of the DJ: to isolate and select particular moments worthy of remembrance and resituate them within a new text that represents the DJ's internalization and reproduction of that history.

As such, the record store basements so fruitfully dug by DJ Shadow and others represent a collective unconscious of stored but repressed memories, and the extraction of specific memories by the sampling DJ represents a surfacing of this latent memory into the consciousness not just of the DJ but of the listening audience as well. Furthermore, just as in dreams, the connections between different cited extracts do not necessarily follow a specific logic, but rather are subject to the vagaries of chance and fortuity. Sitting in the dank basement of just such a record store amidst the "big pile[s] of broken dreams," DJ Shadow explains how his navigation through the stored history of records is dependent on luck, chance, and finding unexpected connections between hitherto separated sound-moments:

It's my little Nirvana. Being a DJ, I take the art of digging seriously, and this is just a place I've been going to for eleven years. It's just an incredible archive of musical culture. And there's the promise in these stacks of finding something that you can use, and in fact most of my first album [Endtroducing..... (1996)] was built off records pulled from here. So it has almost a karmic element of, like, you know, I was meant to find this on top, or I was meant to pull this because it works so well with this. So it's got a lot of meaning for me, personally. (Scratch)

The digging process described here by DJ Shadow represents his own journey through the inchoate history embodied in the disorganized piles of records – indeed it is not only an embodiment of musical history in general, but also, as evidenced by his continual return, throughout those eleven years, to his own personal musical history.

Describing the practice of mining old records for sounds to use in new compositions as “digging” conjures up the image of the DJ as musical archaeologist: “Digging goes back to the noble role of the DJ as a record promoter and musical evangelist, rescuing forgotten songs by never-heard artists or long-forgotten producers, maybe putting them in a mix or on a compilation so this lost music can live again” (Brewster & Broughton 285). Digging then constitutes an engagement with musical history, one that erases the temporal boundaries between sound-moments and the texts that contain them, envisioning musical history instead as an ever-present continuity.

The digger’s ability to find useful sounds to resurrect is as much a learned skill as the technical knowledge of a studio producer and the instrumental prowess of a turntable virtuoso. In Schloss’ Making Beats, DJ and journalist Oliver Wang notes how digging requires a refinement of an individual’s listening abilities into a particular style:

It’s an easy art to learn, just how to work a sampler, how to quantize stuff. But I think it’s extremely difficult to actually develop a good ear. For instance, like drums. If you don’t want to use the same drums that everyone else on the planet’s used, there’s, like, a science to ... looking on a rock record or a jazz record to pick up a particular break. You want your snares to sound a certain way. You kind of want your low-end kick to sound a certain way.
(84)

The technical skill of a sampling DJ is therefore indistinguishable from his or her listening tastes. Indeed, the act of simply listening to musical texts becomes “a science”, like that of a geologist or land surveyor assaying deposits of valuable minerals. In Public Enemy’s “Caught, Can We Get A Witness?” Chuck D makes this connection explicit: “I found this mineral that I call beat / I paid zero / I packed my load ‘cause it’s better than gold.” As Schloss states: “The break had always been there, it just took a great producer to hear and exploit it. Record collecting is approached as if potential breaks have been unlooped and hidden randomly throughout the world’s music. It is the producer’s job to find them” (36-37). The producer’s ear, trained by the practice of digging, is the divining rod through which these breaks – latent throughout the accumulated history of recorded sound – are found. The sampling work that is built upon and with these records – each representing

(forgotten) fragments of musical history – constitutes an organization of that previously unvoiced past into a text of the present.

As demonstrated by DJ Shadow's reverence for the forgotten works of the past, sampling DJs indexes themselves within the continuity of musical history, internalizing the past within his own style in much the same way the Barthes describes the writing subject as the recipient of a historically mediated language. By declaring their debt to history, DJs are aware that musical content is something imposed on them by their place within the history of musical performance; that they are but one link in the continuous transmission of literature from past to future. For example, the endless samples of James Brown's "Funky Drummer" have ensured that Clyde Stubblefield's brief drum break lives in on in its quotation and re-performance within in other works.

Since a sample's musical content is, like Barthes' description of language, derived from an extant source, the originality and authorial intent is deferred from content to form. Indeed, though samplers are accused by critics of musical plagiarism, originality of style is highly valued amongst turntablists: "It might seem ironic that originality is the highest virtue in what might be called the art of recycling. Originality, however, is not judged in the source of the raw materials, but in their selection, juxtaposition, and transformation" (Katz 126). The content of a turntablist's performance is therefore its form. Style and technique not only trump substance, they are the very substance of a performance.

DJs, then, reinscribes originality upon their sources by rewriting them in their own particular style. This style, or, to return to Bakhtinian terminology, this meta-language is the locus of authorial intent within the heteroglossic world of turntablism. As such, DJs not only defer Benjamin's aura from the original performance to its stylized re-performance, they also conflate the acts of reading and writing by assembling works from the consumption of other works. Therefore, Barthes' proposed birth of the reader has not resulted from the author's death; instead, in the postmodern world of sampling, the two have become intertwined as the reception of cultural products coincides with their re-production.

D. The Invention of Sound Recording

1. Introduction.

Just as the technological development of printing had profound effects of the production of literature, the history of recorded sound reveals how the progress of technology has irrevocably changed the nature of musical performance and its apprehension by the listening audience. On one level, it is easy to see how specific formats dictate their respective contents: for example, the traditional assumption that a popular song should be no longer than four and a half minutes is a product of the formal time constraints of the 45 rpm single, the dominant format for pop songs from the 1940s until into the 1980s. The concept of the rock album as a cohesive work and not just an anthologized collection of individual songs that emerged in the 1960s is a product of the long playing record, and the concept of the album has been since undermined by the dominance of the MP3 format which once again returns the focus to individual songs that do not necessarily form part of a whole. Such formal concerns, however, are also bound up with larger, ontological concerns with how records affect the conception of musical performance at a deeper, more structural level.

By solidifying – indeed, reifying – an otherwise ephemeral musical performance into a concrete text object, records (re)make music into a thing: a physical object (or, rather, a *series* of physical objects) that can now be acquired and possessed as a collection. Just as the invention of printing entailed the need for a market of readers as consumers of printed books – what McLuhan describes as Europe’s “first consumer phase” (Gutenberg 160) – the sound recording industry also required the development of a market for musical texts. Records emerged in the early twentieth century alongside the development of mass culture. The record industry enlisted the nascent mass advertising industry to inculcate the desire to own music amongst its prospective market as demonstrated by the marketing efforts of Victor’s Red Seal line of opera records beginning in 1906. From the earliest phonograph cylinders through the emergence of the LP, the eight-track, the cassette tape, and the compact disc, record companies have fostered demand for their products by appealing to a meta-narrative of progress in which increased technological development creates improved records with regards to fidelity to the original, recorded performance (a problematic concept, as will be shown below) as well as the increased mobility of the record. The phonograph originally offered the promise of being able to transport the concert hall to any listener’s front room, and later developments have enabled that same “concert experience” to be apprehended in a

travelling automobile or even, through a portable tape player or MP3 player, carried by and with listeners in a headphone-generated halo wheresoever they may choose to go.

Whereas the earliest recording systems aimed towards a concept of fidelity, that is, the faithful reproduction of a particular performance in a given place and at a given time, later developments such as the electrical process, multitrack tape recording, and digitization have distanced the recording from its historicized referent (i.e. the “live” real-time performance), and instead transform the record from a means of documentation of a performance – conceived as anterior to the record – to the production of that performance through and by the recording studio. Alongside this problematic concept of fidelity lies the increased mobility of sound both in space and in time. On the one hand, the record enables a trace of the “original” performance to be transmitted forward in time, and, on the other hand, the serialized mass-(re)production of that trace allows the performance to multiply and extend in space. The development of the MP3 format in which music is encoded into a disincorporated digital file carries this mobility to its logical conclusion: now shorn of physicality entirely, the MP3 can be effortlessly – and perfectly – reproduced and transmitted *ad infinitum*. Naturally, such a development constitutes a grave threat to an industry predicated on selling authorized copies of a musical text to receiving consumers.

Technical developments of new musical formats, therefore, have been effected with an eye towards just such material considerations. The reproducibility of the text – a key factor in the mass-(re)production of musical performances through records, and indeed one of the primary considerations that enabled the familiar disc to win out over the cylinder format – simultaneously brings forth the possibility of unauthorized production by piracy and counterfeiting. As such, much of the development of recorded sound has been motivated by the material necessity of constraining unauthorized reproductions. To this end, the consumer’s use of the medium has been proscribed. One of the earliest developments, for example, was the decision to remove the recording apparatus from the earliest phonographs so that the device was no longer intended for consumers to make their own records, but rather as a receptacle for standardized, pre-fabricated content. Much of the history of recording technology has been involved in changing the way in which listening audiences – now reconceived as consumers – interact with the musical products for sale. New modes of consumer behaviour are engendered by the succession of individual formats. The very first records, for example, enabled consumers to control the musical experience as they could now begin, conclude, or interrupt a performance, leading critics such as Theodor Adorno to decry this new practice of “atomized listening” that upsets the authorial intentions of a work’s composer by shifting

control over to the consumer who can disrupt, repeat, or circumscribe the playback of a performance at will. Tape-players were developed to enable the consumption of musical texts in a mobile environment (the car stereo and the walkman are both predicated on audio tape technology), but this development had the unintended effect of allowing consumers to make their own, illicit copies of recorded texts to circulate beyond the purview of the record industry. Finally, as was mentioned above, the development of digital media – achieved, as with tape, in order to further increase the mobility of musical texts – has produced further pressures on the copyright regime which authorizes the industrial circulation of these texts. In all these cases, the technological developments mandated by the need to cater to and foster consumptive markets, have led to unintended consequences which act counter to the material needs of the industry that produced them.

2. Music notation and automated music boxes.

The question arises: at what point could music become written? Musical performance has long been a condition of human culture. Indeed, some of the earliest human artifacts are musical instruments such as the 43 000 year old Divje Babe flute found in Slovenia. Moreover, such paleolithic flutes postdate the usage of percussive instruments and the human voice itself as a musical instrument. Regardless of the origins of musical performance, as was the case with oral poetry, such performances could not be preserved in time and made mobile in space until the development of some system of writing, of encoding the performance in a semiotic system. Just such a system was that proposed by the eleventh century Benedictine Monk Guido d'Arezzo who instituted the stave system of musical notation that serves as the basis for our present day musical notation. While this system allowed for the transmission of musical texts over time and space, it does not represent the musical performance itself. What is being transmitted by the musical score is not the actual physical, acoustic performance, but rather instructions on how to reconstruct that performance.

A distinction emerges here between the conception of the musical work as an idea – the abstraction of the acoustic sound into a system of prescribed pitches and rhythms – and the musical work as the materialization of these ideas in a physical performance. In The Recording Angel, Evan Eisenberg points out that the problematic nature of musical notation is an ontological problem: “Perfect preservation is a matter not simply of technology, but of ontology as well. A defect of

preservation is a defect of reification, and this is the trouble with clefs and quavers. 'They aren't music; they just represent it. The music itself is sound' (Eisenberg 11). The text of musical notation is therefore not a transmission of a performance. Instead, it is a supplementary text to the musical performance which conceives music not as a sound, but as an idea. Musical notation cannot write the performance; it can only write *about* it.

It is only with the technological development of sound recording in the late nineteenth century that musical performances could be "written" and preserved as texts in and of themselves by preserving a mechanical trace of the sound produced by the performance. The usage of the word "mechanical" has a double meaning. In order for music to be written, one has to memorialize a trace of the physical motion of matter – i.e. air molecules vibrating in certain ways – which therefore assumes a mechanistic conception of music as a physical act distinct from the ideational abstractions of musical notation. On a more mundane level, in order to accomplish this memorialization, mechanical devices must be employed to reproduce the physical acts of the original, recorded performance so that the air molecules vibrate in the same way.

Dating back to the Middle Ages, mechanical devices existed which could produce sound automatically. Arab and Persian inventors such as the Banu Musa brothers in the ninth century and Al-Jazari in the thirteenth had made primitive music boxes that could play a pre-programmed song. The Banu Musa water organ used hydraulic power to rotate interchangeable cylinders with raised pins that struck metal keys and served as the basis for the principles of automated music boxes until the second half of the nineteenth century (Fowler 45). A key distinction between such devices and the later phonograph was the automata could not reproduce sound; rather they simply produce an original sound like an automated musical instrument. Being incapable of recording sound, the music box and its progenitors were mere mechanical simulations of a musician. As such, the automated music box removes the individual characteristics of the human performer and returns music to its ideal state along the lines of the abstractions of musical notation.

The mechanized music boxes from the inventions of the ninth century Islamic world to the player pianos of the nineteenth century once again place the locus of musical textuality in the domain of the composer for whom the performer serves as a simple medium for the ideational conception of the musical text. In comparison to electronic musicians, Fowler's 1967 article on mechanical instruments observes that the project of these devices was "to rid music of man's individual mannerisms, to create a scientifically perfect music, and, as a composer, to control fully the interpretive aspect of the musical art" (49). One could go further to observe that "interpretive

aspect of the musical art” is not being controlled so much as it is being erased. Again, just like in musical notation, what is “recorded” by the automated music box is simply an idea of how the musical piece should sound, and the characteristic idiosyncrasies of the individual performer are perceived as deviations from this Platonic ideal of the musical text. Unlike music notation, with its somewhat vague directions with regards to intonation, tempo, and articulation, however, mechanized music rolls and cylinders do not allow for the individual interpretation of a given piece; rather, its physical actualization manifests mechanically according to whatever is dictated by the cylinder or roll. The interpretative work is not done machine, but instead is prescribed beforehand by the manufacturer. It is not until the late nineteenth century that the interpretative work of the performer could be written when technological developments allowed for the encoding of acoustic sound in a medium.

3. The first recorded sounds.

The very first recorded sounds were produced mechanically through acoustic recording. Sound is captured by a diaphragm connected to a cutting needle which makes a groove in the physical medium. In 1857, a French physicist Eduoard-Leon Scott de Martinville constructed his phonautograph, a mechanical simulation of the human ear. A megaphone collected sound waves from a given source. A membrane was stretched across the narrow end and, when sound entered the megaphone, this diaphragm caused an attached bristle to vibrate onto a sheet of black paper on a rotating, cylindrical drum. The tracings constituted a visual representation of a sound wave and could be used to provide accurate measurements of the force of the measured sound (Schicke 6-7). This device was used in laboratories throughout Europe and the United States from the 1860s on, and despite its apparent ubiquity in the late nineteenth century, few recordings made by the device have survived to the present day (Morton 2-4). Some recordings made using the phonautograph do remain (unfortunately, this does not include a possible recording of Abraham Lincoln’s voice rumoured to have been made by Scott during a visit to Washington). In 2000, the History Center of the Instituted of Electrical and Electronics Engineers attempted to use modern digital techniques to produce a sound from the surviving recorded images: “A few well-preserved phonautograph traces were discovered among the holdings of the archive of the Thomas Edison National Historic Site in West Orange, New Jersey. National Park Service staff made high-quality digital scans of the traces, but the original recordings were so badly made that there was little to try to recover, and the

experiment was abandoned” (Morton 3). In the case of the phonautograph, the gap between visual and aural representation of sound waves, due to the poor technology of the time, has proven insurmountable and it is only with the development of the phonograph that the reproduction of actual sound itself became possible.

Thomas Edison expanded on the same principles of Scott de Martinville’s phonautograph in building his phonograph in 1877. Instead of using sound waves hitting a diaphragm to produce a visual representation of a sound, Edison experimented with using a similar acoustic-mechanical process to etch a physical trace of the sound onto a soft, scratchable surface. Edison made this discovery somewhat accidentally while he was focused on a machine designed to record Morse characters as indentations on a piece of paper. As Edison himself reports: “In manipulating this paper, I found that when the indented paper was turned with great swiftness, it gave off a humming sound resembling human talk heard distinctly” (qtd. in Schicke 7). Though this was not an actual sound recording in and of itself, it did point Edison to the same method of sound recording that would be used to make all records until the development of the electrical recording process in the 1920s.

It should be noted, however, that Edison was not the only person to make this breakthrough in 1877. A few months prior to Edison filing his patent for his phonograph, a French inventor by the name of Charles Cros described his *parléophon* in a letter to the Académie des Sciences. Based on the phonautograph, instead of having the bristle transcribe an image of the sound wave on paper, Cros’ proposed device would, via a stylus, etch a tracing in a graphite-coated metal plate. The plate was then treated with acid which would carve out the groove created when the stylus had scratched off the carbon coating. When placed back on the *parléophon*, this groove could then reverse the recording process and drive the stylus to vibrate the diaphragm, thus reproducing the recorded sound (Morton 5). Though the invention was described in the October 1877 issue of La Semaine du Clergé (and was even given the prescient, alternate name of “phonograph”), there is no evidence that Cros ever undertook to construct a prototype of his design, nor that Edison was aware of this simultaneous albeit aborted development (Morton 5, Schicke 10n).

Working from Edison’s sketches, an aide at the Menlo Park laboratory, John Kreusi, constructed a prototype of Edison’s phonograph in December of 1877. The phonautograph’s bristle was replaced with a metal stylus attached to a mica diaphragm, itself connected to a resonating horn. The vibrating stylus etched its groove on a thin sheet of tinfoil – the phonogram – wrapped around

a rotating brass cylinder inscribed with a continuous spiral groove followed by the stylus. In his history of recorded sound, Schicke describes the machine's functioning:

To make a recording, the operator cranked the handle of the machine, which moved the cylinder laterally, while someone spoke, sang, or played a musical instrument into the recording horn. The sounds collected by the horn caused the enclosed diaphragm to vibrate in an up-and-down motion, thus driving the attached stylus in and out of the surface of the tinfoil like a trip-hammer, forming thousands of tiny dents. To re-create the original sounds, the process was simply reversed. The stylus of the playback unit was set at the beginning of the series of dents, which fitted in the continuous groove on the engraved surface of the cylinder. The cylinder was then set in motion; and as the playback stylus retraced the course of the recording stylus, falling in and out of the dents, it caused the attached diaphragm to vibrate in a way almost identical to the way that the recording horn diaphragm had vibrated during the recording phase. The playback unit horn amplified the re-created sounds generated by the diaphragm so that they were clearly audible to the listener. (8-9)

For the first time, then, an acoustic sound, or at least at trace thereof, could be stored in a physical medium. Whereas the music boxes and automata of old could store a musical piece, they only stored it, like sheet music, as an ideational arrangement of melodic and rhythmic elements; the sound itself was produced entirely by machine itself according to its physical design (i.e. a pianola can only produce piano sounds; metal chimes cannot reproduce string sounds, etc). The phonograph, however, can take on the timbral characteristics of whatever sound enters the megaphone.

4. Fidelity and originality.

The phonograph then gives rise to two related concepts which will have a heavy bearing on the development of recorded sound: the idea of an originary performance and that of fidelity to that originary performance. The performances of a player piano or a music box, though mechanized and standardized, have no original performance against which they can be measured. Though some of the more advanced player pianos could be programmed in real-time by encoding a human performance on the piano onto a piano roll to be played back in a identical, albeit mechanical, re-performance, this encoding represents a translation of a performance rather than its physical transcription (in some respects, the advent of digital technology in which a sound wave is encoded

by laser on a compact disc as series of 1's and 0's represents a conceptual return to this system). Nonetheless, the ultimate performer of the transcribed music is the machine itself, (re)interpreting the "original" performance in much the same manner as a music student performs the sheet music of Beethoven, albeit with automated mechanical fidelity. While this may allow for the re-performance of instrumental music, the reproduction of the human voice was impossible until the development of the phonograph.

With Edison's phonograph, however, the reproduced sound is derived from an impression of an anterior and exterior (to the machine) performance. Music no longer existed as an ideational construct on piano rolls and notated scores; it now took on physicality. Moreover, by preserving a sound in a physical form, the phonograph allows for the repetition (not, as in musical automata, the mechanized re-interpretation) of one particular performance. However, even after the advent of high-fidelity recording later in the twentieth century, this was never an exact repetition as the physical limitations of the media prevent a completely faithful reproduction of the sound in question. Consequently, the history of recorded sound, at least up to the development of the MP3, represents a quest to overcome the loss of fidelity resulting from the recording process.

When he first built the phonograph, Edison did not initially intend it to be a music-player. Nonetheless, in his early notes on the subject, the inventor envisioned uses for his creation that included "toys, talking clocks, talking advertisements, and music recorded on flat sheets" as well as a variety of office applications including a primitive form of what is now known as voice mail (Morton 12-13). As Morton notes, "Edison sought to be not merely the inventor of the device but also the inventor of the public's uses of it, and hopefully their desire for it" (13). Already the split between producer and consumer is shown, and, as Edison's wishes for his mechanical progeny bear out, the consumer's use of produced material is to be prescribed by the producer. Though in its early tours of the United States in the late 1870s, the machine was used to make demonstration recordings of local musicians, Edison's first intentions, perhaps a result of his partial deafness, were for the machine to transcribe and store speech, primarily telephone conversations, enabling the then novel telephone to, in Edison's own words, "provide invaluable records, instead of being the recipient of momentary and fleeting communication" (qtd. in McLuhan, *Understanding* 241). Nonetheless, the idea remains that the record is exactly that: a record, the preservation for all time of an otherwise transient phenomenon.

There were, however, some problems in the phonograph that needed to be overcome. First, the tinfoil phonogram could only hold roughly a minute of sound and, more crucially for the

preservatory aims of the device, wore out its groove after a half dozen replays. Replays themselves were difficult, as once the tinfoil was removed from the cylinder, it was virtually impossible to realign the engravings on the tinfoil with the cylinder's groove. Moreover, the machine was sorely lacking in the fidelity department: "Human speech, though recognizable, was far from distinct; the sound was completely lost" (Schicke 13). Despite briefly toying with a disc-based system akin to the familiar vinyl record (it was dropped due to the deterioration of sound quality as the stylus reached the centre of the disc), a discouraged Edison eventually dismissed the phonograph as "a mere toy with no commercial value" (qtd. in Schicke 14).

Still, despite these difficulties, the initial demonstrations of the device were received with admiration. A review of such a demonstration in an 1877 issue of Scientific American described the event as a strange, almost parodic, machined conversation: "'the machine inquired as to our health, asked us how we liked the phonograph, informed us that *it* was very well, and bid us a cordial good night. These remarks were not only perfectly audible to ourselves, but to a dozen or more persons gathered round'" (qtd. in Morton 13). Even at this nascent stage, the phonograph already is engaged in the kind of cybernetic ventriloquism used – with irony – by postmodern turntablists who construct conversations, not dissimilar from that above, out of various sound sources and, perhaps more pointedly, allow the turntable to speak for them, their voices becoming indistinguishable from those reproduced by the stylus.

As the Scientific American report attests, even the low fidelity of the recordings did not undermine the novelty effect of the device. Though the New York based Edison Speaking Phonograph Company built thirty of the machines for sale, the units did not work as well as Edison's prototype and did not sell. Instead, Edison built one of his own, more reliable, machines for touring demonstration purposes under the supervision of trained technicians adept at making recordings. Indeed, the idea of a talking machine was of such interest that the public would gladly pay money to hear the spectacle, and, in another strange foreshadowing of the music industry, "Edison collected thousands of dollars in royalties during the first year of exhibitions" (Morton 15). Since the machines were still not sufficiently reliable and user-friendly to be put in the hands of anyone other than trained experts, the company did not sell its machines, but rather only rented them out to licensed exhibitors. When, in only a couple of years, the novelty of the phonograph had sufficiently worn off and the royalties dried up, Edison abandoned the machine in favour of a new project involving producing electric light from a glass bulb and metal filament. It would be

many decades yet until technology could allow the simple playing of records to become sufficiently spectacular to merit the attentions of a paying audience.

5. Bell's graphophone.

Soon, Alexander Graham Bell also took interest in Edison's phonograph technology. In 1886, two representatives from the Bell Laboratory visited Menlo Park to describe their new talking machine, the graphophone, in the interests of creating a partnership between the two companies. Bell's device (or rather, that of his researchers Charles Sumner Tainter and Chichester Bell), which had been in development since 1881, replaced the tinfoil phonogram with a cardboard tube coated in wax. The use of wax had two positive effects: firstly, the soft surface could be engraved with a finer groove, resulting in an extended playing time; secondly, wax produced a less harsh sound than its tinfoil predecessor. Though more pleasant, the sound produced by the wax was quieter and necessitated stethoscopic ear tubes for amplification (Schicke 16-17). The major innovation of Bell's machine, however, was that whereas Edison's phonograph used a rigid metal stylus that incised vertical indentations into the phonogram, Bell's graphophone featured a "floating" stylus that, being loosely mounted, could ride smoothly as it cut "hill-and-dale" grooves – that is, grooves whose varying depths modulate the vibration of the stylus into an approximation of the original, recorded sound. Another advantage to Bell's design was that its wax cylinders were longer and thus had a larger playing surface: "The graphophone cylinder length, for example, meant that the recording was spread out over a broader area than the phonograph, making it easier for the user to locate a particular passage on the cylinder and move the reproducer to it when necessary" (Morton 17). Also, since no tinfoil – so easily torn – had to be carefully rewrapped around the cylinder, it was easier for the user to change recordings.

Fittingly, the first publicized recording for the graphophone, as memorialized on a cylinder given to the Smithsonian Institution, echoed the machined voice of Edison's phonograph. "I am a graphophone and my mother was a phonograph," the machine said (Morton 16). Once again, a mechanical device has appropriated a human voice as its own. The human identity of the now nameless individual who recorded the phrase has been transferred to a machine. In The Medium Is The Message, McLuhan comments that "All media are extensions of some human faculty – psychic or physical" (26). He goes on to declare that "The book is an extension of the eye" (34-37), which would imply by analogy that the record is an extension of the ear. Certainly, records enable the

human ear to extend itself in that it can now hear sounds originally uttered in a setting spatially and temporally distanced from the apprehending ear. Conversely, however, the record also here extends the uttering voice in space and time. In his analysis of the phonograph in Understanding Media, McLuhan cites the complaint of the famous American march composer John Philip Sousa who complained of the new-fangled phonograph in a 1906 issue of Appleton's Magazine: "With the phonograph vocal exercises will be out of vogue! Then what of the national throat? Will it not weaken? What of the national voice? Will it not shrink?" (Sousa 281; qtd. in McLuhan 241). Though Sousa's complaint was also motivated by more material concerns than the phonograph's undermining of amateur singing, McLuhan points out that the composer grasped one essential fact: "The phonograph is an extension and amplification of the voice that may well have diminished individual vocal activity, much as the car had reduced pedestrian activity" (241). Though the collective, national chest may atrophy, the individual chest is amplified – a process furthered by the developments of the electrical process, tape-recording, and digitization to be described below.

This extension of the human body through media produces a reconfiguration of the human listener and utterer into a cybernetic form that brings together the categories of the biological and the technological. Feminist critic Donna Haraway uses the image of the cyborg as a model for the possibility of new, hybrid identities that are not rooted in such ossifying categories as gender, race, and class. In her 1985 essay, "A Manifesto For Cyborgs," Haraway describes how the technology of the twentieth century has blurred the boundaries "between animal-human (organism) and machine" (2272). Referring to technology that antedates the microprocessors and integrated circuits that dominate the lion's share of the paper, Haraway comments that "pre-cybernetic machines could be haunted; there was always the specter of the ghost in the machine" (2272). Just such a ghost is what appears to have inhabited Bell's talking graphophone: the recorded voice issuing forth from the device constitutes a spirit, a trace of the human, injected into the otherwise lifeless machine. Yet the machine speaks for itself: a puppet with no present ventriloquist, a puppet that has replaced its ventriloquist. Moreover, its speech is a declaration of its physiological progeniture, being the purported offspring of Edison's earlier, mothering device. The record player, then, seems to anticipate what Haraway ascribes to later, electronic machinery: "Late-twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally-designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert"

(2272)⁵¹. The reversal of lively machines and inert human beings Harraway declares in that last line is precisely the fear articulated by Sousa over the replacement of human singers by these new talking machines. When one conceives of the utterer-phonograph-listener as a hybrid assemblage with no clear boundaries, the experience of listening to records on the phonograph becomes a cybernetic construct. The talking machine of 1886 is the direct ancestor of the cybernetic image of the jogger with a walkman or, later, an MP3 player connected to the central nervous system via the vein-like wires that graft the machine directly into the ear. The problem of the machine speaking with a human voice will be revisited, perhaps most explicitly in the “His Master’s Voice” advertising campaign that helped initiate the market for records with an appeal to the authenticity – that is fidelity – of the simulated – or, rather, traced – human voice emanating from the record.

While Bell’s graphophone literally declared its filial relationship to Edison’s phonograph, Edison himself did not accept the legitimacy of this mechanical progeny. Instead of accepting the partnership with Bell, he entered into competition with the rival laboratory. The Edison Speaking Phonograph Company, which had dissolved back in 1878, was resurrected as the Edison Phonograph Company and set about improving upon the improvements of Tainter and Bell. First, Edison abandoned the phonograph’s use of embossed tinfoil in favour of incised wax. He experimented with a number of different compounds. While the graphophone used a soft wax which was prone to dislodging the needle or covering it with accumulated wax, Edison’s engineers used a harder combination of paraffin wax and natural resin “that would flake off and scatter as it was carved out of the groove during recording” (Morton 17). Still focusing on using the prospective machine for office dictation – fidelity was not sufficient for the satisfactory reproduction of music – Edison fitted the phonograph the with a foot treadle and battery powered motor that improved upon the old hand cranks by ensuring the cylinder rotated at a constant speed. Also, the stylus was lightened so that the grooves it cut on the now entirely wax phonogram were only 1/1000 of an inch deep (Schicke 18-19).

With a new company, the Edison Phonograph Company, and a new factory in West Orange, New Jersey, Edison and his engineers set about competing with the Graphophone Company, focusing primarily on the dictation machine business. However, Edison still pursued other applications for his invention. One idea hearkened back to the tradition of music boxes: “In 1887,

⁵¹ Furthermore, Harraway’s later statement – “Our best machines are made of sunshine; they are light and clean because they are nothing but signals, electromagnetic waves, a section of a spectrum” (2274) – portends the apotheosis of the record when it transcends its own physical existence to become an infinitely transmissible, utterly disincorporated MP3 file.

inventors William Jacques and Lowell Briggs had shown Edison an idea for a talking doll using a tiny record player placed inside the doll's body" (Morton 18). The technology of the time problematized the delicate construction of the miniature players for the dolls and only 3000 were produced before the concept was abandoned in October 1890 (Morton 19). Still, the experiment continued the theme of mechanical ventriloquism that blurs the boundaries between human and machine: to paraphrase the cliché, the machines were imbued with a "ghost" of a human voice, a tinny parody of discursive subjectivity.

Meanwhile, Tainter and Bell sold their patents to a group of Washington based investors that formed the American Graphophone Company, beginning a series of Byzantine dealings that foreshadow the legal complexities the copyright regime extended over the music industry in the twentieth century. Edison sold his phonograph patents to businessman Jesse H. Lippincott's newly formed North American Phonograph Company. Just as the copyright regime under which most commercially recorded music was produced in the twentieth century is able to alienate artistic works from their composers (the most obvious example being the late Michael Jackson's control of the Beatles' back catalogue)⁵², the complex transactions of marketing and distribution rights took control of the inventions away from their inventors. While Lippincott was unable to obtain the Tainter-Bell patents from the American Graphophone Company, he was able to obtain national sales rights (except in the areas of D.C., Delaware, and Virginia) for the machines and began parcelling off territories for various licensed companies. Following Edison's original conception, the device was marketed as a dictaphone to businesses and government agencies. Moreover, due to the machines' expense, the local companies would rent out the machines, sharing the proceeds with the parent firm. Though the machines were expensive and unreliable, the nation's stenographers considered them a threat to their livelihoods. In the end, despite Lippincott's hope for a monopolistic success, both the Phonograph and the Graphophone failed to sell: "By early 1891, after two years of operation, the total number of machines in circulation was only three thousand. And of that number, the better engineered phonograph had outsold the graphophone by a ratio of 50 to 1"

⁵² Discipline Global Mobile's 2004 reissue of King Crimson's 1969 debut album, *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, originally issued by Island Records, has the following note, which delineates the company's departure from the standard industry practice regarding artists, labels, and copyright: "The phonographic copyright in these performances is operated by Discipline Global Mobile on behalf of the artists with whom it resides, contrary to common practice in the record industry. Discipline accepts no reason for artists to assign the copyright interests in their work to either record company or management by virtue of a 'common practice' which was always questionable, often improper, and is now indefensible." Of course, the benign altruism of the statement is somewhat undermined by the fact that Discipline Global Mobile is a company set up and run in part by King Crimson lynchpin Robert Fripp. The model used by Radiohead to self-distribute their 2007 album *In Rainbows* over the Internet, on the other hand, constitutes more a fundamental departure from the top-down corporate model.

(Schicke 23). Up to this point, both talking machines had been designed for clerical uses and not for entertainment.

6. Phonograph parlours and the consumer market.

In 1889, the manager of one of Lippincott's regional distributors, Louis Glass of the Pacific Phonograph Company, determined that his business could not survive by catering to just the office rental business. Coin-operated technology was coming into vogue at the time, so Glass considered the potential of charging the public to hear a phonograph. He attached a slot device to his machine so that when a nickel was dropped in the slot, the cylinder would rotate, playing the phonograph through four sets of listening tubes (Morton 23). First installed at San Francisco's Palais Royal Saloon, the device was a success leading to the installation of pay phonographs at eighteen other locations. In 1890, Glass sold the patents for his innovations to the New York-based manager of the Metropolitan Phonograph Company, Felix Gottschalk, who then formed the Automatic Phonograph Company to sell coin mechanisms and multitube listening attachments to the various local companies under the umbrella of the North American Phonograph Company. Perhaps the greatest innovation from this new practice was the need for a stock of pre-recorded "entertainment" cylinders. By 1891, the Columbia Phonograph Company (a precursor to Columbia Records) had published a ten page catalogue of pre-recorded cylinders.

This is an important shift: Edison's original vision for his invention was as a device used by its consumer primarily for recording (and, of course, playing back those records), but it was now a device used for playing back prefabricated records. At first, the "content" of the machine would be user-generated (though the consumers could record anything they wanted, it was assumed that, given the prohibitive cost of the machines, that business-related content would predominate). Now, for the first time, the recordings themselves became commodities in their own right. While the recording business so far had focused on the commercial world rather than the entertainment world ("Their belief was that the main market for recorders would emerge from the ranks of professionals engaged in fields that required careful note taking" (Morton 22)), the possibilities of the device's use for entertainment purposes could now be explored once Edison developed a means of making multiple copies of recorded wax cylinders.

Morton notes that Edison had considered the duplication of records as early as 1877, following his original invention of the tinfoil phonograph: "Because the first records were metal, he

imagined that he might lay the recorded tinfoil flat, make a plaster mold of it, and then press new sheets of tinfoil into the mold to make multiple copies of the record” (27). Once wax rather than tinfoil became the medium of transcription, this method, however, was no longer possible. Even after Edison had devised a method of electroplating wax cylinders (which he adapted from methods used by graphophone promoters), local recorders preferred to make their own copies. This was done by having performers play in front of a bank of recorders, from which the best individual “readings” would be selected for duplication by means of a special phonograph machine which could hold two cylinders, transferring the groove from one to another: “The undulations in the groove of the recorded cylinder drove the mechanism, incising a copy of the recording into the blank groove of the second cylinder. About 25 to 100 copies could be made this way before the groove in the master record became too worn to produce a good copy” (Morton 27). Immediately, the principles of fidelity and mobility come into conflict. With each copy produced, the original degenerated, a problem that would remain unsolved until digital technology enabled the production of copies identical to their originals. More fundamentally, the ability of a recorded performance to be mobile in space (by means of a proliferation of portable duplicates) is inversely proportional to its ability to be mobile in time (by means of the continued preservation of an unworn groove). By 1900, however, the problem was addressed when the Chicago-based inventor Thomas B. Lambert began molding cylinders out of celluloid plastic, a practice soon adopted by Edison who used a similar material called “Blue Amberol”, a forerunner of the soon to be ubiquitous vinyl (Morton 27-28).

The first entertainment cylinders were of vaudeville tunes: the pop music of the day. At first, they were not sold under any artist’s name: “most of the musicians and singers who made recordings received no credit on cylinder labels or in catalogues. In fact, the record catalogues of the early nineties did little more than list titles under general descriptive headings such as ‘Sentimental,’ ‘Topical,’ ‘Comic,’ ‘Irish’ and ‘Negro’” (Schicke 28). There were few exceptions to this practice. In its 1891 catalogue, however, Columbia advertised cylinders featuring the works of John Philip Sousa and the United States Marine Band as well as whistling virtuoso John Y. Atlee, and the North American Phonograph Company promoted its “original” cylinder recordings of well known instrumentalists and vocalists. However, these remained the exception, but as the business grew, certain cylinders drew in more nickels than others, and the recording star system based on name recognition was born, a condition which will further enhance the distinction between producing performer and consuming audience.

Not only did this era see the birth of the recording star, the figure of the producer also emerged. With multitrack recording still being several decades away, all performances were captured with a single recording horn. This limitation necessitated a meticulous attention to the space of the recording room, since certain instruments, by virtue of their acoustic timbrality, were picked up more easily than others. Consequently, the recording technicians needed specialized, experiential knowledge of acoustics to make the best sounding records possible. As Morton reports:

Making a recording was a delicate operation requiring a highly skilled ‘recordist.’ These technicians could tell by listening and watching how the recording session was going. They learned from experience how to substitute the diaphragms in the recording horn with membranes of greater or lesser flexibility, depending on the type of performance, the humidity of the air, or any of a host of other factors. These recordists were fairly well-paid individuals who often were jealously guarded by their employers. (26)

This appears in stark contrast with the original uses of the phonograph as envisioned by its inventors. Whereas Edison and Bell had both conceived of their devices being used by office workers, it would soon turn out that the machines required specialized technicians for their proper operation. Instead of being used by their consumers to create user-originary, aural documents, phonographs would receive their content top-down from industry-oriented producers. Even at the dawn of the recording industry, the consumer was subordinated into a passive position.

The development of the consumer market was furthered as the declining novelty value of phonograph parlours drove the development of home phonographs which would see sound recordings become mass-marketed commodities. The first phonograph for home use was sold in 1893 at a cost of \$150 to \$200. By 1896, some refinements were made such as replacing the battery powered electric motor with a cheaper clockwork motor which reduced weight and maintenance requirements. Crucially, the recording apparatus was also removed, though it was available as an extra-cost option. The price of the machine was also reduced to \$100. Though Edison had taken control of his rivals at the North American Phonograph company, one licensee, the Columbia Phonograph Company, retained its independence and entered into competition with Edison, introducing a machine in 1894 that retailed for \$80. By 1896, Columbia had organized network of dealers and distributors and issued an illustrated catalogue of thousands of recorded titles (Schicke 36). As a result of this competition, prices were driven even further down so that by 1900, a phonograph could be obtained for \$20 (Morton 24).

7. The disc.

In the interests of increased marketability, it was necessary to reduce the consumer to a passive receiver of pre-written content, and this drive was an important factor in the shift from cylinders to the more familiar disc format. As Morton states, “The transition from cylinders to discs in the early 1900s was less of a breakthrough in technology than a reflection of a market shift” (31). The shift in question was away from various professions and businesses in need of making records to a mass market audience that simply received content rather than generating its own. The dichotomy of consumer and producer was now beginning to take shape in the form of mutually exclusive categories. Initially, the disc was developed because it could be easily mass-(re)produced and therefore was more amenable to the cultivation of a large consumer market. The inventor of the disc format, a German immigrant named Emile Berliner, predicted in 1888 that “the future of sound recording lay in providing inexpensive recordings to consumers for home entertainment” (Morton 34). He developed the disc format as a new process to facilitate the duplication of records, as they could be more easily stamped out in a factory. The development of the medium was henceforth being driven by the necessities of mass production and the logic of the assembly line.

Since experiments with recording on discs had already been attempted (dating back to Scott’s phonograph), Berliner determined that he had to alter and improve the groove cutting process in order to be able to secure a patent for disc recording. His innovation was to have the groove cut laterally as a zigzag pattern rather than the vertical, hill and dale grooves of the cylinders. The zigzag pattern was inscribed onto a zinc disc covered with a layer of wax. In a manner similar to traditional engraving techniques, the disc was dunked in acid which ate away at the zinc exposed by the recording stylus’ scratching. From this, a negative copy was made which was then used for stamping into heated plastic which hardened as it cooled. Because of this hardened medium, Berliner’s system also had the advantage of producing louder playback, as the discs could withstand much harder stylus pressure (Schicke 40-42, Morton 34-35). Berliner called his device the gramophone, and the goal was not to improve fidelity, reliability, or ease of use, but rather create a centralized mass market for recordings: “Recordings would be made solely by manufacturers, not by consumers. Berliner perceived, correctly as it turned out, that his market would be customers who wanted to listen to recorded music in the home, but were not interested in making it themselves” (Morton 32-33). Sound, or more specifically music, was now a commodity to be traded on the mass market.

This shift radically innovated the originally conceived use for such talking machines. When Berliner first proposed his device in 1888 in an address to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia (a year before Glass' development of the coin slot), phonographs and graphophones were still being marketed as office dictation machines. Any recordings made by the devices were to be produced by the consumer for commercial rather than aesthetic purposes. Indeed, "the fact that cylinders could be made by anyone, and duplicated pantographically anywhere, was considered a strong selling point by those who marketed the machines as office dictation devices. Unlike Berliner, they failed to see the mass entertainment possibilities of recordings" (Schicke 41). Berliner also presciently foresaw the mechanics of the record star system: "He further prophesied that great performers would earn royalty payments derived from the sale of copies of their original recordings" (Schicke 41). Once having worked out the method for the mass-reproduction of discs, Berliner launched his United States Gramophone Company in 1893, and by 1895 it had sufficient capital (from a group of Philadelphia businessmen) to regularly issue records in both North America and, by the late 1890s, Europe.

The disc-based gramophone had several advantages. Aside from producing a louder sound than most cylinders (meaning that stethoscopic ear tubes were not necessary for this device), discs were also more portable and took up less storage space and were thus more amenable to consumers who sought to build up a library of recordings. Schicke also mentions in passing another advantage: "Of little consequence as far as the public was concerned, but of prime importance from a business standpoint, was the fact that the disc could not be pirated" (51). Despite what Schicke states, this factor did have important ramifications for the listening public, as it meant that the proliferation of recordings could be limited and controlled by the industry, and the issue of preventing the creation of unauthorized copies of recordings would become a paramount concern for the recording industry, reaching a critical point in today's era of digital technology and file sharing.

There is an irony, however, to Berliner's development of the disc as a means of pre-empting piracy of recordings, as Berliner himself lost authorial control of his invention. Cylinders were reproduced by a method called the pantograph in which a master cylinder was read by a stylus connected to another, recording stylus which etched a (nearly) identical groove onto a second, blank cylinder. While on the one hand, this system produced copies of inferior sound quality compared to the original masters, it was also a very simple procedure which made copying rather easy. Unfortunately, this ease of use made the cylinder market susceptible to audio piracy: "Coin machine operators soon discovered that it was cheaper to make their own pantographic duplicates of a hit

cylinder recordings than to buy additional copies” (Schicke 33). Cylinder manufacturers, such as Columbia, fought back against this problem by essentially pirating Berliner’s disc-based gramophone technology which itself was less vulnerable to piracy. A lawyer for Columbia, Philip Mauro sued one of Berliner’s sales agencies, the National Gramophone Company run by Frank Seamon, on the grounds that the company had infringed upon the Tainter-Bell patents for a floating stylus now owned by Columbia. Under this legal pressure, Seamon turned against his former colleague, Berliner, and developed a new talking machine, the Zonophone, which was “almost an exact copy of the Improved Gramophone” (Schicke 53). Seamon sold the manufacturing rights for his new machine to Columbia so that the cylinder manufacturer now had access to the disc market. Columbia’s entry into disc manufacturing through the acquisition of the Zonophone was challenged by Berliner and his associates, but the company had another avenue. Because he feared violating the Columbia-held Tainter-Bell patents, Berliner never patented his disc cutting process which enabled an employee of his, Joseph Jones, to apply for such a patent himself. Upon receiving the patent in 1902, Jones sold it to Columbia who were then able to manufacture and distribute disc-playing gramophones without challenge. And so, after a period of complex legal manoeuvres, the various companies could now focus on technical improvements to the process of sound recording and reproduction, with the aim of cultivating the consumer market for their machines. One legacy of these legal battles is that the word “gramophone” was no longer used in North America where the term “phonograph” denotes both cylinder and disc players to this day. The term did, however, remain in use in Europe.

The adoption of the disc format, however, did not prevent audio piracy. Because of the machinery and capital necessary to make copies of phonograph discs through moulding, unauthorized copying of recordings was initially achievable only by individuals and companies already within the industry itself: “Because the equipment necessary to mould discs was elaborate and expensive, it helped exclude the small-time pirates. Subsequently, most illegal copying was done by record manufacturing companies, who sometimes produced their copies in addition to making legitimate products” (Morton 176). When the LP format replaced the old 78 rpm records in the late 1940s, piracy became, for a time, more economically feasible as the adoption of the new format led to a replacement of their old record stampers, and “by purchasing these used record stampers at low cost, counterfeiters were able to enter the market more easily” (178). The design features of the disc that made it so amenable to mass-(re)production for a consumer oriented market also had the inadvertent effect of making piracy and counterfeiting more feasible. The battle between the

recording industry and audio piracy was present even in the industry's inception. However, accusations of piracy were not solely directed at counterfeiters, but also were heard in the conflict between the early recording industry and the traditional institution of live music, now being challenged by the emergent disc.

8. Piracy and radio.

At its inception, the phonograph industry itself was accused of piracy by live musicians and composers – notably John Philip Sousa – since recorded musicians were not given royalties for their reproduced works. While Sousa's 1906 article is often cited for its defence of amateur, live music, the article's lesser-known second section, however, deals with the issue of copyright, and it becomes apparent that the composer's primary objection to records is that he was not getting paid for the profits derived from recordings of his works: "I venture to say that it will come as an entire surprise to almost every reader to learn that the composers of the music now produced so widely by mechanical players of every sort draw no profit from it whatever. ... It is this fact that is the immediate occasion of the present article" (282). The copyright laws of the time only afforded protection to sheet music representations of musical pieces, not their mechanically produced recordings. Sousa cites the decision of the United States Court of Appeals that piano rolls are conceptually different from sheet music and therefore not subjected to the copyright laws: "We are of the opinion that a perforated paper roll, such as is manufactured by the defendant, is not a copy of complainant's staff notation for the following reasons: It is not a copy in fact: it is not designed to be read or actually used in reading music as the original staff notation is..." (283). The decision goes on to suggest that since records and piano rolls are produced mechanically, the copying is done by machine, and since what is read – be it perforations in a piano roll or the groove of a phonograph – could not be read unaided by a human being, it does not constitute writing and is therefore not subject to copyright: "In fact, the machine, or musical playing device, is the thing which appropriates the author's property and publishes it by producing the musical sounds, thus conveying the author's composition to the public" (283). In response to this view, Sousa asserts that the mechanical reproductions are actually a more direct copy of the musical text than mere staff notations which "are no more the living theme which they record than the description of a beautiful woman is the woman herself" (284). Here Sousa makes the observation that sound recording enabled musical

performances to be written for the first time (as opposed to being simply written *about* as in notation).

When the Copyright Act of 1909 was passed, Sousa's objections to recorded music, even those based on a defence of amateur, live music, subsided: "His opposition to the phonograph vanished after the copyright law eventually passed, granting a royalty to composers and publishers for mechanical reproductions of their work. By the 1920s Sousa was crediting the phonograph for contributing to the nation's thriving musical culture" (Suisman 165). It is important to note, however, that this revision to the copyright laws still did not recognize sound as copyrightable, and it held that what was contained on records or piano rolls was not sound, but rather "text" analogous to a musical score: "The music of piano rolls and phonograph records was inscribed into law not as sound but as 'text', albeit text beyond the legibility for humans. To register the copyright in a work, one had to submit some kind of written score" (Suisman 168). The material sound recording, then, had to be guaranteed by the presence of an authorizing score, which would be a problem for recordings of oral traditions such as blues and folk music. Recordings of works which had no written score were, under the letter of the law, not afforded the same protections: "the notes, not the sounds, were what the copyright protected" (168). As Sousa noted above, however, transcribed notes are but signifiers of the actual musical sounds that constitute a composition. The copyright regime of the time saw the printed score more as a direct approximation of the composition as idealized in the composer's mind than a recording of the material manifestation of that idealization. Sousa's view aims to reverse this assumption and give primacy to the materialization of the composition, i.e. its performance, whether that be a live performance or a recorded one.

Whereas Sousa's challenge to records based on a defense of live music constituted a resistance to a new technology by an old paradigm, the recording industry of the early twentieth century also faced challenges from another, newer form of technology. When radio gained prevalence in the 1920s, it became a powerful competitor with the phonograph as a means of bringing music into the home of the consumer, and, confronted with this new medium with its electrically amplified, improved sound quality, record companies found themselves in the same position as John Philip Sousa and other composers and performers two decades prior. Though they did not involve the production of unauthorized physical copies of records, radio broadcasts of phonographs freely disseminated musical works to the public in much the same way as digital file sharing does today. Just as the early record companies had essentially been able to pirate the works

of composers and songwriters legally, radio undermined records companies' exclusive rights to distribute their recorded works.

Early radio had made extensive use of phonographic records as the source for its broadcast material, and record companies made deals with the networks to control how broadcasters used their products. One such example was Victor's 1925 arrangement with AT&T which enabled the network to play Victor records on the air. This relationship, however, was not entirely symbiotic, but also outrightly hostile, as radio, a medium through which listeners could get music for free, undermined record sales. Whereas record sales amounted to 110 million units in 1922, by 1932 sales had dropped to six million (Coleman 38). Moreover, the broadcast of records hurt the fortunes of playing musicians. Nationally recognized recording stars became the standard against which all musicians would be judged: "Audiences came to expect more because they'd heard the best big bands and pop vocalists (especially Bing Crosby) on a regular basis. Suddenly, the local dance band sawing away on the hits of the day, a staple of most radio stations, didn't sound so good. They didn't sound like records on the phonograph" (Coleman 38-39). By making the top stars of the day readily accessible to all audiences, the mass-reproducing and mass-disseminating abilities of records and radio effectively homogenized expectations of musical skill as well as simultaneously providing a cheaper alternative to live music.

Consequently, musicians reacted against so-called "canned music". In 1922, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), an organization set up in 1914 to protect the copyright of songwriters publishers, most notably those of the New York's Tin Pan Alley, threatened to prosecute stations that played records of ASCAP licensed songs. Following a 1917 court decision that held the unlicensed public playing of records in commercial establishments such as restaurants constituted unauthorized performance for profit and therefore a violation of copyright, ASCAP brought a successful suit in 1923 against a New Jersey radio station for broadcasting records of works by its members (Suisman 172-175). The radio stations acquiesced and agreed to pay royalty fees which varied according to the size of the broadcasting station (Brewster & Broughton 34; Coleman 45-46)⁵³. To counteract this development, radio broadcasters

⁵³ When the United States Federal Government began to more stringently regulate the airwaves in the early 1920s, driven in part by the increasing number of radio stations, amateur stations were pushed off the air as regulations which privileged the broadcast of live programming rather than records favoured the richer commercial stations and further drove the formation of networks: "the impetus for consolidation was largely economic; it was expensive and impractical for individual stations to organize or create enough 'live' content to fill the broadcasting day" (Morton 84). Consequently, live performers would work in central studio in New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago, and their performances would then be rebroadcasted by the various stations in the network.

united to create the National Association of Broadcasters in 1923, which, in turn, created its own copyright firm, Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI) in 1939. The aim of BMI was to shift the focus of copyright from composers and songwriters (and their publishers) to records. Also, in order to undermine ASCAP's dominance of the music publishing industry, BMI actively courted the sorts of musicians who were denied entry in ASCAP: those who made folk and "race" records. As a result, when ASCAP pulled its stable of artists and songs from radio play as part of a ten month strike in 1941 after the radio stations refused a royalty increase of seventy percent, the radio waves were restocked with BMI licensed artists. Though ASCAP did eventually get its royalty increase, many younger musicians and previously marginalized genres on smaller record labels were able to gain exposure (Brewster & Broughton 34-35; Coleman 46).

In 1927, the head of the Chicago chapter of the American Federation of Musicians, James Caesar Petrillo, called for a ban on the playing of records over the broadcast airwaves. One concession he was able to extract from the radio stations was that a union musician would be employed to operate the studio record player which, the musicians union argued, had stolen his performing job. By 1933, Petrillo and AFM were calling for a complete ban on all broadcasts of recordings and, not long after ASCAP's strike, the AFM under Petrillo went on strike themselves in 1942. The entire union refused to make records for more than a year, effectively stopping the recording industry (Coleman 41, 47; Morton 101). The popular bandleader, Fred Waring, who had risen to prominence as a result of his radio programs, made no records at all for over a decade beginning in 1932 (Coleman 45). The ultimate aim of the union efforts on the part of musicians to pull their records from the air was to establish a copyright that would benefit performers as ASCAP benefited songwriters and composers. Though a royalty agreement for recorded performers was eventually worked out to offset the losses musicians suffered as a result of the free medium of radio, the larger aim of Petrillo and AFM – to shield completely musicians from the pecuniary effects of technology – was ultimately unsuccessful.

As a result of these pressures from both music publishers and musicians unions, the major networks took records off the air (or, at least, as much as possible). In 1927, the Federal Radio Commission (which would eventually become the now familiar FCC) declared the playing of records on air to be "unnecessary" (Brewster & Broughton 33), and the regulator threatened to deny licences "to stations, especially urban stations, not providing what they considered high-quality material, with the implication that phonograph records were not high-quality programming" (Morton 86). Both NBC and CBS formally banned record playing by their stations in 1930 (Coleman 39), and record

companies issued printed warning labels on their products not to broadcast them. Because many radio stations could not afford the capital requirements of live in-studio music, a way of circumventing the ban on records was found in the 16 inch Electrical Transcription disc developed by Western Electric in the 1920s. Much larger than their phonograph cousins and rotating at the now-familiar 33 1/3 rpm, these discs were large enough to contain a half-hour radio program and were sold to individual stations through a monthly subscription service (Brewster & Broughton 35; Morton 87). Also, because these were programs recorded specifically for broadcast and not aimed at a consumer market, they avoided potential legal action from record labels. Still, despite the fact that FRC regulations dictated that a broadcasted transcription record must be announced as such, these records ultimately tried to hide the fact they were records. In his travelogue exploring the origins of country music, Lone Star Swing (1998), Duncan McLean, relying on the reminiscences of Bob Will's 'Texas Playboys' drummer Johnny Cuiello, illustrates how small radio stations would use transcription discs to create the illusion of live programming:

Radio stations would usually fake their own programmes, making on [*sic*] that all twelve or so of the Texas Playboys were crammed into the tiny studio in Slapout, Oklahoma, or wherever. Announcers would come up with effortfully casual links along the lines of, "Well, folks, I hear Eldon Shamblin a-banging on the studio door, so let's have Bob and all the boys play 'Keep Knockin' But You Can't Come In' – and right after that we'll have a message from our friends down at the Slapout feed store." (qtd. in Brewster & Broughton 36)

In 1932, three quarters of all radio stations used transcription discs, and by the end of the decade they made up the bulk of programming on small stations (Coleman 40). There is indeed a deep irony in the fact that in order to accommodate the ban on records being played on the air, radio stations had to rely on record technology nonetheless to broadcast "live" (i.e. non-phonographic) performances. In the end, the efforts of the music publishers and musicians' unions to purge records from the airwaves led to an even greater reliance by radio stations on records.

Even though phonograph records themselves may not have been broadcast, record companies, such as Victor and Columbia, had contracts which required the companies' permission for their stars to appear on air. As such, the record labels sponsored radio programs which featured their contracted performers (Victor's relationship with AT&T, and later RCA, took this form). The radio performance therefore became a broadcast advertisement for the record itself; the live performance was ancillary to the recorded performance. The concept of radio as record promoter

goes back further to the days of amateur radio stations, before the establishment of corporate stations and networks and the restrictions of the FRC. In 1911, Dr. Elman B. Meyers of New York City broadcasted a daily 18 hour program that consisted almost entirely of records. In 1913, the wife of San Jose broadcaster Charles “Doc” Herrold, Sybil Herrold (later Sybil True), hosted a radio program aimed at children, “The Little Ham Programme”, for which she played records borrowed from a local store. The aim of the program was to increase interest in radio among youth, but it also had the effect of increasing interest in records. As Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton note: “Mrs Herrold noted with satisfaction that her programme had a noticeable effect on the store’s record sales. ‘These young operators would run down to the store the next day to be sure to buy the one they heard on the radio the night before.’” (30-31).

By the 1930s, although the major networks still deferred to music publishers and musicians unions by avoiding using records in their broadcasts, individual stations still used records when they could. Coleman states: “By all accounts the ban was selectively enforced at best, so many stations kept on spinning” (39), and Morton writes: “By the end of the decade, it was becoming clear that these shows helped stimulate consumers to buy the music they heard” (98). One example of such a show was Martin Block’s “The Make-Believe Ballroom” which was broadcast by New York’s WNEW from 1935 to 1950. Making his personality as much a part of the show as the records he played, Block was one of the first disc jockeys to be a star in his own right (Brewster & Broughton 37; Coleman 79). In his broadcasts Block fused his musical taste with his powerful marketing abilities⁵⁴ to become the premier record promoter of his era: “By 1940, Martin Block was the make-all, break-all of records. If he played something, it was a hit” (Brewster and Broughton 38-39). As a result of this, record labels began focusing on radio disc jockeys as part of their marketing efforts as the DJs’ tastes stood in for, and indeed therefore dictated, consumer desire.

In both these cases, the economic threat that one emergent medium presented to an older, established form (radio vs. the phonograph; the phonograph vs. live performer) was envisioned as a violation of the law. By not being accounted for in the existing legal structure that governs the dissemination of musical texts, these media, at their emergence, constituted piracy: they were outlaws. In both cases, the regulatory framework of copyright was amended so that what was previously regarded as piracy became legitimized and enfolded into the authorized music industry, so long, of course, as the profits of the record companies (in the case of radio) and music publishers (in

⁵⁴ One legendary anecdote tells that a department store in upstate New York sold 300 hundred refrigerators during a blizzard as a result of one of Block’s ad-libbed commercial advertisements (Brewster & Broughton 38; Coleman 80).

the case of records) were still respected. Again, it is worth reiterating that Sousa's considerable aesthetic objections to phonograph records evaporated once his economic objections were alleviated by royalties.

E. From Acoustic to Electric Recording

1. The electrical process.

Despite the competition from radio, it was the electrical technology developed by and through radio that helped revive the recording industry and undo the damage done by competition with radio. The electrical technology that facilitated radio was transferred to the record-making process, thereby greatly improving sound quality. Moreover, as a result of the electrical process, the recorded performance was not simply mechanically traced upon the medium, but rather encoded into an electrical signal. As a result of this encoding, the sound could now be manipulated after the fact, meaning that the recording process was not involved in the faithful – and simple – reproduction of a sound so much as it entailed the production of that sound. This shift raises questions about the reality of what is being recorded. With its increased volume and higher dynamic range, the electrical process furthered the cause of fidelity. This concept that was emphasized in advertising materials such as the iconic “His Master’s Voice” painting, which dramatized the confusion between the “real” original and the technologically produced simulation that stands in for and usurps the place of the original. Though the “His Master’s Voice” painting originates in the early acoustic recording era, the concerns it illustrates become more resonant in the post-electric era, particularly due to the developments of stereophonic sound and multitrack tape recording that further removed the process of sound recording from the simple act of documenting a mechanical trace of a sound.

Until the 1920s, phonograph technology had relied on an acoustic process whereby soundwaves were transmitted from the horn to the medium via the mechanical vibrations of a stylus. The use of electronics in sound recording has its roots in the late nineteenth century experiments of Thomas Edison and Ambrose Fleming, who discovered that a modified light bulb could conduct an electrical current through its vacuum interior to a wire or electrode. Lee De Forest modified Edison’s apparently useless “curiosity” by placing a wire control screen between the bulb’s filament and the electrode which, when charged with a small voltage, would increase the electrical output of the signal: “The large current flow from the tube varied in direct proportion to the screen-control signal – it was, in other words, a high-power copy of the original, weak telephone signal” (Morton 65). Dubbed the Audion, De Forest’s device was unreliable, but, following its sale to AT&T in 1913, it was refined for use as a signal booster in AT&T’s transcontinental telephone

lines. Around the same time, phonograph companies began experimenting with using the Audion amplifier in recording (Morton 65-66).

The principle of “transduction”, that is, the translation of acoustic waves into electromagnetic waves which can be transmitted through either space or a wire, had been first used in the late nineteenth century by Alexander Graham Bell for his telephone. Bell’s original telephone used the mechanical movements of acoustic waves to modulate an electric current through the use of primitive microphones (Morton 7). In 1877, Edison tried to develop a machine for recording telephone signals, but this machine still relied on the same mechanical-acoustic processes as the phonograph, and the telephone’s electric signal was too weak to create a satisfactory recording. It was only with the development of amplification following De Forest’s modification of Edison’s bulb that the “electrical process” became a viable means of making records.

Morton reports that many researchers tried to work out solutions for boosting electrical signals used for recording, “but no independent researcher or record company could compete with AT&T’s research facility” (65), thus illustrating that technological innovation is not only driven by commercial interests but is itself a function of capital. In The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge, Jean-François Lyotard explains the circular relationship between technology and wealth: prior wealth is the prerequisite for technological innovation, which itself is nothing more than the means of making production more efficient and therefore a more effective means of generating further wealth. Lyotard writes: “The games of scientific language become the games of the rich, in which whoever is wealthiest has the best chance of being right. An equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth is thus established” (45). Furthermore, this logic defines technological innovation as that which more improvedly generates wealth. For example, the final generation of cylinder records, Edison’s Blue Amberola line, introduced in 1912, were in many respects superior in sound quality to their early disc contemporaries. Made out of hard plastic, they eliminated a lot of the surface noise produced by other media, and their vertical hill-and-dale grooves offered a higher dynamic range than the lateral grooves of circular discs (they were also, as a result, easier to record). These advantages led Schicke to declare that, “Record historians maintain that this cylinder record was the crowning achievement of the acoustical recording era” (69). Nevertheless, the vinyl disc won out due to its easier reproducibility. Whereas Edison’s cylindrical swansong became little more than an atavistic footnote, Berliner’s disc became the groundbreaking innovation only because the

system under which it was developed identifies and defines technological progress with economic potential.⁵⁵

Armed with this capital apparatus, AT&T improved upon the Audion vacuum tube to produce the electrical transcription disc. They also adapted this technology for use in consumer players, and it was licenced to the Victor company for their Orthophonic player in 1925 (Morton 65; Coleman 36)⁵⁶. Schicke observes that the two major record labels in America, Columbia and Victor, were initially apprehensive of the new technology which, “with its wires, tubes and condensers, smacked too much of that old devil radio” (82). Though both companies began experimenting with electrical recording in 1925, this work was kept secret for fear of devaluing existing stocks of acoustically recorded records. Indeed, a series of pop recordings made with the electrical process in May 1925 were not advertised as such to the public (Schicke 83). The Orthophonic player was still an acoustic player (it did not feature any electrical amplifiers in its design), but was able to play electrically made recordings. In a nod to the recording industry’s envious competition with the better sounding radio, the Orthophonic was advertised as producing a “radio timbre” (Coleman 36). Later that same year other companies, such as Brunswick and Columbia, introduced their own fully electric phonographs, and the transition from acoustic to electric was complete.

Edison was skeptical of electrical recording, seeing it as merely symptomatic of the “volume fad,” and he worked at refining acoustic recording. He saw the translation of acoustic waves into electromagnetic signals as “a barrier between the real-world sound event and its inscription. Why would anyone want that, when the acoustic recording process, the direct impression of the world onto a record, still held such promise?” (Milner 48). Indeed, the development of the electrical process constituted an important shift in the making of records. Translating an acoustic sound into an electromagnetic signal opened up the possibilities for manipulating that sound, after the fact, away from its point of origin. Recording was now no longer simply a process of inscription or documentation of a sound event; it now was as much a process of production as the musical performance itself. All further developments of sound recording, from the multitracking possibilities offered by magnetic tape to the myriad ways in which digital technology can manipulate sound, are derived from the electrical process, a development which ultimately predates the phonograph itself and originates in Bell’s invention of the telephone.

⁵⁵ A similar dynamic might shown in the late 1970s defeat of the 8-Track format which offered improved sound quality over its victorious rival, the cassette tape whose advantage lay in ease-of-use and portability rather than fidelity.

⁵⁶ Morton dates the introduction of Victor’s Orthophonic to 1924, whereas Coleman dates it to 1925. Given that Schicke cites the first electrical recordings by Victor as being made in 1925, the latter year appears more likely.

Amplification radically changed the way sounds could be heard by offering a higher dynamic range during playback as well as by making the recording process much more effective. Not only was it louder, but it also allowed for quieter, subtler sounds that would be inaudible to an acoustic horn. It was only through the electrical process that orchestral music could be properly reproduced on a record player. Robert Philip notes that a readers' poll of the most popular records taken by Gramophone magazine in October 1925, the end of the acoustic era, included very few orchestral recordings, but by April 1928, another such survey produced a list, two thirds of which, including seven of the top ten, were orchestral (34). Not only could instruments like guitars and violins be recorded more satisfactorily, but the human voice itself could now become a much more expressive instrument in its own right through the electrical process. This innovation allowed for the emergence of a new style of singing: crooning, a soft, almost-whispered, vocal style that could only be picked up by a microphone. Singers no longer had to project their voice into a horn like a stage performer, so the resulting recording had a sense of "closeness" between the recorded performer and the audience at home that belied whatever temporal and physical distance separated the two: "Crooning thus provides a sense of intimacy between artist and audience, collapsing the technologically imposed distance that would seem to preclude such a relationship" (Katz 40-41). The increased sound receptivity of microphones enabled the listener to inhabit the same acoustic space as the performer, a dynamic that would be continued with the development of high-fidelity recording techniques and stereophonic sound later in the twentieth century to the point that, with the introduction of the compact disc in the early 1980s, consumers were promised a listening experience equivalent to being there in person (Milner 218).

In the meantime, however, the new recording technology also affected live music as audience came to expect the stage performers to recreate their records in the concert hall. Thus, the microphone colonized the stage: "Soon stage appearances had to be bolstered with public address systems, for without amplification the crooning Mills Brothers and Miss Poop-poop-a-do could not have been heard beyond the third row" (Read and Welch qtd. in Schicke 86). Whereas Edison had previously offered "tone tests" demonstrating a record's equivalence against a live performance, the comparison now worked the other way as live performers were expected to live up to recordings made via the electrical process. Later developments, such as multitrack recording, would enable the studio to create performances that had no "real" counterpart.

The development of the electrical process also highlighted a distinction in the conception of recording between the acoustic and electrical processes. Edison and other acoustic recorders aimed

to record a sound to the point that it was indistinguishable from its original counterpart; the function of the phonograph was documentary. Electrical recording, however, was introduced to public as an improvement or enhancement of that original sound. Acoustically-minded critics attacked electrical recording with its amplification as a corruption of the original sound. Audio archivist Walter L. Welch complained in 1933 that “Whatever may have been the limitations of the acoustic method, ... the drawbacks consisted largely of what was left out of the recording process, instead of the present defects, which are added, namely excess resonance, distortion, over-amplification, and extraneous noises” (qtd. in Milner 55). Because it no longer involved a direct mechanical connection between sound source and medium, electrical recording, in the minds of the Edisonians, could not capture a sound properly. Instead, what was “captured” was an electromagnetic codification of that sound. Though, on the one hand, that codification makes possible an increased manipulability of sound – “Sound was now flexible, elastic,” states Milner (58) – on the other hand, it increases the conceptual distance between a record and the original sound source. What one hears on a record is not the sound itself, but rather the recording of it.

This important theoretical distinction was made clear in the way that even the early electrical recordings captured the acoustics of the rooms in which they were recorded. Acoustic records had to be made in so-called “dead rooms” that minimized acoustic reverberations, but with the electrical process, recordings could now be made in larger halls and the ambience of the hall would be captured on the recording: “By recording the room as much as the music, you could, in effect, give the listener at home a vivid re-creation of the concert-going experience” (Milner 54). As such, these records did not just reproduce a sound, but also its context, which fundamentally conflicted with the Edisonian concept of recording: “Edison wanted to capture just the music and edit out the world around it ... Acoustic recording was about just capturing some mysterious entity called ‘music.’ Electrical recording implied capturing a whole lot more” (Milner 55). Just what this “whole lot more” constituted is explained by Coleman’s description of early electrically recorded jazz and blues records: “electrically recorded discs captured something new as well: the musicians’ audible sense of freedom, all their twists and turns and quirks and flourishes. Now the stuff that couldn’t be written down – the aura or underlying vibe – was preserved forever in crackling black plastic” (Coleman 37). The concern for ambience that electrical recording generated serves to emphasize the physicality of musical performance; it cannot be abstracted from its immediate material surroundings as the

reverberations of the room and other subtle elements are just as much a part of the music as the notated melody and rhythm.⁵⁷

Leaving aside for the time being such theoretical matters, the heightened sound quality enabled by the electrical process enabled record companies to respond to the economic challenges presented first by competition from radio and second by the Great Depression which stripped away demand for consumer goods. The dire economic climate led to a series of mergers and consolidations of record companies on both sides of the Atlantic. As such, the companies narrowed their marketing focus to more wealthier segments of the market: “One of those segments was classical music, where buyers were wealthier than the average consumer and often collected large personal libraries of music. Because they preferred the best quality recordings, they would purchase expensive records more readily than the average consumer, who was more price conscious” (Morton 92). Once again, just as with Victor’s Red Seal recordings that inaugurated the disc era of recording, an expensive price tag indicated higher sound quality, and listeners’ tastes lined up with social and economic class divisions.

2. The formal constraints of disc sides.

The necessity of accommodating the tastes of the classical market also changed the form of the record itself. By 1912, discs had been more or less standardized as double-sided 78 rpm discs of either 10 or 12-inches which could contain roughly three to five minutes of music. Composers therefore had to tailor their works to fit this format: Igor Stravinsky, for example, famously composed his 1925 work, “Serenade for Piano” to be four movements of three minutes each, the even number of movements was conceived to avoid wasting a side of shellac. The American composer Roy Harris recorded his Symphony No. 1 for a set of records, taking up seven sides, and he composed a new piece, appropriately titled “Four Minutes-20 Seconds” to fill out the set. Early recordings of classical works sometimes truncated the compositions so they could fit on a disc. For a 1916 recording of his Violin Concerto, Edward Elgar edited the piece from a roughly 50 minute running time to 20 minutes so that it could fit on four 78 sides (Katz 3, 34-35). An alternative strategy was to simply play the piece at a faster speed. Once again, aesthetic form is dictated by commercial considerations: though the faster tempo may have violated the authorial intentions of

⁵⁷ In fact, the ability of microphones to pick up ambient sound presented some problems for early audio engineers as certain undesirable sounds such as the depressing of the piano’s sustain pedal or the friction of the bow against a violin string (which would not carry in a concert hall) were picked up by the microphone (Katz 40).

the composer, it saved a side of vinyl and was therefore more cost-effective. Just such concerns pushed early record producer Fred Gaisberg to get Edward Elgar to re-record the last section of his Nursery Suite in May of 1931. As he wrote in a letter to the composer: “We are trying to arrange a session to complete the ‘Nursery Suite’ on June 4th. You will recollect that the last record was about 10 seconds too long, and Willie, with whom I was speaking after the session, said that he thought it would be quite easy to make up this difference in time so as to get the record on one side instead of making two records of it, which would be uncommercial” (qtd. in Philip 36). Even with these time-saving manoeuvres, classical pieces still needed to be cut into smaller sections, which were packaged together and sold as “albums”, giving rise to the contemporary usage of the term. In 1927, Victor introduced the first record changer so that the listener could stack several records on a single spindle and the machine would automatically change records when the current one played out. Aimed at the lucrative classical market, these players cost as much as ten times more than a conventional player (Morton 92-93).

The splitting of whole pieces into multiple sections changed the way compositions were heard as listeners became used to the breaks between sections. In Capturing Sound, Katz quotes composer Andrew Mead’s recollection of his father’s opinion that Brahms wrote weak transitions between sections of his pieces, an opinion derived no doubt from the fact that he was first exposed to Brahms’ works through stacks of 78 rpm records (32). This phenomenon gives rise to what Adorno termed “atomized listening” to describe the understanding of a work as a series of disconnected moments rather than a unified whole. Writing in 1934, Adorno complained of the formal constraints of gramophone records: “The only thing that can characterize gramophone music is the inevitable brevity dictated by the size of the shellac plate. Here too a pure identity reigns between the form of the record disc and that of the world in which it plays: the hours of domestic existence that while themselves away along with the record are too sparse for the first movement of the Eroica to be allowed to unfold without interruption” (“The Form of the Phonograph Record” 278). This commentary carries on what Adorno had theorized regarding the broadcast of symphonic works over the radio: that symphonic works were heard as atomized parts rather than as a unified whole (in the case of radio, this phenomenon is achieved by the ability of the listener to turn off – and therefore to abort – the work in progress at any moment he or she desires). In “The Radio Symphony” he writes:

The decline of the unity, which is the essence of symphony, is concomitant with a decay of the manifold comprehended by it. ... The meaning of the music automatically shifts from

the totality to the individual moments because their interrelation and articulation by dynamics and colors is no longer fully affected. These moments become semi-independent episodes, organized mainly by their chronological succession. (261-262)

To Adorno, then, the very form of the phonograph record negated the possibility of satisfactorily representing the symphonic experience precisely because it allows the consumer to disrupt the flow of the composition in its real time existence by breaking up that temporal unity into discrete sections and moments. Here, Adorno articulates a covert concern with the authorial intent of the composer that dictates the unfolding of a given composition over a certain amount of time. The consumer's interference with this unfolding – as enabled by the form of the record – deprivileges the role of the composer as the arbiter of the composition's unity.

Nonetheless, the project of the recording industry from the early 1930s was to attenuate the temporal constraints of the medium that curtailed the abbreviation and segmentation of longer, classical works. In an effort to fit more music on to a single disc, Victor introduced its Long-Playing Record in 1931 which, though not yet the familiar LP record, consisted of either 10 or 12-inch vinylite discs which rotated at 33 1/3 rpm, a speed used by radio recorders since it was the lowest speed at which the electric motors of the day could spin consistently. Though individual discs were more expensive than the 78 rpm format, complete works – albums – were comparatively cheaper. Though eventually discontinued by 1933, “this failed experiment was a demonstration both of the record company's attempts to cater to the classical audience and of the engineering fascination for what would be called ‘high fidelity’” (Morton 93). As a result, these innovations were taken up again after World War II with the development of the LP proper, introduced by Columbia in June, 1948. The LP combined a variety of innovations ranging from improved materials for records – made of vinyl plastic rather than the traditional shellac compound so as to minimize surface noise – to a new, almost microscopic stylus that could cut the finer groove required to fit more music on a single side of vinyl (Morton 135; Elborough 23-24; Schicke 120-121).

Dr. Peter Goldmark, the Columbia engineer who developed the 33 1/3 rpm long-playing record, “claimed his driving inspiration was the desire to hear major works without interruption” (Coleman xxi).⁵⁸ The direct inspiration, according to Coleman, occurred when Goldmark was listening to records at a friend's house in 1945 and was horrified at the breaks between sections:

⁵⁸ Coleman also reports here that, “Similarly, compact discs were designed to run seventy-five minutes because a Japanese engineer loved Beethoven's Ninth Symphony” (xxi).

In the midst of listening to the first movement of this record, a terrible thing happened. There was a click, silence, and strange noises and then the movement continued.⁵⁹ This happened again and again. I counted twelve sides for the four movements and eleven interruptions, of which eight were unplanned by Brahms. So eight abominable times during the rendition I was in turn enthralled and jarred, like having the phone ring at intervals while you are making love. (qtd. in Coleman, 51)

Goldmark here echoes Adorno's concern that a record's dissolution of a whole piece into discrete section not only violates the composer's intentions but also prevents the listener from perceiving the work as a unified whole. In the interests of preserving these wholes, another Columbia engineer, Edward Wallerstein, had surveyed the company's catalogue of recordings and determined that virtually any movement of a piece in the Columbia library could be fit on to a single 20 minute side (Morton 135-136). Ironically, Wallerstein, who would prove instrumental in introducing the Columbia LP, had been the executive who had scrapped Victor's 33 1/3 long-player in 1933 (Elborough 22). After working out the technical issues with the new smaller styluses and materials, the LP was unveiled to the public (via invited members of the press) at Columbia's offices in New York. In a dramatic demonstration of the LP's capacity, Wallerstein stood between a stack of 78s and LPs each containing the same amount of music. While the stack of 78s stood eight feet high, the equivalent stack of LPs was only 15 inches in height. Not only did the new records sound better, but the increased capacity also increased the portability of that sound.

Whereas the longer running time satisfied listeners who did not want to break up whole pieces into sections, it produced a nightmarish situation for the musicians and engineers in the studio. In the days before tape-recording, pieces were cut directly on to master discs and, as such, had to be performed perfectly, in a single take: "Even for seasoned concert professionals, playing for four minutes under these conditions was hard work. The possibility of having to keep going at it for twenty could only have filled all concerned with dread" (Elborough 25). The recording process at this time combined all the pressure of live performance with the new anxiety that whatever was being recorded would be memorialized forever, thus compounding the demand for accuracy. Sergei Rachmaninoff commented in 1944: "When the test records are made, I know that I can hear them played back at me, and then everything is alright. But when the stage is set for the final recording, and I realise that this will remain for good, I get nervous and my hands get tense" (qtd. in Philip 43). This system also presented problems for LPs compiled from extant 78s. The aim of these records

⁵⁹ Presumably, Goldmark's friends, Mack and Helen Morgan possessed an automatic record changer.

was to present the piece, which had been broken down into its constituent sides, as a reassembled whole. To do this, studio engineers would have to switch in real time with a turntablist dexterity between 78 sides while the LP master rotated. A producer for Decca Records, John Culshaw, recalls the experience:

If a work occupied, say, ten 78 rpm sides then in all probability five of them would take up one side of an LP, and the problem was to get a smooth crossover from one 78 rpm side to the next. I stood there with a score and began a countdown during the last thirty seconds of a side and then shouted “Drop!”, at which point one engineer would fade out the side that had just ended while another, with luck, would lower the pickup on the beginning of the next side. If anything when even slightly wrong there was nothing to do but go back to the beginning, and as every LP had to be cut at least twice in case of an accident during processing at the factory it was a tedious and frustrating business. (qtd. in Elborough 27).

Aside from revealing the technological limitations of the time as well as hinting the revolutionary changes that tape-recording would bring, Culshaw’s experience, paralleling that of Rachmaninoff, serves to illustrate the performative nature of playing records. Though, when compared to Rachmaninoff, Culshaw is a “second-order” performer (that is, his “performances” are the performances of other performances), he is, as revealed here, a performer no less, his instrument being the phonograph rather than the piano or the baton.

Meanwhile, at RCA Victor engineers had curiously reached an alternate conclusion regarding the appropriate running time for a disc in the development of their 45 rpm 7-inch microgroove disc – the format that exclusively constitutes the source material for Product Placement and The Hard Sell. Oddly, a survey similar to that done by Wallerstein at Columbia, revealed in a 2000 PhD dissertation by historian Alex Magoun, was conducted by RCA-Victor which concluded that a five minute side would be sufficient to hold any of the label’s classical recordings. Morton comments: “Clearly, engineers at Victor had different ideas about what constituted a classical song” (138). The discrepancy can be explained, however, when one realizes that RCA-Victor’s recordings would have been made specifically for the shorter run time of the 78 rpm record, and this formatting exigency dictated and ultimately reified the truncated durations so that the shorter run time was assumed as “natural”. Whereas Columbia’s 20 minute figure led to the LP, RCA’s determination that 5 minutes was the appropriate length for a piece of music led to the 45 rpm “single”. This curious discrepancy reveals how technological constraints shape and determine the formalistic considerations of an artwork.

Moreover, the 45 rpm disc carried over a development from the 78 rpm format: the multi-record changer which was introduced in 1949, priced to compete with Columbia's LP player. Because both formats used a similarly sized groove – around 1 millimetre – both types of disc could be played on the same player with minor modifications (the only significant challenge being the difference in the size of the hole in the centre of the disc, which was easily solved with an adapter still used on record players today). Consequently, “unlike the battle between cylinders and discs in earlier decades, the War of Speeds resulted in a compromise” whereby both formats were able to survive together (Morton 139). The 78 rpm format, however, was gone by the 1960s: the last 78 rpm disc pressed by a major American record company was Chuck Berry's “Too Pooped To Pop”, released in 1960.⁶⁰

In the “War Of Speeds” that broke out between the two competing formats, RCA-Victor launched a massive \$2 million advertising campaign to promote their 45 rpm format and sold their machines “at prices close to cost to ensure a wide circulation” (Elborough 38; Schicke 126). Nonetheless, the public's reaction indicated an initial victory for Columbia's LP:

It was apparent that music on 33 1/3 was cheaper. A Tchaikovsky symphony on [a set of] 78s sold for \$7.28. Columbia was able to issue the symphony on a single long-playing record retailing for \$4.85. Though the cost of music on 45 [rpm] discs averaged about the same as the long-playing record, no-one wanted to contend with changing record sides every three or four minutes. And storing a symphony or a complete opera on 45s was about as easy as trying to find space on a shelf for a small accordion. (Schicke 127)

Ostensibly, the use of automatic record changers negated the problem of physically changing sides. As Milner notes, “RCA had designed a special record changer that could hold eight stacked 45s, with as little as one second elapsing between one disc ending and the needle dropping on the next. That meant 32 minutes of almost uninterrupted music” (135). Furthermore, RCA contended that the higher rotation speed enabled the 45 to produce a higher quality sound than the LP: “But it didn't matter. The New York Times critic Howard Taubman spoke for many record buyers in 1950 when he admitted that although many 45s were aurally superior, he preferred LPs for their ‘sheer listening comfort and continuity of performances’” (Milner 137). The end result was that, ironically, the acoustically superior 45 rpm format became the standard format for pop releases whereas LPs dominated the classical market (Katz 35; Milner 137). The two vinyl formats reigned over the

⁶⁰ An exceptional holdover, however, was a track on Wow, the 1968 LP released by the San Francisco based psychedelic rock group Moby Grape that required playback at 78 rpm.

recording until the emergence of a new format, that of tape, after World War II. However, before moving on to a discussion of the effects of tape-recording, it is worth examining how the recording industry used advertising to appeal to a concern on the part of the consumer with the phonograph's representation of reality and, moreover, the fidelity to the original, recorded sound. The heralded fidelity to the original, in many respects, serves to conceal the fact that the reproduced sound is very much a construction of the recording media, a condition furthered by the development of stereophonic recording.

3. Nipper, reality, and stereo.

One of the innovations in the marketing of the phonograph and other similar devices was the use of advertising to tap into the newly conceived mass market, and this advertising focused on pointing to the indistinguishability between recordings and real life. When Berliner and Eldridge Johnson, the machinist who had improved the gramophone by adding a clockwork motor to replace the fiddlesome hand crank, set up the Victor Talking Machine Company to market gramophones and recordings, they had adopted a corporate mascot in the now-iconic image of a small dog listening to a gramophone (specifically Victor's Improved Gramophone). Captioned "His Master's Voice", the image was originally a painting by an English artist named Francis James Barraud. The original version, as completed in 1898, depicted a small dog, Nipper, listening to an Edison Phonograph. Denied exhibition at the Royal Academy, Barraud then attempted to sell his work to the Edison Bell Company who demurred on the grounds that "Dogs don't listen to phonographs" (Østergaard). Eventually, the painting made its way to the offices of the English Gramophone Company where William Barry Owen offered to purchase it with the proviso that the Edison Phonograph be replaced with the disc-based gramophone. In 1900, the new image was trademarked by Berliner and used in promotional material for the gramophone and its recordings quickly becoming one of the most recognizable trademarks of the twentieth century, living on to this day as the corporate mascot of HMV music stores (whose name is an acronym of "His Master's Voice").

Aside from showing the importance of advertising in the newly developing world of mass culture, the image expresses some of the important theoretical ramifications of the new technology. The dog's quizzical look while regarding the strange device signifies a confusion, an inability to distinguish between his master's real voice and this mechanical facsimile. Since the dog is ostensibly responding to the sound on the disc, the reproduction of the voice has usurped the commandeering

position of the original, creating a crisis in authenticity. In this instance, the recorded sound of a thing stands in and replaces the “real thing”. Moreover, Nipper represents for the consumer who, in the producer-oriented regime of industrial mass culture, is rendered passive and servile. The communication stream opened up by the phonograph is unidirectional; it is not a form of reciprocal dialogue, but rather an authoritative monologue (of the producer) to be received by the consumer: his master’s voice. In The Recording Angel, Evan Eisenberg offers some thoughts on the subject:

The immense popularity of the HMV logo suggests the following things. That we feel like dumb animals before the phonograph, cocking our ears in consternation. That we are not masters of the voice, but the other way around. That the owner of the voice is dear to us, that we miss and would like to see and sniff him. That if the disc is faithful to the master, we will be faithful to the disc. (52)

Eisenberg goes on to draw parallels between Barraud’s iconic painting and other images featuring listening subjects with heads tilted in deliberation: “In each case the listening figure is fascinated, but also a little anxious as to who or where his real master might be” (52). Indeed, the record heard by the dog is not the master, but rather a representation of the master: a stand-in to emphasize the absence of the master. Yet since the dog responds to the recording of the master’s voice as much as he presumably would respond to the actual, present “in-the-flesh” voice, the recording usurps the place of the master, rendering the “original” unnecessary and irrelevant. This erasure of the original and its replacement by the copy is in line with Jean Baudrillard’s idea of the simulacrum: the copy with no original. Whereas the poor sound quality of early recordings left no doubt as to their derivative nature, the improved sound quality, particularly after the institution of the electrical process, threatened the distinction between the original and its copy, precisely the confusion dramatized in the Nipper painting. As Baudrillard writes: “It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real” (Simulacra 2).

This question of the authenticity of the copy is also dramatized to humorous effect in the Marx Brothers film Monkey Business (1931). Having illicitly stowed away on a trans-Atlantic voyage, when the four brothers disembark, they must take on the identity of a legitimate, authorized passenger, namely that of the French singer and actor Maurice Chevalier, in order to proceed through customs and immigration. To this end, the brothers have stolen Chevalier’s passport while on the ship (Chevalier himself does not appear in the film). Zeppo Marx attempts to pass himself off as Chevalier with the purloined passport, but the ruse is undone when he offers to prove his

identity by singing. The customs officer is not fooled, and Zeppo is sent to the back of the line. Once at the back of the line, the stolen passport is recirculated between the brothers. As with Zeppo, Chico and Groucho Marx's attempts at impersonating Chevalier are similarly rejected. Harpo Marx, however, tries a different approach. The famously mute Marx Brother once again presents the customs officer with Chevalier's passport, but when it comes time to sing, Harpo instead appropriates Chevalier's voice by means of a concealed phonograph to which he ventriloquizes Chevalier's voicing of the song "You Brought A New Kind Of Love To Me" from the 1930 film The Big Pond.

Like the phonograph, Harpo has no voice of his own and to speak he must therefore appropriate the voice of another. In appropriating Chevalier's voice, Harpo also appropriates Chevalier's identity: the absent Chevalier is rendered present by his phonographic simulation. In this instance, the phonograph serves not just as an extension of both Harpo's and Chevalier's voice, but also and moreover as a supplementary substitution for both voices. It speaks in place of Harpo and takes the place of Chevalier, and by doing so, the phonograph allows Chevalier to take the place of Harpo and vice versa.

The illusion fails, however, when the wind-up portable phonograph begins to lose its wound-up power. Chevalier's singing consequently slows down and lowers in pitch, deconstructing the technological simulation and revealing its difference from the "live" original even though this original (Chevalier himself) is not present in the scene to verify the falseness of the copy. The ability of the record to simulate the original Chevalier is limited only by the technological stringencies of the medium: if Harpo had a portable compact disc player, perhaps the ruse may have been more successful. Nonetheless, the customs officer's as a result of the marked discrepancy between the human being in front of him and the picture in the forged passport is somewhat assuaged until the phonograph reaches its technological limitations. When the machine plays its record faithfully, the confused officer repeatedly checks the passport and is seemingly unable to reconcile the visual difference with the audible similarity. This confusion is also represented in the scene as Harpo both prefaces and postscripts his failed phonograph demonstration by anarchically disordering the mass of official documentation at the customs and immigration table in the port. The means of verifying identity by texts (either the passport and other official documents or the document of the record) are thrown into disarray by Harpo's re-performance of Chevalier.

The triumph of the recorded copy over the "live" original was foreshadowed in the very first public demonstrations of the phonograph: "In 1913, Edison finally introduced a disc record, and

late in 1915 his company began a combination demonstration and marketing campaign called the tone tests. These public tests, held in music halls, challenged the audience to detect whether a performance was live or a recording. Both the artist and the recording of the artist were hidden behind a curtain. Sometimes the audience could tell [the difference] and sometimes it could not” (Morton 60). Often the tests consisted of a duet between the live performer and their recording, and the record would play continuously while the singer would periodically cease. This cessation was not audibly evident, however, as it was solely through the visual cues of the spectacle that audience perceived the illusion: “As the mechanical [contralto singer Christine] Miller sang, flesh-and-blood Miller continued her bait-and-switch. The audience craned forward to see when her lips stopped moving. It was the only way they could tell when she wasn’t singing” (Milner 5-6). During the final portion of the tone test, the stage lights would be extinguished or a curtain drawn so that, bereft of any visual evidence, the audience could not distinguish between the “real” live performance and its mechanical copy.

The intended effect of these tone tests was to demonstrate that the mechanical copy was identical to its real referent. A closer examination of the tone tests reveals, however, that it was not so much a case of the record offering a perfect reproduction of an *a priori* “real” performance as an example of the recorded performance being the “real” against which the live performance is judged. The singers who participated in the tests conditioned their vocal performances to approximate the performance of the record: “While the phonograph played, the singer would strive to imitate the sonic characteristics of the record, such as the ‘pinched’ quality it lent to voices. This was a subtle inversion of the whole point of the tone tests, which was to show that it could imitate life perfectly. In practice, the tone tests posited the sound of the machine as the baseline, and subsumed the sound of ‘reality’ within it” (Milner 7). The position of the record as the normative baseline is implicitly reinforced by fact of the record playing constantly throughout the test with the singer’s voice only intermittently emerging from the stage. In order to preserve the record’s primacy, singers would have to modulate their voice to accommodate the machine’s pre-eminence. As Anna Case, an opera singer who took part at the most famous tone test at Carnegie Hall in 1920, remembered: “I remember I stood right by the machine. The audience was there, and there was nobody on stage with me. The machine played and I sang with it. Of course, if I had sung loud, it would have been louder than the machine, but I gave my voice the same quality as the machine so they couldn’t tell” (qtd. in Milner 7). The ultimate aim of Edison’s project, however, was not simple equivalency between live and recorded sound, but rather the supersedence of the former by the latter. As he

wrote in a 1913 article for Cosmopolitan: “I shall yet put before the world a phonograph that will render whole operas better than the singers themselves could sing in a theater. I shall do this by virtue of the fact that with a phonograph I can record the voices better than any person in a theater can hear them” (qtd. in Coleman 26). Though the acoustically recorded Diamond Disc format that Edison demonstrated at the tone tests was ultimately commercially unsuccessful, the tone tests demonstrated a desire on the part of the recording industry to have the recording supersede the recorded original as the benchmark of “reality”. The recording – the putative copy – usurps the position of the real.

The format of the Edison tone test – the comparison of a recording against its live counterpart in order to purportedly erase the difference between the two – became the model for subsequent tests designed to demonstrate further evolutions in sound recording which would allow the recording to out-realize the live performer. The amplification that resulted from the electrical recording process increased the volume and frequency range and was held by advocates of the Edisonian process of acoustic recording to be a distortion of the original recorded sound. Though electrical recording improved the sound quality of records, it was able to do so by enabling the documentation not only of the performance, but also its physical context. In the early 1930s, the conductor Leopold Stokowski, already enamoured with the new electrical process, orchestrated a collaboration between Bell Labs and the Philadelphia Orchestra which saw some experimentation with stereophonic recording. By separating the high and low frequencies into two channels, Stokowski and the Bell engineers were able to capture not only a sound in and of itself, but also convey the physical space in which it was played and recorded. As Stokowski described in his write-up for The Atlantic Monthly, this system was a closer analog of the human sensory apparatus:

The microphone is a kind of electric ear, but the microphone is a *single* circuit or means of carrying the sound to us. To convey music with full and true auditory perspective, we should have, in my opinion, double circuits which could be made to correspond to our method of hearing with two ears and which would give us the tonal spaciousness and beauty of sound that make music so satisfying in a large and well-planned auditorium. (qtd. in Milner 66)

However, this “true auditory perspective” also enabled the listener to be deceived: what was seemingly heard was not exactly what was recorded. Though the placement of two microphones on either side of the stage allowed for the reproduction of the spatial arrangement of the instruments in the stereo mix, the amplification of sound enabled the recording to magnify the performance so that

six violins could be made to sound like 40 (Milner 66). When this new process was demonstrated at a meeting of the Institute of Radio Engineers and the Society of Motion Picture Engineers in a Manhattan theatre in 1931, the composer Deems Taylor described the “realness” of what he heard compared to the records of the day: “One can only say, rather lamely, that the voices became real. The difference between what we usually hear and what I heard was, roughly, the difference between looking at a photograph of somebody and looking at the person himself” (qtd. in Milner 67).

Though they were not offered to the consumer market until after World War II, stereophonic recordings were marketed on this concept of fidelity: that because stereo produced a sense of three-dimensionality to recordings, it constituted a more faithful reproduction of the sound as it was heard in the room. The illusion of three-dimensionality produced by stereophonic sound, however, was not necessarily closer to the original sound-performance. Morton describes a stereo-listening test conducted in the 1950s in which a live band was picked up by a pair of microphones and the stereo signal sent to a group of listeners in another room who were then charged with identifying the placement of the instruments on stage (a task made more difficult by the fact that the relative placement of the musicians in the stereo mix could be altered by moving the microphones around)⁶¹. Although the listeners were able to discern the placement of the various individual instruments, they were not able to pick out the precise location of each on stage: “In other words, while most listeners found the stereophonic effect pleasing, it was rarely able to accurately re-create the original placement of performers. It was, therefore, more of a distortion of the original sound than a step toward higher fidelity” (Morton 147). Nonetheless, stereophonic recording created the illusion of presence, of being in the same space as the performers: “a recorded sound with presence did more than just capture the music perfectly. It captured the sound of music made in a specific space. ... [A] final refutation of the Edisonian belief that recording should only document the sound of music as heard in a flat, non-reverberating utopia” (Milner 139).

Despite these advances, stereo recordings did not find their way to the consumer market until after World War II when the development of tape recording and multitracking revolutionized the recording studio. Until Westrex, a subsidiary of Western Electric, developed a stereophonic disc cutter, the only format that could duplicate stereophonic sound was expensive reel-to-reel tape, and even then it was sound effects and not music that were produced (recordings of table tennis games,

⁶¹ Although Morton does not refer to a specific tone test event, Milner describes a similar specific event that occurred at Carnegie Hall in 1955 that matches Morton’s description except that what was heard was not a live performance, but a recording. Moreover, the test was reportedly a failure: “Many were disappointed by how poor taped music sounded compared with the live performance (139).

for example, were quite common)⁶². The first musician to popularize the stereophonic recording of music was the bandleader Enoch Light, whose 1959 album Persuasive Percussion was frequently used to demonstrate hi-fi audio equipment. Because musical performers on stage do not exhibit the same amount of radical spatial movement as, say, a train pulling into a station or a ping-pong ball, Light used stereo not to create an accurate reproduction of a staged performance, but rather to create spatial arrangements of sound that had no counterpart in reality. For example, percussionist Terry Snyder had his bongos recorded in such a way that one bongo was entirely on the left channel while the other was entirely on the right. Moreover, throughout the record instruments move abruptly from side to side.

The result of these effects, which would be copied and reproduced by records that followed, was to create point-of-view for the listener that did not correspond to any point-of-view that could possibly exist in the real world. Though several decades of marketing had persuaded the public that the advances in sound recording were moving ever closer to a perfect approximation of “the real thing”, what in effect was happening was the erasure of an a priori reality to be documented and the replacement of that reality with the decidedly unreal products of the modern recording studio, a technological assemblage enabled by the development of audiotape.

4. Magnetic recording and tape.

The principles of recording on a magnetized medium go back to the turn of the twentieth century. In 1898, a Danish inventor, Valdemar Poulsen began experimenting with recording sound on a steel wire. Anticipating the electrical process, Poulsen used a telephone transmitter to generate a variable electrical signal from acoustic waves. This signal then powered an electromagnet which, in turn, would act upon a long thread of steel wire. With the signal magnetically encoded upon the wire, the sound could be replayed by simply reversing the process so that the magnetized wire would act upon the electromagnet, which would, in turn, power a telephone receiver (Morton 50). Poulsen demonstrated his invention throughout the early decades of the twentieth century and attracted

⁶² Famously, at the January 1953 Audio Fair held in Los Angeles, Ampex set up an exhibit featuring the stereo recording of train played back through three separated speakers each reproducing the signal from three specially placed microphones at a station in the San Fernando Valley: “The way the three microphones had been spaced far apart, so that as the train moved the signal faded in one channel and grew stronger in the next, created the very real sensation of a train bearing down on the listener” (Milner 143-144).

interest from AT&T; however, the new technology was difficult to both make and use, and by 1919 experimentation with the device had ceased.

Throughout the 1930s, however, work began again on magnetized recording for military applications such as storing radar images for later study (Morton 106-108). While magnetic recording was used by journalists in World War II because of compactness and sturdiness in the face of environmental exigencies, it was in Nazi Germany – where magnetic recorders were used to monitor citizens' telephone conversations – that the technology saw its highest development. Because the medium of steel wire or tape was contingent on steel imported from Sweden, Germany saw a national interest in developing a recording system that could be made from entirely domestic components. The result was the magnetophon which replaced the steel medium with a plastic tape covered in iron particles developed by the BASF division of the chemical conglomerate I.G. Farben (Morton 113-114). After the war, this technology was discovered by the Field Intelligence Agency Technical (FIAT), a program set up to seek out and appropriate useful German technology. The Rangertone device, developed by the lead FIAT investigator in tape-recording technology, Signal Corps Colonel Richard H. Ranger, was based on the German magnetophon, and a similar device was manufactured by Ranger's civilian colleague John H. Orr in Alabama after the war.

With the declassification of FIAT technical reports in 1945, various companies such as Rangertone, Orr's Orradio Industries, Ampex Corporation, and the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company (3M) began manufacturing recording tape and tape recorders (Morton 120-121). These American companies were able to improve on the tape produced by German companies. Not only was sound quality improved, but the speed with which the tape passed under the recording head was reduced from 30 inches per second to 15 and even 7 ½ inches per second, effectively quadrupling the amount of material that could be stored on a reel of tape (Schicke 117). The advantages of lower-speed recording with regards to recording length are offset by the fact that recording at a lower speed (and thus maximizing tape room) produces recordings of lower quality (Morton 121). Nonetheless, these recorders were used by radio broadcasters to improve sound quality over disc recordings and, in the wake of increased post-war competition from the new medium of television, to enable a low cost means of providing pre-recorded content (Morton 123-124). Moreover, "the recorder's most appealing feature for radio was that it was virtually impossible for the listener to distinguish between a taped broadcast and a 'live' broadcast. Mistakes made during broadcasts or recording sessions could be easily cut out of a tape and corrections inserted without the audience being any the wiser" (Schicke 117).

Tape recorders had their most significant effect, however, in the recording studio, and their usage there constituted to biggest advance in recording technology since the electrical process. As Morton writes: “The use of electrical recording also helped force out the old traditions of the acoustic ‘recordists’ who focused on capturing every nuance of sound in high fidelity. Through all of this, however, it remained necessary for performers to deliver a perfect or near-perfect song in the studio, without the possibility of later editing. This remained the pattern through the end of the 1940s” (141). Compared to the older practice of recording on disc, tape allowed recorded performances to be more easily manipulated after the recording had been completed. Moreover, tape recording also allowed for the possibility of overdubbing, the process of adding another performance on top of one already recorded on the tape. This practice was pioneered, though not necessarily invented, by the guitarist Les Paul⁶³ who “installed in his home studio an Ampex tape recorder capable of recording eight parallel tracks on a 2-inch-wide tape” in 1956 (Morton 148). Multitrack recording, as inaugurated by Les Paul, enabled musicians to approach the studio as a locus of composition where musical pieces could be worked out and tinkered with as they were being recorded. Even before the full adoption of multitrack recording, Jack Clement, an engineer for Sam Phillips’ Sun Records made heavy use of a mixing board which allowed for the selective addition of echo by splitting the electric signal from the microphone and rerouting part of that signal through a second, unloaded tape recorder in order to delay that part of the signal. By applying it to, for example, a snare drum part, Clement used this echo to create “a shadow rhythm” and stated, “To me, that board was musical instrument” (Milner 152).

Musicians could now create recordings, such as the Beach Boys’ “Good Vibrations” and the Beatles’ Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, that were not simple documents of a live, real-time performance. If stereo allowed for the manipulation of space, then the development of multitrack recording allowed for the same manipulation of time as, through the process of overdubbing, individual performances occurring at different moments in time can be played back simultaneously. As Eisenberg states: “The word ‘record’ is misleading. Only live recordings record an event⁶⁴; studio recordings, which are the great majority, record nothing. Pieced together from bits of actual events, they construct an ideal event. They are like the composite photograph of a minotaur” (89). An example of just such a minotaur can be seen in the Beatles’ 1967 recording “Strawberry Fields

⁶³ Though Les Paul is often popularly credited with the development of multitrack recording, as Milner points out, the development is more creditable to the engineers at Ampex, in particular one Ross Snyder, who first built a recorder with multiple tape heads for recording and playback (see Milner 156-157).

⁶⁴ And even then, many live recordings are mixed and adjusted after the fact.

Forever” that was constructed from multiple takes, none of which alone was satisfactory. The released recording was a splice of the first half of Take 7, recorded November 29, 1966, and the second half of Take 26, recorded December 9, 1966. Unfortunately, these two preferred takes were in different keys and tempos, but, fortuitously when one was sped up to match the tempo of the other, the pitches also matched. The end result was a pastiche that, when coupled with the panning and phasing effects added to the track in post-production, did not have the material counterpart of an originary, live performance (Katz 41-42; Lewisohn 30). The song’s chorus contains the apt lyric that in “Strawberry Fields / Nothing is real,” and, indeed, like all other multitrack recordings assembled in the studio, the performance memorialized on the record was not a real-time performance, but an assemblage of such performances composited artificially in the studio after the fact. Such recordings are simulacra in that they document an original performance that never really existed.

The use of multitrack tape recording in the studio further distanced the recording from the process of representing a performance. The result is that a recorded performance is no longer tied to particular temporal sequence; instead it can be an assemblage of a multiplicity of performances distended over time. An illustrative example of this is Natalie Cole’s 1991 recording of “Unforgettable”, a song previously recorded by her father, Nat “King” Cole in 1951 and again in 1961. Natalie Cole’s vocal performance was inserted into a remixed and re-edited version of her father’s 1961 performance to create a duet that spanned three decades (Katz 42). Multitracking therefore has the effect of undermining the unity of a recorded performance, replacing the single performance with a plurality. As such, the recording no longer refers back to an anterior, original performance, but rather produces the performance as an artificial construct after the fact in the studio.

Recording is dislocated from the process of representation and instead shifts into production and performance itself as the recorded performance, in flagrant disregard for the notions of fidelity that were of central concern to the acoustic recordists, no longer carries any reference to the “real”. As Morton describes:

The use of multitrack recorders transformed the recording process. It became routine for performers recording a song to make not one recording of a complete song but many partial recordings. The resulting recordings were not simply improved versions of studio performances; they were constructed or synthesized from a collection of components, assembled from pieces like any other complex, technological product. As such, they could

not usually be performed outside the studio, such as when a band played live before an audience. By the 1960s, especially in rock and roll, performers were creating records that were so far removed from what was possible to perform live that onstage renditions of recording were sometimes barely recognizable to audiences. Tape had become something of a musical instrument, but one that was difficult or impossible to “play” anywhere else but the studio. (150-151)

This instrumentality of the studio also shifts the production of the recorded performance away from the live, instrumental performer to the technicians of the studio. It injects a multiplicity of voices into the record text, voices, such as those of the sound engineer or the mix engineer, that because of their behind-the-scenes nature are not readily apparent to the listening consumer⁶⁵. The recorded text is no longer a product of an individual performer or group, but rather of the whole technical assemblage of the studio and its plethora of technicians.

5. Cassettes and tape players.

While tape recorders were used extensively by industry, the consumer market was largely undeveloped beyond a niche market amongst audiophiles for reel-to-reel tape machines, although this market was necessarily constrained by the high cost of both tape-players and reel-to-reel tapes. In 1959, Ampex introduced a model that brought tape reels down to prices comparable to those for records. This Ampex machine still had the drawback of requiring consumers to thread tape from one reel to another before playback, but this problem was solved with the development of tape cartridges which eliminated the necessity of continually threading the tape in the spools (Schicke 151-152). Various forms of tape cartridges were introduced in the 1960s with the primary goal of bringing recorded sound to the automobile (Morton 158-160).⁶⁶ The Stereo-8 cartridge did make unauthorized duplication somewhat more feasible, as the necessary equipment was “relatively inexpensive compared to disc-stamping machinery” (Morton 179), but it was still in the purview of professional counterfeiting organizations. The Compact Cassette format was introduced by Phillips in 1964, and though it initially featured a much lower sound quality than contemporary LPs (at least until the development of Dolby noise reductions techniques in the 1970s), its selling points were its

⁶⁵ An obvious exception to this caveat would be dub producers such as King Tubby and Lee “Scratch” Perry who are often given authorial credit for their works ahead of the recorded performers (see below).

⁶⁶ Several attempts had been made to make a phonograph record player that would work in a car, but none were successful.

portability and, perhaps more fundamentally, its recordability. Indeed, as pre-recorded cassettes (unlike their 8-Track competitors) were unavailable until the late 60s, early cassette decks were used – primarily by children – to make home recordings, often dubs of LPs or radio broadcasts (Morton 162).

The emergent popularity of the cassette deck in the 1970s saw in part the return of sound recording technology to its originally intended use of allowing consumers to make their own recordings. Edison's phonograph lost its recording horn with the development of the disc in the late 1880s and the concomitant emphasis on providing consumers with prerecorded media. The development of tape recording after World War II, however, saw the recording function restored to the consumer. Initially, the intent was to make recorded sound mobile by allowing consumers to listen to recordings in their cars. A California entrepreneur, Earl Muntz, created the Muntz Stereo-Pak – a forerunner of the 8-Track cartridge – to be installed as “an exciting automotive accessory” whose appeal “lay in its capacity to allow consumers greater control over the music they listened to in the car” (Morton 159). Tape cartridges freed consumers from the tyranny of the radio playlist (as well as removing the annoyance of radio commercials), but despite its potential for the making of home copies, the technology still relied on the centralized production of pre-recorded cartridges. The later innovation of the compact cassette prompted consumers to make their own copies of records to listen to in the car, and by 1975, “over 162 million blank cassettes were sold in the United States alone, representing about 80 percent of the market for blank recording media (most of the rest representing sales of blank 8-tracks and open-reel tapes)” (Morton 164).

Morton goes on to attribute the success of the cassette format (which, by the late 1970s was beginning to cut into vinyl sales) to a shift in consumer behaviour conditioned by the changing technology. Just as the introduction of the phonograph record produced a demand for professional recorded music over live, amateur music produced on the home piano, the cassette prompted consumers to exercise greater control over the music they listened to through the now possible processes of selection and dubbing. Berliner's initial vision of a vast market of passive consumers who receive standardized pre-recorded content was in jeopardy:

Underlying the cassette's success is a change in consumer behaviour that foreshadowed changes to come. Enthusiasm for making recordings, in addition to listening to them, emerged in the 1960s among very young consumers for cheap tape recorders, but was gradually transferred to a broader segment of the public by the 1970s, perhaps as the children of the 1960s grew up. Home recording was not an end in itself for most

consumers, but a way to create mobile versions of the music they liked. During these same years, consumers were moving beyond the level of portability permitted by transistor and auto radios, and embracing the habit of choosing their own music for mobile listening (although radio listening also remained very popular). The perceived need for choice and mobility that helped the cassette rise to commercial dominance would profoundly shape the development of virtually every subsequent audio technology as well. (164-165)

Cassette dubbing had the effect of turning every listener, or at least every listener equipped with a cassette deck, into a potential disc jockey with the “promise of freedom of selection” (Coleman 161). Consumers were now able to program their own musical selections, thus undermining the record industry’s status as cultural programmer and giving rise to a whole counter-industry of user-generated “mixtapes” that would serve in the 1980s as powerful means of dissemination for otherwise marginalized musical genres such as hip hop and punk.

In his history of hip hop, Jeff Chang describes how the private circulation of recordings of early hip hop performances was the primary means by which the new musical genre disseminated itself beyond the Bronx neighbourhoods of its inception:

Live bootleg cassette tapes of Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, Flash and Furious 5, the L Brothers, the Cold Crush Brothers and others were the sound of the OJ Cabs that took folks across the city. The tapes passed hand-to-hand in the Black and Latino neighborhoods of Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, Queens and Long Island’s Black Belt. Kids in the boroughs were building sound systems and hold rap battles with the same fervor the Bronx once possessed all to itself. (127-128)

This practice emphasizes the power of the portable and dubbable cassette. Not only does it illustrate the relationship between cassettes and automobiles (the tapes were not only played in, but also sold out of the OJ Cabs), but it also shows the ease with which cassettes could be copied in the home without needing any specialized industry equipment. This ease meant that for the first time a consumer-created counter-industry could be created. Until the popularization of home cassette decks, musical piracy was by and large the domain of industrial scale outfits (often sub-contractors to record labels). Now, the ability to mass-reproduce sound recordings was now achievable in the home, thus prompting such industry led movements as “Home Taping Is Killing Music”.

The campaign against home taping was ostensibly aimed at stopping consumers from directly copying albums which would thus result in decreased album sales as consumers could dub their own for the simple cost of a blank cassette. Coleman notes that “for a while in the mid 1970s,

FM radio facilitated home taping with midnight ‘album hours.’ Indeed, many stations would actually broadcast a tone so that everyone could set their meters accordingly” (161). The record industry’s assertion that such practices constituted a mortal threat to record sales (the Record Industry Association of America claimed in 1978 that “its members lost \$500 million a year because of home taping on analog cassettes” (Morton 182)), was countered by independent studies, such as one conducted by the Copyright Royalty Tribunal in the early 1980s, that suggested otherwise: “The results indicated that home tapers purchased the most recorded music” (Coleman 159-160). Indeed, the phenomenon of home taping was difficult to prevent through litigation because since “few consumers tried to sell the recordings they made, charges that they had violated copyright laws seemed untenable” (Morton 182). Indeed, in a 1984 decision, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the home videotaping of a television program (and therefore home audiotaping) did not violate copyright.

Nonetheless, the industry’s insistence on a tax on blank cassettes and tape recorders effectively lumped together for punitive purposes individuals making pirated counterfeits from LPs or radio broadcasts with consumers anthologizing their listening tastes for private circulation. In the Thurston Moore edited Mix Tape: The Art of Cassette Culture, critic Matias Viegner describes the mixtape as

a form of American folk art: predigested cultural artifacts combined with homespun technology and magic markers turn the mix tape to a message in a bottle. I am no mere consumer of pop culture, it says, but also a producer of it. Mix tapes mark the moment of consumer culture in which listeners attained control over what they heard, in what order and at what cost. It liberated us from music stores and radios in the same way radios and recordings liberated generations earlier from the need to be present at the performance of live music. (35)

Indeed, Coleman suggests that it was this very agency and control on the part of the consumer with regards to cultural products that provoked the resistance from the record industry: “Perhaps the deeper threat behind home taping was this implicit act of consumer empowerment, the ability to select; and indeed a deadly threat was exactly what the record industry made of the cassette trade. Home taping gave listeners the power to program. Call it freedom of choice” (160). Matias Viegner goes on to place the mix tape in the poetic tradition of quotation that reaches back to the centos of late antiquity:

The mix tape is a list of quotations, a poetic form in fact: the cento is a poem made up of lines pulled from other poems. The new poet collects and remixes. Similarly an operation of taste, it is also cousin to the curious passion of the obsessive collector. Unable to express himself in a “pure” art, the collector finds himself in obsessive acquisition. Collecting is strangely hot and cold, passionate and calculating. All we can agree upon is that it’s not the same as making art. Or is it? (35)

In effect, the mixtape is a form of consumer writing: a text made up of the consumer’s listening to demonstrate a virtuosity of consumption. The mix tape takes the traditional role of the radio DJ as selector and promoter and resituates it in a private – to the point of intimacy – one-on-one relationship. Conceptually, the work of mixtape compiler who assemble choice tracks for personal anthologization (often as a form of romantic courtship in which the works of others are appropriated and ventriloquized like in *Cyrano de Bergerac*) is also similar to the work of a sampling DJs, such as DJ Shadow, who create new compositions from the parts of extant works.

DJ Shadow’s second full-length album was titled The Private Press in reference to the practice of making mix tapes. The interior artwork featured a detail of a photograph of a large collection of home-made tapes. The tapes are arranged in a row of neat stacks with the spines facing outward enabling the viewer to read the labels. Some are printed, but most feature elaborate hand-made labels that mimic the stylized text of graffiti. The rows of stacks exceed the frame of the photograph as if to suggest that the detail offered is but one section of a periodized and seemingly infinite series of tapes, like one single hexagon in Borges’ Library of Babel. The tapes themselves are recordings of mixes and hip hop sets that act as a musical biography of DJ Shadow himself: in addition to recordings of concerts by rap artists such as N.W.A. and II Live Crew, there are tapes labelled “Late ’97 Funk/Soul”, “Early ’96 Funk/Soul”, “DJ Shadow Feb ’99 Routine Practice Runs”, “UNKLE Demos”⁶⁷, and so on. Tapes of other people’s work are interspersed with DJ Shadow’s own recorded practice mixes, which suggests a communal pool of quotation and selection. Furthermore, the image is broken up: one half is on the tray card, the other on the back of the liner notes with, for the CD release at least, the disc’s spine in between so that the total panorama is disjointed and fragmented.

The cassette restored the ability to make and compile recordings to the consumer, but despite its popularity, it did not supplant the vinyl record (primarily the LP) as the dominant format

⁶⁷ UNKLE is a DJ Shadow side project. Initially a collaboration between the disc jockey and Mo’Wax label head James Lavelle, which saw the release of the 1998 record Psyence Fiction, UNKLE now continues on under the sole aegis of Lavelle.

for recorded sound. Vinyl, however, would be challenged with the introduction of the compact disc in the early 1980s. The advent of digitization made possible by this new technology also constituted a shift in the ontology of recording equal to that effected in the switch from acoustic to electrical recording in the 1920s. Moreover, digitization also enabled the MP3 which would further expand the consumer's agency in receiving and disseminating cultural products (in the form of audio recordings). This increased agency has led to further efforts on the part of the increasingly challenged copyright regime to curtail the transgressive, unauthorized distribution of texts.

F. Digital Sound, MP3s, and the Resurgence of Vinyl

1. The compact disc and digital audio.

The shift in the 1920s from acoustic to electric recording opened up new possibilities for sound recording and ultimately led to the development of tape and multitrack recording that revolutionized the role of the recording studio in the production of sound. Another shift of equal ontological importance began in the early 1980s with the development of digital recording. Whereas electrical recording transformed the acoustic sound wave into a variable electrical signal, the development of digital audio and the compact disc format in turn translated the electro-magnetic signal into a binary, digital code made up of a series of 1's and 0's. On the one hand, this further translation increased and facilitated the possibilities for after-the-fact manipulation of a sound while also offering improved sound quality; on the other hand, digital audio also reiterates questions first raised during the transition between acoustic and electric recorded over the "reality" of what is recorded. Consequently, proponents of the older, analog system make arguments based on ideas of authenticity and reality similar to those used by the Edisonian proponents of acoustic recording in the 1920s. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, the new compact disc format supplanted vinyl as the dominant format for music, but at the same time it also produced a backlash leading to the modest resurgence of the vinyl format in the new millennium. This resurgence is of particular significance due to the ascendance of the MP3 format, which dispenses with the necessity of physical media altogether.

The compact disc was the fruit of a collaboration between the Japanese Sony and the Dutch Philips corporations. Philips, working with the American firm MCA, had developed a 12-inch disc that held 25 minutes of audio and video in 1977. Although the technological means for doing so go back to the 1930s invention of Pulse Code Modulation, in which an ordinary audio signal could be converted into a digital signal, digital audio recording had been largely unexplored until the 1960s when Sony developed a digital recorder that recorded audio on to tape via a Betamax VCR (Morton 171-172). When Sony teamed its expertise in audio recording with Philips' knowledge of optics, the compact disc proper – in which audio is stored optically on a plastic disc and read by a laser – was unveiled in 1982. In a curious echo of the contradictory determinations of the proper formal length for a musical work during the speed wars of the late 1940s and 50s, the 74 minute running time of

the compact disc was supposedly determined by Sony because this time was the length of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Milner 211).⁶⁸

For the first two years of their existence, CDs were manufactured in Japan and imported into the United States. In 1984, however, Bruce Springsteen's Born in the U.S.A. appropriately became the first compact disc produced domestically at the newly inaugurated pressing plant in Terre Haute, Indiana (converted from a cassette factory). Milner reports that a public demonstration of the still novel technology at the plant, where the Springsteen album was handed out to attending dignitaries along with a disc of old Edison recordings, was heckled by a passing truck driver shouting "FUUUCK YOOOU!" at the audio spectacle. Theorizing on the anonymous driver's motivations, Milner sums up the opposition to the new format:

The thing is, this guy didn't want "thawed." He didn't want pristine. I imagine his noisy Chevy having a cheap tape deck with dirty heads. As he cruises down Fruitridge, it's playing "Magic Carpet Ride" or "We're an American Band" or "Rainbow in the Dark" or "Photograph."⁶⁹ It sounds grimy, and it sounds good. And now these douches under the tent want to take it away from him. Fuck that! (189)

The truckdriver's complaint has been since rearticulated many times by proponents of vinyl, perhaps most stridently by producer and punk musician Steve Albini, who, in the liner notes to Big Black's final album, Songs About Fucking, stated, "The future belongs to the analog loyalists. Fuck digital." When the group later released an anthology on compact disc, 1987's pointedly titled The Rich Man's Eight Track Tape, Albini's liner notes elaborate the critique of the compact disc with the assertion that the format was little more than a consumerist gimmick fated to be eclipsed by whatever new format comes along in an aim to sell more home audio technology to an expanding market:

This compact disc, compiled to exploit those of you gullible enough to own the bastardly first-generation digital home music system, contains all-analog masters. Compact discs are quite durable, this being their only advantage over real music media, you should take every opportunity to scratch them, finger-print them and eat egg and bacon sandwiches off them. Don't worry about their longevity, as Philips will pronounce them obsolete when the next phase of the market-squeezing technology bonanza begins. ... When, in five years, this remarkable achievement in the advancement of fidelity is obsolete and unplayable on any

⁶⁸ Milner also indicates that this determination is "most likely a digital audio urban legend" (211).

⁶⁹ Songs by Steppenwolf, Grand Funk Railroad, Dio, and Def Leppard, respectively, all hard rock groups.

“modern” equipment, remember: in 1971, the 8-track tape was the state of the art. (qtd. in Milner 196-197)

To Albini, the promise of better sound through technology is an industry lie designed to generate increased sales as consumers are encouraged by the assurance of improved sound quality to purchase new equipment and to buy new copies of recordings they already own in the new format.

Ultimately, however, there is more to the denigration of the compact disc and its digital sound than simply a critique of the consumerism embodied in the shiny compact disc. By replacing the vinyl groove with an optically-read plastic disc, the compact disc removed the background hiss characteristic of vinyl records. Indeed, at early demonstrations of the compact disc, audiences were astounded by the lack of background noise when an Elvis Presley song was played on CD: “After hearing the first words of ‘Love Me’ ... played on a vinyl record, people would gasp when the CD was played for comparison. ‘It electrified people,’ [Robbin Ahrold, then a vice president at RCA] recalls. ‘Because there was no sound, and then all of a sudden there was his voice’” (Milner 218). The selling point with compact discs and digital audio was the sound was presented in full fidelity, free of the distortions and noise of analog media. Furthermore, compact discs have a higher dynamic range than vinyl, being able to carry frequencies of up to 96 decibels compared to the LP’s limit of 70 decibels (Elborough 379).

Sound on a compact disc is stored digitally as a series of microscopic indentations (called “pits”). When “read” by a scanning laser, the difference in height between the “pits” and the “lands” between them creates a difference in the reflection of the laser’s light. The data is thus read as a series of binary 1’s and 0’s that express a 16-bit number that, in turn, represents the amplitude of a sound wave at a given moment. As such, digital audio, unlike the analog groove of a vinyl record, is not a continuous sound, but rather a series of discrete sound moments which, in aggregate, produce a continuous wave through extrapolation. As Milner explains:

The system essentially takes measures of the wave’s amplitude and connects them. Again, if you imagine yourself drawing a sound wave, this time imitating a digital system, you would do it by plotting points on graph paper. What you would have is a jagged “staircase” line. The goal of a digital system is to make the squares on the graph paper small enough so that to the listener the line seems smooth and continuous. (191-192)

In order to make the soundwave seem continuous, the standard CD contains data sampled from the original acoustic source at a rate of 44 100 times a second. The 44.1 kHz sample rate was decided early on by Sony and Philips because it is just over twice the highest frequency discernable by the

human ear. The Nyquist-Shannon sampling theorem states that a sample of audio can always be reconstructed so long as the system is able to take two readings of the sound wave within a given cycle. Frequencies higher than the Nyquist frequency (the highest frequency that a system can sample), however, have to be filtered out as they produce distortion. Leaving aside the technical limitations of the low-pass filters that eliminate these frequencies as well as criticisms that the 44.1 kHz sample rate was too low⁷⁰, the elimination of the high frequencies still results in a degradation of the sound, no matter how imperceptible that degradation may be. The resulting sound is held by audiophiles to be “antiseptic” and “lacking in warmth” (Elborough 382-383). Bob Woods, the sound engineer who helped develop the Soundstream digital recorder for Telarc, emphasizes the necessity of the upper frequencies cut-off by the CD’s 44.1 kHz sampling rate. Even if by themselves, the frequencies are inaudible to the human ear, their presence in the recording is part of the sound’s gestalt: “Even for people with limited hearing, my experience is that if something is missing in the reproduction system, you’ll hear a change in timbre, color, or other qualities that make an instrument sound like what it sounds like” (qtd. in Milner 226). The higher frequencies, though ostensibly indiscernible, make their presence felt through their absence. Consequently, digital media represent a step back from the quest for fidelity to the original sound in the studio, as problematic as that notion of originality may be. As the musician and record label owner Akin Fernandez states:

The reductionists will say that the human ear cannot hear beyond a certain range, so there is no point in saving these frequencies. We say that sound is not only heard, it is also *felt*, and that we should be striving to increase the resolution of our recording and playback, not trying to constrain them for convenience or to fit inside the constraints of the current technology. (qtd. in Milner 226)

Ultimately, therefore, the argument against digital sound rests upon a metaphysics of presence that rests upon a subjective evaluation of a sound: whereas the science behind the Nyquist theorem suggests that the difference is indiscernible, audiophiles maintain the absence’s presence.

More fundamental, however, is the idea that because it is an aggregate of sampled moments and not a continuous wave, digital sound is not an actual trace of an acoustic wave, but rather a digitally mediated reconstruction of a sound. In a 1992 editorial for Guitar Player, reprinted in Harper’s Magazine, Neil Young describes the music of the compact disc as “simulated music” and goes on to explain: “Listening to a CD is like looking through a screen window. If you get tight up

⁷⁰ By comparison, the Soundstream digital recorder, one of the earliest digital recorders, sampled at a 50 kHz rate (Milner 226).

next to a screen window, you can see all kinds of different colors through each hole. Well, imagine if all that color had to be reduced to only one color per hole – that’s what digital recording does to sound. All that gets recorded is what’s dominant at each moment” (23-24). By contrast, the vinyl groove is as contiguous as the original sound wave it reproduces. Even with the higher sampling rates advocated by both Albini and Young among others, the very concept of digital audio demands that a sound be broken down into atomized moments from which the reproduced wave is reconstructed. As such, an analog medium – whether it be magnetic tape or a gramophone record – contains an electro-mechanical transcription of the original sound. Digitization, on the other hand, replaces the original sound wave with a series of 1’s and 0’s that essentially function as instructions on how to reconstruct that sound wave. This comparison recalls the distinction made by John Sousa at the beginning of the sound recording era between a recording and a musical score, with the signifiers of traditional music notation replaced by 16 bit numbers read not by a human player but rather an optical laser. Though the reproduction may be indistinguishable from the original to all but the most stringent audiophiles, the distinction that it is at best a model of the sound, albeit one of near-perfect fidelity, remains at hand.

2. The MP3: disincorporated sound.

The digitization of sound also enables a recording to exist solely as software independent of any physical manifestation in media, as exemplified by the MP3 format. An MP3 file takes the binary information of digital audio and compresses it so that the smaller file size makes it easier to transmit. The compression of digital audio data has its roots in the telephone industry of the early 1970s when “telephone companies digitized an analog signal, then used computer algorithms to mathematically reduce the volume of data” (Morton 189-190). Work done in the late 1980s by the German research consortium Fraunhofer Gesellschaft moved towards developing a means of reducing the bandwidth of a digital audio stream without audibly compromising sound quality. It did this by employing concepts from the science of psychoacoustics:

Psychoacoustics has to do with how the human brain perceives sound, and, more important, which sounds the brain leaves out. For example, whenever two identical sounds hit the ear from two different directions, a human will hear it as a single sound coming from the first direction. This is called the *Haas effect*, and understanding such phenomena allowed the

German team, in essence, to throw out the sounds human ears don't hear and keep the important ones. (Knopper 116)

Armed with this principle, Fraunhofer researchers at the University of Erlangen developed a form of encoding that would allocate smaller amounts of the data stream to background sounds that are, by and large, drowned out by foreground sounds⁷¹. Data reduction by algorithmic compression can be done in a number of different “layers”, and the researchers found that compression becomes audibly noticeable when the data is compressed to between 1/10 and 1/12 of the original size, a level referred to as “layer 3”. When the compression algorithm, patented by Fraunhofer in 1989, was submitted in 1991 to the Moving Pictures Expert Group (MPEG), a subgroup of the International Standards Organization (ISO), it was adopted as the standardized method for compressing digital audio in 1992 with the name “MPEG-1 layer 3”, later abbreviated to simply MP3⁷² (Knopper 117-118; Morton 190-191).

In an event befitting a format that would go on to be the bane of copyright regimes everywhere, the MP3 encoding program was found on and downloaded from the University of Erlangen's unprotected computers by a Dutch programmer operating under the name SoloH, who then made it available online for others to use and improve (Katz 161). Throughout the early and mid-1990s, various sites on the nascent Internet offered the technology as well as archives of compressed files for download. The first widely-used MP3 playing software, Winamp, was released for free in 1997, the same year that saw the launch of mp3.com, a commercial site that provided free downloads of songs by popular artists (Knopper 119; Morton 193). The most popular forum for MP3 distribution, however, were peer-to-peer (P2P) networks such as Napster, which eschewed the traditional form of dissemination of files from a centralized server: “Instead, P2P describes a decentralized network in which each computer has direct access to certain designated files stored on every other computer; the circulation of data among members of a network is known as file-sharing” (Katz 161). While sites such as Napster did not host the actual sound files on their servers, they did host indexes of downloadable files in order to facilitate searching by consumers. It was this fact that enabled Napster to be shut down in July 2001 after intense legal pressure from the record industry. Nonetheless, various other P2P networks such as LimeWire, Kazaa, and SoulSeek have emerged in the wake of Napster's downfall to provide means for listeners to freely download MP3s, the vast majority of which represent copyrighted songs by established artists.

⁷¹ The Suzanne Vega hit “Tom's Diner” was selected as a test track for the compression research because it featured a solo voice with no background accompaniment (Knopper 116).

⁷² The MPEG-1 layer II, or mp2, became the standardized format for video.

It is the wholly digital nature of the MP3 that makes it so amenable to audio piracy. Indeed, the concept of algorithmic compression was developed to not only save storage space, but also to make information more transmissible. Because it makes audio files readily downloadable, MP3-based filesharing renders music, now shorn of its physical body, completely mobile in space: ultimately portable. Furthermore, unlike radio, which, as detailed above, also freely disseminated musical texts and caused a similar consternation in the recording industry in the early twentieth century, file-sharing enables consumers to retain copies of musical texts on their computers to listen to at any time. Furthermore, unlike home-taping and record bootlegging, the digital nature of MP3s enables downloaded copies to be perfect reproductions of their “originals”⁷³. If the development of records made music portable beyond the specific location of its performance, the MP3 carries this idea to its apotheosis, rendering the physical distribution networks created over decades by the music industry obsolete and anachronistic.

3. MP3s and collecting.

Once again, the MP3 ascendancy demonstrates the way that the technological form of a text determines the way in which it is read and, consequently, shapes the art form itself. Since the introduction of the LP record, the music industry has been dominated by the album format; however, because MP3s can be downloaded individually, the concept of a grouping of tracks selected and anthologized together by the producer (whether that “producer” is the artist or the record label) seems to be fading away. Although criticism of the record industry “forcing” consumers to pay for a full record’s worth of songs when they only want to hear a handful of tracks has been long been an issue for the industry, “filesharing reinforces what might be called ‘singles listening’” (Katz 168). By “singles listening”, Katz is referring to a particular kind of atomized listening in which individual tracks stand alone, removed from the gestalt of the anthology or album. The album format, on the other hand, creates a unified experience out of the totality of its tracks. While the “unity” of a given album may be nothing more than the fact that the collected tracks happened to have been recorded by the same artist around the same time, certain albums, such as Bob Dylan’s John Wesley Harding, do exhibit a unified sound and thematic concern, whereas

⁷³ It should be noted, however, that owing to the compressed nature, the MP3 is, conceptually at least, a degradation from the original CD audio. As in the debate between digital and analog sound, the actual audibility of this compression is questionable and often depends on the way in which the file is compressed.

others, such as Pink Floyd's The Wall⁷⁴, are explicitly united to form a continuous story. Nonetheless, regardless if a given record is a "concept album" or not, the assemblage of disparate tracks into one album produces post facto a gestalt experience in which the individual songs are apprehended together. Katz explains this phenomenon:

When listeners get to know an album intimately, the end of one song on the album strongly raises the expectations of the next. Beatles fans who wore out the grooves of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band will always anticipate "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" in the silence following "With A Little Help From My Friends" (even if they hear the latter on the radio), just as "Smells Like Teen Spirit" contains the seeds of "In Bloom" for initiates of Nirvana's Nevermind. For better or for worse, downloaders often miss out on the gestalt of the commercially produced album. (168-169)

Instead, downloaders have the ability to select just the songs they want and compile them into playlists of their own devising so that the death of the album format comes with an awakening of the consumer's ability to control the media they consume.

Just as the album becomes a meaningless concept in the post-Napster world, the value of collecting records also becomes somewhat of an anachronism. As Morton states towards the end of his history of sound recording, "It is evident, particularly in the behaviour of young people, that owning records and amassing collections are no longer as important to consumers as acquiring the music itself, represented by ephemeral and largely intangible digital files" (194). A 2011 study by the Social Science Research Council examined how the proliferation of digital technology has challenged the traditional concept of the media consumer as collector of artifacts:

Traditionally, the high costs of media production and distribution dictated relatively sharp distinctions between producers, distributors, and consumers of media. The consumer sat at the end of a commodity chain that delivered finished goods and structured experiences – records played on stereos, movies shown in theatres, and so on. ... This model has, of course, come under pressure as falling costs of production and distribution democratize those core functions of the media economy and as new technologies privilege forms of commentary, appropriation, and reuse. (35)

⁷⁴ In a recent lawsuit, Pink Floyd successfully prevented Apple's iTunes store from selling their songs individually, arguing that their recording contract with EMI records, signed in 1967, prevented the label from splitting up album tracks for sale. The judge in the case agreed with the group that the contract contained a clause to "preserve the artistic integrity of the albums" ("Pink Floyd Win").

The SSRC study points to a decline in the concept of the collector as a direct result of changing technology altering the way consumers relate to media products. Because of the MP3's ease of transmission and its relatively small file size, filesharing has greatly expanded the possible scope of consumers' media archives. In developed countries with full broadband Internet access, "the growing size of personal media libraries is disconnecting recorded media from traditional notions of the collection – and even from strong assumptions of intentionality in its acquisition" (36). The study cites two surveys from 2006 and 2009 that reveal the average size of a young person's music archive in the UK constitutes 8000 songs, but up to two thirds of these tracks have never been listened to (36). Such collections are simply too large to be organized or managed by the individual collector. Moreover, the existence of the peer-to-peer filesharing networks that facilitate this new form of acquisition further calls into question the concept of ownership that structures the concept of the collection: "Increasingly, we live in an ocean of media that has no clear provenance or boundaries" (36).

Even in the emerging economies that make up the bulk of the study's focus, where the lack of significant broadband penetration thwarts the distribution of texts over the Internet, the conception of the consumer as collector is also undermined. Citing the proliferation of affordable VCD and DVD players and burners as one of the proximate causes of the expanding piracy in developing countries, the SSRC study observed that consumption of media in these countries is often a collective act, particularly amongst the low income mass markets catered to by the pirate economy: "Consumer practices at this level are organized differently, with less attachment to CDs or DVDs as elements of a private collection than as goods shared within extended families and communities. Collective consumption – viewing and listening – is more common in this context, reflecting the lower number of TVs, computers, and DVD players in poor households" (37). Even those markets where physical media still predominate have therefore taken on a form more akin to that of the filesharing of the developed world.

In both cases, the "nostalgic view of the consumer as collector – of people making deliberate choices to purchase, or pirate, specific goods for personal use" has become an "anachronism" (37). Yet, as the SSRC study concludes, this anachronism still shapes debates over media consumption, particularly with regards to the enforcement of the copyright regime: "the collector is an important construct that anchors personal responsibility – and liability – in the copyright economy" (37). By moving away from a legal enforcement regime in which media products are seen as objects to be purposely collected (by means licit or illicit) and towards a conceptualization of media as a cultural

commons for which technology provides an increasingly democratic, if not necessarily legal, access: “The key question for media access and the legalization of media markets, as we see it, has less to do with enforcement than with fostering competition at the low end of media markets – in the mass market that has been largely ceded to piracy” (iv). The focus on enforcing outdated models of ownership, in the view of the SSRC, has challenged the media industry’s ability to foster new business models that address the demands of the ever-increasing market of media consumers.

From an aesthetic point of view, the rise of the MP3 and filesharing has fundamentally transformed the way a text exists in space and time. Because of its digital nature, any copy of an MP3 can yield, through P2P file-sharing, an infinite number of identical copies. Not being bound to a physical object, whether it be a platter of vinyl or a shiny compact disc, the MP3 knows no scarcity and can never be tied to a specific time and place: it exists in the ethereal realm of discorporated dataflows wherein it can proliferate ad infinitum.

4. The resurgence of vinyl.

The discorporation of sound as (dis)embodied in the MP3 file is a stark contrast to the physicality of the vinyl records that serve as the subject matter for Product Placement and The Hard Sell. The Hard Sell concert opens with a brief introductory film that frames the performance for the audience by explaining the importance of the vinyl format to the turntablist DJs. Presented in the form of a question and answer session with questions being offered by stand-ins for the audience, the film outlines a brief history of the 45 rpm format, citing the portability of the format as one of its key selling points:

Ah! Let’s start with the records. This is a 45 rpm record. They’re frequently called outside of America a seven inch. Developed by RCA Victor Records in 1949, the 45 format was intended to provide a smaller, more attractive alternative to brittle, heavy 78s. The two formats existed concurrently until the rock ‘n’ roll boom in the late 50s when 78s got left behind as consumers required portability. Reaching their peak in the mid 60s, the 45 rpm format then began a slow, decades long decline that continued until their near extinction in the early 90s.

The film too points out, however, that the very portability offered by the 45 created a problem for the format: “In some ways, the portability of the 45 has contributed to its rarity. The records were often viewed as disposable and frequently stored without sleeves. It’s safe to estimate that as much

90% of existing vinyl made between 1949 and 1979 was simply thrown away.” Yet despite its apparent utter disposability, the vinyl format (both LPs and 45s) has endured the challenge of not only cassettes and 8-tracks, but also the digital media of compact discs and, more recently, discorporate, downloadable MP3s. The introductory film to The Hard Sell makes note of this endurance with its answer to the question, “They still make these things?”:

Yes, 45s continue to be manufactured to this day albeit in diminished numbers. To many listeners, vinyl provides a tangible respite from the impersonal download model that has, in the eyes of some, removed an important physical component from the musical experience. After all, 45s have grooves; they have shape and form; they have labels that can be personalized. And, as an artifact, they are finite: only so many of each record are made, giving them a cachet of value and collectability beyond the music itself.

Indeed, the continued, albeit reduced, market presence of vinyl is attested by the film’s use of images of 45s by relatively recent bands such as U2 and Guns ‘n Roses whose careers coincided with the ascendancy of the compact disc over vinyl. The current music industry bears this trend out, as vinyl has experienced a commercial resurgence concomitant with the digitally-fuelled decline of the compact disc, its hitherto heralded replacement.

A 2008 Time article reported that Warner Music Group increased LP sales by 30% in 2007 and that in October of that year, Amazon.com opened a vinyl-only store with a selection of 150 000 records (Dell). John Esposito, the president and CEO of WEA was quoted as saying, “It’s not a significant part of our business, but there is enough there for me to take someone and have half their time devoted to making vinyl a real business.” Michael Fremer, a senior contributing editor at Stereophile comments: “I’m not saying vinyl will become a mainstream format, just like gourmet eating is not going to take over from McDonald’s, but there is a growing group of people who are going back to a high-resolution format” (Dell). A 2007 Wired article also points to this resurgence: “And now demand for vinyl is on the rise. Pressing plants that were already at capacity are staying there, while others are cranking out more records than they did last year in order to keep pace with demand” (Van Buskirk). Indeed, Billboard reported a decrease in CD sales of 2% between 2001 and 2003, whereas “Other” sales – a figure which includes mostly vinyl sales along with a few other obscure formats such as DVD audio – grew by 30% in the same period (Shuker 61). While vinyl

sales still account for a small portion of total music sales⁷⁵, the increase in sales demonstrates the existence of a market for vinyl amongst audiophiles. As Patrick Amory of Matador records explains: “The size and presence of the artwork, the division into sides, the better sound quality, above all the involvement and work the listener has to put in, all make it the format of choice for people who really care about music” (qtd. in Van Buskirk).

Furthermore, vinyl is also imbued with a sense of nostalgia for many collectors based on “the perceived aura and authenticity of the format” (Shuker 65). In his 2010 study of record collecting, Roy Shuker asserts that vinyl’s desirability for collectors is derived from its ostensible connection to the past, specifically to the mid to late twentieth century, the era in which many, if not most, collected recordings were made. Shuker argues that vinyl “represents the original historical artifact: how the vinyl single, EP, or LP was originally recorded, and therefore the form in which it should be listened to” (65). For hip hop DJs such as Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow, this authenticity is more materially grounded. While, on the one hand, vinyl is valorized by hip hop artists because of its connection to hip hop’s origins in the block parties of the Bronx in the late 70s, on the other, more practical hand, sample sources are often only available on vinyl (Shuker 72). Indeed, sample sources are often reissued on other formats such as compact disc after – and as a result of – their usage in hip hop tracks.⁷⁶

The Hard Sell’s introductory film, however, concentrates on more material factors for vinyl’s endurance. It makes the point that one of the selling points of vinyl – and by extension any physical media when compared to downloadable MP3s – is the tangibility it confers to the owner’s music library. The criticism is aimed not so much at compact discs, which certainly, although reduced in size, retain that tangibility, but rather at downloadable MP3s. As the film states, this format “has, in the eyes of some, removed an important physical component from the musical experience.” The experience of a record is not simply the apprehension of a recorded sound, but also the physical experience of a material object. If the CD undermined this physical experience by reducing the size of the text-object and its packaging – “They could never hope to match the sweep, the physical allure, the *sensuality* of an LP sleeve,” states Elborough (384; emphasis in original) – then the

⁷⁵ According to a Nielsen SoundScan report in 2007, vinyl accounted for just 0.2% of music sales compared to the compact discs’ 89.7%, although this does not include figures from smaller, independent shops where vinyl tends to sell best (Dell).

⁷⁶ Another example of this phenomenon would be the case of the work of David Axelrod whose late sixties and early seventies albums have been reissued since their sampling by DJ Shadow and Dr. Dre among others. In gratitude for his career’s reemergence, Axelrod dedicated two recent tracks – “The Shadow Knows” and “The Dr. and the Diamond” from 2001’s David Axelrod – to the two producers.

discorporeal MP3 compounds this problem by removing this “sensuality” altogether. In his comparison of CDs and vinyl, Elborough describes “the rituals of vinyl”, all of which pertain to the physicality of the medium:

The needle doing its damage to two sides. The etchings on the inner ring; the pressing plant codes; the little messages from masterers like Porky boasting of another prime cut. Then there were the grooves. Like ripples in the sand to a camel trader, to the trained eye, the distribution of grey to black lines thrown off by the vinyl’s peaks and troughs tell a million little stories. (384)

Whereas both digital and analog formats enable a record to be heard, it is only with vinyl records that a listener can also literally *feel* the impression of the sound upon the medium – an important condition for a turntablist DJ. A physical format allows a text to exist not only within the acoustic space of the listeners’ central nervous system, but also as an object in the shared, objective space of the physical world. This principle may account for why some consumers see the act of listening to vinyl as an inherently more social experience than that offered by the MP3. This viewpoint is articulated in the Time article on vinyl’s resurgence, which ends with a consideration of the social experience of listening to vinyl: “Crowding around a record player to listen to a new album with friends, discussing the foldout photos, even getting up to flip over a record⁷⁷ makes vinyl a more socially interactive way to enjoy music. ‘As far as a communal experience, like with family and friends, it feels better to listen to vinyl,’ says Jason Bini, 24, a recent graduate of Fordham University. ‘It’s definitely more social’” (Dell).

Unlike the infinitely reproducible MP3, physical records can only be produced in finite numbers, which, as the intro film to The Hard Sell states, “giv[es] them a cachet of value and collectability beyond the music itself.” A record has value to the collector because its singular existence in space and time. Though it may be one of thousands or even millions of copies produced identically by the assembly line of the pressing plant, individual physical copies take on a life of their own within the collection (itself a kind of “meta-album”): the collector thinks of a copy as being “my” Bitches Brew, conceptually distinct from other equivalent yet different copies of that text. An analogy of this effect occurs in a scene from the novel and film No Country For Old Men in which the assassin Anton Chigurh instructs a gas station attendant – a potential target for his killing – to flip a coin. When the coin flip comes up in the attendant’s favour, thus sparing the

⁷⁷ An irony of sorts lies in the fact that the LP was developed to minimize side transitions during longer musical works, yet now that one side change – a vestige of the multiple changes required by an album 78s – has become part of the format’s charm.

unwitting man from assassination, Chigurh instructs him to keep the coin, but to keep it separate from other coins in order to preserve its unique status as a token of the man's life: "Anywhere. Not in your pocket, where it'll get mixed in with the others and become just a coin. Which it is." The coin, though physically indistinguishable from other coins produced exactly in its likeness, has attained a singularity – an "aura" in Benjamin's terminology – by its embodiment of a crucial moment in that man's life (even if he did not realize the import of that moment).

Though his most famous essay decried the destruction of a work's aura as a result of its mechanical reproducibility, elsewhere in his writings, Benjamin observes how a mechanically reproduced artifact can attain an aura by virtue of its place within a collection. In "Unpacking My Library", Benjamin makes the point that each book in a collector's library, though a serialized copy (assuming it is a printed book and not a handwritten manuscript), becomes an *eikon* into its own history like the coin in No Country For Old Men: "As he holds [the books] in his hands, [the collector] seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired" (61). On behalf of the collector, Benjamin interprets the Latin epigram "Habent sua fata libelli [books have their own destiny]"⁷⁸ to refer not to a book in the generalized sense as a text, but rather to individual copies of books: "For him, not only books but also copies of books have their fates. And in this sense, the most important fate of a copy is its encounter with him, with his own collection. I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth" (61). The book – meaning the copy of the book – takes on a history of its own, separate from and in addition to the generalized history of its ideal form, the text itself that is objectified in the reproduction.

Similarly, the record-object also becomes a physical symbol of both the musical experience it contains and the consumer's emotional and historical relationship with that music. To demonstrate this, Katz quotes a 22-year-old female college student's musings on downloading:

I believe that by utilizing this technology, I lost part of the nostalgia inherent in buying and listening to this music. For example, I can listen to my Flaming Lips CD and know that I purchased it the week after my 15th birthday, during my "alternative" stage in high school, but I cannot do this with MP3s. I acquired so many songs at such a fast rate that listening to this music only reminds me of sitting in front of my computer freshman and sophomore years [at college]. (171)

⁷⁸ In an example of transformation through quotation, Benjamin's citation omits the first half of Terentianus Maurus's phrase, "Pro capta lectoris, habent sua fata libellis", which expresses the reader-response viewpoint that each book has its own destiny according to the capabilities of the reader.

The student here makes a connection between records and memory as, for many collectors, records are totems of nostalgia, connected to specific moments in an individual's life, and this is specifically true of physical records, primarily vinyl with its specific connotations of vintage authenticity:

“[record collecting] is a fuller expression of the general tendency for sound records to act as prompts to memory, given that they are material artifacts locked in time and place with an ascribed meaning for many listeners” (Shuker 53).

The discorporeal nature of the MP3 does not allow for the same projection of memory that is possible with the physical record. The objective presence of a record makes it a potent signifier for the consumer's apprehension of the text and enables serialized copies of a text to attain a kind of singularity by virtue of the presence in the collection. Furthermore, with the vinyl records lauded by The Hard Sell, this singularity is rendered literal. Not only can vinyl records be personalized through inscription (the same would be ostensibly true of CDs), but over the record's lifetime, wear from the needle produces imperfections in the groove that result in clicks and pops during playback. No record will wear in the exact same way so that each individual copy becomes a unique artifact with its own idiosyncratic distortions. The inevitable wear that occurs on the vinyl record is in actual fact the tracings of individual “readings” by the phonograph's needle. Indeed, these distortions and sonic imperfections constitute a tracing of the record's history on to itself: marked by the successive listenings that have been drawn out of the vinyl by the stylus, the record, in its degradation, becomes a singular, unique object. In Benjaminian terms, its aura has been restored.

Bound up with the concept of objective presence is the phenomenon of the library. By having an existence in physical space, a collection of records has a presence denied to a collection of MP3s on a hard drive. As Katz explains: “A collection is meant to be displayed, and has a visual impact that confers a degree of expertise on its owner. The tall bookcase full of CDs in my home office often impresses visitors who, correctly or not, infer from it a certain breadth and depth of knowledge about music on my part. My MP3 collection, out of sight and intangible, has no such effect” (171). Records, therefore, serve not only as text-objects in their own right, but also as visual signifiers of their owner's taste and connoisseurship. Indeed, as Baudrillard reminds us, “For what you really collect is always yourself” (Objects 97). By virtue of its physicality, the record collection becomes a spectacular display of an individual's taste and, by extension, a surrogate and mirror of the self: “The collection is a display of conspicuous consumption and cultural capital, and asserts personal identity” (Shuker 133). Moreover, unlike infinitely downloadable MP3s, vinyl records are finite, the serializing possibilities of mechanical reproduction notwithstanding. Ownership of such

an artifact, therefore, carries with it a cachet of value derived from the scarcity of the record and the difficulty of its acquisition, heightening its expression of cultural capital.

For all these reasons, The Hard Sell's introductory film states: "Vinyl has always been, and probably always will be, the preferred format for scratch DJs. The tangible grooves provide tactile experience that simply cannot be replicated by any other format." This explanation, however, elides the importance of the perceived authenticity of vinyl as described by Shuker. Vinyl records are not only physical artifacts, but also historical artifacts that carry with them a sense of the past. In the case of the turntablist sets, this past can only be properly invoked by a genuine artifact, and, as such, the film later notes the authenticity of the artifacts here on display: "But I heard they were just pressing up new 45's of stuff that didn't originally exist in the format. Isn't that cheating?" Yes, that would be. That's why, as with the two previous sets, all 45s being played are original, vintage pressings." The history of the text-object being sampled, then, is crucial to its aesthetic value. To use a contemporary record would violate the Oulipian procedural rules of the set, yet the reasoning behind these rules is left unexplained: it is unclear as to why such a practice would constitute "cheating". The suggestion is, however, that the re-pressing of works onto 45s that did not originally exist in the format constitutes a violation of the history they seek to preserve and reanimate on the turntable. Moreover, the exclusive use of vintage records subverts a record industry attempt to co-opt and cash in on the cachet afforded vinyl by collectors by offering new artifacts for sale.

III – EXEGESIS

A. Introduction

Both Product Placement (2004) and The Hard Sell (2008) are primarily conceived as occasions for DJ Shadow (Josh Davis) and Cut Chemist (Lucas MacFadden) to play records simply for the audience's enjoyment (as well as their own). Beyond the sheer entertainment value of the performances, however, there are greater thematic considerations. In both their form and content, the two turntablist performances⁷⁹ are concerned with the history of records and sound-recording as well as the implications of technological change for art. This concern for musical history is part of a larger concern with the memorialization of history through documentary texts.

More specifically, Product Placement focuses on the relationship between music and advertising. The usage of particular record-texts combined with the video imagery projected behind the stage serves to deconstruct the way in which mass culture engenders consumerism. The polemical aim of the set is to provoke an increased awareness on the part of consumers such that they can perceive how the coercive forces of the culture industry are acting upon them. This project puts the turntablists in line with the consumer awareness program of culture jammers such as Kalle Lasn and Adbusters.

Aside from the continued concern with consumerism indicated by its title, The Hard Sell is more explicit in its polemic, as it is concerned with a valorization of physical media in the face of the ascending dominance of digital media not tied to any physical existence. The concern for the history of recorded sound is most explicitly demonstrated in the short film that introduces the concert which outlines the history of vinyl records and contrasts them with their MP3 successors. Certainly the turntablists' art is dependent on physical media (although new technology does allow DJs to "scratch" digital sound files), but the set also demonstrates the totemic, fetishistic values of physical media – primarily vinyl records. Not only does the disembodiment of the MP3 undermine the emphasis on the physicality of the record so necessary to the genre of turntablism, but its ephemerality constitutes a threat to the preservation of history.

In addition to the musical content, both Product Placement and The Hard Sell are complemented with visual imagery that serves to illustrate as well as comment on the material being

⁷⁹ Strictly speaking, Product Placement is not a performance: the document on the DVD is assembled from multiple concerts that occurred in 2001 through 2003.

played at that moment in the set. Like the musical content, much of this visual imagery is taken from anterior sources ranging from stock footage to vintage commercial advertisements to old films. Moreover, both of the DVDs also feature footage of the attending crowds. The imagery of the dancing crowds displays the response of the audience to the performance (the viewer can also hear the audience's vocal approval of specific, cited records). As such, the audience's apprehension of the performed text becomes part of the text itself.

The two sets, however, are more than just the sum of the constituent musical parts and their arrangement within the greater text. When combined with the attendant video imagery, these performances are multimedia experiences that expand upon traditional concepts of what constitutes "written" literature. Aside from having obvious musical value (as demonstrated by the spectacle of the dancing audience), the sampled records also have a textual significance that approaches an inscription of semantic value (beyond the mere lyrical content in the case of tracks featuring vocals). For example, the National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation's "Rappin' with Gas" signifies the appropriation of hip hop by industry for the purposes of marketing its products to a particular demographic group. In The Hard Sell, an electronic cover of the rock 'n' roll staple "Rock Around the Clock", in which the vocal part is sung through a vocoder, illustrates the usurpation of the human voice by that of the machine. Moreover, the significance of individual records such as these is expanded by the connections made between the records as a result of their inclusion in the assembled texts. This significance can be further elucidated by commentary on the relationship between the audio material and the visuals. The end result is that the two concerts weave together a plurality of different texts from multiple media to create an intertextual dialogue that embodies many of the theories of textuality developed in the postmodern era, but hitherto largely applied to traditionally "written" (i.e. printed) texts.

B. Product Placement

1. Brainfreeze

In 1999, the two DJs and friends, Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow were asked by Michael Herlihy, a music promoter and friend of Cut Chemist, to assemble a headlining DJ performance for a San Francisco event titled Future Primitive to be held in February 1999. The result was Brainfreeze. Like the procedural works of the Oulipo school of writing, the DJ set was predicated on a series of self-imposed limitations: “Create an hour’s performance, using only 7-inch 45rpm singles – 45 of them, of course – which would impress and entertain a live audience consisting, mainly, of the pair’s peers, either DJs or record collectors, or both” (Batey 15-16). The resulting assemblage took the cut’n’paste methodology pioneered by Coldcut and Double Dee & Steinski, but expanded to an hour-long runtime.

The musical content of the performance relied heavily on the “late ‘60s/early ‘70s funk that gave hip hop its sonic bedrock” – indeed, “certain records were chosen because of their resonance within hip hop history” (16). For example, in his liner notes to The Hard Sell, Angus Batey writes that the New Orleans soul man Eddie Bo’s “We’re Doin’ It (The Thang)” was included in the set “partly for its sounds, but just as much because it had formed the basis of parts of Coldcut’s “Beats’N’Pieces”” (16). Such tracks were not presented as mere artifacts of history, but in effect are re-presented in defamiliarizing new contexts. Because the audience for the one-off Future Primitive show was made-up of people fluent in the discourse of hip hop (collectors and DJs), not only would they be able to discern the historical significance of such obscure records to this subculture, but they would also hear the difference produced by the resituating of a given piece of music. Writing about the reworking of previously sampled tracks, Batey comments that “their new contexts would have caused first recognition in the minds of the Future Primitive crowd, then amusement at how they were here being presented in a new light” (16).

This defamiliarization that depends on an assumption of the audience’s knowledge of particular track’s significance continues the tradition of expectation seen in the production of the centos of Late Antiquity. In the case of the centos, that presupposed common knowledge is that of the poetry of Virgil, whose Aeneid formed the authorized metanarrative of Roman society. The cento-like pastiches created by DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist, however, go further than their ancient forebears. First, by using obscure texts that have been quoted by a particular subculture, the

Brainfreeze set positions itself within a more narrowly defined community, in which knowledge of particular records acts as a kind of shibboleth allowing the possessor of that knowledge to claim membership within the group. Compared to the poetry of an author regarded as foundational to his culture, this knowledge is more esoteric and less authorized, heightening its value as a common denominator for a give subculture.

Okacova notes of the reading of centos: “Essentially, in order to penetrate all the significance inherent in the centos, readers have to be continually aware of the semantic duality of these texts” (4). For the audience of Brainfreeze (as well as Product Placement and The Hard Sell), this duality is expanded into a trinity. When they hear Eddie Bo’s “We’re Doin’ It (The Thang)”, for example, they hear not only the original funk track itself as well as its citation within the Brainfreeze set, but also its previous use by Coldcut: a total of three individual texts brought into a conversation not only with themselves, but with the other cited texts within the performance. Moreover, each one of these sampled tracks is not a unified text, but a plurality, just as that one Eddie Bo song unfolds into three separate intertexts. The structure of the set then is, to employ a term from Deleuze and Guattari, rhizomatic in that it follows a logic of radical connectivity: “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be” (7). Furthermore, what are connected are not points of unity, but rather loci for further connection. To illustrate this, Deleuze and Guattari present an image of a puppeteer controlling the strings of a puppet: “Puppet strings, as a rhizome or multiplicity, are tied not to the supposed will of an artist or puppeteer but to a multiplicity of nerve fibers, which form another puppet in other dimensions connected to the first” (8).

Moreover, any given track that is sampled is not a unified performance, but rather a multiplicity of performances brought together by multitrack recording. In “Signature Event Context”, Derrida maintains that one of the defining characteristics of writing is its citeability, that is, that any written signifier can be repeated detached from its original context. This citeability – an inherent condition of all writing – means that any utterance carries with it an infinity of possible connections:

Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring. (320)

Thus, any sign, whether it is a line from Virgil, a verse of Shakespeare, or a funk song, is a multiplicity of possible, latent connections and contexts. In the specific case here of turntablist texts, what is heard by the audience is not so much the individual pieces of music, but rather the plenitude of connections brought forth between the citations.

The Brainfreeze set was reportedly a great success and skilfully negotiated two separate impulses of turntablism: that of using the DJ mix to promote obscure records, and that of using the re-performance of extant song-texts to demonstrate their instrumental virtuosity on the turntables. As Batey notes:

At this stage, funk mixes, where they existed at all, were either simply compilations of rare 45s, or pieces that stripped out so much of every record's song elements that all that was left in the mix were the breaks and percussive segments that a hip hop producer would choose to sample. Brainfreeze landed squarely between these extremes, playing enough of the record to make them recognizable as songs, yet stressing the hip hop-ready elements in them and emphasising this old music's prescient (if accidental) post-modernity. It was a risk, as Shadow explained to the author, journalist and academic, Oliver Wang, again in the pages of the estimable Big Daddy (issue 4, 2000): "Funk lovers [are] generally conservative in their own right," he recalled thinking. "They don't want to hear a bunch of scratching. And maybe it was too soul-oriented for a lot of turntablists." Yet by honouring the original music while playing up its hip hop aspects, Brainfreeze redefined funk DJ-ing overnight. (19)

In other words, there are two aspects to the performance, or rather, two separate performances: the physical performance of the DJ's skill as turntablist as well as the aesthetic performance in which the DJ set is a showcase for the DJ's listening tastes.

A rehearsal set had been recorded – the actual performance itself was described as "nervous and a bit sloppy" (Book), and the positive reception of the show led to a brief tour and the pressing of two thousand CDs which, sold at concert performances and promoted "by word of mouth" (Book), quickly sold out: "And as word of the set buzzed around the hip hop and funk DJ bush telegraph, bootleg copies of the mix – some even pressed on vinyl – became far more numerous than the original CD, in another curious Steinski echo" (Batey 19). The underground popularity of the set also produced a flurry of interest in the original songs themselves as surviving 45s of the rare tracks greatly increased in value: being connected to the "magic 'word'" of Brainfreeze "somehow makes records sell twice or three times their value" and has consequently "caused stress and amazement among long time collectors of funk and soul records, records that never moved or were

unknown suddenly became famous with the release of the underground favourite, Brainfreeze” (Book). Bootleg albums compiling some of the 45s quoted in Brainfreeze became available in “the less scrupulous record shops” (Batey 20) (when the Product Placement set was released, it was accompanied by a disc of Product Placement Breaks which compiled some of the sampled tracks in unmixed form). This phenomenon illustrates the process by which sampling authorizes the works it cites, and this promotion has been seized upon by even major labels.

The successful reception of Brainfreeze led to its sequel Product Placement. The “conceptual centrepiece” of the Brainfreeze set was the re-performance of “Dance The Slurp”, a novelty single from the late 1960s put out by 7-Eleven to promote the company’s then-new Slurpee drink. The track was mixed with a Kraftwerk track and “set amid a galaxy of much more credible, canonical funk breakbeats” (Batey 16, 19). The original track, which appropriated the style of funk to promote a commercial venture, is simultaneously included as ironic kitsch, while at the same time elevated and presented sincerely as a slice of danceable funk. This double-voicing of a commercial piece of music led to the central concept of the Product Placement set, which, though it did not feature “Dance The Slurp”, contained a number of soft drink jingles issued on 45s. What was initially a track played simply for its humorous kitsch value is transformed (even if the individual track itself was not reused) into the leitmotif for Product Placement’s sustained critique of the commodification of music. The limited run compact disc release of the Product Placement set featured a sticker which parodied the promotional packaging of milk: “Now fortified with exclusive ‘Accu-Blend’ technology.” The concern with advertising is reflected in the set’s title, which not only refers to the commercial practice of embedding promotion of various goods and services in mass-art texts, but also serves as a pithy description of the DJs’ work: the artful arrangement of pre-existing cultural products into a new coherent, yet fragmentary, whole.

2. Product Placement DVD front end matter.

i. Copyright notice

The very first image to be shown on the Product Placement DVD is the customary copyright notice that warns the consumer not to make unauthorized copies of the text (see fig. 1). The warning for this otherwise English language disc, however, is given in Spanish: “Pirateria Fonografica: La copia de este fonograma constituye delito de estafa, penado con prision de hasta 6

anos (Ley N° 23535).” By issuing the warning in Spanish, the image subverts the language of the authorial regime by rendering it into that of an alien, subaltern culture. That the law in question has been numbered – “N° 23535” – places the law itself within the same serializing logic of mass production and standardization that governs industrial-scale mass art, which further cements the relationship between the law and industry.



Fig. 1: Copyright warning.

The warning against piracy that prefaces Product Placement, however, is itself the object of piracy. The text has the same blurring and slight indistinctness of that of a photocopy. Smudges appear above the “on” of “constituye” and the “n” of “anos”⁸⁰, and these marks are the orthographical equivalents of the pops and crackles on vinyl records. More fundamentally, however, they appear as demonstrations of the loss of fidelity that inevitably occurs in the mechanical reproduction of images or text, precisely that which occurs in the very home taping that such warnings aim to prohibit. Coming at the beginning of a text produced in 2004, however, the warning carries with it a sense of ironic nostalgia as the practice of home taping has been rendered obsolete by digital technology that enables consumers to make perfect reproductions of audio or visual texts easily, without the introduction of sonic imperfections similar to the visual distortions seen in the pirated warning against piracy.

⁸⁰ It is possible that the mark in “anos” is an *œne*, although the text is entirely in block capitals, so this may not be the case

Accompanying this warning is a silhouetted image of a cassette tape on top of a pair of crossed bones: the parody of the “Jolly Roger” pirate symbol that served as the logo for the 1980s anti-copyright infringement campaign by the British Phonographic Industry, “Home Taping Is Killing Music.” Throughout the history of the sound-recording industry, piracy of legitimate recordings has been a persistent issue. Indeed, it was precisely this concern which led to the phonographic disc as developed by Emile Berliner in the early 1890s to supplant Edison’s wax cylinder as the dominant medium for sound recordings. The sort of piracy that is of most concern to DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist, however, is the process of sampling. In the context of hip hop, the development of sampling went hand in hand with the emergence of the new art form. The parodied copyright notice which opens the Product Placement DVD illustrates the artists’ identification with transgression. In adopting the Jolly Roger parody as their logo, the DJs are responding to the interpellation of the culture industry that places them outside the law.

ii. Parodic logos.

The DVD proper begins with a brief animated logo for Pillage Roadshow, the production company that released the DVD editions of both Product Placement and The Hard Sell. The logo itself is a parody of the logo for the much more well-known Australian media conglomerate, Village Roadshow (see fig. 2). The Village Roadshow logo takes the form of a series of iridescent v’s. The Pillage Roadshow logo takes this exact same imagery (it has apparently been pirated, though no legal injunction has been issued by the larger company), but adds on top an outline of a hand fingering through the v’s like a customer in a record store looking through a crate of vinyl. The pirated image visually therefore displays the means by which sounds – in particular, the sounds that will be displayed in this document – are appropriated, this being, of course, the practice of digging. The accompanying music is a brief brass fanfare taken from another, unknown source, decidedly not the music of the original Village Roadshow logo. By deliberately infringing and signifying upon a trademark, this logo (which serves as the mark of the copyright-guaranteed industrial author for the text), like the parodied warning against piracy, positions the text and its authors outside the regime of copyright law.⁸¹

⁸¹ The Pillage Roadshow logo is then followed by another animated logo, this time for Headown Projects. Though not obviously pilfered from a previous source, this logo emerges on the screen as a simulation of a graffiti tag accompanied by a percussive sound that simultaneously evokes the sound of a paint spray can (as well as that of a scratching



Fig. 2: Pillage Roadshow logo.

The use of this parody, as well as the parody of the warning against piracy, frames the work as an instance of culture jamming or “subvertising”. The term “culture jamming” was first coined by the new wave punk band Negativland on their 1985 record Jamcon 84, a collection of radio broadcasts by the group that took the form of a (fictional) convention of media hackers and culture jammers. One of the band members makes the observation that, “As awareness of how the media environment we occupy affects and directs our inner life grows, some resist ... The skillfully reworked billboard ... directs the public viewer to a consideration of the original corporate strategy. The studio for the cultural jammer is the world at large” (qtd. in Dery; Pickerel, Jorgensen, & Bennett 1). This strategy is used as a way of countering the manipulation of consumers by the corporate-controlled mass media. In the introduction to an interview with Kalle Lasn, the founder of Adbusters, Wendi Pickerel, Helena Jorgensen, and Lance Bennett offer this explanation:

Jams are often aimed at exposing questionable political assumptions behind commercial culture, aiming to capture our attention so that, for a moment, we can consider the branded environment we live in. Culture jams refigure logos, fashion statements, and product images to challenge images of “what’s cool,” along with assumptions about the personal freedoms of consumption. Culture jams help create a sense of transparency about a product’s production impact by presenting images that quickly communicate the realities hidden behind the slick corporate logos. The logic of culture jamming is to convert easily

turntable). The logo itself consists of a stylized, shadowed face and the name presumably references the image of a DJ focusing on the spinning of a record.

identifiable images into larger questions about corporate responsibility, the “true” environmental and human costs of consumption, or the private corporate uses of the “public” airwaves. (1-2)

As Dery notes, culture jamming was anticipated by the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco in a 1967 essay “Towards A Semiological Guerrilla Warfare” in which he notes, in first world countries at least, the political control is effected through the mass media: “Today it is only in the most backward countries that fascist generals, in carrying out a coup d’état, still use tanks. ... Today a country belongs to the person who controls communications” (135). Rather than proposing to attack those who disseminate, and thus control, messages (a position he argues is “summed up in the sentence ‘We must occupy the chair of the Minister of Information’ or even ‘We must occupy the chair of the publisher of The New York Times’”), Eco positions the locus of conflict in the domain of the consumer of media messages: “What must be occupied, in every part of the world, is the first chair in front of every TV set (and naturally, the chair of every group leader in front of every movie screen, every transistor, every page of newspaper)” (142). As such, “the battle for the survival of man as a responsible being in the Communications Era is not to be won where the communication originates, but where it arrives. ... I am proposing an action to urge the audience to control the message and its multiple possibilities of interpretation” (142-143). The aim then of this semiological guerrilla warfare is to awaken the critical faculties of the consumer so that the messages of the media industry are opened to the possibilities of reinterpretation⁸². Culture jamming aims to achieve this awakening by deconstructing images and messages in the mass media so that their codes are laid bare to the consumer and their manipulatory effects are revealed. Culture jammers then fulfill Eco’s hopeful prediction: “The universe of Technological Communication would then be patrolled by groups of communications guerrillas, who would restore a critical dimension to passive reception” (144).

One form of culture jamming – one that is particularly salient to Product Placement and The Hard Sell – is “subvertising”, which Mark Dery defines as “the production and dissemination of anti-ads that deflect Madison Avenue’s attempts to turn the consumer’s attention in a given direction” (6). Turning the process of branding against itself, subvertising, as explained by Lasn, “mimics the look and feel of the target ad, prompting the classic double take as viewers realize what they’re seeing is in fact the very opposite of what they expect” (131). One such example is a 30

⁸² Eco’s project – outlined here in 1967 – was itself anticipated by a series of essays written by Roland Barthes in the mid-1950s and collected in Mythologies (1957). Individual essays, such as “The World of Wrestling” and “The Great Family of Man,” explicated concealed ideological meanings at work in various cultural texts and institutions.

second commercial produced by Adbusters called “Obsession Fetish.” It begins with “a collage of cool, sexy, eerily familiar fashion images, complete with hip music and quick jump cuts.” A close up on a nude model is accompanied with a voice over saying, “Why do nine out of ten women feel dissatisfied with some aspect of their own bodies?” The camera pulls back from the close up of the model’s slender back to reveal that she is vomiting into a toilet making clear the connection between images produced by the fashion industry and the problem of bulimia amongst young women (Lasn 31-32, 177). In this case, the Calvin Klein company is being singled out as a prominent offender.

Essentially parodies of advertisements, subvertisements work along the principle of *détournement* as set out by the French Situationist Guy Debord, in which “one is not limited to correcting a work or to integrating diverse fragments of out-of-date works into a new one; one can also alter the meaning of those fragments in any appropriate way” (Debord & Wolman). As an example of such a *détournement*, Debord and Wolman assert that rather than prohibiting D.W. Griffith’s Birth Of A Nation, the racist ideology expressed by the film can be better countered “by adding a soundtrack that made a powerful denunciation of the horrors of imperialist war and the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, which are continuing in the United States even now [in 1956]” such that presentation of the film becomes its own critique (Debord & Wolman). As set out in The Society of the Spectacle, *détournement*, also translated as “diversion”, is “the opposite of creation” and, as such, “It embraces an author’s phrase, makes use of his expressions, erases a false idea, and replaces it with the right idea” (Debord 75 [Theses 207-208]).

This principle of turning quotations against themselves has been adopted by culture jammers as a means by to deconstruct the mass media messages of corporations: “Literally a ‘turning around’, *détournement* involved rerouting spectacular images, environments, ambiances, and events to reverse or subvert their meaning, thus reclaiming them” (Lasn 103). This is precisely what occurs by the use of the parodied imagery of both the anti-piracy warning and the Village Roadshow logo. The Village Roadshow logo is the sign by which the company asserts its legal, authorial presence over a given cultural text. Its appropriation and transformation here decants the image of the authorial presence of the media conglomerate and replaces it with a sign that, on the one hand, points to the text being outside the branding umbrella of the company and, on the other hand, asserts the copyright of another company – Pillage Roadshow – while simultaneously ironizing that very assertion of copyright. The principle of *détournement*, used here in the framing of the performance on the DVD, will be more extensively developed in the sections of the performance, concentrated primarily in the second half or set, in which the relationship between music and advertising is more fully explored.

iii. Opening credits.

The concert portion of the DVD begins with a black and white image of a 45 rpm single rotating on a turntable. The viewer hears a sample of a guitar playing the theme from The Twilight Zone television series, the crackle of the vinyl being prominently audible. A second guitar is introduced, and this reveals the music to be not the actual Twilight Zone theme, but rather the musical quotation of that sound in another work (a close comparison between the two pieces of music reveals the excerpt sampled here is not musically identical to the original theme, but nonetheless an evocative pastiche). After a quick shot of a similarly rotating radar scanner, the screen then cuts to a series of images of various groups of individuals assembled around and listening intently to the radio. The effect of these images is to suggest the broadcast and reception of the recorded media (represented by the 45) as a hierarchical relationship between centralized, authorized producers and the masses. Fittingly, the transmitting medium as represented by the rotating radar scanner carries with it some martial connotations. Indeed, just as was the case with audiotape and the Internet, the development of broadcast technology and mass communications went hand in hand with military requirements.

Immediately following this brief, assembled vignette, a voice informs the viewing audience, which is identified with the stock footage of the various radio audiences: “Ladies and gentlemen, please do not try to adjust your nervous systems or your emotions because for the next 60 minutes’ / ‘Cut Chemist’ / ‘and DJ Shadow’ / ‘will control your soul. So what we want you all to do is get on this train and let us take you higher.” The names of two DJs are injected into the statement from other sources (the words “Cut Chemist” are taken from an in-track announcement by the rap group Jurassic 5 for whom Cut Chemist deejayed and produced). This interjection, which serves to introduce the DJs to the DVD’s audience (a similar device will be used to introduce the performers to the concert audience), takes the form of a triple-voicing. Similar to the triple-voicing seen in the quotation of already quoted works in Brainfreeze, the sampled quotation which is ventriloquized and transformed by the interpolation of the DJs’ names is itself a quotation – or, rather paraphrase – of an anterior voice.

The sample is a parodic reference to the introductory narration from the early 1960s television show The Outer Limits, which was inspired by The Twilight Zone (and the narration itself

is influenced by Rod Serling's introductory monologue for The Twilight Zone). The original opening narration for The Outer Limits reads thus:

There is nothing wrong with your television set. Do not attempt to adjust the picture. We are controlling transmission. If we wish to make it louder, we will bring up the volume. If we wish to make it softer, we will tune it to a whisper. We will control the horizontal; we will control the vertical. We can roll the image, make it flutter. We can change the focus to a soft blur or sharpen it to crystal clarity. For the next hour, sit quietly and we will control all that you see and hear. We repeat: There is nothing wrong with your television set. You are about to participate in a great adventure. You are about to experience the awe and mystery which reaches from the inner mind to The Outer Limits.

The overall effect of the iconic introduction above is to emphasize the viewer's alienation from the broadcast program. Denied all control over the transmission, the viewer is envisioned as a passive recipient of whatever imagery and sounds the unidentified controllers see fit to transmit (and howsoever they are transmitted, whether it be as "a soft blur" or with "crystal clarity"). Indeed, not unlike the attempted injunctions against home taping, consumer agency is explicitly and strongly warned against: "Do not attempt to adjust the picture." This injunction makes explicit the hierarchical relationship between broadcaster and audience suggested in the opening images of groups of individuals listening to the radio. By virtue of coming from a centralized source, the disembodied voice of The Outer Limits' introduction is inherently imbued with authority. The audience, on the other hand, is denied the possibility of a voice with the command to "sit quietly," thus making their "participat[ion] in a great adventure" utterly passive. That such control is inherent to the medium of television⁸³ is reinforced by the repeated insistence that "there is nothing wrong with your television set."

In the parody of this statement, the mood of the original is softened from the imperative order to "sit quietly" to the suggestion of "what we want you all to do." Furthermore, rather than ordering the audience to passively "sit quietly," this opening invites to the viewer to actively choose to "get on this train and let us take you higher." The command to "not attempt to adjust the picture" is turned into a polite request with prefatory "please". A fundamental shift occurs in the parody in which the viewer's nervous system and emotions stand in for the technological assemblage

⁸³ This point diverges from the argumentation of McLuhan developed below: McLuhan saw television, unlike film or radio, to be "cool" medium requiring more participation from the consumer. In Barthesian terms, McLuhan sees television as a "writerly" medium, largely on the grounds of its poorer image quality and smaller size when compared to film.

of the television set. This substitution echoes a theme prevalent in the work of Marshall McLuhan who argued that technology constituted an extension of the human being. Just as, for example, an automobile is a technological extension of the physical body, in this case the human foot, the electronic media were, according to McLuhan, extensions of the sensory apparatus: “Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man – the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media” (Understanding 19). The substitution of “your nervous systems or your emotions” for “your television set” has already been effected by the medium television itself. The television and its viewer (and by analogy, the radio and its listener) are elided into one passive receptor for a signal. In the sampled quotation, what is being “adjusted” in the manner of a piece of audio-visual equipment is the audience’s “nervous system” and “emotions.”

This cyberneticization of the human as a result of living in technological society – a prominent theme in both Product Placement and The Hard Sell – links with the cyborg theory of Donna Harraway, who observes that post-industrial, technological society has blurred the boundaries between organism and machine. The cyborg, that staple trope of science fiction, is a mythological understanding of the human condition in late capitalism: “I am making an argument for the cyborg as a fiction mapping of our social and bodily reality” (2269). Harraway argues that late twentieth century society has rewritten the body in technological terms: research into genetics, for example, has translated the physical body of an organism into a code, a form of writing. The theme of cyberneticization will be developed at greater length in The Hard Sell in which machines – jukeboxes – will be taught not only to sing, but also to love. Nonetheless, the art form of turntablism in and of itself is a cyborg art form. Records not only stand in for the performers and performances they memorialize, but are performers in their own right, to be choreographed by the DJ or turntablist.

In describing the world of advanced capitalism and the increasing sophistication and miniaturization of telecommunications devices, Harraway states, “Our best machines are made of sunshine; they are all light and clean because they are nothing but signals, electromagnetic waves, a section of a spectrum” (2274). The machines in question here are the signals which disseminate texts such as those received by radio audiences depicted earlier or the television audiences referenced in the ironized Outer Limits introduction, and these machine-texts are themselves products of machinery. Recall that the objection of John Philip Sousa and his fellow composers to

what they felt was the violation of their copyright in the form of unauthorized recordings of their works was initially countered by the courts' assertion that this copying was done entirely by machines and therefore did not involve the human agency necessary for the violation of copyright.

After the two DJs are named in this sequence, a quick video clip of them performing on the turntables is juxtaposed with a snippet of film depicting an adult man and a boy listening to the radio together as if to indicate an equation between the DJs' art and the listening activities of mass media consumers. This imagery coincides with the vocal sample's exhortation to the listener to "get on this train and let us take you higher" – the "us" here has its referent shifted from the original sample source to the two turntablists who have appropriated and repurposed the speech of the sample.

This ironized warning is immediately followed by an image of a man – Scottish DJ and record collector Keb Darge – simulating masturbation underneath a blanket over which is laid a brief vocal interjection of "Let's get with it!" This then introduces a short collage of footage, much of it sped up, showing both Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow sifting through stacks of vinyl in various record stores to suggest a parallel between the activity of consuming records and the subsequent playing of those records which will constitute the artwork on display in the DVD.

3. Product Placement: first set.

i. Introductions

The performance section of the DVD begins with footage from a performance of the Product Placement set at the Liquid Room in Tokyo on November 1st, 2001. This is the last performance of the initial tour, which included sets in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, and London. Cut Chemist specifically informs the audience: "Hey, you know this is the last night of the tour; this is the last show. After this we don't do it anymore. This is it." The show, as memorialized in the DVD begins with its conclusion: the performance is already over before it has begun. This emphasizes the status of the writing of a performance (its recording) presupposing the finality of the performance. The record therefore marks the moment at which the original performance ends, following the Derridean conception of writing as a mark of absence, a stand-in for the absence of the writer:

For if the written to be the written, it must continue to "act" and to be legible even if what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written, for what he

seems to have signed, whether he is provisionally absent, or if he is dead, or if in general he does not support, with his absolutely current and present intention or attention, the plenitude of his meaning, of that very thing which seems to be written “in his name.” (“Signature” 316).

This passage carries on the Derridean theme of the problematic relationship between memory and writing. The separation of the signifier from the signifying presence shows that all writing is recontextualization of what is written. By translating “living” speech into “dead” signs, however, writing acts as a monument for the absence of what was once present: “While the phonic signifier would remain in animate proximity, in the living presence of the *mneme* or *psuche*, the graphic signifier, which reproduces it or imitates it, goes one degree further away, falls outside life, entrains life out itself and puts it to sleep in the type of its double. ... Instead of quickening life in the original, ‘in person,’ the *pharmakon* [writing] can at best only restore its monuments” (*Dissemination* 110). This idea is expressed in musical terms in an enigmatic quote that occurs at the conclusion of the Eric Dolphy album *Last Date* (1964) when the woodwind player states: “When you hear music, after it’s over, it’s gone, in the air, you can never capture it again.” At first this phrase seems counter-intuitive, coming at the end of a memorialization of a musical performance that has been captured and preserved on a record. The biographical context of *Last Date* adds a layer of poignancy this statement. It was recorded in June 1964, just weeks before Dolphy’s early death from diabetic shock, and was released posthumously. What Dolphy suggests here is that the actual musical performance as it exists in a particular space and time never makes it on to the record. In order to be memorialized, the utterance has to be translated into signs, be they alphabetic, or in the case of musical writing, the electro-magnetic signal brought forth from the playback of the record. The record then is, to borrow a term from Derrida, a supplement of the original performance that emphasizes the original’s absence. What is heard on the record is not the original performance, but rather the microphones’ hearing of the performance.

In *Product Placement*, it is fitting that the text-document of a performance produced by juxtaposing and re-positioning various appropriated sounds that would not otherwise be connected is itself a spliced-together assemblage of various performances: the “performance” documented on the DVD is an aggregate. The various dates of tour are mixed together, seemingly seamlessly; though the captions and video footage explicitly show the shifts in time and place that occur, the audio is fluidly mixed to make the divisions inaudible. The DVD documents the entire tour: a series of such performances; yet the itinerary of the tour is not recounted in the sequential order of its

historical occurrence. Instead, it is fragmented in much the same way as the source-texts that make up the show are cut up and re-ordered by their stylized re-performance within the show.

In keeping with the Tokyo's show near-coincidence with Hallowe'en, both DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist are in costume: Cut Chemist is dressed as a chef; DJ Shadow as a motocross competitor. Once again, the authorial presence of the "speakers" is hidden beneath a guise. The costumes, then, point to the masking nature of the authorial function: they are playing a role. In a rare instance of the turntablists speaking to the audience with their own voices, however, Cut Chemist explains the conceit of the show – an explanation that comes in the form of a parenthetical aside after the introduction of their costumes: "Oh and by the way, the whole night is 45s only; all 45s." This explanation is important because the appreciation of the set requires an understanding of its fragmented, assembled nature.

This explicit revelation of the procedural constraints of the performance puts the turntablists in a similar camp as the French Oulipo movement which sought to create new methods of writing based on restrictions, often mathematically derived (the foundational example is Raymond Queneau's 1961 work Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes which consisted of ten 14-line sonnets whose individual lines could be interchanged without disrupting the rhyme scheme to produce up to 10¹⁴ poems). The Oulipian emphasis on constraints and restrictions as a precondition of artistic creation puts them at odds with high modernism's desire to break away from convention in favour of so-called "artistic freedom". Instead of seeing "freedom" as the Joycean transcendence of constraining tradition or convention, the Oulipians reconceptualized artistic freedom as "the freedom of difficulty mastered" where difficulty is seen as a game to be played (Roubaud 40). Procedural constraints, then, act as a playful, self-induced challenge. The liberating possibilities of artistic creation are not found in an a priori state of unconstraint; rather, liberation is attained in an overcoming of a prescribed (and arbitrary) constraint. With regards to the turntablist texts under consideration here, the work is structured and defined by the limitation of the source material. Moreover, the specification that the set will be built up entirely from 45 rpm, 7-inch singles is a display of the physical virtuosity of the DJs: due to their small size, 45s are harder to manipulate on the turntable than their 33 1/3 rpm, 12-inch cousins. The constraint therefore not only limits the selection of sources to those issued on one particular format (albeit a common one), but also restricts the turntablists' dexterity. While Product Placement's overarching procedural constraint is outlined in Cut Chemist's brief introduction, The Hard Sell goes to much greater lengths to explain and justify the same constraint through a four minute long introductory film.

The set proper begins with the quotation record made by the children's television show, Sesame Street in which a voice belonging originally to Oscar the Grouch, but now appropriated by the two turntablists, says, "Okay, everybody get over here; it's time for something important." The character of Oscar the Grouch is defined as much by his habitation of a garbage can as his utter misanthropy. The inclusion of sounds from a children's record illustrates the levelling of culture seen in turntablism in general and in particular in this set where obscure funk-soul tracks and commercial jingles are put forward for the same aesthetic enjoyment.

A second voice then asks, "Well, you know who that is don't you?" DJ Shadow is then formally introduced with a quotation of a female chorus singing "Shadow, Shadow, Shadow" taken from the Milton Floyd soul song "I'm a Shadow." The original song focuses on the heartbreak of a spurned lover who is "just a shadow travelling in the dark / All because this girl broke my heart." Even though nothing other than the repeated single word of the female chorus is cited, the context of this statement is ironized when the quotation is juxtaposed with another brief sample of the title phrase from Lonesome Sundown's "I'm a Sampling Man." When repurposed by DJ Shadow, this phrase obviously refers to his work as a sampling DJ, but the original context of the phrase was as a self-inflating description of the Louisiana blues man's prowess with his many female admirers: "Well I kissed a cheek in California, I kissed one in New Orleans / If you want to know what love's all about, come over here to me / I'm a sampling man." The opposing identities of faithful, but forsaken lover and the promiscuous Casanova are contradictorily brought together in the figure of DJ Shadow. The otherwise divergent principles of fidelity and philandering are reconciled in the DJs whose sincere love for their sources is paired with a cultural promiscuity in which all genres and all forms, like the women Lonesome Sundown has scattered across the country, are fit for sampling. Though the digging disc jockey may be searching, like Milton Floyd, for that one particular sound in his head, that sound may be found anywhere and, as such, no avenue for gratification should be closed down.

ii. Sounds of science.

Following this ventriloquized introduction, the first full musical track is prefaced with a sampled statement: "You must have a good producer that has the know-how of putting sound together on a good recording." Immediately, this statement emphasizes the technical knowledge required by and for the production of sound recordings. The possession of this "know-how" is

what separates the professional producer from the amateur consumer. Indeed, the figure of the producer emerged early on in the history of sound recording and was of particular necessity in the era of acoustic recording. The technical evolution of the recording studio that was inaugurated by the development of the electrical process (which allowed for the electrical manipulation of recording signals) and tape recording (which allowed for the assemblage of a recording from multitrack, polyphonic recordings) furthered this divide by increasing the knowledge gap between producers and consumers. By citing this quotation, however, the DJs are undermining the privileged status of the technically oriented producer. From their perspective, the “know-how” needed to make a good recording is not the science of acoustics, but instead the knowledge of the musical connoisseur: the ability to recognize “good” sounds that can be quoted and “put together” on a new “sound recording.” Via turntablism, the consumer is turned into a producer, but not just any consumer: in order to produce a work such as Product Placement, an extensive knowledge of the archive of recorded sound is required as the prerequisite for being able to select the best passages to quote.

Another voice is heard: “Sounds of science: it’s a vast field that encompasses the dreams of tomorrow: chemistry / chemistry / chemistry ... [echoes to fade]”. Coupled with the previous statement about producers and “know-how”, this sample locates music production within the context of scientific progress. The technical knowledge needed for producing records is but one strain of scientific discourse, specifically the science of sounds. In its original context, the phrase evokes the modernist conception of progress as expressed in the famous DuPont slogan: “Better things for better living ... through chemistry,” which originally served to highlight the benefits to daily life that resulted from industrial science. This phrase was signified upon when it was chosen (and truncated to the more oft-quoted “Better Living Through Chemistry”) by the British house artist and producer Fatboy Slim for his debut album in 1996. This usage suggests that the “chemistry” held to provide “better living” is not the authorized processes of corporations such as DuPont, but rather the illicit chemistry of narcotics prevalent in rave culture.

The chemical-narcotics connection is further developed in the vocal sample from Grady Lewis’ “Soul Smoking” that is played at the end of this first piece and sets up the transition to the next track: “You can have your pot and pills, that’s your mould, but I get my high from smokin’ soul. Oh yeah, I get up with it, down with it, love it, and can’t quit it. Right on. I’m the best that ever did it and got away with it.” A female chorus comments: “Ooo-wee! Found that soul!” Here soul music itself is likened to a drug and an illicit one at that: the enjoyment of the music is something to “get away with.” As such, chemistry is turned into a *pharmakon*, and the ironization

injects uncertainty as to whether it is DuPont or Ecstasy that constitutes the poisonous term of the binary. Though legal and productive, DuPont's chemistry is also pollutive, while illegal and dangerous narcotics such as the Ecstasy associated with the rave culture represented by Fatboy Slim promotes the "better living" of communal, ecstatic celebration.



Fig. 3: A series of Cut Chemists.

The inclusion, and repetition, of the word "chemistry" is accompanied visually by a multiplication of the freeze-framed image of Cut Chemist himself. Each repeated iteration of the word causes a semi-transparent duplication of Cut Chemist producing a serialized "train" of Cut Chemists in time to the looped repetition of the word. The image of the DJ becomes, like the sampled quotation, something that can be duplicated and reiterated: a moment of time that is frozen and looped. Not only does the quotation of a passage effectively duplicate and repeat it, albeit in a different place, but the quotation itself also is reiterated by being looped. In this instance, a single word is being repeated, but the looped repetition of musical phrases is one of the musicological bases of sample-based music. Even though this particular performance is more like a traditional DJ set than the solo work of DJ Shadow (notably his Endtroducing..... album), Product Placement (and The Hard Sell more so) makes use of looped sections, which, as discussed above, create a cyclical view of time at odds with the modernist idea of linear progress expressed in the sampled statement.

The original quotation suggests that the "dreams of tomorrow" – which not only can be read as referring to the imaginary conception of anticipated advancement via the unfolding of time, but also that tomorrow itself is a dream: the mental construction of the as yet unraveled future – will be realized through the development of technological science such as chemistry. Yet this development is deferred by the repetition of the word "chemistry", and the deferral is further emphasized with the series frozen images of Cut Chemist (who at that moment is depicted in the act of backspinning the record to produce the repetition) superimposed on one another in almost

Cubist collage of a single, suspended moment. The leitmotif of progress, which recurs throughout Product Placement and The Hard Sell, is cast in nostalgia and looked back on from a position of post-progress.

The name Cut Chemist and its etymology has special significance here: it unites the otherwise opposing concepts of dislocation and synthesis. The first part of his name refers to the turntablist practice of “chopping”, which Schloss defines as “the practice of dividing a long sample into smaller pieces and then rearranging those pieces in a different order to create a new melody. In other words, chopping actually takes a continuous musical performance and makes it *sound* like a collage” (151, emphasis in original). In this sense, “cutting” not only denotes the rupturing of musical texts, but, more importantly, also their reassembling into a new whole. It operates here along the same indeterminate lines as the word “splice”. A splice involves the joining together of two linear elements, whether they be clauses of a sentence, sections of rope, or gene sequences. The splice also emphasizes the fragmentary nature of the joined elements: to perceive the splice is to perceive the division between what has been spliced. So, while the splice joins what would otherwise be separated (and, in the case of the comma splice, what should be properly kept separated), it also at the same time points to the very separation it attempts to bridge.

Moreover, the term “cut” is also used to refer to individual tracks on a record and is essentially synonymous with a specific recorded performance. This etymology is derived from the fact that vinyl records are produced by literally cutting a groove into a disc. In the era of acoustic recording, this cutting occurred at the very moment of recording, when the vibrations of the mechanized stylus attached to the recording horn etched a groove into the master disc. Despite the developments of the electrical process and digital recording, the phrase “to cut a record” is still used in an analogous fashion to “publishing a book.” Therefore, Cut Chemist’s “chemistry” involves the cutting together of cuts from cuts (cut records, that is) to produce a new cut: the record of Product Placement itself. Furthermore, chemistry implies a transformation of source materials by bringing them together in a chemical reaction.

As the word “chemistry” is echoed by way of backspin, the musical accompaniment begins with some serpentine guitar lines and the emergence of stuttering drumbeat. A second vocal sample is then introduced: “This [a pause is added to make the rhythm of the spoken words in time with the drumbeat] is soul: [another pause] the beginning of today and the hope for tomorrow.” To effect the pauses, DJ Shadow manually stops the record from spinning, thus suspending it momentarily so that the metre of the vocal phrase is adjusted to fit with its new context. The sample is then

retemporized: its progression is adjusted, deferred by the hand that stops, momentarily, the rotation of the record. The formal effect is a kind of temporal polyphony in which multiple times are apprehended simultaneously. Though ultimately one time is subordinated to the other (the musical record is not adjusted to fit the vocal sample, but vice versa), the pauses are perceived by the audience (the importance of the film cameras capturing the DJs' moves is shown here) and therefore demonstrate the existence of a plurality of times (as expressed by rhythmic metre) in the text.

On a semantic level, the juxtaposition of the samples draws parallels between music production and progress of science: just as the "sounds of science" involve the "dreams of tomorrow," soul music is equated with "the hope for tomorrow." The link is emphasized by the earlier sample that states a "good producer" must have "the know-how of putting sounds together." The production of music, at least since the development of multitrack tape recording, is sonic chemistry whereby the interaction of musical elements induces a reaction to produce a new whole. As stated above, the original context of this particular quotation refers to the technical know-how required of a studio producer who, as a result of the development of multitrack tape recording in the mid-1960s, was tasked with the job of assembling the final record from the multiple individual performances of the recorded musicians. Rather than being a unitary performance to be documented by the record, the studio production was now a gestalt produced by the interaction of individual elements. The structure is rhizomatic: any alteration to one part effects its connection to other elements (for example, raising the volume of a bass guitar will affect the prominence of a kick drum).

The "good producer" that the vocal sample insists is required is the musician that plays this particular instrument, and their performance is the combination of the various performances on the multitrack tape. In this sense, the record producer is analogous to the novelist as theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin. In his analysis of the Fyodor Dostoevsky, Bakhtin noted the plurality of authorial voices within the writer's novels. In "Discourse In The Novel" (1935), Bakhtin writes, "The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (262). Although ostensibly the work of a single writer, the novel consists of a polyphony of different writings. The work of the author, in this case Dostoevsky, is to mediate between the different voices – each theorized by Bakhtin as an author in its own right. The novelist then becomes a meta-author who controls the various subordinate authors of the different voices within the text itself:

The stylistic uniqueness of the novel as a genre consists precisely in the combination of these subordinated, yet still relatively autonomous, unities (even at times comprised of different languages) into the higher unity of the work as a whole: the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of a novel is the system of its “languages”. (262)

The novel then is quite literally a dialogue between these voices and the author-function is to determine the relationships between these appropriated languages. Meaning is therefore achieved through the interaction of these diverse elements. Once again, the science of chemistry is evoked by the emphasis on the interaction of elements to produce a new synthesis.

Turntablism takes this process one step further. If the evolution of the modern recording studio turned the tools for recording into a musical instrument, the turntablist DJ transforms the tools for playing back recordings into a musical instrument. Moreover, the ability to do this depended on the possession of specialized knowledge. It is important to note that the pioneer of turntablism, Grandmaster Flash, was, like King Tubby before him, a trained electrician and foraged abandoned electronics from the streets of the Bronx: “I was a scientist looking for something. Going inside hair dryers, and going inside washing machines and stereos and radios, whatever you plugged in the wall” (qtd. in Chang 112). Flash’s musical expression through the turntable is inseparable from his abilities as an electrical engineer. Not only were his turntable experiments made possible by his jerry-rigging of audio equipment, but his musical techniques – “The Quick Mix Theory” and “The Clock Theory” – bore names seemingly more appropriate to scientific discourse. Indeed, it was his scientifically-minded concern with technical exactitude that Grandmaster Flash saw as separating him from the earlier, less precise stylings of Kool Herc.

This technical knowledge does not just include the understanding of how to use the equipment necessary for sample-based music. The “know-how” required by DJs to “put sound together on a good recording” also encompasses the archival knowledge of music as exemplified by the practice of “digging” that forms the bedrock from which samplers mine their quotations. The turntablist thus unifies the virtuosity of instrumental performer with the skilled consumption of the connoisseur. Both these virtuosities are predicated on a stored accrual of specialized knowledge.

The phrase “the beginning of today and the hope for tomorrow” is repeated again in the opening piece of Product Placement. A delay is inserted between the words “today” and “and”, and this momentary pause is filled with a scratch. The scratch explicitly signifies the breaking up of the phrase and therefore the separation of “today” and “tomorrow”; the progress from one to the other is interrupted by a distension of the timing of the original phrase. The continuity of time is

fragmented, and the linear sequentiality of today and tomorrow (as well as an implied past) is broken down into atomized moments, each of which can be successively reiterated on its own.

Following this repetition, a new assembled phrase is quoted at 3:00: “Each of them is the supreme master of / ‘turntable hits’ / ‘Each of them has blinding speed.” The first and third lines seem to be taken from a movie trailer, presumably an action movie of some kind. The words “turntable hits” are quoted from elsewhere and are sound like the same southern voice who asserted that “You must have a good producer....” The musical accompaniment momentarily drops out for the phrase “turntable hits.” The phrase “turntable hits” is a play on words: the original context is no doubt referring to hit records. Within the context of the turntablist set, however, the concept of the “hit” is ironized as the success of a played record is not determined by industry sales figures, but the immediate feedback from the dancing audience. Moreover, the vast majority of the records played were and are not hits in the classical, commercial sense, but rather inversely valued precisely for their obscurity. Furthermore, the visual imagery accompanying the phrase’s quotation shows the two turntablists each engaged in manipulating the playback of the records with their hands, which suggests the alternate meaning of literal hits on the turntable. This double-meaning then also incorporates the turntablist technique of the “stab” which is defined by Schloss as “quick, knifelike, intense sounds that puncture the surface texture of the music before quickly receding” (202n3). Though usually consisting of brief exclamatory snippets of guitar or horns, in this instance, the very phrase “turntable hits” becomes a stabbing turntable hit itself.

The overall effect of this assemblage of vocal samples is to cast the two DJs as superheroes by inserting them into the movie trailer voiceover. The phrase is attended by some turntable stabs that are heard as punch or kick sound effects from the sort of fight scene one would find in just such a movie whose trailer is being quoted and revoiced here. The ventriloquization of the trailer allows the DJs to engage in self-promotion in the third person. Indeed, the “blinding speed” advertised by the sample is then immediately demonstrated by DJ Shadow who proceeds to put forth a display of virtuoso scratching that coincides with a chord change in the backing track. His performance is followed by a similar turntable solo by Cut Chemist. In between, the second half of the trailer’s announcement is repeated, but this time it is extended: “Each of them has blinding speed and overwhelming power.” Both displays of scratching coincide with a guitar solo on the original backing track as if to suggest a parity between the instruments of the electric guitar and the phonograph turntable.

iii. *“Whole Lot of Love.”*

The sampled quotation from “Smokin’ Soul” which depicts soul music as an illicit narcotic serves as the transition to the next featured 45. When the first backing track stops, the camera pans out from focusing on DJ Shadow cueing up the next record to show Cut Chemist ventriloquizing the vocal sample. With exaggerated hand gestures and mimed mouth movements, Cut Chemist appropriates the sampled voice as his own. The last sentence of the vocal sample – a female chorus saying “Ooo-wee! Found that soul!” – echoes as a familiar guitar riff introduces the next track: an instrumental version of the Led Zeppelin hit “Whole Lotta Love” that accompanies the title credits for the Product Placement DVD.

The recording in question is “Whole Lot of Love” by Dennis Coffey & The Detroit Guitar Band, which curiously fixes the grammatically incorrect title of the original Led Zeppelin version. The use of the cover version of such a well-known song serves to defamiliarize the ubiquitous original by presenting an alternate “reading” of the “original” song. The term “original” is used provisionally and ironically here as Led Zeppelin’s release of “Whole Lotta Love” as a single⁸⁴ from Led Zeppelin II generated some legal questions about the track’s authorship. The lyrics to the 1969 recording were largely taken from a 1962 song “You Need Love” by Willie Dixon, though Dixon was not given any credit for the quotation until a subsequent lawsuit in 1985. Dixon’s lyrics were not copied directly, but rather reworked. Dixon’s final verse – “I ain’t foolin’ / You need schoolin’ / Baby, you know you need coolin’ / Baby, way down inside, woman, you need love” – is repositioned to the beginning of Plant’s version: “You need coolin’, baby / I’m not foolin’ / I’m gonna send you back to schoolin’ / Way down inside, honey, you need it / I’m gonna give you my love.” The vocal melody of the Led Zeppelin version closely follows Dixon’s. This quotation, however, was not an aberration in the career of Led Zeppelin who, working in the blues idiom, would frequently quote both the musical and lyrical content of earlier blues songs (that themselves were derived from the floating pool of oral tradition). Another track from Led Zeppelin II, “The Lemon Song”, was originally credited to the four members of Led Zeppelin despite being based on Chester “Howlin’ Wolf” Burnett’s “Killing Floor” (as well as quoting from Robert Johnson’s “Travelling Riverside Blues”: Johnson’s lines – “Squeeze my lemon till the juice runs down my leg”

⁸⁴ Reaching the number 4 position on the US pop charts, the UK version of the single was halted by the group’s manager Peter Grant: “An official statement added that they had written a special number which they intended to be their first British single. This never materialized, and despite much record company pressure, they declined to issue official singles in the UK throughout their career” (Lewis 15).

– are pointed to in the song’s title). As with “Whole Lotta Love”, a subsequent lawsuit resulted in changed credit for the song: “In fact, some later copies of the album do list the track as ‘Killing Floor’” (Lewis 17).

The sampling of a cover version of a song, which itself constitutes a citation of an earlier work, calls into question the idea of any work having a clear point of origin. Rather, what is revealed is that any work exists in a genealogical continuity: the point of origin is deferred as, following the rhizomatic structure of citation, each such point merely points to further antecedents. Indeed, Dixon was also subsequently given credit for two tracks released on Led Zeppelin’s self-titled debut album – “You Shook Me” and “I Can’t Quit You Baby” – but as Robert Palmer notes in the liner notes to Led Zeppelin’s 1990 boxed set anthology, Dixon’s claims of authorship are as questionable as Led Zeppelin’s: “Yet several of Dixon’s copyrights are of material from the folk-blues public domain – tunes like “My Babe” were current in the South long before he claimed them. It is the custom, in blues music, for a singer to borrow verses from contemporary sources, both oral and recorded, add his own tune and/or arrangement, and call the song his own” (19). Led Zeppelin’s quotation of musical and lyrical phrases from previous works in the blues idiom is therefore part of the continuity of the oral tradition, a continuity which is conceptually carried over in the process of sampling. Brewster and Broughton place sampling in that exact tradition of musical borrowing, although it is borrowing which, by virtue of it making use of the material manifestation of composition in a sound recording rather than just the ideational structure of melody and rhythm. In their analysis of Afrika Bambaataa’s “Planet Rock”, Sugarhill Gang’s “Rappers’ Delight”, and Grandmaster Flash’s “Adventures on the Wheels of Steel” (all foundational early hip hop recordings), the writers state:

In fact, all three songs show a considerable leap from the kind of organic sampling which has always existed in music – the slow transmission of melodies and rhythms – to a more unmediated form of musical thievery. Here are songs made from very little more than snippets and snatches of others, not *versions* of other songs, not *improvisations* of other songs, but *copies*, either re-recorded from existing records or replayed note for note as exactly as possible. (265, emphasis in original)

Leaving aside for now the question of mediation – contrary to Brewster and Broughton’s assertion that sampling is “more unmediated,” the quotation is mediated by the medium of the record so that what is being sampled or copied is not the song in its ideal form, but rather its recording – the emphasis on “the kind of organic sampling which has always existed in music” points to the lack of

a point of origin for musical phrases (which, by analogy, can be extended to verbal phrases), which always gesture backwards to further antecedents.

After roughly half a minute of the instrumental version of “Whole Lotta Love,” in which Robert Plant’s vocal part is voiced by a distorted electric guitar, a sample from the chorus of the Led Zeppelin recording is overlaid on top of the instrumental backing. Plant’s vocal line is reintroduced to the song as an accompaniment in which the original duets with the derivative cover. The Led Zeppelin 45 is passed through an equalizer which filters out the lower frequencies so that the vocal performance is rendered more prominent. The effect of this filtering is to undermine the audio fidelity of the sample – the sound is “tinny” – and to accentuate the distance between the in-studio vocal performance and its memorialization on the record. Moreover, each iteration of the titular refrain is spaced with yet another voice calling for the repetition of the chorus line: “‘What a whole lotta love’ / ‘Again’ / ‘What a whole lotta love’ / ‘Once more’ / ‘What a whole lotta love’.” Furthermore, though its low position in the mix makes it difficult to hear, a vocal sample from LL Cool J’s “I Need Love,” consisting simply of the spoken iteration of the title, shadows Plant’s refrain. Though musically unrelated to the Led Zeppelin track, LL Cool J’s 1987 rap ballad fortuitously references and answers the Willie Dixon track title “You Need Love” that provided the lyrical basis for the Led Zeppelin composition.

iv. “Let’s Do It Again.”

The “Whole Lotta Love” section is brought to an end after the Robert Plant and Dennis Coffey duet where the guitar riff is duplicated with a rhythm produced by scratching on the turntable. The last note of the riff is echoed as the flute pick-up leads into the next track – Charlie Whitehead’s “Let’s Do It Again (Part 3).” A call-and-response pattern is set-up as the guitar riff from Whitehead’s record is answered by a similar riff taken from another unidentified track. The vocal phrase taken from Whitehead (“Baby, gotta gotta do it again”), a call to repetition, is itself repeated, yet what follows, what is “done again,” is the introduction of yet another piece, “It’s Your Thing” by Cold Grits, an instrumental reading of the Isley Brothers’ 1969 hit. Just as with “Whole Lot of Love,” a recognizable tune is defamiliarized by its substitution with a lesser-known cover version in which an electric organ speaks in place of the Isley Brothers. While the Cold Grits version of “It’s Your Thing” plays on, the camera focuses on DJ Shadow cueing up another 45 on the turntable. Small strips of paper stuck to the record are visible: these are the visual cues that mark

off the section of the record to be played as required by Grandmaster Flash's Clock Theory. DJ Shadow moves the record back and forth, yet no sound issuing from it is heard: he is practicing the next mix, presumably insuring that the following track – "Expo '83," an instrumental number by the Backyard Heavies – is introduced seamlessly into the set.

After allowing the Backyard Heavies' track to play unadjusted, the DJs reassert themselves in the mix with a series of scratched bass stabs that accentuate the bass rhythm while simultaneously altering it by adding further syncopation. The stabs are revealed to be taken from the introductory drum break from Timmy Thomas' "Sexy Woman," and this break is played out in full to the point that its source song is entered into the set. Indeed, two individual records of the track are played off against each other so that after a portion of the song has been played, it returns to the beginning once more and is replayed, but with additional elements added from elsewhere by the DJs. A brief saxophone phrase is introduced and chopped up in real-time via turntable scratching. A third return to the opening break sees the break extended this time into a drum solo, or rather, drum duet, as the original break is once again accompanied with bass drum stabs from the other copy rotating on the turntable.

v. "(You) Got What I Need"

When the third iteration of the intro break from "Sexy Woman" progresses once more into the rhythm guitar pattern of the song, it is now combined with the piano melody from Freddy Scott's "(You) Got What I Need." The audience signifies their recognition of the melody with a cheer, but what is being recognized is not Scott's relatively obscure recording, but its quotation in Biz Markie's "Just a Friend." A 1989 hit for the comedy rapper, "Just a Friend" combined a spoken rap with a cartoonish, off-key sung chorus that took its melody from the Scott original. The piano line plays out, but right at the moment when the song proper is to emerge, the track is instantly returned to the beginning of the piano melody. A brief "Oh-" is heard which signifies the beginning of the vocal part of the track, so this progress is deferred by returning once again to the beginning of the piano break. A second iteration of the piano sample then follows until the vocal chorus is allowed to emerge as the drum part from "Sexy Woman" is cut-off. When the vocal part is played in full, the audience responds with an even louder cheer; those who had not initially recognized the Biz Markie reference in the piano melody now pick up the reference when the song's vocal part is played.

Aside from citing the melody of the track, Biz Markie also plays with the original's lyrics in much the same way as Robert Plant reworked Willie Dixon's "I Need Love." Similar to the contradictory juxtaposition of Milton Floyd's "I'm a Shadow" and Lonesome Sundown's "I'm a Samplin' Man" described above, Biz Markie's re-reading of Scott's composition radically alters the sense and significance of the lyrics. Only the very first verse of the track is re-played in Product Placement, but this is the section that provided the basis for Biz Markie's version: "Oh baby, you / You got what I need / You've got everything I need / You're like medicine to me." The original track expresses the contentment and bliss of love fulfilled: the singer is cured by the presence of his addressed lover, a presence which provides all that he "need[s]" and "save[s]" him from "... a world [of salty tears]⁸⁵ / So afraid and full of fears." In Biz Markie's version, however, this love is unrequited as the addressed woman is apparently unfaithful: "You / You got what I need / But you say he's just a friend / And you say he's just a friend." The rapped verses of the track, in which the viewpoint shifts so that addressee of the chorus is referred to in the third person, reveal that the alleged "friend" in question is actually the addressee's lover and that it is Biz Markie who is really "just a friend." The medicinal qualities of the love described by Scott are turned, pharmakon-like, into a poison that negatively affects the singer: "I was so in shock that my heart went down south," he raps in the final verse when he catches the object of his affections (referred to throughout the song as "Blah-blah", a designation which erases the individual's interpellating name and replaces it with an anonymous, non-linguistic sound) and an unnamed male "tongue-kissin'" in her school dormitory. Both Scott and Markie see in their respective addressees "everything [they] need," but whereas for Scott this desire is realized and satiated by the lover's "medicine," Markie's desires are always deferred by the vacillations of the female character of the song. At each moment when he hopes to fulfill his desire, another rival male's presence is made manifest. Yet even at these moments, his desire is not quite denied, as the rival is explained away (mendaciously, the listener is to presume according to the rapped verses) as "just a friend". Thus, Markie's love is held suspended between consummation and rejection such that he is revealed to be an object of teasing and manipulation on the part of Blah-blah.

This theme of female manipulation, which is implied by the quotation of the source material for Biz Markie's "Just a Friend," is carried over in the next track in the set, Bobby & James Purify's "I'm Your Puppet" in which two male singers (who harmonize into a single, albeit duophonic, voice) inform an addressed female: "Pull the string and I'll wink at you / I'm your puppet / I'll do

⁸⁵ This phrasing is this author's reading of a somewhat indistinct line; no official lyric sheet can be found for this track.

anything that you want me to / I'm your puppet.” Furthering the theme of cyberneticization, the singers then see themselves as technological assemblages (i.e. puppets) devoid of any internal agency and controlled instead by an external subjectivity. Moreover, the speaking presence of the singers is conflated with its representation on the record. Just as the singers are puppets of the addressed string-puller, the record itself is a technological object under the control of the turntablist. Scratching the disc is simply the means by which they “pull the strings” of the record-puppet. Therefore, the “I” of the quoted line ambiguously stands in for both the harmonizing singers as well as the record of their performance that is now being re-played in the Product Placement set.

What follows is indeed a puppet performance as DJ Shadow proceeds to take two copies of the Bobby & James Purify record and alternates between each one to create, at first, a staggered looping in the manner of Grandmaster Flash’s Quick Mix Theory. This simple looping, however, is expanded upon as, after one iteration of the isolated passage, individual drum beats from one copy are inserted into the playback of the other copy. Crucially, these beats are inserted at different points than their original placing to produce a new rhythm from elements already in the original. This turntablist technique is known as beat juggling, which, as colourfully defined by Mark Katz, “requires two turntables and involves isolating and repeating discrete passages, alternating (‘juggling’) them between the turntables in counterpoint. When done well, it looks easy, but as with juggling chain saws, the smallest error in timing can have disastrous results” (125). In their history of the disc jockey, Brewster and Broughton offer an expanded definition:

Beat juggling is really no more than a superfast version of the basic spinback techniques developed by Grandmaster Flash. The key move is the loop, in which a short drum pattern⁸⁶ is repeated and repeated. The other important moves are the breakdown, a manual slowing down of a drum pattern whereby the DJ halts the record in between each beat; and the fill, where beats from a second record are added to the first to give double or triple beats or an echo effect. (283-284)

Whereas an example of the “breakdown” technique will be illustrated later on in Product Placement by Cut Chemist, the beat juggling here by DJ Shadow is a demonstration of the “fill” technique. Through the staggered juxtaposition of two copies of the same musical passage, DJ Shadow is creating a wholly new drum part for the original song, one that is more complex and syncopated. Beat juggling therefore brings forth new rhythmic forms that are implicit in the original. Whereas

⁸⁶ In the instance of beat-juggling being analyzed here, DJ Shadow is looping not just a naked drum break, but rather a piano melody and its attendant rhythm backing.

DJs routinely create new works through the interaction of elements from other, different works, beat juggling involves mixing elements from the multiple copies of the same record. As such, the work is juxtaposed and put into dialogue with itself.

Moreover, to bring out this new rhythm requires a not inconsiderable amount of skill and practice on the part of the beat juggler. Brewster and Broughton illustrate this with a description of a demonstration of beat-juggling by Roc Raida, a member of the X-Men / X-ecutioners group of DJs: “With a flurry of little jet-fast moves, he flicks around the two breakbeat records. The result is an impossibly complex pattern of improvised drumming; he seems to be able to put each beat exactly where he wants it. As if that isn’t enough, he then speeds up the pattern in a ballistic sequence of funky syncopation and double-beats. It sounds, of course, nothing like the original records” (Brewster & Broughton 283). Once again, for the audience to fully apprehend the virtuosity of the performance, the formal constraints have to be delineated, and this is achieved by way of a Cut Chemist announcement made this time in his own voice: “Check it out! DJ Shadow on the three inch hip-pocket disc. Check that out. They just get smaller and smaller.” Not only is he calling the audience’s attention to the usage of an obscure format – one that, due its small size, is even more difficult to manipulate than the standard seven inch 45 rpm single – but the exhortation to “Check it out” moves the focus away from the aesthetic appreciation of the music being played to the physical dexterity required to (re-)play it. As Katz notes in his analysis of a particular beat juggling routine:

In addition to the verbal and instrumental aspects of a routine, the physical element can be just as crucial. Part of the appeal of successful routine is the sight of the swift and intricate motion of the DJ’s hands; in fact, it is sometimes hard to appreciate the difficulty of a routine without seeing it. (This is true to certain extent of all music making, and reveals once again the challenge created by the invisibility of recorded performers). (126)

The presence of the cameras becomes of paramount performance here (and more so for The Hard Sell, in which a battery of film cameras displayed the performance in real-time for the live audience on a backdrop screen). Though the audio effect of the beat juggling is a new musical performance, the visual emphasis points to the constructed nature of that performance. The audience is presented with seemingly organic whole while simultaneously being informed of its artificial nature.

A similar effect also occurs immediately after the beat juggling sequence. “I’m Your Puppet” quickly gives way to a drum break from The Oceanliners’ “Funky Pants” which sets off a new sequence. Midway through this transition, however, a visual cut occurs: the DJ’s are suddenly

no longer in costume and the stage set-up is noticeably different (the two DJ's are no longer side-by-side; rather they are facing each other at a 90 degree angle). A caption on the bottom of the screen states that this footage is now being taken from the October 21, 2001 performance of Product Placement at the Knitting Factory in Los Angeles. Though the jump in time and space is visually abrupt and clearly discernable, the audio switch between shows is seamless, such that the viewer has no indication of where the audio feed from one show ends and the next show begins.

vi. Cooking with gas.

After playing an excerpt from “Super Funky (Part 1)” by Thunder, Lightning & Rain (Cut Chemist makes sure to first ask the audience, “Y’all want to hear funky?” – he requires their permission to carry on with the set), the track is interrupted by a vocal interjection from James Brown’s “Talkin’ Loud and Sayin’ Nothing” in which the Godfather of Soul tells his band to “Stop, fellas, cut, uh!” In this instance, the recipients of this command are shifted from the musicians playing within the recording to the turntablists playing the record (or, more accurately, the turntablists playing *another* record which James Brown is now interrupting). In the original single release of this track (the lengthy number was split into two parts, one on each side of the 45rpm 7-inch disc), this statement forms the first part of an *a capella* vocal break. Following the spoken interjection quoted here, Brown and his sideman, Bobby Byrd, trade off iterations of the sung phrase “Keep on singin’” before the rest of the band re-enters and the track returns to its repeated funk groove. “Talkin’ Loud and Sayin’ Nothing” was not included on an album release until the 1985 compilation In a Jungle Groove which was released to capitalize on the resurgence of interest in Brown’s early 70s work as a result of it being sampled by early hip hop artists.

The figure of James Brown is an important one in hip hop. In the liner notes to Endroducing....., DJ Shadow states: “All Respect Due to James Brown and his countless disciples for inventing modern music.” This statement comes at the end of a list of artists who are cited as influences upon his own work under the heading, “This album reflects a lifetime of culture.” Prior figures in hip hop are grouped, somewhat chronologically, into the subcategories: “Pioneers”, “Groundwork”, “More masters”, “All Respect Due to the original ‘edits’ crew (Chopping beats Hip hop style)”, and “All Respect Due to the DJs that inspired me through the years”. Once again, the ancestor worship inherent to hip hop is demonstrated, and James Brown is cast as the ultimate patriarch of this lineage.

The importance of James Brown extends beyond merely providing funky fodder for samplers to harvest; the form of his music is also an important predecessor for hip hop DJs. By basing his compositions around endlessly repeated grooves, Brown prefigures the cyclical (anti-)teleology of the loop. Also, his music is cellular in that each individual instrument (including Brown's vocals) plays a repeated, simple figure. The composition is the gestalt of these smaller parts, and their various musical interactions alter slightly with each repetition. In most of the tracks from this period, no single instrument plays the melody; instead, the melody is an aggregate, made up of the conversing parts of the songs – for example, guitars answering the horn section.

Moreover, Brown also deconstructs each performance as his vocal interjections call attention to the structure of the piece. Like the famous Centre George Pompidou, Brown's middle-period funk compositions lay bare their own structure, which is then reincorporated as part of the aesthetic content of the composition. For example, Brown's rhythmic stage directions to his band and the studio staff, such as the example briefly quoted here in Product Placement, take the place of sung vocals so that the lyrical "message" of a given track is its own composition and production. In other places, his instructions come in the form of requests to the band ("Can you take me to the bridge?") thus decentring himself as the controlling authorial figure of the piece. Brown also puts himself in the position of the audience by issuing a running commentary on the music often in the form of the repeated observation, "Ain't it funky, now?"

In an instance of a break fulfilling the same function in the DJ set as it does in its original context, the James Brown vocal sample introduces the next sequence. The introductory riff of an anonymous cover version of Stevie Wonder's "Superstition," in which the recognizable clavichord melody is translated into a guitar part, backs a sampled statement from the United States government: "This is Paul Anthony for the Office of Consumer Affairs of the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Secretary of HEW, Joseph A. Califano, Jr., has a special message on energy for the consumers who are most likely to be affected if there is a shortage of oil and gas / gas / gas...." The layering of appropriated voices is deep here. The announced message is to come from Joseph A. Califano, Jr.⁸⁷, who will be speaking on behalf of his governmental agency.

⁸⁷ The citation of Joseph A. Califano, Jr. carries with it a somewhat fortuitous link to the relationship between the media and big business. Aside from writing a book on the 1968 student riots in France, Califano was also the co-author of Media and Business, which, in the book's introduction, includes a transcript of a 1977 seminar between business and press leaders on the purported antagonism between the two institutions. The discussion of the agonistic relationship between business and the media obscures the fact that the media itself is a business, and the transcribed seminar focuses instead on the argument that increased consumer and environmental concerns since the 1970s have undermined the traditional integration of media and business (xi). Corporations are portrayed as marginalized voices: an executive from

The actual speaking voice heard here, Paul Anthony, acts as a herald for Califano, but even in this instance, Anthony is speaking *for*, that is *in place of*, the Office of Consumer Affairs for the Department of HEW. Though sourced on a 45 single, the message (whose message is but an announcement of a further message to come) takes the form of a government broadcast in which a single, authorized voice speaks to the undifferentiated masses. The authority of the speaker is derived from the government agency for which he speaks. Such agencies cannot speak themselves, they can only be spoken for by authorized representatives such as Anthony and Califano.

The message that follows, however, is not a speech from Joseph A. Califano, Jr., but rather a 1988 45 rpm flexidisc⁸⁸ credited to the National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation entitled “Rappin’ with Gas.” As such, the message to consumers affected by the fuel shortage is actually an advertisement aimed at increasing demand for a specific product. As the liner notes on the reverse

the fuel company Mobil, Herbert Schmertz, is quoted as saying: “All we want is a fair chance to be heard” (xiv). Writing in the late 1990s, Adbusters’ Kalle Lasn asserts that just the opposite is the case, that despite the protestations recorded by Califano, corporations do enjoy a sizeable influence over the content of the mass media:

In 1997, Chrysler, one of the five largest advertisers in the U.S., sent letters to one hundred newspapers and magazine editors demanding to review their publications for stories that could prove damaging or controversial: “In an effort to avoid potential conflicts, it is required that Chrysler corporation be alerted in advance of any and all editorial content that encompasses, sexual, political, social issues or any editorial content that could be construed as provocative or offensive.” According to a spokesperson at Chrysler, every single letter was signed in agreement and returned. This kind of editorial control is widely, quietly practiced throughout the industry. (35)

Lasn goes further to point how messages contrary to the aims of major advertisers are shut out from the media and makes for himself the same claim as Mobil’s Schmertz: “All we want is a fair chance to be heard.” As described above, Lasn’s Adbusters group has produced a series of television spots aimed at deconstructing consumerism. Ads such as “Autosaurus” (“a takedown of the auto industry involving a rampaging dinosaur made of scrap cars”), the above-described “Obsession Fetish”, and the campaign for “Buy Nothing Day” were all “systematically, repeatedly rejected by not only the CBC but by all the North American TV networks. ... Now, these are not crummy low-budget commercials that offended the networks’ delicate sensibilities. They’re effective and professional. The networks could not and did not object to how they looked. They objected to what they said” (31-32). Indeed, the CBS network executive Robert L. Lowary rejected the commercial for “Buy Nothing Day” on the grounds that “This commercial ... is in opposition to the current economic policy in the United States” (qtd. in Lasn 33).

The overall point is that, contrary to the purported antagonism between media and business discussed by Califano et al, messages that run counter to the consumerist narrative constructed by advertisers are shut out of the media, leading Lasn to ask: “But if a network decides that Nike or McDonalds can buy thirty seconds of airtime and say, ‘Buy hamburgers’ or ‘Buy shoes,’ why don’t I have the right to buy airtime for my side of the story?” (197). Lasn’s proffered solution is to institute a rule of Media Carta in which the airwaves are envisioned as public property and that corporate control over broadcasting constitutes a violation of the right of freedom of expression. By forcing media companies to not discriminate with regards to selling airtime, Lasn sees the principle of Media Carta as “a media reform movement to take back the cultural power to which all citizens are entitled – to reclaim our airwaves and the rest of our mental environment so that we can start telling our own stories and learn how to talk to each other again” (189-190).

⁸⁸ Flexidiscs or Soundsheets are flexible sheets of vinyl which were cheaply reproducible: “Soundsheets were the least expensive quality recording available. Mono or stereo, one sided or two, it was economically practical to use Soundsheets where recordings had been far too expensive before.” Often included as magazine or book inserts, flexidiscs were often used “as a marketing vehicle in countless trade publications” (“Soundsheet”). Introduced in the United States by the Florida-based Eva-Tone company, the format was discontinued in August 2000 as a result of the development of compact disc technology. Before the “Rappin’ with Gas” sequence, while the instrumental cover of “Superstition” is playing, Cut Chemist can be seen picking up the “Rappin’ with Gas” flexidisc from the record crate and flapping the vinyl sheet in a subtle display of the format to the audience before laying on the turntable.

of the single's sleeve attest: "‘Rappin’ with Gas’ is an educational program developed to teach the efficient use of gas in the home, the proper and safe operation of the gas range, and the overall convenience and benefits of natural gas appliances." The advertisement itself takes the form of a vintage hip hop track rapped by children in order to extol the virtues of cooking with natural gas: "I cook with gas ‘cause I’m in control / The flame could be adjusted for the perfect shrimp creole / The burner’s not on when I think it’s not / I can simmer, brown or boil in the same metal pot." Although this line appears to emphasize the agency granted to the consumer by the natural gas stove, the lyrics proceed to instruct the audience on exactly how to use this particular technology. Not only is the audience coerced into using a particular product and technology, but also to do so in a specific manner: "Another safe practice when using your range / Is to judge very carefully the height of the flame / The bottom of the pan is all it should cover / Pan size should be right to prevent boilovers." Throughout, the somewhat clumsy rhymes and 1980s-style delivery are juxtaposed with images taken from 1950s television illustrating suburban, largely white, domesticity. Thus, two very different times (the 1980s and the 1950s) and places (the inner city and the suburbs) are brought together in apposition.

Furthermore, the use of hip hop to sell natural gas indicates that the National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation is attempting to reach a particular demographic of young, urban minorities, presumably those who "are most likely to be affected if there is a shortage of oil and gas." At the same time that "Rappin’ with Gas" was produced, the shoe company Nike also realized the utility of using hip hop as a branding strategy in order to reach a particular, hitherto largely ignored, demographic niche:

One night, two W&K [the advertising agency Wieden and Kennedy] admen saw She’s Gotta Have It, in which Spike Lee’s oddball character Mars Blackmon stomped around in Air Jordans. A light bulb went off. They called Lee and told him they wanted to pair him with [basketball player Michael] Jordan. In 1988, when Spike and Mike began filming a series of spots that would shock the advertising world, Reebok was a \$1.8 billion company, and Nike trailed at \$1.2 billion. A year later, Spike and Mike’s ads helped propel Nike past Reebok, and the company never looked back. Not only did Nike’s success confirm that niches were the future, it also confirmed that a massive shift in tastes was occurring – from baby boomer to youth, from suburb to city, from whiteness to Blackness. (Chang 417).

Not only does this process indicate the economic importance of otherwise marginalized urban minorities, but it also serves to legitimize hip hop. Indeed, this legitimization through inclusion in

advertising was described in the statement from the rap group EPMD sampled in the DJ Shadow composition “The Third Decade, Our Move” explicated above.

Aside from appropriating the sonic characteristics of early hip hop, the track also appropriates formal aspects of the genre by sampling T. La Rock & Jazzy Jay’s 1984 work, “It’s Yours.” This is a double-appropriation: not only is the practice of sampling appropriated, but, in doing so, namely by sampling an earlier hip hop track, “Rappin’ with Gas” also more literally appropriates hip hop music to sell fuel gas. Indeed, the appropriation of method is indistinguishable from and requires the appropriation of content. There is no record of any legal injunction made against the National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation by the sampled artists.

By sampling this record, the turntablists remove it from its original commercial function and re-aestheticize the advertisement, transforming it into just another tune to dance to. This follows Adorno’s declaration that “every pleasure which emancipates itself from exchange values takes on subversive features” (“Fetish Character” 39). This subversion is further emphasized later on in the track when the DJs add to the song an assortment of raspberry sounds, connoting another, less salutary form of gas. By injecting such scatological humour into an otherwise earnest advertisement, the DJs are travestying the original work in much the same manner as the centonists who reshaped Virgil’s high-minded, epic poetry into descriptions of gambling games and wedding nights. Ironically, however, it is precisely this anterior commercial function, as well as the track’s ersatz pastiche of early hip hop, that gives the piece its aesthetic value as humorous kitsch. Indeed the DJs’ attitude to the track is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, the addition of farting sounds indicates a satirization of the piece. On the other hand, it is juxtaposed with other, more authentic, examples of electro hip hop such as CD III’s “Get Tough,” Man Parrish’s “Hip Hop, Be Bop (Don’t Stop),” and The Furious Five’s “Step Off.” The inclusion of “Rappin’ with Gas” amongst these more pedigreed tracks authenticizes the commercial message, reappropriating (or perhaps de-appropriating) it from its status as cynical marketing exercise, while at the same ironically deriding the simulation as little more than sonic flatulence.⁸⁹

During this section, a female voice is heard to utter “[indistinct name], you are the best / Pop this beat because it so fresh.” The last word of the phrase is then echoed by the backing track, “One For The Treble” by Davy DMX in which the same word, “fresh”, is repeatedly reiterated, but it is also electronically processed (in the original track) so that the word’s utterance sounds like a

⁸⁹ The repeated refrain of the song, “Cookin’ with gas,” is also slang for doing something well: the DJs are “cookin’ with gas” during the “Cookin’ with Gas” sequence as evidenced by the impressive display of turntablist techniques that follows the quotation of “Rappin’ with Gas”.

record scratch. The echo is continued with another quotation, this time from Melle Mel's rap in "Step Off": "To the DJ's scratch, you've met your match / 'Cause we're coming out fresh with a brand new batch / So we're taking you off into the galaxy / It's Vicious, Vicious, Vicious Lee." In this citation, the word "fresh" is the "match" of "the DJ's scratch". In this instance, then, the human voice and the sound of a turntable are rendered almost indistinguishable.

This sequence is accompanied with images of 45 rpm singles, many of which, such "It's The Real Thing" and the above mentioned Man Parrish track, are included in Product Placement. At one moment, the phrase "Not for sale" is clearly visible, signifying that the illustrated 45 in question here was a promotional copy intended for radio or juke box play. Through the spindle hole at the centre of each record, one can see in the background video footage of not only dancing crowds but also the manufacturing processes of the records themselves. This suggests an equivalency, or at least a balance, between the mass-consumption of a record with its industrial mass-production, a theme that will be returned to in the second half of the turntablist set. Later, this imagery is supplanted with an abstract, stylized series of blue, red, and white stripes that form a pastiche of the branding imagery of Pepsi-Cola.

At one point, an off-camera MC speaks to the audience: "Party people, make some goddamn noise. All original 45 shit for you. Whoever said seven inches wasn't enough, huh?" The phrasing of "all original 45 shit for you" is somewhat ambiguous. Later on, the same MC interjects again: "Original shit, original shit!" This raises the question of what constitutes originality here. Clearly, the music, by the simple fact of it coming from pre-extant and primarily vintage records, is manifestly not original. Even the quotation of the records is not original as many of the tracks are played for their significance in being previously sampled (the quotation of "(You) Got What I Need" as sampled by Biz Markie is a prime example of this). The originality could lie in the assemblage of the records: they had never before been combined and juxtaposed in this way. The recombination of previous sounds makes each quoted record "new" by providing it with new connections to other recordings.

Another, more materialist reading is that "originality" here stands in for "authenticity." The 45s being played here are genuine, vintage 45s – that is to say they are "original 45[s]" and not recent reissues. The quotation then takes on the "aura" of its source-text; unlike a sample taken from a recent reissue, a sample from an original copy carries the history of not only the format as a whole (it is important to stress here that turntablism as an art form emerged in the mid-1990s around the same time that vinyl records were being fully supplanted by compact discs, the recent resurgence in

vinyl notwithstanding), but also the history of the individualized copy in its journey from the pressing plant to its eventual location by the digging DJ in a used record store. In this sense, a uniqueness is imparted to an otherwise serialized copy, a uniqueness that is made manifest in the distinct crackles and pops that accrue on the record with each playing.

The insistence on using original copies – a wonderfully oxymoronic phrase – affirms not only the importance of tradition, but also the active engagement with that tradition, which comes in the form of doing the work of searching for records. In *Making Beats*, Schloss cites many DJs and producers who object to the usage of CD reissues of classic records and, though not explicitly mentioned, these same objections apply to vinyl reissues⁹⁰. A producer named Specs observes that the readily available nature of reissues pre-empts the whole concept of digging: “It just seems too easy. ... Because you don’t have to go out shopping for CDs. You don’t have to search. You have to search for records. ... So it cuts down the whole searching aspect. Like, most any good deejay or producer is gonna have to do some work. And now you don’t” (110). This view is carried on by Strath Shepard: “You have to take the flak from the record dealers, you have to wake up in the morning and get your hands dirty. You have to be willing to go through some crazy shit to get your records. And with a CD, it’s like you could just go to Blockbuster and buy that thing. Part of the culture is digging” (110-111). Aside from maintaining a connection to the emphasis on tradition and the archive in hip hop, the insistence on using original copies is very much another Oulipian strategic constraint that validates the art form precisely by making it more difficult.

In another instance of the original version singing, karaoke-like, over a subsequent instrumental cover as seen earlier in the “Whole Lot of Love” sequence, the titular vocal phrase that introduces Esther Williams’ “Last Night Changed It All (I Really Had a Ball)” is played over the backing track of Kid ‘N’ Play’s instrumental version of “Last Night”, a track which samples the Esther Williams song. The phrase is cut up so that that it now reads: “Last night- / Last night changed it all / Last night / I - / I - / I really had a ball / Last night-.” Distended by the repetition of the very first parts of the two lines, the original is altered to accompany its genealogical descendent. The quotation, or rather the juxtaposition of the quoted original with its also quoted quotation, transforms the original.

⁹⁰ In *The Hard Sell*, the introductory film makes a specific point of insisting that the records to be played are all original 45s and not reissues.

vii. *"Ain't It Good to You."*

The next section of the performance is linked by an impressive display of beat-juggling by DJ Shadow. This performance is framed with a stage announcement from the MC, "DJ Shadow," as if to remind the audience of the authorial presence of the DJ, a reminder pre-emptively echoed by Cut Chemist's theatrical two-armed pointing to DJ Shadow. This gesture reveals the constructed nature of the musical performance. What is being heard is not simply the reproduction of a record, but the production of an entirely "new" performance assembled from the playback of records. This then points to the central paradox of DJing: that the art form is based around creating the illusion of an organic whole, while simultaneously revealing the constructed nature of the assembled whole. The visual spectacle of the dextrous turntablist techniques required to seamlessly assemble the musical quotations in the turntablist text therefore fulfills the same function that Roland Barthes ascribed to the preterite and the third person point of view in novelistic writing. These literary conventions serve, in Barthes' view, to hide the author and create a simulacrum of reality which is nonetheless requisitely artificial and constructed: "and we have just seen that, in the West at least, there is no art which does not point to its own mask. The third person, like the preterite, therefore performs this service for the art of the novel, and supplies its consumers with the security born of a credible fabrication which is yet constantly held up as false" (*Writing Degree Zero* 41).

Indeed, DJ Shadow's very name is expressive of this paradox in which the DJ attempts to remove his authorial presence from the texts he creates. He explained the etymological reasoning for taking the name in an interview:

A lot of producers, like Herbie Lovebug and Marley Marl⁹¹, started coming out with records where they were trying to push themselves to the forefront. And for whatever reason, probably another political reason or something, I felt that that was missing the point of what a producer's role should be. So "Shadow" represented the fact that I thought that producers

⁹¹ Marley Marl was a hip hop producer in the 1980s when hip hop was moving from clubs to the studio who affirmed the equivalence between DJing and music production: "There's not much difference between making a record and being a DJ, cutting up beats and stuff" (qtd. in Brewster & Broughton 266). It is unclear who exactly Herbie Lovebug is, but it is possible that DJ Shadow is referring to Lovebug Starski, another hip hop DJ who made his way to the recording studio in the 1980s.

should stick to being in the background. A producer being acknowledged as a celebrity just felt tasteless to me, at the time.⁹² (qtd. in Wilder 56)

Yet despite making himself a “shadow” like the protagonist of the quoted Milton Floyd song, the obvious presence of the DJ on stage foregrounds the shadow. This irony is compounded when the attempt at authorial erasure – the self-naming of “shadow” – becomes itself an authorial title, the author-function under which the musical works of one Josh Davis are organized.

In the sequence of early 1970s funk tracks that follows the spectacular⁹³ beat-juggling display, a vocal interjection from John Ellison’s “You Got to Have Rhythm” is repeatedly cited throughout. Through this quotation, the audience is repeatedly asked, or rather reminded, in reference to the music being played: “Ain’t it good to you?” After a few repetitions of this single phrase, the track is eventually allowed to proceed, and the verse that follows extols the necessity of the audience’s involvement with the music:

Grab hold of my hand and don’t let go
 Come with me out on the dance floor
 I want you to dig this funky beat
 Don’t it make you want to move your feet
 You say you can’t dance, but I bet you can
 You see that’s something you don’t understand
 Ain’t nothing to it, you can do it
 Ain’t nothing to it, you can do it
 All you need is a little bit of rhythm.

The cited voice of John Ellison stands in here for the figure of the disc jockey whose role it is to motivate the audience’s appreciation of the music heard. The line “I want you to dig this funky beat” works as a manifesto of the DJ’s enterprise, to essentially “sell” the played record to the listener.⁹⁴ Moreover, the singer is speaking directly to the record’s audience in a conversation that cuts across the distances both spatial and temporal. Recorded in a studio, the track addresses an interlocutor who is not yet present at the moment and place of recording and therefore incorporates a presupposed reception of the record into its very production. The speaker, much like the DJ in

⁹² The latest venture of *American Idol* and *The X-Factor*’s Simon Cowell is a musical competition show that proclaims to seek out “the world’s next great DJ.” In contrast to DJ Shadow’s statement, Cowell states: “DJ’s [*sic*] are the new rock stars, it feels like the right time to make this show” (qtd. in Pendergrast).

⁹³ The word is used in a denotative, and not an evaluative, context.

⁹⁴ This theme will be greatly expanded on in the analysis of *The Hard Sell*.

general with which he is identified, then occupies a liminal space between producer and consumer (as the narration on the 1959 jazz composition by George Russell, “Big City Blues,” states: “So cats keep on struggling to say their say / But between them and the audience there sits the DJ”). The relationship between the performer and the audience that is encapsulated in this verse is consummated in the playback of the record. The distended (and one-way) conversation between Ellison and his audience is collapsed into a seemingly spontaneous, real-time interaction between the record and its listeners.

The final phrase of the verse – “All you need is a little bit of rhythm” – is followed through as, immediately following its utterance, the music is stripped down to a solo drum break from Mongo Santamaria’s “Coylude.” Through various scratchings and backspinnings, the break is extended beyond its actual duration on the original record, but still remains purely percussive. The extraneous melodic elements are removed so that all that is left, all that is needed, is the purely rhythmic, introductory part of the track. In the Product Placement set, this introduction serves as simply a break (in the literal sense) before another funk song is offered to the audience.

Another switch in time and place is effected as the film moves from Los Angeles to a performance recorded four days prior on October 17th, 2001 at The Fillmore in San Francisco. As before, the audio remains constant (though an almost audible edit can be detected before the video switches), even as the video makes the move backwards in time and space explicit (a movement that is signified with a caption). This simultaneous erasure and confirmation of the temporal and spatial gaps between the performances is repeated within the performance when two tracks with similar basslines are juxtaposed. The second record interrupts the first by continuing its melody. This mix is done by DJ Shadow and, as it occurs, Cut Chemist stands back from his turntables and crosses his arms, thus becoming himself part of the audience as he smilingly watches his colleague mix the tracks. As the first record plays, he uncrosses his arms and moves his fingers up and down to the rhythm of the track in an imitation of the hi-hat rhythm. Anticipating the next record, he first holds up his left arm and beckons in a gesture that comes across as a request for the mix. When the switch occurs, that same hand then points down to the turntable on which the mix has been effected, and Cut Chemist then speaks into the microphone: “It sounds just like the same song.” This affirmation of the similarity between the two records serves to reveal their distinction. By pointing out that “it sounds just like the same song,” Cut Chemist is showing to the audience, who may not have otherwise discerned the mix, that it most definitely is not the same song, gesturing

towards the DJ's presence at precisely the moment when it is at its most conspicuously inconspicuous.

This sequence is then followed by the conclusion to the first Product Placement set, when the DJs play one of their own records, specifically "The Game," a track Cut Chemist had produced for the Los Angeles-based rap group Jurassic 5, included on their 2000 album Quality Control. This particular track is based on a sample from Denis Bryant's cover of Isaac Hayes' song "Soul Man" (a song made popular by the duo of Sam & Dave). Though Chali 2na and Marvski⁹⁵, two of the rappers who provide vocals on the Jurassic 5 track, both appear live on stage to rap their respective parts, "The Game" is not being played so much as it is being reconstructed: the record on the turntable is Bryant's, not Jurassic 5's. The opening phrase which is sampled in the Jurassic 5 track is looped manually by Cut Chemist on stage: a live, real-time demonstration of the track's construction. Moreover, the reconstruction of "The Game" is not presented in full: it itself is sampled, and the excerpted section (only Chali 2na and Marvski's versions are (re)presented here) is abruptly cut off and interrupted by a duet of beat juggling in which both turntablists use all four turntables to create a crescendo of increasingly complex rhythms and cuts that concludes the set that makes up the first half of Product Placement.

4. Intermission

The intermission between the two sets is occupied on the DVD by a short, ten minute film assembled from backstage footage. The film shows the preparations for the performance as well as footage of the two DJs purchasing records while on the tour. While in his chef's costume, Cut Chemist instructs the videographer: "Dude, you need be at the motherfucking record bar"⁹⁶, filming shit." At each performance, in addition to the usual merchandise table, a large collection of used vintage vinyl was put on sale for the audience. Immediately, the viewer sees audience members with headphones on, flipping through crates of old 45s. The presence of the record bar enables the audience to engage in the same practice of digging as the turntablists, a consumptive practice spurred on by the demonstration of the fruits of digging that is the Product Placement performance. The record bar then makes it possible for the audience to emulate the turntablists. The

⁹⁵ While Chali 2na is a member of the group in question, Marvski is not part of Jurassic 5, but appears on the album track as a guest rapper.

⁹⁶ The phrase "record bar" implies that records are to be consumed like beverages.

consumption of the performance by the audience is then coupled with the more active consumption of purchasing records. Inside any record buyer lies a latent DJ ready to emerge at any time.

This footage is then juxtaposed with the baking of cookies which will be distributed to the audience in the “Cookies ‘n Milk” sequence in the second set as if to suggest an equation between the consumption of records and the consumption of food. Indeed, the image of a series of cookies on a baking plate is an analogy for the serialization of record-texts as seen in the dug crates of the record bar. The multiplicity of serialized cookies on the baking plates becomes therefore a symbol for the mass-production processes required in the manufacture of records. This also suggests an equation between the cultural consumption of texts and the material consumption of food. Just as any given animal can be proverbially said to be what it eats, the DJ, as an author-function, is the sum of his or her listening habits: one plays what one hears.

Much of the intermission, however, is dedicated to documenting the means by which the DJs accrue their archives of sound. In the back of New York taxi cab, DJ Shadow is shown negotiating a record deal over the telephone: “DJ Rap ‘n Scratch? Do I need it? No, I mean I’ve got everything by him I’m aware of. What? With the cover, or just the 12-inch?” Later in the intermission, an actual record deal is shown being conducted in the Tokyo stop on the tour when a pair of record collector-vendors makes a late night visit to the DJs’ hotel room. In the commentary track to the DVD, the transaction is referred to as a “four hour trade,” and it takes on the air of an illicit drug deal. One of the dealers describes some of his stock as “very hard to get” as if it were some form of contraband that can only be secured upon great pains. The deal is revealed not be a sale, but a literal trade in which collectors are swapping items in their collection, a process which culminates with Cut Chemist picking up one of his 45s, kissing it, and saying “bye” as he laid it on the stack of records to be given to the Japanese collectors. That the trade may not have been satisfactory is hinted at in the commentary from Cut Chemist: “Wish I’d checked the condition on the Soul Lifters though before I’d made the deal.”

Prior to the hotel deal, the team is shown visiting a used record store in the Bronx. The camera pans through the various shelves full of vinyl, the fish-eye lens creating the effect of the stacked shelves arching over the viewpoint: an immersive cocoon of recorded sound. The elderly, bearded owner of the store sits in a rocking chair like a patriarch of the archive while his younger assistant (perhaps a son) explains the price structure to the DJs. The old man recounts how individual buyers come to the store looking for specific records: “Well, a few DJs come in for certain things. They want one thing, a certain thing, you know. Most of them do weddings and

want this thing or want that.” This generalized account of DJ purchases is then followed by the explanation of the individual tastes of one particular celebrity buyer: “See, [actor] Matt Dillon comes in, but Matt Dillon wants Cuban music. See, that makes it difficult: he wants one thing. And [on the] 78 [rpm format]!” Matt Dillon’s patronage is accommodated by the store’s fortuitous stocking of the record he seeks. This implies a multiplicity of Matt Dillons (or his serialized equivalents), each of whom finds his collecting desire, as expressed in the lack of a certain record, satiated in some way by the store. Yet this desire is never fully sated, no matter how rare and coveted the record may be. There is no final record to the collection: the satisfaction of one desire is but a prelude to the next record to be searched out. Only a record collection on the order of Borges’ Total Library could conclude and complete digging: a crate containing not only every record ever made, but every record that ever *could be* made.

A more personal account of the archaeology of collecting is offered by Cut Chemist who, at one of the store’s turntables, hears a particular record in his collection, one that he had stolen and dubbed from a friend. The moment of acquisition is recalled when hearing the sound of the collected object. A brief spin on the turntable, however, reveals that this is not that record, but rather a sound-alike. His friend B+ comments: “Funny how records sound the same sometimes, isn’t it?” Nonetheless, despite this momentary misidentification, the link between musical consumption and biographic memory is affirmed. Each individual record carries with it not only the memory of its production in the record studio and pressing plant, but also the biography of the record itself, primarily centred on the moment of acquisition, that moment that constitutes the fleeting fulfillment, if only for just a moment, of the collector’s desire. Later on in the intermission, while the group are on the tour bus to London, Keb Darge relates a story in which an argument between two collectors over a record led to the death of one of the combatants at the hands of a claw hammer (the victor ended up walking off with the contested record). Upon hearing the story, a member of the entourage asks “What the fuck record was that?” to which Darge replies, knowing the title, “‘Soul Thing’”. On the DVD commentary track, at this moment, Cut Chemist asks, “Now is he talking about ‘Soul Thing’ like Keith Mansfield’s⁹⁷ ‘Soul Thing’? ... I hope not.” It would be unwelcome for one of *their* records to be tainted with such an unfortunate history: the violence manifested by the desire for one copy of “Soul Thing” infects all other serialized iterations of that record.

⁹⁷ British keyboardist and library musician who worked extensively with the De Wolfe and KPM music libraries.

An interesting exchange occurs when the two DJs make their purchases. As he hands over some cash, DJ Shadow comments to the store owner: “Neat store you got here.” The store owner then asks: “Do you get to see a lot of music, too? Do you hear a lot of music?” which elicits the weary sounding reply: “Yeah.” As DJ Shadow affirms his position as a consumer of music, the old man then asks, “Do you play also?” to which the DJ answers: “Um, no, but we’re DJs.” The old man’s questioning sets up a dichotomy of seeing/hearing music and playing it, a dichotomy which is undermined by the DJ who produces by playing music that he has heard. DJ Shadow’s “no” is therefore delivered somewhat ironically, and the statement “but we’re DJs” qualifies the negation to suggest that DJing is an equivalent substitute for musical instrumentalism. As such, the old man’s questioning is critiqued: the opposition between playing and listening is a false one.

5. Product Placement: second set.

i. “Bizarro Brainfreeze”

The second half of Product Placement begins back at The Fillmore in San Francisco with a speech by DJ Shadow: “Whoever read the Superman comic books? [the audience cheers] Then you know about a villain named Bizarro [more cheers]. And Bizarro would take you into like an alternate reality, and if Brainfreeze was performed in Bizarro world, this is sorta what it might sound like.” What follows is a reconstruction of a portion of the earlier Brainfreeze set. However, Product Placement makes no use whatsoever of any records used in the construction of Brainfreeze. Instead, they use alternate versions of the records used in the Brainfreeze set to produce a new, alternative version of Brainfreeze. Even without the introduction, the reworking of Brainfreeze is made explicit in the text of the performance: the phrase “Brain/freeze” is assembled from two different recordings (the word “freeze” coming from Lifeforce’s “The Freeze”), and is then repeated. Each reiteration of the phrasing is individualized through the use of backspinning and a delay effect so that each utterance of the phrase is subtly unique. Indeed, it is not the phrase “brainfreeze” that’s repeated so much as the individual words, through which the whole periodically emerges: “brain/freeze-freeze-freeze/brain-br-br-br-brain/freeze-freeze-freeze/brain-br-br-brain....”

The sequence begins with a vocal sample that obliquely refers to the 7-11 promotional jingle, “Dance The Slurpee,” prominently featured in Brainfreeze, but absent in Product Placement: “Hey,

lucky for you you turned on here ‘cause this Dykesville and Blazersville. There’s a 7-11 combination for you if I ever heard it. Put ‘em together with a bunch of Broadway⁹⁸ sounds and you’ve got ... well, wait ‘til you hear it.” Nonetheless, the “7-11 combination” is reproduced through the use of different records. It is the same structure, but one made out of different bricks. As Batey explains:

There was even an extremely clever and very droll in-joke at the start of [Product Placement]’s second half, when Cut and Shadow constructed a sort of cover-version of Brainfreeze, using different readings of the same tracks – the Commodore’s “Keep On Dancin’” instead of the Alvin Cash version; Little Buck’s “Little Boy Blue” rather than Eddie Bo’s “Love And A Friend”; two covers of “California Soul” replacing Marlena Shaw’s peerless, and Gang Starr-sampled, original⁹⁹. (21)

When Brainfreeze was apprehended by the original San Francisco audience, the audience responded not only to the reworkings of the original source-texts within the turntablist performance, but also the links between the sources and the other hip hop tracks. In the Product Placement reconstruction of Brainfreeze, another layer is added to this already triple reading such that the inclusion of two versions “California Soul”, for example, already a double-reading of two texts (Product Placement itself as well as its immediate sources), refers back to not only Marlena Shaw’s version of the song (itself a cover version of the 5th Dimension’s original), but also the sampling of that particular version in Gang Starr’s “Check The Technique”, but also the inclusion of that version in Brainfreeze. The different tracks and their respective usages in the sampling texts are not related sequentially but rhizomatically, as each individual text is related to all others. Moreover, this chain can be extended with links between these records and the other records mixed with them (not only in both Product Placement and Brainfreeze, but also, in this example, other records quoted in the Gang Starr text). In other words, by quoting Marlena Shaw, Brainfreeze also cites “Check The Technique,” and the quotation of alternate versions of the song recorded by Shaw in Product Placement refers back also to both these texts and their prior citation in Brainfreeze.

That this rhizomatic structure is perceived by the audience is demonstrated in the cheers of recognition at hearing Earnest Jackson’s “Funky Black Man.” What is being recognized is not the obscure Jackson record, but rather the citation of Fried Chicken’s “Funky DJ” in Brainfreeze. The

⁹⁸ This sample also appears to refer to the Arizona-based soul group Dyke & The Blazers whose 1966 single “Funky Broadway” is cited as the first usage of the word “funky” in a song title (“Dyke & The Blazers”).

⁹⁹ The drum part from Marlena Shaw’s “California Soul” was also used by DJ Shadow in “Midnight In A Perfect World.” Moreover, the quoted section in Shaw is a naked drum break that is absent in both the Wilson’s and The Messengers’ versions.

two songs in question are virtually identical, with only different lyrics to prevent the one being a straight cover of the other. Oddly, despite the obvious similarity of both the composition of the tracks, but also their arrangement, the two records are credited to different writers (though both were recorded by the same producer, Ron Shaab). After the title phrase is uttered in the replay of the Jackson text, one of the MCs in the background (an interesting reversal of the usual hip hop privileging of the MC whereby the DJ/producer recedes into the background) asks the audience, “How many people think this is a funky DJ?” The question is intended with a double meaning: not only is the MC asking the audience to make an evaluation of the funkiness of the DJs on stage, but he is also leading the audience to recognize the similarity between “Funky Black Man” and “Funky DJ” and to correct the misreading of those who thought they were hearing the track quoted in Brainfreeze. The audience responds with a cheer to affirm that they too recognize the allusion, effectively making the same observation as that of B+ in the Bronx record store: “Funny how records sound the same sometimes, isn’t it?”

After a cut away from San Francisco back to the performance in Los Angeles, the “Bizarro Brainfreeze” section moves on to a display of beat juggling, this time by Cut Chemist. As in the previous instance of beat juggling, two copies of the same record – this time “Keep On Dancin’” by The Commodores – are played against each other. After staggering the breaks on each copy so that momentary break is extended, the cuts between the two identical records are then timed so that the otherwise constant beat appears to slow down into half-time. This suspension of time, however, is transitory, as, following this display, the beat picks up again and voice is heard to say, “Now get down on that bass one time,” heralding the re-entry of the bass guitar part. The same voice then says, “Come on, get down, do your thing now.” A muted guitar and drum beat are then sent through a delay effect while the main beat carries on. The voice urges the audience, “Alright, everybody keep on dancin’,” yet it is at this moment that the drumbeat’s rhythmic propulsion comes to an end. Ironically, however, rather than “keep[ing] on dancin’,” the track abruptly ends with sound of the vinyl record being swiftly slowed down to a stop, but even this halt is merely a momentary one as almost immediately the horn intro to Gerald Wilson’s instrumental cover of “California Soul”.

The version of “California Soul” heard in Product Placement is a combination of two separate texts, each a materially distinct rendition of the same ideal text (as attributed to the husband and wife songwriting team Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson): the vocal cover by The Messengers and Gerald Wilson’s instrumental version. Initially, Wilson’s record is heard by itself,

the melody of the song carried by a solo saxophone. After one repetition of the first melody line, the melodic phrase is repeated again from the beginning, but this time it is The Messengers' vocal version. This second record is noticeably sped up so that the tempo of the two different tracks is normalized. Also, during the later bars of the instrumental iteration of the melody, the strings from the Messengers' record can be faintly heard in the background, not quite in tune with Wilson's horns, like a palimpsest although one that foreshadows an emergence rather than marking an erasure. Once the strings give way to the vocals, however, the two records are switched. Wilson drops out of the mix and The Messengers effectively have a solo: "Like a sound you hear lingers in your ear / But you can't forget from sunrise to sunset / It's all in the air, you hear it everywhere / No matter what you do, it's gonna get a hold on you." The chorus-refrain of the song – "It's California soul / California soul" – does not play out. Rather, the word "California" is repeated, alternating between its voicing by the female singer from The Messenger's and the asemantic saxophone. The chorus line is therefore suspended in time and transformed into a call-and-response pattern between one record's vocal and another record's saxophone. Once again, the human voice is rendered equivalent with a musical instrument: the saxophone's dumb phrasing of "California" erases the word's semantic content and strips it down to just its rhythmic and melodic aspects. Also, the call-and-response dialogue between the two records is also a dialogue between the two DJs themselves. The saxophone's utterance of "California" is played by Cut Chemist's turntable, and this utterance is answered by DJ Shadow's cuts from the vocal version.

ii. Strike Cola.

It is the saxophone's phrasing of the chorus that closes out the "California Soul" sequence. Just as the chorus melody switches into the bridge, the song is halted and wound down to a slow rumble. As this sound ceases, the DVD's visual feed switches to a close up of a brown liquid – presumably a cola of some kind – being poured (only the pouring stream of liquid is shown; its receptacle vessel is below the screen's viewpoint). As the liquid pours, it produces a rising tide of effervescent bubbles that floods the screen. This is accompanied by the sound of fizzing and a voice that asks the audience: "Hi. Recognize that sound?" / [scratching] / "Delicious!" The fizzing sound is repeated once more, and the voice continues: "Makes you thirsty just to hear it, doesn't it? And every time this sound meets up with a healthy thirst, something wonderful happens to a thirsty throat / [string flourish] / Mmm-hmm!" The phrase is accompanied by a series of images taken

from vintage Coca-Cola commercials in which a variety of consumers (a middle-aged man, a boy, and a young girl) are shown drinking from Coca-Cola bottles – the company’s iconic hourglass bottle is recognizably shown.

At “Mmm-hmm!” a guitar riff enters to introduce the next record in the mix: “Fun Buggy” by the Glasgow-based rhythm and blues quintet, the Poets. The track in question was recorded as a promotion for Strike Cola¹⁰⁰, a product of the Scottish soft-drink manufacturer A.G. Barr. The soda is still sold in the United Kingdom to this day under the name “Barr Cola.” Essentially a commercial for the cola, the track’s lyrics consist of nothing more than the refrain: “Strike! / Strike cola!” This verbal refrain is juxtaposed with a phrase taken from “Strike” by Union. In this track, a female singer repeatedly states: “I’m on strike!” The two phrases are brought together into a single utterance: “‘Strike! / Strike cola!’ / ‘I’m on strike!’ – ‘Strike! / Strike cola!’”. As such, the branding strategy of the soft drink becomes conflated and equated with a proletarian refusal to work. The song by Union uses the antagonism between management and labour as a metaphor for a relationship breaking down. The verse from which the tag-line is quoted runs in full:

I don’t mind if you say you’re working late.
 Don’t let me find out that you’re out on a date.
 I’ll give you one more chance to come up with your love.
 If you don’t, I’m gonna picket ‘til it’s me you’re thinking of.
 I’m on strike (Strike!)

In another “funny” instance of records sounding the same, the backing chorus’ repetition of the word strike that occurs at the final line of the verse is sonically similar to the “Strike!” heard in “Fun Buggy” such that the two phrases can be blended together. In a couple of iterations during this sequence, the second “strike!” from Union can be heard, perhaps erroneously, in the middle of the “Fun Buggy” phrase, a phrasing that can be represented as: “‘Strike! / Strike cola!’ / ‘I’m on strike!’ – ‘Strike!’ – (‘Strike!’) / ‘Strike cola!’”

The effect of this juxtaposition is to put the word “Strike!” at odds with itself. Unable to speak for itself, the product, Strike Cola, has enlisted the services of the Poets in order to proclaim

¹⁰⁰ The b-side to “Fun Buggy” was a track entitled “Heyla Hola.” With full verses dedicated to extolling the virtues of Strike Cola, the b-side is rather more explicit in its commercialism than the a-side:

Heyla hola! Fun loving people are drinking Strike Cola.
 Heyla hola! Pour yourself a glass of cool Strike Cola.
 If you’re looking for a drink that’s easily the best,
 Better bet on the one that’s better than the rest.
 Comes in cans and bottles coloured red, white, and blue,
 Cool Strike Cola’s the drink for you.

itself to the world, a world represented by the market for soft drinks. The repeated refrain of “Fun Buggy” is an instance of a voice engaged in the self-designation of an other. Yet this deferred “self”-promotion is paired with an enunciation of resistance from the Union track. Stripped from its verse, the citation from “Strike” is de-metaphorized so that the figurative romantic context of the phrase remains unheard. This opens up the possibility of a reading that sees this particular phrase as an answer to not only the promotional proclamations of the Poets (speaking on behalf of A.G. Barr), but also the cheerful commercial voice that introduced the track and that periodically reappears as a kind of “narrator” to the sequence. During the drum break to the Poets’ track, he reveals not only that the product in question is of the highest quality, but also that the promotion of this product is itself exemplary: “So far as we know, nothing like this has ever been done before: an all-out, across-the-board effort to make more people thirsty.” The assertion that “I’m on strike” comes across as a rebuttal to this cajoling; the work being refused here is the work of the consumer, and the strike in question is a cessation of purchase. Alternatively, “I’m on strike” could be read as an endorsement of the product: like the Poets, the singer of “Strike” is “on” Strike Cola like a patient on a prescribed (or perhaps even illicit) drug. In this reading, it is the refusal that has its meaning shifted: in hip hop parlance, it has been “flipped.” In either case – which is not to preclude the possibility of a multiplicity of other readings – the intended meaning of the original phrasing has been discarded, ignored in the citation. Instead, the discourse of commodity capitalism has been appropriated to form part of a critique of the very system of which it was originally a part.

The adman’s statement during the drum break is also curious in that it is an advertisement that explicitly reveals itself as an advertisement: “an all-out, across-the-board effort to make people thirsty.” The statement (and therefore, presumably, the advertisement from which it is quoted) is an attempt to increase the desire for the product even as it simultaneously points to its desire to increase this desire. The focus of this hard sell is not on the satisfaction of a desire provided by the product (by conflation, Strike Cola), but rather on the privation that creates that desire: “That’s why we call it ‘thirsty first’, ‘cause this is a program where thirst comes first!” The intention of the message is not to slake thirst, but rather to produce thirst. Moreover, given that thirst represents nothing more than the desire for an as yet absent refreshment, what is produced by the campaign is a lack, a momentary absence which is to be filled by the proffered product. However, since the ostensible aim of any advertising campaign is to create continued demand for its product, this thirst is never to be quenched. As such, the function of the advertising is always to stoke desire, but never to fulfill it; the aim is to foster a desire for desire itself.



Fig. 4: Serialized soda bottles.

Throughout this sequence, the commercial record is accompanied by video imagery of empty soda bottles in a bottling plant. The first image shows a seemingly endless expanse of empty, identical bottles; overflowing the frame of the camera, the infinite plethora of soda bottles suggests the boundless harvest made possible by industrialized capitalism. As the adman's voice tells us that "This sound is already on its way to becoming the greatest sound in town," the bottles are shown being conveyed through the assembly line of the bottling plant and filled with cola. A parallel is implicitly drawn between the mass-production of soda pop and the assembly-line mass-production of records. Like copies of a mass-produced record, each soda is identical: serialized iterations of the same "ideal" soda. No human hand or intention is shown taking any part in the production: all that is shown is robotic machinery assembling the final product through a series of endlessly reiterated mechanical gestures. Yet despite this homogenization, the earlier imagery of vintage commercials shows a variety consumers drinking these same sodas as if to suggest the possibility of an individualization of the otherwise undifferentiated soda as a result of its consumption. Though the soda may be identically produced, each particular experience of that soda as it is drunk by the consumer is different, not only by virtue of its specific position in space and time, but also by its enmeshing with whatever individual experiences form the context of its consumption.

The analogization of this mass-production/mass-consumption is extended to records. While each copy of a given record may be identical, these otherwise identical texts are heard differently. For example, an audience member who is aware of the textual significance of “California Soul” (i.e. its references to earlier versions of the same track as well as other tracks that have sampled these versions), will have, as result of discerning these connections, a rather different reading of the song than one who can only hear the musical content of the record.

It is one of the functions of advertising, however, to normalize these reactions to the products it promotes. The effervescent voice of the adman (who, it should be noted, is presumably *not* promoting Strike Cola, but rather another, competing carbonated beverage) insists that the recognizable sound of bubbling soda should elicit a Pavlovian response from its auditor: “make you thirsty just to hear it, doesn’t it?” The consumer is personally addressed in the second person by the advertisement. Though addressed as an individual (an individuality that is expressed through the selection of consumed objects), the “you” here is ambiguous as it addresses the aggregate of consumers en masse.

In The System of Objects, Jean Baudrillard points to the ambiguity of advertising’s use of “you” in that it inculcates competition between consumers for the status conferred by a certain product (owning the latest model of motor car, for example, is “the essential stamp of social worth” (200)), yet at the same time encourages conformity:

This ambiguity is perfectly epitomized by advertising’s use of “you” – as in “Guinness is Good for You”. Is this a polite (and hence personalizing) way of addressing the individual, or is the message directed at the social group as a whole? Is this “you” (or the French *vous* in similar contexts) singular or plural? The answer is both: the pronoun addresses each individual inasmuch as he resembles all others. Fundamentally this is the impersonal or gnostic “you”. (200n41)

Moreover, the consumer’s response to the drink is preconditioned and presumed by the advertiser: “And every time this sound meets up with a healthy thirst, something wonderful happens to a thirsty throat.” In this phrase, the sound of the drink stands in metonymically for the drink itself, which lends an ambiguity to that wonderful “something.” The condition of thirst, that is a lack of liquid refreshment, is described as “healthy,” suggesting that the desire for the soda the commercial seeks to evoke is a natural condition. The thirsty individual is referred to, also metonymically, as a “throat” such that the consumer is regarded as nothing more than a bodily receptacle for the product, and when this throat meets up with, that is to say “hears,” the soda, the “something

wonderful” that happens is the awakening of desire for the proffered beverage. What the advertiser describes is not the consumer’s reaction to the product, but rather his or her reaction to the advertisement. The metonymic “sound” yields a conversely literal reading: the effect of the sound of fizzing soda makes a thirsty throat realize that it is thirsty, prompting the demand for soda.

The processes of mass-production depicted in the video imagery find their double in the quoted advertising copy. The mass-production of goods by industrial machinery is paired with the mass-production of desire by mass-media advertising. The declarative tone of the commercial voice presupposes a universality of response to the product being sold. That someone could be repulsed or nonplussed by the sound of fizzing soda is inconceivable. Consumers are therefore identified with the undifferentiated legions of empty soda bottles shown repeatedly throughout the duration of “Fun Buggy.” They are nothing more than empty vessels to be filled with soda by the mechanized procedures of industrial mass-production.

iii. “It’s the Real Thing.”

The same adman’s voice is carried over into the next sequence in which two different versions of the Coca-Cola jingle “It’s The Real Thing” are played on top of each. Just as with “California Soul” and “Whole Lotta Love,” an instrumental version by the Ivor Raymonde Orchestra is paired up with a vocal version by The New Seekers. At the beginning of the sequence, the advertising voice from the “Strike Cola” section again asks the audience if they “recognize that sound?” Whereas previously, the demanded recognition pointed towards the sound of a fizzy drink being poured, the sound to be recognized here is the familiar melody of the Coca-Cola jingle, which is intended to act as a musical signifier of the Coca-Cola corporation, its product, and the various impressions associated with the brand.

The slogan “It’s the Real Thing” was first used by Coca-Cola in 1969, yet unlike some of their other advertising campaigns, this particular one has stuck with the company such that the phrase is still punningly used to this day in articles about the corporation. Indeed, the phrase was even retained in “I’d Like to Buy the World a Coke,” the advertising jingle that replaced “It’s the Real Thing” in 1971. The ostensible intent of the slogan was to emphasize that Coca-Cola, as developed by Atlanta entrepreneur John Styth Pemberton in the Nineteenth Century, is the original cola beverage and all others, such as Barr’s Strike Cola, are but decidedly unreal imitations.



Fig. 5: The “real” thing.

The visual imagery for this sequence begins with shots of individuals from the developing world all supposedly enjoying Coca-Cola. At first, the audience is shown an individual moving through a tropical landscape carrying a case of Coke bottles on his head in the manner associated with traditional peoples. Later, a Latin American man is shown obviously enjoying the refreshing beverage, his broad smile demonstrating the very satisfaction presented in the lyrics to the Poets’ “Heyla Hola.” The imagery serves to make an implied critique of the soft colonialism of Western consumerism being exported to the Global South.

Another implication that emerges from a reading of this imagery is that the originary primacy of Coca-Cola is called into question. A recent move by the Bolivian government has charged the American company with pirating the traditional use of the coca leaf by the Andean peoples. In response to this, the South American nation has announced plans to introduce a coca-based soft drink to compete with Coca-Cola, one which will market itself by imitating the very product that it considers its derivative:

It’s still unclear whether the new drink will be promoted by a private company, a state enterprise, or some sort of joint venture between the two. The new beverage will be called Coca Colla, in reference to age old history: in Bolivia, Quechua, Aymara and other indigenous peoples descended from the Incas are known as Collas. In a move that will undoubtedly exasperate Coke, Bolivian officials say Coca Colla will feature a black swoosh and red label similar to the classic Coca-Cola insignia. Coca Colla reportedly has a black color, just like normal Coke, and could be sold on the market as early as April. (Kozloff 1)

Despite the imitation, the Bolivians insist that their new beverage is in actual fact “the real thing,” as, unlike modern Coca-Cola, it retains the coca leaf ingredients¹⁰¹.

¹⁰¹ Indeed, faced with accusations that the coca-laced beverage was not a beverage but rather a drug, Coca-Cola was made subject to a new stamp tax on patent medicine. Asa Griggs Candler, the pharmacist who had secured the rights to

Coca Colla, then, represents the attempts of the Bolivian people to reclaim the drink by presenting a “new” original cola. The Secretary General of the Bolivian Coca Growers’ Federation, Julio Salazar, said, “Coca-Cola robbed from us the name of our coca leaf and moreover has cornered the market all over the world. It is high time that the true owners of this natural resource benefit by industrializing our coca” (qtd. in Kozloff 1). This embrace of coca leaf is more than an effort to compete with a multi-national corporation; it is also an expression of post-colonial nationalist resistance to the perceived imperialism of the American-led war on drugs:

Though Bolivia’s promotion of Coca Colla may cause some to chuckle, the move could contribute to a further deterioration in U.S.-Bolivian relations. For years, Bolivia’s indigenous peoples have bristled under the U.S.-fuelled drug war which demonized [the] coca leaf. In a snub back at Washington, coca growers from the Chapare region proposed Coca Colla and it is now [Bolivian President Evo] Morales, himself a former coca farmer from Chapare, who has taken up coca nationalism as a cultural and political rallying cry. ... When speaking before adoring crowds, Morales drapes a garland of coca leaves around his neck and wears a straw hat layered with more coca. What’s more, Morales claims that the United States seeks to intervene in Latin American countries by playing up the drug war. Washington’s policy, Morales has charged, is merely “a great imperialist instrument for geopolitical control.” (Kozloff 2)

The appropriation of Coca-Cola’s brand imagery and the parodic name therefore not only serves to call into question the presumed originality of the American beverage, but also constitutes a means of symbolic resistance to the imperialism of the drug war. Just like the “smokin’ soul” described earlier in Product Placement by Little Grady Lewis, the coca leaf takes on a pharmakonic quality in this debate: what is to the United States government a dangerous narcotic is seen by indigenous Bolivians as not only a beneficial plant, but also a national symbol. Coca Colla effects this resistance by associating a parody of an alien, dominating presence (Coca-Cola) and injecting it with a concept of local traditions and national identity, one that pointedly involves a transgression of an established legal order (the illicit nature of coca leaves). In hip hop terms, the iconic branding of Coca-Cola is “flipped”, or signified upon, so that it is turned against itself. The Bolivians’ adoption of this

the drink from its inventor reduced the quantity of coca to a trace amount (a small amount was left in order to retain the trademarked name) and successfully sued the United States government for exemption from the tax in 1901. By 1903, as a result of a new process for preparing the coca leaves, all cocaine content was gone from Coca-Cola (though the company remains among the largest legal users of coca leaves in the world) (Zacks 80-82).

strategy is an analog of the adoption of the tape and cross-bones logo stolen from an anti-piracy campaign and appropriated as a quasi-logo by the two turntablists.

Throughout the “It’s the Real Thing” segment, the advertising voice and soda sound effects heard during the “Strike Cola” sequence recur, although the pitch previously ascribed to the Barr beverage is now repurposed to “sell” Coca-Cola. One of the conditions of consumerist mass-culture is the illusion of choice. In this instance, the consumer is faced with a large variety of soda beverages; the “personality” of one product matches the personality of its consumer. In The System of Objects, Baudrillard uses a quote from Pierre Martineau’s 1957 study of advertising and its effects with reference to the plethora of different automobiles: “‘There is no simple relationship between kinds of buyers and kinds of cars, however. Any human is a complex of many motives ... [whose] meanings may vary in countless combinations. Nevertheless the different makes and models are seen as helping people give expression to their own personality dimensions’” (207). Though individuals may come to define themselves by the products they consume (in much the same way that DJs’ style are defined by the music they consume and sample), this variety is in fact an illusion. As Lasn explains: “The spectacle is an instrument of social control, offering the illusion of unlimited choice, but in fact reducing the field of play to a choice of preselected experiences: adventure movies, nature shows, celebrity romances, political scandals, ball games, net surfing...” (104-105). The ease with which the pitch for one brand of soda (Strike Cola) can be repurposed for another brand (Coca-Cola) illustrates this principle¹⁰².

During “It’s the Real Thing”, the phrase “Makes you thirsty just to hear it,” used during the Strike Cola sequence, is replayed. This time, however, it refers not to the sound of an actual soda (or, more precisely, the recording of such a sound), but rather the sound of the jingle. Being the sonic equivalent of a branding logo, the melody serves as the “sound of Coke” and therefore acts as a stand-in for both the company and its products. The adman’s words are intertwined with the chorus to the Coke jingle: “‘Cause this is a program where’ / ... / ‘th-th-th-thirst comes first’ / ‘It’s the real thing / In the back of your mind / What you’re trying to find / Is the real thing’ / ‘Th-th-that’s where we come in.’” By means of turntable scratching, the rhythm of the spoken phrase is adjusted to fit its new musical setting. Similarly, the first part of the vocal line from the New Seekers’ version of “It’s the Real Thing” is scratched so that it matches the rhythm of the saxophone’s version of the song’s melody in The Ivor Raymonde Orchestra’s instrumental.

¹⁰² Presumably, however, this recorded advertising pitch did not refer in its original context to either of these brands.

Ironically, when the adman says “Let’s put ‘em both together,” the music is stripped down to just a naked drumbeat found in the break section of the instrumental. As before, this break is extended by manual looping, although the sections being looped become progressively smaller in size until it ends sounding like a skipping record. After a momentary pause, the break is then restarted from its beginning and is then played through, leading into the instrumental’s final build-up. A fuller iteration of the phrase occurs immediately after the finale of “It’s the Real Thing”: “Let’s put ‘em both together and we’ve got the greatest sound in town.” In the context of the turntablist set, this refers literally to the layered recombination of the instrumental and vocal versions of the same track (as well as the various brief quotes from the spoken advertising pitch whose original product is left unmentioned). In its original context, however, the phrase refers to the sound of soda “meet[ing] up with a healthy thirst.” The “greatest sound in town” is therefore produced when the desire Pavlovianally elicited by the sound of pouring soda is consummated by the apprehending “healthy thirst,” when producer and consumer meet in the act of consumption which satisfies the desire produced by the advertisement. The advertisement exists then only its apprehension by the consumer.

After the colas – both Strike and Coca – make both their pitches, milk then gets its chance to make an appeal to the consumer by way of the all-but-instrumental funk track “The Basic.” During this section of the performance, a crew of stage hands made up largely of fellow DJs and record collectors distributes cartons of milk and plates of cookies to the audience symbolizing the audience’s consumption of the “nourishing” records being played. Although discographic information for the recording is difficult to find, the 2002 45 rpm reissue of the song by Jazzman Records (with ‘The Poets’ “Fun Buggy” on the b-side) credits it to “Milk,” but the centre label of the 45 also has a secondary credit to the American Dairy Association of Mississippi. This credit strongly suggests that “The Basic” was a promotional song.

The scant lyrics to the track consist of nothing more than the repetition of “Milk! The Basic!” It is unclear exactly how this promotes milk, but DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist supplement this with additional phrases from other dairy advertisements. A dialogue is constructed between two such voices: “‘Always say’ / ‘We say’ / ‘Always say’ / ‘We say’ / ‘Always say’ / ‘We say?’ / ‘Always say’ / ‘Make mine milk.’” The consumer is then advised just why he or she should “always say” “make mine milk.” In direct contrast to the sugary sodas advertised above, “[scratch] Milk-m-[scratch] / Milk gives you lasting energy based on nourishment, not just temporary stimulation. No other beverage gives you so few calories against such an abundance of vitamins, minerals, and

proteins. It's the perfect pick-up around the clock. Pure, fresh milk." The chorus to the underscoring "Milk" is re-interpolated in the dialogue when the "We say" phrases are reiterated: "W-w-we say' / 'We say' / 'We say' / 'We s-/ we s-' / '(fresh)' / 'We s-/ we s-' / '(fresh)' / 'We say' / 'Milk! The Basic!' / 'We say' / 'Milk! The Basic!' / 'We say?' / 'Milk! The Basic!' / 'Whaddaya say?' / 'Milk! The Basic!'" The exact identity of "we" becomes ambiguous in this exchange. Ostensibly, being voiced by the same recurrent adman, "we" refers to the milk producers such as the American Dairy Association of Mississippi who presumably sponsored the recording. However, in its exhortation for "we" to "always say" "make mine milk," the voice becomes mobile and simultaneously stands in for the voice of the consumer such that "we say" becomes "we say that you (should always) say: 'make mine milk'" ("whaddaya say?"). A similar effect is generated by the earlier pairing of "we say" and "always say."

iv. "We the willing..."

The "we" is rendered even more mobile in the transition to the next section of the Product Placement set. After the conclusion of "The Basic," the adman's voice chimes in with: "By now you may be wondering who we are and why we're doing this. / We... / We...." The "we" is repeated by backscratching to produce a deferring pause so that Cut Chemist has the time to cue up the next record. This next record features a spoken recording of the following famous quote: "We the willing, led by the unknowing, are doing the impossible for the ungrateful we have done so much for so long for so little that we are now qualified to anything with-with-with-with [nothing]". The final word of the quotation ("nothing") is cut off such that the unenunciated "nothing" literally becomes the absence it expresses. The transition between the two quotations also encompasses a transition between the San Francisco concert and its New York counterpart held at the Irving Plaza on October 23, 2001. During the distended pause filled with repetitions of the word "we", the visual feed cuts rapidly between the two separate performances such that they become simultaneous. This effect is most visible in the figure of Cut Chemist whose position between his turntables appears to oscillate. On the practice session issued as a record to accompany the tour, this pause is not as audibly present between the adman's "we" and the "we" of "we the willing". On the audio record, the two quotations are connected more seamlessly and, not having to mix two separate performances together, the record erases the splice between the two samples.

Though the actual phrase itself is of unknown origin, the speaker of this particular utterance of the passage is rapper Doug E. Fresh on the track “Nuthin’,” issued as the b-side to the UK single release of his 1986 track “All the Way to Heaven.” The quotation serves as the introduction to the track, which sounds as if it were recorded live in concert. The Doug E. Fresh connection is slyly announced and portended in the repeated utterances of the word “fresh” in the milk sequence. In Doug E. Fresh’s version, the final word, “nothing,” is also absent from the live speech but rather belatedly supplied by a robotic voice presumably emanating from a turntable. What follows is a dialogue of sorts between the MC and the turntable: “...we are now qualified to do anything wi- wi-’ / ‘Nuthin’! / ‘Say what?’ / ‘Nuthin’! / ‘I can’t hear you!’ / ‘Nuthin’! Nuthin’!” The machine steps in to complete what cannot be said by the human voice, though its vocalization remains unapprehended by the quoting speaker

Doug E. Fresh’s utterance is just one version of a quotation that seemingly has no defined point of origin: the originary, speaking “we” remains unrevealed. Generally cited as “anonymous,” the phrase is often attributed to Mother Teresa. Despite being associated with the purported humanitarian, the quote, despite being universally cited in English, is also sometimes attributed to the French Metropolitan Paratroopers and is often used as an epigrammatic signature by posters on military-related Internet forums. The actual historical origin of the quote is irrelevant: through its appropriation, the self-referential “we” of the phrase can be adopted to cover either a pacifist nun or a commando unit. That such a phrase can be taken up as a motto for such divergent, contradictory causes illustrates the malleability of quotation from oral tradition. Because, by virtue of the lack of a grounding source, neither context can assert definitive ownership, the re-quotation of the lines in both Product Placement and “Nuthin’” carries with it all the possible associations brought forth by the passage.

Moreover, without a defined source, the quotation takes on all its authority and resonance entirely from its re-quotation. In an essay on quotation, Marjorie Garber cites Esther Cloudman Dunn who stated of Shakespeare that “to cite him in a lecture or an essay was to give lustre and prestige to the words and ideas that surrounded his magic name” (9). One of the functions of quotation is to appropriate the authority of a canonical writer along with his or her words. Yet this transfer of authority works both ways, as the re-citation of an utterance imparts the authority of posterity’s regard upon its original utterer. As Ralph Waldo Emerson stated in “Quotation and Originality,” a work quoted by Garber: “a writer appears to more advantage in the pages of another’s book than in his own. In his own he waits as a candidate for your approbation; in

another's he is a lawgiver" (19). In other words, the words of a prior author (and therefore the author himself) accrue authority precisely through their citation. An effect of the repeated citations of this particular passage is that the words take on the cast of received wisdom. Though the cited "origin" may vary from anonymous to Mother Teresa to the Metro Para Pledge, the words remain exactly the same in each iteration such that, devoid of an originary presence, they take on an authority of their own, an authority that is not retroactively transferred to the original speaker, but rather appropriated by the quoter.

The juxtaposition of the quotation with the previous citation of the advertising voice who says "By now you may be wondering who we are and why we're doing this" implies that the "we" who are "doing the impossible for the ungrateful" are in fact the admen of Madison Avenue. Fresh's delivery of the quotation, with its melodic cadences and intense, rapid-fire enunciation, resembles that of a black preacher or civil rights activist. The combination of the two quotations sets up a shift from an exhortation of consumerism to an expression of resistance¹⁰³. Indeed, the re-presentation of the passage in Product Placement constitutes an after-the-fact appropriation of the quotation by the turntablists on behalf of the advertising industry.

The quotation itself serves as the introduction for the most dance-oriented section in the set, thus drawing a parallel between cultural resistance and hedonistic enjoyment. Two percussion heavy tracks, The Cookie Crew's "Born This Way (Instrumental)"¹⁰⁴ and Larry Sanders' "Story Of My Love," which feature very similar introductory drum breaks, are played on top of each other. The marginalized "willing" referred to and spoken on behalf of by Doug E. Fresh insist that they are "qualified to do anything." In the percussive section that then follows, this "anything" is revealed to be dancing. At first, this desire is expressed by a barely audible voice saying "Let's dance / Come on

¹⁰³ Interestingly, the unsourcable quotation is used as both an epigram and a title for the website of Guerilla Arts Ink, LLC, a group that describes itself as "a community-based arts & education organization dedicated to improving the overall quality of life of the youth we serve through quality arts programming, innovative curriculum design, and educational consulting" ("About"). One of the group's projects, the Hip Hop Educational Literacy Program (H.E.L.P.), provides "a series of supplementary reading workbooks using the lyrics of [hip hop] artists such as Kanye West, Nas, Lauryn Hill, Common, and many others to promote literacy, critical analysis, and cultural relevance to teachers and students alike" ("H.E.L.P. Is On The Way"). Labeled as "The Guerilla Artist's CREDO", the quote is attributed to "Mother Theresa [sic] via Doug E. Fresh" ("About"), thus tracing the genealogy of the quote's appropriation. Its usage by this one particular group casts the promotion of hip hop as educational discourse as a form of cultural resistance. The phrasing in the above cited promotional video for H.E.L.P. indicates a dual purpose to the use of hip hop in encouraging literacy: the use of rap lyrics is not only intended to make literature seem for relevant for urban youth, but also to elevate the literary status of hip hop itself by inserting it into the established educational canon. Part of "doing the impossible for the ungrateful" involves just such a promotion of "cultural relevance to teachers".

¹⁰⁴ The Cookie Crew's presence in the set is announced by Cut Chemist's interjection of "Cookies and milk, y'all" immediately following Doug E. Fresh's "We the willing" speech. This also links back to the earlier serving of cookies to the audience.

/ Let's dance." The sibilant characteristics of the voice blend it with the cymbals of the two drum beats, but the exhortation is soon made clearer when another voice is introduced to the mix: "Get up! Ha! Get up! It's party time! Clap your hands! C'mon! Let me hear you!" The recorded MC is instructing not only the audience on the dance floor, but also the performers on stage. His exhortation is obeyed, as directly following this statement, the two DJs trade scratching solos on the turntables. Following this display, the camera switches to the audience dancing in response to the scratching. This switch corresponds with a switch in location as the action moves to the October 26th, 2003 performance at The Arches in Glasgow, Scotland. A noticeable downgrade in sound quality occurs during this switch as the audio seems to have been recorded in the room rather taken directly from the soundboard.

The connection between the radical resistance denoted by the Doug E. Fresh speech and the explicit call to dance that follows is part of the hip hop tradition of connecting politics and hedonism. For example, Keith LeBlanc, the house drummer for the Sugar Hill label, took passages from the speeches of Malcolm X and set them to a danceable beat to produce the 1983 track "No Sell Out." Russell Potter describes the mixed reaction to the track:

While some were outraged that "Minister Malcolm's" words would be sonically mingling with hedonistic dance music, there were many who realized the political potential of such a technique; fortunately, Dr. Betty Shabazz, Malcolm's widow, was among them, and the recordings received her seal of approval. Before long, samples from Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael, and other black leaders became hip hop commonplaces, even spreading into late-'80s techno dance mixes. (43)

The transformation of such revolutionary speeches into music to dance to could be seen as a travesty of the historical figure of Malcolm X. At the same time, however, it elevates dance music into a form of and forum for political resistance by repackaging radical politics with a funky beat.

A more subversive example can be found in the 1992 Steinski release, "It's Up To You (Television Mix)." The track takes a portion of a George H.W. Bush speech regarding the invasion of Iraq and, by combining it with a rhythm track taken from a funk song, transforms the president into a hip hop MC with the repeated chorus: "Regrettably / We do believe / That only force / Can make him leave." The recontextualized speech is then further signified upon with the addition of various other quotations ranging from Bill Cosby, the film Network, and free-speech activist Mario Savio. The political impetus behind the song is inseparable from its status as a dance track; indeed,

its political function, much like LeBlanc's "No Sell Out," is attributable to its combination of politics and hedonism. Dance itself becomes a form of political agitation as if to follow Funkadelic's injunction in "One Nation Under A Groove" to "Dance your way / Out of your constrictions."

To return to the Glasgow iteration of Product Placement, after a couple of minutes of letting the percussive records play, the DJs begin scratching in unison. A momentary silence occurs, which is quickly filled the audience's applause, before the DJs recue the records and begin another display of beat juggling. This time, however, both DJs are engaged in a simultaneous duet of beat juggling in which the propulsive beat slows down to half its original tempo. At this moment, the previously seen image of Keb Darge simulating masturbation on the tour bus underneath a blanket is transparently overlaid in slow motion on top of the beat juggling DJs. The hand movements of the DJs are identical and synchronized, each one a copy of the other as if a mirror were placed between the two. The effect produced is an illusion of one single DJ operating four separate turntables, an illusion produced by the audio mix, yet simultaneously held up as false by the very visible spectacle of the two turntablists working together. At one point, the screen splits into three sections. The left two thirds of the screen is filled with a shot of both DJs' hands at work on turntables, while the right third is further split into two thin columns each filled with the respective DJ's head angled downwards in concentration. The resultant image is a cubist view of the performance in which multiple perspectives are presented simultaneously: a visual analog to the musical cubism of turntablism in general and beat juggling in particular.

v. Motocross.

The penultimate sequence of Product Placement, taken from the Tokyo performance at The Liquid Room, is introduced with a sample from the Peanuts cartoon in which the character of Peppermint Patty is heard to say: "Hiya gang! Let me give you a flash on what's new. It's called motocross!" Although the line of dialogue was originally heard in the animated special "You're a Good Sport, Charlie Brown," aired on the CBS network on October 28th, 1975, the sample heard in Product Placement was located on a 45 issued by Charlie Brown Records in 1980. The 7-inch record itself was part of a book and record set designed to allow children to read along to the record. The audio of the record provides an oral counterpart to the printed words (and images) of the book, one that guides and facilitates the child's reading of the text, the combination of the two encompassing a dichotomy of both the oral and the literary. In that particular Peanuts book and the

animated special from which it is derived, the character of Snoopy enters the motocross race in the disguised persona of the Masked Marvel. In the Product Placement mix, this character is brought in via a quoted sample from the record of the Peanuts gang exclaiming, “Yay! There goes the Masked Marvel!” This quotation follows another vocal sample of an unidentified voice, presumably from a movie trailer that states, “Violence is fun.” A cut away from the footage of motocross riders shows Cut Chemist at the turntables donning a motocross mask indicating his appropriation of Snoopy’s veiled persona.

The main musical content of this section, however, is a track called “Motorcross Pt. 2” by Logic Circuit. Only the first part of the record is played, and this consists of a dense drumbeat which accompanies a chorus of motorcycle engines. Both the record as well as its re-performance here elevate the sound of machinery into music. In his review of the Product Placement album, Pitchfork’s Rob Mitchum describes this sequence as “near unlistenable (revving motorcycle noises are, unsurprisingly, sort of hard on the ear in any context).” Such subjective evaluations aside, the use of engine sounds in a musical composition (be it “Motorcross Pt. 2” or Product Placement) demonstrates the democratization of sound envisioned earlier by avant-garde composers such as Pierre Schaeffer and John Cage. As the sequence progresses, the DJs begin to scratch, and the sound of backspun records becomes indistinguishable from the roar of the engines. If the usage of advertising records such as “Fun Buggy” and “It’s the Real Thing” makes an aesthetic object out of the industrial processes used to produce demand, the musical use of a motorized engine’s sound constitutes a more literal aestheticization of industrial processes.

vi. A psychedelic party.

The link between machines and music is further explored in the subsequent section that is abruptly introduced by a vocal sample: “Now how about a psychedelic party?” The background screen is filled with op-art effects, while the introduction to Hunger’s “Mind Machine” begins. The song begins with a bubbling sound (perhaps created by an electric organ) that mimics the motorcycle engine noises just heard. After the bubbling, the track launches into a Hammond organ vamp. At this, Cut Chemist removes his motocross mask and proceeds to mime playing the organ on top of his turntables. After a quick, and unlooped, drum break, the first verse of the song is played:

Climb aboard my black [fluorescent?] mind machine

It will take you places you have never seen
 You will feel as though you have been there before
 Your mind will open like a swinging door
 In my black mind machine.

The “black mind machine” in question here is the technological assemblage of the vinyl record on the record player. The ability of the record and its player to take the listeners “places [they] have never been” and open their minds “like a swinging door” recalls the Outer Limits parody at the very beginning of the DVD that exhorted the audience to “get on this train and let us take you higher.” The narcotic effect of records is further explored in the song’s second verse, a verse not included in Product Placement, but that nonetheless demonstrates the ability of records to transport the listener outside of themselves and into the constructed space of the record:

After the trip you will find you must come down
 Your body’s twisting, turning all around
 You’ll find that you’re trapped in there just like me
 Digging everything that you hear and see.

This continues the theme of music-as-drug initially set out in Product Placement by the sampled quote from Little Grady Lewis’s “Soul Smoking.”

This second verse to “Mind Machine,” however, is left unplayed, and instead, just as “Soul Smoking” led into an instrumental cover of “Whole Lotta Love,” Hunger’s track is replaced by a sped-up cover version of The Doors’ “Light My Fire”. This track quickly dovetails into the 13th Floor Elevators’ “You’re Gonna Miss Me,”¹⁰⁵ a transition that highlights the similarities in the chord progressions of each song. The track is played with little to no manipulation by the DJs until the chorus when the signal from the turntable is sent through a delay unit that produces a wash of echoing sound. The DJs begin furiously scratching records, and DJ Shadow is shown playing with a multi-effects unit known as a Kaoss Pad. The overall effect is to simulate the massive washes of feedback one would find at the end traditional rock and roll concert, no better exemplified than by the fiery theatrics of the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

Despite this apparent finale, the cessation of sound is momentary, and the show continues nonetheless. As the echo wash from the 13th Floor Elevators fades out, the next record to be played is Gran Am’s “Get High.” The track begins with the group spelling out the word “High” with the

¹⁰⁵ Possibly, aside from the brief quotations from Led Zeppelin’s version of “Whole Lotta Love”, the most well-known recording featured in Product Placement.

familiar call-and-response pattern of high school cheerleaders. Interestingly, the word being spelled out here is the very word that caused controversy to The Doors' "Light My Fire" single referenced (but not played in its original incarnation) above. Famously, when the group were to perform the song on the Ed Sullivan Show, they were asked to drop the drug-referencing line: "Girl, we couldn't get much higher." After failing to make the change and instead performing the song as written, the group were informed that they were never to perform on the venerable variety show again (Charlesworth & Hogan 30).

Gran Am's record is not actually played by itself; rather, the single "Loving You Sometimes" by the Outcasts is featured instead. However, during the second verse of the Outcasts' record, the "I" of the spelled-out "High" is reintroduced at the end of each line like an alien echo of the main track:

"But sometimes I feel that" / "I"

"Mmm, when you're near, I feel you disappear" / "I"

"Oh, into my mind and leave me far behind" / "I"

"Since you've been hanging 'round, oh, I've been upside down" / "I"

"Girl, I love you so, don't you ever go" / "I"

"But sometimes I feel that" / "I"

The song describes an impending threat of the absence of the loved other. The singer seems to want to avoid the shadowy fate of the previously heard Milton Floyd. However, even as his lover draws near, the singer feels her disappearing into his own imagination. At the moment that the "you" begins to go, the presence of the speaker is re-emphasized with the repetition of the word "I," itself an alien "I" sourced from the Gran Am record. Furthermore, the verse's implication that the girl in question could be imaginary ("I feel you disappear / Oh, into my mind") opens up the possibility that the addressed "you" is but a doubling of the speaking "I."

Even the "I," however, becomes unstable: during the second iteration of the refrained tagline – "Sometimes I feel that" – the "I" undergoes a skipping effect as if it were being scratched on the turntable. This is not due to the manipulations of the turntablists, but rather is heard on the original record itself. Following this line, the repeated verse lines are absent and replaced by a keyboard solo, yet the punched-in "I"s of the Gran Am record remain. As a result, the original speaking "I" of the Outcasts is supplanted by the alternate presence of Gran Am. Indeed, by the end of the citation of "Loving You Sometimes," a fuller voicing of the musical content of the Gran Am track is heard (as opposed to just the vocal content of its spoken intro). A fuzz guitar riff from

the bridge of “Get High,” that sounds remarkably similar to the fuzz guitar riff that introduces “Loving You Sometimes,” is played in full, replacing the previous track (though both tracks are in actual fact played simultaneously). Over top of this backing melody, the word “High” is scratched in time to the guitar. Then, as with “You’re Gonna Miss Me,” the track breaks down into a wash of echoing turntable stabs.

vii. “House of Mirrors” and The Waste Land.

Following the “psychedelic party” of the previous sequence, the final 45 to played in the Product Placement set proper is the down-tempo, jazzy number, “House of Mirrors” by David McCallum. Emerging from the rubble of “Loving You Sometimes” / “Get High,” the ponderous track, which, unlike the rest of the songs included in the set is in waltz time as opposed to the more danceable four time. The song is accompanied by imagery of a debris-strewn underground railway track and a homeless man walking through the tunnel carrying a large plastic bag of harvested garbage as well as images of jury-rigged houses built in the subway out of refuse. A slow, tracking shot of an abandoned, rubble-strewn subway rail connotes the predetermined track of the groove on a vinyl record. The shot is repeated like a loop as if to suggest the circularity of the otherwise linear vinyl groove.



Fig. 6: Dark Days: bricolage in the subway.

The imagery is taken from the 2000 documentary Dark Days by filmmaker Marc Singer for which DJ Shadow provided some music. The film depicts the lives of homeless people living in the abandoned subways of New York City, constructing shantytowns out of the debris they find there, and enduring the ever-present threat of forced eviction by Amtrak. The situation of such people living – quite literally – in the subaltern margins of society, sifting through the detritus of industrial urban decay, all the while under the threat of sanction by the corporate-political authorities, is indeed analogous to sampling DJs who pirate the artifacts of industrial culture to create their own “house” amongst the ruins: a construction that by its very nature is contrary to the laws of copyright and intellectual property.

The subterranean urban wasteland shown behind the two DJs at the end of Product Placement recalls another Waste Land, that of T.S. Eliot. The subway tunnels of New York are an “Unreal City,” albeit a whole other city parallel to and underneath the skyscrapers above. The bricolage structures of the homeless people seem to answer the question asked at the beginning of The Waste Land: “What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, / You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken images” (l.19-22). Assembled out of allusions to and quotations from other works, The Waste Land itself is just such “a heap of broken images,” as the layering of mythical and literary references has the double function of reconstituting the fragments of modernity while simultaneously demonstrating their very fragmentation. Similar to Eliot’s use of allusion in The Waste Land, the assembled fragments that make up the gestalt of Product Placement are a culture jamming response to the commodification of industrial mass-culture. Whereas Eliot used the “fragments I have shored against my ruins” to resuscitate the formerly cohesive sense of Western tradition undone by the atomizing force of modernist liberalism (V.430), the archival project characteristic of hip hop engages in a similar project. A further echo of this imagery is found in the “Culture Jammer’s Manifesto.” After “jam[ming] the pop-culture marketeers and bring[ing] their image factory to a sudden, shuddering halt,” the culture jammers at Adbusters and other like-minded groups, like the Fisher King in Eliot’s The Waste Land, see a possibility for renewal: “On the rubble of the old culture, we will build a new one with non-commercial heart and soul” (Lasn 128).

As the last guitar notes of “House of Mirrors” fade out, the vocal sample from the very beginning of the set is heard once more to say: “This is soul ... The beginning of today ... and the hope for tomorrow.” The circularity of the set is now complete, but the beginning is repeated differently: the individual phrases of the sample are interspaced with echoing pauses such that the

phrase as a whole re-begins itself even while it is still in play. As such, this sample marks the looping point for the whole set. There is, however, one final utterance that closes the set. Immediately following the echoed rephrasing of “This is soul...,” another voice chimes in with the final word: “How far can you get without four years of college? A lot further than you may think.” The word “think” is then looped and projected on the screen such that it becomes a one-word manifesto that demands the audience’s attention to and thoughtful participation in the act of receiving the products of the culture industry.

The imperative phrasing of the word (once it is shorn from the rest of the phrase by means of the looped echo) carries with it the implicit threat of political subversion, or at least resistance to, the commodification of musical texts. The socio-political significance of the set is hinted at in the closing, valedictory remarks of MC Marvin Holmes who, after asking the audience to applaud the two DJs, states: “What we all need to do is stay together.” Holmes is describing the community that is formed in the shared reception of totemic cultural texts (a community that is illustrated in the closing credits’ presentation of the camaraderie created by DJ culture). An early seventies soul song emphasizes this point as it overscores the credits with the chorus: “United we stand, divided we fall / So let’s get together, come on, one and all.”

C. The Hard Sell

1. The Hollywood Bowl.

A five year interlude followed Product Placement, during which the two DJs worked on various other projects¹⁰⁶ before reconvening for The Hard Sell. In early 2007, the duo were approached by numerous European festivals to perform the Brainfreeze mix, but both demurred on the grounds of not wanting to repeat themselves. As DJ Shadow recalled to Angus Batey in the liner notes to the DVD release of The Hard Sell: “And Luke and I both said ‘No.’ What’s the challenge in that? We don’t just like to do what we’ve done, or the easy thing, or on some level ... to do what people want us to do” (23). An amalgamated set made up of “mashing up parts of Brainfreeze and Product Placement” was considered as a benefit concert for a friend who had suffered a brain aneurysm, but this was dropped when the two turntablists received an offer from the Hollywood Bowl who had an unexpected opening in their summer concert schedule. The prospect of performing in such a venue required an extensive expansion of the blueprint laid out in both Product Placement and its immediate progenitor, Brainfreeze. As DJ Shadow related to Batey: “I can’t think of any other venue in the world that would be, for me or Luke, more prestigious, really. ... So as soon as they called we went, ‘OK, we’re not just gonna half-ass it and do anything we’ve done before: it’s gonna be new – 100 per cent new’” (26).

The primary challenge of The Hard Sell was the audience in front of which it would be performed. The Hollywood Bowl is a large outdoor auditorium as opposed to the small clubs and halls which hosted Brainfreeze and Product Placement, and “this simple and very obvious fact meant that, somehow, Shadow and Cut had to bulk up and beef out their performance to make sure it had a decent chance of filling up all that space and properly connecting with the audience” (Batey 26). More importantly, the expected audience for the show would be rather different than that which attended the earlier mixes. As Batey notes:

Just as importantly, the crowd who would be there to see them in June [2007] was going to be entirely different from the record collectors, DJs and hip hop junkies who snapped up the tickets for Future Primitive [Brainfreeze] and Product Placement. Not only would there be a great deal more of them, but many of them would never have heard of Cut Chemist and DJ

¹⁰⁶ DJ Shadow released two solo albums, The Private Press (2002) and The Outsider (2006), whereas Cut Chemist provided production for three Jurassic Five albums as well as releasing his first solo record, The Audience’s Listening (2006).

Shadow; would never have heard anyone scratching or beat-mixing; might consider themselves either ambivalent, or perhaps even openly hostile towards, hip hop music. (27)

Indeed, while much of the audience would presumably be composed of people who had specifically purchased individual tickets for the show, there was also the expected presence of season ticket holders who regularly attend the full program of shows at the Hollywood Bowl, and “so while the mix had to be challenging and interesting enough for its two makers to want to write and perform, it also had to be accessible enough to entertain the first non-specialist audience they’d ever constructed one of these sets for” (Batey 27). As such, the content of the performance was altered from the previous mixes in order to accommodate this audience. The Hard Sell required a more extensive framing than Product Placement in order to explain to the audience what exactly it was they were seeing and hearing. So, whereas Product Placement began with Cut Chemist’s parenthetical declaration that the whole set will be solely composed of 45 rpm 7-inch records – a declaration that took for granted the audience’s understanding of the physical and compositional challenges of producing a turntablist set entirely from that one particular format – The Hard Sell employed a slickly produced, four minute long introductory film to outline to the audience the history of the 45 rpm format, as well as to explain and demonstrate the artistry of turntablism as a genre.

Moreover, the musical content that provided the raw material for the set was selected with the audience in mind. Whereas the previous sets’ selections were compiled for a prospective audience largely engaged in the subculture of turntablism and aware of the musical tradition of which it has made use, The Hard Sell was designed for a broader audience and therefore required a broader range of source material. As Cut Chemist explained, again to Batey:

We felt like we had covered a fair amount of ground with Brainfreeze and Product Placement. With Brainfreeze it was geared more towards funk, dance music type stuff, and then Product Placement was edging into psychedelic rock. But it was still a more dance-oriented kind of mix. [The Hard Sell] was specifically designed for a sit-down audience, and we knew that going in, because it was the Hollywood Bowl. So I think that right off the bat we wanted to come up with something a little more theatrical, and make the music spectrum a lot broader than just funk and hip hop. (27)

The framing device of the show’s location in the Hollywood Bowl (along with its implied audience) therefore dictates the content of the set. In much the same way that McLuhan stated that a given medium controls – to the point of being – the message, in the case of The Hard Sell, the venue is the message. Both DJs saw the auditorium as a symbol of Hollywood and the star system with

which the city is identified. As Cut Chemist explained: “There was an idea that the Bowl had some kind of subtext of the magic of Hollywood” (qtd. in Batey 32). For Cut Chemist, who had grown up in the Los Angeles area, the Hollywood Bowl was a common family destination, and, as he states in the documentary preamble on the DVD of the performance, “It’s just been woven into the culture of living in Hollywood.” This idea of engaging the mainstream culture associated with Hollywood is reflected in the choice of MC for the performance. The various Product Placement performances had been MC’ed by a group of rappers and record collectors, but The Hard Sell performance at the Hollywood Bowl was MC’ed by Kim Fowley¹⁰⁷, an American record producer, impresario, songwriter, and musician who had been born into the Hollywood system as the son of character actor Douglas Fowley (who himself had starred in the Hollywood staple Singin’ In The Rain).

The younger Fowley, however, has steered his career away from the mainstream into the fringes of mass culture pursuing various obscure and offbeat projects such as recording novelty records and working with cult figures such as Frank Zappa and Warren Zevon. Fowley critiques the Hollywood star system – the very system in which he inhabits a marginal position. In Mayor Of The Sunset Strip, a documentary film about the Los Angeles radio DJ Rodney Bingenheimer, Fowley states of Hollywood: “You must be very cynical, very detached, and nothing bothers you, like me, and you’ll be fine. I recommend it for all the selfish bastards who shit in their own little place. Get on a plane immediately and show up.” In the brief documentary that prefaces The Hard Sell performance, he performs a rap in which he critiques the aspiring culture industry workers who flock to Hollywood from the American heartland:

Hollywood
 Neon Babylon
 Rotten, forgotten
 Full of dreamers from the midwest
 Trying to pass the test
 Of who could be the best
 Marginal morons looking at lipstick and collagen
 Trying to find out where the knowledge was
 Because

¹⁰⁷ Although he is credited as the MC for the show, Fowley’s sole appearance on the Hollywood Bowl stage occurs at the very conclusion of the set.

They could not just be ordinary
 They had to rendez-vous with destiny
 So they came to Hollywood
 And they tried to be mysterious
 They then became delirious
 Because the dope wasn't good in Hollywood.

Fowley's rap reveals a darker side to the shiny, prefabricated seduction offered by the star system of Hollywood, and it echoes a view expressed in the mid 40s by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in Dialectic Of Enlightenment. The images of the silver screen are a powerful interpellating lure to the mass audience members who desire to no longer "just be ordinary." Yet the seduction is a hollow one as, of the multitudes who flock to Los Angeles with the dream of participating in the mass-dream of the Culture Industry, only a few are ultimately selected. The selection is based more on chance than work or merit. As Adorno and Horkheimer state in Dialectic of Enlightenment, only those who already fit the mold will be selected by the Culture Industry: "The girls in the audience not only feel that they could be on screen, but realize the great gulf separating them from it. Only one girl can draw the lucky ticket, only one man can win the prize, and if, mathematically, all have the same chance, yet this is so infinitesimal for each one that he or she will do best to write it off and rejoice in the other's success, which might just as well have been his or hers, and somehow never is" (145). The invitation to participate in mass-culture is simultaneously an alienation in which the consumer remains powerless. In a final irony, even the dark fate implied for Fowley's hapless Midwesterner fails to live up to its reputation: the drug-induced delirium of the failed star is unsatisfactory "because the dope wasn't good in Hollywood."

As a symbol of this cultural establishment, the use of the Hollywood Bowl as the venue for the concert provides, on the one hand, a degree of legitimacy on the part (and as a part) of the culture industry. Now, on the verge of taking that very same stage, Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow – unlike the Midwesterners described by Fowley and the primarily female film audiences described by Adorno and Horkheimer – have successfully made the jump from consumers to performers and can now participate in the star system, a situation described as "a dream come true." On the other hand, as indicated by the critical nature of the show's MC, The Hard Sell also represents an insurgency from within that system, especially given that The Hard Sell carries on the culture jamming project of Product Placement, which aims to deconstruct the relationship between mass culture and the corporate control thereof.

As noted previously, video screens had been used in Product Placement to provide a visual accompaniment to the audio content of the set to supplement it by more fully exploring themes hinted in the selection of particular pieces of sound. For The Hard Sell, however, the use of video had a more fundamental function of demonstrating turntablism to a mainstream audience. In the introduction to the video recording of the performance, DJ Shadow notes the necessity of providing visuals to give context to the audio for an audience not immersed in hip hop culture so that they can understand “what was about to happen and why it mattered.” A senior program manager for the Hollywood Bowl, Johanna Rees, makes the case for the legitimizing nature of the show at the Bowl, which will present the genre to mainstream culture. She acknowledges the “educative” function of the show, as mainstream audiences “don’t appreciate what a DJ’s doing and don’t understand that they’re musicians and these [turntables] are instruments.” The framing video featured in the show, and by synecdochical extension, the set as a whole, therefore serves simultaneously as both a demonstration as well as a defense of the art of the turntablist DJ. The oft-cited criticism that “they’re just playing records” is quoted and rebutted in the video. As DJ Shadow explains: “We wanted to take that classic line that so many reporters have resorted to and factor it into the intro video.” The set then prefaces itself with a *détournement* of its own criticism; the DJs are literally spinning their critics.

2. The Hard Sell DVD front end matter.

i. Copyright notice

Like any other mass-disseminated textual product, The Hard Sell is copyrighted; however, just as in Product Placement, this copyright is somewhat qualified. Again, the very first image shown on the DVD is an anti-piracy warning similar to that shown at the beginning of Product Placement. This time, the polarity of the image is reversed so that black text is shown on a white background, and the image itself is shown only for brief, almost subliminal period before the DVD’s main menu screen. The parodic function of the warning, as described in the previous chapter, remains. The accompanying booklet contains a more straightforward assertion of copyright: “©2008 Pillage Roadshow, all rights reserved,” and the Pillage Roadshow logo is displayed on the obverse of the sleeve. An explanatory note on copyright, however, is also included as an appendix

to Angus Batey's liner notes essay (the note is also signed "AB"), and this note serves as a qualification and critique of the very notion of copyright being enforced:

The DVD you hold in your hands may look colourful enough, but the legal area it inhabits is distinctly grey. Copyright law – an imperfect, but, in the opinion of this writer, fundamentally important legal instrument, the sole device that allows creators of music, images, writing and other artistic works to earn a living from their labours – is stretched beyond the shape its framers can have intended.

One of the weaknesses of existing copyright laws is their inability to differentiate between wilful plagiarism – passing off – and a respectful act of artistic homage. It will be clear to anyone listening to and watching The Hard Sell that its makers are, first and foremost, huge fans of the records they have included in the set. It is conceivable that mixes such as this would pass the test for "fair use" of copyright material, in that the snatches used are not substantial parts of the originals, and that their re-use here certainly does not diminish the market value of the source material. Indeed, past evidence has shown it has exactly the opposite effect: the story of Brainfreeze demonstrates that works like this cause an increased interest in – and sales of – the original records used to make them. If it was a radio broadcast, a manageable fee based on the length of time each record was played would be payable, and permission to include them would not have to be sought.

Still, though, no names of the records used in The Hard Sell, or the artists who originally released them, are included in this sleeve note or packaging. (35)

This notice is important as it emphasizes the problematization of extant copyright law effected by the practice of sampling. As Batey asserts, the concept of copyright is intended to protect the rights of artists to earn money from the dissemination of their works, yet this legal framework is insufficient when it comes to artists who construct their texts from reworkings of others' material. His citation of the effect the release of Brainfreeze had on consumer demand for the source material of the set parallels the apparent hypocrisy of the above cited compilation of library tracks from the De Wolfe Music Library.

Moreover, Batey's note asserts the rights of DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist as authors of the work within the legal framework of copyright, but it simultaneously amounts to a confession that this assertion of copyright also constitutes an infringement of the various – and, crucially, unnamed – authors of the works sampled therein. The hypothesis that the samples "would pass the legal test for 'fair use' of copyright material" is shortly called into question with the declaration that "no

names of records used in The Hard Sell, or the artists who originally released them, are included in this sleeve note or packaging” (35). Despite this hedging, at least one source is all but named in the accompanying liner notes. In describing the influence of Hollywood soundtracks (notably those of John Williams), Batey describes “one of The Hard Sell’s earliest signature moments, which these notes will not be naming for reasons explained further down [in the note on copyright]” (30). Despite this anonymity, the track is gestured to: “When you watch the DVD you’ll know the bit [Cut Chemist]’s talking about. It’s a 1950s track that exists in that Hollywood timeline, but also barged its way into the hip hop universe when the Fugees rapped over it in 1996” (30). Batey is referring to the Flamingos’ “I Only Have Eyes For You,” which was sampled by The Fugees in their track “Ready Or Not” (1996). Its usage in The Hard Sell therefore has the effect of bridging the different traditions of (mainstream) Hollywood and (marginalized) hip hop into one cultural continuum, and, indeed, one of the functions of sampling is to affirm a continuity of tradition in which various texts are recycled into new forms. The doctrine of fair use was assuredly granted to T.S. Eliot who, though doing much the same thing as sampling DJs, did not have to obscure his sources in anonymity but, rather, famously revealed them in an appended series of footnotes to the text.

iii. Menu screen.

Following the ironized anti-piracy warning, the very first image of the DVD proper is the menu screen which takes the form of a stereotypical 1950s jukebox. The various options the viewer has for watching the performance (“Play Show”, “Scene Selection”, and “Bonus Material”) appear as optional track selections on the mock juke box. This imagery introduces one of the leitmotifs of the show which is the valorization of the physical media upon which recorded sounds are stored. As described previously, it was the concept of the coin-operated jukebox that gave birth to the music recording industry of the twentieth century.



Fig. 7: The Hard Sell menu screen.

The jukebox performed an important marketing role for record companies since it not only required the purchase of records for it to play, but also popularized these records amongst the listening public: “The jukebox not only consumed records but also helped to bring customers back to record stores. Each disc held in the machine was identified on the front panel by title and artist, so that customers could easily find out who they were listening to” (Morton 100). By providing a venue through which consumers could sample prospective records, the automated jukebox therefore serves the same advertising function ascribed above to the radio DJ, particularly with regards to the DJ’s role as an advertiser of records. In his history of the jukebox, Kerry Segrave, like Morton, also observes that jukeboxes united the concepts of consumer and producer. Not only did the jukebox market represent a considerable portion of record sales in and of itself, by providing essentially free advertising for individual songs, it also promoted further sales to individual listeners: “By 1939, jukes consumed about 30 million records per year, while serving the double function of buyer and seller. Millions of records were purchased because they had been heard the night before on a box” (127). Jukeboxes served the same purpose as the radio DJ in terms of exposing listeners to records and, subsequently, encouraging them to purchase those records.¹⁰⁸ However, unlike the radio, the jukebox constitutes a more consumer-oriented medium wherein the listener had agency over the selection of tunes for playback: “radio had done a lot to cultivate a taste for, and an appreciation of,

¹⁰⁸ On a more literal level, jukeboxes also functioned as advertisers, as in the 1930s commercial messages were placed at the beginning of jukebox records (Segrave 87).

music; and that it had made name bands, but it could not give you your favourite band ‘when you want it’ like the phonograph could” (101).

Indeed, the jukebox is very much a mechanized disc jockey, albeit one that also projects the DJ’s selection powers on to the listening consumer. Furthermore, in much the same way that the stylized re-performance of texts by turntablists provides a visual spectacle to supplement the heard music, the interior machinations of the jukebox were also exhibited to audience and became part of the jukebox experience, as customers watched “the fascinating process by which the machine automatically selected the correct disc, moved it to the turntable (or, in some cases, moved the turntable to the disc), played it, and then returned it to its place” (Morton 100). Like the virtuoso tricks of a turntablist, the almost Rube Goldberg-like spectacle of the jukebox machinery emphasizes the tactile nature of physical records as opposed to the digitized disembodiment of MP3s. This dichotomy is played with in The Hard Sell with the frequent use of imagery throughout the show depicting robotic jukeboxes shooting lasers at the hordes of small iPods and MP3 players.

iii. Titles.

The performance proper begins after the Pillage Roadshow logo (as previously featured in Product Placement) and the animated logo for the production company, Mission Control. Following these branding titles, the screen goes black to the sounds of a cheering crowd. In the bottom left corner of the black screen, a small, lone white figure emerges on to the stage. The static black screen then becomes mobile as a shaky camera zooms in on the figure on stage to reveal a simply dressed MC (not Kim Fowley) who, after thanking the opening DJs (DJ Dust and J Dilla), introduces Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow to the audience. The spoken introduction is then followed by a sampled voice that refers to “the ultimate in destruction” and “the greatest team in the history of mass slaughter.” The emphasis on destruction in these epigrammatic titles affirms the performance’s motif of the de(con)struction of mass culture. Towards the end of the title sequence, a scene is presented from a kung-fu film in which a woman attacks a man by hurling 45 rpm records like ninja stars. The seven inch records are transformed into the weapons by which a marginalized figure – a young woman – fends off an apparent attack from a male figure. The repurposing of cultural artifacts into weapons symbolizes the two DJs’ use of the products of the Culture Industry, repurposed through their sampling, to subvert the commodifying order of the Culture Industry.

The title sequence itself presents images from the rehearsal sessions for the performance. The sessions are depicted in a series of still photographs that produce the illusion of a motion picture. Each still image in the succession represents a moment frozen in time as a result of its capture by the camera. However, by stringing these single, frozen images into a sequence, the assemblage of images reconfigures each image's existence in time: the static picture, which implies the permanence of single image-moment, becomes mobile and transitory when successively juxtaposed with other static images of moments – equally permanent in and of themselves – from nearby temporal locations. The logic of this sequence also implies a reverse principle: that the fluid, linear treatment of time of the motion picture can be, by analogy, deconstructed into a similar series of static images, each depicting the permanence of a given moment. The sequence thus reveals the illusion through which a motion picture, such as that presented by the DVD, creates a movement through time.

This visual deconstruction of time is presented alongside an aural counterpart as the sampled phrase, “Right now, ladies and gentlemen, it is star time,” is cut up and looped. The words “Right now” are delayed, deferred, and repeated so that a single moment – the “Right now” – recurs again and again. The fleeting “now” is rendered permanent through the reconfiguration of time mandated by the teleology of the loop. In this instance, the progress to “star time” – the “now” being referred to here – is deferred and held off at arm's length by the sample's continual return to its beginning.

in. “The Road to Hollywood.”

The performance that is documented in The Hard Sell begins with a recapitulation of its own history in the form of a brief documentary about the show. Much like the introductory film that was included within the stage performance itself, this documentary serves to frame the DJ set, and it issues an explicitly polemical defense of the art form. In direct contradiction of the oft-cited criticism that “they’re just playing records,” the two turntablists are engaged in an art form as legitimate as the more traditional Hollywood Bowl performances of an established figure such as film composer John Williams. Moreover, the brief film also frames the framing devices of the show itself, as DJ Shadow explains the necessity of the use of supplementary visual material to provide context to the musical content of the set such that the concert itself becomes more than just a musical performance. This choice underscores the necessity of making the subculture of turntablism accessible to the more mainstream audience associated with the venue.

Following defenses and explanations from both Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow as well as Hollywood Bowl program director, Johanna Rees, “The Road To Hollywood” concludes with another speech from Kim Fowley that acts as a thesis statement for the show. While holding up the sleeve of a 45 rpm record¹⁰⁹, Fowley declares:

Welcome to The Hard Sell. Twenty-first century trivia. People you’ve never heard of daring you to sit in your room or in your theatre to try and figure out if you’re being entertained or educated. What is a hard sell? [shouting:] HARD SELL IS EMPHATIC! I LOVE THIS MUSIC! I WANT YOU TO LOVE IT TOO! THIS IS THE SOUNDTRACK OF MADNESS! THIS! THIS! THIS! [roars].

Fowley’s monologue at first associate the hard sell with aggressive marketing. The hard sell is an invasive force: a colonization of the listener’s culture. The emphasis on “your room” and “your theatre” indicates the consumer’s ownership of culture, yet this ownership is infiltrated by a manipulative entity intent on gauging the success of the Culture Industry’s evangelism. The DJ is also engaged in the same coercive techniques as the zealous advertisers and corporate marketing departments previously deconstructed in Product Placement. The DJs who select for play individual tracks they love are not only effectively “selling” these tracks to the audience, but are also selling their own musical taste. Just like the audio texts themselves, the DJ’s musical taste is also a commodity to be exchanged.

3. Introductory film.

Following Fowley’s monologue, the DVD cuts to the film used at the Hollywood Bowl to introduce the set. Although the audio track includes the audience applauding the beginning of the show, the film is initially presented full screen with no audience visible. Though a newly made production, the film includes flickering and scratch effects to simulate the effect of damaged vintage film¹¹⁰. The first image is of a theatre curtain that draws back to reveal the title of the show, “The Hard Sell.” An announcer – using a mid-century advertising voice similar to that heard in Product Placement – greets the audience: “Hello and welcome to The Hard Sell, the all-new collaborative DJ

¹⁰⁹ A split single with the Scottish indie musician Future Pilot AKA on which Kim Fowley contributed the b-side, “Night Flight to Memphis” (1999).

¹¹⁰ Indeed, just as digital technology has enabled film restorers to remove such visual “noise” from vintage film stock, many digital filmmaking programs such as Apple’s Final Cut and Adobe’s After Effects also include plug-ins to simulate the effects of old film.

set by Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow.” During this announcement, the perspective changes and the film is revealed to be that projected behind the stage at the Hollywood Bowl. The stage and film screen blend together and interact with one another: when the DJs’ names are introduced, a pair of arrows appears on the background film that point to the actual DJs on the stage. The distinction between the “aura-fied” live performance and the pre-prepared text is thus blurred.

As stated above, the purpose of the introductory film is to frame the performance for the audience, to explain, in the words of DJ Shadow “what was about to happen and why it mattered.” It states: “We’d like to take a couple of moments to explain what you’re going to be seeing and hearing over the next hour.” The announcer’s voice addresses potential questions from the audience: “You may be asking, ‘What makes these guys so special?’ and ‘Why should I care?’ ‘At the end of the day, aren’t they really just playing records?’” The questions themselves are uttered by other voices, alternating between male and female. As these other interlocutors express their queries, a corresponding image of an individual (either male or female, depending on the gender of the questioning voice) is seen in the film. These images are taken from old advertising catalogues and are presented with a close zoom that reveals the pixilation characteristic of colour printing. The male voice that asks “Why should I care” is juxtaposed with a shot of a male model wearing a suit. Over his left-hand shoulder appears the caption: “C – Navy Blue” that gives away the commercial provenance of the picture.

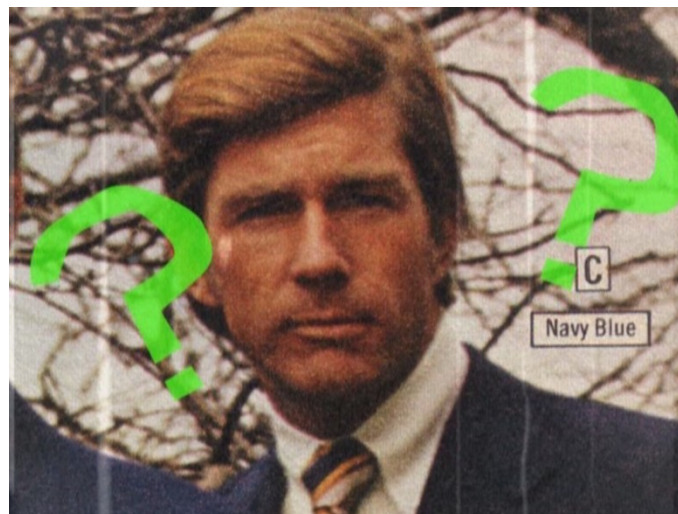


Fig. 8: The advertising model questions the hard sell.

The models in these pictures are intended to represent the consumer. In the context of the film, they represent the consumer of the Hard Sell in attendance at the Hollywood Bowl, but in their original context, they have a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, the models display the clothing being sold – in this immediate case, a navy blue suit. On the other hand, however, they also represent the consumer to whom the clothing is being sold. What is ultimately being sold, therefore, is not simply an article of clothing, but also an entire self-image created as a combination of the consumer and the consumed product. The model, then, is an idealized vision of the consumer, a cipher into which consumers can project themselves. As Vance Packard explains in his 1957 analysis of advertising, The Hidden Persuaders: “Studies of narcissism indicated that nothing appeals more to people than themselves, so why not help people to buy a projection of themselves. That way the image would preselect their audiences, select out of a consuming public people with personalities having an affinity for the image” (40). In this way, the catalogue model serves the same function as that of the screen actress described above by Horkheimer and Adorno.

The third of these initial questions reiterates the common criticism cited earlier by DJ Shadow: “At the end of the day, aren’t they really just playing records?” Rather than launching into a polemical defence of the DJ’s art, the announcer uses this as jumping-off point for a quick history of the 45 rpm format that provides the source material for The Hard Sell as well as the earlier Brainfreeze and Product Placement sets. The history of the 45 rpm format and its consequent competition with later, digital formats serves to valorize the earlier format due to its physicality and (literally, in the case of the turntablists) its tangibility.

For the more mainstream audience of the Hollywood Bowl, the two DJs need to explain the significance of the use of 45 rpm records in the set. Not only does the exclusive use of the format create a procedural limit as to which tracks can be included in the set, it also presents a technical challenge to the turntablists: “However, 45’s are somewhat problematic. For starters, they’re smaller – there’s less real estate to get a grip on. And those big holes can really wreak havoc when you’re cutting it up! Also, the disc is spinning at 45 revolutions per minute as opposed to the standard 33 1/3, so DJs have to move quicker to access desired points on the record.” The revelation of these technical details was not necessary for the Product Placement performance which was set up with the simple declaration that “the whole night is 45s only, all 45s.”

The intro film carries on its framing function by explaining the equipment used:

“Okay, so let me make sure I understand so far: they’re playing all 45’s.” Right. “And nothing else, no computers, no keyboards?” Correct. All audio is being delivered via vinyl

on eight turntables into four mixers. Sometimes, the audio is then being sent into an effects box for echo(-echo-echo...) effects, or into one of two guitar pedals enabling us to loop the sound, loop the sound, loop the sound. Looping can also be done using precisely placed stickers on the record.

An image in the form of a technical schematic of an electronic circuit is displayed to illustrate the set-up.

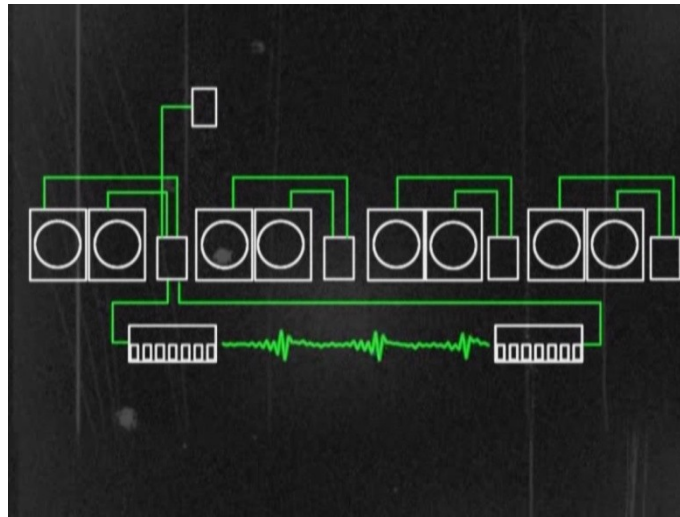


Fig. 9: Technical schematic of The Hard Sell's equipment.

In addition to describing the equipment being used, however, this explanation also serves to illustrate the ambiguity within the show between “live” and “recorded” performances. The explanation emphasizes that no live instruments are to be used (“All audio is being delivered via vinyl on eight turntables into four mixers”), yet the constituent recordings (the 45 rpm records) are being played live. The musical content itself is prerecorded, yet its reperformance, its playback, is “live.” Furthermore, the film goes on to state that “all loops are performed in real time, live on stage.” This statement points to a paradox: a loop, by definition, is a suspension of real time in which the live moment is captured and replayed.

Finally, the intro film also calls the audience’s attention to the visual part of the show as cameras are used to facilitate the audience’s understanding of the performance: “‘Okay, well, how do I know who’s playing what? I can barely see them.’ Don’t worry, we have cameras! Ha-ha ha-ha-ha!” Although the show takes the form of a musical concert, it is also concerned with its own presentation. The art of the turntablist is not simply the manipulation of pre-extant audio material;

it is also the visual display of this manipulation. While on the one hand, the mixes between tracks are intended to create the illusion of an organic whole despite its fragmentary nature, on the other hand, this illusion must be revealed in order for the DJs' artistic presence to be registered by the apprehending audience. Once again, as Roland Barthes wrote, "in the West at least, there is no art which does not point to its own face" (*Writing Degree Zero* 35). Like James Brown's musical instructions to his band, the cameras point to the structure behind the show, as it is through seeing the DJs physically that their musical performance is registered. This necessity is compounded by the audience at the Hollywood Bowl who would not otherwise be able to discern the virtuosity and dexterity of the performance from the sound alone: the size of the venue itself, when compared to the small confines of the clubs in which *Product Placement* was performed, amplifies the need for a visual display of what is occurring on stage. The film concludes with the following statement: "Thank you for listening. We hope this explanation has helped your understanding and appreciation of DJing with 45 rpm records. Now, enjoy as DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist present *The Hard Sell*."

4. *The Hard Sell*.

i. Tuning up.

Following the introductory film, the two turntablists take the stage. The "clean slate" status of the show's beginning is signified by the blank, black screen behind the equipment framed by two plain black curtains. The sole image on display is the live presence of two men in plain white clothing standing behind a large table of turntables and musical equipment. The very first sounds heard in the actual set proper (as opposed to the front end matter described above) are a series of clicks (attended by Cut Chemist rhythmically pointing his hand at one of the turntables) followed by a looped orchestral drone. A series of other sounds – the clinkings of a prepared piano, backwards guitar feedback, bass drones – are layered on top. A beat briefly emerges from the Protean, ambient sounds before sinking back into the murk to be replaced by washes of guitar feedback and a helicopter sound accompanied by sounds of animalistic screaming.

This opening sequence suggests a turntablist analogy for an orchestra's tuning up, perhaps in an allusion pop orchestral performances usually hosted by the venue. A series of echoed brass stabs are introduced into the mix. Initially presented as individual notes, they are replayed in quicker succession until a melody is assembled. Interpolated with the brass stabs, however, is an

electronically generated test tone. The synthesized test tone is incongruent, pointing to a disconnect between the acoustic horn sounds and the electronic note as if the test tone is a robotic intrusion into the otherwise orchestral sound mix. The inclusion of the test tone with the horn stabs suggests an equivalency between electronic equipment and traditional musical instruments. Its ostensible origin in a stereo test record implies that a turntable requires the same degree of tuning as a trombone, trumpet, or violin. Furthermore, the inclusion of a sequence mimicking an orchestra tuning up as an integral part of the set repositions otherwise extrinsic preparations for the performance as part of the performance itself.

After the final iteration of the assembled horn melody (with its electronic interloper), the droning background noise drops out of the mix and is replaced by a series of machine noises and science fiction sound effects. The first discernable human voice (aside from a looped, echoing “oh-h-h-h” in the very first moments) appears in the form of a sped-up countdown. The countdown is run through a delay pedal so that the individual numbers (and other utterances within the countdown) echo. The progression of time demarcated by the successive numbers of the countdown becomes blurred as the individual moments of the countdown, interpellated by their respective numbers, repeat over each other. Finally, a child’s voice saying the phrase “we’re on a mission” on behalf of the two DJs is scratched in to properly begin The Hard Sell.

ii. *“Rock Around the Clock.”*

At this moment, the background screen comes to life with the iconic, rainbow-like image of the top of a jukebox projected over the similarly shaped Hollywood Bowl structure itself. An electronic beat starts up to introduce the first proper song in the set: the Belgian synth-pop group Telex’s 1979 cover of “Rock Around the Clock,” originally a 1954 hit for Bill Haley & His Comets. The usage of relatively lesser-known covers of recognizable songs was a device much used in Product Placement, but in this instance, the defamiliarization of the archetypal rock song is even more pronounced. The familiar rock ‘n’ roll backbeat is drastically slowed down and replaced by a synthesized pulse. The musical backing is provided not by guitars or horns but by electronic keyboards. Most radical, however, is the substitution of a robotic vocoder¹¹¹ for Bill Haley’s lead vocal. In place of Haley’s original, exuberant delivery, Telex’s cover version uses a dispassionate,

¹¹¹ An electronic effect that uses human speech articulations to modulate a synthesized tone in order to produce a sound approximating electronic speech.

emotionally flat robotic voice that, when coupled with the slowed tempo, decants the track of its youthful energy – an energy that at the time of the song’s original release was associated with unbridled sexuality. Instead, the ungenderable robot voice expresses no libidinal energy, just cybernetic sterility; its disaffected tone is seemingly consumed by ennui. Furthermore, just as they did in the “Whole Lotta Love” sequence of Product Placement, the turntablists introduce snippets of Bill Haley’s recording of the song which are then used as fodder for a display of scratching. The organic, human voice of Haley is positioned as an alien interloper in the otherwise robotic performance, but is then rendered “unnatural” as the scratching transforms it from recognizable speech into machine-like noise.

The inclusion of the cover version of “Rock Around the Clock” goes beyond the amusing, defamiliarizing of the original and its status as an example of 1970s kitsch. The Bill Haley original (which is instantly recognizable within and through the cover version by Telex) stands as a synecdoche of the early rock ‘n’ roll era: it is featured prominently in the 1950s nostalgia pieces American Graffiti and Happy Days, and its reference within The Hard Sell evokes that same period in conjunction with the jukebox imagery throughout the show. As discussed above, the prominence of the jukebox throughout the show’s background imagery, specifically when juxtaposed with images of MP3 players, reflects the turntablists’ concern with physical media.

The projection screen at the back of the stage shows a jukebox standing alone in a barren landscape in a parody of the black monolith in the dawn of man sequence in Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey. As MP3 players float through the sky – their trailing bud earphones indicative of a shift away from the communal listening experience mandated by the jukebox to a more private, solipsistic experience – the jukebox sprouts arms and legs and transforms into a robot that shoots the MP3 players out of the sky with a laser from its head. The jukebox thus becomes identified with the machine voice singing the song, reperforming the track here just as countless jukeboxes had previously reformed Bill Haley’s hit in the malt shops of 1950s America. The DJs then are drawing a connection between themselves and the machines used to reproduce musical sounds. Just like the sampled child’s voice that immediately preceded the Telex track, the robotic voice of the jukebox is a stand-in for DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist. More specifically, the lyrical content of the song’s first verse – “One o’clock, two o’clock, three o’clock, rock! / Four o’clock, five o’clock, six o’clock, rock!” – provides a mirror image of the blurred countdown used to introduce the song. The reversed time of the countdown is now running forwards again, indicative of a record’s ability to manipulate time. Furthermore, the clock around which we are supposed to rock is the record

itself. The vibrating needle of the phonograph literally rocks around the clock as it traces the spinning groove. Furthermore, as the development of different formats from the 45 to the LP to the compact disc attests, a record defines itself by the proscribed time for a complete musical piece (the four-minute duration of a pop single on a 45, the LP side's requisite containment of a whole symphonic movement, the possibly apocryphal story that the CD's initial runtime of 74 minutes stemmed from the duration of a Beethoven symphony).

The record is a measurement of time even as it removes performances from their specific location in historical time and, through the possibility of successive reiteration, makes them mobile in time (as well as space). Grandmaster Flash's "Clock Theory" literalizes the metaphor of record-as-clock. The circular face of the clock, echoed by the disc of a record, indicates a cyclical conception of time. The spiral nature of the record groove enables the needle to continually retrace its steps while simultaneously progressing towards the centre. The measurement of time expressed in the rotation of a clock's hands analogized by the rotation of a record on a turntable is a machined echo of the passage of time denoted by the Earth's rotation, its orbit around the sun, and the solar system's orbit around the galaxy. In all instances, time is expressed through the arc of a circumference, a mathematical construction that on the one hand separates a part from the whole, while on the other hand attests to the part's enclosure within the whole (a circumference can always be extrapolated from an arc).

In demonstration of this reconfiguration of the record's time through looping, the basic beat of the Telex cover of "Rock Around The Clock" is looped and used as the foundation for the next musical section. Melodic passages snatched from other records are overlaid while the background screen shows a kaleidoscopic image of crates of records being dug through. The faces of DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist are superimposed over the crates to suggest an identification between the DJs and the records, cementing a relationship between the disc jockey author-function and the texts they consume and use. An echoing voice appears with the phrase "non-stop music" at which point the looped backbeat from Telex's "Rock Around The Clock" returns by itself. A keyboard melody is then overlaid on top. The playback of this keyboard sample is reworked by the DJs in such a way that it is unclear which elements are part of the original performance and which are the result of looping or distortion produced by manipulating the record on the turntable.

Following the keyboard solo, an *a capella* version of Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" is introduced into the mix. Throughout this section, the background imagery shifts to show various eyes with their irises replaced by 45 rpm singles. This superimposition situates the medium – the 7-

inch single – in the position of a human sensory apparatus. As such, it positions the record as a technological mediation through which the outside world – symbolized by the music on the record – is apprehended. The record is that which stands between the consumer and the artwork and is the means through which the work is perceived. Moreover, the combination of eye and record produces an image of cyberneticism, a prevalent theme throughout the set.

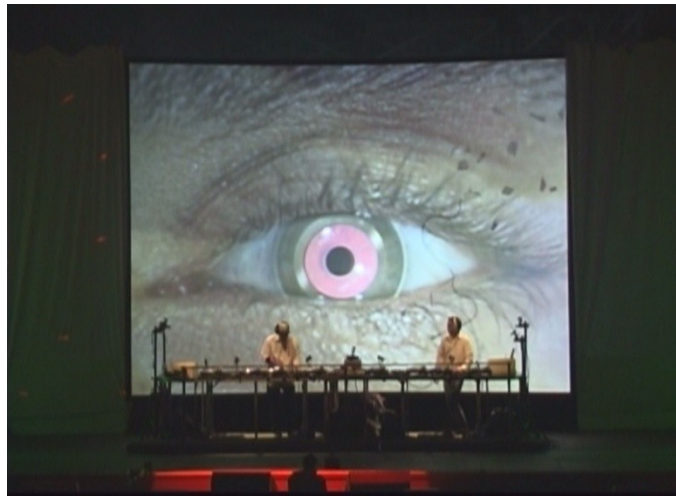


Fig. 10: The “eye” of the tiger.

iii. “Los Angeles, 1937”

After the second reiteration of the titular tagline from “Eye of the Tiger,” the electronic beat of Telex repeats for another few bars before being cut off (the camera shows DJ Shadow hitting a guitar loop pedal with his foot). A narrating voice is heard to say “Los Angeles, 1937” before the film screen shows a video sample from Casablanca. The famous line, “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in the world, she walks into mine,” is quoted after which the imagery switches to vintage shots of an old jukebox. After the brief quotation from Humphrey Bogart, the audio switches to an excerpt from “I Only Have Eyes for You,” as performed by Ruby Keeler and Dick Powell in the 1934 film Dames. The reperformance of the song in The Hard Sell is accompanied by imagery of an old jukebox switching records. Not only does the juxtaposition of this visual image with the lyrics to the song further illustrate a relationship between records and eyes as introduced in the previous section, but it also presents an interesting parallel with the song’s original context.

In Dames, the song is presented as part of a Busby Berkeley choreographed musical sequence. The song is initially sung by a chorus of dancers (this is the section used in The Hard Sell), all of whom are wearing masks of the film's female lead, Ruby Keeler (who would be on the receiving end of Dick Powell's solo rendition later on in the sequence). This multiplicity of Keelers suggests a monomania on the part of the song's narrating persona (voiced here by the chorus): having only eyes "for you," everything that the singer sees is replaced by the image of the beloved's face. This endless duplication, however, also serves to undermine the primary status of the real Keeler, who does appear in nearly every shot of the sequence, yet can be and is replaced by a superabundance of serialized equivalents. Characteristic of Berkeley choreographies, these reproductions of Keeler move about the stage in mechanistic, geometric patterns not dissimilar from the machined ballet of the jukebox which replaces the visual content dance sequence in The Hard Sell. More fundamentally, however, the duplicate Keelers are substituted by a stack of records each of which represents a potentially endless serialized reproduction of the superseded original performance (here identified with the "real" Keeler herself).

Only the first verse of the Powell-Keeler version of the song is played. The final "you" is left to echo as the opening guitar strums of the Flamingos' 1959 doo-wop version of the song begin. The video screen switches back to the scene from Casablanca in which Bogart's Rick Blaine asks Dooley Wilson's Sam to play "As Time Goes By" as he had done for Ilsa earlier in the film: "You played it for her, you can play it for me." The pianist replies, in a moment of cautious deception, "Well, I don't think I can remember it." By comparison, the machine jukebox, unlike the human musician, has perfect memory, issues of fidelity notwithstanding. The record player, then, is a more perfect version of the human musician. Nonetheless, Blaine treats Sam like a machine – like a record player – ordering him to reproduce the song: "If she can stand it, I can. Play it." The dialogue is the source of the oft-repeated misquotation "Play it again, Sam," a phrase never uttered in the film, yet the misquotation is obliquely referred to by the repetition of the phrase "Play it!" At this command, a real-time image of DJ Shadow physically repeating the line by backspinning a record is superimposed over the image of Humphrey Bogart's character. The form of the record enables a musical piece to be endlessly (re)played again on demand.

To coincide with the line "Are the stars out tonight?," Bogart's image fades into the rotating star-field produced by a disco mirrorball. When the chorus line, "I only have eyes for you," in the Flamingos' version of the song reappears, it is interpolated with its equivalent in the Powell-Keeler version, which appears as an echoed counterpoint to the Flamingos' later version. At this point, the

video of the DVD switches to an upside-down fish-eyed view of the Hollywood Bowl where the mirrorball star-field being projected on to the background screen melds with the actual night sky over Hollywood.

Two more doo wop songs are played successively during this section, and the background imagery continues to make connections between records and consumerism. A hand deposits a coin into a jukebox and makes a selection from the menu. The imagery then switches back and forth between shots of the internal workings of various jukeboxes and advertising imagery of cars rotating on disc-like daises. The juxtaposition of this imagery with the love-themed doowop songs illustrates the way in which advertising serves to create an almost romantic desire for its goods on the part of the consumer. In The Hidden Persuaders (roughly contemporaneous with the automotive advertising imagery used in this section of The Hard Sell), Vance Packard notes the connection between the advertised product and human sexuality. Not only is a product sold on its ability to assist consumers in their romantic life (Packard here cites advertisements for women's lingerie), but the product itself stands in for the beloved object, notably in the automotive sector. Convertibles, such as those on display here in The Hard Sell, in particular, are identified as a "mistress" – herself a substitutive supplement for the wife:

After exploring the situation Dr. Dichter concluded that men saw the convertible as a possible symbolic mistress. It set them daydreaming of youth, romance, adventure just as they may dream of a mistress. The man knows he is not going to gratify his wish for a mistress, but it is pleasant to daydream. This daydreaming drew the man into the auto salesroom. Once there, he finally chose a four-door sedan just as he once married a plain girl who, he knew, would make a fine wife and mother. "Symbolically, he marries the sedan," a spokesman for Dr. Dichter explained. The sedan is useful, practical, down to earth, and safe. Dr. Dichter felt that the company would be putting its best foot backward if it put its main emphasis on sedans simply because that was the car most men ended up buying. Instead, he urged the company to put the hope of mistress-adventure a little closer to males by giving the most prominent display to the convertibles. (73-74)

As such, the image of the convertible – attended on the rotating dais by a beautiful model who makes the connection between the car and romance explicit – serves as a seduction to the consuming male. The image of the convertible inculcates desire on the part of its (male) consumers, yet this desire is never fulfilled. Instead, following the logic set out by Dichter, it is redirected towards the more family-oriented sedan. The possible gratification of desire necessary to bring the

consumer into the showroom is deferred and substituted. The convertible, both its image and its actual self, serves as a synecdochic advertisement for not only the car company, but the car itself, which in the logic of the advertiser is a stand-in for a woman. Therefore a chain of desire can be constructed from the woman who is the original object of desire, the convertible (mistress) that supplements her, and the sedan (wife) with whom the desire is finally consummated.



Fig. 11: The seductive convertible.

The illusory nature of this seduction is hinted at in the lyrics to the doowop song being played in *The Hard Sell*, Eddie Holman's 1965 hit "This Can't Be True": "This can't be true, girl / Are you for real, girl?" As he fantasizes about the object of his love, the singer wonders to himself "Am I dreaming dreams of loving you / Or am I dreaming dreams that can't come true?" The gratification of the desire is ultimately irrelevant, however, as what matters is the desire itself and the feeling that it itself brings. No matter the end result of the affair, "I feel good inside, sweetheart". The good feeling here stems not from the consummation of the desire, but rather from the potentiality of the seduction. The title and the refrain of the song indicate that the singer is aware that "this can't be true" and that the ultimate reality of the love itself, questioned in the refrain, is endlessly deferred and replaced by the seductive projections of the singer's desire.

iv. *“Charlene.”*

The last in this series of slow-paced serenades is a song that will be provisionally called “Charlene.”¹¹² The song opens with an arpeggiated piano line and a simple horn melody, which dovetails from the chorus of “This Can’t Be True.” To this introduction, the turntablists add another layer of percussive scratching. The scratching stops just as the lead vocal to the song comes in. The vocal part is an off-key, flat, male voice, but it is this rather questionable vocal performance that led to the song’s inclusion in the set. As DJ Shadow explains in a question and answer session on his website:

We wanted to put together a set that would alternatively make people smile and nod their head, and the next moment throw them off their balance and think “Whoa, I’m not sure if I’m down with this.” In other words, we wanted to push the boundaries of good taste. The “Charlene” track seemed to perfectly encapsulate all of those sentiments. We didn’t necessarily think the song itself was funny, but the act of playing it and submitting people to it amused us to no end. Brainstorming the visual accompaniment was the icing on the cake. The effect of the track’s inclusion in the set, particularly its location following a sequence of smooth, well-sung love songs, is to disorient the audience with its carnivalesque inversion of the considerations of taste.

The song is supplemented by a video depicting the off-key male singer as a lovelorn jukebox. The titular “Charlene” is revealed, through a thought bubble emanating from the cartoon, anthropomorphized jukebox, to be a female jukebox. The curves of the jukebox are further feminized into an hourglass shape with a pair of speaker cones standing in for breasts. The lyrics to the song – a serenade from the male machine to his imagined female (but equally mechanized) beloved – are subtitled on the screen for the audience. A bouncing 45 rpm record follows the words as they are sung, but there are a few problems. The words at the beginning of the chorus are indistinct and their indeterminacy is glossed with a series of question marks. At the final line of the chorus where the jukebox sings of those who insist that he, as a machine, should have no such feelings (“But they’re wrong, Charlene”), the bouncing record becomes confused and loses the

¹¹² The song’s proper title and its original artist are unknown. In a Q&A session on his website DJ Shadow answers a fan question as to the tracks origin by stating “I can’t reveal sample information and the like because it leaves me vulnerable to legal issues” (“Ask DJ Shadow”). Despite extensive research on the Internet, the author has been unable to track down the song’s origin.

timing of the words, bouncing backwards and forwards in impatient anticipation of the rhythm of the vocal part.



Fig. 12: “Charlene.”

The lyrical content to the song has special significance to the set, since the cartoonish, amorous machine blurs the distinctions between the human and the robotic. This is a machine that evidently has developed feelings and is expressing them. That the jukebox is aware of its monstrous nature is revealed in the lines, “I’m just a machine / With no feelings / And I’m not supposed to fall in love.” The automated playback of records – the jukebox’s function in life – has enabled the machine to appropriate the voices and emotions conveyed by the record, the same appropriation effected by DJs who often mime the words sung on the records they play. By ventriloquizing the human voices stored on its contained records, the jukebox elides the distinction between the real and the simulated in the same way as was seen in the famous “His Master’s Voice” advertisements that inaugurated the phonograph era. The question asked in the previous song – “Are you for real, girl?” – becomes irrelevant here as the categories of the real and the simulated are intertwined and rendered indistinct.

In his essay “Can Thought Go On Without a Body?,” Jean-François Lyotard considered the possibility of future machines being able to carry on the human experience after the disappearance of the biological human race. He concluded that in order to do so, the machines would have to be taught to love, an enterprise that would require the understanding of sexual difference. In this essay, Lyotard conceives of human beings – like all forms of biological life – as technical devices that filter

and process information. What sets human beings apart, however, is that due to language, the “human being is omnivorous when dealing with information because it has a regulating system (codes and rules of processing) that’s more differentiated than those of living things. ... In other words your philosophy is possible only because the material ensemble called ‘man’ is endowed with very sophisticated software” (290-291). For human thought to continue after the death of the sun (which Lyotard identifies with the death of human material existence, a death which would preclude the continued existence of philosophical thought), new hardware has to imbued with this same software.

The software of human thought, however, is different from the binary programming of computer models: “A thought in which therefore procedures of the type ‘just as ... so likewise ...’ or ‘as if ... then’ or again ‘as p is to q , so r is to s ’ are privileged compared to digital procedures of the type ‘if ... then ...’ and ‘ p is not non- p ’” (293). To Lyotard, this mode of thinking is a manifestation of the human biological body (in the same way that binary logic is a manifestation of the computer’s digital “body”). In order to reproduce this mode of thinking in the machine, the machine has to be structured along the same lines as the human body, and, for Lyotard, this structure is dependent on the difference of gender: “It’s an accepted proposition that sexual difference is a paradigm of an incompleteness of not just bodies, but minds too” (298). The motivation for human thought, says Lyotard, is desire: the desire to engender thought where before was unthought (this same unthought that will return in the absence of the Earth brought about by the solar holocaust). This “force” of desire is predicated on the incompleteness of the human body, an incompleteness mythologized by Aristophanes’ speech in Plato’s *Symposium*: “‘Love’ is the name for our pursuit of wholeness, for our desire to be complete” (192e-193a). Lyotard identifies this desire for completeness as a force of “negentropy,” a force that, in contradiction to the laws of entropy (embodied in the inevitable explosion that shall destroy the solar system), leads towards increased complexification: “So: the intelligence you’re preparing to survive the solar explosion will have to carry that force within it on its interstellar voyage. Your thinking machines will have to be nourished not just on radiation but on the irremediable differend of gender” (299). En-gender-ed with sexual difference, the sexualized machine can now exist as a supplement to the human. It perpetuates the human even after the ever-imminent solar explosion Lyotard alludes to throughout his essay has destroyed biological life (Lyotard conceives this machine as a probe floating through the void of space). Unlike the desexualized robotic voice that sings the version of “Rock Around The Clock” heard earlier, the sentient, lovelorn jukebox depicted in the “Charlene” sequence constitutes just such a machine.

v. Loops

Following the conclusion of “Charlene,” the video switches to a shot of a crowd cheering. A young man with early 1960s style glasses is shown standing and screaming. Though the audio is from the present concert, this image appears to be taken from an early 1960s concert, perhaps one of the Beatles’ early tours. This brief sequence demonstrates once again the manipulation of time inherent in a turntablist text as a visual fragment several decades old is inserted into the current performance. The confusion of time is furthered when the audio switches to a contemporary sounding beat in marked contrast with the vintage love songs played in the previous section.

During this section, the work of the DJs on stage is shown in more detail. As the track begins, the video shows imagery taken by a camera attached to Cut Chemist’s arm, effectively giving a “wrist-eye” view of the proceedings. The video shows real-time footage of the turntablists on stage while behind them on the screen are projected larger-than-life doubles of the two DJs at work on the turntables. At one point, a hall of mirrors effect is realized as images of the background screen are projected on to the screen itself. Behind the set-up on stage, the audience sees on the screen a giant image of Cut Chemist on the turntables with successive reiterations of that same image shown in the background to produce a series of Cut Chemists stretching back into infinity.

The music then gives way to the recognizable trilled guitar line from the Incredible Bongo Band’s 1972 recording of “Apache,” an instrumental composition written by Jerry Lordan. It was first a hit for the British group the Shadows in 1960, and reached number one on the charts in August of that year, “staying there five weeks and selling a million copies” (Matos). Though not such a hit on its initial release, the Incredible Bongo Band’s version became an important track in the development of hip hop, due largely to its bongo drum intro and lengthy, highly sample-able drum break. Kool Herc, who has referred to the track as “the national anthem of hip hop” (Hermes), used it in his mid-70s sound system shows in the Bronx (Chang 178). Indeed, as he recounts in a story on the song in the New York Times, “Apache” featured prominently in the “Merry-Go-Round” section of his set, which he describes as “the segment [of the set] where I played all the records I had with beats in them, one by one. I’d use it at the hypiest part of the night, between 2:30 and 3 am. Everybody loved that part of my format” (qtd. in Hermes). After obtaining multiple copies of the record, Herc was able to extend the percussive break section by effectively creating a loop by switching between copies: “The Bongo Rock LP [the album on which “Apache” appeared] – specifically “Apache,” but other tracks, too – was the first record he used in this way”

(Hermes). The track was also used as source material for the Sugarhill Gang's "Apache," although its reiteration here, like in other Sugarhill Gang tracks, notably their reworking of the bassline from Chic's "Good Times", was not a sample of the Incredible Bongo Band recording, but rather a new performance by the Sugarhill house band. Nonetheless, the break itself was subsequently used by the West Street Mob, Grandmaster Flash, as well as Double Dee and Steinski. According to Michaelangelo Matos' history of the song, the first major rapper to use the song was L.L. Cool J who sampled it on "You Can't Dance," a track from his 1985 debut, Radio. Sped-up versions of the break were used in the 1990s development of the drum and bass genre by such artists as Goldie and Digital. Matos also cites the break's usage in songs by hip hop artists such as The Roots and Nas.

Although considered alongside James Brown's ubiquitous "Funky Drummer" as one of the most sampled tracks in history, hip hop historian Oliver Wang notes that this status may be overstated. Citing the online sample database the-breaks.com, Wang observes that Brown's "Funky Drummer" has 182 citations compared to 45 citations for "Apache." Part of the reason for this imbalance, Wang suggests, may be that the dense layering of percussion in the break makes it unsuitable for manipulation:

The "Apache" break is fantastic ... a great, stand-alone breakbeat for dancers. It does not, in my opinion, translate well as sample fodder. In those cases, you really want something that is cleaner, with more "open" space between kick and snare ... this is why the Honey Drippers' "Impeach the President" is almost three times as better sampled than "Apache." With "Apache" what you hear is what you get: you can't really manipulate the "Apache" break unlike "Funky Drummer," "Sing a Simple Song"¹¹³, "Impeach the President," etc. It's those bongos – they're wonderful for the sense of polyrhythm, but they also pack the break with a lot more sonic detail which can't be fiddled with easily. ("Apache Revisited")

Ironically, it is because of this limitation that the track is used to demonstrate looping in The Hard Sell. First, because of its reputation as a common sample source, the song is fairly recognizable to the audience (who cheer at its introduction), and it carries connotations of early hip hop. Second, because, as Wang describes, its sonic density makes it unamenable to turntablist manipulation, the successive reiteration, especially in this slowed-down form, makes the looping process easily discernable.

¹¹³ A 1968 song by Sly & The Family Stone that was the b-side for "Everyday People."

The section of the track being looped occurs midway through the original¹¹⁴ recording where the trilled guitar line alternates with the unaccompanied percussion part. The looped section begins with an orchestra hit (indicating the end of the previous verse in the Incredible Bongo Band record). Each successive recurrence of this orchestra hit signifies the recommencement of the break. Sometimes the loop is restarted midway through its replay as if the sample were interrupting itself, breaking down the solid 4/4 time of the break. At other moments, the DJs let the loop play out and then allow for a brief, silence-filled pause before recommencing the loop to make the repetition even more noticeable. To further illustrate the looping process, the video cuts away to the guitar pedals on the stage and DJ Shadow's foot is shown hitting one of the pedals to restart the loop. Finally, at the end of the "Apache" section, a sampled voice emerges to tell the audience, "That's called a break," making the educative function of the show – this section in particular – all that more explicit.

vi. Biofeedback.

The looping demonstration of "Apache" is followed by a short transitional section comprising of a bass-heavy drum beat featuring sampled exclamations of "Get into it!" from James Brown sideman Bobby Byrd. On top of this backing, DJ Shadow scratches the beginning of the 1993 De La Soul track "En Focus." The De La Soul song opens with a processed voice uttering the word "biofeedback" (this was the sound being scratched). The inclusion of the word "biofeedback" is fortuitous as the concept is evocative of the show's recurring theme of cyberneticism. Biofeedback involves the use of external instruments to enable the conscious mind to take control of otherwise autonomic bodily processes. These processes are measured by electrodes attached to the body and are displayed on a monitor screen. Consequently, biofeedback requires a machine to read the human body, and the machine's reading is subsequently read by the human subject, who, through a process of trial and error, can identify the mental activities necessary to effect physical changes. The human body is therefore conditioned by the application of technology, making the term somewhat of a misnomer as the feedback in question is produced by artificial means.

"En Focus" is cut off midway through after the repeated line, "Did a tour that took me all around the world." The music then switches to the main drum and bass rhythm part from the Dugable Planets' 1992 hit "Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)." It appears that the turntablists are

¹¹⁴ Here referring to the Incredible Bongo Band version, not the older version by the Shadows.

using an instrumental version of the track in which the bassline sampled from Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' "Stretchin'" is prominently featured. On top of this, Cut Chemist cuts in a section of the vocal part (presumably from an *a capella* mix): "The poobah of the styles like Miles and shit"¹¹⁵ / Like sixties funky worms with waves and perms / Just sendin' chunky rhythms right down your block / We be to rap what key be to lock." The final quoted line occurs in the original at a moment where the musical backing drops out, leaving rapper Butterfly alone with his words. Though only this four line stanza is used in The Hard Sell, the lyrical content to "Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)" is significant nonetheless as it details the hip hop aesthetic of reworking past styles. Though club audiences are being drawn to ever increasingly heavy beats – "They flock to booms, man, boogie had to change" – hip hop alters old recordings while still retaining their history: "Why's it so fly? Cause hip hop kept some drama." Yet this history is subject to present revisionism as it is recontextualized. For example, Butterfly's verse replaces Elvis's proverbial blue suede shoes with "light blue suede Pumas." Similarly, the second verse describes hip hop's use of vintage samples and the attendant process of selection: "If it's the shit we'll lift it off the plastic / The babes'll go spastic / Hip hop gains a classic." The classic being gained here is not just the new hip hop track being produced, but also the original source material that now has been resuscitated by its re-use in the new track. Indeed, just such a process is what occurred to the Incredible Bongo Band's "Apache" described above. A flop upon its original release in 1972, the track has now become a classic largely by virtue of its inclusion in many hip hop songs.

The phrase "We be to rap what key be to lock" is repeated by the turntablists (again, the camera shifts to show Cut Chemist operating the looping guitar pedal to effect this repetition). The continual looping of the phrase has the effect of turning into a mantra in which the words become shorn of their semantic meaning. All that remains is the rhythm of the words that are used to form the initial bedrock of the next section in the mix. When the phrase stops repeating, all that is left is a naked bassline over which the DJs introduce a new beat to build the mix back up.

An introductory drum break followed by a piano melody marks the beginning of Melvin Bliss's 1973 single "Synthetic Substitution." Only the very first verse of Bliss's song is played before a brief bout of scratching (seen through Cut Chemist's wrist camera) transitions the track into

¹¹⁵ In the original Digable Planets song, the "shit" is retained. In its reperformance in The Hard Sell, the vulgarity is indiscernable such that line appears to read, "The poobah of the styles like Miles my man." It is possible that the *a capella* version used here is a "clean" version intended for radio broadcast. "Miles" presumably refers to Miles Davis.

“Magic Mountain” by Eric Burdon and War¹¹⁶. The opening four notes of the song – played by a saxophone and a harmonica – are repeated before the sample is allowed to play itself out and return to its beginning, the initial repetition repeating again. A drum beat is then introduced over top of this reconfiguration of the Eric Burdon and War track. The drumbeat continues as a looped piano sample from another track is played as a counterpoint to the reworked horn and harmonic melody from “Magic Mountain,” which recurs again. After the second reiteration of these alternating parts, the music abruptly switches to “Little Old Country Boy” from Parliament’s 1970 debut album Osmium and which constituted the b-side to the 1971 single “Breakdown.” Only a snippet of the song is played in which George Clinton impersonates the yodeling vocals of a white country singer. The record is then abruptly slowed down to a stop, and in its place appears the title line from the children’s song “Who Stole the Cookie from the Cookie Jar?”

Also known as “The Cookie Jar Song”, the song is used as a children’s game and features an infinite loop. The game involves an accuser asking “Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?” and then declaring that a particular child in the group “stole the cookie from the cookie jar.” When that child protests his or her innocence, he or she are asked again, “Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?” which restarts the exchange, albeit with a different participant being named as the offender. The game can repeated without end, creating an infinitely recursive loop of accusation, denial, and substituted accusation. In The Hard Sell, the sampled question is scratched and backspun by DJ Shadow such that the recursion is concentrated in the initial question: “Who stole...?” No answer is ultimately provided – the question remains open, and instead a horn-led funk instrumental is briefly played.

vii. “Definitely a plug.”

When the funk instrumental is cut-off, a brief moment of silence occurs. This silence is quickly interrupted by some scratching which introduces a voice seemingly belonging to a game show host who asks the question, “If you were a domestic appliance, what would you be?” The question is answered by a voice with a slight English accent saying, “A plug. Definitely a plug.” In an inversion of the robotic jukebox becoming human in the “Charlene” section, here is a human voice identifying itself as a consumer good. As Baudrillard notes in The System of Objects, the

¹¹⁶ Originally appearing as the b-side to the 1970 single “Spill The Wine”, “Magic Mountain” was also sampled by the Bristol-based trip hop group Portishead on the track “Wandering Star” from their 1994 debut album Dummy.

possession of consumer goods turns into an identification with (and ultimately a possession by) those goods:

With the automobile, for instance, it is possible to speak of “*my* brakes”, “*my* tail fins”, “*my* steering wheel”; or to say “*I* am braking”, “*I* am turning” or “*I* am starting”. In short, all of the car’s “organs” and functions may be brought separately into relation with the person of the owner in the possessive mode. We are dealing here not with a process of personalization at the social level but with a process of a projective kind. We are concerned not with *having* but with *being*. (109, emphasis in the original)

The brief exchange sampled in The Hard Sell dramatizes this process by having the consumer fantasize about becoming a household object. The consumed good is no longer something to have, but rather something to be. Just as the lovelorn jukebox presented a machine aspiring to the category of the human with its ventriloquized emotion, the reversal of that process demonstrated here further illustrates the blurring of boundaries between the biological and the technological.

Although the respondent’s reasoning for choosing to be a plug is left unspoken, the choice is significant. First, a plug, by definition, fills in a designated space (the socket) and, as such, fulfills a lack. Indeed, consumer goods in general can be seen as plugs in that they satisfy the desires (howsoever manipulated) of the consumer. The implied double-entendre of the exchange insinuates a sexual connotation to the term: the male voice identifies with the plug as a phallic, synecdochical replacement for himself designed to satisfy an ulterior desire and socket. Furthermore, plugs can be interchangeable: anything that can fill the standardized socket can function as a plug¹¹⁷. One of the characteristics of a plug is its standardization, whether it be an electrical power supply, a bathtub stopper, or a headphone jack. One plug can always stand in for another, and any single plug implies the existence of a series of identical copies. This concept is played with in the turntablists’ reworking of the exchange. Sections of the dialogue are replayed as a beat forms underneath. Eventually, the word “plug” is rhythmically repeated with the alternating numbers “1” and “2” to suggest an alternation between two equivalent plugs: “‘Plug’ ‘1’ / ‘Plug’ ‘2’ / ‘Plug’ ‘1’ / ‘Plug’ ‘2’”. The plug is therefore a cipher: whatever can fill the socket becomes the plug.

In his essay “On Popular Music” (1941), Theodor Adorno makes use of the term “plugging” to refer the process whereby standardized song forms are differentiated through repetition. While “the term ‘plugging’ originally had the narrow meaning of ceaseless repetition of one particular hit in

¹¹⁷ Indeed, the term “plug” is also used by sports fans to refer to team players who, due to their mediocre talent, are interchangeable and replaceable.

order to make it ‘successful’” (447), Adorno’s analysis goes further to show that this repetition serves to highlight whatever stylistic or formal feature differentiates the composition from its standardized, equivalent peers:

To be plugged, a song hit must have at least one feature by which it can be distinguished from any other, and yet possess the complete conventionality and triviality of all others. The actual criterion by which a song is judged worthy of plugging is paradoxical. The publisher wants a piece of music that is fundamentally the same as all the other current hits and simultaneously fundamentally different from them. Only if it is the same does it have a chance of being sold automatically, without requiring any effort on the part of the customer, and of presenting itself as a musical institution. And only if it is different can it be distinguished from other songs – a requirement for being remembered and hence for being successful. (447-448)

Plugging, then, produces an effect of pseudo-individuality in which differences between songs are inflated to conceal the very standardization that invariably structures these productions: “Thus, standardization of the norm enhances in a purely technical way standardization of its own deviation” (445). Indeed, the phenomenon described by Adorno in 1941 can be seen today in the television program American Idol, which calls on viewers to vote for – that is, to select – their favourite singer on the show (at the expense of eliminating the others). This ostensibly “free choice”, however, elides the fact that the various performers on the show merely represent different “flavours” of the same basic form and genre (Anglo-American pop music). Viewers are therefore invited to make their selection from a field of basically interchangeable options separable only by their use of certain stylistic socio-ethnic markers: the “twang” of white, “country”-ish singers, or the baroque vocal flourishes of “urban” performers. These slight stylistic distinctions cover up the structural standardization of the formulaic pop conventions.

Of course, “to plug” also means to advertise a product, specifically when a promotional message is inserted into another performance or text. For example, an actor’s appearance on a talk show is itself a cultural product to be consumed (generally as a means to gain an audience for the show’s advertising sponsors), yet the appearance is almost always attended with promotional message for whatever film or television show in which the actor is currently featured. As such, the plug in this sense is a form of product placement, but one in which the audience is manifestly aware of the product being advertised. Often, product placement does not call attention to itself as advertising, preferring to work in the background of the viewer’s consciousness. For example, in a

letter written to Paul Karpowicz, president of Meredith Broadcasting Group, owners of Fox's Las Vegas affiliate, the media watchdog group Commercial Alert noted that as part of a deal with McDonald's, the local news broadcast featured McDonald's iced coffee on the desks of the news anchors (Weissman). Referring to this practice of product placement as a form of "hidden advertisement," Commercial Alert remarked that even though no explicit endorsement of McDonald's products was made on air, the very presence of the product on the set would make it "harder for Meredith news programs to run stories critical of McDonald's thanks to the deal. The ad agency which brokered the McDonald's deal even acknowledged it 'would expect that the station would absolutely give us the opportunity to pull our product off the set' if a negative McDonald's story were to be aired" (Weissman). The plug, on the other hand, is explicit in its endorsement of a given product (when a talk show guest plugs a current film, record, or book, for example, the audience is plainly told the release date of the product in question and advised to "go see it" or "pick it up"). Whereas ordinary product placement is woven into the cultural text such that its presence is not explicitly obvious to the audience, the plug, as befits its name, calls attention to its own insertion within the text, making a (brief) spectacle of its own commerciality.

Finally, a plug, together with its attendant socket, represents a link, a liminal space between two systems wherein they are connected. The subject who is "plugged in" is integrated into the technological system. By becoming the plug, then, the subject then becomes the locus where, like a biofeedback machine, the biological meets the cybernetic, symbolized in this instance by the headphones through which the two DJs are plugged into their extensive sound system. Furthermore, the records themselves are plugged into the mix. In this particular sequence, a backbeat is built around a repeated low woodwind motif and snare hit over which a looped drumbeat is introduced. The DJs then set about "plugging" in other records into this sequence. At first the audience hears a male singing voice slowed down (in order to match the tempo of the backing) to the point that the words are indistinguishable. After the vocal phrase is complete, the beat is stripped down again to just the woodwind phrase before restarting again with a much faster soul song.

The unidentified song, which features a female lead singing doo-wop style wordless vocalisms as well as the invocation of another character named Sloopy¹¹⁸, includes a recurrent drum and bass pattern that introduces the almost wordless "verse": "[Female:] 'Whoa!' / [Male:] 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!'" Other parts of the song are included, but the words themselves are totally

¹¹⁸ The song in question is not "Hang On Sloopy" (1966) made famous by The Ventures.

indistinct, rendered by this indeterminacy into asemantic, musical sound. The human voice in this instance is rendered equivalent with other musical instruments, becoming another means of generating sound. This pattern is replayed and supplemented with a looped organ and guitar, each from other records. On top of this, Cut Chemist makes a series of scratches in time with the rhythm. When the backing drops out, the scratches continue by themselves as DJ Shadow cues up the next track, another unidentified soul number featuring the following lyrics:

[Female chorus:] Losing control, losing control
 [Male singer:] I lose control, I lose control
 Every time I see you with somebody new
 I tell myself we're really through
 But I find myself believin' in reality
 Cause no matter what I do, you got a hold on me
 I lose control ([Female chorus:] losing control)
 I said I lose control ([Female chorus:] losing control)

Just as in the “Charlene” sequence, the emotion of love has turned the singer into an automaton controlled by the addressed beloved. Reality itself becomes confused: though the singer is seeing the object of his affection “with somebody new,” he maintains nonetheless the reality of his relationship even at the moment it is called into question. The singer substitutes the potentially compromised relationship with a projection of an otherwise healthy relationship. That this apparent fiction has taken the place of reality is a result of the singing subject’s lack of agency over his own feelings: “Cause no matter what I do, you got a hold on me.” The singer is being played by his lover as a DJ plays a record. Furthermore, these lyrics carry on the theme introduced in the “I Only Have Eyes For You” sequence wherein the consumer is seduced into substituting for reality the potential desire proffered by the advertising industry. The utterer in this case is aware of his manipulation, but is unable to do anything but observe his loss of control.

The track then dovetails into a chromatic organ riff that is reminiscent of the famous James Bond theme. As this new song proceeds to its saxophone melody, the background imagery plays on the Bond connection by presenting stylized images of 45 rpm records. The patterns on the 45s being shown in close-up recall the iris effect used in the main titles sequence of *Dr. No*. The centre of the disc, where the hole for the turntable adapter is located, is filled with a moving image of a ninja figure throwing 45s as if they were ninja stars. This imagery is presented in a mock up of a film strip, with copies of the same ninja-in-a-45 both above and below the main, central image and

flashing time codes to the side. When one of the 45s flies out from the ninja in the disc and hits the screen, stylized blood runs down the screen to indicate a “hit.” Later, a mannequin is shown dancing in front of a spinning record. He stops – as if in freeze-frame – only to be literally sliced by a barrage of thrown 45s. This sequence of imagery re-presents the brief clip from a kung-fu film shown at the very beginning of the DVD in which a young girl fends off an assailant by throwing 45s like ninja stars. The effect of both these visual sequences is to transform the mass-produced text object into a weapon, just as the turntablists DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist are using the reperformance of just such mass-produced text objects to critique and subvert the culture industry and its commodification of musical texts.

As the DJs cycle through various instrumental funk tracks in this part of the show – all held together in the same tempo as if they were simply different sections of a unified piece – the background imagery, which consists largely of close-ups of specific 45s, serves to emphasize the physicality of the objects with particular emphasis on the two features highlighted by the intro film: the “tangible groove” and the labels. At one point, in a peculiar meta-reference, the label for a 45 credited to Cut Chemist himself is shown on screen. One particular record prominently featuring the word “PUBLIC!¹¹⁹” is shown twice as if to draw a connection between the text-object and its listening audience. This record is then later countered by another record bearing the title, “Screw the people.”

viii. Lunch break

This section, dominated by instrumental funk, is brought to a close with a looped drum break over top of which the sampled voice saying “That’s called a break!” makes a series of repeated reappearances. As the drum break loops, a group of stage hands starts setting up a table and chairs on stage in front of the DJs’ equipment. Another drum break is cued up and left to play on as both DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist come out from behind the turntables to sit at the table attended by a female waitress. The lengthy drum break continues as the two tuck into some bowls of soup¹²⁰ laid out on the table. After nearly a minute of drumming, the horns, wah-wah guitar, organ, and bass kick back in and, the break over, the DJs return to their decks. This rather brief sequence is a double-layered musical joke. On the one hand, it plays with the foundational DJ concept of looping

¹¹⁹ Public! is the name of the record label that issued the Hunger song used in *Product Placement*.

¹²⁰ It may be worth noting that one of the MCs in Cut Chemist’s Jurassic 5 group uses the moniker Soup as his rap alias.

breaks to maximize danceability. In this instance, however, the break is sufficiently long so as to not require looping, and thus enables the two DJs to take a break themselves. As such, the sequence also plays on the link between the musical break and the workday break. After all, in its original context, the break constitutes a break for non-drummers. The sequence occurs near the middle point of the set and functions literally as a “lunch break” for the turntablists. The musical performance of the set in its entirety is then a mock-up of a working day, and the moment of leisure presented here in the little vignette of the DJs supping on soup dramatizes the distinction between work and leisure time that structures the daily rhythms of post-industrial workers. Moreover, just as the turntablist’s art is predicated on the transformation of textual consumption (a leisure activity) into textual production (the *work* of art), this moment of leisure is itself a performance, and therefore part of the Hard Sell work itself.

ix. Orientalism.

After returning from their lunch break, DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist let the instrumental piece play on before fading it out. In its place emerges a slow piano melody and a black voice intoning the words, “Reality, war, politics, work, money, reality.” The final “reality,” unlike the other words in the series, is sung rather than spoken. The visual backdrop at this moment displays sped-up time-lapse imagery of night-time cityscapes in which the streams of traffic appear as liquid cascades of light. When the vocal part concludes, the imagery switches to daytime shot of a city vista filmed by a shaky, hand-held camera. This shot then switches in turn to imagery of a liquid light show like those used in psychedelic and progressive rock concerts. The liquid light provides a visual echo of the night-time city traffic flows earlier shown in time lapse. A musical sample of some kind of trilled, Eastern stringed instrument is also introduced into the mix. As the prior musical backing (the piano melody that begins this section) fades out, the sampled trill remains, holding the mix in suspension while another voice announces, “From coast to coast ... the sound of now!”

The final “now!” is echoed manually by means of Cut Chemist backspinning the record and coincides with the introduction of a heavy drum beat. Out of the liquid light show on the screen emerges the figure of a silhouetted belly dancer while, simultaneously, a Middle Eastern string melody joins the drum beat. The image of the belly dancer is visually echoed – that is, multiple iterations of the dancer in different colours appear, slightly delayed, behind the main, darkest figure

– and this distortion and distension has the effect of blending the dancer with the previously seen liquid light show effects. Furthermore, the visual echo creates a multiplicity of moving limbs emanating outward from the dancer's torso. This effect transforms the belly dancer into a semblance of Shiva, the Hindu Lord of Dance, which in turn raises a series of connotations to the sequence.

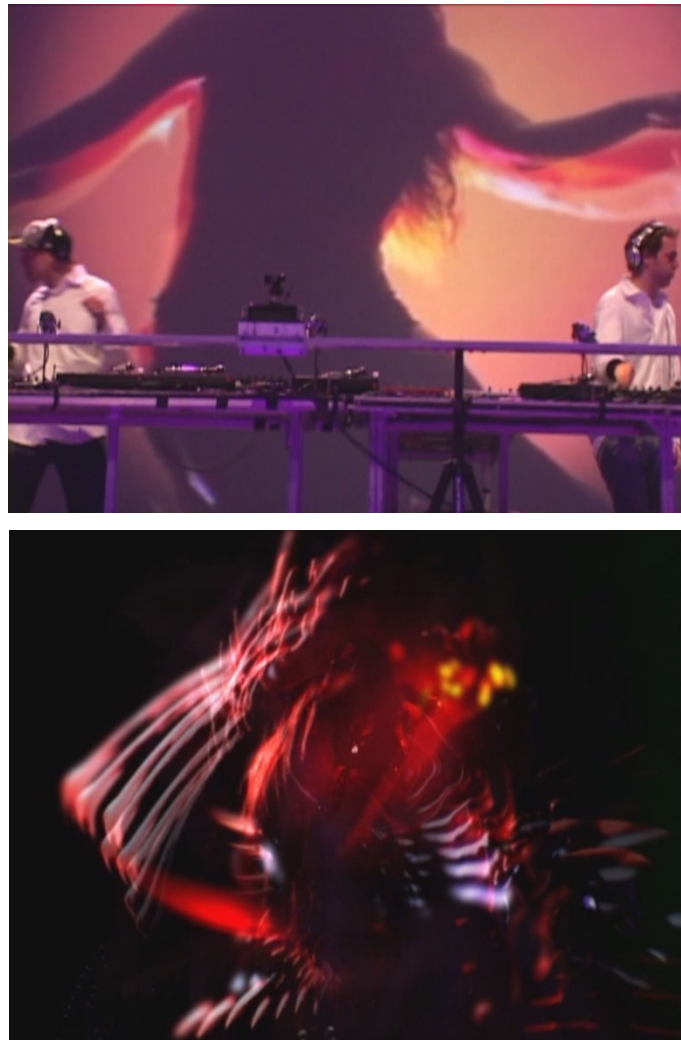


Fig. 13: The Nataraja.

Considered one of the primary gods in multiple Hindu traditions, Shiva is seen as both a creative and destructive force alternating between benign and malignant forms. As Gavin Flood notes, Shiva “contains all opposites within him” and “is sometimes described as the god of destruction, part of the ‘Hindu trinity’ with Brahma as creator and Visnu as sustainer, but for his

devotees he is the supreme Lord who creates, maintains and destroys the cosmos” (151). In her analysis of Shiva’s apparently contradictory nature, Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty points out that the opposing identities – Shiva as creator and destroyer – are not necessarily contradictory, but are expressive of Shiva’s complex nature: “He does not change, but different aspects of his eternal nature are manifest from time to time” (34). Moreover, she posits that the origin of these opposing natures are a result of what Bakhtin might term the heteroglossic character of Hindu religion and its figures such as Shiva: “Although the apparently contradictory strains of Śiva’s nature may well have originated at different times and places, they have resulted in a composite deity who is unquestionably whole to his devotees. This is why Hindus accept and glorify what an outsider might consider a meaningless patchwork, a crazy-quilt of metaphysics” (35). As such, although the figure of Shiva may be derived from a multiplicity of texts and traditions that have evolved over time¹²¹, his encapsulation of both creation and destruction is a means of mediating apparent oppositions as “interchangeable identities” that are really different forms of the same thing (O’Flaherty 35). Like the textual pastiches of the turntablists, Shiva synthesizes different aspects into a recombined whole.

Whatever its origin, this ambiguity is furthered by Shiva’s depiction as Nataraja, the Lord of Dance. Iconography pertaining to the Nataraja often depicts an androgynous figure with both male and female attributes which are each associated with the two most common forms of dance performed by Shiva: the Tandava, the powerful, masculine dance which brings about destruction and the Lasya, the more gentle, feminine dance associated with construction. As such, the androgynous depiction of Shiva – the Ardhanarisvara, a composite of Shiva and his consort Parvati – combines these two attributes into one figure which depicts the ultimate power of the universe as a combination of the feminine and the masculine. The figure of the Ardhanarisvara thus illustrates an inherent hybridity – of male and female and, concurrently, of destruction and creation – in the very structure of reality. Moreover, the seemingly opposite processes of creation and destruction (expressed as feminine and masculine) are recombined into a synthesized whole through the Hindu conception of time as an eternal cycle. Existence itself is wholly impermanent and is a continuous process of rebirth: “Life in all of these worlds is, of course, impermanent and one will eventually be reborn elsewhere” (Flood 112). The procession of time is not a linear phenomenon, but rather a cycle of destruction and rebirth as the universe is successively destroyed and reborn: “There is no end to this process; no purpose other than the Lord’s play” (113). The apparent paradox of

¹²¹ Some scholars have identified a proto-Shiva figure in the pre-Indo-Aryan Indus River Civilization (see Flood 26-29).

opposition is resolved therefore by its synthetic integration at a higher level. The procession of time is conceptualized as a loop in which any millennial conclusion is simply the starting point for a new cycle.

The imagery of the multi-armed dancer also evokes the figure of Kali, the four-armed Hindu goddess of destruction and consort for Shiva who appears as the destructive aspect of the goddess Parvati. In Hindu mythology, Kali is identified with time. Her name is the feminine form of “kala,” meaning “black” as well as “time,” itself an epithet for Shiva in his destructive manifestation. This etymology, along with Shiva’s often ambisexual depictions, suggests a shared identity between the two with Kali embodying the “ferocious,” destructive aspects of the god (Flood 165, 177). As the personification of the destructive and consuming aspects of reality (enunciated here by the male voice at the beginning of the sequence: “war, politics...”), Kali represents the slow, inevitable destruction brought about by the movement through time. Yet, at the same time, Kali is regarded in the Tantric tradition as the foundation of reality, the ultimate source of the gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and the destruction she brings about is in reality a cyclical return to a primordial of origin, thus allowing for rebirth. In the Mahanirvana-tantra, Shiva says this of Kali:

Because Thou devourest Kala, Thou art Kali, the original form of all things, and because Thou art the Origin of and devourest all things Thou art called the Adya. Resuming after Dissolution Thine own form, dark and formless, Thou alone remainest as One ineffable and inconceivable. Though having a form, yet art Thou formless; though Thyself without beginning, multiform by the power of Maya, Thou art the Beginning of all, Creatrix, Protectress, and Destructress that Thou art. (qtd. in Kinsley 122)

Kali, as represented here by the distorted belly dancer, pharmakonically unifies the concepts of destruction and creation in the same way that the turntablist DJ is able to create new compositions from the de(con)struction of prior musical texts. Furthermore, the DJ plays with records which, according to the textual logic articulated by Jacques Derrida, stand as the memorials to the musical performances they contain (or, more accurately, the electro-mechanical traces of such performances). The record marks the temporal delimitations of a musical performance: the transcribed groove of the record presupposes the completion of the performance even as it allows for the continuous rebirth of the musical piece in the form of its potential re-performances through the record’s playback. The previously cited Eric Dolphy quotation – “When you hear music, after it’s over, it’s gone, in the air, you can never capture it again” – illustrates the fact that an utterance is already over by and at the time of its apprehension. The apparent paradox uttered by Dolphy is

resolved when seen through the cyclical conception of time of the Hindu tradition. Death and life are merely two aspects of the ever-unfolding existence of the universe.

This same metaphysical worldview is also seen in an early DJ Shadow track, 1993's "In/Flux."¹²² Over the course of twelve minutes, the track presents a complex assemblage of vocal samples pertaining to change, destruction, and rebirth. The theme of revolution, linked to the revolving turntable, runs throughout the composition as myriad voices express the necessity for destruction (possibly violent) to preface the rebirth of a new world. As the piece concludes, a voice is heard to say, "The record ends and we must begin again." Yet rather than ending, the record indeed begins again as a bassline heard earlier in the track is reintroduced for the final fade-out. As such, "In/Flux" follows its own program of death and rebirth as the track effectively loops itself and heralds its own rebirth at its apparent, but provisional, conclusion.

The juxtaposition in The Hard Sell of the dancer with the imagery of time-lapse cityscapes also suggests a connection between the two based on the underlying rhythms that structure both the belly dancer's movements as well as the traffic flows of the modern city. The city vistas represent the "real" world of "war, politics, work, money" heralded by the male voice at the beginning of the sequence. Yet just like the belly dancer, this world, when observed from the detached viewpoint of the time lapse footage (detached both in distance, but also, more importantly, in time), appears as a choreographed dance performance. Just like the footage of the inner, mechanical workings of the jukebox that stood in for the choreographed dancers in the "I Only Have Eyes For You" sequence, the combination of time-lapse night-time traffic and the Kali-esque belly dancer illustrate the suffusion of everyday modern life with the principles of organized, rhythmic movement.¹²³

As this Orientalist sequence proceeds, various Eastern-sounding melodies are draped over the heavy back beat. At one point early on in the sequence, Cut Chemist begins scratching a vocal sample that, when it is allowed to play out, is revealed to be in a non-European language and appears as exotic and "other" to the presumably Anglophone audience. Furthermore, in true Orientalist fashion, the sequence homogenizes the very different musical traditions of India, Arabia, and other "Eastern" cultures into a monolithic, somewhat undifferentiated whole united only by its exotic unfamiliarity when beheld by Western ears. Yet this defamiliarized musical content – the semantic meaning of the sampled words in this instance being incomprehensible to the audience

¹²² Later anthologized on the 1997 album Preemptive Strike.

¹²³ This sequence also recalls the film Baraka which juxtaposed similar time-lapse photography of the rhythmic flows of modern cities and factories with equally rhythmic religious rituals and natural phenomena such as the movement of stars across the night sky.

renders the speech into a purely musical phenomenon – is re-familiarized when, amidst the exotic, Orientalist sounds, the recognizable “stomp-stomp-clap” rhythm of Queen’s “We Will Rock You” is introduced into the mix. The familiar, albeit sped up, sound of Freddy Mercury’s vocals is recognized and cheered by the audience. The effect of this combination of the exotic and the ubiquitous produces similarities and links between two otherwise utterly distinct forms of music. The fact that Freddy Mercury, born as Farrokh Bulsara in what was then the British Protectorate of Zanzibar, was of Zoroastrian Parsi descent further blurs the categories of “Eastern” and “Western” that are initially presented in opposition during this sequence.

This recombination of binaries furthers the hybridity seen in the figure of Ardhanarisvara. Furthermore, the blurring of the seemingly binary oppositions of East and West, of Global South and Global North, is a condition that has been advanced by the development of the recording industry throughout the twentieth century. The explosion of Anglo-American rock music in the 1950s and 60s – itself a form defined as much by European melodic elements as Africanized rhythmic elements – led in turn to an emergence of various national pop and rock genres in non-Western countries. The development of music recording technology played a key role in these genres’ emergence as the development of the cassette tape allowed small markets in small countries to have a means of reproducing and disseminating their local musical styles:

[P]recisely because the technology is portable and recordable, it has also been used in the production, duplication, and dissemination of local musics and in the creation of new musical styles. In this way the technology has tended to decentralize control over the production and consumption of music. Decentralized control holds out the possibility that new voices and new musics will find new avenues for expression. (Garofalo 341)

Thus, the very force that allows for the hegemony of Western – primarily Anglo-American – forms over global culture has simultaneously allowed for localist, indigenous resistance to and subversion of this hegemony.

On the one hand, the emergence of genres such as Tropicalia in Brazil, Anatolian Rock in Turkey, Ethio-Jazz in Ethiopia, and Afrobeat in Western Africa as well as the growing exports of American and British music to international markets¹²⁴ can be seen as a form of cultural imperialism in which traditional, indigenous music forms are replaced by more standardized, technologized Western forms. On the other hand, however, these same genres also reveal that the relationship

¹²⁴ Reebee Garofalo notes that “as early as 1977 both CBS and RCA were reporting that more than 50 percent of their sales came from their international divisions” (339).

between the Western centre and the non-Western margin is more complicated, as non-Western artists have adopted and adapted Western forms for their own purposes, effectively re-colonizing the invasive forms with their own styles. In his 1999 essay, “Music and Industry in the Twentieth Century,” Reebee Garofalo observes that “the results, at least as regards music, usually approximate what Wallis and Malm call ‘transculturation’ – a two-way process whereby elements of international pop, rock, and rhythm and blues are incorporated into local and national musical cultures, and indigenous influences contribute to the development of new transnational styles” (341). The cycle has continued as Western artists such as Dengue Fever and Vampire Weekend have in turn used these musical forms as influences for their own music.

These genres became the source material for a 2009 DJ set by Cut Chemist, Sound Of The Police¹²⁵ which contained extracts of tracks by Nigeria’s Fela Kuti, Benin’s TP Orchestre Poly-Rythmo de Cotonou, and Ethiopia’s Mahmoud Ahmed, among others. In the liner notes to the 2010 CD release of the set, Cut Chemist states, “This CD contains African & South American inspired music from around the world. It was constructed for the first of Mochilla’s Timeless series on February 1st, 2009. I had the privilege of performing this set opening for [Ethio-Jazz composer and vibraphonist] Mulatu Astatke which was his very first L.A. appearance.” This particular performance (the CD release was compiled from rehearsal tapes) dramatizes the transglobal cycle of influence facilitated by recorded music. A white, Los Angeles-born disc jockey playing records from Africa and South America as an opening act for the first Los Angeles performance by the venerable Ethiopian jazz musician. Astatke’s performances in America are not simply the display of an exotic musical form in the West, but very much a return of Ethio-Jazz to (one of) it(s) points of origin. As Miles Cleret remarks in the liner notes to a 2009 anthology of Astatke’s late 1960s and early 1970s work, New York-Addis-London: The Story of Ethio Jazz 1965-1975, Ethio-Jazz is a syncretic form – “a combination of traditional Ethiopian melodies (played on the five-tone or pentatonic scale) with 12-note harmonies and Western instrumentation” (3-4) – and was developed as a result of Astatke’s exposure to European as well as Caribbean and West African musics during his youthful studies in North America and the United Kingdom. Indeed, through his music, Astatke has introduced unfamiliar Ethiopian styles to Western audiences¹²⁶ while simultaneously bringing Western styles to Ethiopian ears. To this point, Cleret cites a comment from an Ethiopian cab driver he encountered in a 2004 trip to Addis Ababa: “[Astatke] has taught me about Beethoven and

¹²⁵ The title of the DJ set and record refers to the origin of many Ethiopian soul and jazz musicians in various state-authorized police and military bands.

¹²⁶ Notably in the use of some of his music in the soundtrack to the 2005 Jim Jarmusch film, Broken Flowers.

Mozart and all this classical music of yours through his radio show” (8). The transmission of hitherto local sounds (be they Western or non-Western) through radio, records, and now the Internet has allowed for a cycle of cross-fertilization between cultures and genres in which traditional identities are broken down and reassembled into new, transnational forms.

The decentralization of control brought about by new duplication technologies has also had effect in creating massive markets for pirated goods in the developing world, and it is through these illicit channels that non-Western, developing countries are exposed to Western culture in the manner described by the Ethiopian cab driver. The easily duplicated cassette has since been replaced by compact discs that can be just as easily duplicated with no discernable quality loss, and this technology has created a pirate market that, in the developing world, has largely replaced the legal market. The 2011 study by the Social Science Research Council found that these extensive pirate markets in the developing world exist to satisfy a demand created by global advertising, a demand that is not satisfied by legal means: “The enormously successful globalization of media culture has not been accompanied by a comparable democratization of media access – at least in its legal forms. The flood of legal media goods available in high-income countries over the past two decades has been a trickle in most parts of the world” (1). As such, the proliferation of pirated media is the product not only of technological developments, but also of a market failure in which the supply of legal materials – as determined by price – does not keep pace with the demand created through global advertising campaigns. For example, the SSRC report cites the international pricing structure of Coldplay’s 2008 album, *Viva La Vida*. Legal copies of the disc retail for \$17 in the United States, and prices for the record in the developing world are similar: \$11 in Russia, \$14 in Brazil, \$8.5 in India, and \$14 in Mexico. However, when these figures are adjusted for the Comparative Purchasing Power of each country, the disc that sells for less than \$20 in the United States actually sells for \$55 in Russia, \$80 in Brazil, \$385 in India, and \$80.50 in Mexico. As such, the market for legal compact discs (the same phenomenon is observed in DVD films as well) is a luxury market; the mass market is catered for by pirated copies which, when adjusted for Comparative Purchasing Power, sell for \$25 in Russia, \$14 in Brazil, \$54 in India, and \$5.75 in Mexico (57-58). It is only through the pirate markets enabled by easily reproducible technology that the demand for Western media products – stoked by global advertising campaigns – can be satisfied in developing countries.

x. *Carnival.*

Following the Orientalist section, a new, Afro-Caribbean dancehall beat starts up. By way of a vocal sample, the audience is asked “Are you ready?” before the beat is properly introduced. The Latin connotations of the rhythm are emphasized with background imagery of Brazilian carnivals. This imagery is presented as a series of pictures of colourful carnival dancers whose rapid-fire succession transforms the imagery into a kaleidoscopic whirlwind of shapes and colours in which the forms of the dancers themselves become indistinct, devolving instead into a constantly shifting, indeterminate sea of colour. The phenomenon of the carnival is particularly resonant with the larger themes of both The Hard Sell and Product Placement. The carnivals depicted in this section – those of Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans – are modern day descendants of a medieval tradition analyzed by Mikhail Bakhtin in Rabelais and his World. Bakhtin uses the term “carnavalesque” to describe the assemblage of festivals, traditions, and rituals that “were sharply distinct from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials” (5). Bakhtin presents carnival as a folk continuation of pagan celebrations such as the Roman Saturnalia in the Christian feudal order¹²⁷ (76). Indeed, just like the novel which would come to dominate Bakhtin’s later analyses, carnival acts as a repository for assorted obsolete and marginalized genres and forms (218).

The carnival constituted a second world outside the dominant order that responded to that order with laughter, parody, and grotesquery: “In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play” (Bakhtin, Rabelais 7). Indeed, the everyday order of medieval life is reversed and parodied during carnival. The traditional social hierarchies of medieval society were erased as all individuals in the stratified community become part of the collective. Bakhtin notes that “all were considered equal during carnival. Here, in the town square, a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among the people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age” (10). Carnival, then, is a fundamentally collective experience in which daily life itself was transformed into a grotesque spectacle that through parody was “felt as an escape from the usual official way of life” (8). Otherwise suppressed impulses and voices are able to overturn and profane the feudal and ecclesiastical structures of medieval life.

This subversion is effected through an emphasis on the grotesque that, in contrast to the Christian ideals of piety and purity, focused on bodily functions such as eating, defecating, and

¹²⁷ It is interesting to note that the two locations most commonly identified with contemporary carnivals are New Orleans and Brazil. Both places are also known as locations of syncretic religions that hybridize Christian (primarily Catholic) traditions with pagan African substrata.

copulating. The focus on the body that degrades the spiritual into the material. Yet this degradation has a positive value as it stresses the fertile and generative over sterile piety (the bodily is identified with the feminine): “Grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 21). Consequently, this degradation is not just a simple de(con)struction of oppressive social structures, but also a means of bringing about change and renewal. Bakhtin therefore identifies the function of the carnival-grotesque as a means “to consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted” (34).

The trope of the carnivalesque runs throughout the turntablist texts of DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist in particular and the discourse of hip hop in general. The framing device of the parodied copyright notice at the beginning of both *Product Placement* and *The Hard Sell* is designed to subvert the dominant structure of capitalism (as enforced through the copyright regime). Indeed, the culture jammers’ project (in which the turntablist texts at hand are situated) contains elements of the carnivalesque. The culture jamming parody of the Calvin Klein ad (in which a model is depicted vomiting into the toilet) not only focuses on the emetic bodily function, but, in doing so, it also transforms the original Calvin Klein advertisement into a grotesque parody with the aim of giving voice to marginalized non-capitalist voices and allowing the (re)birth of the critical faculties of the consumer, who can be identified as a manifestation of the social body. The *détournement* employed by the culture jammers therefore is imbued with elements of the grotesque realism described by Bakhtin.

The figure of the disc jockey embodies elements of the carnivalesque as it constitutes a blurring, if not an outright erasure, of the distinct categories of audience and performer. Since the carnival festivals transformed daily medieval life into a spectacle, all the spectators are simultaneously participants in the spectacle: “In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 7). As such, carnival undoes one of the characteristics of European high art, which, in contrast to the more-communally based African forms that served as the inspirational foundation for hip hop, is predicated on a separation between the passive, consuming audience and the productive artist, a separation embodied metonymically in the stage and footlights referred to here by Bakhtin. During the carnival sequence in *The Hard Sell* in particular, the images of Brazilian and New Orleans carnivals are intercut with shots of the audience dancing to the music being played on stage. The

reception of the performed musical text by its audience in the live setting has become part of the spectacle memorialized and documented in the DVD texts.

Though the location of the show in the venerable Hollywood Bowl would seem to reify the traditional categories of performer and audience, the DJs' presence on stage in actuality subverts this dichotomy. At the end of the day, the disc jockeys are consumers of the very music they are (re)performing on stage, transforming their consumption of cultural artifacts (records) into a spectacle in which all can participate. Similarly, the club DJ is but a facilitator of the primary spectacle: the dance floor where the various individual bodies of dancers become, in aggregate, a single collective body. The mode of resistance has changed from one instance of ludic free play for another. Whereas the medieval carnivals engaged and subverted social norms with laughter, the participants here use dance as if to follow, once again, Funkadelic's edict: "Dance your way / Out of your constrictions."

Furthermore, the carnivalesque's use of the grotesque to "degrade, bring down to earth, turn [its] subject into flesh" (Bakhtin, Rabelais 21) finds an analogue in impulses and strategies at work within these turntablist texts in particular and sample-based hip hop in general. As stated above, the carnival's focus on degradation is not just a simple travesty of official medieval culture, but also a means of renewal. As Bakhtin states, "To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring about something more and better" (21). Like the Shiva-Kali figure, degradation unites the binaries of destruction and creation. This union of binaries recalls T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land, which, like the sample-based pastiches of the turntablists, is a heteroglossic meta-text, and, like the carnival's use of the grotesque, is aimed as a critique of what Eliot perceived to be the sterility of the dominant order (in Eliot's case, modernism). One particular passage in the poem has Eliot's narrator inquire of his friend Stetson, "'That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?'" (l.71-72). The corpse in Stetson's yard continues the theme of the Fisher King that pervades the work. As Weston points out, the Fisher King – the ruler who must die so that his sterile kingdom may return to life – is a part of the tradition of nature cults as outlined by Sir James Frazer in The Golden Bough, the same nature cults which, as Bakhtin points out, found a later, post-Christian, subversive expression in the carnival festivals of medieval Europe.

Just as the Fisher King, in both Eliot and the grail mythos whence Eliot found him, represents the simultaneously devouring and generating properties of time (as symbolized by the seasonal vegetative life cycle), the degradation effected by the grotesque of carnival performs a

similar function. As Bakhtin observes, the festive laughter of carnival is related to the death and renewal caused by the change in the seasons and thus constitutes a play within and with the very structure of time itself: “Indeed, the ritual of the feast tended to project the play of time itself, which kills and gives birth at the same time, recasting the old into the new, allowing nothing to perpetuate itself” (*Rabelais* 82). The art of the sampling turntablist DJ follows this same logic. The archaeological function of the DJ as the resurrector of dead works – that is those in which the performance “completed”, memorialized on record, and ultimately interred in the basements of record shops trawled by diggers – enables the (marginalized) past to return to life, renewed by its resituation within the present work. The completed text, whose completion marks the death of the performance, is brought back into a state of becoming. Like Stetson’s corpse, the dead body is exhumed as the raw material for a new life.¹²⁸

Furthermore, the erasure of social rankings during carnival dismantles the distinct categories of high and low culture. Within sample-based musical texts such as the performances at hand here, obvious schlock such as “Charlene” is placed on equal footing with the DJs’ beloved funk, canonized rock songs, and even classical pieces. Indeed, within the carnival section itself, one of the Latin beats is briefly reworked through cutting and scratching into a fleeting approximation of Mozart’s “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik.” In this instance, a signifier of the European, classical high-art tradition is degraded through its revoicing by a low, popular folk form. Again, however, this degradation is not just a travesty of a high work, but rather an expression of an inherent democratic acceptance of all cultural products regardless of the perceived social rank they index.

xi. “Night Train” and pasodoble.

After a clattering drum solo brings the carnival section to a close, a record is played from which comes forth a voice saying “All aboard the night train.” In its original context, the phrase comes as an introduction to the standard “Night Train,” a 1952 hit for Jimmy Forrest. The song was subsequently covered by many different artists, perhaps most notably James Brown in 1962. Brown’s version famously began with the sampled phrase although the version heard here is not

¹²⁸ It is worth noting that an analogous process is at work in the centos of Late Antiquity. While on the one hand, Virgil’s *Aeneid* is being degraded by its reconstruction into a work that, for example, explains the rules for a game of dice, on the other hand, the carnivalesque reworking brings the otherwise dead, completed text into a state of becoming through the play of the centonist. Once again, the work of the cento is not the completed text itself, but rather the ludic process through which it was created.

James Brown himself, but presumably is derived from a cover of James Brown's cover. The inclusion in The Hard Sell of this reference to the song alludes to an illustration of hip hop's discursive practice of appropriation and recontextualization of textual extracts which, through their transformation, can be detoured against their original. James Brown's version of "Night Train" was itself sampled in another notable version of the song, Public Enemy's 1991 track "Nighttrain." For his version of the song, James Brown changed the lyrics. In Forrest's original version, the lyrics describe the typical blues trope of a man lamenting the loss of his woman and regretting his poor treatment of her (the ostensible reason for her leaving). Brown replaced these lyrics with a simple list of cities, primarily cities in the southern United States. This list of cities (along with frequent shouted interjections of the song's title) suggests a depiction of the movement of blacks away from segregation and discrimination in the rural South towards the urban environments of the North. Through this rather radical reworking of the song, Brown's version switches the point of view to the departed and mistreated woman, here representing the migrating blacks.

Public Enemy's version continues this detournement by offering their own interpretation of the northern urban migration alluded to in Brown's previous version. Whereas the upbeat rhythm and celebratory cries of "Night train!" in Brown's version implies a hopeful vision of the future away from the injustices of life in the South, Public Enemy's sampling of Brown's exclamations are layered with irony as rapper Chuck D describes the world produced by northern urban migration three decades later:

Homey over there knows Keith an'
 But he be theifin'
 I don't trust him
 Rather bust 'em
 Up out goes his hand and I cough
 He once stole from me
 Yeah I wanna cut it off
 The black thing is a ride I call the nighttrain
 It rides the good and the bad
 We call the monkey trained
 Trained to attack the black and it's true
 Cause some of them look just like you.

The night train itself is literally degraded: following Bakhtin's association of the term in its carnivalesque context with burial, the night train described by Chuck D is a New York subway. Furthermore, the originally hopeful message expressed by Brown (itself a reversal of the original) is undercut with Chuck D's description of white racism and conflicts within the black community.

Public Enemy's use of James Brown is a perfect example of the dialogic heteroglossia at work within sample-based hip hop. The samples retain their meaning and history, but this meaning is multiplied and fragmented when it is combined and juxtaposed with Public Enemy's authorial intent. Through the sampler, James Brown is put into dialogue with his hip hop descendants, and that dialogue emerges as a complex meditation on African-American history. This dialogue is not found in the lyrical content of the track (although the lyrics do make up a prominent voice within the whole), but in the overall form of the track that arranges these various elements together. Moreover, in its refutation of Brown's optimism, Public Enemy's "Nighttrain" acts as an antithesis of its cited antecedent, yet just like Shiva-Kali's unification of creation and destruction, its synthesis brings together the otherwise opposing voices of James Brown and Chuck D.

Following the "Night Train" introduction, the DJs start up a bolero-esque beat over which emerges the melody from "España Cañi," also popularly known as the "Spanish Gypsy Dance". This instrumental piece, composed by Pascual Marquina Narro in 1925, has been traditionally used as background music for bullfights, particularly during the matadors' entrance into the arena. A ballroom dance, the *pasodoble* (double-step), developed as a re-enactment of the bullfighting ritual in which the dance leader takes the role of the matador and the follower taking the part of either the matador's cape, his shadow, or the bull itself. "España Cañi" has proliferated beyond the bullfighting arena to be played at numerous sporting events, and, despite its relatively recent provenance (1925), the composition has become identified by its sheer ubiquity as the quintessential "Spanish" piece of music.

In *The Hard Sell*, the "España Cañi" melody is first played by an organ while the video screen flashes up an instruction to the audience to "clap!" The tempo of the piece increases until it is cut off with a held guitar chord. A trilled guitar melody is then played solo before the guitar chord is played again. The turntablists then take successive reiterations of that single guitar chord, and, through a series of backspins and crossfades, they reconfigure the guitar chord into a copy of the melody and chromatic chord change from "España Cañi," the double-step *pasodoble* being performed in stereophonic unison by the two turntablists. The chord changes increase in tempo until the sequence climaxes in a flurry of furious scratching before the music ends completely.

xii. Intermission

Although the set is past its halfway point, the show breaks at this point, and the DVD cuts to imagery of a working jukebox with the superimposed caption “And now a brief intermission.” The whirring machinery gives way to a re-citation of the kung-fu film clip of a woman hurling 45 rpm records at a male attacker as if they were ninja stars. This time, however, the clip is played long enough to reveal a piece of dialogue subtitled, “Ninja trick of flying disks.” The DVD then shows sped-up footage of DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist planning and rehearsing the set at home. The imagery alternates between appearing to be sped-up footage and being a time-lapse succession of still images. At certain points during this footage, the imagery is slowed down to show what the DJ’s are doing: at one point, for example, we see Cut Chemist applying a sticker to a record and writing on it in accordance with Grandmaster Flash’s “Clock Theory.”

Foreshadowed by the revelation of the mechanical workings of a jukebox, the effect of this section is to reveal the internal structure of the show. While rehearsing parts of the set already seen and heard on the DVD itself, the turntablists are shown “vocalising” scratches they intend to make on the turntable, effectively “singing” the parts to be played later by/on the machines. Later, as-yet unheard, sequences are foreshadowed: we briefly see the portable turntables that will be used in The Hard Sell’s finale, and the turntablists are shown spinning discs with holes punched away from their centre. Laughter is heard when they play “Charlene.” “This is deep shit right here,” comments DJ Shadow. Presumably intended ironically, this statement is ambiguous enough to refer either to the track’s overt excrementality, or, possibly, the depth of emotion on display in the “unconventional” vocals. DJ Shadow’s sarcasm continues: “That shit is banging, son.” Nonetheless, the inclusion of such “deep shit” within the set confirms the carnivalesque nature of the turntablists’ art in which even the most execrable piece of music can be rehabilitated and made aesthetically palatable by its recombination within the samplers’ bricolage.

xiii. The sounds of love: dubstep and crunk

The next segment of The Hard Sell begins with a harp playing, as if from a classic Hollywood film. A male voice announces: “Beloved, here we are, you and I, truly alone. And in this time, listen for the sound of love.” The sound of love that follows is a scream that cuts off the

dulcet tones of the harp, leaving in its wake a wash of echoing percussion noises, metallic scraping, and an ambient, mechanical hum. From this almost formless haze of sounds emerges a slow drumbeat and vibraphone melody. Though the vocal sample suggests the promise of the sounds of human emotion, following the primal scream, what the audience is faced with is a synthesized, electronic bed of sound similar to the down-tempo electronica of artists such as Boards of Canada and the Aphex Twin. Yet beneath this synthetic exterior (as evidenced by the artificial strings that are introduced) still beats a human heart: a vocal part, albeit slightly processed with a flanging effect, is sampled which states, “I check to see if you’re down / You’re still breathing.” This vocal part, the further lyrics of which are indecipherable due to electronic processing, dovetails neatly with the next single to be inserted into the mix, a 2004 release by the British dubstep group Various Production entitled “Hater.”

Emerging in London in the early 2000s, dubstep¹²⁹ is a genre of electronic dance music that represents a contemporary continuation of the compositional techniques developed by Jamaican sound systems in the 1970s. Whereas dub accentuated the bass and rhythm parts of a song at the expense of the melodic hook, dubstep takes this reduction even further. By means of electronic manipulation technologically unavailable to the Jamaican sound system operators, dubstep compositions feature basslines artificially lowered into the sub-bass range consisting of frequencies below 90 Hz and reaching down to the very limits of human hearing, bordering on inaudible infrasound (around 30 Hz)¹³⁰. Dubstep, then, is music that challenges the limits of the listening human body.

Moreover, the rhythmic characteristics of dub further alienate the listener. Many dubstep tracks feature a synthesized drum part playing at a relatively slow speed while the sub-bass part plays at double the speed. The effect of these dual rhythms is to create a sense of unease in the listener as the sparse rhythm track never settles on one of the competing tempos. As the dubstep artist Kode9 remarked in an interview in *The Wire* while describing a track by DJ MRK1, the “track is so empty it makes [the listener] nervous, and you almost fill in the double time yourself, physically, to compensate” (“Invisible Jukebox”). The deconstruction of a track down to these sparse, yet somewhat conflicting, rhythmic elements forces listeners to “fill in the gaps” themselves. By challenging the listener’s apprehension of a text through technological manipulation, dubstep, then, is expressive of a world in which technology as supplemented and supplanted the category of the

¹²⁹ The genre’s name somewhat recalls the *pasodoble* (double-step) played prior.

¹³⁰ See Wilson for a fuller explanation of dubstep.

human. As such, dubstep expands on the political concerns of traditional Jamaican dub-reggae as it emerged in the 1970s as an expression of Rastafarian consciousness.

Just as the punk and new-wave groups of 1970s England such as The Clash and The Specials AKA adopted reggae forms as a means of complicating (white) English identity, the electronic genres emergent in millennial England such as dubstep are expressive of a new “post-imperial” English identity that is “alternately resisting and embracing a new national identity that alternately deconstructs and reinforces deeply held notions of race, class, and culture” (Veal 239). However, the (post-)colonial regime combated by dub has been recast as a technologically-mediated surveillance regime as demonstrated by the panopticon-like closed circuit cameras that dominate British cities. In his study of dub musics, Veal offers the following comments on the electronic genres based on dub styles that emerged in the United Kingdom during the beginning of the new millennium:

In this sense, dub’s more paranoid moods born of the violent Kingston climate have been recast in urban England as the hybrid electronic music of an embattled pan-ethnic working-class/cosmopolitan youth subculture reflecting the broader concerns cited above as well as what Simon Reynolds described as “late capitalist economic instability, institutionalized racism, and increased surveillance and harassment of youth by the police.” All resolves into what he termed the music’s “bunker” imagery of alienation, surveillance, and paranoia, conveyed in song titles such as Photek’s “Hidden Camera” as well as in the profusion of dialogue excerpted from radio and walkie-talkie transmissions, television crime show dialogue, and 1970s blaxploitation cinema. (239)

Dubstep furthers the political alienation originally expressed by Jamaican dub by depicting a technological alienation in which the category of the human becomes undermined and estranged from the increasingly cybernetic world in which it is now situated. The “bunker” imagery described by Veal and Reynolds stakes out a refuge of human consciousness within an increasingly machine-mediated reality. The theme of cyberneticism is furthered by the visual backdrop that shows the machinery of jukeboxes. At first, the audience is shown a kaleidoscopic shot of the ubiquitous jukebox machinery, but this change into an entirely computer-generated rendering of the same machinery. The presence of the live stage in front of the imagery has the effect of inserting the real-time, live performance of the turntablists within the pre-arranged footage, both artificial and genuine, of machinery.

Compared to the other tracks used so far in The Hard Sell, Various Production's "Hater" is the first relatively contemporary composition to be prominently featured in the set. Fittingly, then, it is mixed into another relatively contemporary track, 2003's "I Never Scared" by Bone Crusher featuring Killer Mike and T.I. "I Never Scared" is an example of crunk, a genre of rap that was developed in the southern United States during the 1990s. Generally slower than ordinary hip hop, crunk features shouted rhymes over a sparse drum machine beat and simple, repeated synthesizer melodies¹³¹. Whereas dubstep offered a cold, dark view of a technologically mediated world, crunk is party music unconcerned with socio-political matters. However, this apoliticalness is, not unlike the apolitical funk of Funkadelic, itself a political statement in the sense that crunk represents a refusal to engage the socio-political regime on its own terms and instead focuses on hedonistic, bodily enjoyment. Though ostensibly party music, the lyrical content of crunk – generally repeated phrases – is delivered in a hyper-aggressive, shouted style as if to express a latent aggression that has been rechanneled from political frustration into ludic play. In a crunk song such as "I Never Scared," the club dance floor becomes a literal battleground. The song itself is introduced with a spoken verse by Bone Crusher in which he states, "Ol' punk ass kids, we out the club, nigga / That don't mean nothin', nigga! I'm gon' fuck this nigga up, my nigga!" While the repeated chorus emphasizes the transposition of street violence to the club – "So I'm outside of the club and you think I'm a punk / So I go to my loaded TEC-9¹³² that's off in the trunk" – the final line of Bone Crusher's verse makes clear the link between violence and celebratory intoxication (i.e. crazy drunkenness: crunk-ness): "Pistols getting busted now I need somethin' to drank". This line sets up a loop of sorts in which intoxication leads to violence, which in turn is celebrated through further drinking and intoxication.

In the context of The Hard Sell, the switch from dubstep to crunk represents a liberation from the strictures of the machine world. At first, the mix is foreshadowed by the introduction of the double bass hit stabbed into the Various Production track, as if to dramatize the dubstep listening experience described above by Kode9 whereby the listener mentally inserts a double-time rhythm suggested by the deconstructed dubstep track. Once again, the visual imagery used to accompany the music bears out this analysis. Whereas during the "Hater" sequence, the video screen shows the machinery of the jukebox, "I Never Scared" is attended by shots of a computer-generated cloud of 45 rpm records billowing out over a cityscape. First, the cloud of records

¹³¹ For a fuller discussion of the origins and characteristics of crunk music, see Miller.

¹³² A semi-automatic handgun.

spreads through the inside of a subway car. Then, pillars of records are shown rising like smokestacks over a barbed wire fence before fanning out over the skyline. While the cloud of records floating over the city is suggestive of the music carried through the air by the ethereal, deterritorialized network of radio waves, it also illustrates that in a post-Benjaminian world, the mobility of sound – whether it be as a result of radio transmission, mass-produced records, or downloaded MP3's – ensures that music, or sound in general, is no longer tied to a specific time and locality.



Fig. 14: A cloud of 45s.

The Bone Crusher track is then deconstructed and mixed in with other electronic sounds to produce a new musical assemblage into which is inserted a verse from OutKast's 2003 track "The Way You Move," a single pulled from the group's double album, Speakerboxx / The Love Below¹³³. The verse in question, performed by the rapper Big Boi, envisions the experience of hearing music through an elaborate sound system (referred to as the "Speakerboxx") as a melding of the human and the cybernetic. At first, the music provokes a sexual reaction from the listener: "Drip drip drop, there goes an eargasm / Now you comin' out the side of your face." However, this description is immediately paired with a line that depicts the listener as a machine accessed by the record: "We're tapping right into your memory banks (Thanks!)." The Speakerboxx itself is depicted as a vehicle, as

¹³³ The album is a double-album in more than one sense. Not only does it span across two discs, but each disc constitutes a single album by the two members: Big Boi's Speakerboxx and Andre 3000's The Love Below.

if the elaborate sound system of a car metonymically overran the car itself. Recall that this intended mobility of sound was one of the primary motivations for the popularity of the cassette tape.

To further the car imagery, the verse describes the seatbelt as the interface through which the body is integrated into the machine (a plug of sorts): “So click it or ticket let’s see your seatbelt fastened / Trunk rattlin’ like two midgets in the back seat wrestlin’.” The vibrations caused by the speakers are likened to sexual vibrations (presumably the proximate cause of the “eargasm”). Indeed, the unplayed chorus to the song – “I like the way you move” – could refer to not only the male gaze’s appreciation of the dancing female form, but also the seductive movements of the speaker cone. These vibrations approximate the movements of some type of sexual activity going on inside the car: the “wrestlin’” of the “two midgets in the back seat” (perhaps these are the “sounds of love” referred to at the beginning of this sequence). Whatever the cause, these vibrations also threaten the bureaucratic regime that regulates the car by almost shaking loose the license plate that indexes the vehicle within this regulatory framework: “Speakerboxx vibrate the tag / Make it sound like aluminum cans in a bag.” On a literal level, the “aluminum cans in a bag” describe how the shaking bass frequencies have transformed the vehicle into a percussive instrument. On a figurative level, however, reading “cans” as a euphemism for breast creates an image of cyberneticized femininity similar to the ambiguity of the chorus refrain “I like the way you move.” Above all, however, the verse emphasizes the corporeality of sound: it is literally an acoustic vibration that is felt by the body. This principle is declaimed by the repeated lines at the end of the verse: “But I know you wanted that 808¹³⁴ / Can you feel that B-A-S-S, bass?”

xiv. “Everything gets turned around.”

“The Way You Move” is cut off before its first chorus can begin, and it is replaced instead by an ascending and descending electronic tone. A voice says, “Everything gets turned around, time-warped, and tuned into today.” An overhead shot of the turntables on stage shows one particular record on one of Cut Chemist’s turntables rotating around a hole punched off-centre. This off-centre spinning means that the record is not rotating at a constant speed relative to the turntable and produces a sound that alternately rises and falls in pitch. Visually, the turntable now looks somewhat like a rotating steam locomotive wheel with the needle arm taking the place of the

¹³⁴ “808” refers to a particular model of drum machine, the Roland TR-808 Rhythm Composer, introduced in 1980. This machine also serves as the inspiration for the name of the early 1990s electronic group 808 State.

driving piston as it appears to move backwards and forwards over the record. The unsteady sound of the off-centre records is juxtaposed against a steady backbeat to produce an disorienting effect like that of the layered rhythms of the dubstep track. By literally playing with the physicality of the record, the turntablists are using the record player to create a new, defamiliarized sound out of the spun record. This technique is characteristic of the longstanding tradition of hip hop artists' and turntablists' deliberate and innovative mis-use of technology.

Furthermore, when *The Hard Sell* show was taken on tour, during the Montréal iteration of the set, this section was referred to on stage by Cut Chemist as “*musique concrète*.” *Musique concrète* involves the electronic manipulation of natural sounds along the lines of the avant-garde experimentation of John Cage described above in which the composer envisioned using phonographs to compose symphonies from sounds such as “an explosive motor, wind, heartbeat and landslide” (qtd. in Brewer and Broughton 279). It requires the aestheticization of non-musical and often “natural” sounds, yet in this instance, what Cut Chemist describes as “*musique concrète*” are, or rather *were*, musical sounds that have been transformed into non-musical “noise” as a result of the distorted playback. This noise is then reshaped into a musical form as a result of the normalizing backbeat against which the elliptical orbit of the decentred record is held in sharp relief.

xv. Rock show.

Out of the swirling, de-centred sounds of the *musique concrète* section emerges the opening guitar chords of the Foo Fighters' 1997 single “Everlong.” After the first verse of the mainstream rock hit, the pre-chorus section of the song is blended into a mid-sixties garage rock track. Not only does this dovetail mix illustrate one more “funny” instance of “records sound[ing] the same,” but it also suggests a continuity of rock ‘n roll history in which, in illustration of the above-cited analyses of both Theodor Adorno and the Timelords, pop songs are assemblages of established forms and conventions. The mixed sequence of rock tracks during this section links the disparate songs¹³⁵ through their commonalities, affirming their place within a continuity of tradition. If individual records represent discrete, atomized moments that, through the process of recording, have been made mobile in history and, according to the analysis of Walter Benjamin, have been detached from

¹³⁵ This section includes covers as well as original versions of the rock standards “Somebody To Love” (originally performed by Jefferson Airplane) and “Break On The Through (To The Other Side)” (originally performed by The Doors).

their tradition, then their recombination here reimagines that tradition as an eternal simultaneity in which the historical performances memorialized on records continuously recur.

The layering of successive times into one cyclicity is further shown when the camera cuts away to the audience: shots of the Hollywood Bowl audience dancing to the turntablists are intercut with old footage from rock concerts of the 1960s and 70s. The genealogy of this continuity is explored as the sequence goes on: “Break On Through” breaks down into a quick, two-step rhythm that could either be sourced from a mid-sixties garage track (such as that mixed with “Everlong”) or a mid-eighties punk track. However, this ambiguity is cast further back into time when the turntablists graft on top of this mix a vocal from the Leadbelly song “Whoa Back Buck.”¹³⁶ As such, the various rock songs played here are situated within the blues tradition previously explored in Product Placement via the usage of Led Zeppelin’s “Whole Lotta Love.”

xvi. Portable turntables.

The final section of The Hard Sell begins with the following announcement played by DJ Shadow: “Mercury presents the result of years of electronic research and development. The world’s first completely portable, battery-powered hi-fi phonograph. Welcome to the exciting world of sound!” The phonograph in question is modelled by Cut Chemist who, in flagrant disregard for the manufacturer’s intentionality, wears the portable phonograph on a strap around his neck with a mixing board attached¹³⁷. The sampled commercial continues: “Imagine: just six ordinary flashlight batteries producing a sound like this.” The sound produced is an extract from Jimi Hendrix’s Woodstock performance of “The Star-Spangled Banner”¹³⁸. The audience can see the American flag’s stars and stripes printed on the record itself. When the commercial goes on to say, “Or, for that matter, a sound like this,” another track is introduced in apposition to the Hendrix performance. This second sound is the churning power chords of Metallica’s 1989 single “One”, and Cut Chemist scratches the Hendrix track in time to the Metallica song’s rhythm.

¹³⁶ The specific version of this song played here is not, however, sung by Leadbelly himself.

¹³⁷ Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow’s donning of the record player echoes Harpo Marx’s wearing of a gramophone in Monkey Business.

¹³⁸ The live performance of the American national anthem was released on a special 7-inch picture disc by MCA Records in 1999. The b-side was the Woodstock performance of “Purple Haze.” Since this is evidently not the original release of the track, its usage here could constitute a violation of the procedural limit announced at the beginning of the concert. That said, this disc is the first release of Hendrix’s “The Star Spangled Banner” on a 45.

The Metallica record is cued up by DJ Shadow and is left to play as both turntablists come to the front of the stage with their portable turntables and mixers slung around their necks like the electric guitars of rock performers. The two turntablists, now out from behind their banks of equipment and in the foreground of the stage, enact a mimesis of the physical showmanship of a rock concert. At one point, they stand back to back in a pastiche of the stereotypical guitar heroics of hard rock performances such as the frenetic guitar soloing of the “One” being played at that very moment. This image most clearly dramatizes the evolution of the turntable from a simple playback device into a musical instrument in its own right. Indeed, this particular moment is the most explicit transformation of the act of playing records into a spectacle to be visually consumed by the audience. While there is certainly an element of parody to the performance, it also does serve to draw a parallel between the showmanship of the more “traditional” rock performance and the displays of virtuosity requisite of turntablism.

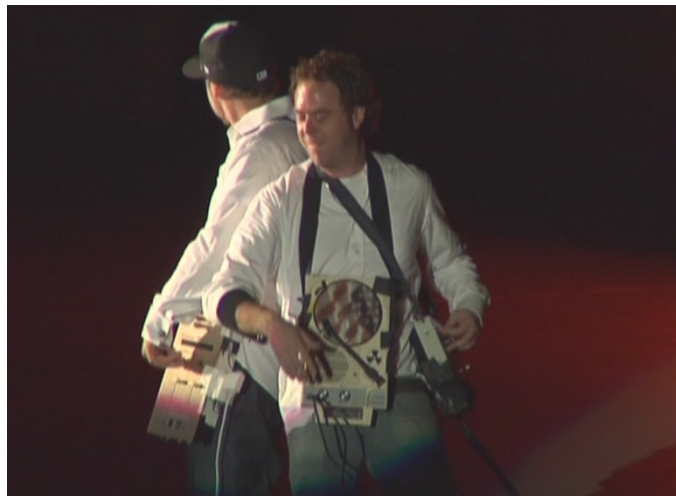


Fig. 15: Portable turntables.

Moreover, the substitution of the turntable in place of the guitar is illustrative of a then-current industry trend. As claimed in Doug Pray’s 2002 documentary, *Scratch*, by the turn of the new millennium, turntables for the first time began to outsell guitars. In the eyes of consumers – particularly the youth demographic – the turntable has replaced the guitar as primary means of youth musical expression. A similar illustration of this phenomenon is seen in the game *DJ Hero*, a 2009 spin-off of the 2005 game *Guitar Hero*. In the original, players used a guitar-shaped controller to simulate guitar and bass parts from well-known rock song. The spin-off translated this idea to the

genre of turntablism by using a turntable-like controller to enable players to simulate mixing various tracks. Indeed, DJ Shadow was involved in creating some of the mixes to be used in the game. The sequence that closes out The Hard Sell draws a more literal equivalence between “guitar hero” and “DJ hero.”

This parody of the musical theatrics of rock music also illustrates how consumers’ use of technology is often markedly different from the usage prescribed by the manufacturer as the two DJs have found a use for these portable turntables not anticipated by the manufacturer. As this study has shown, this discrepancy has been characteristic of recorded sound technology ever since Edison’s office dictation machine was used to play music. The developments of the cassette tape, the compact disc, and the MP3 were designed to make music more mobile in space (the portable cassette tape could be played in a car; the MP3 can be easily transmitted through the rhizomatic structures of the Internet) and more mobile in time (the increased durability of compact discs as compared to records). Yet at the same time, these same developments allowed for the practices of home-taping and file-sharing that have undermined the ability of the copyright regime to regulate the transmission and duplication of the musical texts. As such, technology invites new ways of mediating cultural production, ways that are often unforeseen by their original developers.

Finally, as the Metallica song draws to a close (at one point, Cut Chemist darts back to the turntables behind him to recue the song), the show’s MC, Kim Fowley, steps on to the stage to announce the show even as it is at its moment of conclusion: “My name is Kim Fowley, and that was The Hard Sell.” Following Fowley’s retroactive interpellation of the set, an anti-drug public service announcement has the last word: “The party’s over. You’ve been using cocaine and you’ve had too much to drink. If you think more cocaine will keep you awake as you drive home, think again.” The final words, “think again”, are echoed in a curious repetition of the valedictory “Think!” that concluded Product Placement. Indeed, the DVD itself closes in much the same way as its predecessor: images of the show’s after party as well as a recapitulation of shots from the DVD are played over the end credits. The music for the credits is the exact same track that was used in Product Placement. The repeated chorus line, “United we stand, divided we fall / So let’s get together, come on, one and all,” which implies a call for an increased sense of community and solidarity amongst record buyers even as the market for physical media is contracting due to pressure from the ascendant digital media market. Only by “stand[ing] ... together,” the DJs seem to be saying, can record aficionados ensure the preservation of their medium of choice.

IV – CONCLUSION

Both Product Placement and The Hard Sell end with explicit, echoed enjoinders to the audience to “Think!” (in Product Placement) and then “think again” (in The Hard Sell). Similar to the Outer Limits introduction signified upon early in Product Placement, these exhortations take the form of imperative commands which implicitly undermine the consumer agency the statements seemingly purport. In both of the concert documents, this imperative call to “Think” is overscored with the same funk-soul track that instructs the audience to “let’s get together, come on, one and all.” This call for solidarity seems to point to the formation of a community in which, in a Bakhtinian, carnivalesque sense, the audience and the performers are rendered equivalent.

The exact nature of the called-for audience agency, however, remains somewhat unclear. On the one hand, part of the hard sell is the promotion of DJ culture. Both concerts featured a “record bar” in which, as in the gift shop to a museum, audience members are invited to purchase the commodities of the record industry, but what is also being sold here is the whole DJ lifestyle. On the self-titled 2000 album by Deltron 3030, a collaboration between the MC Del Tha Funky Homo Sapien and producer Dan the Automator, the listener is told, “In the year 3030, everyone wants to be an MC.” What DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist seem to want to envision is a future (presumably nearer than the year 3030) in which everyone wants to be a DJ.

On the other hand, this utopian vision of audience-performer egalitarianism may appear to be naive and problematic. Though the camera may occasionally pan out over the audience to include the dancing masses as part of the spectacle, the stage still remains manifestly in place. The listener may be invited to take part in cultural production, yet at the same time the spectacular display of the two DJs’ turntablism – both in its performative and compositional components (ie. both the physical dexterity of the DJ at the turntable as well as his ability to dig through the crates of the record archive) – reifies the division between audience and performer by exemplifying the DJs’ singular talents. While DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist are working out of the turntablist tradition inaugurated by the Invisibl Skratch Picklz that sought to demystify the DJ by explicitly revealing the various techniques and source materials in order to further collaboration and revision, not every audience member can aspire to the same degree of technical competence, no matter how many items they may purchase from the in-venue record bar.

Nonetheless, what is certainly being inculcated in both of these concerts is a heightened degree of listener competence. In order to grasp the significance of particular tracks that are

included in the citational mixes, the audience is expected to have a working knowledge of the historical and social contexts of the sampled material. Product Placement takes it as a given that the attending club audiences can perceive the intertextual links between that set and its Brainfreeze predecessor. For example, understanding the genealogy of “California Soul” acts as a kind of shibboleth by which the audience member can claim entry into the world of DJ culture. Moreover, aside from acting as a badge of subcultural membership, this expectation of audience competence fulfills the Barthesian project of shifting the determination of meaning away from the author and on to the reader: it is up to the listener to make sense of what is being heard. At the same time, however, not all readings are necessarily equivalent: though one audience member may enjoy the mash-up of the two readings of “California Soul” in Product Placement as nothing more than a slice of danceable funk, the audience member who can apprehend the traces of hip hop history in the cited sample will have a different reading experience, one that is implicitly privileged over the former.

In The Hard Sell, the promotion of DJ culture is broadened from the more hip hop savvy audiences of Brainfreeze and Product Placement to the dominant, mainstream culture as symbolized by the venue, the Hollywood Bowl. Though the rap performed by the show’s MC, Kim Fowley, at the beginning of The Hard Sell film seems to indicate a critique of the Hollywood mythology, elsewhere in the introductory sections to the concert, Cut Chemist’s comments about “the magic of Hollywood” as well as the numerous references to “Golden Age” Hollywood scattered throughout the set serve to affirm that very mythology. The staging of the concert in this particular venue indicates a willingness to be co-opted, enfolded within the very dominant culture against which the turntablists have set their various detournement attacks. Similarly, whereas part of the aim of The Hard Sell is to educate the mainstream audience of the Hollywood Bowl about DJ culture, the location of the concert also requires a transformation of the turntablist set in order to render it appropriate for appropriation by the very Culture Industry that is simultaneously being critiqued in both sets. They attempt to broaden the appeal of turntablism by expanding the canon of samples beyond the usual funk and soul and into Golden Age Hollywood tunes and mainstream¹³⁹ rock music. This broadening of appeal contrasts with the tradition of marginalized musical forms’ reactions to imminent commercialization by becoming more challenging to mainstream culture (see,

¹³⁹ It is worth noting that The Hard Sell makes use of more popular, mainstream music in general. The canon of old skool hip hop as well as the traditional vintage funk and soul is supplemented by mainstream, contemporary musical selections from artists such as OutKast, Bone Crusher, and the Foo Fighters.

for example, the development of bebop as a reaction to white acceptance of jazz in the 1930s and 1940s or the emergence of gangsta rap at a similar juncture in the history of hip hop).

This ambiguity towards the Culture Industry points to a larger problem at work within both Product Placement and The Hard Sell. The ostensible critique of the capitalist Culture Industry that is effected by ironized sampling of commercial advertisements or kitschy tunes such as The Hard Sell's "Charlene" is undermined by the ambiguity with which such samples are ultimately treated. The audience is invited to laugh at the crude, borderline naive attempts of the adman selling Strike Cola or the lovelorn jukebox's off-key singing, yet at the same time this invited laughter can be interpreted as being complicit in the hard sell of the dominant culture.

In The Sublime Object Of Ideology, Slavoj Žižek draws a distinction between two forms of cynical laughter. On the one hand, Žižek borrows from Peter Sloterdijk the term "kynicism" to describe the "popular, plebeian rejection of official culture by means of irony and sarcasm: the classical kynical procedure is to confront the pathetic phrases of the ruling official ideology – its solemn, grave tonality – with everyday banality and to hold them up to ridicule, thus exposing behind the sublime *noblesse* of the ideological phrases the egotistical interests, the violence, the brutal claims to power" (29). This form of laughter engages in the same travesty of official culture as Bakhtin's understanding of the carnivalesque. The culture jamming ad parodies of Lasn's Adbusters group appear to engage in precisely this form of ridicule by subverting and exposing the coercive strategies of the advertising industries. Žižek's definition of kynicism assigns to it the desire to deconstruct official culture and expose so hitherto hidden truth.

The usage of the National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation's "Rappin' With Gas" could be seen as an example of this procedure whereby the dominant, capitalist culture's appropriation of hip-hop to sell natural gas to inner city markets (itself a travesty of hip-hop's claims to be the authentic "folk" music of and for the streets) is ridiculed with the addition of flatulent sound effects. The implication here is that the track amounts to little more than an excremental utterance. At the same time, "Rappin' With Gas" is aligned with the dominant culture by virtue of its following a heralding of a forthcoming (but never actually appearing) statement from a United States government official. Its inclusion in Product Placement serves (even if inadvertently) to legitimize this instance of cultural (mis)appropriation.

The ridiculing of "Rappin' With Gas", therefore, can also have the effect neutralizing the presumed criticism of the track and its context. Such an effect is precisely the implication that Žižek makes in his analysis of kynicism's more pernicious counterpart, cynicism. To Žižek, the cynical

distance afforded by laughter allows a subject to eschew critical interrogation of the often insidious workings of ideology. He states: “The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less still insists upon the mask” and, in a detournement of a phrase from Marx, he goes on to say: “They know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it” (29). As such, “Cynicism is the answer of the ruling culture to ... kynical subversion: it recognizes, it takes into account, the particular interest behind the ideological universality, the distance between the ideological mask and the reality, but it still finds reasons to retain the mask” (29). In the case of “Rappin’ With Gas”, the presentation of the track with its attendant flatulence certainly serves to point and laugh at the crude attempts of the National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation’s attempt to co-opt early hip hop to sell fuel to inner city markets. At the same time, however, its inclusion acquits the track of its blatant commercial function, thereby neutralizing any possible critique of the appropriation of hip hop by consumer capitalism.¹⁴⁰

The pernicious cynicism described by Žižek mirrors the purported authenticity of rock music that emerged out of the 1960s counter-culture and was furthered by punk and hip-hop in the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹⁴¹ As Shuker states: “Even rock’s frequent refusal to admit its commodity status and its attempts to position itself as somehow above the manufacturing process, all too easily become marketing ploys” (8). “Authenticity” becomes a part of the Hard Sell, a means, as the Clash said in “(White Man) In Hammersmith Palace” (originally of New Wave’s softening of the punk rock movement,¹⁴² but perhaps also inadvertently of themselves), of “turning rebellion into money.” Along these same lines, the purported critique of consumerism that runs thematically throughout Product Placement and The Hard Sell allows the turntablism to keep the commercialism of their own work at arm’s length. Perhaps this is most succinctly shown in the liner notes to The Hard Sell DVD wherein a critical discussion of the problems with contemporary musical copyright law is immediately followed by an unironic “© Pillage Roadshow, all rights reserved.” Of course, it would be unfair to expect the turntablists to cede legal control over their works (although just such a circumstance occurred with DJ Danger Mouse’s Grey Album), but the example still serves to illustrate the problematics of critiquing a system from within while trying to avoid complicity in that very system.

¹⁴⁰ A more “serious” incident of this type of appropriation can be seen in the Nike shoe commercials featuring Spike Lee and Michael Jordan.

¹⁴¹ The emergence of “grunge” music in the 1990s that opposed itself to the “corporate rock” of established groups such as Van Halen continues this self-heralded authenticity even as many of the so-called “alternative” groups found themselves signed to the same major labels owned by multinational media conglomerates.

¹⁴² See Laing 101.

Just as various rock genres ranging from mid-1960s folk rock to punk, grunge, and beyond have held up their professed anti-commercialism as a badge of authenticity, the issue of racial identity in hip hop music presents a similar set of problems. Writing in 1994, Tricia Rose describes rap music as “a black cultural expression that prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America” (2). In more recent years, however, hip hop has expanded beyond its original locus as a means of specifically black expression into not only a global phenomenon, but also a form of expression that occupies a central role in contemporary American culture. Even at the time of Rose’s writing, this phenomenon was evident: “To suggest that rap is a black idiom that prioritizes black culture and that articulates the problems of black urban life does not deny the pleasure and participation of others. In fact, many black musics before rap (e.g., the blues, jazz, early rock ‘n’ roll) have also become American popular musics precisely because of extensive white participation; white America has always had an intense interest in black culture” (4-5).

The problem is, however, that a question is raised as to whether this broadening of hip hop’s audience may come at the cost of diluting the original meaning of the genre: “However, extensive white participation in black culture has also always involved white appropriation and attempts at ideological recuperations of black cultural resistance” (5). Indeed, just as Pat Boone’s sanitized (and ultimately more – at least initially – commercially successful) re-readings of Little Richard songs decanted the originals of their transgressive sexuality, the adoption of hip hop by the dominant culture threatens to neutralize any radical, resistant message it may have in its content. Potter describes this potentiality in terms that approach Žižek’s description of cynicism: “Even if the political messages of rap are taken seriously, there is a further danger that many listeners will do no more than listen, cashing in on the ‘feel-good’ politics of simply *buying* a rap record. As [Henry Louis] Gates has noted, it can amount to little more than ‘buying Navajo blankets at a reservation road-stop’” (104). As a result, for all its pride in becoming a global movement, hip hop has carried with it an anxiety of authenticity and a fear of co-optation. The 1992 track “Crossover” by EPMD articulates precisely this anxiety. In the song’s second verse, rapper PMD describes how he is

Not like other rappers, frontin’ on they fans, the ill,
 Trying to chill, saying, “Damn, it be great to sell a mill,”
 That’s when the mind switch to the pop tip,
 (Kid, you’re gonna be large),
 Yeah right, that’s what the company kicks,
 Forget the black crowds, you’re wack now,

In a zoot suit, frontin' black, lookin' mad foul,
 I speak for the hardcore (rough, rugged, and raw),
 I'm outta here, catch me chillin' on my next tour
 From the U.S. to the white cliffs of Dover,
 Strictly underground funk, keep the crossover.

Yet even this profession of remaining true to the “underground funk” in the face of record company pressure to produce a crossover hit is complicated by the fact that its utterance occurs within a music video broadcast on the none-more-mainstream MTV. By contrast, *The Hard Sell*'s staging at the Hollywood Bowl and necessary tailoring of the show to the presumably wider, less subculturally specific audience indicates a desire on the part of Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow to engage in precisely such a crossover.¹⁴³

Nonetheless, an individual's position as a marginalized subaltern from the ghetto is frequently held up as proof of authenticity following the same logic of rock music's professed disregard for commercial appeal. Rapper 50 Cent, for example, has predicated his career on a narrative of having once been a bullet-riddled drug dealer. White rappers have also invoked the ghetto as a source of authenticity: “In other cases, such as that of white rapper Vanilla Ice, the ghetto is a source of fabricated white authenticity. Controversy surrounding Ice, one of rap music's most commercially successful artists, highlights the significance of ‘ghetto blackness’ as a model of ‘authenticity’ and hipness in rap music” (Rose 11). While, as Rose notes, Vanilla Ice's origin-story has been debunked as marketing fiction, similar strategies have been engaged by white rappers such as Eminem and Kid Rock. On the one hand, these attempts of white artists to integrate themselves within a specifically African-American tradition and subjectivity appear as crass attempts at co-optation, but on the other hand, they can also be read as a broadening of the “ghetto-margin” from being a racial identity to a class identity. Even though Rose identifies hip hop as a specifically African-American means of expression, she also includes Hispanic communities within early hip hop's formation (34-41), which indicates that membership within the early hip hop community was as much a question of subaltern class status as of race.

The question then arises, as asked by Russell Potter: “Is rap exclusively ‘a black thing?’” He goes on to answer by stating:

¹⁴³ Even though such a broadening of audience undoes the shibbolethic, subcultural nature of turntablism's engagement with the archive of forgotten musical texts.

From back in the day onto the present, Latino communities on the east and west coasts have been pivotal to hip-hop; ... Latin flavor is also a central part of successful groups such as Cypress Hill and Funkdoobiest. And despite Vanilla Ice and his Elvisian ambitions, a number of white rappers, such as MC Serch and Prime Minister Pete Nice (both formerly of 3rd Bass) have earned the respect of many hip-hop audiences. The global spread of hip-hop continues in the '90s; as documented on the 1993 Tommy Boy compilation Planet Rap, the list includes rappers from Ireland, France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, South Africa, Brazil, Japan, and Canada. (105)

Along the same lines, Rose points out that hip hop's broad, cross-cultural appeal is based on its perceived capability to articulate social dissatisfaction on the part of a marginalized class.

Rap music, like many powerful black cultural forms before it,¹⁴⁴ resonates for people from vast and diverse backgrounds. The cries of pain, anger, sexual desire, and pleasure that rappers articulate speak to hip hop's vast fan base for different reasons. For some, rappers offer symbolic prowess, a sense of black energy and creativity in the face of omnipresent oppressive forces; others listen to rap with an ear toward the hidden voices of the oppressed. (19)

The two poles of resonance that Rose identifies here are really just different degrees of the same principle: the "sense of black energy and creativity in the face of omnipresent oppressive forces" is but one ethno-specific "voice of the oppressed."¹⁴⁵

When hip hop expands beyond its original ethno-social context, it becomes a more generalized expression of cross-cultural, indeed, trans-global resistance to the dominant order. However, in doing so, hip hop becomes part of the very system it aims to critique and therefore is subject to the same problematics described above with regards to Product Placement and The Hard Sell's critique of consumer capitalism. Hip hop therefore occupies a liminal space between the

¹⁴⁴ Indeed, parallels can be drawn between non-African-American appropriation of hip hop and, for example, the adoption of blues forms by, among others, white working class Britons.

¹⁴⁵ Similarly, the adoption of and admiration for reggae by the predominantly white punk movement was predicated on reggae's perceived articulation of cultural resistance to a dominant culture: "Reggae offered the ideal of a music that seemed spontaneously to embody a culture and a politics. It had roots in an oppressed social group whose religious-political beliefs (Rastafarianism) provided a powerful and poetic means of expression. As such, reggae had achieved for young blacks what some punk ideologues wanted to claim their music was doing for the 'dispossessed' among young whites" (Laing 39).

The relationship between hip hop and punk is more complex and cannot be explored in full here. Though some punk acts – notably the Clash and Blondie – sought to inject hip hop culture into their works, the marriage between the two styles did not always work. In 1981, the Clash invited Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five to open for several of their New York concerts, but the punk crowd angrily rejected the rap group in disgust (Chang 155).

margin and the centre, acting as a bridge between the two: “It is at once part of the dominant text and, yet, always on the margins of this text; relying on and commenting on the text’s center and always aware of its proximity to the border” (Rose 19)¹⁴⁶.

Hip hop’s anxiety of appropriation is further problematized by the fact that it is a music of appropriation that relies in large part on the syncretic assemblage of various forms from various traditions into a postmodern bricolage. Early on in the development of hip hop, Afrika Bambaataa’s DJ sets were noted for their egalitarian acceptance of multiple sounds and musics: “He mixed up breaks from Grand Funk Railroad and the Monkees with Sly [Stone] and James [Brown] and Malcom X speeches. He played salsa, rock, and soca with the same enthusiasm as soul and funk. He was making himself open to the good in everything” (Chang 97). Even at this early stage, the hip hop DJ set involved an erasure of the lines separating different (sub-)cultural groups in favour of an all-encompassing hybridity. Similarly, the Wu-Tang Clan created a syncretic mythology by grafting of imagery from martial arts films (which themselves can be read as an exploitative commodification of a particular, ethnically oriented subculture) on to their daily inner-city life (the Staten Island projects, home to many of the group’s members, are re-imagined as the Slums of Shaolin).

As such, hip hop, with its sample-based, bricolage aesthetic offers a model of an essential hybridity at work within postmodern culture: “Polyculturalism built on the idea that civil society did not need Eurocentrism or whiteness at its core to function. In the real world, cultures layered, blended, and sounded together like the polyrhythms of a jazz song or a DJ riding the crossfader” (Chang 421). Such polycultural syncretism is also at work within Product Placement and The Hard Sell. To be sure, various forms of black popular music styles have been appropriated, but they have been appropriated alongside other musical forms from a variety of cultures ranging from European progressive rock to classic Hollywood tunes to Latin, Asian, and African musics. The suggestion here is not that Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow are operating out of some post-racial utopia,¹⁴⁷ but

¹⁴⁶ When Soundscan technology began in the early 1990s to track record sales more accurately by tallying point-of-purchase sales through barcode reading, it was revealed that genres hitherto associated with marginal niche-markets – country, heavy metal, and rap – were in actual fact the top sellers. As Chang notes:

Soundscan told the music industry what the kids had been trying to tell them for years. Broadcast culture was too limiting. They weren’t interested in being “programmed” or hard-sold into the mainstream. They wanted control over their pop choices; they wanted to define their own identities. ... The center had given way, and the pop field looked like a jumble of fragments. (417)

¹⁴⁷ The tradition of turntablism out of which Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow emerge is notably poly-racial. As stated above, the first DJ to use the term “turntablist” – Babu the Turntablist – is Filipino-American, as is the Invisibl Skratch Picklz mainspring, Q-Bert. Given that the genre emerged in the mid-1990s, after the mainstreaming of hip hop, the non-exclusive nature of turntablism is further evidence of the general broadening of hip hop culture beyond its point of

rather than the essential acquisitiveness of sample-based turntablism points towards a formation of hybrid identities in which the otherwise reified conditions of class and race are eroded and such unities, following the logic of Donna Haraway's cyborg theory, are replaced by polyphonic affinities.

Indeed, as is befitting performances based on musical heteroglossia, issues of hybridity are prevalent throughout the two sets. The focus, however, is not primarily on racial identities – although this idea is implicitly raised by the inclusion in The Hard Sell of a Queen song amongst a constellation of Orientalist signifiers – but primarily on the hybridity of the human and the machine. Recalling the McLuhanite idea of technology being an extension of the human, throughout both Product Placement and The Hard Sell, the audience is presented with numerous instances of the confounding of the boundaries between the biological and the mechanical. Men envision themselves as agency-less puppets, consumers identify themselves as household appliances (“Definitely a plug”), a lovelorn jukebox sings to his beloved, and, in the final sequence of The Hard Sell, the cyborg figure of the DJ and turntable grafted together presents a parody of the rock ‘n’ roll trope of the guitar hero. The artform of turntablism in and of itself is a cyborg artform: records not only stand in for the performers and performances they memorialize, but are also performers in their own right, to be choreographed by the disc jockey.

Both the content and the form of Product Placement and The Hard Sell serve to emphasize the continued value of physical media in the digital age. Both concerts, however, take place at a moment in history when physical media are being supplanted by digital formats such as the MP3. The last significant development in physical media for audio recordings occurred in the 1980s with the introduction of compact discs. Subsequent developments such as DVD-audio and Super Audio Compact Discs have been introduced, but with little commercial success and no lasting market presence. As such, what is intended as a celebration of physical media also manifests as a eulogy for the form, a lament for the record.

In Lament for a Nation (1965), George Grant decries what he perceives to be the end of Canadian nationalism as the Canadian identity is swallowed up by its larger neighbour. While Grant identifies this process as the inevitable outcome of fate, his lament for the passing of Canadian

origin. More distantly, both DJs are also heavily influenced by the early 1980s tape-based, studio-created pastiches of turntablism created by Double-Dee and Steinski. Aside from the fact that both Double-Dee and Steinski are white, the authenticity of the “Lessons” series is questioned by virtue of them being, like “Rapper’s Delight”, tape-based studio creations that merely simulate the turntablist techniques of the live DJ. In 2000, this inauthenticity was somewhat recuperated when DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist – to Steinski’s surprise – recreated the “Lessons” live using turntables.

sovereignty is, like the turntablist performances of DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist, not just a simple eulogy for a passing order, but also a productive act of memory that seeks to retain the past even as it passes from the present: “But how can one lament necessity – or, if you will, fate? The noblest of men love it; the ordinary accept it; the narcissists rail against it. But I lament it as a celebration of memory; in this case the memory of that tenuous hope that was the principle of my ancestors” (5-6). To Grant, though Canada may be doomed to oblivion by inexorable geo-historical fate, the act of mourning this destiny enables what is now past to be retained in the present (and transmitted to the future) as a memorialized trace.

What is being lamented in Product Placement and, more particularly, The Hard Sell is not just the history carried by and within records, but also the very means of preserving and transmitting that history through physical texts. What is being lamented and memorialized is memory itself. The reliance on digital systems to store texts does offer advantages such as saving archival space, but it also comes with the heightened problem of textual erasure should the technology fail. A 2010 article in Rolling Stone documented the problems that have resulted for the record industry as a result of the failure of digital storage:

Last year, the Beggars Banquet label unearthed the multitrack master recordings of the Cult’s classic 1985 album, Love, for a planned deluxe edition. The LP was an early digital recording, and to the label’s shock, one master was unplayable; the other contained only 80 percent of the album. “That’s the problem with digital,” says Steve Webbon, head archivist of the Beggars Group. “When it goes, it’s just blank. It’s gone.” (Browne)

By contrast, the Church Of Scientology has preserved recordings of L. Ron Hubbard’s lectures on nickel-plated records stored in “titanium capsules housed in calamity-proof vaults to ensure the timeless preservation and survival of the Scientology scripture” (“Spiritual Technology”). The threat of erasure is avoided by returning to an older form of textual transmission, one that is less susceptible to destruction through technological failure.

The destruction of texts need not just be the result of accidental failure. As demonstrated by Amazon’s remote deletion of e-books from users’ Kindles, digital technology also makes it easier for authorities – be they governmental or corporate – to circumscribe the circulation of transgressive texts. In the case of Amazon, the transgression was that an electronic edition of George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four violated certain copyright laws (the book is in the public domain in the United Kingdom, but remains under copyright in the United States). As a result, Kindle owners who had purchased the text found it deleted from their devices. Though Amazon apologized for

the deletion and refunded the customers with a promise to no longer delete their books, the incident revealed problems with the digital publication and consumption of texts. As Farhad Manjoo notes:

The worst thing about this story isn't Amazon's conduct; it's the company's technical capabilities. Now we know that Amazon can delete anything it wants from your electronic reader. That's an awesome power, and Amazon's justification in this instance is beside the point. As our media libraries get converted to 1's and 0's, we are at risk of losing what we take for granted: full ownership of our book and music and movie collections. ... Amazon deleted books that were already available in print, but in our paperless future – when all books exist as files on servers – courts would have the power to make works vanish completely.

This example takes on added resonance due to the fact that one of the deleted books¹⁴⁸ was Orwell's dystopian text that depicted a future in which historical documents are routinely altered and, when in contradiction to the dictates of the Party, flushed down into a memory hole to be burnt and forgotten. In the novel the Party had to institute a complicated system of deletion, destruction, and reinscription to ensure the erasure of history, but in the digital age unimaginable to Orwell writing in 1948, their project would be much more feasible.

The sleeve artwork for DJ Shadow's latest solo album, The Less You Know, The Better (2011), also dramatizes this same fear that new technology threatens to erase musical history. The cover depicts a cartoon, anthropomorphized laptop, iPod, and MP3 player whitewashing a billboard upon which the album title is written, representing the erasure of physical media. The artwork on the inside depicts a city block at night-time with the three devices walking down the street with their paint roller and can of white wash. There are three record stores on this street, two of which – labelled "Record Superstore" and "Vinyl Warehouse" – are boarded up with signs advertising the imminent arrival of new businesses: an "Internet Business Logistics" company and a "Cellphone Superstore." One store still remains – the "Last Record Store Standing" – and out of the drawn curtains emerges a ray of light that illuminates a crack in the sidewalk where a small plant with a eighth note for a flower grows. The desolate city street with this lone, struggling example of organic light recalls the urban wasteland evoked in the final section of Product Placement, but the possibility of renewal is maintained with the stubborn, continuing existence of physical media. The artwork thus has two messages. On the one hand, it emphasizes the archival, historical project of the

¹⁴⁸ Though the example of Nineteen Eighty-Four was the most famous deletion, Manjoo cites other texts as being subject to deletion including Orwell's Animal Farm as well as works by Ayn Rand and J.K. Rowling.

turntablists with their concern for the preservation of old texts and physical media. On the other hand, it also sets up an opposition between what is perceived as the sterility of digital media and the organic “life” – symbolized by the growing flower – enabled by physical, in this case analog, media.

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Note: Included amongst the sources below are a number of the recordings used in Product Placement and The Hard Sell. Only those recordings referred to in the text in their original context (i.e. apart from their citation within the two DJ sets) have been listed. Because of the obscure, rare, and often out-of-print nature of many of these records, most of them could only be obtained through various online postings and file-sharing services. Since it would be impossible to document these convoluted and sometimes illicit means, the records have been cited according to their original release. Any subsequent reissues have been noted where relevant. The discographic database discogs.com was an invaluable source for much of this textual data. Unless otherwise specified, all of these recordings were issued as 45 rpm singles.

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