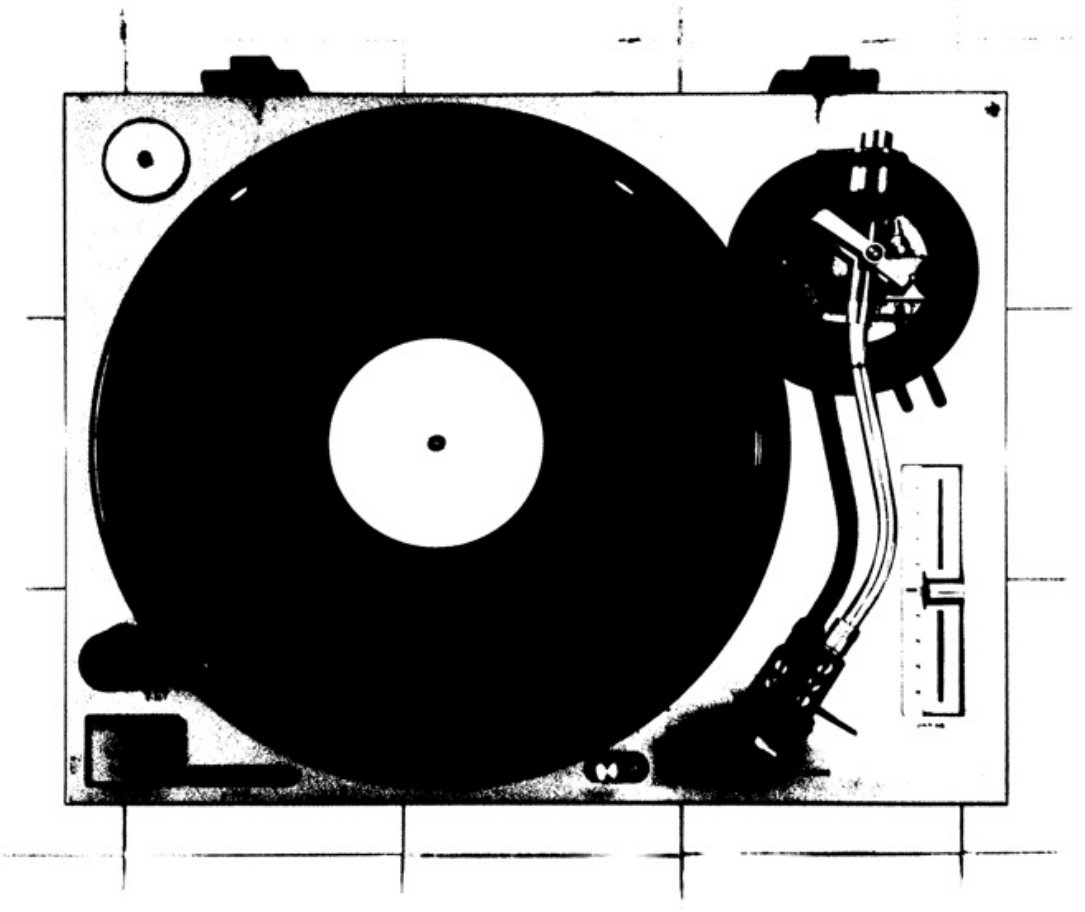
THE AESTHETICS OF SAMPLING

Eduardo Navas



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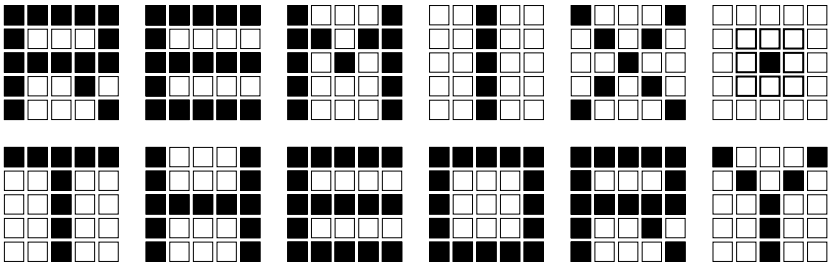

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******

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Chapter Two is a revised and extended version of "Dub, B Sides and Their [re]versions in the Threshold of Remix," *Vague Terrain*, August, 2008, http://vagueterrain.net/journal07/eduardo-navas/01.

Chapter Three contains revised sections from the following texts:
"Remix: The Bond of Repetition and Representation." In *Interactivos II: ambientes, redes, teleactividad*, edited by Rodrigo Alonzo, 32-46. Buenos Aires: Fundación Telefónica, 2008.
"Regressive and Reflexive Mashups in Sampling Culture," *Vague Terrain*, June 25, 2007, http://www.vagueterrain.net/content/archives/journal07/navas01.html, which was further revised to be part of Sonvilla-Weiss, Stephan. Editor. *Mashup Cultures*. New York: Springer Wien/New York, 2010.
"Turbulence: Remixes + Bonus Beats," *Turbulence.org & newmediaFIX,* January 22, 2006, http://turbulence.org/texts/nmf.

Chapter Four contains revised sections from "Reflections on Conceptual Art and its Relation to New Media, a Month Long Conversation at Empyre," *Noemalab*, Bologna, Italy. January 2006, http://www.noemalab.org/sections/ ideas/ideas_articles/ navas_conceptual_art.html.

The Conclusion contains a revision of the anecdote "Report on Periferico, Mexico City: third installment in a series of five," *Netartreview*, September 20, 2004, http://www.netartreview.net/weeklyFeatures/periferico3.html.

Preface

I was not aware of it then, but my research on remixing began when I bought my first set of turntables during the summer of 1987. I would have bought them sooner, but I could not afford an expensive set of Technics 1200s and a Numark mixer until I started to work fulltime. Prior to this, like many aspiring DJs, I would spend countless hours re-dubbing tape-to-tape recordings I made from the radio. When I took my turntables home, I could sense that they represented something bigger than music. I had no idea what that was, so I spent over fifteen years living the not-so-glamorous life of a DJ who mostly played private parties and weddings, occasionally spinning at clubs. From East Los Angeles to Beverly Hills, I got to experience LA culture in a way that I still find hard to describe in writing.

What the turntables stood for became clear to me in 2003 when I decided to focus on the concept of remix as a type of cultural binder, a glue that brings elements together beyond music. At the time that I decided to focus on remixing as a form of discourse (which I refer to as "Remix" throughout this book), Lawrence Lessig was just beginning to publish on remix culture, which at times he called free culture, and most recently refers to as read/write culture.

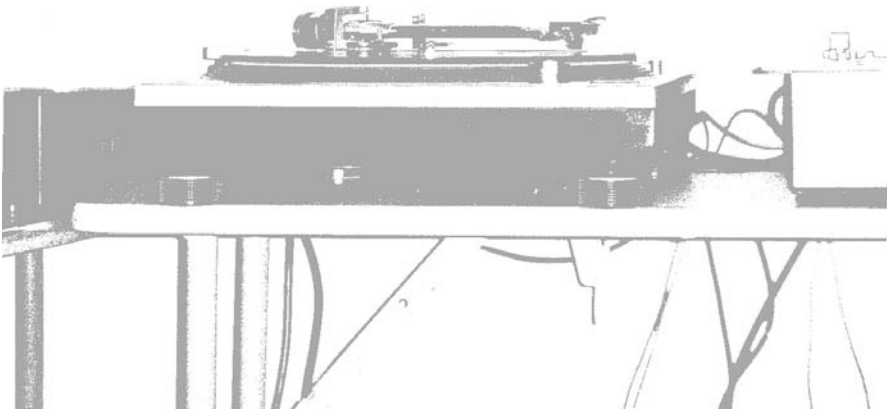
Now that my research finds its way into book form, some nine years after I started on this quest, much has been published about the subject, and the rise of "remix studies" has taken hold of academia, with a growing number of conferences in different parts of the world. I hope that the research community will find the compilation (remixed) version of my research in book form worth perusing.

This book brings together parts of selected texts that were previously published. My early publications, while accepted as valid references to define remix in culture, occasionally have been questioned for their specificity. There are two major reasons for this. The first is that previous texts were released as preliminary studies that were later re-edited based on feedback from my peers. The second is that as I developed more ideas I found the need to summarize them in order to meet a limited number of words for publication as individual essays. Now that I have the chance to officially publish the material the way that I think makes most sense, it is my hope that critics will find their questions answered in the longer version.

There is a particular criticism that I must mention in this preface for the reader to keep in mind while moving through the chapters. Some discussants of my work argue that I tend to generalize Remix and claim it to be everywhere. I will not respond to this question here as it is dealt with in

depth throughout the chapters that follow. However, I will state that if I may still be criticized for generalizing Remix as a type of cultural binder after reading this book, this may appear to be the case because aesthetics cannot be contained; like a virus, it spreads and informs culture. And so, whether we want to call the aesthetics of remix anything else, this does not change the fact that we live in a culture that is very self-aware of the recycling of material and immaterial things.

Introduction: Remix and Noise



E. Navas, *Remix Theory*

Image: Turntable, San Diego, CA, February 2007

We must know the right time to forget
as well as the right time to remember,
and instinctively see when it is necessary
to feel historically and when unhistorically.

Friedrich Nietzsche

My goal in this analysis is to evaluate how Remix as discourse is at play across art, music, media, and culture. Remix, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, informs the development of material reality dependent on the constant recyclability of material with the implementation of mechanical reproduction. This recycling is active in both content and form; and for this reason throughout this book I discuss the act of remixing in formal and conceptual terms. I focus on Remix as opposed to remix culture, which means that I consider the reasoning that makes the conception of remix culture possible. Remix culture, as a movement, is mainly preoccupied with the free exchange of ideas and their manifestation as specific products. Much has already been published about Remix under the umbrella of remix culture in terms of material development: how it is produced, reproduced, and disseminated. Its conflicts of intellectual property are also a central point discussed by activists such Lawrence Lessig, a copyright lawyer whom I reference throughout my investigation. As I evaluated the principles of Remix for this analysis, I came to the conclusion that as a form of discourse Remix affects culture in ways that go beyond the basic understanding of recombining material to create something different. For this reason, my concern is with Remix as a *cultural variable* that is able to move and inform art, music, and media in ways not always obvious as discussed in remix culture. Remix culture is certainly founded on Remix, and for this reason it is referenced repeatedly through my chapters; but remix culture is not the subject of this investigation mainly because it is a global cultural activity often linked specifically to copyright; and Remix, itself, cannot be defined on these terms.

Throughout the chapters that follow, whenever I refer to Remix as discourse I use a capital "R." Discourse is commonly understood in the humanities as an ever-changing set of ideas up for debate in written and oral form. However, I also consider discourse to include all forms of communication, not just writing and oral communication. When the term is used in the humanities, it is often linked to Michel Foucault. My use of discourse is certainly informed by his definition (debates within and among specialized fields of knowledge), and I do extend Foucault's definition to media

at large, because at the beginning of the twenty-first century it is media as a whole that is treated as a form of writing; or rather, *media is discourse*.[1] Therefore I argue that Remix is not an actual movement, but a binder—a cultural glue. Based on this proposition, the analysis performed in the following chapters should demonstrate that Remix is more like a virus that has mutated into different forms according to the needs of particular cultures.[2] Remix, itself, has no form, but is quick to take on any shape and medium. It needs cultural value to be at play; in this sense Remix is parasitical. Remix is meta—always unoriginal. At the same time, when implemented effectively, it can become a tool of autonomy. An example of this can be found in the beginnings of Remix in music.

Remix has its roots in the musical explorations of DJ producers; in particular, hip-hop DJs who improved on the skills of disco DJs, starting in the late sixties. DJs took beatmixing and turned it into beat juggling: they played with beats and sounds, and repeated (looped) them on two turntables to create unique momentary compositions for live audiences. This is known today as turntablism. This practice made its way into the music studio as sampling, and eventually into culture at large, contributing to the tradition of appropriation.

Cut/copy and paste is a common feature found in all computer software applications, and currently is the most popular form of sampling practiced by anyone who has access to a computer. Cut/copy and paste extends many of the principles explored by DJs and previous cultural producers in the twentieth century. Keeping in mind the link of sampling and appropriation to cut/copy and paste, I argue that Remix is a discourse that encapsulates and extends shifts in modernism and postmodernism; for if modernism is legitimated by the conception of a Universal History, postmodernism is validated by the deconstruction of that History. Postmodernism has often been cited to allegorize modernism by way of fragmentation, by sampling selectively from modernism; thus, metaphorically speaking, postmodernism remixes modernism to keep it alive as a valid epistemological project.[3]

To come to terms with the importance of Remix during the first decade of the twenty-first century, then, we must consider its historical development. This will enable us to understand the dialectics at play in Remix, which at the beginning of the twenty-first century is the foundation of

[1] For the concepts of discourse and episteme, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[2] This is a reference to William Burroughs's views on language as a virus. See Williams S. Burroughs, *The Ticket That Exploded* (New York: Grover Press, 1987).

[3] This is a reference to the critical positions of Jean Francois Lyotard and Fredric Jameson. Their ideas are discussed in chapter three.

remix culture. Remix came about as the result of a long process of experimentation with diverse forms of mechanical recording and reproduction that reached a meta-level in sampling, which in the past relied on direct copying and pasting. Certain dynamics had to be in place in the process of mechanical recording and reproduction for sampling to become part of the everyday, and they first manifested themselves in music at the end of the nineteenth century, framed by the contention of *representation* and *repetition*.

Political economist Jacques Attali has reflected at length on the relation of representation and repetition, arguing that the power of the individual to express herself through performance, a primary form of representation, particularly of musical material, shifted when recording devices were mass produced. Once recording took place, repetition—not representation—became the default mode of reference in daily reality; a common example, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is the willingness of individuals to purchase and listen to a music compilation in CD or MP3 format. This form of musical experience is different from a live performance. Following Attali's line of thinking, the power of repetition here is in the fact that the user sees a practicality in listening to a recording as frequently as desired. Going to a performance, on the other hand, implies a different experience that requires a deliberate commitment to a social activity. Often the material one expects to hear live is compositions of which one already bought recordings, or at least heard previously on the radio; thus the live performance is linked to some form of reproduction, defined by repetition. For these reasons I argue that repetition and representation have a contentious relationship in contemporary culture and play a key role in modernism, postmodernism, and new media during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Attali sees music as the domestication of noise during the nineteenth century. Music became, and is, a political medium that enables Capital to become the default form of cultural exchange. He considers this domestication important in the understanding of culture throughout modernity and argues that it is in the domestication of noise where one can learn about the effects of the world:

> More than colors and forms, it is sounds and their arrangements that fashion societies. With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. With music is born power and its opposite: subversion. In noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men. Clamor, Melody, Dissonance, Harmony; when it is fashioned by man with specific tools, when it invades man's time, when it becomes sound, noise is the source of purpose and power, of the dream—music.[4]

[4] Jacques Attali, *Noise The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1985), 6.

Using Attali's theory as a conceptual framework and starting point, my goal is to demonstrate how Remix is closely linked to the domestication of noise, which eventually became a model for autonomy in modernism and postmodernism. I approach Remix as Attali approaches Music. He considers music the result of the domestication of noise; I consider Remix to be the result of the domestication of noise on a meta-level of power and control, as simulacrum and spectacle. Applying Attali's theory of noise to Remix exposes how and why Remix is able to move with ease across media and culture, both formally and conceptually. For this reason, my investigation of Remix in art, music, and media is not primarily concerned with productions or objects popularly considered remixes, such as music remixes or video mashups; instead the popular understanding of remix is taken as the point of departure to look at works and activities that clearly use principles of Remix, but may or may not be called remixes. My analysis also considers how Remix principles originally found in the concrete form of sampling as understood in music remixes move on to other forms, though not always in terms of actual sampling, but as citations of ideas or other forms of reference. In other words, my investigation traces how principles found in the act of remixing in music become *conceptual strategies* used in different forms in art, media, and culture.

I argue that Remix, starting in the nineteenth century, has a solid foundation in capturing sound, complemented with a strong link to capturing images in photography and film. Given the role of these media in art practice, it became evident to me that art is a field in which principles of remix have been at play from the very beginning of mechanical reproduction—hence the prevalence of art aesthetics throughout the chapters.

During the 1970s the concept of sampling became specifically linked to music, and, towards the end of the '90s, all forms of media in remix culture. It is the computer that made the latter shift possible. This does not mean that Remix is not informed or intimately linked with other cultural developments; on the contrary, Remix thrives on the relentless combination of all things possible. However, for the sake of precision, I emphasize the role of textuality in terms of structural and poststructural theory. Admittedly, my definition of Remix privileges music because it is in music where the term was first used deliberately as an act of autonomy by DJs and producers with the purpose to develop some of the most important popular music movements of the 1970s: disco and hip-hop.

I also pay specific attention to the foundation of Remix in music because, according to Attali, it is in the domestication of music where we can find the roots of modernism proper: "For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for the hearing. It is not legible, but

audible."[5] Attali, by providing a critical reading of music as domesticated noise, is able to expose how specific conflicts are at play in different areas of culture; conflicts such as subversion of individual expression in an economy of specialization, as well as the control of knowledge in a global class struggle. My focus on the origin of Remix in music aims to have a similar effect for remix culture, as well as new media, in close relation to art practice. My reading of Remix and its intimate relation to music should be viewed, then, as one way of theorizing about a culture defined by recyclability and appropriation. My hope is that my research will be considered complementary to other studies of Remix and remix culture. Throughout the chapters I implement cultural analytics methodologies, meaning that I make use of statistics and graphs, and other types of data visualization in order to better understand information that otherwise would function as abstract footnote references. The implementation of cultural analytics makes this publication a contribution to the interdisciplinary research practice of the digital humanities, which consists of the adoption of computing by the humanities.[6]

The four chapters of this book were written to note how Remix has its roots in the early stages of mechanical recording and reproduction, starting in the nineteenth century. As noted above, a crossover between art, media and music was inevitable, hence the chapters reflect on these fields in order to demonstrate how the principles of Remix constantly shift across media. To accentuate how Remix is at play in a micro and macro level, some of the chapters contain personal anecdotes in which Remix was experienced.

According to the critical framework that I have proposed in this introduction, chapter one, "Remix[ing] Sampling," defines the roots of Remix in early forms of mechanical reproduction. It outlines seven stages beginning in the nineteenth century with the development of the photo camera and the phonograph that lead up to the current state of Remix, and evaluates how recorded material redefines people's concept of representation. The first three stages are called "Stages of Mechanical Reproduction," and the remaining four "Stages of Remix." The chapter also outlines the difference in sampling at play in visual culture and music culture, and explains how such differences collapsed with the rise of the computer.

Chapter two, "Remix[ing] Music," explains the rise of dub in Jamaica during the 1960s and '70s, the experimentation with remixing in New York City during the late '70s and early '80s, the development of remix as a style from the mid '80s to the late '90s, and the global rise of remix cul-

[5] Ibid, 3.

[6] To learn more about cultural analytics, see http://lab.softwarestudies.com/

ture from the end of the '90s to the time of this writing. Chapter two also expands on the definition of Remix outlined in chapter one to demonstrate how Remix moves beyond basic material production into an ideological realm, where it becomes a political tool. To accomplish this, the chapter re-evaluates the writings of Hommi Bhabha and Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri in relation to Remix as a form of critical production. This is done to reflect upon not just the historical development, but also the cultural politics that inform Remix.

Chapter three "Remix[ing] Theory" consists of a concise definition of Remix as a proper action in music. It makes use of the historical and cultural contextualization set in the previous two chapters to define specific forms of Remix. Chapter three focuses on Remix's beginning in music during the 1970s and its eventual influence in art and media. It includes analysis of modern and networked art projects, software applications and literature, including Remix's evolution as blogging. Attali's definition of noise and music are explained extensively, and linked to arguments by Theodor Adorno. Craig Owens's and Fredric Jameson's theories of postmodernism are discussed in detail throughout the chapter in order to gain a better understanding of the development of modernism and postmodernism in the twentieth century. Chapter three explores Remix in art, music, and media, and lays the ground for the study of other critical strategies that also inform Remix, which are considered in the last chapter and conclusion.

Chapter four, "Remix[ing] Art" expands on how principles of sampling considered in chapter one share strategies as a political tool with forms of appropriation at play in conceptualism, minimalism, and performance art. It examines specific new media works in order to assess the interchangeable role of artists and curators. This chapter applies the theories of authorship by Roland Barthes, as well as Michel Foucault to networked projects to better understand how collaboration has become a conventional act in media culture, informed by the concept of textuality and reading as defined in terms of critical discourse. Sampling is linked in this case to the preoccupation with reading and writing as an extended cultural practice beyond textual writing onto all forms of media. In the conclusion, I reflect on the history and theory I outlined throughout the four chapters of the book.

In this publication, I deliberately leave an open-ended position for the viewer to reflect on the implications of cultural recyclability. I do not attempt to provide a specific answer, but rather offer material for critical reflection that may be considered a contribution to various fields of research in the humanities and social sciences. I do, however, take a critical position which I believe is already apparent in this introduction, but is further developed throughout the following chapters.

Chapter One: Remix[ing] Sampling

E. Navas, *Remix Theory*

Image: Ignacio Nieto's tape collection, Santiago de Chile, Summer 2006

Before Remix is defined specifically in the late 1960s and '70s, it is necessary to trace its cultural development, which will clarify how Remix is informed by modernism and postmodernism at the beginning of the twenty-first century. For this reason, my aim in this chapter is to contextualize Remix's theoretical framework. This will be done in two parts. The first consists of the three stages of mechanical reproduction,[1] which set the ground for sampling to rise as a meta-activity in the second half of the twentieth century. The three stages are presented with the aim to understand how people engage with mechanical reproduction as media becomes more accessible for manipulation. The three stages can be marked with the first beginning in the 1830s, when the rise of early photography took place; followed by the second in the 1920s, when experimentation of cut up methods were best expressed in collage and photomontage; and ending with the third, when Photoshop was introduced in the late 1980s. I also refer to the last as the stage of new media. The three stages are then linked to four stages of Remix, which take place between the 1970s to the present; they overlap the second and third stage of mechanical reproduction. This chapter, then, defines three stages in the development of mechanical reproduction to show how sampling became a vital element in acts of appropriation and recycling in modernism that then became conventions in postmodernism, which eventually evolved to inform and support Remix in culture.

Sampling Defined

Some specialists might propose sampling as a term reserved for music. However, the principle of sampling at its most basic level had been at play as a cultural activity well before its common use in music during the 1970s. I do not argue to change the term recording for sampling when discussing film, photography or early music recording; rather, my goal is to point out that recording and sampling are terms used at specific times in history in part due to cultural motivations. Sampling as an act is basically what takes place in any form of mechanical recording—whether one cop-

[1] Mechanical reproduction here is understood according to Walter Benjamin's well-known essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." At the time that Benjamin wrote his essay, it was not possible for him to see completely where new technologies would lead the mass-produced image. Yet, he did set a methodological precedent to deal with possibilities when he explained how mechanical reproduction freed the object from cult value. Once taken out of its original context, the object gains the potential of infinite reproducibility; it enters the realm of exhibit value. See, Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the End of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations* (New York, Schocken, 1968), 217-251.

ies, by taking a photograph, or cuts, by taking a part of an object or subject, such as cutting part of a leaf to study under a microscope.

The concept of sampling developed in a social context that demanded for a term that encapsulated the act of taking not from the world but an archive of representations of the world. In this sense, sampling can only be conceived culturally as a meta-activity, preparing the way for Remix in the time of new media. Early recording, in essence, is a form of sampling from the world that may not appear as such to those used to the conventional terms in which the concepts of recording and sampling are understood. According to the basic definition of capturing material (which can then be re-sampled, re-recorded, dubbed and re-dubbed), sampling and recording are synonymous following their formal signification.

Sampling is the key element that makes the act of remixing possible. In order for Remix to take effect, an originating source must be sampled in part or in whole. However, sampling favors fragmentation over the whole. At the moment that mechanical recording became a norm to evaluate, understand, and define the world in early modernism, the stage was set for postmodernism. Postmodernism is dependent on a particular form of fragmentation, whose foundation is in early forms of capturing image and sound through mechanical recording, which, technically speaking, sampled from the world beginning in the nineteenth century.

Recording is a form of sampling because it derives from the concept of cutting a piece from a bigger whole. Because cutting was commonly understood as a form of taking a sample, the disturbing element of photography is that an exact copy appeared to be taken, as though it had been "cut" from the world, yet the original subject apparently stayed intact. To better understand this, it is necessary to evaluate the basic definition of sampling. Random House Dictionary states: "a small part of anything or one of a number, intended to show the quality, style, or nature of the whole; specimen."[2] This general definition defaults to cutting, not copying materially. Looking back on the history of mechanical reproduction, it becomes evident that this definition was in part contingent upon the technology available for capturing images. It was in the nineteenth century when mechanical copying became possible, with machines designed to copy at an affordable price. The first form of mechanical copying with certain accuracy was the lithograph, which became quite popular in the 1830s.[3] So,

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[2] Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)
Based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, Random House, Inc. 2006, http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sample.

[3] Barbara Rhodes & Heraldry Bindery, "Materials & Methods/The Art of Copying," *Before Photocopying: The Art & History of Mechanical Copying, 1780-1938* (Massachusetts: Oak Knoll Press & Heraldry Bindery, 1999), 21.

while the notion of copying from pre-existing texts or sampling a piece to represent a whole may have been at play to some degree in this time period, it was so with great possibility of inaccuracy or error in having some of the information missing. Prior to the popularization of mass printing, it would be up to scribes to copy as accurately as possible, but during the nineteenth century other forms of copying would start to be employed more pervasively.[4]

Once the idea of capturing from the real world (as a form of copying) entered the material world via mechanical reproduction, a major shift in culture began to take place in the nineteenth century with photography: the first technology that is fully invested in capturing as a form of sampling. While printing can be argued to have the basic elements of recording by way of sampling, the difference with photography is that photo media could in theory record an image of anything—it created accurate *copies* of the world; of course in the beginning this was unstable, as the success of developing an actual image from, say a calotype required great devotion and care in the process. Eventually, even text would be treated as another element from which to copy, capture (sample) in part or in whole: the microfilm is the most obvious example of this transition. Before digital scanning was possible, microfilm was one of the first databases of information relying on scanning as understood in new media. Most importantly, photography introduced the possibility for everyone to record images. In other words, with a broad sense of the term: *to sample* the world as they wished. Potentially, any person with the right equipment could take a piece of the world by making an image copy of a moment in time.

This challenged the control over mechanically produced material. The principle that enabled people to use a medium for private use was not the direct intent of print; if anything, print promoted the contrary. Print was and still is a one-way form of communication, in which the publisher holds ultimate control on what is printed. While it can be argued that today readers have greater power on what is published, it is still the publisher who will decide so based on politics. Print, then, is about quality control; its authority lies in the fact that from the very beginning only few people could learn and afford how to edit and print books properly. Today this is further complicated with the rising complexity of copyright.[5] Photography challenged this control during its cultural introduction. During its early stages, photography validated itself as a mass medium by promoting the opportunity for anyone potentially to take photographs; so in photography

[4] Ibid, 7.

[5] A good account of publishing control directly connected to emerging technologies, especially online can be found in, *Lawrence Lessig, The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in the Connected World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 111-112.

a tendency that is vital to new media and Remix at the beginning of the twenty-first century manifested itself as a mass phenomenon: the acknowledgment of the user to complete the work, or do the actual labor.

Sampling, then, has its seeds in 1839, as Lev Manovich argues when he cites a Parisian who commented on what followed after Louis Daguerre's famous presentation of his daguerreotype: "A few days later, 'opticians' shops were crowded with amateurs panting for daguerreotype apparatus, and everywhere cameras were trained on buildings. Everyone wanted to record the view from his window, and he was lucky who at first trial got a silhouette of roof tops against the sky."[6] And this frenzy is a natural element of new media culture, taken as a given.

To fully grasp the importance of sampling in modernism, however, we must also consider how recording in music evolved to incorporate sampling as a vital part of music production. At the time of this writing, sampling is commonly understood to imply copying in material form, not by capturing from the real world, but from a pre-existing recording. This principle of sampling, which became popular in the 1970s with DJ producers of disco and eventually hip-hop, is a meta-activity that follows early forms of sound capturing. Early sound recordings, with a similar approach as photography's, were also tools used to copy (sample) from the world. Thomas Edison developed the phonograph in 1877 to record sound (Figure 1.2); his interest was not the recording of music but of voices.[7] It was not until much later, around 1910, that the phonograph, along with the gramophone, would be commonly used not to record but to listen to music. Edison did not pursue recording music as he was interested in providing a dictating service for corporations. (This pursuit was not successful.)[8] Thus, the phonograph, like the photograph was developed with the same purpose: to capture (sample) a moment and relive it later. This is particularly true from Edison's point of view. It must be noted here that while the kind of sampling taking place in photography can be argued to be technically a different process from capturing sound, from a cultural perspective it was collapsed in film by Edison's conceptual approach. He deliberately thought of capturing images equivalent to capturing sound. He theorized that "photographic emulsion could attach images to a cylinder, and they could be played back like a phonograph."[9] And he openly considered the Kinetoscope a visual phonograph. Here we begin to see an intimate rela-

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[6] Cited by Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 2001), 21.

[7] Theresa M. Collins, Lisa Gitelman, and Gregory Jankunis, "Invention of the Phonograph, as recalled by Edison's Assistant, by Charles Batchelor," *Thomas Edison and Modern America: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002), 64.

[8] Ibid, 23.

[9] Ibid, 20.

tionship between image and sound; however, the process of capturing would not become the same for them until the introduction of the computer, a machine that treats both image and sound the same: as binary data to be manipulated at will by the user. While early recording technology carried this trace, people would not think of image and sound as equivalent forms of recording; further, these two forms would not be called "sampling" at this time, because the notion of sampling as it is used during the first decade of the twenty-first century was not conceivable—in part because the conception of appropriating recorded material would not take place until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Technically speaking, when considering the basic definition of sampling, this is what takes place in this first stage; early technology enabled people to sample from the world and eventually from sampled material. In current times the latter becomes a default state with the computer: to sample means to copy/cut & paste. Most importantly, this action is the same for image, sound and text. In this sense, the computer is a sampling machine: from a wide cultural point of view, the ultimate remixing tool. The reason for this has to do with two levels of operation in culture, which I define as The Framework of Culture. The first takes place when an element is introduced in culture, and the second when once that element has attained cultural value it is re-evaluated, either by social commentary, appropriation, or sampling.[10] These strategies are vital to the practice of Remix as the act of remixing takes place in the latter stage with the combination of formal and ideological strategies. Both the photograph and the phonograph functioned at the first stage, setting the ground for appropriation and sampling in modernism commonly understood mainly as forms of recording primary sources. Photography and sound recording would take full effect as a meta-action in postmodernism, to become friendly to the simulacrum, once enough material had been gathered to be remixed.

[10] This statement does not imply that the content is some how "new" along the lines of something completely "original," but rather that the material introduced is different enough for people to evaluate how it redefines conventions previously established. Once such material is assimilated it can enter the second layer of the framework of culture. Some obvious examples are the photograph, the phonograph, the computer and the Internet, which are all innovative re-combinations of technology developed by many people, not a sole individual.

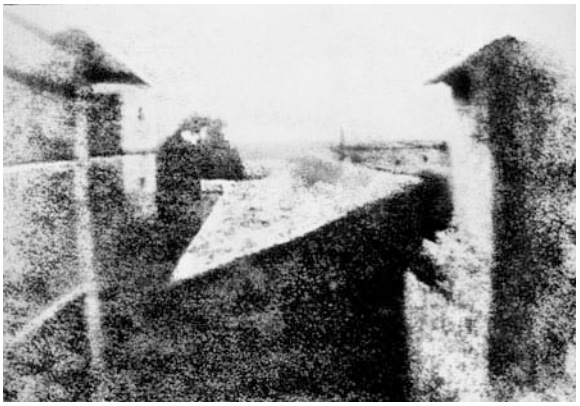

Figure 1.1 Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, Eight hour exposure. Heliograph. Taken in 1826 or 1827, in Saint-Loup-de-Varennes.

Figure 1.2 Thomas Edison and his early phonograph. Circa 1877, Brady-Handy Photograph Collection (Library of Congress) Author: Levin C. Handy.

The Three Chronological Stages of Mechanical Reproduction

Based on the material surveyed above, there are three stages of Mechanical Reproduction (Figure 1.3): the first consists of early photography, beginning around the 1830s (extended in film), and sound recording with the phonograph in the 1870s and '90s; at this stage, it is the world itself that is recorded—represented with images and sounds. The act of sampling as known today was not relevant at this stage; instead, *recording* was the word most often linked with early forms of mechanical reproduction. Once mechanical recording became conventionalized and paradigms developed, and most importantly, enough material was recorded and archived, the second stage of mechanical reproduction is found beginning in the 1920s in photo collages and photomontages, which relied mainly in cutting and pasting. This is the first stage of recycling—an early form of meta-media preceding sampling as commonly understood in new media. Social commentary dependent on the recycling of mechanically reproduced media becomes feasible in this second stage, which first manifested itself most visibly in photomontage, but became pervasive in music sampling during the 1970s, once sampling machines became readily available. In music, cutting gave way to copying. During the '70s, music sampling leaned towards leaving the original music composition intact; and with the right equipment, music samples could sound just as good as the originating source. The final stage of sampling is found in new media beginning in the 1980s—which I also refer to as the second stage of recycling. This stage privileges pre-existing material over the real world. The tendency to look for already recorded material prevalent in early music remixes, which became the staple practice in hip-hop music, is now a shared tendency commonly found in new media when people opt to search for information in databases—whether it be text, image, or video. In this case, both of the previous stages are combined at a meta-level, thus giving the user the option to cut or copy based on aesthetics, rather than limitations of media. This is not to say that new media does not have limitations, but rather that most people adept in emerging technologies could concentrate with greater ease in developing their ideas with efficient forms of recording and sampling that simulated (to a believable degree) previously existing media.

Figure 1.3

Let us examine each of these three stages in more detail. To begin, photography in its initial stage samples, in the strict sense of the definition, by capturing a moment in time that can be reproduced as a print, assuming that the negative is well taken care of, which is most obvious in one of the first recorded images by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window*

at Le Gras, circa 1826, (Figure 1.1) a heliograph which took several hours to achieve.[11] The capture of time would be pushed by film language by creating a series of images that when played in sequence gave a sense of actual time lapse. During the second stage of mechanical representation, cutting from images to create other images was explored as a legitimate aesthetic. A prime example of this stage is the work of Hannah Höch, who sampled by cutting directly from magazines and other publications. John Heartfield is another artist who sampled by cutting to then create photographs (better known as photomontages) to be published in magazines. While Höch may have a closer relationship to the notion of sampling by taking actual pieces from a bigger whole, Heartfield and his contemporaries offer a transitional moment; they set the ground for the kind of recycling found in new media that privileges copying not cutting. Heartfield explored copying or sampling as defined by the first stage found in photography when he produced cut and paste compositions to be photographed to then find their final form in the print Magazine AIZ, as criticism on the politics of Adolf Hitler.[12] What is crucial in Heartfield and his contemporaries practicing photomontage is that he developed work specifically for reproduction; they explored the visual language that would become fundamental during the early '90s for the software application Photoshop, where cut/copy & paste is essential to develop basic new media imagery. This is the default mode of photographic reproduction for people who have access to computer technology at a professional or amateur level. Photoshop, then, marks the third stage of mechanical reproduction, which I also refer to as the stage of new media, and the second stage of recycling. This stage was marked in music a decade earlier, when DJs turned producers during the late 1970s and early '80s were able to take bits of different songs with sampling machines to create their own compositions. This tendency now is part of remix culture.

Now that the three stages of mechanical reproduction have been defined and contextualized theoretically, it is time to look at how these stages are historically linked to four more stages that specifically support the development of Remix in postmodernism and our current state of new media production.

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[11] Mary Warner Marien, "The Invention of Photographies," *History of Photography: A Cultural History* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2006), 9.

[12] David Evans,"From Idea to Page: The Making of Heartfield's Photomontages,"*John Heartfield: AIZ* (New York: Kent Gallery, Inc, 1992), 20-29.

The Four Stages of Remix

The four stages of Remix overlap the second and third stage of mechanical reproduction (Figure 1.4). As noted, the third stage of mechanical reproduction begins in visual culture when Photoshop was introduced; however, as also noted, this shift happened in music a few years earlier during the 1980s with the introduction of sampling machines used to experiment with different forms of remix. While this is taking place, the computer was introduced to the mass public during the first years of the 1980s. IBM's personal computer 5150 was officially released in 1980. And Apple's Lisa was released in 1983.[13] In this way, the aesthetics of constantly taking bits and pieces of content begins to be shared across media, and is not limited to music. Here we find a parallel in the aesthetics of sampling, which would be combined in the late '90s in Remix. However, it is the concept of remixing in music, as we will see that became appropriated to encapsulate the tendency to recycle material in all media.

The first stage of Remix took place in Jamaica with the rise of dub, during the late 1960s and '70s; that is, at the end of the second stage of mechanical reproduction. The second stage of Remix took place during the 1970s and '80s when principles of remixing are defined in New York City.

The third stage takes place, during the mid to late '80s and '90s, when Remix becomes a style, and therefore commodified as a popular form used to increase music sales in the United States, at which time a new generation of music producers became active in England as well as other parts of Europe and the world. This is also the time when the computer becomes more popular and the aesthetics of new media are implemented with the introduction of Photoshop. While the United States began to sell music clearly informed by remix aesthetics as mainstream commodities, people in Europe developed a subculture based on the principles of Remix defined during the 1970s and early '80s. The North American styles of Detroit Techno, Chicago House, New York Garage, along with the rise of mainstream hip-hop, became the points of reference for subcultures to develop their own material. The result was music genres such as trip-hop, downtempo, breakbeat and jungle, which were perfected throughout Europe, but most clearly defined in England.

[13] Paul Freiberger & Michael Swaine, *Fire in the Valley* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 329 – 354.


THE FOUR STAGES OF REMIX
THIRD STAGE OF MR/SAMPLING
PRINCIPLES OF THE FIRST AND SECOND STAGE FUNCTION CLOSELY TOGETHER
FIRST STAGE OF REMIX
The first stage of Remix took place in Jamaica with the rise of dub,
during the late 1960s and '70s
This stage privileges pre-existing material over the real world
Sampling is found in new media beginning in the 1980s
Sampling is prevalent in early music remixes (disco and hip-hop music)
SECOND STAGE OF REMIX
The second stage of Remix took place in New York City,
when principles of remix become properly defined in disco and hip hop music
during the 1970s and '80s
THIRD STAGE OF REMIX
The third stage of Remix took place in the mid to late 1980s and early '90s.
Remix becomes a style, and commodified as a popular form used to
increase music sales in the United States. Simultaneously, a new generation
of music producers became active in England and other parts of Europe and the world.
This is also the time when the computer becomes popular.
FOURTH STAGE OF REMIX
The fourth stage begins in the late nineties. At this point the act of remixing
becomes a concept appropriated for things not always considered "remixes."
It becomes popular with the term "remix culture."
Diagram by Eduardo Navas, http://remixtheory.net

Figure 1.4

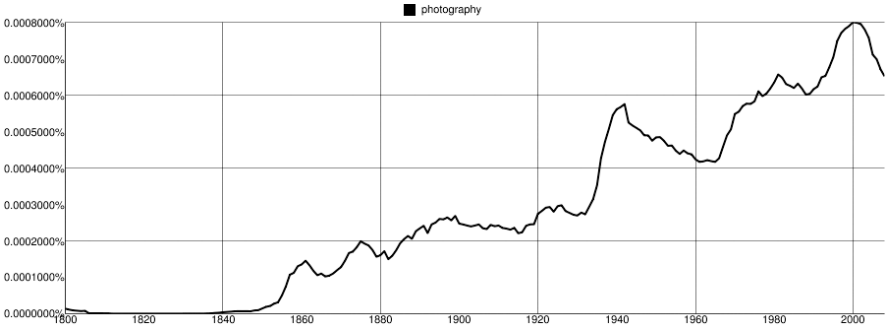
The fourth stage of Remix takes place when the act of remixing becomes a concept appropriated for things not always considered "remixes." Remix becomes an aesthetic to validate activities based on appropriation. This stage takes place during the late '90s, and becomes most pronounced with the concept of remix culture, as defined by Lawrence Lessig. The popular online community resource ccMixter is perhaps the most obvious example of how the principles of remixing, explored in the previous stages inform online collaboration.[14] ccMixter encourages its members to share music tracks and remix them, as long as participants respect the copyright licenses which have been adopted by the original track producers. But the less obvious examples would fall in the diverse uses of Creative Commons licenses which are designed to cover all forms of intellectual property production, including, image, music, and text.[15] Here, Remix is in place, and we are currently living through the fourth stage.

Analytics: From Photography to Remix Culture

The three stages of mechanical reproduction and the four stages of Remix become evident in the use of key terms in print between the 1800s and 2000s. The visualizations that follow demonstrate the rise of sampling moving towards Remix as discussed throughout this chapter. Note that the queries are limited to books in English.

The Cultural Understanding of Photography and Film in Print

The following graphs demonstrate how the words "photography" and "film" were popular in print publications between 1800 and 2008.



[14] ccMixter, http://ccmixter.org/

[15] Creative Commons, http://creativecommons.org/

Figure 1.5 The usage of the term "photography" increases dramatically beginning in the 1840s.[16] This is shortly after Louis Daguerre's innovations. This corresponds with the First stage of mechanical reproduction.

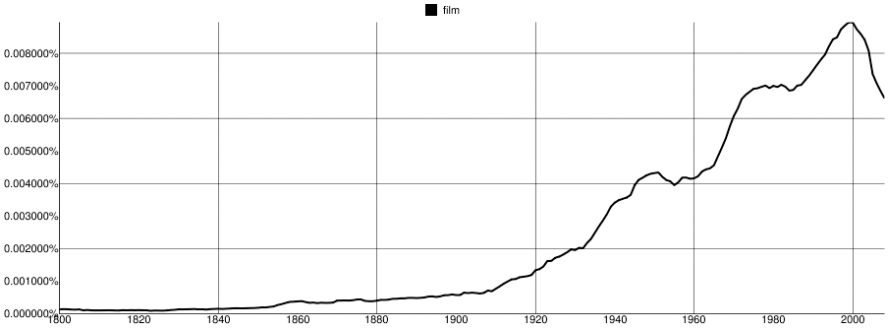


Figure 1.6 The term "film" appeared in print prior to the 1840s.[17] This, however, was likely in relation to other denotations of the term. The term's use increases around the 1860s. This falls in line with the innovations by Thomas Edison and his contemporaries. The usage of photography and film in print corresponds with the first stage of mechanical reproduction.

The Cultural Understanding of Recording and Sampling in Print

The following graphs demonstrate how the words "recording" and "sampling" were popular in print publications between 1800 and 2008.

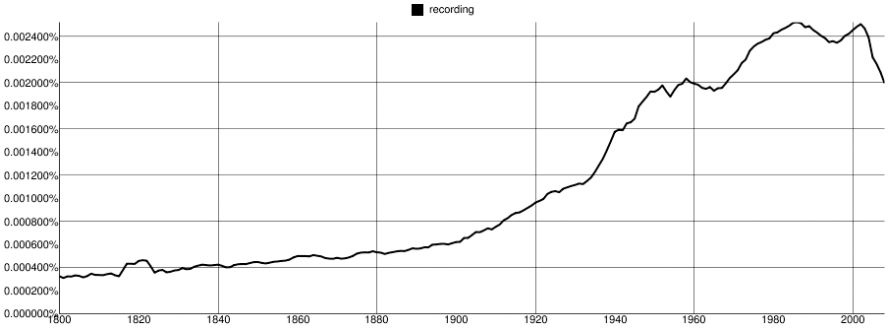


Figure 1.7 The usage of the term "recording" increases from left to right, moving towards contemporary times.[18]

[16] Google nGram: http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=photography&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

[17] Google nGram: http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=film&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

[18] Google nGram: http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=recording&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

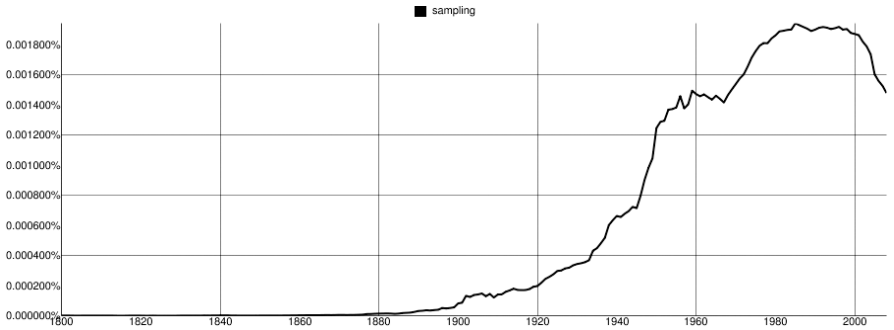


Figure 1.8 The usage of the term "sampling" is basically non-existent in print until the beginning of the 1880s. This corresponds with the relation of the concept of sampling with the archiving of mechanically reproduced material from which to sample in order to create collages and photomontages during the second stage of mechanical reproduction.[19]

The Cultural Understanding of Collage and Photomontage in Print

The following graphs demonstrate how the words "collage" and "photomontage" were popular in print publications between 1800 and 2008.

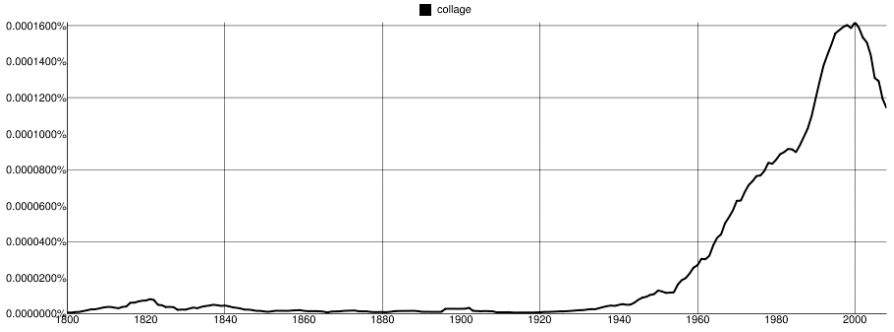


Figure 1.9 The term collage did not increase in usage until around the 1920s. This corresponds with the second stage of mechanical reproduction.[20]

[19] Google nGram: http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=sampling&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

[20] Google nGram, http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=collage&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

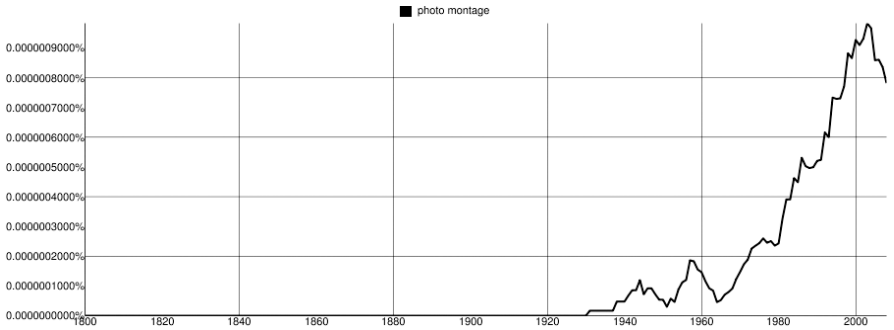


Figure 1.10 The term "photo montage" was not in print until about the 1930s.[21] Performing the search for "photomontage" results in a slightly different pattern, which still corresponds with the rise of the concept of photomontage in culture during the 1930s. I searched for two words, as opposed to one because this would be the way the concept was initially printed. The popularity of photomontage in print corresponds with the second stage of mechanical reproduction.

The Cultural Understanding of Music Recording and Music Sampling in Print

The following graphs demonstrate how the words "music recording" and "music sampling" were popular in print publications between 1800 and 2008.

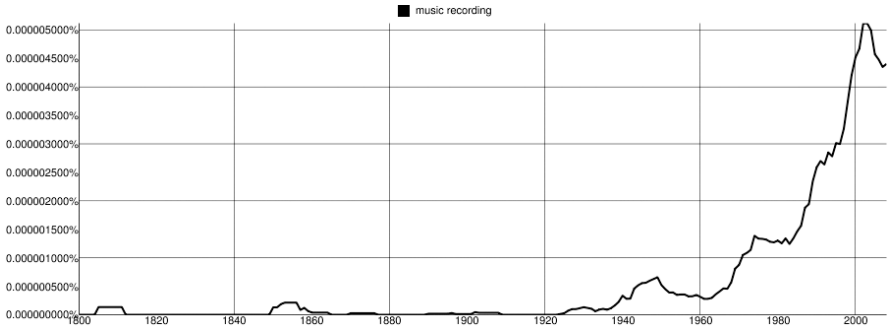


Figure 1.11 The term "music recording" does not increase in popular usage until the 1930s, and takes a major rise in the late '40s, and then again in the '80s.[22] This corresponds with the second and third stage of mechanical reproduction, and the first stage of Remix.

[21] Google nGram, http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=photo+montage&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

[22] Google nGram: http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=music+recording&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

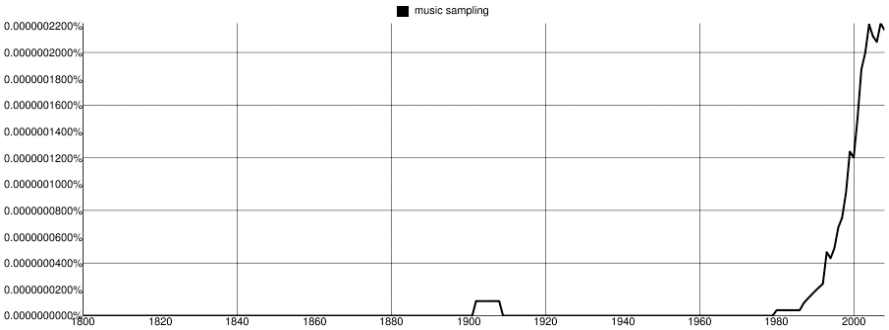


Figure 1.12 Music sampling, although it had an apparent relevance at the beginning of the 1900s, is not consistently popular until the beginning of the 1980s.[23] This corresponds with the rise of remixing in music within the first and second stages of Remix, eventually leading to the concept of remix culture.

The Cultural Understanding of Remix and Remix Culture in Print

The following graphs demonstrate how the words "remix" and "remix culture" were popular in print publications between 1800 and 2008.

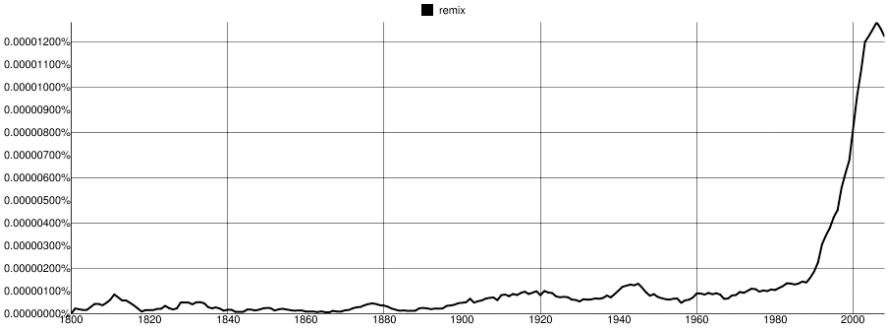


Figure 1.13 This graph demonstrates that the term "remix" was in use during the 1800s; however, it becomes evident that the term's popularity increased exponentially during the 1980s, which is also the time when dance club and hip-hop remixes became popular.[24] This corresponds with the first and second stages of Remix.

[23] Google nGram: http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=music+sampling&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

[24] Google nGram: http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=remix&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

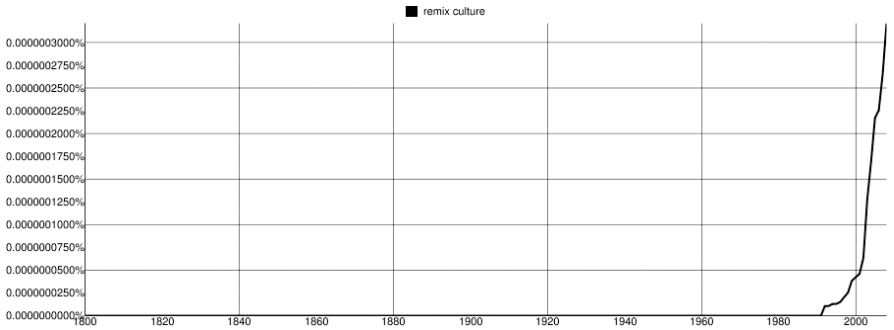


Figure 1.14 The term "remix culture" was not in print prior to the 1990s, when it began to be used to promote changes to copyright law by Lawrence Lessig and his contemporaries.[25] This corresponds with the third and fourth stages of Remix.

The Regressive Ideology of Remix

A theoretical evaluation of the fourth stage of Remix is necessary to understand better Remix's development. The notion of time that was explored in music sampling during the 1970s became proliferated throughout postmodern culture during the '80s. In the '90s—and certainly in the early 2000s—the notion of sampling became the intricate and undeniable default form of consumption available to average listeners who normally would not be considered content producers; users who, from time to time, may want "to play DJ" by selecting music in their ipods, or "remixers" by reblogging on subjects of interest. Inevitably, because of the state of specialization which makes modernism and postmodernism possible, access to sampling and ability to remix (of appropriating material which carries cultural value and tends to reference itself) falls into the danger of subverting history; and younger generations who may not know where the sample came from may treat remixed material as original. This is key to sampling in media at large, and this was the great fear of critical theorist Theodor Adorno when he discusses the regressive listener in mass culture—the individual who the industry would gladly keep at a juvenile stage, and can tell what to consume.[26]

An example of this occurrence is the hip-hop song "Rappers Delight" by the Sugarhill Gang, which during the early '80s was a popular hit, riding on the coat tails of hip-hop subculture. Early electrofunk artists, like Grandmaster Flash dismissed the song as a cooption by the culture indus-

[25] Google nGram: http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=remix+culture&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3

[26] Theodore Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (London, New York: Routtledge, 1991), 50 - 52

try of the thriving developments in the Bronx.[27] Some people thought of it as the first rap song, but it was not; and further, it sampled from a song titled "Good Times" by Chic. The producers did not acknowledge the sample. Here we note how historical citation is by default subverted in Remix. People were expected to recognize the "Good Times" baseline loop while the MCs rapped on top. Giving credit and also royalties to music artists whose samples were used would become a major issue in copyright law in the 80s.[28] As can be noted with "Rappers Delight," Remix, even when used in regressive fashion, with a short history span, still demands that people recognize some trace of history. Thus the power of sampling is always based on a diversion, one that can be presented, as a state of repressed desire that is completely mediated, showing no solution except to point to itself.[29] Part of the interest in sampling within the culture industry, then, is in taking a bit of music that the listener will recognize, who will in turn most likely become excited when she recognizes the sample. At this point, sampling manifests itself as loops that can potentially go on forever. It begins to expose the basic aesthetic of loops as vehicles of ideology in consumer culture. Repetition, as defined by political economist Jacques Attali, subverts representation, making the recording the primary form of experience in everyday life; it becomes part of reality at this moment.[30] And with this form of mechanical repetition, with loops, time gives way to space, because in modularity, time is not marked linearly, but circularly, for the sake of consumption and regression. One can go back to a favorite recording to experience it over and over again, thus making it the main point of reference in one's understanding of the world.

This is also the power of the photograph as defined by Roland Barthes. For him, the punctum is a static form of repetition; it captures, freezes a moment in time that the viewer can play over and over in his/her mind, similarly to a music recording. For Barthes the punctum is a sublime experience with which the viewer tries to come to terms by negotiating space and time. Barthes argued that an acknowledgment of a person's inevitable death is pronounced:

> This punctum, more or less blurred beneath the abundance and the disparity of contemporary photographs, is vividly legible in historical photographs: there is always a

[27] Ulf Poschardt, *DJ Culture* (London: Quartet Books, 1998), 193-194.

[28] Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night a DJ save my Life* (New York: Grover Press, 2000), 244-246.

[29] This is an observation made on postmodern culture by Fredic Jameson. See, Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 51-54. Also, see my analysis of his work in chapter three, 86-88.

[30] Attali, 7-22, see introduction for full citation, 5.

> defeat of Time in them: that is dead and that is going to die. […] At the limit, there is no need to represent a body in order for me to experience this vertigo of time defeated.[31]

For Barthes the ability of photography to freeze a moment in time was not only a pronouncement of death in the future, but also the capture of death within the image itself. It is because of the sense of "cutting" that was understood when people saw an apparently accurate reproduction of reality why the punctum was at play. It appeared as though a "sample" from real life had been stolen. The photograph records time, turning it into a fragment that spans across space: a material record of a person's mortality. This disturbing element of photography, which is crucial as an early form of recording, culminated in the power of film—in which the punctum noted by Barthes is extended overtly pronouncing space over time.

Figure 1.15 View of New York, New York Casino, Las Vegas, Summer 2008

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, stills and moving images, informed by photo and film language, are used to advertise all sorts of commercial brands. Images are displayed on billboards found all over New York City and Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Tokyo to name but a few

[31] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* Trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 96.

major international centers. In Las Vegas, as a concrete example, image and sound are strategically repeated incessantly to create a seamless spectacular loop. In this city with no clocks anywhere to be found, time is suspended—night and day become one timeless loop, encouraging people to stay up as much as possible and spend all of their time at the gambling tables. Kitsch art exhibitions and collections are promoted as just another major spectacle on the strip; nightly performances by cover bands of The Beatles, along with Elvis Presley impersonators, are naturally juxtaposed with actual performers, including Cher, Prince, and Wayne Newton—as if they belong to the same time period. In Las Vegas time stands still in the name of the spectacle. With the efficiency in production and simulation that mechanical reproduction has reached, the concept of time, and with it, history, give way to privileging space—simulacrum in space. Thus, Las Vegas specializes in presenting an ever-growing simulacrum of the world. One no longer needs to go to Paris to experience the Eiffel tower, but to Las Vegas to experience the pure myth of Parisian culture. What Las Vegas offers is a culture where the copy is revered for being a fake. And that fakeness attains authenticity based on the honest act of trying to be a parody of, and admirable reference to the original. Vegas is the ultimate experiment in appropriation—where critical distance is absent, where time is dismissed and space is presented as something modular, which can be replicated as simulacra proper, a never ending stage of make believe.[32] The punctum is taken to its limit.

The ideology that makes Las Vegas powerful has a reciprocal relationship with new media technology: once the computer database entered everyday reality, linear representation gave way to modular representation. This consists of privileging the paradigm over syntagm; meaning that it is not the story but the parts of the story that become emphasized as forms of interest. Database logic consists of making information access the goal in cultural production,[33] and narrative is subverted by the drive for efficient information access that need not have a beginning, middle, or end to be of interest to the user.

Music sampling was a transitional period toward privileging the fragment over the whole; and it is no accident that sampling in music became popular during the postmodern period. Fragments became the subject of cultural tension. While it was the medium of photography that came to define our relationship of the world through *recorded* (sampled) representations, this tendency would take its first major shift towards what is known

[32] My concept of the simulacrum is informed by Jean Baudrillard's theory on simulacra. See, Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 1-43.

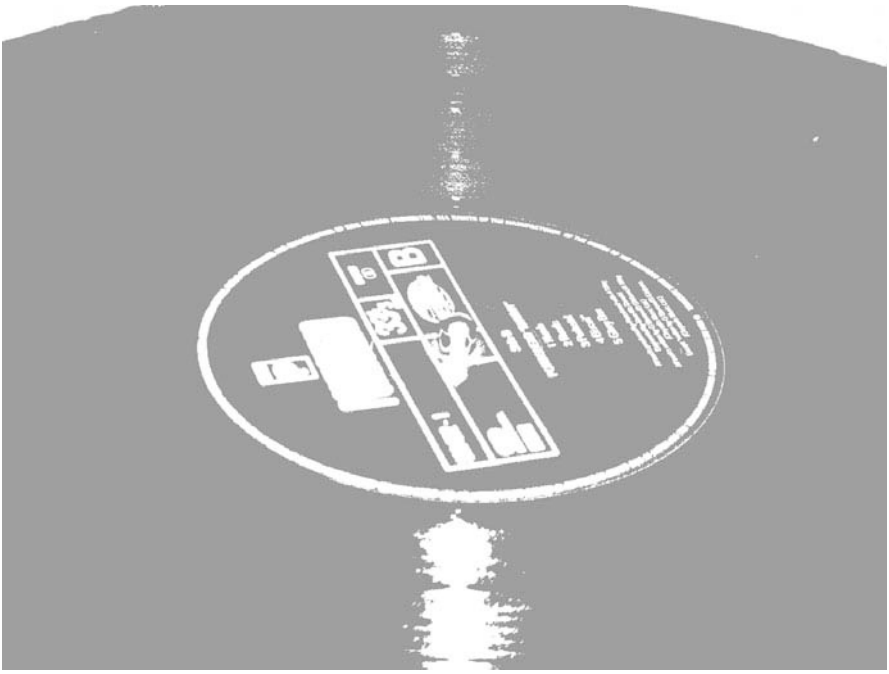
[33] Manovich, 218 – 221.

today as modularity not in visual culture but in music culture, in the explorations of composers, like Stockhausen, who with tape loops aesthetically alluded to what the computer actually does today. Tape loops run repeatedly until they are turned off, or fall apart from wear and tear; similarly, computers check themselves in loops in fractions of seconds to decide what to do at all times.[34] Looping, or modular repetition is what defines media culture, and Remix as a form of discourse; in this sense, Las Vegas is just one example of how this understanding of repetition is accepted by the average consumer in the form of spectacle: images repeat with no beginning or end. Looping in culture at large functions similarly to the punctum in photography as noticed by Barthes: the loop repeats a moment in time, just like a photograph presents a moment in time. Repetition, the stability and negation of the passing of time towards death, is found in consumer culture, not as a conscious recognition of history, but as superfluous and indifferent fragments of apparently unrelated events.

Hence, the principles of appropriation privileged in visual culture at large during the first decade of the twenty-first century started in early photography and printed media, moving on to sampling in music, finding their way back into culture once the computer became a common item in people's homes. And today, principles of Remix in new media blur the line between high and low culture (the potential that photography initially offered), allowing average people and the elite to produce work with the very same tools. Choice and intention, then, become the crucial defining elements in new media; digital tools can be used to support all types of agendas—which fall between commerce and culture.

[34] Rob Young, "Pioneers. Roll Tape: Pioneer Spirits in Musique Concrete," *Modulations*, ed. Peter Shapiro (New York: Caipirinha Productions and D.A.P., 2000), 8 – 20.

Chapter Two: Remix[ing] Music



E. Navas, *Remix Theory*

Image: B-side on turntable, San Diego, CA, Summer 2007

A Night at Kadan, San Diego, CA

On a Wednesday night, during the summer of 2007, I hosted a couple of friends from the east coast, who were in San Diego to participate in Siggraph.[1] We went to a bar called Kadan in the North Park neighborhood. Local friends thought that it would be a good place to meet for the evening because it was drum 'n' bass night.[2]

It was a bar like many others in the area: the bartender at the front, and some chairs and tables with enough space for bands to perform in the back. Kadan was already quite busy when we arrived. Upon entering, I heard some early jungle being mixed on the decks. I thought about how drum 'n' bass had reached a moment when all those styles which had been guarded by their respective innovators now could be juxtaposed with no problem, either on the turntables themselves or in the studio.[3]

I did not recognize any songs played during the first few minutes, which was fine because I had not been following the latest drum 'n' bass releases for the last year or so. My friends and I settled at the front of the bar with some beers and began to talk. Every so often we would hear rappers cutting through the rhythm, perfectly in sync; then, I noticed that some of the same freestylers came on top of different beats. When a song in the style of the music label V Recordings was played,[4] I decided to get closer.

I finally understood what was different about the sound. The DJ was spinning instrumental drum 'n' bass while three MCs were improvising live. They were so precise that I thought it was all pre-recorded and that it was the DJ who was playing the tunes with vocals on top; but this was not the case. I thought, "This kind of energy… this is how it may have been in the early days, in some way, in Kingston and later in the Bronx—maybe even London, and Bristol: Selectors/DJs spinning and MCs/rappers just rhyming." It was an anachronistic moment in which I experienced the roots of hip-hop as a world movement: where it had been, where it was at that moment—yet, it was not necessarily clear where it was going. And that was exciting for me. It kept the tradition alive by remixing it; each im-

[1] Siggraph is a major convention that features some of the latest technology in emerging fields. The event happens every year in the United States. See website: http://www.siggraph.org/

[2] As of this writing, Kadan still holds Drum 'n' Bass night, every Wednesday See: http://www.kadanclub.com/.

[3] For a brief history on the development of drum 'n' bass see, Javier Blánquez, "Progresión lógica: jungle, drum 'n' bass y 2step," in *Loops: Una historia de la música electrónica,* ed. Javier Blánquez and Omar Morera (Barcelona: Revervoir Books, 2002), 417.

[4] V Recordings is one of the most popular Drum 'n' Bass music labels. It was founded by Roni Size. See their website for more information: http://www.vrecordings.com.

provised rhyme, each record mixed in with another showed an awareness of history.

In the tradition of freestyling, the voices demanded that the audience listen because the MCs/rappers had a story to tell. The tales in themselves were like many stories of MCs and rappers: the performers talked about their crews and where they come from; to whom they listen and respect; and how much street credibility they have earned. What mattered here in the end was the form of delivery, and the energy produced by the live performance. The MCs/rappers were freestyling in a localized Rastafarian style. The rhymes were leaning towards the early sound of reggae, but at a frenetic, locomotive speed contemporary of drum 'n' bass—syncopated and in perfect staccato, with extreme cohesion between beat and rhyme. At that point I thought of the drum 'n' bass tunes I was listening to at Kadan as equivalent to early dub plates, riding the threshold of *versions* and *instrumentals*. Dub was present that evening in remixed form.

Dub, B Sides and Their [re]*versions* in the Threshold of Remix

The above anecdote points to a moment when Remix manifested itself on the threshold of culture. A moment that could be easily dismissed as another night at the club, but which upon closer reflection exposes the instability of meaning. More importantly, it brings into view the allegorical impulse upon which Remix is dependent. In his essay "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism," Craig Owens argues that allegory is pivotal for the work of art during the postmodern period. One of his prime examples is Laurie Anderson who in performances, such as "Americans on the Move," presents material that pulls the viewer's reading in two opposing ways simultaneously. Owens considers a specific moment from Anderson's concert in which the image of a man with his hand raised and a woman standing passively beside him, which was originally designed by NASA to be sent into space to greet other intelligent beings, could be read as a gesture of amicability—it could mean two things: hello or good-bye.[5] This dual tension is allegory for Owens, meaning that two readings are active at once. This is not so different from music mashups, which consist of two or more songs juxtaposed allowing the listener to acknowledge the mix as a single composition or a combination of various sources simultaneously.[6] Similarly to Anderson's work, the drum

[5] Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism," in *Art After Modernism,* ed. Brian Wallis and Marcia Tucker (New York: Godine, 1998), 217-221.

[6] See chapter three of this book.

'n' bass freestylers would come on top of an instrumental track to tell their story. They pulled and pushed the audience between instrumental music and music with lyrics.

In regards to this duality in music shaped by the appropriation of tools of mechanical reproduction, this chapter demonstrates how repetition and representation are able to function as both critical and regressive tools. In the following sections, dub is defined by the deliberate implementation of repetition to create mechanical forms of representation that, like Benjamin's mass produced object, can become a tool of regression or progression, depending on the producer's inclination.

This chapter also aims to demonstrate that early dub is a liminal space in which colonial ideology becomes appropriated by those on whom it was initially imposed. This is crucial to understand because Remix carries this critical trace of colonial resistance. In support of my argument this chapter links dub to the theories of Hommi Bhabha and Hardt & Negri. This framework presents dub as the aesthetical ground that supports Remix's expansion beyond music.

The Threshold in Dub

Dub was at times called B-sides, which meant that the recordings were not the actual songs, but "versions" (yet another word used for dub) of songs. In dub, and eventually the rise of Remix, the concept of originality was questioned incessantly. The myth of the artist genius, which was commonly popular in art and music, and to this day is still promoted in mainstream media, was demoted in the actual production of recordings made of pre-existing musical compositions in the small island of Jamaica.

The history of dub, like that of hip-hop certainly is always up for debate for researchers. Depending on who you read, and what CD reissues you may listen to, some people might say that it was King Tubby who discovered dub almost by accident in the studio of Lee "Scratch" Perry, while others might say that it was Ruddy Redwood who, while observing his engineer, Byron Smith, in the studio of Duke Reid, realized the potential creativity of music with subverted lyrics.[7] Both tales recall a similar instance: In Redwood's case his engineer left the vocal track's volume down, and in the case of Tubby he turned the voices off in the mixing board, realizing that the instruments had power of expression on their own.

[7] The credit for the most part goes to King Tubby. For a different tale where credit is given to Redwood, see the accompanying text of the CD reissue: *The Rough Guide to Dub: Original dub master, birthplace of modern dance music*, Rough Guides/World Music Network, 2005. Also see *Dub Massive Volume One*, Fuel 2000 Records, 2000. For an attribution to Tubby, see Dick Hebdige, "Pre-mix: version to version," *Cut 'n' Mix* (Comedia: London, 1987), 83.

In both tales, experimentation with sound as abstraction took place: echoes and reverbs were added, while the bass line became privileged.

It is not an issue for us in this instance which of these two pioneers first conceived the concept of dub, but that what developed as dub exposes a musical element that thrives on a *threshold*; what Homi Bhabha calls the liminal space where identity is constantly defined, where one is neither one nor the other, where one is both and neither, where a third space to gain autonomy can begin to take place.[8] I cite Bhabha's theory with the understanding that it has been questioned by some, including Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri for proposing what they call indecidability; for ultimately only enabling the subjects to vacillate within a space that makes them predictably marginal to the status quo, unable to develop an actual identity following a Hegelian dialectical philosophy. The criticism of Hardt and Negri is that both postcolonial and postmodern theories are looking at Western enlightenment thinking as a ghost to fight from the past; they argue against those who share Bhabha's position: "Power has evacuated the bastion they are attacking and has circled around to their rear to join them in the assault in the name of difference. These theorists thus find themselves pushing against an open door."[9] In other words, that which postcolonialists claim to resist has assimilated their rhetoric.

Whether we side with Bhabha or Hardt and Negri is something to consider at a later point in this text. What we should focus on at the moment is on how these positions are at play in culture, simultaneously, and more directly how they link to dub, as well as Remix. It is important to develop a critical understanding of dub as a discourse in relation to these critical thinkers because their positions expose the anxieties that have informed the creative drive behind music culture since the rise of the radio. In terms of recent history, Bhabha's as well as Hardt & Negri's theories present particular, and arguably extreme, critical positions that have been inherited from the 1990s. There are many other thinkers who fall in-between the views expressed by these theorists; however, evaluating their apparently polar positions best serves the evaluation of Remix in terms of center and periphery.

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[8] Homi Bhaha, "The Commitment to Theory," *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 34-37.

[9] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Cambridge, England: Harvard University Press, 2000), 138.

Dub: From Acetate to Digital

In dub, material tools, particularly sound studio equipment for post-production, were used to explore the concepts that would become the backbone of Remix, namely *what I define as the extended, selective and reflexive remixes*.[10] Dub as a musical concept vacillates among various definitions. The term itself exposes the conundrum upon which Bhabha and Hardt & Negri contest the margins of culture. When we consider the history of dub in Jamaica and other parts of the world, high and low, middle and center no longer exist with clear divisions; yet they are still at play as ideological forces in popular culture—hence a theory of liminality is necessary.

Dub recordings are not songs without lyrics, nor "music without words;" they are something in-between. Dub is often linked to the term *version*; it is also cited in relation to Reggae *B-sides* which at times were seen as *instrumentals*, but in the end, while it vacillates among these terms, borrowing and informing them, a dub recording has come to be understood as a thing of its own.

Dub got its name from the process of making acetate test plates. Recording engineers, before digital technology, created master disk plates known as test dubs as a necessary part of the process to master a recording. These plates basically were produced to test the levels of tracks, fading them in and out.[11] As dancehall culture evolved in Kingston these plates became important for selectors (the equivalent of the Disc Jockey in pop culture today). And as previously mentioned, it was either, or perhaps both, King Tubby and Ruddy Redwood (by observing his engineer Byron Smith) who came to focus on the actual manipulation of sounds, including vocals as an art form of its own in terms of post-production.

What complicates the relationship of dub and versions is that dub recordings were not necessarily instrumental versions of a song, but alternate versions that would have some variation, often overemphasizing the bass. Versions in many ways were one of Kingston's interpretations of remixes, but they do not completely fit the concept of remixing as it is understood today. A version could be a combination of a cover, a variation of a song, or at times be a re-mix of original recordings along with new tracks on top. A song could have hundreds of versions. For example, Dick Hebdige explains that Wayne Smith's "Under mi Sleng Teeng" circa October 1985

[10] I define these terms at length in chapter three.

[11] See *Dub Massive Volume One*. This is also common knowledge among musicians invested in dub culture.

was estimated to have about 239 versions.[12] These were variations that included adding instruments or adjusting levels on pre-recorded tracks, as well as what normally would be called covers. The concept of version becomes hard to define and begins to cross over to the concept of the instrumental and eventually dub, all which came to be included in the genre of B-sides. Here is a mythical story of how Redwood became aware of the potential of dub:

> According to Ruddy Redwood, owner of Ruddy's Supreme, one day he was in Duke Reid's studio when he heard the engineer Byron Smith play a tune by the vocal group the Paragons, except that Smith inadvertently forgot to bring up the vocal track in the mix, so that all that could be heard over the studio monitors was the instrumental track. […] When he [Redwood] played the disc in the dancehall it caused a sensation, and immediately Ruddy cut his own versions—initially called 'instrumentals.'[…] He also got guitarist Lynn Taitt to play on many of them, thus consolidating their exclusivity.[13]

To further shed light on the development of dub, and complicate the conundrum of who actually developed it, here is a quote that provides more details of the event described above:

> When dub started it wasn't really "dub." Tubbys and myself was at Duke Reid's studio one evening, and [a sound system operator] by the name of Ruddy [Redwood] from Spanish Town was cutting some riddims, with vocal. And the engineer made a mistake and him was going stop and Ruddy said, "No man, make it run!" And then the pure riddim run because him didn't put in the voice. Rudy said, "Now take another cut with the voice." And then, him take the cut with voice.
>
> [Ruddy] was playing the next Saturday and I happened to be in the dance. And they play this tune, they play the riddim and the dance get so excited that them start to sing the lyrics over the riddim part and them have to play it for about half an hour to an hour! The Monday morning when I come back into town I say, "Tubbs, boy, that little mistake we made, the people them love it!" So Tubby say, "All right, we'll try it." We try it with some Slim Smith riddim like "Aint Too Proud to Beg." And Tubby's start it with the voice and [then] bring in the riddim. Then him play the singing, and then him play the complete riddim without voice. We start a call the thing "version."[14]

It appears that Tubby may have actually manipulated the sound during the pivotal session with Redwood, because Bunny Lee includes both Tubby and himself in the act of dubbing along with Redwood's engineer; but this is the instability of oral history that we will have to live with for now, because it is not clear exactly what they did. What is of interest is that in both quotes we notice a few key elements at play. First the text mentions instrumentals which were B-side recordings of original songs. We also no-

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[12] Hebdige, 12.

[13] See Text for CD compilation: *Dub Music Rough Guide*.

[14] Bunny Lee quoted. See, Michael E. Veal, *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007), 52.

tice that Redwood would add to his B-sides other elements like guitars to make the alternate compositions interesting on their own, and in this way the instrumentals were also versions, which Bunny Lee suggests he and King Tubby developed after Redwood's session. Dub, then, carries the trace of B-sides, and versions, with the pivotal difference that dub emphasizes the manipulation of the sound in post-production.

In this sense, dub has a direct relationship with remixes of today. Dub compositions privilege the pre-recorded tracks as the starting point of creativity. When Tubby was in the studio tweaking by "accident" the knobs of the soundboard, as the story proposed by critics like Dick Hebdige goes,[15] he was having a creative dialogue with the machines and the tapes. What he and others like him were doing was certainly informed by the practice of creating versions as described above. Certainly some would argue that to claim what a B-side was or is, whether it is an instrumental or not, a version or a dub in the end may be a mute argument, because it becomes obvious just in the brief history outlined that these terms were intimately intertwined.

My argument is that dub, as a musical genre, however, rose above the other concepts because of the creative possibility that it offered, as well as the practical efficiency it gave to the sound engineer. These elements are quite relevant in "do it yourself" (DIY) culture today. The creative drive behind dub was successful and has become assimilated into what is known as remix culture for two reasons: one, it allows the individual to thrive alone in his studio with proper equipment, to then quickly disseminate the production in the community; and often it allows others to create more versions. Dub was the first activity in electronic music and remix culture to make the most of individual input in large part dependent on technologies of post-production, while also making it efficiently available to others for further development, and input, when the time was appropriate.[16] Granted funding was needed, so this power was held by the few privileged producers of Kingston.[17]

To further elaborate, the engineer did not need anyone, just the recorded tracks. No one else, like a performer who would normally want to have retakes, had to be around. It was only the creativity of the engineer that was primarily at play in dub. And if someone came in to record at a later point, then that person had to listen to the producer of the track and live up to the expectations of what was already recorded. This further reasserted

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[15] Hebdige, 83.

[16] While some critics may argue that John Cage and Stockhausen, Yoko Ono and their contemporaries played with pre-recorded materials as tape loops, their compositions were not open to constant revision by others, which is vital to versions and dub recordings.

[17] Veal, 46.

the dependence of the performer on the machine: the rupture that musicians had been coping with since the conception of the phonograph.[18] This is a symptom of repetition. A pivotal element that would become more evident as dub culture grew is the lowering cost of producing your own music, which today is available to anyone with a computer and a connection to the Internet. Accessibility, then, has enabled dub to become an influence in just about all facets of electronic music. Currently, anyone can dabble with some form of creative production, whether it is music or visual manipulation with tools often developed in open-source communities. Dub marked a moment when the producer and/or music engineer overtly became not only a musician but a conceptual artist focused on selectivity. This is the legacy of Lee "Scratch" Perry, who wore many hats, including gofer, promoter, engineer, producer, and performer.[19] Dub created a space where individuals who enjoyed playing live with the soundboard could conceive doing it in front of a crowd, just like they would do it alone in the studio. This is the concept behind some performances by music groups such as the Chemical Brothers, who are known for performing with their studio equipment on stage. During concerts, the audience is presented with a large studio soundboard and all the accompanying equipment that would normally be found in a professional recording studio.[20] All of these elements are simplifications of dub's experimentation with the principles of Remix.

Subversion and the Threshold

Based on what has been noted, it can be argued that a dub recording is not an instrumental, nor a version—but both and neither at the same time. It vacillates, dabbles, and questions its definition as well as those of version and instrumental (see figures 2.1 –2.4). Dub explored elements later found in the act of selectivity in Remix, as it developed in New York City. With the concept of selection as its foundation, dub is different from the concept of an instrumental in that unlike an instrumental, a dub composition will have traces of vocals, many times half a sentence that gets lost in a reverb that resonates for several bars. Dub compositions do not allow the listener to get lost in complete abstraction. Yet, the trace of the allegorical in terms

[18] These observations are based on my own experience as a DJ, and percussionist, as well as having spent time in studios occasionally, experiencing the recording process. For a historical reassessment of this influence see, Hebdige, 83 – 89.

[19] Erik Davis, "Dub, Scratch, and the Black Star: Lee Perry on the Mix," *techgnosis.com*, http://www.techgnosis.com/dub.html, 1997.

[20] I experienced this when I attended the Chemical Brothers' concert at the Hollywood Palladium, Los Angeles, California on Friday, July 9, 1999.

of representation is still within the recordings. Dub music over emphasizes the bass, and brings forward all other instruments, freeing the drums for experimentation (something that would become the focus in rhythm science, particularly drum 'n' bass), and then turns the vocals into riffs that come in and out, similar to horns in actual songs. The riffs complement the exploration of the more abstract elements in the composition.

A dub composition finds itself in-between complete abstraction, which was found in pure instrumentation and the more concrete narratives found in lyrics; it deliberately subverts speech; presents it muffled, thus paradoxically pointing to the power of spoken word as a form of representation. Dub negates speech, unexpectedly making it much more powerful by showing its limited role within an almost instrumental composition. Dub privileges the bass line and guitar riffs, but without the lyrics coming in and out in similar fashion to a horn section, the song would simply fall apart; the average person would be prone to become bored.[21] Dub becomes a simulacrum, a cave, where one sees the shadows of the story upfront, but always undefined. One senses the narrative, but this one never completely appears. If one knows the original tune, then one can project the lyrics, and have an allegorical experience that presents a possible dual reading: almost a song with lyrics, almost a song without. One may try to figure out what the lyrics may say; but even then, one knows that something is subverted—dub is defined by an allegorical tension, one which it shares with appropriation art during the '80s, and its predecessors in the form of photocollage and film. In dub music we find at play the basic elements of the fragmentation of the postmodern period as defined by Owens. In dub we find the roots of Remix.

This is the case with songs like "Moses Dub" by The Revolutionaries, or "Satta Dread Dub" by Aggrovators and Kin Philip. They begin with instrumental intros, guitars on top of the over-emphasized bass line, and then a break follows with a reverb of the last note played on the instruments; and then the lyrics come in. The beginning of a phrase, here, then gets lost, then a reverb, and out again, all instruments drop except for the bass, then a reverb and from the back the lyrics come on top to then get lost in an echo, and so on. This approach varies immensely and there are too many other groups to name, but as is common knowledge to all Jamaican music

[21] This, of course, is an issue for those critics holding on to Adornian criticism of music. While I do reflect on Adorno's critical position in other sections, this chapter is not the place to point out what banal entertainment may or may not mean for those who align themselves with culture in the name of critical theory. This is merely an observation without passing judgment on the people that would react to music as boring due to their desire to be entertained.

lovers, other acts like Prince Jammy and Perry's Upsetters made the most of these few studio effects.[22]

This in-betweeness, this inability to completely be a version or an instrumental, while also comfortably relying on both for cultural dissemination, is what has allowed dub to have great expressive power. It has also turned it into an appealing model for music genres that have followed it. Like dub, those other movements did not develop in the center, but in the threshold in that liminal cultural space, the periphery where things can be redefined.

Traces of dub are quite common and taken for granted when a DJ tweaks knobs and levels to create sound effects on the fly. This excites the dancers on the floor, and it is a direct act coming from the early studio days of dub experimentation when artists like Perry and Tubby would tweak again and again the same tracks. Plastikman, Juan Atkins, Timo Maas, and Paul Oakenfold, among other contemporary DJ stars, use the DJ mixing board following principles first explored alone in a studio, in Kingston. Today, the tweaking of knobs is part of lucrative spectacles developed around DJ Culture to fill up arenas.

Analytics: From Reggae to Electronic Dub

The following visualizations of selected songs demonstrate how the reggae sound gives way to the emphasis of bass and drums as valid creative elements. The waveforms and melodic spectograms below make evident how the enhancement of the mid and lower tones became important musical variables as experimentation took place in reggae, dub, and eventually trip hop and electronic dub.

Analysis of Dub and Reggae Recordings

The privileging of the beat over the lyrics would come to contribute to the development of other styles such as drum 'n' bass, and more recently dubstep.[23] The time sections of the recordings were chosen for comparison with similar areas, for the most part the introduction of songs. This is done to provide a focused representation of what goes on throughout the recordings. Visualizing the compositions from beginning to end leads to the same evaluation that I propose below.

[22] For other songs see *Dub: The Music Rough Guide*. Also the Double CD set *Dub Massive*.

[23] The examples here do not cover drum 'n' bass, or dubstep, but the emphasis found in the last two examples fall in line with the approach to sound mixing in these genres.

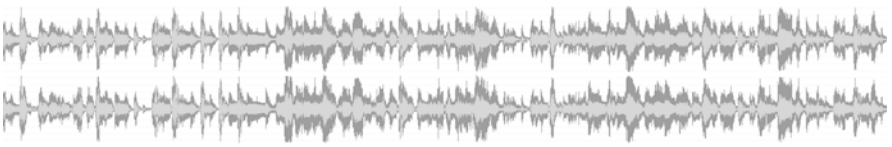

Figure 2.1 “Fever” (1975) performed by Susan Cadogan, waveform visualization of minute 0:00 to 00:35 of the recording.[24] Note that the waveform has a pattern which is much bolder where lyrics are present.

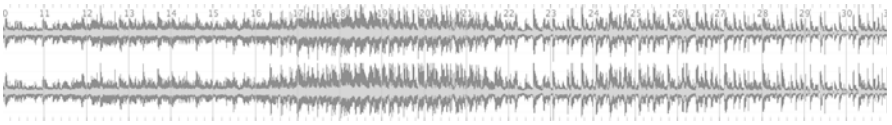

Figure 2.2 “Upsetting Dub” by Lee “Scratch” Perry, waveform visualization of 0:00 to 00:35 minute of the recording.[25] Throughout this composition the drums are enhanced with deep echo effects. This is evident in the wider sections of the waveform above. Note that other waves are clearly separated, producing a steady percussive rhythm. Melody is subordinated in this composition; it is completely instrumental with the occasional guitar strumming typical of reggae.

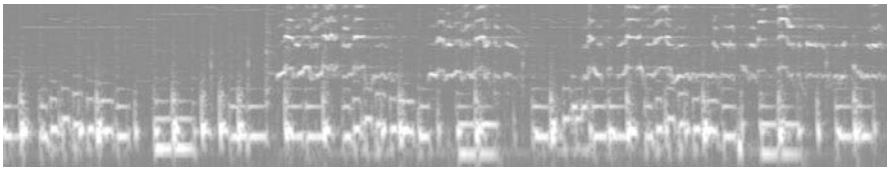

Figure 2.3 “Fever” (1975) performed by Susan Cadogan, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 0:00 to 00:35 of the recording. The brighter areas represent the lyrics or high-pitched instruments; they match the bolder areas of the corresponding waveform above.

[24] Susan Cadogan, “Fever,” *DJ Spooky Presents in Fine Style 50,000 of Trojan Records!!!* Trojan Records, 2006, CD Reissue.

[25] Lee “Scratch” Perry, “Upsetting Dub,” *Lee “Scratch” Perry versus I-Roy Sensimilla Showdown*, Fuel Records, 2002, CD Reissue.

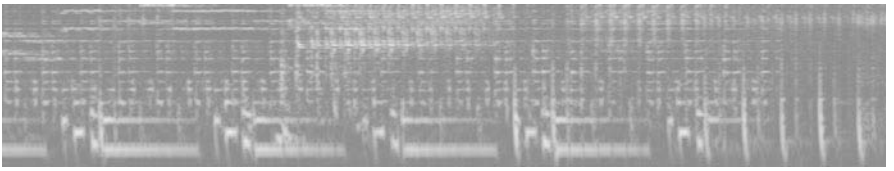

Figure 2.4 “Upsetting Dub” by Lee “Scratch” Perry, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 0:00 to 00:35 of the recording. This spectogram matches the “Upsetting Dub” waveform above. Note that the lighter areas are not as pronounced as those found in “Fever.” Notice also how there is less variation within the range of the overall mix; it shows an emphasis on the mid and low tones.

Analysis of Trip Hop and Electronic Dub Recordings

The experimentation with beats in dub not only influenced the conception of hip-hop in the United States, but also trip hop and electronic dub in England. Below are two examples that make evident how later styles borrow qualities from reggae and dub.

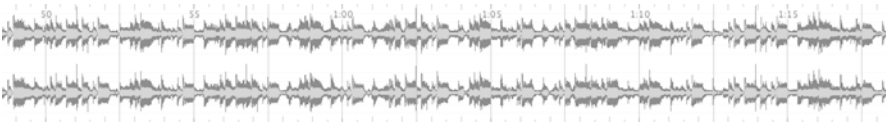

Figure 2.5 “Protection” (1994) by Massive Attack, waveform visualization of minute 00:45 to 01:20 of the recording.[26] This recording is considered a trip hop recording. Similarly to “Fever,” the lyrics appear as bolder waveforms throughout the visualization. However, they differ in that the waveform does not have areas that move away from the center as drastically as those in “Fever.” Note that the pattern of “Protection” is more uniform; this makes evident the deliberate percussive emphasis of the composition.

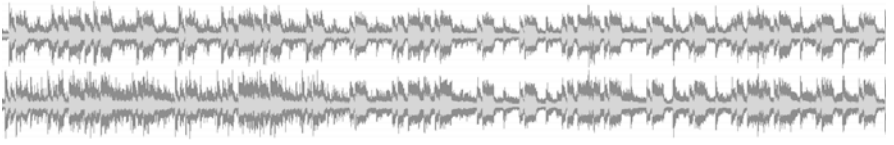

Figure 2.6 “Radiation” (1994) by Mad Professor, waveform visualization of minute 00:45 to 01:20 of the recording.[27] This recording is considered a crossover from trip-hop to electronic dub. This is essentially a remix of “Protection” by Massive Attack.[28] Notice how the waveform is overall much bolder and wider than the original recording. This recording does not only privilege rhythm, but also the bass and drums to a much higher degree than classic

[26] Massive Attack, “Protection,” *Protection*, Virgin Records, 1994, CD Recording.

[27] Massive Attack versus Mad Professor, “Radiation Ruling the Nation: Protection, ” *No Protection*, Gyroscope Records, 1994.

[28] I define this type of remix as “reflexive remix.” See chapter three for the actual definition.

dub recordings, such as Lee Perry's above. The reason why bass and drums could be further enhanced has to do in part with the ongoing development of music technology. In the 1990s, Mad Professor could push the range of the mid and lower tones to a degree that would not be possible in the '60s and '70s for reggae or dub.

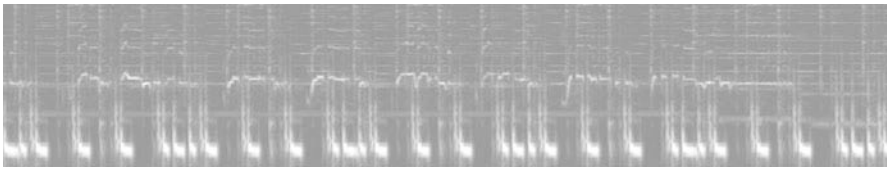

Figure 2.7 "Protection" (1994) by Massive Attack, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 00:45 to 01:20 of the recording. This spectogram makes evident that it is the percussive elements in the composition that are privileged in the mix. There is no great variation as found in "Fever." This has to do with the way the voice and high notes were handled in the actual mixing of the composition to make all the elements subordinate to the bass and the drums. There are bright areas that are more pronounced whenever lyrics are present.

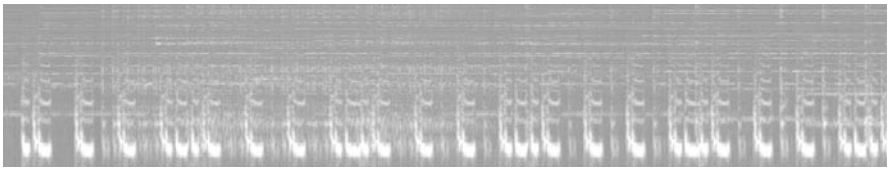

Figure 2.8 "Radiation" (1994) by Mad Professor, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 00:45 to 01:20 of the recording. This visualization is even brighter than "Protection's." However, the overall composition is more visible. This is because of the extreme expansion of the bass and treble. This dub composition pushes the limit of its sound spectrum to the point that, if heard in a proper stereo, the speakers will sound on the verge of peaking into pure noise, yet that effect is carefully developed to sound crisp within the appropriate range. The bright areas in this case don't correspond every time with lyrics, but rather with the sound that has been pushed to be on the higher side of the spectrum; excerpts of the lyrics are also regularly introduced dissolving with deep echoes. Notice that, because this is a remix, the pattern is still quite similar to the original "Protection" recording.

Dub in Hip-Hop, Down Tempo and Drum 'n' Bass

Dub, as Jamaican music, is perhaps best known for its link to hip-hop in the '70s and '80s in the Bronx, NY. Kool Herc is now officially known as "the father of hip-hop."[29] He took the culture of toasting to the Bronx.

[29] Afrikaa Bambaataa calls Kool Herc the father of hip-hop in the movie Scratch. See *Scratch*, DVD. Directed by Doug Prey. USA: Firewalks Film, 2001.

Toasting means, literally, to make toasts—make celebratory announcements—on the microphone while also animating the audience. With his mobile sound system, and the concept of the breaks—Herc made the most of instrumental sections, where the drummer could find expression just for a few bars before the lyrics came back. This was the basis for turntablism. DJs became obsessed with finding breaks they could remix on the spot for dancers and especially B-boys. The selector in Jamaica is equivalent to the DJ in New York, and the MC (Master of Ceremonies) is equivalent to the rapper. While the selector spins the records the MC animates people to get busy on the dance floor. This activity of mixing and remixing live for the audience, while the MC talked over the records, which was further explored during the early days of hip-hop in the Bronx, made it to the music studio in order to become the foundation for hip-hop music, which developed parallel to disco, another studio based music genre.

These events in New York were preceded by pivotal moments in Europe. Soon after War World II, people from Jamaica migrated to England to fill up jobs that English people did not want to perform, and the music of Jamaica started to ambivalently become part of English culture, as the immigrants from the West Indies were not always well received by the English.[30] West Indian children born in England developed new musical forms of their own. In the '90s, during the third stage of Remix, when it became a style in the music mainstream largely defined in the United States, subcultures in England began to develop new forms of music on the periphery that would inform remix culture towards the end of the '90s. Dub and reggae along with hip-hop were the major influences in the development of drum 'n' bass, as well as trip-hop and down tempo,[31] music genres with multi-ethnic contributors, particularly in Bristol. Artists like Goldie attest that drum 'n' bass was the first form of music that England could call its own because it had not been imported.[32] Nevertheless, drum 'n' bass is informed by the tradition of breaks (evolving into breakbeats) that started in the U.S. with turntablism.

In England breaks were sped up. In this sense the turntable as an instrument played a vital role. A breakbeat record played at 33 RPM could be replayed at 45 RPM, and it would sound strikingly like the early jungle sounds. Also, by doubling up the beat in this way, jungle (early drum 'n' bass) became fully mixable with down-tempo, or trip hop compositions, often played at 60 or 80 BPMs. This allowed producers in Bristol to push for the beat in abstract form and explore rhythm in similar fashion to the

[30] Hebdige, 90 – 95.
[31] Blánquez, "Progresion Lógica[…]," 407 – 436.
[32] Ibid.

early dub days in Kingston. This fetishization of the rhythm came to be called Rhythm Science. Drum 'n' bass producers in particular also strategically inserted lyrics to create a sense of abstraction leaning towards open ended narratives. The influence of dub is strongly sensed in early jungle.

Down tempo was influenced by hip-hop compositions, also often favoring or over-emphasizing the expressive power of the instruments, not the voice, although the lyrics were important and complete songs did develop. One of the first trip-hop bands was Massive Attack. With their album *Blue Lines* (1991), they explored the possibilities of rap in UK culture. Their compositions were also clearly influenced by the Kingston sound, particularly the aesthetic of dub. This became even more obvious in their second album, *Protection* (1994) which was released simultaneously with its doppelganger *No Protection* mixed and produced by Mad Professor (see figures 2.5 – 2.8). *No Protection* was clearly informed (if not fully formed) by imported dub culture. Other Bristol groups followed, such as Portishead, and their internationally successful album *Dummy* (1994), as well as individual artists such as Tricky, and his album *Maxinquaye* (1995). Tricky initially collaborated with Massive Attack, but by the late '90s had moved on to work on his own projects. The label Ninja Tune was founded in 1991 by Matt Black and Jonathan More, better known as Coldcut.[33] In Ninja Tune we find a mix of all the genres mentioned so far, drum 'n' bass riffs seamlessly combined with breakbeats and down-tempo tunes, and other styles in-between that would defy an easy label. Other contributions during the '90s came from the label Mo-Wax which produced albums such as DJ Shadow's *Endtroducing*. Shadow, originally from Davis, California is perhaps best known for his seminal composition "Midnight in a Perfect World."[34]

While acts like Portishead and Massive Attack have found some acceptance in pop culture, drum 'n' bass artists have not been able to become as popular, although drum 'n' bass itself as a musical form is actually incorporated into bling bling type hip-hop, as well as TV commercials. Goldie may be one of the few drum 'n' bass artists who actually became somewhat well-known in the mainstream. He even dabbled in acting.[35] But other artists like Photek and LTJ Bukem remain well known mainly within the more immersive circles of electronic music. Their compositions are unlikely to be played in major radio stations, at least in the United States.

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[33] For more information see their website: http://ninjatune.com.

[34] DJ shadow, "Midnight in a Perfect World," *Entroduding*, CD. Mo-Wax/FFFR, 1996.

[35] For details on Goldie's career see his website: http://www.metalheadz.co.uk/, an extensive bio is available on VH1's website: http://www.vh1.com/artists/az/goldie/bio.jhtml, and for a list of films he has been in see, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0325635/

To this day, dub has informed the more popular genre of "electronic music," but even this format is not fully part of the mainstream; instead, it thrives as a semi-sub-culture that at times attains momentary attention in mainstream media. Electronica, itself, thrives on the periphery of a stable market, which is possible due to the economic stability offered by global sales in large part on the Internet. Now that an outline of dub's evolution is in place, its relationship to the periphery can be considered with the theories of Bhabha and Hardt & Negri.

Dub 'n' Theory

We need to revisit the critical positions of Homi Bhabha, as well as Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri in more detail. As previously explained Bhabha focuses on how identity is defined in the liminal space between cultural fields. He is interested in developing a theory of the Other that does not ultimately support colonial ideology. He writes:

> I want to take a stand on the shifting margins of cultural displacement – that confounds any profound or 'authentic' sense of a national culture or an 'organic' intellectual – and ask what the function of a committed theoretical perspective might be, once the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world is taken as the paradigmatic place of departure.[36]

With hybridity, Bhabha proposes to consider activities by groups like the ones responsible for the evolution of dub in terms of difference not diversity. The reason being that diversity, he argues, is epistemological, an object of empirical knowledge, something that demands a stable identity, while *difference* is always in the process of enunciation. It is always becoming, and changing.[37]

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri use Bhabha as the generalized example to show the limited view of not only postcolonial theory, but also poststructural and postmodern theories. The main reason, they argue, is that these theoretical disciplines keep looking at Western thought as a hegemonic model from the past. Hardt and Negri argue that theories conversant with postcolonialism react against the foundation of Enlightenment thinking:

> We argued earlier that modernity should be understood not as uniform and homogeneous, but rather as constituted by at least two distinct and conflicting traditions. The first tradition is that initiated by the revolution of the Reinaissance humanism, from Duns Scotus to Spinoza, with the discovery of the place of immanence and the celebration of singularity and difference. The second tradition,

[36] Bhabha, 21.

[37] Ibid, 34.

> the Thermidor of the Renaissance revolution, seeks to control the utopian forces of the first through the construction and mediation of dualism, and arrives finally at the concept of modern sovereignty as a provisional solution. When postmodernists propose their opposition to a modernity and an Enlightenment that exalt the universality of reason only to sustain white male European supremacy, it should be clear that they are really attacking the second tradition of our schema (and unfortunately ignoring or eclipsing the first).[38]

Soon after they explain that the critical position of the postmodernists and postcolonialists is limited because it only focuses on how power is sustained for white males and does not deal with the foundation of that power, they argue that the very concepts of difference due to this oversight have been co-opted, and comfortably assimilated by the very forces postcolonials aim to resist. Hardt & Negri's argument of pushing against an "open door" is based on how the concept of difference has been adopted and promoted by Capital. To support their view, they argue that corporations see difference, as often presented by postmodernism and postcolonialism, as a way to new markets, and that even corporations promote "diversity management" as a way to keep their employees as productive as possible.[39]

There are two elements at play in the criticism of Hardt & Negri. One is that Bhabha and those who share his methodologies do not support a dialectical development of culture, which is in what Hardt & Negri are truly interested. They argue that one must be aware of the ongoing development of what they call Empire, a concept that enables them to view the state of globalization in line with the theories of late capitalism as defined by Ernest Mandel and further supported by cultural critics such as Fredric Jameson: "We certainly agree with those contemporary theorists, such as David Harvey and Fredric Jameson who see postmodernity as a new phase of capitalist accumulation and commodification that accompanies the contemporary realization of the world market."[40] Hardt and Negri ultimately view postcolonial and postmodern theories as symptoms and signals marking a stage of Capital that must be assessed critically to move successfully to the next dialectical moment.

The second element of criticism is that postcolonialists (or in Hardt & Negri's case, Bhabha) place an emphasis on the complexity of identity defined not only by class but also other cultural elements such as gender ethnicity, and race. Bhabha reflects on the struggle of classes in England with the miner's strike of 1984-85. He explains that when this moment was later remembered, it belonged securely to the "working-class male" safely historicized as another class struggle. To complicate this matter, the activist

[38] Hardt & Negri, 140.
[39] Ibid, 153.
[40] Ibid, 154.

Beatriz Campbell interviewed women, who also participated in the strike, for the *Guardian* newspaper. The interview, argues Bhabha, demonstrated that women's experience of the struggle was different from that of men's, and that the conflicts were not only about class struggle, but identity and gender struggle, as well. He elaborates:

> It would be simplistic to suggest either that this considerable social change was a spin-off from the class struggle or that it was a repudiation of the politics of class from a socialist-feminist perspective. There is no simple political truth to be learned, for there is no unitary representation of a political agency, no fixed hierarchy of political values and effects.[41]

This position on "no fixed hierarchy" is what Hardt & Negri attribute to the indecidability in Bhabha; that is, Bhabha's unwillingness to claim a side and a clear position in terms of resistance as a struggle that is socially shared, as well as his apparent dismissal of a dialectical postcolonial theory. They accuse Bhabha of vacillating, unable to come to terms with a larger view of cultural struggles. They further argue that the celebration by postcolonials of constant movement is something that people who actually struggle with class difference are unable to relate to:

> Just a cursory glance around the world, from Central America to Central Africa and from the Balkans to Southeast Asia, will reveal the desperate plight of those on whom such mobility has been imposed. For them, mobility across boundaries often amounts to forced migration in poverty and is hardly liberatory. In fact, a stable and defined place in which to live, a certain immobility, can on the contrary appear as the most urgent need.[42]

There are other postcolonialists who do share a materialist foundation in some degrees with Hardt and Negri, such as Gayatri Spivak in particular, but they do not mention her at all in their critical dismissal of postcolonial theory.

I have focused on Bhabha's and Hardt & Negri's two critical positions because they are in many ways what contemporary critical theory has inherited from the '90s—a time when critical thinkers began to evaluate the social developments of the '60s, '70s, and '80s in which the development of Remix took place. The evolution and influence of dub since its conception in the West Indies can now be assessed with these two particular philosophical points of view in mind.

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[41] Bhabha, 27-28.

[42] Hardt & Negri, 155.

Dub-b-[ing] the Threshold

As previously noted, the third stage of Remix is its popularization as a musical style—a fully fledged commodity—during the 1980s and '90s. This took place in hip-hop and electronic music culture. All of the music genres mentioned so far have been part of an ongoing evolution, which by and large have taken place on the peripheries of specific cultures. They find themselves in the threshold contested by Bhabha and Hardt & Negri. In Kingston it was in the more marginalized areas where musicians expressed their frustration about their reality.

This becomes evident in ska and early reggae. Lyrics often focused on the hard times of Jamaican reality, as Lee "Scratch" Perry and Bunny Lee demonstrate in their recording "Laberish." At one point, they express their dismal views on their economic reality. Lee Perry asks how the business is going and Bunny Lee responds that it feels like he will go bankrupt at any moment. Lee Perry asks about getting a loan and Bunny Lee responds that the banks are useless. Lee Perry follows by stating that they are being killed softly. [43]

In the Bronx, it was the African American and Latino working classes that also found expression in recycling recorded material. Rap lyrics became a legitimate form of expression laid on top of looped breaks, influenced by the practice of Jamaican talk-over, toasting, and dub. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five echo Lee Perry and Bunny Lee's reflection above in the style of the Bronx. Their rap "The Message" paints a dire picture of broken glass all over the streets and people sitting around the neighborhood with indifference about their reality. The smell and the noise are unbearable; the buildings are full of rats and roaches, and junkies are in the alley ready to attack anyone with a baseball bat. The rap then goes on to explain the impossibility of escaping this reality, and that he (the rapper) should not be pushed to "the edge."[44]

In Bristol, musicians were able to find an autonomous voice, more or less following the models developed in Kingston and New York. Tricky, when he was part of Massive Attack rapped in the song "Blue lines" about a beautiful day, which, according to his lyrics, in his reality does not mean much. The next couple of lines unexpectedly focus on his identity, by claiming that even if he bothered to tell the listener about it, it would not help in the attempt to get to know him. The next line has an existential ring when he reflects on the thought of having a mixed background of English

[43] As cited by Dick Hebdige in *Cut 'n' Mix*, 64.

[44] See lyrics for The Message: http://www.lyricsfreak.com/g/grandmaster+flash/the+message_20062225.html.

and Caribbean.[45] In all these lyrics a deep sentiment of existence and identity, as well as economic struggle are sensed; themes that to this day are fervently revisited by hip-hop artists all over the world.

Who cared about Bristol as a cultural mecca prior to the development of down-tempo, as well as trip hop? Mario Blánquez has reflected on this, arguing that the kind of creativity that took place in Bristol happened because the structure of the city allowed musicians to get lost in their bedrooms and studios and create their own compositions with some isolation from mainstream music culture.[46] Bristol, Kingston, and New York are among many other cities that have helped shape music globally since the rise of dub. What this points to is that music is always in a constant state of change: it is never *pure* or *impure*. Modernism's preoccupation with music is at play here, because the relation of lyrics and instrumental compositions was contested due to the concept of purity and impurity during the nineteenth century. Art certainly was often defined as a form leaning towards purity, and once instrumental music was accepted as a fine art, it was easier for critics such as Clement Greenberg to adopt abstract music as a model for the visual arts:

> Only by accepting the example of music and defining each of the other arts solely in the terms of the sense or faculty which perceived its effect and by excluding from each art whatever is intelligible in the terms of any other sense or faculty would the non-musical arts attain the "purity" and self-sufficiency which they desired, that is, in so far as they were avant-garde arts.[47]

Music thrives on the threshold, from which, when it moves to the mainstream, it must find its way back, again to produce the next progression in culture. In this sense, the concept of purity privileging the separation of the arts following music without words as a model that people like Greenberg promoted was, more than anything, a myth proposed for the arts to find autonomy in modernism.

When we reconsider the history of dub and the social struggle of MCs and rappers that has just been outlined above, we note that progression in music culture has happened in part because of social struggles that preoccupy Bhabha and Hardt & Negri. Music was often the vehicle for the politics that shaped Jamaica since WWII. Reggae was about West Indians coming to terms with their roots in Africa and their hard life in Jamaica, which was mythologized in a more comfortable form for the mainstream once West Indian music was introduced to the rest of the world via Eng-

[45] See lyrics from Blue Lines: http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/massiveattack/bluelines.html.

[46] Blanquez, 357.

[47] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," *Clement Greenberg the Collected Essays and Criticism Volume 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), 31-32.

land with the recordings of Bob Marley and the Wailers.[48] In the Bronx, Afrikaa Bambaataa, Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, and their contemporaries developed their work in part influenced by the music of Jamaica; they also created work around a social struggle. The same happened in Bristol with the movement of trip hop, down tempo, and drum 'n' bass. All these movements never developed in the center of culture, but the periphery. A periphery, it must be noted, that has been always marked by colonialism.

The individuals who contributed to these musical genres often had social limitations imposed on them, as Hardt & Negri would claim; and yes, many were interested in finding stability, rather than being in a constant state of flux. This search for stability, often due to lack of education and social awareness beyond trying to survive day to day, plus having problematic role models, has become fetishized through the glorification of commodities in bling bling culture. In rap songs from the mid/late '80s one can notice the desire for the stability with which money is often equated. Eric B. and Rakim in their well-known rap, "Paid in Full" discuss the process of writing their rhymes. The rap begins with thinking of a grandiose plan to attain economic stability. The rapper then digs into his pocket only to come up with "lint." He then leaves his place thinking on how to attain some money, while arguing that figuring this out will also enable him to eat fish, which is his favorite dish. The only thing that he can do to accomplish this is to hit the studio in order to "get paid in full."[49]

What we find in these lyrics, which have been recycled in many ways by those who followed, is the possibility to break out of dire straits. In this way the constant push for indecidability that Hardt & Negri write against can be used by those who search for ways to break through their limitations: that which defines the individual's instability becomes the very means to move on to a more appealing (albeit not necessarily critically productive) state of living. This is what Eric B. & Rakim rap about in "Paid in Full," discussed above, and once that rap is recorded to then become a commodity, the rappers *may* find themselves in a position of possible decision-making (depending on the deal they made with the record company). Here is the moment where social awareness can be important as Hardt & Negri write, "Mobility and hybridity are not liberatory, but taking control of the production of mobility and stasis, purities and mixtures is."[50] Rappers who have struggled monetarily in their upbringing often glorify their ability to make money with their compositions and rhymes, and find

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[48] Hebdige, 78 - 81.

[49] "Paid in Full" lyrics by Eric B. And Rakim http://www.asklyrics.com/display/Rakim/Paid_in_Full_Lyrics/170733.htm.

[50] Hardt & Negri, 156.

hip-hop music the form with which to take control of their production, though not necessarily the reality in which they function. They often do this while not understanding the contradictory social structure that enabled them to get there based on particular stereotypes, that may bring some economic stability but at the price of becoming labeled in a way that is comfortable to mainstream culture. Due to this reality, bling culture has no critical conscience. It is the fetishization of hip-hop culture. The lack of critical awareness, then, is part of a vicious circle created by lack of education and positive role models. This vicious circle is hard to break out of because now it has become the means for corporate America to earn profits from hip-hop as a major industry. Gangsta rap is historically the most obvious example of this development.

With these contradictions on trying to take control of the tools of production, what one can find in Bhabha's proposition of searching for agency within the threshold is that, even when one has been pushed to the margins, and is not there by choice, one can actually do something productive within this space. One can actually take control of the tools available if one figures out how to do that. The problem for those who find themselves in such situations is to realize that they do have a way to improve themselves and their communities. The problem is that realizing such complexities comes with education, and education is a commodity that the poorer classes, which are often marginalized, cannot attain.

What is of most urgency here is not to privilege class over ethnicity, gender, and race in the struggle for social change, but to see them as mutually intertwined, much how the concepts of version, instrumental, and dub are in music culture. bell hooks is able to focus on issues of class, gender, race, and ethnicity with great precision. Her case is specific to African American culture:

> Racial solidarity, particularly the solidarity of whiteness, has historically always been used to obscure class, to make the white poor see their interests as one with the world of white privilege. Similarly, the black poor have always been told that class can never matter as much as race. Nowadays the black and white poor know better. They are not so easily duped by an appeal to unquestioned racial identification and solidarity, but they are still uncertain about what all the changes mean; they are uncertain about where they stand.[51]

hooks not only shows how class is important and must be discussed, but also that class difference will never be resolved unless we also take into account its intimate bond with race, gender, and ethnic differences.

The outline of dub in juxtaposition with the critical discourses so far considered shows that culture is always in a constant state of flux. It is ever-changing, on a feedback loop from the periphery to the center. The

[51] bell hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 5-7.

question becomes how to come to terms with this flux. While Bhabha and Hardt & Negri may disagree, their discourses need not be exclusive.

The creative practice behind dub has played a marginal yet major role in all of the musical manifestations so far discussed. People often know about dub, but most may not consider themselves major fans.

They often like music that is influenced by dub, and because of this they may buy an occasional dub album. Since dub has consistently stayed on the periphery of culture, it is a rare element that shows that the liminal space promoted by Bhabha can be useful; and yes, once one becomes aware of it, a state of flux can be celebrated as the means to an identity that will need to keep being redefined. A question to consider then is, can epistemology be appropriated for post-colonial ends, and not dismissed as Bhabha argues due to its status as a meta-narrative, as a blanket term that allows Western hegemony to stay alive? And should one not question Hardt & Negri's criticism of post-colonials for their generalized approach? Is not post-colonial discourse too diverse to be dismissed with the swift examination of only one example, Bhabha? Like dub is to music, post-modern and postcolonial discourses are complementary to critical theory. Similar to music becoming a model of autonomy for the fine arts, while also allowing each specialization to keep its specific role, in the tradition of critical theory, postcolonial theory can also help redefine cultural production today.

The concept of dub then can be thought of in terms of dialectics, because the producer needs to become aware of how to work with what is already given. The new will come out of the material already in place—the material manifested already shows what it will be, but it will only be experienced and understood in the actual process of *enunciation* (to appropriate Bhabha's concept), whether in the studio as in the case of Tubby and other dub artists, or in media culture at large.

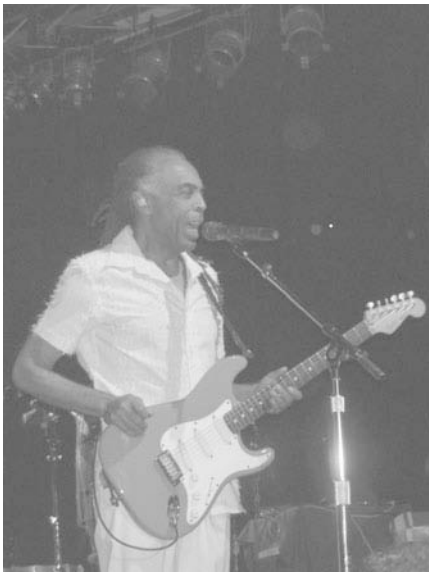

Figure 2.9 Gilberto Gil, in concert at the 4th and B, San Diego, CA, June 30, 2008. Photo: Annie Mendoza.

Dub 'n' Remix

On June 30, 2008 I went to see Gilberto Gil at the 4th and B nightclub, in San Diego. I knew that Gil was Brazil's Minister of Culture. I learned about his current position because of an article in the New York Times, which discussed Gil's innovative approach to improving youth culture in Brazil. He has adopted elements of hip-hop culture as a means to educate disadvantaged youth about their potential creativity, and help them envision education as a means to a better life.[52]

Based on this article from 2007, I was under the impression that Gilberto Gil was not performing regularly anymore. But he apparently is able to find the time to promote his own music, while also doing his job as the minister of culture. His concert is full of anecdotes about the development of the different styles of music in Brazil. It is a combination of history and spectacle. Gil delivers an impressive mix of bossa nova, samba, and reggae. Throughout the evening he performed some original tracks, as well as three well-known covers. The first was "Three Little Birds" by Bob Marley, the second was "Girl from Ipanema" by Antonio Carlos Jobim, and the third was "Something" by The Beatles. All three had a twist to them. "Three Little Birds" was played with a bossa nova feel, while "Girl

[52] Larry Rohter, "Brazilian Government Invests in Culture of Hip-Hop" *NYTimes*, March 14, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/14/arts/music/14gil.html?ex=1331524800&en=eea77b521e535427&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss.

from Ipanema" was played in the style of Reggae, and "Something" was an unexpected mix of both, Brazilian and Jamaican music. When I heard "Girl from Ipanema" in the style of reggae I could not help but notice the bass, and the drums. I thought, "This is influenced by dub." The bass was so over-emphasized that the musicians could just ride it for minutes. The drummer was completely free to improvise, and the percussionist took great liberty, as well. Then I thought about the bigger picture, and reconsidered the concept of version, which as we have seen is part of the foundation of dub. And I realized that what I was experiencing was the influence of versioning itself. Dick Hebdige echoed in my head:

> One of the most important words in reggae is "version." Sometimes a reggae record is released and literally hundreds of different versions of the same rhythm or melody will follow in its wake. […] "Versioning" is at the heart not only of reggae but of all Afro-American and Caribbean musics: jazz, blues, rap, r&b, reggae, calypso, soca, salsa, Afro-Cuban and so on.[53]

A cover is a type of version. And I was experiencing some amazing covers in the concert; only Gil took it a step further. He twisted the cultural context of the songs: to play "Three Little Birds" in bossa nova style, "Girl from Ipanema" in reggae, and "Something" combining both music genres exposes the awareness of Gilberto Gil about the power of music as a form of communication and expression which can become a means to better understand the nuances of cultures, particularly during a time of globalization. These three songs were not just covers, or versions performed for the sheer desire to entertain the audience. These songs, as well as all others he performed, were delivered with an understanding of how meaning moves across borders, how it jumps from one context to another, and how for this to happen, it must move through the threshold that often separates people in class, gender, race, and ethnicity. As popular as the songs are throughout the world, they were [re]versioned by Gil. Conceptually, the songs were *dubbed*; they were subverted to serve Gil's purpose of showing the liminality of music culture. It becomes quite obvious that Gil was using his position as Minister of Culture to put into practice the philosophy that led him to be a critical performer. Gil has been consciously responsible to his Brazilian culture to the point that he was imprisoned briefly to later be asked to leave the country for England during the '60s, due to his socially oriented activities that went against the government.[54] The evening was an example of how artists can, if they so desire, touch people beyond the immediate means of their particular art form.

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[53] Hedbidge, 12.

[54] Hiram Soto, "The Minister of Culture Will See You Now,"*San Diego Tribune*, June 26, 2008, http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/features/20080626-9999-1w26gil.html.

Gil is not afraid to mix it up and *remix it*, to take from any area that appears innovative, including hip-hop culture. While I could cite an established electronic musician, such as Pole, who is known for developing long repetitive forms of abstract sound clearly influenced by reggae and dub, I find it much more productive to reflect on the practice of an artist like Gil who has proven and keeps proving that one need not only speak or perform for the few, but can also be active politically. Gil cuts across cultural boundaries in a way that few can. Gil and others like him live the philosophy that made dub and its evolution possible. He rides the *threshold*.[55] This is the fourth stage of Remix; it is the time of this writing.

Producers and engineers like King Tuby, Lee "Scratch" Perry on to Gil, reconfigure the concept of the individual and its relation to the collective. Based on the survey outlined above and its link to the contestation of culture by Bhabha and Hardt & Negri, the notion of the individual genius is no longer in place. With remix culture we are entering a stage in which we are more and more dependent on social networks, that thrive on the concepts of sampling and recycling initially explored in dub music, which eventually was redefined in hip-hop culture in New York during the '80s, with the music sampler proper.

Bonus Beats: Remix as Composing

The creative drive behind dub is the desire to communicate. As simple as this sounds, this motivation is also the cause behind Remix itself. This may well be the one thing that makes media effective and relevant to people at both individualistic and collective levels. Paradoxically, throughout history, media communication has been controlled by a few people, but in the last two decades of the twentieth century and certainly the first of the twenty-first, the possibility to have creative agency became an appealing reality for those who sympathize with the act of remixing. Remix culture thrives on the drive to collaborate, to take something that already exists and to turn it into something new by way of personal interpretation. Remix culture aims to find a balance between the individual and the collective, the creator and audience, creative license and intellectual rights. The struggle for the right balance is found throughout Creative Commons licenses, as well as the non-profit organization's pages on how to remix. In ccmixter's FAQ page, this is best expressed when the editors try to answer a question on fair use:

[55] Gilberto Gil retired as Brazil's Minister of Culture shortly after this chapter on dub culture was written. See "Brazilian singer Gilberto Gil leaves politics for music", July 30, 2008, http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jKjYIX1n2KgOYBZkgwhR6rh7bGDA.

> Who Owns My Music?
>
> You the music you make. [sic] If you used samples, then the sampled artist still owns the copyright to his or her samples — you can use them as part of your music as long as you live up to the conditions and restrictions of whatever license applies to the samples you used.[56]

This issue of control is certainly transparent in remix culture, but it moves beyond to other areas which I have explored throughout this text. Remix is part of political economy, and this is what is exposed in the above quote—the control of noise itself in its current stage of information exchange. Paradoxically, the control of noise may have reached, at least partially, the stage of composing that Attali predicted in his book on noise:

> There is no communication possible between men any longer, now that the codes have been destroyed, including even the code of exchange in repetition. We are all condemned to silence—unless we create our own relation with the world and try to tie other people into the meaning we thus create. That is what composing is. […] Composition thus appears as a negation of the division of roles and labor as constructed by the old codes. Therefore, in the final analysis, to listen to music in the network of composition is to rewrite it: "to put music into operation, to draw it toward an unknown praxis," as Roland Barthes writes in a fine text on Beethoven.[57]

To remix is to compose, and dub was the first stage where this possibility was seen not as an act that promoted genius, but as an act that questioned authorship, creativity, originality, and the economics that supported the discourse behind these terms as stable cultural forms. In dub, the concept of abstraction that in the past informed the visual arts to attain autonomy becomes complementary to the act of creating versions with deliberate vacillation between repetition and representation as defined by Attali. Repetition becomes the privileged mode of production, in which preexisting material is recycled towards new forms of representation. The potential behind this paradigm shift would not become evident until the second stage of Remix in New York City, where the principles explored in dub were further explored in what today is known as turntablism: the looping of small sections of records to create new beats—instrumental loops, on top of which MCs and rappers would freestyle, improvising rhymes, which is what I experienced at Kadan. In this chapter, then, we begin to understand how in dub the principles of composing became transparent. The ground was set for Remix to develop and to expand by also accepting influences outside of music.

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[56] "Yeah, but is it legal?" ccMixter.org, http://ccmixter.org/about

[57] Attali, 135, see introduction for full citation, 5.

Chapter Three: Remix[ing] Theory

E. Navas, *Remix Theory*

Image: Amoeba Music Store, Los Angeles, CA, Summer 2009

This chapter defines three basic forms of Remix in music and evaluates how they extend as a fourth form in art and media. I evaluate the principles of Remix against a set of new media art projects. I point out as necessary when a project is informed by remix, as well as when it is a remix in its own right, even when the author does not call it a remix. The chapter also examines the role of Remix in media. My particular examples are software mashups, defined as a combination of two pre-exisiting software applications; I then link mashups to the activity of blogging, commonly known as a form of online journal writing. To show how Remix principles take effect as conceptual strategies, as defined in the introduction, blogging is also linked to literature and appropriation art. Let us now define Remix to understand its complex role in art, media and culture.

Remix Defined

Generally speaking, remix culture can be defined as a global activity consisting of the creative and efficient exchange of information made possible by digital technologies. Remix is supported by the practice of cut/copy and paste.[1] The concept of Remix that informs remix culture derives from the model of music remixes which were produced around the late 1960s and early 1970s in New York City, with roots in Jamaica's music.[2] During the first decade of the twenty-first century, Remix (the activity of taking samples from pre-existing materials to combine them into new forms according to personal taste) is ubiquitous in art and music; it plays a vital role in mass communication, especially in new media.

To understand Remix as a cultural phenomenon, we must first define it in music. A music remix, in general, is a reinterpretation of a pre-existing song, meaning that the "spectacular aura" of the original will be dominant in the remixed version.[3] Some of the most challenging remixes can question this generalization; but based on its history, it can be stated that there are three types of remixes. The first remix is *extended*, that is a longer ver-

[1] This is my own definition extending Lawrence Lessig's definition of remix culture based on the activity of "Rip, Mix and Burn." Lessig is concerned with copyright issues; my definition of Remix is concerned with aesthetics and its role in political economy. See Lawrence Lessig, *The Future of Ideas* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 12-15.

[2] For some good accounts of DJ Culture see works previously cited in chapters one and two by Ulf Poschardt, Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, Javier Bláquez and Omar Morera.

[3] I use the term "spectacular" after Guy Debord's theory of the Spectacle, and Walter Benjamin's theory of aura. We can note that the object develops its cultural recognition, not on cult value, but exhibit value (following Benjamin), because it depends on the spectacle (following Debord) for its mass cultural contribution. See, Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations* (New York, Schocken, 1968), 217-251; Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 110-117.

sion of the original composition containing long instrumental sections to make it more mixable for the club DJ. The first known disco song to be extended to ten minutes is "Ten Percent," by Double Exposure, remixed by Walter Gibbons in 1976.[4] The second remix is *selective*; it consists of adding or subtracting material from the original composition. This type of remix, during the 1980s, made DJs popular producers in the music mainstream. One of the most successful selective remixes is Eric B. & Rakim's "Paid in Full," remixed by Coldcut in 1987.[5] In this case Coldcut produced two remixes, the most popular version not only extends the original recording, following the tradition of the club mix (like Gibbons), but it also contains new sections, as well as new sounds, while others were subtracted, always keeping the "essence" or "spectacular aura" of the composition intact. The third remix is *reflexive;* it allegorizes and extends the aesthetic of sampling, where the remixed version challenges the "spectacular aura" of the original and claims autonomy even when it carries the name of the original; material is added or deleted, but the original tracks are largely left intact to be recognizable. An example of this is Mad Professor's famous dub/trip hop album *No Protection*, which is a remix of Massive Attack's *Protection*. In this case both albums, the original and the remixed versions, are validated on the quality of independent production, yet the remixed version is completely dependent on Massive's original production for validation.[6] The fact that both albums were released in the same year, 1994, further complicates Mad Professor's allegory (see figures 2.5-2.8). This complexity lies in the fact that Mad Professor's production is part of the tradition of Jamaica's dub, where the term "version" was often used to refer to "remixes," which due to their extensive manipulation in the studio pushed for autonomy. This was paradoxically allegorical; meaning that, while dub recordings were certainly derivative works, due to the extensive remixing of material, they took on an identity of their own.[7]

Allegory in Remix

Allegory was discussed in previous chapters in terms of sampling. Now it is time to revisit Owens's theory of allegory in direct relation to the three basic forms of Remix to evaluate how a fourth form emerges in areas outside of music. I call this fourth form the regenerative remix.

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[4] Brewster, 178-79.

[5] Paid in full was actually a B side release meant to complement "Move the Crowd." Eric B. & Rakim, "Paid in Full," Re-mix engineer: Derek B., Produced by Eric B. & Rakim, Island Records, 1987.

[6] Poschardt, 297.

[7] Hebdige, 12-16, see chapter two for full citation, 37.

The remix is always allegorical following the postmodern theories of Craig Owens, who argues that in postmodernism a deconstruction—a transparent awareness of the history and politics behind the object of art—is always made present as a "preoccupation with reading."[8] The object of contemplation, in our case Remix, depends on recognition (reading) of a pre-existing text (or cultural code). For Owens, the audience is always expected to see within the work of art its history. This was not so in early modernism, where the work of art suspended its historical code, and the reader could not be held responsible for acknowledging the politics that made the object of art "art."[9] Updating Owens's theory, I argue that in terms of discourse, postmodernism (metaphorically speaking) *remixed* modernism to expose how art is defined by ideologies, and histories that are constantly revised. The contemporary artwork, as well as any media product, is a conceptual and formal collage of previous ideologies, critical philosophies, and formal artistic investigations extended to new media.

In Remix, allegory is often deconstructed in more advanced remixes following the reflexive remix, and quickly moves to be an exercise that at times leads to a "remix" in which the only thing that is recognizable from the original is the title. Two examples from music culture are Underworld's remixes of "Born Slippy," released in 1996,[10] and Kraftwerk's remixes of their techno classic "Tour de France" released in 2003.[11] Both remix projects are produced by the original authors (See figures 3.1-3.16). Some of their remixes are completely different compositions that only bear the title of the supposed remixed track. At this moment Remix becomes discourse; its principles are at play as conceptual strategies. Kraftwerk and Underworld use Remix as a concept, as a cultural framework rather than a material practice. To be clear—no matter what—the remix will always rely on the authority of the original composition, whether in forms of actual samples, or in form of reference (citation), as demonstrated with Kraftwerk and Underworld. The remix is in the end a *re-mix*—that is a rearrangement of something already recognizable; it functions on a meta-level. This implies that the originality of the remix is non-existent, therefore it must acknowledge its source of validation self-reflexively. The remix when extended as a cultural practice, as a form of discourse, is a second mix of something pre-existent. The material must be recognized, otherwise it could be misunderstood as something new, and it would become plagiarism. However, when this happens it would not mean that the material produced does not have principles of Remix at play, only that the way the

[8] Owens, 223, see chapter two for full citation, 36.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Underworld, "Born Slippy," Single EP, TVT, August 1996.

[11] Kraftwerk, *Tour De France Soundtracks*, Astralwerks, August 2003.

author has framed the content goes against an ethical code placed by culture on intellectual property. Regardless of the legal contentions, without a trace of its history the remix cannot be *Remix*.[12]

Analytics: Variations of the Reflexive Remix in Music

The following are waveforms and melodic spectograms of "Born Slippy" and "Tour de France" remixes. They demonstrate how the reflexive remix once it moves into a more advanced stage functions by mere reference of the original's title. In some of these remix recordings practically nothing of the original composition is recognizable. Those that do reuse key elements, such as basic drums or lyrics, are still very distinct from the original. These remixes make evident how remix in music informs the aesthetics of sampling in Remix as a form of discourse in culture at large, leading to the concept of "remix culture" as an act that is valid in all forms of communication and creative production.

Analysis of Electronic Music Remixes: "Born Sleepy"

The .NUXX remixes of "Born Sleepy" by Underworld are concrete examples of the advanced stage of remix in music. The time segments of the recordings were chosen to match part of an extended section of the original composition. This is done to provide a focused representation of what goes on throughout the recordings. Visualizing the compositions from beginning to end leads to the same evaluation that I propose below. Note how the remixes are visually very different from the original, which is shown first.

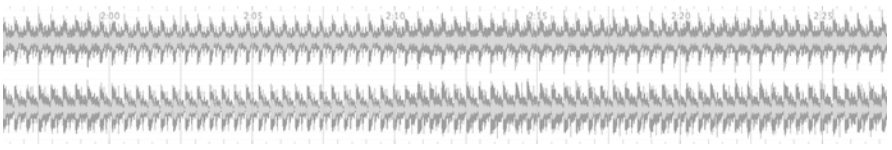

Figure 3.1 "Born Sleepy .NUXX," by Underworld, waveform visualization of minute 01:50 to 02:30, total recording time: 11:30. This is the extended version of "Born Sleepy." This recording contains the basic elements that are remixed in other versions included in the same CD compilation. The close pattern of the waveform represents the heavy and fast drums that play for most of the recording.

[12] DJ producers who sampled during the '80s found themselves having to acknowledge History by complying with the law; see the landmark law-suit against Biz Markie, see Brewster, 246.

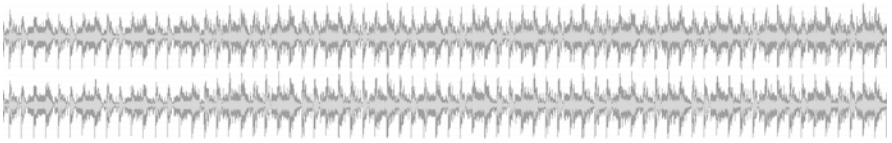

Figure 3.2 “Born Sleepy .NUXX (Deep Pan)” by Underworld, waveform visualization of minute 01:50 to 02:30, total recording time: 10:00. This recording emphasizes synthesizer effects which privilege rhythm over melody. Save for the title, this recording is completely different from the original. There are no aural hints that would lead the listener to recognize this composition as a remix of “Born Sleepy.” It is only because of its name why anyone would call this recording a remix. This remix leans towards cultural citation over material sampling, meaning that its validation is based on a deliberate reference in terms of naming, not necessarily in actual samples of pre-existing material.

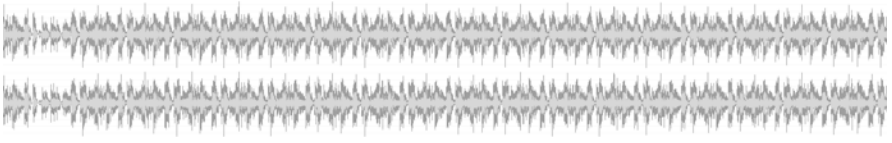

Figure 3.3 “Born Sleepy .NUXX (Darren Price Mix)” by Underworld, waveform visualization of minute 01:50 to 02:30, total time: 6:32. This recording makes use of lyrics from the original recording. It adds synthesizer effects on top of a different drum pattern. Except for the lyrics, this version differs drastically from the original recording; similarly to the “Deep Pan” remix, it functions along the lines of cultural citation over material sampling.

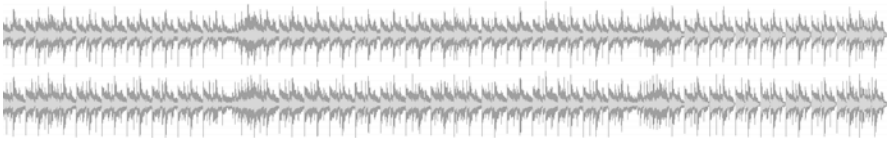

Figure 3.4 “Dark + Long (Dark Train)” by Underworld, waveform visualization of minute 01:50 to 02:30, total time: 10:24. This recording has a pattern that is similar to the “Deep Pan” remix, above, but it sounds completely different (this is evident in the spectograms available below). This reflexive remix has no apparent samples from the original recording, save from abstract incomplete lyrics. Underworld did not even name it “Born Sleepy.” The listener has to acknowledge it as a remix in terms of cultural citation, because the CD packaging presents all the recordings as remixes of “Born Sleepy.” The term “Dark Train” alludes to the film *Trainspotting* (1996) in which the original recording appeared.

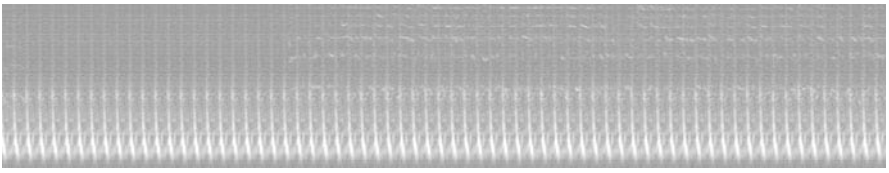

Figure 3.5 “Born Sleepy .NUXX,” by Underworld, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 01:50 to 02:30, total recording time: 11:30. Notice the close pattern, which represents the heavy and fast drum composition throughout the song.

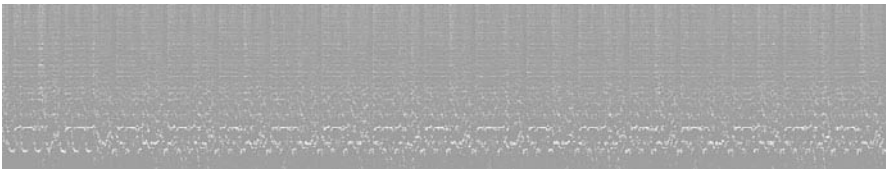

Figure 3.6 “Born Sleepy .NUXX (Deep Pan)” by Underworld, melodic range visualization of minute 01:50 to 02:30, total recording time: 10:00. This waveform demonstrates how different the “Deep Pan” remix is, not only from the original, but other remixes in the CD compilation. The sporadic pattern is the result of the melodic arrangement, which still follows closely the original drum composition.

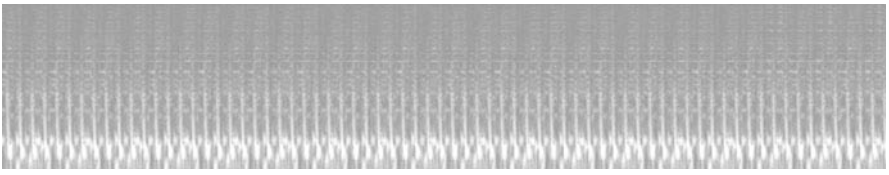

Figure 3.7 “Born Sleepy .NUXX (Darren Price Mix)” by Underworld, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 01:50 to 02:30, total time: 10:24. Notice how the pattern is distinct from the previous two. It is clearly closer to the original, but when looking at the brighter sections at the bottom of the visualization, it is evident that the overall arrangement differs from the original recording.

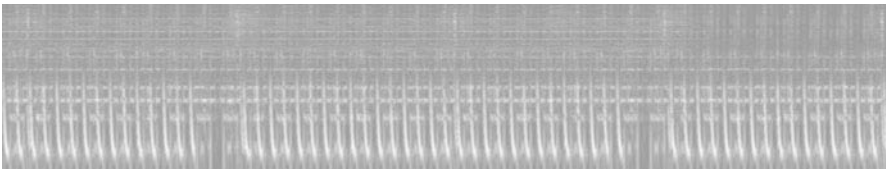

Figure 3.8 “Dark + Long (Dark Train)” by Underworld, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 01:50 to 02:30, total time: 10:24. The drum pattern in this case is quite similar to the original recording. Nevertheless, when comparing the top and mid-sections, it becomes evident that the overall arrangements are distinct.

Analysis of Electronic Music Remixes: "Tour de France"

The remixes of "Tour de France" by Kraftwerk are concrete examples of the advanced stage of remix in music. The time segments of the recordings were chosen to match part of an extended section of the original composition. This is done to provide a focused representation of what goes on throughout the recordings. Visualizing the compositions from beginning to end leads to the same evaluation that I propose below. Note how the remixes are visually very different from the original, which is shown first.

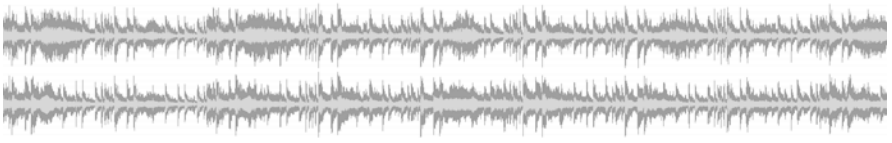

Figure 3.9 "Tour de France" by Kraftwerk, waveform visualization of minute 0:45 to 1:20, total time: 5:11. This is a remastered recording of the original composition first released in the 1980s. The song offers a complex melodic arrangement on top of drum loops, which became the signature sound of electro-funk.

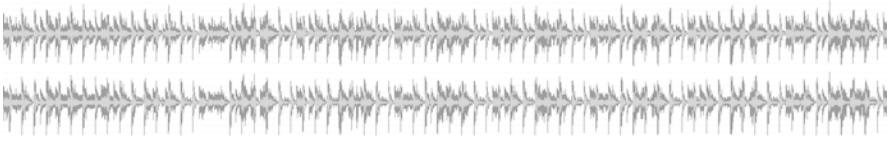

Figure 3.10 "Tour de France Étape 1" by Kraftwerk, waveform visualization of minute 0:45 to 1:20, total time: 4:27. This recording, save for the lyrics and some key synthesizer effects, differs greatly from the original recording. If one were to omit the lyrics, the composition would be unrecognizable as a remix. Consequently, similarly to selected remixes of "Born Sleepy" discussed above, it functions more in terms of cultural citation than material sampling.

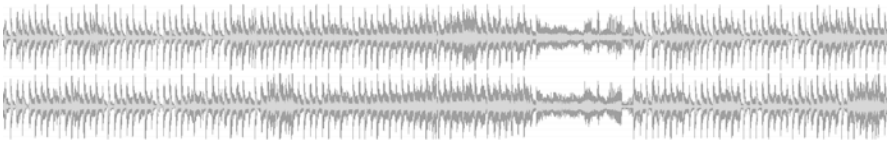

Figure 3.11 "Tour de France Étape 2" by Kraftwerk, waveform visualization of minute 0:45 to 1:20, total time: 6:41. This recording is beatmixed with Étape 1 and 3. The melody keeps the tempo of Étape 1, but its melody descends the scale. Étape 1's melody, in contrast, ascends at times. The echo becomes particularly emphasized which is why the waveform appears much bolder. Similarly to Étape 1, this composition uses mainly the lyrics from the original recording.

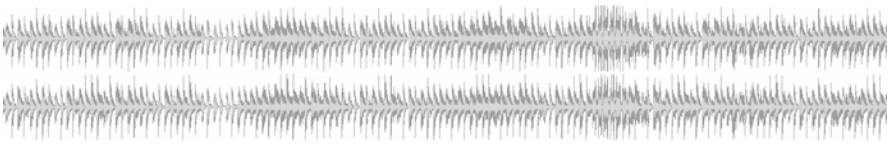

Figure 3.12 “Tour de France Étape 3” by Kraftwerk, waveform visualization of minute 0:45 to 1:20, total time: 3:57. In this recording the rhythm becomes more pronounced. Similarly to the other two Étapes, this version uses primarily selected lyrics. If one were to omit the lyrics, this recording would also function more as a cultural citation than a material sampling. The pronounced element that makes it an evident remix is in large part its title.

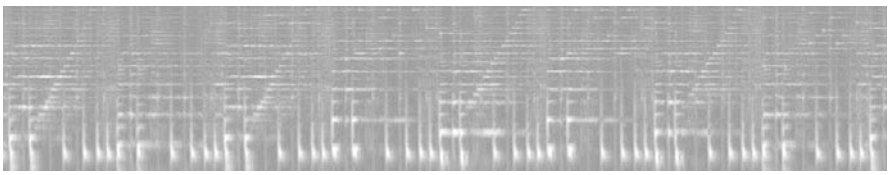

Figure 3.13 “Tour de France” by Kraftwerk, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 0:45 to 1:20, total time: 5:11. Notice the bright sections in this spectogram. In this composition the melodic spectrum has a wide range.

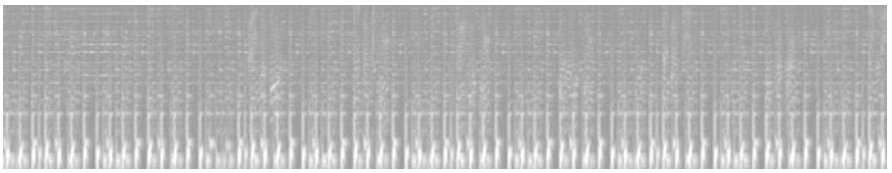

Figure 3.14 “Tour de France Étape 1” by Kraftwerk, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 0:45 to 1:20, total time: 4:27. Notice how the spectrum is brightest at the bottom, and not much detail in the middle or the top. There is an emphasis on synthesizer effects. The drums are quite minimal, as there is no snare, only a base drum for the most part. This pattern is quite similar in all three Étapes.

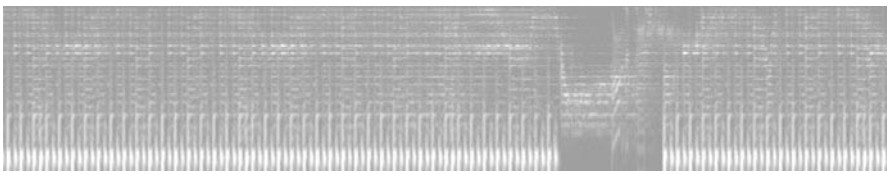

Figure 3.15 “Tour de France Étape 2” by Kraftwerk, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 0:45 to 1:20, total time: 6:41. Notice the similarity in the pattern to Étape 1. There are, however, a few more bright areas in this remix, which means that the melodic spectrum is somewhat more varied at times.

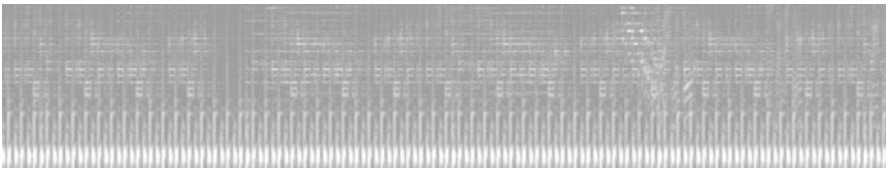

Figure 3.16 "Tour de France Étape 3" by Kraftwerk, melodic range spectogram visualization of minute 0:45 to 1:20, total time: 3:57. The pattern is, again quite similar to the previous two Étapes. Notice, however, that the spectrum is more pronounced in the middle, while Étape 2 is more pronounced at the bottom and top. It is worth noting that all three remixes overall are quite similar with each other, while extremely distinct from the original "Tour de France" recording. These visualizations demonstrate how a reflexive remix begins to function more in terms of discourse, that is in terms of cultural citations, while at times using actual material samplings to validate themselves as remixes.

The Regenerative Remix

The recognition of history is complicated in the regenerative remix. The regenerative remix takes place when Remix becomes embedded materially in culture in non-linear and ahistorical fashion. The regenerative remix is specific to new media and networked culture. Like the other remixes it makes evident the originating sources of material, but unlike them it does not necessarily use references or samplings to validate itself as a cultural form. Instead, the cultural recognition of the material source is subverted in the name of practicality—the validation of the regenerative remix lies in its functionality. A regenerative remix is most common in Software Mashups, all social media from Google to YouTube rely on its principles. The regenerative remix consists of juxtaposing two or more elements that are constantly updated, meaning that they are designed to change according to data flow. I choose the term "regenerative" because it alludes to constant change, and is a synonym of the term "culture." Regenerative while often linked to biological processes is extended here to cultural flows that can move from medium to medium, although at the moment it is in software that it is best exposed. This is further evaluated in later sections.

The regenerative remix, then, is defined in opposition to the allegorical impulse; and in this sense it is the element that, while it liberates the forms that are cited from their original context, opens itself up for ahistoricity, as well as misinterpretations. The principle of the regenerative remix is to subvert, not to recognize but to be of practical use. In this regard Google news in principle is a basic regenerative remix. Google does not produce any content, but merely compiles—mashes up—material from major newspapers around the world. People often do not think about which

newspaper they may be reading, but rather rely on Google's authority as a legitimate portal when accessing the information.

In the following sections I note how online resources like *Yahoo!* Pipes appropriate pre-existing information to create mashups that are specific to a user's need. For instance, some people may be looking for an apartment, so they mash together a map with a list of rentals, both which are constantly updated by their particular members. These examples are previewed to argue that, while Remix is mostly recognized for its three basic forms, it is the regenerative remix, the fourth form that offers a great challenge, as the tendency to appropriate material in the name of efficiency does not always mean that proper recognition of the originating source is performed. This contention is what keeps the term remix culture relevant, which was coined by Lawrence Lessig to support the production and distribution of derivative works, while doing justice to intellectual property.[13] As Lessig's main concern is with the law, his preoccupation exposes how history (a trace of citations, in his case) is vital in derivative licenses distributed and supported by the international non-profit Creative Commons, which Lessig founded.[14] The principle of periodic change, of constant updates (i.e. Google news are regularly updated) found in the regenerative remix makes it the most recent and important form that enable Remix to move across all media, and to eventually become an aesthetic that can be referenced as a tendency. Nevertheless, even in this fourth form, allegory is at play—only it is pushed to the periphery.

It follows that Remix is not only allegorical, but is also dependent on history to be effective. This is the reason why it is a discourse. This is crucial to keep in mind because History was questioned coincidentally in the same time period of postmodernism, which roughly ranges from the mid/late-'60s to the mid-'80s, in which the rise of remixing in music took place.

Remix in music was created and defined by the DJs in the early 1960s and late '70s in New York City, Chicago, and other parts of the United States. Their activity evolved into sampling bits of music in the sound studio during the '80s, which means that DJ producers were cutting/copying and pasting pre-recorded material to create their own music compositions.

New media depends on sampling, (cut/copy and paste), an activity that shares the same principles of appropriation that DJ producers performed. To provide a specific example in new media, the Internet as a network relies directly on sampling; some examples include file sharing, download-

[13] Lessig has written a number of books on this subject. The most relevant to the subject of creativity and intellectual property: Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

[14] Creative Commons, http://creativecommons.org.

ing open source software, live streaming of video and audio, sending and receiving e-mails. These online activities rely on copying, and deleting (cutting), information from one point to another as data packets. Cut/copy and paste then applies directly to new media at large when we consider the efficiency with which independent print publications are produced by small businesses or non-profits like the activist publication *The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*,[15] as well as the online and print new media magazine *a minima*,[16] among many others. The international activity of these and other journals and magazines was acknowledged in 2007 by Documenta, an exhibition of contemporary art that takes place in Germany every five years. Documenta created a special forum and exhibition that encased new digital forms of publication.[17] Here we see how the act of sampling, a key element in actual remixing, is used for different interests beyond Remix's foundation in music. In this case, principles of sampling (cut/copy & paste) are at play for practical reasons. The journals are mainly concerned with producing affordable publications, and make use of computer sampling technology towards this end. Sampling (cut/copy & paste) technology also makes possible the larger than life special effects of movies like *Lord of The Rings* and *Star Wars*;[18] not to mention the possibility of watching video on iPhones and iPods while text messaging: constantly being connected becomes the norm based on the acts of cutting/copying and pasting, which are the basic principles of Remix. Thus, culture is redefined by the constant flow of information in fragments dependent on the single activity of sampling. The ability to manipulate fragments effectively, then, extends principles of Remix even in practical terms. But it must be noted that these examples are not remixes themselves. They are cited to note how principles of Remix have become ubiquitous in media.

What is particular to new media is that the user plays a crucial role in activating the material, as the DJ does when s/he plays with vinyl records. The new media user manipulates data files in the same way the DJ manipulates the record on the turntable, by accessing pre-recorded material. The '70s DJ, however, shares the tradition of hackers, because s/he was manipulating records on a machine that was originally used for passive listening. This active interaction with pre-recorded material became part of the mainstream, and a necessary element of the computer. The user is expected to play with the files and not just listen or view them passively, be-

[15] Journal of Aesthetics and Protest, http://www.journalofaestheticsandprotest.org.

[16] A minima:: Magazine, http://www.aminima.net/.

[17] Documenta XII,, http://www.documenta.de/100_tage.html?&L=1.

[18] Mike Snider, "Maya Muscles its Way into Hollywood film awards," *USA Today*, March 25, 2003, http://www.usatoday.com/life/movies/movieawards/oscars/2003-03-19-maya_x.htm .

cause interaction, touching, or in the case of the online user, clicking, is now integrated in new media culture. It is part of consumption and entertainment: "To call computer media 'interactive' is meaningless—it simply means stating the most basic fact about computers."[19] In order to understand interactivity in new media, specific analyses are necessary. To reflect further on this convention of interactivity, as well as the acts of remixing by DJs, it will be productive to examine manifestations in which principles of Remix in new media are at play. Art has always been a reflection of cultures, and in this case it is a good and effective field in which to begin.

Remix in Art

The following is an examination of various works from the Turbulence.org archive, a non-profit based in Boston and New York which funds Internet art, and archives projects which have explored the possibilities of new media since the popularization of the Internet. To better understand Remix, the projects are compared with art from the twentieth century. This opens a critical window to show how specific codes later found in music remixes and eventually in Remix have been at play under different names throughout history. This section will discuss *Grafik Dynamo* (2005) by Kate Armstrong and Michael Tippett,[20] and *The Secret Lives of Numbers* (2002) by Golan Levin, et. al.[21]

As previously noted, there are four types of remixes at play today: *the extended remix, the selective remix, the reflexive remix,* and the *regenerative remix*. In what follows the implementation of principles of the selective and reflexive remixes in art will be examined.

For the selective remix, the DJ adds to and deletes parts from the original composition, while leaving its spectacular aura intact. An example from art history in which principles of the selective remix were already at play is Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917);[22] this work consists of an untouched urinal (save for a traditional artist signature) to reinforce the question, what is art? And principles of a second level remix on Duchamp can be found in *Fountain (after Marcel Duchamp)* by Sherrie Levine who, in 1991, questioned Duchamp as a man and his urinal as art, leaving intact Duchamp's aura as an artist but not the urinal's spectacular aura as a mass

[19] Manovich, 55, see chapter one for full citation, 14.

[20] Kate Armstrong and Michael Tippett, "Grafik Dynamo," *Turbulence.org*, 2005, http://turbulence.org/Works/dynamo/index.html .

[21] Golan Levin, et. al, "The Secret Lives of Numbers," *Turbulence.org*, 2002, http://turbulence.org/Works/nums/index.html.

[22] For an online reproduction of the famous Richard Stieglitz photograph visit: "Fountain"*Art History Birmington*, http://arthist.binghamton.edu/duchamp/fountain.html.

produced object.[23] Levine did this by replicating Duchamp's urinal in bronze, and titling it after the artist, thus putting into question Duchamp's supposed critical distance as part of his art practice while also referencing the importance of his strategy. In both of these cases there is addition and substraction, leaving specific elements of the work intact.

Duchamp and Levine exercise the act of selectivity later to be found in Remix by strategically deciding what to take and leave in their works. Duchamp does this with a conceptual strategy of recontextualizing an ordinary urinal as a work of art: he takes a urinal from the actual world and inserts it in the art world to offer commentary on art practice. In this sense, he is literally practicing an act of "cutting" as understood in Remix—taking a sample, a piece from the real world, because his commentary needs a material reference in order to take effect as a contradiction of the uniqueness of the work of art. Levine also achieves her critical commentary in conceptual fashion, but with a deliberate contradiction to Duchamp's work. She created a unique object in bronze that looks like Duchamp's but was not mass produced and deliberately looks like a precious work of art. In this way, she exposes how Duchamp's strategy has become assimilated by the artworld, but nevertheless is still relevant. Unlike Duchamp, she did not take a physical sample; instead she cites in terms of discourse, and her citation is strictly conceptual, which is why she finds the need to title the work "After Marcel Duchamp." Levine's citation also exposes how both urinals are dependent on discourse: Duchamp took an actual urinal, but Levine cited the influence of the urinal in art discourse. Manipulation of material (sculptures) is done according to intellectual preoccupation. Therefore, both strategies privilege the ideological layer of cultural production.

To be clear, in Duchamp we have material sampling (cutting—taking an actual object from the real world); in Levine we have a conceptual frame of reference, or a cultural citation, which parallels Kraftwerk's and Underworld's strategy of developing music remixes that are legitimated in large part, if not primarily, by their title. Here, then, we see how the principle of selectivity that became part of the selective remix in music during the '70s was at play with deliberate interests in social commentary for Duchamp in 1917, and Levine in 1991—the selective strategy is just as effective regardless of time period.

This strategy of selectivity became important in the work of pop artists, such as Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein; both artists became known for taking material from popular culture to incorporate it into their art practice.

[23] For an online reproduction of Levine's appropriation visit "Sherrie Levine," *Artnet*, http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/cfinch/finch5-7-4.asp.

For Warhol this meant taking recognizable mass produced goods such as *Campbell's* soup cans, as well as the images of celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley, with the aim to create paintings often defined by repetition of a single image in order to create a simulacrum embraced by the mass public. With this strategy, which often consisted of replicating actual images, therefore sampling from a specific source of pop culture, Warhol questioned the art institution. And Lichtenstein took the language of comic books and incorporated it in his paintings, which featured crashing planes, as well as women crying or making ambiguous sentimental statements. Unlike Warhol, Lichtenstein is not sampling directly from a specific work, but rather appropriating, or aesthetically speaking, referencing in terms of discourse the look of comics for his own purposes. He conceptually remixes the aesthetics of comics with the language of art. Here we note that the principle of selectivity can be used to cite or sample specific sources, or merely the look of a specific source, or genre, again, in terms of cultural citation.

Figure 3.17 Kate Armstrong and Michael Tippett, *Grafik Dynamo*, 2005

Lichtenstein's strategy to appropriate the language of comic books, which now is conventionally associated with pop art, is further explored in the online project *Grafik Dynamo* by Kate Armstrong and Michael Tippett (Figure 3.17).[24] Like Lichtenstein, who appropriated comic strips for his paintings, Armstrong and Tippett appropriate the language of comics using

[24] http://turbulence.org/Works/dynamo/index.html

RSS technology. They refer to the work as a "live action comic strip" because the panels are updated with new images and caption bubbles every few seconds. The strip re-contextualizes material from Live Journal, an online resource that provides free weblogs to online communities. [25] The Internet user sits back and lets the strips reload information. At one point a caption at the bottom of the far left panel reads "But the journalists asked no questions, and seemed to have been hypnotized," while at the top a small image of Tinker Bell is juxtaposed with the text, "All we need is faith and trust, and a little pixie dust..." On the center panel there is a Jack Daniel's bottle and a corresponding thinking bubble that says, "Danger! Sound the whistle!" The panel on the far right presents a woman wearing a large helmet-like device on her head and holding a joystick; the speech bubble states, "I would do anything for someone who would fight me!" while the bottom caption reads, "Toy locomotives choked the thoroughfares..."

All images and text fragments (the latter pre-authored by Armstrong)[26] are combined at random, leaving it up to the user to make sense of them. *Grafik Dynamo*, although the authors do not label it as such, is a selective remix of the traditional comic strip and contemporary culture, with a trace of the postmodern leaning toward allegorical fragmentation.[27] Here we have Remix at play in two ways. First it samples material from different sources, via RSS technology, thus creating a remix in terms of actual sampling; and second, it references the comic book genre, similarly to Lichtenstein; this is a cultural citation. The form with allegorical authority is the comic strip, that like the urinal, which once contextualized as a deliberate appropriation for commentary allows all other forms that come and go to collide, providing multiple significations. Like all contemporary art, this work is not expected to provide specific answers for the viewer, but instead is supposed to offer a space to reflect on the possible meaning of the work of art. In terms of discourse, multiple readings are remixed when the project constantly switches images and texts for the viewer in a matter of seconds, presenting compositions that most likely will never be repeated, thus emphasizing the ephemeral experience of the work. Image and text are combined on the panels just for *you* (and any other viewer who may be accessing the project at the same moment). But that combination will be gone in just seconds, and all that will be left is a memory, a trace. *Grafik Dynamo* is a selective remix because as was previously stated, a selective remix must leave the spectacular aura of the original intact. *Grafik Dy-*

[25] *Livejournal.org*, 2005, http://www.livejournal.com.

[26] I would like to thank Jo-Anne Green, director of Turbulence.org, for making this clear.

[27] Owens, 206.

namo at no point denies or dares question the authority of the comic strip; if anything, it celebrates it as a tool for cultural criticism and in this way it follows the principles of selectivity that are also at play in the work of Duchamp and Levine. As previously noted, Levine actually celebrates Duchamp's artistic aura in a similar fashion to how Lichtenstein, Armstrong, and Tippet celebrate comic strips. This is where Remix is at play; its principles move between concreteness (direct citations as material samplings) and abstraction (general reference to an aesthetic in terms of cultural citations) as needed. Hence, Duchamp recontextualizes the urinal, while Levine questions Duchamp. And Armstrong and Tippet remix Lichtenstein, although in an indirect way: *Grafik Dynamo* uses the language of the comic strip with a similar sensitivity to Lichtenstein's, who appropriated comic strips, but was careful to use them to bring forth the thingness in painting. He considered his paintings unique objects produced intimately, informed by the previous period of abstract expressionism.[28] This means that he made the most of painting as a medium by reinforcing its formal elements.

Armstrong and Tippet, in *Grafik Dynamo*, similarly appropriate the language of comic strips to comment on the computer database as a creative medium. As Lichtenstein uses the language of comics to make the viewer aware of painting, Armstrong and Tippet use the language of comics to make the user aware of database logic: the organization of information by computers. After viewing *Grafik Dynamo* for a few minutes, one realizes the constant flow of information. The loading and reloading brings forth the formal elements specific to digital technology just like the size of the canvas and the way the painting is systematically stroked with detachment by Lichtenstein on canvas, allegorizing a machinic process, thus making the viewer aware of the painterliness of the work of art. To reiterate the flux of Remix: what these examples demonstrate is that a formal citation leads to a cultural recognition, which could be specific or general. The citation could be a particular object, which in the case of Armstrong and Tippett is a database of images and texts, or general, which in the case of Lichtenstein is a reference to the aesthetics of comics. Also note that the database citation is performed at a material level—technologically, (something is taken to be literally delivered to the computer's cache), while the citation of comics is in terms of cultural recognition.

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[28] Poul Erik Tojner, "I know You Must Feel," Michael Juul Holm, Poul Erik Tojner and Martin Caiger-Smith, Editors, *Roy Lichtenstein: All About Art* (Lousiana: Lousiana Museum of Art, 2003), 11 – 31.

As previously noted, the reflexive remix differs in various ways from the selective remix; it directly allegorizes and extends the aesthetic of sampling as practiced in the music studio by '70s DJs, where the remixed version challenges the authority of the original and claims autonomy even when it carries the original's name. Again, this challenge is based on formal recognition that leads to a citation in terms of discourse. In culture at large, the reflexive remix takes parts from different sources and mixes them striving for autonomy. The spectacular aura of the original(s), whether fully recognizable or not must remain a vital part if the remix is to find cultural acceptance. This strategy demands that the viewer reflect on the meaning of the work and its sources—even when knowing the origin may not be possible. An example from art history in which the principles of the reflexive remix were already at play, prior to the rise of Remix, is the work of John Heartfield, who takes material out of context to create social commentary. His photomontages like *Adolf the Superman: Swallows Gold and Spouts Junk*[29] and *Hurrah, the Butter is All Gone,*[30] question the very subject that gives them the power to comment. In the former, Hitler, as the title connotes, is presented swallowing gold and is questioned as a leader of Germany; while in the latter, a German family is having dinner, eating military weapons, thus the stability of the home is questioned due to German politics in WWII. In his case, the spectacular aura of the source image (like in the selective remix) is left intact—but only to be questioned along with everything else: we believe the image but question it at the same time due to the dual transparency of a montage and the realism expected of a photo-image; the work then gains access to social commentary based on the combination of recognizable material. Here, again, material manipulation enables the viewer to recognize significations that can move from one form to another.

Another example from art history where the principles of the reflexive remix can be found is the work of Hannah Höch. Her collages blur the origin of the images she appropriates; the result is open-ended propositions. Her work often questions identity and gender roles. Yet, even when it is not clear where the material comes from, her compositions are still fully dependent on an allegorical recognition of such forms in culture at large in order to attain meaning. This is the case in pieces like *Grotesque*[31] and

[29] For an image of Heartfield's *Superman,* see: *Towson.edu*, http://www.towson.edu/heartfield/images/Adolf_the_Superman.jpg

[30] For an image of Heartfield's *Butter's all Gone*, see http://www.towson.edu/heartfield/images/Hurrah_the_Butter_is_all_gone.jpg.

[31] For an image of *Grotesque* visit *Adam Art Gallery* http://www.vuw.ac.nz/adamartgal/exhibitions/2002/big/lightsandshadows-hoch-lg.html. Also see, Maria Makela and Peter Boswell, editors, *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1997), 174.

Tamar.[32] Although they were made 30 years apart, both decontextualze the objects they appropriate. Here we have body parts of men and women combined to create a collage of de-gendered figures. The authority of the image lies in the acknowledgment of each fragment individually, and a specific social commentary like the one found in Heartfield's work is no longer at play; instead, each individual fragment in Höch's work needs to hold on to its cultural value in order to create meaning, although with a much more open-ended position. This, again, is done in similar fashion as Armstrong and Tippet, and Lichtenstein, who make generalized references.

For Heartfield and Höch the subject which gives the work of art its authority is actually questioned; the result is a friction, a tension that demands that the viewers reconsider *everything* in front of them. This is what makes their art powerful.

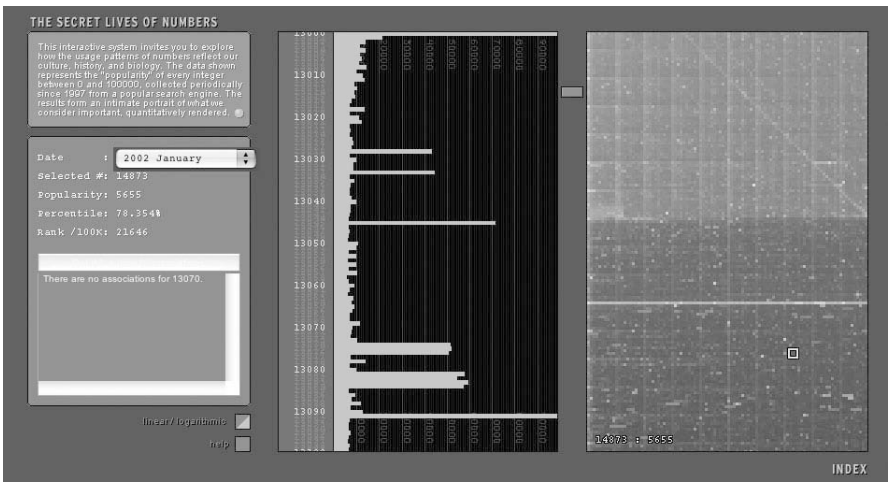

Figure 3.18 Golan Levin, et. al., *The Secret Lives of Numbers*, 2002

Keeping in mind how principles of the reflexive remix work for Heartfield and Höch, we can now examine *The Secret Lives of Numbers* by Golan Levin, et. al.(Figure 3.18)[33] The work consists of a visualization of numbers and their popularity in culture for the years 1997, 1998 and 2002. The artists conducted an extensive study of the numbers between one and a million; and put online the visualization of data for one hundred thousand. The reason they give for this numerical range is that presenting a visuali-

[32] For an image of Tamar ,visit "Hannah Höch: 'Dompteuse(Tamar)'," http://www.yellowbellywebdesign.com/hoch/dompu.html. See also Makela and Boswell, 114.

[33] http://turbulence.org/Works/nums/index.html

zation for up to a million is not possible online, but they claim to have an offline installation which presents all the numbers. The data visualization consists of three panels. The first on the far left provides contextual information about the other two. It presents a menu bar that allows the user to choose between the years 1997, 1998 and 2002, and then provides him/her with the popularity of the number selected, its percentile, rank, and association. The user can choose numbers on the other two panels. The middle panel offers a bright yellow bar-chart at a ninety-degree angle, while the third panel on the right presents a field of green and yellow which varies from lighter to darker values. The color varies with the popularity of the number in culture. When a number is chosen on either the center or the right panel, the left panel then provides information on that number. While all numbers are ranked, not all of them are associated with an actual activity. Some appear to be zip codes, and when the user chooses a number of this type, the following statement appears "Association for 15139: Oakmont , PA." But at times the user may receive the statement "There are no associations for number_____." In fact, this is a common result.

In the end, *The Secret Lives of Numbers* takes numbers from the everyday and combines them as abstraction—which at times can become quite specific as shown above with the zip code association; however, even then the association is cartographic (unless you live there) and only points to the activity of measuring. Here the source cited is also abstract in a parallel gesture to Armstrong and Tippet's, as well as Lichtenstein's citation of comics; only in this case it is science that is referenced. Also note that specific data is directly sampled, but its source is abstracted in order to comment on science. This project is about numerology. It questions scientific methods of measurement, as the introductory statement reads, "[L]ike every symbiotic couple, the tool we would like to believe is separate from us (and thus objective) is actually an intricate reflection of our thoughts, interests, and capabilities."[34] The project allegorizes the authority of numbers and the authority of science, yet its aim is not to leave intact our methodology, but rather to bring forth its limitations as a measuring device of human experience. Like Heartfield's *Superman*, which was conceived to question Hitler as the German leader during WWII, the aim of *The Secret Lives of Numbers* is to question poignantly the way numbers are seen as "objective" in the world. And to do this effectively the artists appropriate the tools of measurement normally associated with numbers: graphs and charts. One comes to realize the possibility for the project to be a well-orchestrated pun on the parameters of modernism. The project then can be considered a reflexive remix because it demands that the Internet user re-

[34] Levin.

flects upon and questions *everything,* including the authority science normally enjoys, just like the viewer must question the realness of Heartfield's photo-montage.

The Secret Lives of Numbers also shares a sense of deconstruction with Höch; like her collages, it presents material that is impossible to engage with precision. One is limited to acknowledge that there is a preexisting process that led to the presentation of the material; in the case of Höch this means her cutting and pasting from different magazines and popular journals, while for Levin this implies the extraction of numbers from different areas of mass electronic media. But in both, one is not able to know the actual sources; the only thing that is certain is that what is presented is part or was part of a bigger whole. Thus, for Höch the body becomes degendered, and turned into pieces that point to the fragmentation that media makes possible when pushed toward the spectacular, while for Levin it points to the collapse of numbers into a purposeless exercise that exposes the preoccupations of measuring that also make mass media possible.

Both new media art works by Artmstrong, Tippet, and Levin show the unprecedented possibilities for expression in new media, when artists use new technologies to develop innovative projects. Also they all share a tendency to cite a genre or abstract concept in their projects. This is possible because of optimization and strategic manipulation of data, a recent form of mechanical reproduction. As can be seen, sampling is a key element in all the works examined, not only in new media, but also earlier examples of modern art in the twentieth century. This form of sampling in new media due to the type of technology used at the time of this writing in music studios, as well as culture at large, which is computer technology, is intimately linked to the type of sampling performed by DJs.

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The definitions of Remix just considered above extend to visual culture with great efficiency, both as content and form. They demonstrate that the power of remixing lies in its effectiveness as action and aesthetic. This is the reason why remixing eventually becomes discourse: it moves beyond material recognition into the ideological realm, where as noted with the remixes in music by Kraftwerk and Underworld, once an aesthetic is established, a textual (cultural) citation may be enough to exude Remix. Thus Remix finds its real power in the realm of ideas. This is the space in which the regenerative remix is best at play, as it combines material according to specific needs.

It is evident that some of the principles of the selective and reflexive remixes in the examples so far provided had been at play in visual culture

for sometime before DJs experimented with them in the music studio; but the extended remix is not found in popular culture before the '70s, and it actually is not found outside of music. The Disco DJs, going against the grain, actually extended music compositions to make them more danceable. As previously noted, they took 3 to 4 minute songs that would be friendly to radio play, and extended them as long as 10 minutes.[35] In the '70s this was quite radical because in fact, it is the summary of long material that is constantly privileged in the mainstream—which is true even today. The reason behind this tendency has to do in part with the efficiency that popular culture demands: everything is optimized to be quickly delivered and consumed by as many people as possible. An example of this tendency is the popularity of publications like *Reader's Digest*, which offer condensed versions of books, as well as stories for people who want to be informed but do not have the time to read the original material, which is often more extensive.[36]

Another recent occurrence quite popular on the web is the two-minute "replay" available for TV shows like "30 Rock."[37] One of the first shows that experimented with online replay was "Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip."[38] The premise is that if you miss a show when it airs, you can spend just two minutes online catching up on the plot; in essence, this is a more efficient version of *Reader's Digest* for TV delivered to your Internet doorstep. This two-minute replay is also called "video highlights." At the same time, this optimization of information allows entire programs to be uploaded in short segments to community websites like YouTube; and even though many of these uploads are done by average consumers, in the end they function as promotion for TV media.[39] With such pervasiveness in mass media, one must wonder about the effectiveness of the critical position by online works like the ones cited. Thus, the question arises, how effective as critical tools are the principles of selectivity and reflexivity at play in works like *Grafik dynamo*, and *The Secret Lives of Numbers*? In order to consider possible answers to this question, it is necessary to revisit concepts that defined postmodernism.

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[35] First known Disco song to be extended to ten minutes is "Ten Percent," by Double Exposure, remixed by Walter Gibbons in 1976. See Brewster, 178-79.

[36] *Reader's Digest* , http://www.rd.com.

[37] "30 Rock," *nbc.com*, http://www.nbc.com/30_Rock.

[38] "Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip," *nbc.com*, http://www.nbc.com/Studio_60_on_the_Sunset_Strip.

[39] The 2007 Grammys can be seen in pieces almost in its entirety. See "Grammys 2007," *Youtube.org* 2007, http://youtube.com/results?search_query=grammys+2007&search=Search .

The Waning of Affect in Remix

The postmodern period resists a simple definition; however, to note its complexity, two contrasting views by Jean Francois Lyotard and Fredric Jameson can be revisited. Jean Francois Lyotard contextualized postmodernism as a time of fragmentation, of bits and pieces, of incompleteness and open-ended possibilities;[40] a time when little narratives questioned Universal History. Meta-narratives attained a certain stigma due to the rise of disciplines such as Cultural and Post-colonial Studies, where the story of the subaltern could be expressed. Simultaneously, during the postmodern period the general tendency of specialization in both research and commercial fields became streamlined.

In contrast, Fredric Jameson considers the postmodern period as a manifestation of the logic of Late Capitalism, following the definitions of Ernest Mandell. Jameson, unlike Lyotard, does not question Universal History, but instead argues that what is called the postmodern is really "a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features."[41] For Jameson, postmodernism is in line with the dialectic of History, as defined by Marx, and thus is in its complex form a progression of modernism and Capital. In both Lyotard's and Jameson's positions, as well as those inbetween, an acknowledgement of some form of plurality, as well as a rupture in History, is evident. However, what is debated by theorists who reflect on modernism and postmodernism is how such plurality and rupture are linked to History, epistemologically. Neither modernism nor postmodernism have been left behind; today we function with a simultaneous awareness and conflictive acceptance of both cultural paradigms.

Both concepts are actually linked to Jameson's own theory which he calls "the waning of affect in postmodern culture," that is a sense of fragmentation, a suspension or collapse of history into intertextuality due to the high level of media production. In his book *Postmodernism,* published in 1991*,* Jameson argues that modernism and postmodernism are divided by the collapse of culture into what he calls intertextuality. For Jameson, this means that the hermeneutics found in modernism in art works like van Gogh's peasant shoes titled *A Pair of Boots* is lost in later paintings like Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*. In van Gogh's painting the viewer is able to identify with a narrative of some ultimate truth: the struggle of the working classes, while in Warhol's the viewer is simply confronted with

[40] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: 1984), 3 – 67.

[41] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 4.

shoes that are independent and indifferent of the viewer's reading. The shoes express nothing except superficiality. Jameson elaborates:

> Andy Warhol's work in fact turns centrally around commodification, and the great billboard images of the Coca-Cola bottle or the Campbell's soup can, which explicitly foreground the commodity fetishism of a transition to late capital, ought to be powerful and critical political statements. If they are not that, then one would surely want to know why, and one would want to begin to wonder a little more seriously about the possibilities of political or critical art in the postmodern period of late capital.[42]

For Jameson this is the outcome of a cultural evolution in which "modernism was still minimally and tendentially the critique of the commodity and the effort to make it trascend itself: postmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process."[43] Van Gogh being part of the modern period can propose moments of struggle with which the viewer can identify, while Warhol can only offer a detached statement of consumerism. Jameson defines this process as "the waning of affect in postmodern culture,"[44] which is a mediated experience: a simulacrum that affords the viewer indifference in cultural consumerism and production.

All of the new media works in the Turbulence archive actually were developed at least ten years after Jameson noticed the waning of affect in postmodernism. And if we reconsider them with Jameson's propositions in mind, we can see how the media projects attain cultural value based on the spectacular elements he describes. *Grafik Dynamo*, for example, appropriates the language of comics with the same awareness of Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*. All the viewer has to do is log on and let the web project do the rest: load and reload text and images to create social commentary. The result is the viewer being periodically presented with a pastiche of image and text that comments on material with no clear context. Everything is presented as a snapshot from a moment that the viewer cannot hope to enter and will soon lose site of because the image and text will be switched by the computer script. And in this case the waning of affect is taken further, because, unlike Warhol's shoes, which one can hope at least to stare at for as long as one desires, the images in *Grafik Dynamo* cannot even offer that superficiality of the postmodern because it is designed to slip away; this is the next stage of superficiality ruling today defined by computer logic. This is the aesthetic of constant updates which I will elaborate on in a later section dealing with mashups. Expanding our view to the possibility of software it can be noted tha *Grafik Dynamo*, while being a selective remix is a simple and limited form of the regenerative remix,

[42] Jameson, 9.
[43] Ibid, xviii
[44] Ibid, 10.

mainly because part of its database (selected texts) are limited preselections by the authors. But the database of images can potentially grow according to the activity of Livejournal.

The Waning of affect finds a home in database logic when we consider *The Secret Lives of Numbers*. Golan Levin et al. are so aware of people's indifference to reality that the artists go on to make a parody of it. Levin and his collaborators take this to the point that the viewer is not able to connect with the piece on any level. It is completely closed off from any possible hermeneutical reading. Here the power of abstraction, which has made the philosophy of Hegel, for example, a powerful tool to understand the complexity of human interests and anxieties, is appropriated and turned into a banal exercise of numerology, which the viewer may try to engage, but in the end the object of contemplation is kept at bay, at best, at a distance allowing for indifference.

This means that the waning affect of postmodernism has not withered, but rather gained force since the 1990s. The reason for this is that the possibilities of cultural production, both popular and elitist have reached an efficiency based on increasing compression of material, that has superseded the postmodern period. And it is the compression of content, the obsession of condensing material for faster consumption and assimilation that gives Remix public legitimation.

It is obvious from the above analysis that both the selective and reflexive remixes depend on the efficiency that made mass media powerful—they appropriate this very element to critique media itself. Cultural critics who apply principles of the selective and the reflexive remix deliver material with the same efficiency and expectations of immediate recognition that the culture industry expects, only their aim is still very much ingrained in the avant-garde tradition of shocking viewers in order for them to realize people's role in mass culture.[45]

All of the works described above depend on mechanical recording, which is used for the particular purpose to attain cultural value. The works, then, are dependent on the inter-relation of repetition and representation, which is a key element in the waning of affect of postmodernism. Based on the current assessment, new media art uses repetition as an aesthetic strategy, and implements recording technology directly as its main form of validation. New media art has assimilated the indifference found in the work of Warhol, as a vital ingredient to attain legitimation and cultural value.

[45] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 88-91.

Remix in the Culture Industry

It is now the opportune time to analyze in more detail the relation of repetition and representation according to the theory of noise by Jacques Attali, in order to better understand how the three basic forms of remix extend beyond music, at times found in the form of the regenerative remix. Attali considers music a cultural form that expresses power; for him, music is the domestication of noise. Music is a way for humans to exert their control over nature, for music is "what links a power center to its subjects, and thus, more generally, it is an attribute of power in all of its forms."[46] Music, then, is the vehicle through which material reality is explored much faster than any other medium.[47]

How music attained such a central role in culture goes back in history to sacrificial rituals, when music functioned as a supplement to the killing, when it functioned as a way to console "everyone's misfortune," making it "tolerable through the derisory designation of a god sacrifice."[48] This ritual in effect silenced the audience; it became a way of indoctrinating people who in turn came to believe in something outside of themselves as they learned to be passive, as they learned to be silent: "noise as silence." Noise, once domesticated as music, is turned into a "simulacrum of Murder" and "Simulacrum of Sacrifice," both extend in current times as the sacrificial ritual to the performance of the musician for an audience who waits to applaud at the end of each musical event. Eventually, as the ritual becomes secularized and commodified, it is murder and violence that become supplanted, as "Music responds to the terror of noise, recreating difference between sounds and repressing the tragic dimension of lasting dissonance—just as sacrifice responds to the terror of violence."[49]

Once music becomes more and more secular, the rise of the minstrel and the street performer came into effect, which evolved from the court composer and eventually fed the rise of the pop-star in the nineteenth century. This is connected to the rise of Capital when copyright defines the role of the composer as musical author whose labor is not clearly defined. Attali argues that the music composer has always had limited rights to the music he/she composes. This is partly due to the fact that the labor of the composer has never been clearly established in relation to performance and the score as the code for value.[50] However, it is representation of music

[46] Attali, 7, for a previous discussion on Attali see introduction, 5-8, and chapter two, 60-61.
[47] Ibid, 11.
[48] Ibid, 22.
[49] Ibid, 28.
[50] Ibid, 80.

that arises with the popularization of the score during the enlightenment. Once a stable format for production and reproduction of the score became established, through copyists and eventually printing, music could then be "presented" anywhere since all anyone needed was the score and the proper instrument to perform the composition with great precision. This enabled many performers to have a career in different venues from great concert halls to side-street cafés.[51] Attali further elaborates that the pop-star rose from the activity of performing the score in the nineteenth century; the pop-star was not expected to be the author of the score, but simply the person who enacted its representation; this was a phenomenon bound to become important in the twentieth century, once music was recorded for playback on phonographs, and most notoriously on the radio.

According to Attali, the *representation* of the performer became a subordinate of *repetition* when sound was recorded, and argues that this is the culmination of noise's domestication because when music is recorded it becomes regulated and distributed with great ease. In short, what Attali sees at play is that once representation (meaning performance of the score) is recorded, any performance that comes after will be subjected to the recording as the constant reference to which people would compare later actions; a recording could be repeated in different contexts, including in the home, public spaces, and on the radio. Music then could be delivered to a mass audience via the airwaves, and *representation* is taken over by *repetition*: "The political spectacle is merely the last vestige of representation, preserved and put forward by repetition in order to avoid disturbing or dispiriting us unduly. In reality, power is no longer incarnated in men. It is. Period."[52]

Here repetition becomes ideology, which is the backbone of consumer society and the culture industry—repetition is also at the foundation of Remix; and the ground is set for the waning of affect as defined by Jameson to eventually take effect in postmodern culture. Attali argues further that the idea of collecting music becomes a common norm, and this mentality leads the consumer to a state of complacency, a state of silence, as people have to listen to that which they consume. Repetition becomes an efficient way of controlling violence because music can be purchased and played repeatedly by young rebels as a way of finding their freedom of expression. Attali makes a point of the punk rockers in the '70s, who were dependent on music to express their anger against culture. He argues that what music did in the end was to keep them within the confinement of the social structure, providing the necessary means of expression while mak-

[51] Ibid, 68-81.

[52] Ibid, 88.

ing sure they did not disrupt society in any significant way. This is extended on to other teenagers in later decades who constantly look to music as a way to express their rebelliousness. In short, repetition has developed such efficiency in consumer culture that it even disrupts its own self-referential flow to appear innovative; Attali elaborates, "The denunciation of 'abnormal' people and their usage as innovators is then a necessary phase in the emplacement of repetition. Although training and confinement are the heralds of repetition, confinement is no longer necessary after people have been successfully taught to take pleasure in the norm."[53]

Attali argues that repetition made possible the abuse of black jazz musicians by the music industry, and also supported the development of the hit parade, music hits in the early days of radio, and the conception of music as background noise; a particular example for him is Muzak. For Attali the cooption of the performer was possible because of one medium: the radio, which gave rise to the DJ as a celebrity. Thus DJs (and the principles of Remix) have been attached to the ideology of repetition from the very beginning of their practice. One must ask, upon consideration of Attali's theory, was there ever resistance at play in the rise of DJ and remix culture? This question will be kept in mind as we evaluate the foundation of Attali's theory of repetition, performance and resistance.

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Attali actually relies on the theories of Theodor Adorno to develop his concept of repetition. Adorno, preceding Attali, focuses on consumer culture—which he sees closely related to the capitalist activity he calls the culture industry. Adorno reflects on the regressive listener who would be in various ways similar to Attali's passive listener. The regressive listener for Adorno is the person who does not want to listen critically to anything that challenges her beliefs, but instead wants to hear something familiar in what is supposedly "new."[54] The listener wants to feel a progress that is comfortable but in the end is not *real*. Metaphorically speaking, she wants a *remix* of what is already understandable. Adorno argues that this is possible because individuals have been turned into mere "purchasers"[55] who are not expected to question what they consume. I consider this to be the real driving force of Remix when it also functions as ideology. In the end Remix demands that the listener surrender, as a consumer, to repetition and regression. Only in the time of networked culture and new media, the lis-

[53] Ibid, 125.

[54] Adorno, 51, see discussion of Adorno in chapter one, 27.

[55] Ibid, 32

tener is no longer passive, as understood by Adorno. The listener, as has been noted in previous sections of this chapter, is now expected to contribute in order to consume.

At this point one might ask, why would this be subjected to criticism? According to Adorno, because it is *not real progress*, but regression—a recombination of something that is already familiar, something that already proved to be successful for the commercial market. Some remixers who decide to become involved in pure commercial activities commit to regression with deliberate purpose to create successful hits, again and again, with formulas that allow for allegorical recognition of the original material, which exercise principles of the three basic types of remixes previously outlined. The spectacular image, as defined by Guy Debord, is efficient in its implementation because it relies on principles of Remix to a large degree. It is also a symptom of the collapse of physical and textual space into intertextuality; in this regard Jameson argues that, in postmodernism, intertextuality has moved past hopes for a utopia because it "knows too well that the contents are just images."[56] From *YouTube* to *American Idol*, people consume the spectacle as something natural, something that is not to be questioned, but comfortably consumed. Some fans are likely to dismiss any criticism by arguing that they have a voice in voting. This, however, is nothing but a simulacrum, which enables the industry to study trends and develop new products and, more importantly, new markets. If this statement sounds like a cliché, perhaps it is due to the assimilation by mass culture of criticism by individuals like Adorno, Attali and Jameson. One could argue that their position could be read with comfortable indifference similarly as Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*. This waning of affect, as can be noted in *Grafik Dynamo*, denies a constant image to contemplate; in the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is the affect itself with which the viewer is being pushed to engage, letting the images become interchangeable and incidental. This tendency has become pervasive in the Web 2.0, the second generation of Web technology. In this regard, the mashup encapsulates the appropriation of two or more elements with similar efficacy as the reflexive remix. But unlike musical remixes, the mashup, once it moves beyond music, no longer allegorizes the originating source. The mashup may best expose how Remix is able to move from medium to medium, technology to technology as discourse. The music mashup is the initial bridge to the regenerative remix, which is currently best expressed in software mashups. For this reason it begs a close examination that will further our reflection on the theories so far discussed.

[56] Jameson, ix.

Mashups Defined

There are two types of mashups, which are defined by their functionality. The first mashup is *regressive*; it is common in music, and is often used to promote two or more previously released songs. Popular mashups in this category often juxtapose songs by pop acts like Christina Aguilera with The Strokes, or Madonna and The Sex Pistols.[57] The second mashup is *reflexive*, and is usually found outside of music, and most commonly in web 2.0 applications. Some examples of this genre include news feed remixes, as well as maps with specific local information. This second form of mashup uses samples from two or more elements to access specific information more efficiently, thereby taking them beyond their initial possibilities. While the regressive mashup is a remix, the reflexive mashup is a regenerative remix that opens the space for Remix to become discourse, because it allows for constant change much how culture itself keeps changing.

The foundation of musical mashups can be found in a special kind of reflexive remix known as the megamix, which is composed of intricate music and sound samples. The megamix is an extension of the song medley. The difference between a medley and a megamix is that the former is usually performed by one band, meaning that a set of popular songs will be played in a sequence with the aim to excite the listeners or dancers. A popular example of a medley band is Stars on 45, a studio band put together in 1981 to create a medley of songs by The Archies, The Beatles, and Madness among others.[58]

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[57] Sasha Frere-Jones, "1 + 1 + 1 = 1: The New Math of Mashups," *The New Yorker,* 10 January, 2005, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/01/10/050110crmu_music.

[58] Stars on 45 .*The Very Best of Stars on 45*, Red Bullet. Re-released 2002. Also see the band's website: Stars on 45, http://www.starson45.com/aboutus1.html.

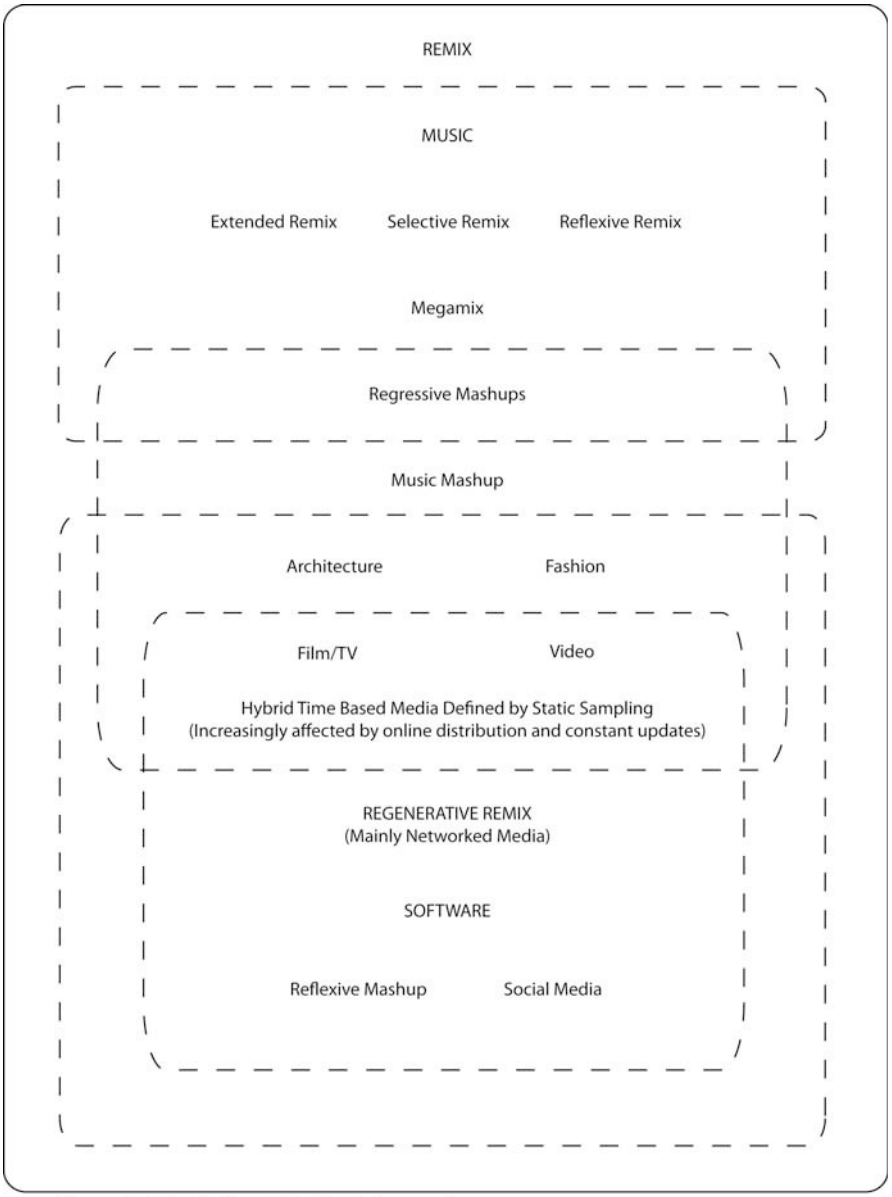

Figure 3.19

A megamix is built upon the same principle of the medley but instead of having a single band playing the compositions, the DJ producer relies strictly on sampling brief sections of songs (often just a few bars enough for the song to be recognized) that are sequenced to create what is in es-

sence an extended collage: an electronic medley consisting of samples from pre-existing sources. Unlike the extended or the selective remixes, the megamix does not allegorize one particular song but many. Its purpose is to present a musical collage riding on a uniting groove to create a type of pastiche that allows the listener to recall a whole time period and not necessarily one single artist or composition.

The megamix has its roots in the sampling practice of disco and hip-hop. While disco in large part experimented with the extended remix, hip-hop experimented with the selective and reflexive remixes. Grandmaster Flash may be credited with having experimented in 1981 with an early form of the megamix when he recorded "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel,"[59] which is essentially an extended mix performed on a set of turntables with the help of music studio production. The recording included songs by The Sugarhill Gang, The Furious Five, Queen, Blondie, and Chic.

Flash's mix does not fit comfortably into any of the Remix definitions I have provided above; instead, it vacillates among them as a transitional song. "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel" exercises principles of the extended remix, when it loops an instrumental version of the 1970s group Chic's "Good Times," over which sections from different songs (such as "Another One Bites the Dust" and "Rapture") are layered for a few bars to then slip back to Chic's instrumental. Flash's mix also has principles of the reflexive remix because it pushes the overall composition to attain its own independence with the quick juxtaposition of the songs. But in the end, the slipperiness of the recording is mainly invested in exploring the creative possibilities of the DJ mixing records on a set of turntables as quickly as possible. The influence of the cutting and switching from one record to another found in this particular recording can be sensed in megamixes that were produced in the music studio from actual samples. Some examples from the history of electro-funk are "Tommy Boy Megamix" produced in 1984, which is a six minute remix of the most popular songs by the hip-hop label Tommy Boy; the megamix includes compositions by Afrikaa Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force, as well as Planet Patrol and Jonzun Crew among others.[60] The megamix found its way into the '90s in the forms of bastard pop and bootleg culture often linked to culture jamming. One of the best known activists/artists during this period is the collective Negativland, who have produced some of the most important mashups to date.[61]

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[59] Grandmaster Flash, "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel," 12 inch single, Sugarhill Records, 1981.

[60] "Tommy Boy Megamix," 12 inch single, Tommy Boy, 1985.

[61] Negativland, http://www.negativland.com

The music mashups of today follow the principle of the '80s megamix, and unlike the selective or extended remixes, they do not remix one particular composition but at least two or more sources. Mashups are special types of reflexive remixes, which at times are *regressive*—meaning that they simply point back to the "greatness" of the original track by celebrating it as a remix; this tendency to take the listener back to the original song logically leads us to name such remix a *regressive mashup*. The term regressive here makes an implicit reference to Adorno's theory of regression in mass culture, as previously introduced. Some popular music mashups are "A Stroke of Genie-us" produced in 2001 by DJ Roy Kerr, who took Christina Aguilera's lyrics from "Genie in a bottle" and mashed them with instrumental sections of "Hard to Explain" by The Strokes.[62] Another example is a mega-mashup by Mark Vidler of Madonna's "Ray of Light" and the Sex Pistol's "Problems."[63] But perhaps the most popular and historically important mashup up to date is a full-length album by Danger Mouse titled *The Grey Album*, which is a mashup of Jay-Z's special acapella version of his *Black Album* with carefully selected sections from The Beatles' *White Album*.[64] *The Grey Album* is important because it is completely sampled. It is one of the most important sampling experiments, along with Marrs's "Pump Up The Volume"[65] which can be considered an early mashup still relying on the concept of a uniting groove as first experimented on the turntables by Grandmaster Flash. The *Grey Album* goes further because it exposed the tensions of copyright and sampling with emerging technologies: Danger Mouse deliberately used the Internet for distribution and he was pushed by EMI (the copyright holders of The Beatles' *White Album*) to take the *Grey Album* off line.[66]

The creative power of all these megamixes and mashups lies in the fact that even when they extend, select from, or reflect upon many recordings, much like the extended, selective, and reflexive remixes, their authority is *allegorical*—their effectiveness depends on the recognition of pre-existing recordings. They are part of spectacular time, as according to Debord, and fall within the theories of regression and repetition of Adorno and Attali. In the end, as has been noted, music mashups are a special kind of reflexive remixes that aim to return the individual to comforting ground. As

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[62] A copy of this mashup can be found at The Hype Machine: DJ Roy Kerr, "A Stroke of Genius" http://hypem.com/track/54069.

[63] Mark Vidler, "Ray of Gob" for more information on the mashup see Go Home Productions, 2006, http://www.gohomeproductions.co.uk/history.html.

[64] Frere-Jones.

[65] For a good account on the importance of "Pump Up the Volume" see, Poschardt, *DJ Culture*.

[66] Corey Moss, "Grey Album Producer Danger Mouse Explains How He Did It" *MTV*, May 11, 2004, http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1485693/20040311/danger_mouse.jhtml.

Adorno would argue, they support the state of regression that gives people false comfort; thus, Debord's spectacular time is today most prevalent than ever before. In postmodernism, as Jameson explained, this became the norm. In this fashion we move from modernism, a state of contemplation of utopia, to postmodernism, a state of mere consumption of utopia as just another product to shop around for, along with anything that can be commodified, from nature to the act of resistance. Supporting this waning of affect linked to repetition are the principles of Remix in mashups; however, this norm can potentially be disrupted with Web 2.0 applications, as we will see below.

Figure 3.20 Kent Cigarettes depicting a man with lung cancer, June 2006, Little Tokyo, Los Angeles. Cigarettes from Chile.

Figure 3.21 R2D2 Mailbox, Downtown, San Diego, California 2007.

Figure 3.22 Office building covered with an advertisement for the film Transformers, corner of Sunset and Vine, Hollywood California, June 2007.

Figure 3.23 Alternate view of Office building covered with an advertisement for the film Transformers, corner of Sunset and Vine, Hollywood California, June 2007.

Figure 3.24 T-shirts for sale at El Rastro, flea market, Madrid, Spain, May 2009

Figure 3.25 Church announcement with appropriated Google logo, corner of Los Feliz and Highland, Los Angeles, CA, August 2007.

Figure 3.26 Action Figure, Spider Hulk, Image taken in Santiago de Chile, August 2006.

Figure 3.27 Motor bike with Louis Vuitton pattern, Humboldt Park, Chicago, August 2008.

It is important to note that these examples are not remixes, but are objects informed by remix principles. Prior to the current period of remix culture, these objects would have been contextualized along the lines of intertextuality, hibridty or appropriation. However, as the nGrams in chapter one demonstrate, we live in a culture where the term "remix" is often used to refer to the ongoing combination of material. Thus, remix has become an attitude and proper aesthetic which marks a period of networked culture recycling ideas and preoccupations of the modern and postmodern period.

From Music to Culture to Web 2.0

Once mashups become complementary of Remix, as a strategy for deployment of repetition, their influence can be noticed in diverse cultural forms, which in the past may have been seen superficially under the context of hybridity and recyclying: tall buildings in major cities are often covered with advertisements selling products from bubble gum to cell phone services, or promoting the latest blockbuster film (figures 3.22-3.23). The building turns into a giant billboard; advertising is mashed up with architecture. Another example: cigarette companies in Santiago de Chile have been pushed to include on their cigarette packs images and statements of people who have cancer due to smoking; two cultural codes

that in the past were separated on purpose are mashed up as a political compromise to try to keep people from smoking, while accommodating their desires (figure 3.20). Yet another: The Hulk and Spiderman have been mashed up to become The Spider-Hulk, as an action-figure. In this case, the hybrid character has the shape of The Hulk with Spiderman's costume on top, (two already hybrid characters in their own right). It is neither but both—simultaneously (figure 3.26).[67] Mashups as a spectacular aesthetic are everywhere. They have moved beyond music to other areas of culture, at times merely as cultural references, and at others with actual formal implementation. Such move is dependent on running signifiers that are in turn dependent on the repetition of media. And repetition had meddled with computer culture since the middle of the twentieth century, developing a contentious relationship with representation.

The strategic aesthetic of mashups was at play in new media during the 1980s with the conceptualization of the personal computer. While people who developed early personal computers may not have been influenced by mashups directly as a cultural reference, their similarities bear comparison, especially because the '80s is the time when computers and remix in music were both introduced to popular culture. The computer's "desktop" which was designed for Apple's GUI (Graphic User Interface) is in essence a technological and conceptual mashup; in this case the computer's information, which usually was accessed via the notorious command line, became accessible to the average user when it was mashed up with a visual interface called a "desktop" (for convenience of mass recognition), making an obvious reference to a person's real-life desktop. This allowed the computer user to concentrate on using the machine for personal goals, while not worrying about how the different parts of the computer ran. This conceptual model has been extended to web application mashups, in which the regenerative remix is fully at play.

Web Application Mashups

Mashups as a conceptual model take on a different role in software. For example, the purpose of a typical Web 2.0 mashup is not to allegorize particular applications, but rather, by selectively sampling in dynamic fashion, to subvert applications to perform something they could not do otherwise

[67] These are citations based on my own travels to different cities. The buildings with images can be found in any major city. For information about cigarettes see: Liz Borkowski, "The Face of Chile's Anti-Tobacco Campaign: The Pump Handle" Posted on January 4, 2007, http://thepumphandle.wordpress.com/2007/01/04/the-face-of-chiles-anti-tobacco-campaign/. For an image of the Spider- Hulk see: "The Incredible Hulk Engine of Destruction," http://www.incrediblehulk.com/spiderhulk.html.

by themselves. Such mashups are developed with an interest to extend the functionality of software for specific purposes.

The actual code of the applications is left intact, which means that mashups are usually combinations of preexisting sources that are brought together with some type of "binding" technology. In a way, the pre-existing application is almost like Legos: ready for modular construction. The complexity with web applications mashups lies in how intricate the connections become. The most rough of mashups are called "scrapings" because they sample material from the front pages of different online resources and websites, and the more complex mashups actually include material directly taken from databases, that is if the online entity decides to open an Application Programming Interface (API) to make their information available to web developers.[68]

In either case web application mashups, for the most part, leave the actual code intact, and rely on either dynamic or static sampling, meaning that they either take data from a source once (static) or check for updates periodically (dynamic). Web application mashups are considered forms that are not primarily defined by particular software; they are more like models conceived to fulfill a need, which is then met by binding different technology. The most obvious example is Ajax which has been defined by Duanne Merrill as "a web application model rather than a specific technology."[69] Ajax tentatively stands for "Asynchronous Javascript + XML." When considering the history of the technology used in the Ajax model, it becomes clear that the technology used to develop web 2.0 content has been around for sometime: Javascript and XML have been part of the web for many years. So the development of web 2.0 lies in part in a cultural sophistication of certain technology.

Some well-known mashups include mapping mashups, which are created with readymade interfaces like Google Earth or *Yahoo!* Maps, offering the combination of city streets with information of specific businesses or other public information that might be of interest to the person who developed the mashup.[70]

A mashup model that appears to be stable as long as the websites offering the information keep their APIs open is Pipes by *Yahoo!*.[71] This particular type of mashup goes deep into the database to access dynamic data. Pipes by *Yahoo!* actually points to the future of the web, where the user

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[68] Duane Merrill "Mashups: The new breed of Web App. An Introduction to Mashups,"*IBM*, October 16 2006, http://www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/web/library/x-mashups.html.

[69] Ibid

[70] For various examples on map mashups see the blog *Google Maps Mania*, http://googlemapsmania.blogspot.com/.

[71] *Yahoo! Pipes,* http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes.

will be able to customize, to a sophisticated level, the type of information that s/he will be accessing from day to day. Pipes, in theory, provides the user with the same possibilities made available by Google, when the user is able to customize his/her own personal portal news page. The difference in Pipes, however, is that the user can combine specific sources for particular reasons. In a way, the specificity demands that the user really thinks about why certain sources should be linked. Pipes allows the user to choose a particular source, such as news, biddings, or map information to then link it to another source. Many of the pipes that I have browsed through leave me with a sense of critical thinking and practicality by the persons who created them; not that Pipe developers are after social or cultural commentary, but rather that they develop most pipes to be useful in specific ways.

When the user is initiated in Pipes, some of the examples provided include: "apartment near something," "aggregated news alert," and EBay "Price Watch." All these pipes propose a very specific functionality; that is to find an apartment, to get the latest news, or to keep up with the best prices on particular biddings on EBay. For example, a user could be looking for an apartment in a particular area, then the person could connect a public directory, such as Craig's List, which has rental information, to *Yahoo!* maps; the Pipe would then be updated as the information is actualized in the particular sources, meaning the map and the rental resource.

What these examples show is that web application mashups function differently from music mashups. Music mashups are developed for entertainment; they are supposed to be consumed for pleasure, while web application mashups, like Pipes by *Yahoo!* actually are validated if they have a practical purpose. This means that the concept and cultural role of mashups change drastically when they move from the music realm to a more open media space such as the Web. We must now examine this crucial difference.

The Ideology Behind the Reflexive Mashup

Contrary to popular understanding, web application mashups are not remixes in the traditional sense. Let's take the music mashups considered so far. Their power lies in their spectacular aura, meaning that they are not validated by a particular function that they are supposed to deliver, but rather by the desires and wants that are brought out of the consumer who loves to be reminded of two or more songs for his/her enjoyment in leisure. Music has this power because it is marketed as a form of mass escapism. Keeping in mind the previously introduced theories of Jacques Attali and Theodore Adorno, the average person consumes music in order

to wind down and find delight in the few spare moments of the everyday. Those who can, go to concerts, but most people are likely to enjoy music as recordings on CDs and MP3s. When people hear their favorite songs mashed up, it is very likely that they will get excited and find pleasure in recognizing the compositions; their elation will help them cope with whatever stress they may have had throughout the day. Musical mashups are reflexive remixes that never leave the spectacular realm. They support and promote the realm of entertainment and therefore find their power as forms of regression as defined by Adorno, and repetition according to Attali, while extending postmodernism's intertextuality after Jameson. But web application mashups can function differently as we have already seen with *Yahoo!* Pipes. The reason for this is because web application mashups are developed with a practical purpose; this tendency for optimized functionality has pushed web application mashups to constantly access information from the originating sources: to constantly update data. They are (at least initially) proposed to serve as convenient and efficient forms to stay informed rather than to be entertained.

The notion of mashups found in music culture is appropriated in the name of efficiency once such concept enters new media culture, which also changes the concept of a mashup, drastically making it reflexive rather than regressive. The term reflexive here functions differently than how it functions in the reflexive remix. As previously defined, the reflexive remix demands that the viewer or user question everything that is presented; but this questioning stays in the aesthetic realm. The notion of reflexivity in a software mashup implies that the user must be aware as to why such mashup is being accessed. This reflexivity in action in web applications moves beyond basic sampling to find its efficiency with *constant updating*. So a reflexive mashup does not necessarily demand critical reflection, but rather practical awareness. Usability rules here, making allegory as encountered in other remixes incidental; allegory is pushed to the periphery. The validation of the reflexive mashup found in web applications does not acquire its cultural authority in popular recognition of pre-existing sources, but instead it is validated based on how well those sources are sampled in order to develop more efficient applications for online activity. This turns the reflexive mashup into a different object; one which does not celebrate the originating sources, but, if anything, subverts them. Therefore, the reflexive mashup is a regenerative remix because, as previously defined, the regenerative remix is not legitimated by cultural recognition (although this one may be acknowledged as an incidental element), but by the usability of the combination of material for practical purposes. To reiterate, a web application mashup does not point back allegorically to pre-existing sources for validation, as extended, selective, and

reflexive remixes do; it merely uses Remix principles to develop more efficient tools. This is Remix—this is the basic regenerative remix.

However, this does not mean that reflexive mashups cannot be used for spectacular entertainment. YouTube and Facebook are some of the most obvious manifestations influenced by mashup models in Web 2.0, where people are willing to tell their most intimate secrets for the sake of being noticed, and to (maybe even) become "media stars." One has to wonder how the concept of privacy may be redefined in these spaces. So, with this in mind, Pipes by *Yahoo!* may be used for a spectacular cause in the end: any music fan can potentially mash two or more feeds to keep up with the news of his/her favorite movie star. In this example the software mashup becomes appropriated for the sake of pure entertainment. It follows that the reflexive mashup's foundation in functionality does not make it free from the allegorical tendency that other forms of Remix are dependent on; however, this duality in purpose may be a hint as to the real possibilities that lie latent in emerging technologies, which can be tapped if one is critically aware of the creative potential of web 2.0. Software mashups expose that it is a deliberate decision by the user to define the combinations as reflexive or regressive according to personal interests, regardless of the mashup's initial mode.

Analytics: From Music Video to Software mashups

The difference between regressive and reflexive mashups becomes evident when performing a formal analysis of music and software mashups. The images below are visualizations of two music mashups that were popular on the web during the early 2000s. I make reference to them throughout this chapter.

Figure 3.28 Visualization of video edits of "A Stroke of Genie-ous," (2001) by Freelance Hellraiser, mashup of Christina Aguilera's "Genie in a Bottle"(1999) and The Strokes's "Hard To Explain" (2001).

Figure3.29 Video edits visualization of "Ray of Gob," (2003) by Mark Vidler, mashup of Madonna's "Ray of Light" (1998) and The Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen," (1977).

Music mashups primarily mix a vocal track on top of an instrumental arrangement. In the case of "Stroke of Genie-ous," (figure 3.28) the former is Christina Aguilera's "Genie in a Bottle" and the latter The Strokes's "Hard To Explain."[72] Similarly, "Ray of Gob" (figure 3.29) remixes lyrics from Madonna's "Ray of Light" and instrumental sections from The Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen."[73]

Once the music mashup is released a video follows. The visualizations above consist of video footage usually taken from the original music videos, although often other sources are used. The remixes tend to complement the way the music remix was created. In the visualizations, the lighter areas represent footage that corresponds with the lyrics, the mid-grays correspond with transitions or over-layering of footage from the two original videos, while the dark areas represent the instrumental sections. The exception to this is Aguilera's and The Strokes' ending, which is mid-gray, and represents the end titles. They are unique graphics created by the video remixers. Notice also that there are no transitions or over-layering of footage in this remix. The video consists of basic montage. Madonna's and The Sex Pistols', on the other hand, relies on the constant over-layering of footage, particularly around the beginning and end of the video remix. It also uses quick montage, moving back and forth, around the middle. Note that both remixes begin and end with footage of the instrumental tracks, that is of The Strokes and The Sex Pistols.

What both videos also share is a clear implementation of repetition in an attempt to reinforce the fact that these music compositions are mashups of two pre-existing songs. The videos function as a type of illustration of what is going on with the sound. One thing that the videos cannot replicate, however, is the complex layering of the actual music recordings. And for this reason, the video remixers have to attempt an equal distribution of footage to create an approximation to the sound mix.

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72 "A Stroke of Genie-us," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShPPbT3svAw, accessed May 1, 2012.

73 "Ray of Gob," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZGnOIBAYSg, accessed May 1, 2012.

The visualizations demonstrate how time-based media largely relies on aural and visual loops of static material to deliver entertainment to the average person. This basic repetition makes the material familiar and quite comfortable for consumption, and eventually a remix of these remixes (as everything can be re-mixed, of course, including remixes of remixes) become a formula that is welcomed by people invested in developing new markets, especially in social media, where going viral with pre-existing and preferably well recycled material can be the beginning of a major capital investment.

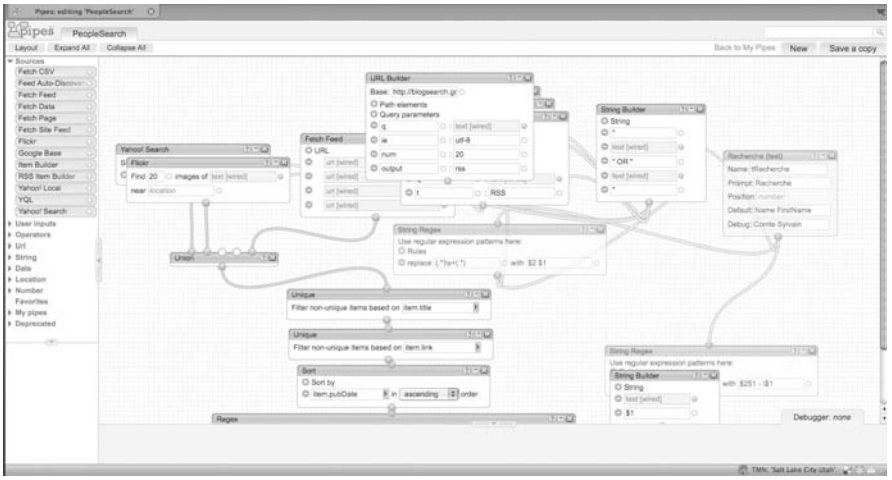

Figure 3.30 Interface of Yahoo! Pipes

Software mashups, as described throughout this chapter, are designed for practical purposes; that is, to serve a specific function. Pipes by Yahoo enables the online user to bring together two elements, thereby repurposing them for a different use, which they could not offer on their own. This is done with the proper linking of modules, as the visualization above demonstrates. The Pipes interface actually makes available to the average user what an advanced developer would normally create with customized code for the implementation of specialized searches designed to be constantly updated.

Yahoo! enables the average user to simply type a URL on one of its modules. Pipes then searches for an RSS feed and makes it available for proper linking to other sources of choice, as explained in other sections of this chapter. The results of the combination of APIs can then be shared publicly on the Pipes website. It can also be shared on social media platforms, and embedded on personal websites.

The major difference between a music mashup and the software mashup is that in the former the user is not expected to manipulate the end product—that is the remixed video. Of course the viewer can choose to download the video and remix it, but there is no interface that enables the user to adjust the video mashup at the moment of viewing. The software mashup, (at least those designed similarly to Pipes) on the other hand, not only validates itself for its delivery on practical terms, but also by the fact that it can be reconfigured by any user. All the user has to do is log on and look "under the hood," adjust the mashup

and republish it. This is an elemental difference that makes the transition of remixing from music to software a second nature of constant change, not only at a formal level but in terms of aesthetics. As a result, we are moving towards a global system where constant change, which is something that philosophically has been entertained for quite some time, is now not only apparent in practical terms but also can be measured, and thereby used for revenue in emerging markets. Constant-updates is the reason why social media corporations, such as Facebook, and Google (with chrome and Google +) are able to thrive. In short, private interests are behind the functionality of the software mashup, although, as I argue throughout this chapter, this technology has the potential for use in the name of cultural enrichment.

Sampling and the Reflexive Mashup

Mashups, whether they are regressive or reflexive, are dependent on sampling. But sampling, as can be noticed from the various examples that have been discussed, begins to be supplanted by *constant updating*. Some mashups do not "cite", but rather materially copy from a source. This is different for the constant updates found in Web 2.0 applications like Pipes by *Yahoo!* because such mashup is dynamically accessing information. This is the same tendency found in *Grafik Dynamo*. In music, architecture, video, and film, as well as many other areas of the mainstream, the source is sampled to become part of another source in form, while in more dynamic applications developed in web 2.0 the most effective mashups are *updated constantly*.

The regressive mashup in music is regressive because it samples to present recorded information which immediately becomes meta-information, meaning that the individual can then understand it as static, knowing it can be accessed in the same form over and over again—this recorded state is what makes theory and philosophical thinking possible. Because of its stability, the principles of the regressive mashup could inform the aesthetic of a building covered with an image publicizing a particular film, such as the *Transformers*, a cigarette box showing the image of a person with lung cancer, as well as two songs by disparate musical acts like Christina Aguilera and The Strokes. The aesthetics of the regressive mashup depends on the recorded signs that are not mixed but transparently juxtaposed: they are recorded to be repeated, accessed, or looked at perfectly over and over again, while the reflexive mashup in Web 2.0 no longer relies on sampling but instead on *constant updating*, making incidental not only the allegorical reference that validates the regressive mashup, but also pushing forward with a constant state of action toward reflection on what is being produced each time the mashup is accessed.

Resistance in Remix

We shall now revisit our previous question about the DJ in relation to representation and repetition: Was there ever resistance, as understood in critical theory, at play in the rise of DJ and remix culture? So far, the survey shows that the concept of Remix developed in music has been extended to other areas of culture, most recently the software mashup. In a way, DJs, while being defined in their profession by a machine (the turntable) that was considered passive and repressive by Adorno and Attali, appropriated the machine and turned it into an instrument of composition. During the 1970s, the hip-hop DJ ruptured repetition when he discovered scratching. What Grand Wizard Theodore (accredited with being the first scratching DJ) did when he stopped the record on the turntable, to move it back and forth and create the effect of a scratch, was to convert the turntable into a musical instrument.[74] This is radical because the phonograph was originally designed to be a pacifier (a silencer) for human beings. When looking back in history, this type of intervention, to rupture the norm in order to open spaces of expression for marginalized communities, was explored by radio DJs during the first half of the century.

When radio became more popular in the 1950s, DJs such as Alan Freed, whether he was aware of it or not, made sure that *repetition* would prevail over *representation*. Freed was one of the first DJs who played a great variety of recorded R & B music. He created a space for the voices of African-American artists to be heard via the recordings he played on his radio show.[75] This being said, one must be aware that such visibility came with conflicts for African-Americans. Yes, while they may have developed a type of public identity by the ambivalent acceptance of their music, issues of race, as well as abuse of their intellectual and creative activities, cannot be denied. In dialectical fashion, black people currently hold a strong cultural position in the United States and other parts of the world, defined by their conflictive history. The complexity of the situation can be seen in the life of Ray Charles, who as part of his own contribution to developing new forms of expressions, inspired the film *Ray*.[76] In his biography turned into a Hollywood film the mainstream public can learn of the conflicts of the music world. Ray Charles, who approved of the film before his death, struggled with and questioned the stereotypes of African Americans in all levels of culture, while also opening doors for generations of African-Americans that would follow him. Unfortunately, the film *Ray* ends up

[74] Brewster, 224-25.
[75] Poschardt, 58-62.
[76] *Ray*, Anvil Films, 2004.

perpetrating many African American stereotypes, like that of the womanizer, while also understanding Ray Charles as a major contributor to the culture of the United States. Consequently, what the film demonstrates is that at the same time that public recognition offers possibilities of expression, it also creates new forms of repression. So, to say that during the middle of the twentieth century the DJ was promoting repetition repressively following the theory of Attali and Adorno would be a reductive statement, because it was in part thanks to *repetition* and not *representation* that African Americans developed a public media position in modernity. At the time when he wrote *Noise*, Attali foresaw a possible day when people could become composers, meaning that they would be critically active in the very forms they consume.[77] In a way, DJs have already demonstrated how this is possible, although they have not always been critical about their practice.

The dependence of the African-American community on repetition via musical recordings played on the radio took a major shift in the 1970s. As previously mentioned, the hip-hop DJ took the turntable and used it to manipulate records, thereby creating a different form of music based on preexisting recordings. The turntable became a machine with which preexisting material could be distorted to the point that, if the skills were developed, the DJ was able to perform solos as complex as those of a guitarist, or any other musician. This is the real power behind hip-hop. This is where the rupture happens within the culture industry. Charles Mudede elaborates on this: "The turntable is a repurposed object. It is robbed of its initial essence. But the void is soon refilled by a new essence which finds its meaning, its place in the hip-hop universe, in the service of the DJ."[78] Mudede goes on to argue that hip-hop actually breaks with music tradition. I argue that it renovates music by disrupting repetition.

DJs reintroduced representation with agency; and with this act we have entered a new paradigm in cultural production and consumption, which is actually an extension of Capital. However, one should be wary of seeing DJs introducing the turntable as a musical instrument and as the possibility of Attali's passive listener to become a cultural producer. The act of not just listening or viewing, but of actually having to "play" something today, is expected in new media culture, as has been noted above with reflexive mashups. It appears that the listener must not only listen, but she must also contribute in the act of consumption. This is conventionalized so the agency that the DJ attained upon appropriation of recorded material is now a factor in the implementation of "playing" at the mass consumer level.

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[77] Attali, 133-148

[78] Charles Mudede, "The Turntable," *ctheory.net*, April 24, 2003, http://ctheory.net/text_file?pick=382.

Playing is a basic and necessary premise behind any website: the user must decide where to go by interacting with an interface designed specifically to make information as dynamically accessible as possible. We also find these features in DVDs, where the user can now not only view a movie from beginning to end, but also access different sections and special features by using interactive menus; the user can enjoy the movie in different languages, or with commentaries by the actors and director. Furthermore, the user is often encouraged to load the DVD in the computer and log on to a website, often to learn about a video game. A case in point is the website for *The Matrix* film trilogy, which during the films most popular time, encouraged viewers to download a video game to play at home or online.[79] Personal playlists made available on websites like Last.fm and Pandora encourage people to explore music according to genres, with the ultimate aim that users purchase songs that they like. People who participate in any of these activities, more often than not, are not necessarily critical, but simply consume via an assimilated form of interactivity, which in the end is regressive not reflexive.

All these examples demand that the user be aware of a sophisticated state of appropriation. The roots of this type of appropriation comfortably assimilated is to what we must now turn to in order to reflect on the complex relationship of repetition and representation, which as we have seen above, find a new ambiguous interrelation based on constant updates vs. static sampling in mashups. And if we notice that constant updating starts to redefine the way archives are accessed, then we must also wonder how such tendency will affect the development and understanding of History.

Remix in History

All that has been discussed so far supports the argument that Remix depends on tools of mechanical reproduction. Due to its efficiency, Remix allows for decontextualization, making possible the loss of history, and for the spectacle,[80] as defined by Guy Debord, to become reality in terms of regression, following the theories of Adorno.[81] To consider this further, I will analyze works that attain meaning in the second and third stages of mechanical reproduction, (see figure 1.3) which contain within themselves

[79] *The Matrix Trilogy*, 2007 http://whatisthematrix.warnerbros.com. For a popular online game see: *The Matrix Online*, http://www.direct2drive.com/6/330/product/Buy-The-Matrix-Online-Download.

[80] Debord.

[81] Adorno, 29-60.

critical commentary on their context. As we will see, only when these advanced stages of (re)production is reached, can Remix emerge.

I have deliberately chosen works from two different media: literature and appropriation art. This was done in order to show how the elements in culture that make Remix possible move mainly as *conceptual strategies*, once culture enters efficient mechanical reproduction. This will also expose the collapse of culture into intertextuality, Jameson's key term that makes possible the waning of affect in postmodernism.

For the second stage of Mechanical Reproduction I chose, as my example, Jorge Luis Borges, who in "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" exposes vital elements necessary to understand a contemporary work of art: its history and contemporary context (that is the actual time it is being read). In this satirical essay, which first appeared in his collection of short stories *Ficciones* published in 1944, Borges presents a writer who painstakingly rewrites, word for word, Miguel de Cervantes's classic Golden Age text, *Don Quixote*, while claiming that his writing is very different. To specify the supposed uniqueness of these two writers, Borges quotes the following text from Cervantes:

> ...truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.[82]

And then he quotes the rewritten text by Menard:

> ... truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.[83]

Here Borges drives his point home by explaining how when reading these two quotes one can see the difference in style and the relationship to the Spanish language by Cervantes, who "employs the Spanish of his time with complete naturalness," while "the archaic style of Menard—who is, in addition, not a native speaker of the language in which he writes—is somewhat affected."[84] The reason why Borges deems Menard's text to be different from Cervantes's, all the while consisting of the exact wording, involves the evolution of taste within the notion of history as related to the authorship of the individual. The fact that Menard reproduces Cervantes *verbatim*—not as a copyist but as an *author*—is a result of the contextual difference supported by the changing tastes; while Cervantes's text may be read as a historical document, Menard's document is read by Borges-narrator as a contemporary document allegorizing Cervantes's text.

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[82] Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," in *Collected Fictions,* trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1999), 94.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

Menard's text gains authority through the cultural capital gained by Cervantes's Quixote as a classical work. The copy is completely different because Menard proposes it as his own text, *specific* for his own time. Yet the key to the authority of Menard's text is that he acknowledges its historical connection to Cervantes's. Nevertheless, the allegory consists of a twentieth century interpretation of the text—the classic Quixote is thus given value amongst contemporary society.

This is an allegorical preoccupation that Borges revisited tirelessly throughout his short stories. In the 1980s, Craig Owens quoted Borges on this exact reflection:

> I know that at one time the allegorical art was considered quite charming... and is now intolerable. We feel that, besides being intolerable, it is stupid and frivolous. Neither Dante, who told the story of his passion in the Vita Nuova; nor the Roman Boethius, writing his de consolatione in the tower of Pavia, in the shadow of his executioner's sword, would have understood our feeling. How can I explain that difference in outlook without simply appealing to the principle of changing tastes?[85]

The main issue for Borges's text is what is considered by Owens a postmodern preoccupation: the ruling system of logic for *Don Quixote*, namely seventeenth century Spanish society, is contested in Menard's writing. Menard proposes to give the Quixote a re-modeling via the new meanings that the words in the text have in the twentieth century. During the time Owens developed his theory on allegory, artists relied largely on appropriation to create their work, very much following Borges's strategy (or one may say, Menard's strategy) of gaining cultural authority by repeatedly asking the question: Does a work really change by merely being copied? If the copy is a cultural intervention contextualized to expose particular codes at play within the work, then the answer is yes—as Borges effectively demonstrates via Menard's re-writing of the *Quixote*.

To reflect further on this strategy of copying work, let us consider the photographs of Sherrie Levine during the early days of the third stage of mechanical reproduction. Levine in the 1980s re-photographed a series of photo-prints by Edward Weston from the 1920s. Her rephotographs are close, if not exact to the original prints. With her work, the viewer is bound to have a similar experience of the reader of Borges's short story. In both cases the viewer/reader carefully examines the copy to see how it differentiates from the original, yet discovers, that the actual material is the same. Nevertheless, Levine's work *will* be read differently based on her individuality. Similar to Menard, Levine is coded with a specific history of which in part she has no control over, thus pointing to the importance of

[85] Owens, 203.

authorship when acknowledging the work of art. As the viewer will find no "difference" in *quality*, it is the actual contextual declaration by Levine that differentiates her prints from Weston's: she is a woman appropriating the work of a man in the context of late twentieth century society. This is the same strategy she used to comment on Duchamp, as we saw in my previous analysis of selective remixes. In the case of Menard, he is a foreigner trying to learn the Spanish language (and an archaic version at that) by appropriating a text that is considered a masterpiece.

This notion of individuality in regards to contextuality is closely tied to the concepts of originality and intellectual property. Ultimately, the works by Levine and Menard are ambiguously linked to copyright laws. And here we must consider the notion of theft as social commentary. Rosalind Krauss explains: "Levine's act of theft, which takes place, so to speak, in front of the surface of Weston's print, opens the print form behind to the series of models from which it, in turn has stolen, of which it is itself a reproduction."[86] According to Krauss, Levine justifies her violation of copyright by claiming that Weston had already "robbed" the models provided by others. Yet, Levine's work, because it functions under the context of "art," is actually accepted by the art institution not only as a critical commentary on the originality of the work of art, but also as a feminist intervention. But the immediate preoccupation is that Levine's work is read as an exact, if not close to exact, reproduction; just shy of proclaiming it as "stolen" in a similar fashion to Menard. In Menard's case, how could he not be accused of plagiarism? He is not accused of plagiarism because he credits Cervantes, as Levine credits Weston. This is a critical strategy of appropriation to comment on the concept of originality, in both cases. Here it can be noted how repetition, as defined by Attali, is used as a strategy of disruption; in both cases the reproduction or repetition of the material with deliberate reflection and citation on what can be considered original frees representation from repetition.

The tendency to cite with exactitude can also be found in the concept of replay in music. Music critic and theorist, Tracy McMullen evaluates how tribute bands for groups, such as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, as well as revival bands such as Cherry Poppin' Daddies, The Brian Setzer Orchestra, and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, use replay as a form of repetition exercised with the purpose to keep in place certain patriarchal principles. McMullen examines in detail how Glen Miller, himself, during World War II used repetition and replay to support "white masculinity as reasoned and

[86] Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: 1999), 168.

in charge."[87] She notes that Miller was meticulous in the band's presentation and demanded that they performed with exactitude; in this sense Miller made the most of repetition to sell consistency as ideology during times of instability. McMullen notes that Replay is found yet once again in 1994 during a 50-year anniversary reenactment of Miller's D-Day broadcast performance at Yale on April 8, 1944, organized in the same place and with exactitude down to the band's outfits by director Thomas Duffy. In this case replay is deliberately simulacra—a spectacular act—aiming to celebrate the past in the fashion of regression.

The concept of replay as defined by McMullen shares some similarities with the acts of appropriation and citation as I have defined them in relation to Borges and Levine. Such similarities are actually critical core observations for McMullen's argument. She notes that in Miller's 1994 reenactment, there are some differences that must be considered, such as the fact that members of the band were two colored men[88] (trumpet and piano) and four white women (two cornets, trumpet, and tenor saxphone).[89] McMullen considers the roles of the two men and four women in terms of "in-passing." A term she coined to explain how the subaltern has come to be accepted to play a role as long as certain codes are met. For the men, they have to blend in with the other white men performers. But the women must go a step further for they must downplay their gender, as well, and appear to be one of the male performers. This is all done to give the reenactment of the performance a historical authenticity. McMullen notes therefore that even when the 50-year reenactment may be quite similar to the original, there are certain traces of a current state of diversity politics at play within the performance.

The trace of diversity of the men and women in the reenactment offer a parallel of the necessity for contextualization as is found in Borges's text. He notes that Menard's Quixote is different because he wrote it in a different time period; a similar argument is also true for Levine, whose photographs appear to be identical to Weston's but the context in which they are presented allow the viewer to acknowledge and also to question the authenticity of not only Levine's work, but also Weston's. The one thing that is different in McMullen's observation is that the producers in both the original and the reenactment are not critically engaged, as are Borges and

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[87] Tracy McMullen, "Identity for Sale: Glenn Miller, Wynton Marsalis and Cultural Replay in Music," *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies (Refiguring American Music),* ed. Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 214.

[88] McMullen uses the term colored men and does not clarify if the men are actually African American or of another ethnic group. For this reason, I also use it, although I would have preferred to be more specific.

[89] This is the terminology used by McMullen, ibid, 210.

Levine. She observes that replay is used in both the original and the reenactment for commercial purposes, even when people who participate in the productions present them as cultural endeavors. They are interested in perpetrating particular values that in the past subverted individuals who are able to participate in the reenactment, but who, as McMullen notes, would never have been accepted by Miller to play in his band. While this might be seen as progressive, the fact that it is downplayed by Duffy in the 1994 reenactment is what McMullen finds worth of critical reflection.

McMullen's text shares a feminist interest with Levine's production. Her argument is briefly outlined here because it exposes how principles of repetition, now part of Remix, have been used to support particular points of views. McMullen's views are also evaluated so that we can see that repetition can be used as a critical tool (which is the case for Borges and Levine), as well as a tool of regression (which is the case of Miller and Duffy). The former are interested in questioning conventions, while the latter in keeping conventions they find comfortably in place. We also see in Duffy's performance a repetition of a historical moment with the deliberate goal to implement values in contemporary times in deferred fashion, as though we are revisiting history, but in reality are asking participants in some level to hold on to values that would not have allowed people like the two colored men and four white women to participate in such a performance in the original moment. This is suspended when repetition validates representation for the sake of ideological stability, as McMullen notes.

Other differences between Remix, Replay, and the work of Borges and Levine must be mentioned. As the word implies, Replay is meant to "replay" or re-enact with exactitude an event from the past. Remix on the other hand is meant to take pre-existing material and make it different while also trying to keep the spectacular aura of the original in order to attain allegorical legitimation. The work of Borges and Levine are not replays or remixes per se; but they are indeed closer to the definition of remixes in that the viewer is meant to notice that something is different. To be more specific, their critical strategy must be highlighted against music remixes.

In a music remix the difference of a composition is used to increase sales, as the listener finds something new in that which they already know; in the case of Borges and Levine, their appropriations are designed to develop a critical reflection. Based on this argument, replays share regressive interests with music remixes because in both people are not expected to think critically about the subject matter, but rather celebrate it in nostalgic fashion. In all three of these cases we can see how appropriation and allegory are at play; they share and are informed by principles of sampling but

are different forms of cultural production. They are compared to begin to understand how Remix is informed by various disciplines that have relied on the tension between repetition and representation. These works are also examined because they expose how both repetition and representation can have equal cultural value, by way of critical commentary, as can be noted in Borges and Levine, as well as deliberate regression as can be noted in the Glen Miller replay of 1994. Now we can consider how principles of appropriation are commonly linked to remix culture.

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The tendency to appropriate preexisting or ("already") recycled material with full accreditation is also found in what Lawrence Lessig calls "remix culture."[90] Lessig, a copyright lawyer, is the founder of Creative Commons,[91] an online resource offering creative licenses to people who are invested in what he calls "free culture."[92] Free culture is the promotion and dissemination of ideas and information with the main interest of sharing them. This, for Lessig, does not imply that the idea should be "free" of charge, but rather that it can be shared, as a type of resource in various forms, carefully moderated to do justice to intellectual property laws. His primary concern is the role of the Internet in the free flow of information, and how it can be moderated so that copyrights are not violated with "free" distributions online.[93] His answer to the many contentions of copyright and the Internet has been to create licenses that allow users around the world to use intellectual property as long as they provide accreditation primarily for research purposes. While these licenses are not expected to be valid in an actual court dispute, what they do provide is a trace of authorship similar to the strategy applied by Borges and Levine in their works; for Lessig this is a fair form of remixing.

One could say that Levine with her use of repetition to create critical commentary, just like the fictional Menard, exercised at an earlier stage the concept supported by a Creative Commons license. The key point for Lessig is that the work when appropriated or redistributed does not hurt the copyright holder monetarily or intellectually; if anything the free redistribution of the work with proper accreditation should, in the best case scenario, benefit the author by adding prestige to her ideas. So, returning to our examples in art and literature, both Menard and Levine comment on a

90 Richard Koman, "Remixing Culture, an Interview with Lawrence Lessig," February, 24 2005, http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/policy/2005/02/24/lessig.html.
91 Creative Commons.
92 Lessig, *Free Culture*.
93 Ibid, *The Future of Ideas*, 12-15.

pre-existing material, which they take without permission, not in the quest to claim it as their own but rather with the interest in reusing the pre-existing work in a different context, thus allowing the recontextualization of the work to be a way to reintroduce critical reflection as part of their immediate culture, completely dependent on the original work's history. The immediate contention becomes the balance between the contemporary work's dependence on the acknowledgment of a preexisting context, thus making the awareness of history absolutely important for both the original work and the allegorical work to be valid. This validity only functions if the appropriation is fully disclosed, as well as acknowledged as part of the new work. If this is the case, then even when the work is contextualized as "stolen," as is defined by Krauss, it actually is acceptable because, ultimately, it contributes intellectual capital back to the original work. In the case of Levine, she gains acceptance as an avant-garde artist, while also further promoting Weston as the author of the original photographs.

Here we have a combination of History and the Law playing a role in Remix, and becoming the foundation for remix culture. Walter Benjamin realized that while the work of art could be released from its shell for further dissemination in culture at large with mechanical reproduction, it also could fall prey to the danger of losing its historical context.[94] Therefore, while Benjamin found a positive side to reproduction, he was also wary of how new technology could decontextualize the work, once it became reproduced in diverse and unexpected contexts, making it also prone to losing its history. We also must consider that reminding people of a historical context can function as a means of regression, as I noted with McMullen's analysis of Miller's big band reenactment.

In this regard, history is crucial to the notion of remixing, for the work itself exposes a dependency on a preexisting context and content, as noted above when remix was defined: without a recognized history to support it, the remix cannot be *Remix*, and instead becomes plagiarism, and an injustice to History as well as the Law. However, the object can still be evaluated for how principles of selectivity, reflexivity as found in Remix, are at play. For instance, Höch, who already was using strategies that would become part of Remix, could be accused of plagiarism, as she does not cite the sources of her images. But like Levine, she is accepted as an avant-garde artist due to the deliberate strategy in the work to show how the original source would normally appear as a naturalized cohesive image. For Höch, this is at play in how she manipulates her collages to show that they are fragments. In the execution of her compositions the viewer finds the seed of a pre-existing history that is inaccessible. But this is a critical

[94] Benjamin.

practice—aware of social consequences, and the argument is that most people will not be critical of how they appropriate things. This argument in part informs Creative Commons' mission to educate people about the responsibility of proper citation.

The danger of losing History becomes even more complex when constant updating (as has been analyzed in the previous section on mashups) is no longer concerned with the archive. When surveying the development of media, one realizes that emerging technologies make it easier to sample, to take, "to borrow," and to steal from pre-existing works, while disregarding with greater ease the work's history. This is obvious from the examples provided above in Levine's actual reproduction and Borges's fictional character. They shed light on the necessity of the individual to acknowledge the source that validates his or her work as a viable contribution to culture. And given that we live in a different stage of technological development, I argue that the term Remix is specific to contemporary times because it relies on technological developments that were originally used with the deliberate idea of mixing pre-existing material to reintroduce it in culture so that people may understand that the material is dependent on pre-existing work. The act of remixing can only function as the text does for Menard and rephotography for Levine: with full disclosure of their history, even when the actual works are not physically changed and appear identical before acknowledging their contexts—the precise strategy that makes the remix possible. The term "remix" was not in Borges's mind—allegory was the purpose of his fictional text. And this allegory can be paralleled to the idea of appropriation that is used in Levine's work. Borges and Levine realized that what they produced could only attain meaning when it functioned in the world as a critical commentary of its context—a commentary that has no choice but to expose the conflicts in their particular technologies. In this sense they are *anti-replays* (if we are to extend McMullen's term here), because they demystify the spectacle upon which replay depends. Their works can be deemed as part of an early period of modernism (Borges), already showing postmodern tendencies, and a late period part of postmodernism (Levine) moving towards remix culture at the end of the twentieth century. Both artists relied on strategies that are now part of selective remixes. Like *Grafik Dynamo*, and works by Lichtenstein and Warhol, both authors select strategically making sure they leave the aura of the pre-existing work that they are commenting on intact in order for their critique to attain cultural value.

The practice of citation as appropriation, a conceptual strategy dependent on principles of selectivity as found in Remix, used by both authors, has been absorbed by media, and has recently turned into a new cultural form of production fully dependent on cited and sometimes not so well

cited appropriation, which is why intellectual property activists like Lawrence Lessig are invested in remix culture. Most importantly, the literary contentions at play in works like Borges's and Levine's, the act of appropriation and dare we say stealing, which were vital to early forms of remix (often called bootlegs), are found in new media in the cultural figure of the blogger. We now turn to analyze the development of appropriation in Blogging, where conceptually and aesthetically the model of the DJ, remixing pre-existing material, is most obviously at play in networked culture in the form of the regenerative remix.

Remix in Blogging

The weblog (or blog as it is now commonly called) is a recent cultural manifestation of a specific shift in consumer culture, which Walter Benjamin noticed during the early half of the twentieth century with the popularization of printed media. Benjamin observed that more and more people started to become "collaborators" in his own time with the rise of the newspaper. Editors created new columns according to the trendy tastes of their readers, including the now standard section "letters to the editor." These spaces were designed for the reader to feel in touch with her culture, and in this sense the reader became a type of author. Benjamin saw the reader redefining the literary text; his example is the Soviet press:

> For as writing gains in breadth what it loses in depth, the conventional distinction between author and public, which is upheld by the bourgeois press, begins in the Soviet press to disappear. For the reader is at all times ready to become a writer that is, a describer, but also a prescriber. As an expert even if not on a subject but only on the post he occupies—he gains access to authorship.[95]

While Benjamin may have been idealizing the Soviet press, his theory, nevertheless, is relevant to Remix. Benjamin observes a new development in writing, a major change in literature, to be more exact, which is the reader attaining an influence in what is published for her; and he claims that when such a shift happens, literature moves from "specialized to polytechnic education;" that is, the work loses some of its depth in order to attain an efficiency in production. If one is to think of literature from this point on, Benjamin argues, one must also include newspaper publishing, as well.

Today, blogs follow the evolution of the newspaper writer, the newspaper reader, and the rise of the collaborator. Blogs have pushed the idea of the collaborator (as Benjamin saw it) in unexpected ways. For instance, because blogs function on a network (the Web which runs on the Internet),

[95] Ibid, "The Author as Producer," *Reflections* (New York:Schocken, 1978), 225.

they are able to perform as platforms for not only feedback on printed media that is newspapers and magazines (which now also have online versions of their publications), but also as places where to simply exchange ideas with other writers. Communities of bloggers (this is the name given to those who write on weblogs) flourished beginning around 1997;[96] and recently, blogs have become an important part of the World Wide Web's infrastructure.

Following Benjamin's criticism, one has to admit that this type of online publishing must also be included as part of the history of Literature, if one expects to understand what Literature is during the first decade of the twenty-first century. But some questions arise with this latest manifestation: how does this type of online publishing relate to culture today as opposed to Benjamin's time? What is the actual cultural agency that blogging has today vs. the early days of the newspaper, when the reader mainly had influence as an active audience? What does it mean to be a "contributor" in the age of the Internet and the World Wide Web? And most importantly, how does all this relate to repetition and appropriation as has been discussed so far?

A brief answer to these questions is to consider the blogger a reader and writer, a hybrid producer/consumer who does not necessarily share the critical meta-narratives of Walter Benjamin (that of the bourgeois writer on the left who sides with the proletariat). In short, the active Benjaminian reader has reinvented herself as an online weblog writer. The blogger, who now functions as a checkpoint for the newspaper journalist, usually is not a person with an average education. As John Stiler explains, a person who has the time to blog, especially on a specific subject with authority, holds an advanced degree, often in direct relation to the blogging subject.[97] This reader turned author, then, does not fit the type of newspaper reader to which Benjamin refers. This reader/author, this blogger, is usually an academic of some sort, or a professional who holds some authority in a specific field. Other questions that arise when one realizes this is why anyone would bother to make her thoughts public on a daily basis? What does she get out of it if there is no money involved?

Richard Barbrook explains that the Internet has been largely built on the gift economy.[98] Barbrook connects this term to the 1960s' Situationists and their interpretation of the Potlatch: the tradition of gift giving in Polynesia.

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[96] Barbara Blood, "Weblogs: A History and Perspective," Rebecca's Pocket, September, 2000, http://rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html.

[97] John Stiler, "Blogosphere: the Emerging Media Ecosystem," *Microcontentnews.com*, May 28 2002, http://www.microcontentnews.com/articles/blogosphere.htm.

[98] Richard Barbrook, "The High Tech Economy," *First Monday*, 1998 and 2005, http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/631/552.

He explains that open source, as an online practice, closely resembles the act of giving away gifts. Barbrook also connects this practice to the academic field, where researchers often share information and ideas through conferences and academic journals. There is no direct money exchange involved in this aspect of the practice, but what the members do get is public recognition that can lead to tenure jobs in major research institutions. Many of the early pioneers in Internet and Web development were academics, or at least were individuals interested in research (hackers), which means that they were decently educated. This also means that they were willing to collaborate without direct monetary rewards for their labor, as long as they got public recognition for their contributions. This is one of the reasons why open source is so popular on the Internet. A good example of open source used by a corporation is Netscape, which, at least for a limited time, survived its competition with Microsoft's Internet Explorer by releasing its code to the online community.[99] This meant that anyone could download the source code of the Netscape browser and try to improve it. If such changes were accepted then the developer got public recognition, which lead to legitimacy on many levels, both academically as well as online, with hacking and/or research communities. Another example is Linux, an operating system that is free online, which has become a major competitor of Microsoft's Windows.[100] In short, open source promotes collaboration and is a major driving force on the web. This type of activity relies on the gift economy infrastructure, which depends on the individual developing a social bond with others, supported by the act of giving (contributing), and leading to trust that makes individuals reliable members of a community. This is essential for people who interact via networks, like the Internet.

There are many types of blogs that function with diverse purposes; in this regard, that the open source tradition is a major influence in people's reasoning for sharing information is undeniable, and, while bloggers may not get direct monetary rewards, they do get recognition much in the same way as open source contributors do. Bloggers also see themselves as collaborators as they comment on already published material, as well as on material published by fellow bloggers. In this way Benjamin's idea of the collaborator is extended, as the online reader is ready to write at the same time she reads new material. The boundary of writer/reader is blurred.

In less than a hundred years the reader went from a passive participant with agency to a more active "collaborator" (a blogger). The media, which includes the newspaper in our times, now not only considers its popularity

[99] Tim Berners-Lee and Mark Fischeti, *Weaving the Web* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), 84.
[100] Barbrook.

according to the reception of the readers, but also, thanks to blogging, looks at the readers for possible stories. Bloggers can function also as check points for reliability of the story once it is published, and this process then can even lead to a new story, as Stiler explains.[101] What is peculiar about blogging is that it is always about archiving information that refers to other archives of information. In this way the type of "literature" of today, that is if we keep in mind Benjamin's terms, is both "polytechnic" and "specialized;" an odd turn, which became possible because the technology is efficient enough to let people do today more things than it was possible in the past. Professionals are able to write casually on topics that they are experts on; their comments carry some depth at the same time that they are efficient in production. Here, leisure, private life, and work are combined as the blog functions as a type of journal giving each writer certain authority, while also demanding that they spend time they would otherwise use to entertain themselves writing about topics of their choice.

People like Barbrook consider the Internet an arena where both capitalism and the gift economy, which he strategically connects with what he calls anarcho-communism, are actually working together. He claims that both political camps function simultaneously by compromising and sharing resources. He explains:

> What was once revolutionary has now become banal. As Net Access grows, more and more ordinary people are circulating free information across the Net. Crucially, their potlatches are not attempts to regain a lost emotional authenticity. Far from having any belief in the revolutionary ideals of May '68 the overwhelming majority of people participate within the hi-tech gift economy for entirely pragmatic reasons.[102]

This would be the case for many bloggers, as well. And to make this proposition more complex, most recently the professional blogger has emerged; the individual who can actually make a living by writing on her blog full-time.[103] And newspapers have adopted the blogging format as part of their online publications. Thus, it can be stated that the contemporary blogger finds herself in multiple positions in culture: at times as part of mainstream journalism, and at others in peripheral online communities. The contemporary blogger can hold multiple positions as amateur or professional; and this does not imply a necessary contradiction.

Once Remix becomes discourse at play in culture at large, as has been demonstrated, the blogger can be viewed as a regenerative remixer who is constantly looking for material on which to comment. For this reason the

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[101] Stiler.

[102] Barbrook.

[103] A good example of this is Regine De Batty's *We Make Money Not Art*, http://www.we-make-money-not-art.com.

blog is only relevant if it puts into play the aesthetic of constant updates elemental in the regenerative remix. The power of the blogger is not primarily of breaking news (although this is common if the blogger is an eyewitness to events like the war in Iraq).[104] The ultimate blogger is the one who blogs from other blogs: a metablogger who does not write but simply selects. This activity is known as reblogging; this is one of the forms in which Remix extends to culture as a form of appropriation. From this stance, reblog becomes a synonym for Remix: it is an extension of the copy/cut & paste aesthetic of sampling that moved on to new media with the popularization of computers. And in new media culture this is what the blogger does in the end: remixes culture by constantly appropriating pre-existing material, to comment on it, or simply to recontextualize it, by making it part of a specialized blog. For example boingboing.com is a blog specialized in pop culture. Many blogs reblog material from boing boing, but boing boing also takes material from other blogs that do not have anything to do with pop culture. Basically this is a state of *constant remix*, which is synonymous with *constant updating*, as well as reblogging.

To be clear, then, what the DJ initially brought forward and made transparent is the appropriation of *repetition* by *representation*. Thus, representation does not resist cooption by repetition; if anything, today it is optimized for assimilation, by being constantly remixed. Constant updating, as discussed in relation to mashups, as a concept, is found in reblogging, just like it is found in turntablists when they perform. It is also found in works like *Grafik Dynamo*, and this, as I argued previously, is a new form of the waning of affect previously found in postmodern culture. To summarize, the regenerative remix is exercised formally in software mashups, and becomes a tendency (an aesthetic) in the constant act of blogging, which depends on constant updates. The regenerative remix is most powerful in networked culture, and thrives in social media.

Bonus Beats: Remix in Culture

We have looked at how principles of Remix have played a role in different media prior to the rise of Remix as an actual discourse itself. As can be noted, elements vital in Remix are found in the practices of appropriation by artists and writers that include Borges, Duchamp, Heartfield, Höch, Lichtenstein, and Warhol, and new media artists such as Amstrong and Tippet, as well as Golan Levin. Principles of the selective and the reflexive remixes are further extended in media at large via music and software products I have defined in terms of regressive and reflexive mashups, re-

[104] Where's Raed? http://dear_raed.blogspot.com/

spectively; Remix finds its most poignant manifestation in the blogger, who can be considered as a regenerative remixer of preexisting content that includes image, text, as well as video; the blogger is able to combine principles of the reflexive and regressive remixes according to the need of each post. The blogger also carries the code of constant updating that is key to reflexive mashups like Pipes by *Yahoo!* and, therefore, is a pivotal example of what remix culture demands of producers as we enter the realm of the regenerative remix, that is if we connect such activity as a valid critical practice following the demands of Benjamin in his essay, "The Author as Producer." All of these activities are intimately connected via repetition and its subversion of representation as argued by Attali, which extend the waning of affect in postmodernism, as defined by Jameson, to our own period of Remix. In this regard, it is important to note that principles of Remix were also at play in music with reenactments in the performances of Glen Miller, as noted by McMullen, in which they were used for the sake of regression. In fact, principles of Remix are used for regression more often than not. The examples of critically oriented projects examined in this chapter are an exception to the way people may perceive Remix in daily reality.

So why call it Remix now when what I have been calling Remix throughout this chapter has always been at play in the past? Is this term not meaningless when reconfigured as discourse? To answer this question, we can look at the nGrams in chapter one to realize that the concept of remixing currently is in use because an entire economic infrastructure supports it and also depends on it (figures 1.5-1.14). We can also consider movements like Dada, since we have looked at three members of that movement—Duchamp, Heartfield, and Höch—and reiterate that they previously experimented with strategies of appropriation as they are found in Remix. But during the first decades of the twentieth century, they did not call their activities Remix. This is because, like us, they were subject to their reality, and the concept of Remix as manifested in music during the '70s was not conceivable for the Dadaists or their contemporaries. The Dadaists thought in terms of photo-collage, photography, film, painting and sculpture. They did not have machines that deliberately remixed in the formal sense of the word. Remix as a proper concept and eventual discourse has its birth in the development of music samplers. This moment belongs to Jamaica and New York City in the 1960s and '70s, well on to the '80s.

Once the concept of sampling, as understood in music during the '70s and '80s, was introduced as an activity directly linked to remixing different elements beyond music (and eventually evolved into an influential discourse), appropriation and recycling as concepts changed at the beginning

of the twenty-first century; they cannot be considered on the same terms prior to the development of machines specifically design for remixing. This would be equivalent to trying to understand the world in terms of representation prior to the photo camera. Once a specific technology is introduced it eventually develops a discourse that helps to shape cultural anxieties. Remix has done and is currently doing this to concepts of appropriation. Remix has changed how we look at the production of material in terms of combinations. This is what enables Remix to become an aesthetic, a discourse that, like a virus, can move through any cultural area and be progressive and regressive depending on the intentions of the people implementing its principles.

Remix, then, is a discourse that helps explain activities informed by the tendency to recombine material with a naturalized attitude. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, people take for granted that they can rerecord a song, video, or text as it was originally produced. Many others find it very easy to make changes to material they have attained with the use of software like Photoshop for visual images, and Pro Tools for music. No great training is needed to make substantial changes with any of these tools, although professionals can certainly develop high-end material that demands specialized training. The tendencies of this naturalized state which the current generation of young producers takes for granted cannot be fully explained in terms of appropriation or recycling. It is the term Remix—the regenerative remix—which best describes this convention of constant change in culture. Remix, then, is used to demonstrate a break from both the postmodern and modern; Remix, however, does not need to renounce either of these concepts, but instead can afford to cite them as needed, in similar fashion to how a computer user can cite information from a database. The modern and the postmodern collapse in Remix into a "heap of fragments," a symptom of intertextuality as defined by Jameson.

We live in a time that, due to its prior history, particularly its close relation to postmodernism, resists the cooption as another "ism." Unlike modernism and postmodernism, the possibility of naming our times remixism simply sounds banal and incorrect. Our ears resist it, and conceptually it simply falls apart. Remix is not a movement, or a coherent period; it is a type of decentralized state that thrives on the constant updating found in selective remixes such as *Grafik Dynamo,* as well as reflexive mashups such as Pipes by *Yahoo!* Remix is the constant state of the waning of affect turn on itself, as a subject interested in exploring itself—this is pushed on media culture today. I take the opportunity to repeat a few words from my introduction: *Remix is more like a virus that has mutated into different forms according to the needs of particular cultures. Remix, itself, has no form, but is quick to take on any form and medium. It needs cultural value*

to be at play in order to take effect; in this sense Remix is parasitical. Remix is meta—always unoriginal. At the same time, when implemented effectively, it can become a tool of autonomy. Thus, appropriation is ever-changing; nothing is expected to stay the same—the regenerative remix becomes the common form of efficient production, as software turn up everywhere. Constant change rules as the state of consumption and production, and the individual participating in Remix is now expected to produce and consume as one. It appears, then, that the state of media production has assimilated the constant action that was demanded of the critical producer. And one must ask where to go from here. In this sense, what becomes clear is that while culture may be producing advanced digital technology, the real anxieties that plague us philosophically remain constant. They have not changed, but solidified, making obvious the ongoing development of Capital and the ambivalent reshaping of modernism in the ever changing forms of spectacular time, which has collapsed into pure space.[105]

[105] Jameson,16.

Chapter Four: Remix[ing] Art

E. Navas, *Remix Theory*

Image: Electronics and music store, Madrid, Spain, May 2008

A Late Night in Berlin

In late June of 2006, I was invited to give a presentation on my research about Remix for Liquid Video, a VJ festival that took place in Berlin. I stayed in the city for a little over a week. One night, Timo Daum, my host and a member of the VJ collective Fuss!, suggested that we attend a late night party.[1] Berlin was in the middle of the World Cup, and the soccer frenzy was everywhere—except the desolated area of the city where we arrived a bit after midnight. We took the subway. As we went up the stairs to ground level, Timo noticed some people walking towards a non-descript building. We followed them. As we stopped on the sidewalk, right next to the building, I reconsidered my assumption that desolated buildings were no longer used for underground parties, as was the case during the early days of rave culture. But this was in fact the situation.

It was quiet. We stood in front of the building for several minutes, and I could not figure out if, in fact, the party was taking place inside. Timo did not make this clear to me, but simply looked around. I quickly realized that we were waiting for his friends to show up and confirm the place. Soon enough Timo's friends arrived, and after we greeted them, we went inside taking the stairs to the second floor. It was quite dark and hard to see, but I noticed that the floor was quite dirty, and some of the tiles were raised, ready to come apart. The building was unpainted, and smelled old. The walls showed moisture stains, which made me assume that the place was full of water leaks. I figured the building was set for demolition. But then I thought that it was likely to be one of the many structures that the city of Berlin never got around to renovating for reasons beyond my understanding; I figured that it would be left alone for sometime. There were actually quite a few buildings like this one throughout Berlin.

We arrived on the second floor and a thin man, quite young, wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans opened the door for us, and the sound blasted through my body. It was house music. The place was a dump but full of people. Right in front of us was the bar. All they were selling was beer. Right next to the bar was the main area, where the DJ was set up on a portable office table; people were already filling the dancefloor. To the far left was a hallway leading to a terrace where people were smoking. We went outside to chat. Meanwhile, I kept an ear open for the musical changes.

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[1] For the conference visit: Liquid Video 2006, http://www.liquidvideo.de/lv2006/index.php?page=22_Juni. To learn more about Fuss! visit: http://www.ambientador.de/ambientador_en.html.

For the first few minutes the DJ was performing simple transitions, beatmixing straightforward blends that at times would take over three minutes to complete—"nice," I thought as I got to know his skill and style. After a few songs, I went inside to see how he manipulated the turntables. At times he would cut on top of the first beat to introduce a song that matched the tempo but clearly stated a shift in energy, and every so often he would flip between two records to create breaks that clearly excited people on the dancefloor. The music throughout this time was techno and some hard house, but because the DJ would actually do some hard cutting from one record to another every so often, I could tell that he was not loyal to beat blending, typical of techno or house. This became evident after a couple of hours, when he started to play mainstream music from the 1970s and '80s by strictly cutting from record to record. I thought people would leave the floor, but the way he introduced the songs excited the dancers. The floor was packed at this point. The night was already hot and humid and the body heat made the dancefloor even hotter. The beer was running out, but it did not matter. The dancers were on another zone as it was clear that other stimulants had been passed around. The DJ was ready to take them to another level. And he did.

I, myself, became excited as the DJ dropped a relentless set of major hip-hop and R & B hits from the '80s. The DJ made his way back to hard house, and the dancers, drenched in sweat, stayed on the floor, still moving but clearly taking a break. The performance was reminiscent of Grandmaster Flash's megamix "Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel."

As we were taking the subway back, it was the megamix that stood out in my head. The DJ was able to go back and remix material that he gambled would work for a specific moment—the peak of the night. He successfully mixed songs that anyone *cool* would find offensive to hear in a place that was supposed to be outside the mainstream. The dancers acknowledged his music citations with great excitement. I came to look at this moment metaphorically as a hot debate, a type of physical conversation. The DJ spoke by introducing records and the dancers answered by swinging their bodies with excitement. It was call and response. There was clear feedback from both sides, as I noticed that the DJ would read the crowd before deciding what to play next. He evaluated their reaction, and then he would quickly turn around and dig into his crate and find a record; sometimes as he read the label he would look at the crowd, and at times he would put the record back and take another one he already had preselected. I came to consider this moment a metaphor for the type of relation that producers and their audience have today in new media and remix culture, when it is not enough just to put something out and hope to receive

some feedback at some point. With the development of social networks people can expect almost immediate feedback on material they decide to share with their community. That night in Berlin, the DJ, as author, was having a clear relationship with his audience, his readers. It was the audience that completed the work. This tendency becomes evident throughout this chapter. To this effect, it is the discourse of authorship that is considered in the next sections in relation to principles of sampling as defined in chapter one, a development that clearly informs not only Remix but also other areas of culture, particularly the visual arts—the focus of this chapter.

Remix is Meta

If Remix has its roots in music, what is evident in chapter three is that it thrives in culture, in large part due to explorations that take place in contemporary art. For this reason, this chapter considers conceptual art strategies, which developed paralleled with Remix during its first stage in Jamaica, and its second stage in New York City. This evaluation is performed to consider how and why the act of remixing could only have developed as a meta-action, once strategies of selectivity and reflexivity found their way into culture in forms not always related to music, but in daily activity. This happened as Remix moved from its third stage (when it became a mainstream style during the '80s and '90s) to the fourth stage (when principles of Remix would be absorbed by various areas of culture) in remix culture and new media (see figure 1.4).

The concept of remixing, then, in the second half of the twentieth century can best be understood when realizing that the strategies of appropriation by artists throughout the first half had to be assimilated to then be recycled as part of the postmodern condition in the second half—a time when remix developed in music. The acts of collage, photomontage, and the eventual development of mixed media, which took on conventional forms of communication eventually outside of art during the second stage of mechanical reproduction (more or less the 1910s to the 1980s), had to become conventional, not only in the visual arts but also in mainstream media, for remixing to become a common concept in mass culture. Remix during the third stage of mechanical reproduction (starting in music in the 1980s and new media in the early '90s) questioned the role of the individual as genius and sole creator, who would "express himself." In relation to this, sampling allows for the death of the author; therefore, it is no coincidence that around the time when remixes began to be produced during its first stage of dub in Jamaica in the '60s and '70s, authorship as a discourse was analyzed by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, respectively. For

them, "writing" in the sense that Rousseau promoted as expressive power of the individual is no longer possible, as they consider writing an act that takes place among different parties—that of authors and readers. Barthes's and Foucault's theories expose the tendency to reconsider creativity not as an individual act, but a collective one, where the "author" introduces an idea that the "reader" then can complete by questioning, endorsing, or extending as part of her own opinions. In this sense, linguistic and textual discourse as a cultural practice allows for the postmodern condition. Remix, then, is informed by poststructural approaches to reading and writing as defined by Barthes and Foucault, which aesthetically compose a form of cultural sampling, across all media. As has been noted, this is considered by Owens as a preoccupation with textuality, which is further pushed by Jameson in terms of intertextuality.

In brief, Remix has elements of textuality and intertextuality that also informed art practice during the 1960s and '70s. Evaluating how appropriation as a form of textual sampling was at play in the arts is important because art has always been in close conversation with music and culture at large. We turn to this aspect of sampling as a form of reading and writing in the next section. The premises of both Barthes and Foucault are applied to new media works, as well as the practice of new media curators. I first outline Barthes's and Foucault's respective theories and then explain how they were conversant with contemporary art practice, during the period when both authors developed their theories. I then move on to new media art, which in our case is specifically Internet art.

The Role of the Author and the Viewer in Remix

In his essay, "The Death of the Author," written in 1968, Roland Barthes questions the concept of authorship. For him it is the text that speaks to the reader. He writes, "A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into relations of dialogue, parody and contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author."[2] With this statement he summarizes his argument that we should treat the text not as something coming from a specific person, but as something that takes life according to how the reader interprets the writing. For Barthes, it is the reader who holds the real potential to make discourse productive. He looks at specific writers, such as Proust, Mallarme, and Valery as authors who "Restore the

[2] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image Music Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 148.

place of the reader."[3] The author ceases to matter for Barthes because only in this way can the text be set free, for to have "an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing."[4] Barthes wants to overthrow the myth of the author as "genius" as it has been promoted since the renaissance. For Barthes, the text's unity is not in its origin but its destination. And only the reader can define that.

Michel Foucault in his essay "What is an Author," written in 1969, also questions the role of the author in contemporary culture. Whereas Barthes pointed out the necessity to shift our cultural attention from the author to the reader, Foucault concludes that the notions supporting the death of the author actually have only renegotiated the concept of authorship.[5] To prove this Foucault examines two notions supporting contemporary discourse. The first is the concept of the work, which includes everything an author has written, and the second is the notion of writing, which during Foucault's time, and even in current times, pretends to function autonomously. Foucault goes on to claim that such autonomy is ideological in contemporary times and sets out to prove his point by defining his own term: "The author function." Foucault considers the author function a cultural variable used to control discourse. This is not too different from Barthes's theory of authorship. The author function is a classificatory function.[6] It is not universal, although such discourse could be presented as if it were. The author function is not created by a single individual, but rather it is a complex web of power shifts that leads to the construct of the author.[7] The author function becomes clear when Foucault relates it to Marx and Freud, two "authors" who created discourses following their names, Marxism and Freudianism (or psychoanalysis). Foucault reasons that both authors developed concepts that were reevaluated by later generations, and that such discourses can be changed which is not necessarily true for the field of the natural sciences, as he explains: "A study of Galileo's works could alter our knowledge of the history, but not the science, of mechanics; whereas a re-examination of the books of Freud and Marx can transform our understanding of psychoanalysis or Marxism."[8] In other words, discourse as developed by an author can be changed. While Foucault went further than Barthes and explained the power dynamics supporting the author, he also agrees with Barthes that one day the author, or

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author," *The History of Art History: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Donald Preziosi (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 299-314.

[6] Ibid, 305-307.

[7] Ibid, 308-09.

[8] Ibid, 312.

the "author function" will disappear, "We can easily imagine a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author. Discourses, whatever their status, form, or value, and regardless of our manner of handling them, would unfold in a pervasive anonymity. No longer the tiresome repetitions."[9] One can notice hope in Foucault's final statement for a time when a more democratic model would be at play; this has been a pronounced interest of artists and media researchers, and has provided fuel for the historical and neo-avant-garde to stay active since the beginnings of modernism.

Barthes and Foucault's reflections on authorship were already in action during their own time with Conceptual and Minimal art practices, which relied largely on appropriation and allegory to derive critical commentary. The notion of authorship that they examined can now be assessed in relation to new media practice and Remix, which is largely dependent on the "reader," or user, as the participants are commonly called. This particular dynamic of sampling started during the early days of modernism with photography and music. Sampling allows for the death of the author and the author function to take effect once we enter late capitalism, because "writing" is no longer seen as something truly original, but as a complex act of resampling—as the reinterpretation of material previously introduced. This is obviously not innovative but expected in new media. Acts of appropriation are aesthetically speaking acts of sampling: acts of citing pre-existing text or cultural products after the concept of remix was introduced are similarly informed by sampling. This is the reason why citations are so necessary in academic writing, and certainly is something that is closely monitored in other areas of culture, like the music industry, where sampling is carefully controlled by way of copyright law.

Our most obvious example of this new form of "writing" and producing is, again, the work of Duchamp, who understood the act of citation so well that he decided to simply choose readymades as opposed to trying to create art from scratch. He understood the new level of writing, or creating that was at hand in modernism, which entered a stage of meta—of constant reference, relying on the cultural cache of pre-existing material. So writing's and art's true power is selectivity, and this is transparent in the third stage of mechanical reproduction, a privileged symptom of the postmodern. The selectivity found in the death of the author and the author function is what makes the notion of interactivity easily assimilated. To be specific, once cut/copy and paste is assimilated not only as a feature for the user to write her own texts, but also to recycle and reuse pre-existing material, the user becomes more of an editor (metaphorically, a remixer). This is the case

[9] Ibid, 314.

with the blogger, who, as previously noted in chapter three, often comments about pre-existing writing and news events, or simply reposts them as reblogs. This possibility of selecting and editing to develop a specific theme according to personal interests plays an important role in how the art viewer, or new media user, will relate to the artist, and the artist to the curator. It also creates a collapse that art historians, such as Rosalind Krauss, have been critical of because of the inability to keep a critical distance expected of the visual arts.[10] These roles, while redefining the concept of creativity and originality, also develop new challenges for the media producer. Appropriation was informed by the discourse of authorship in terms of textuality, and was implemented in conceptualism, minimalism, and performance art; consequently, new media artists at the beginning of the twenty first century claim lineage with conceptualism, minimalism, and performance in terms of textuality, while also sharing an awareness of strategies of Remix. New media practice is, so to speak, a "mashup" of aesthetical approaches in art production that question authorship.

The Role of the Author and the Viewer in Performance and Minimalism

The role of the viewer has always been "interactive" at a very basic level, by acknowledging the object of reflection, as argued in chapter one.[11] This is part of the basic argument in both Foucault's and Barthes' theories on authorship. With Minimalism and Conceptualism, however, the viewer is asked to do more than acknowledge the work of art. The viewer is asked to "complete it" by becoming active with the work in some form. This is the particular element against which Michael Fried reacted in Minimalism, calling the art movement a kind of theater; "The answer I want to propose is this: the literalist espousal of objecthood amount to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre; and theatre is now the negation of art."[12] His reasoning was that minimal art ideologically borrowed from theatrical language to demand that the viewer became active in the aesthetic space of the white cube when walking around the sculptures by artists such as Robert Morris. Conceptualism and performance were influenced with this idea of interaction with the audience of which Fried was critical. Vito Acconci's famous *Seedbed* installation is recognized as an important work of

[10] Rosalind Krauss, A Voyage on the North Sea: Artist in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

[11] Manovich, 55, also see chapter one, 14, and chapter three, 76.

[12] Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," Minimal Art, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: 1968), 126.

art because the work's meaning is dependent upon the presence of the viewer in the gallery space.[13] The viewer was not only expected to walk around the space, but also to listen carefully to what Acconci was doing under the platform especially created for the installation. Acconci masturbated while talking to the viewer (whispering through a microphone). Here the presence of the viewer is essential to complete the work of art. If Acconci has nobody to address, his project is incomplete—it is interaction or "reading" by the gallery attendee, following the concept of the reader defined by Barthes and Foucault that is at play in this piece. As it is evident, the *reader*, or the viewer, is the person who defines the work; similar to Acconci's perception of his work as an extension of his exploration in literature. This is important to note because Acconci was originally a writer who saw great potential for expression in performance art.[14] In Acconci, we notice the same tension that music without words went through in order to be recognized as a proper art form: Acconci felt he wanted to leap from the page into real space, to expand on the text, to free himself from the limitations of the printed page. What becomes evident here is the preoccupation with reading the text allegorically, as according to Craig Owens's theory of allegory as discussed in previous chapters.

Performance art was created in direct dialogue with other practices dealing with site-specificity; all of them, except for minimal art practice, ended up questioning not only the work of art but also the art institution as a viable place to create art. Artists started to move away from the white cube to develop projects of diverse forms in the public sphere. Robert Smithson is best known for his earthwork *Spiral Jetty*, consisting of black basalt and limestone rock and earth compiled in a spiral configuration emerging from the waters of the Great Salt Lake in Utah; he created the earthwork based on a vision he had when driving up to the lake. Along the same lines, Michael Heizer, who influenced Smithson, developed several earthworks such as *Isolated Mass/Circumflex, No. 9,* carefully designed to expose the aesthetics of earth modification, by developing a 120 x 12 x 1 ft excavation in Massacre Dry Lake, Nevada. Art historian John Bearsdley argues that earth artists shared an ambivalence towards their contemporary gallery system; he uses Heizer as a prime example: "Heizer shared in a then widespread notion that the art world was afflicted with a too grand

[13] Henry M. Sayre, "Introduction," *The Object of Performance* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 4-5.

[14] The following observation is made based on a lecture by Acconci I attended at Skowhegan School of Painting and sculpture, during the summer of 1998. I also discussed with him his interest in performance, text and architecture.

preciosity, that artworks were valued only as commodities, and that they were limited by their preoccupation with strictly formal concerns."[15]

This type of practice has found a productive critical position in institutions like The Center for Land Use Interpretation in Los Angeles, which considers landscape as a space where cultural tensions are played out in diverse and unexpected ways.[16] The Center for Land Use Interpretation functions as a non-profit gallery dedicated to site/nonsite art practice with a specific political investment. The art object in this form of art practice becomes dematerialized, privileging discourse, very much following Foucault's definition of authorship in relation to the work, although the focus on conceptual art, the strategy of reacting against the gallery system was quite limited and in many ways an innovative way to reinvigorate the art market with idealized forms of resistance, following a safely prescribed model of the avant-garde.

Miwon Kwon writes about this shift. She considers the development of the artist coming from a conceptual minimal art practice into the field of the site/non-site culminating as a "working on call artist."[17] This means that an artist who is commissioned by an institution to develop work that may not be hosted in the actual art space is usually legitimated through documentation. This type of artist is not making art in the usual sense, but instead she collects pre-existing material to display in anthropological fashion. She functions like a freelancer who apparently reflects upon the commodification of the art object, following the 1970s critical position of the New York avant-garde. Kwon explains how such artist appears to be successful:

> Thus, if the artist is successful, he or she travels constantly as a freelancer, often working on more than one site-specific project at a time, globe-trotting as a guest, tourist, adventurer, temporary in-house critic, or pseudo-ethnographer to Sao Paulo, Munic, Chicago, Seoul, Amsterdam, New York and so on.[18]

Kwon notices that when the artist is no longer producing actual work, but rather organizing material upon commission, the artist's name becomes crucial as a stamp of approval to make the work valid. She argues that this is specific to "the artist's absence from the physical manifestation of the work."[19] This is the latest attempt in keeping a critical distance in art practice, which is absorbed as a "subversion for hire: criticism turns into spec-

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[15] John Beardsley, "Monument and Environment: The Avant-Garde, 1966-1976," *Earthworks and Beyond* (New York, Paris, London: Abbeville Press, 1998), 13.

[16] Center for Land Use Interpretation. < http://www.clui.org/>

[17] Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on site Specificity," *October 80*, Spring (1997), 100.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid, 102.

tacle."[20] Kwon is not necessarily arguing that the artist him/herself has become a commodity; instead, she claims that artists following this practice provide "critical artistic services." One of her prime examples is Mark Dion, who actually appropriates the language of science. For instance, he takes samples from the Thames River in London and places his "archeological findings" in the Tate galleries as an installation that reflects upon the history of the museum, its relation to the art galleries, and their foundation on the cabinet of curiosities, which is a clear bifurcation between art and science.[21]

In Dion's work, principles of sampling take place in two forms. First, Dion actually gathers samples, meaning, pieces that represent the actual place of origin (following the practice of site specific artists like Robert Smithson). This is the kind of sampling that defaults to cutting discussed in the first chapter. But then Dion appropriates the practice of science by creating allegorical installations that recall the authority of the scientific method; thus, turning it into a conceptual practice where he as an artist acts like a scientist. The author function and death of the author as defined by Foucault and Barthes, respectively, are at play when Dion deliberately places himself as a pseudo-scientist: the viewer is encouraged to question Dion's artistic merit, as well as the limitations of science. The work is completed by this necessary critical gesture from the viewer, which conceptually is equivalent to the gallery visitor becoming aware of the necessity to walk around minimal art in order to experience the work.

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Many (if not most) new media artists depend on grants and residencies to complete their works, which places them in a similar position of the "working on call artist." Instead of producing a specific object, they produce a discourse quite similar to the model described by Kwon. These artists also overtly depend on the role of the viewer in their work (like Acconci's or Dion's pieces). They do not only need the viewer to acknowledge the work at a basic level of interaction[22] but often also to complete it. This turns the viewer into a "user," meaning someone who actually utilizes the material, puts it into action (thus completing it), and

[20] Ibid.

[21] See essays, Colin Renfrew "It May Be Art but Is It Archeology," Robert Williams, "Disjecta Reliquiae The Tate Thames Dig," *Mark Dion*, *Archeology* (European Union: Black Dog Publishing, 1999), 12-23 and 72-99.

[22] According to Manovich, all artworks in the past have had some level of interactivity: "All classical, and even more so modern, modern art is 'interactive' in a number of ways." See: Lev Manovich, 56.

giving it aesthetic meaning. This dynamic is contingent upon the ideology of collaboration that has propelled new media activity from its very beginnings and goes back to photography, as noted in chapter one, where the potential for anyone to take their own pictures and become a type of author became a myth.

The artists who are evaluated in the following section develop projects along the lines of ethnographers. They partly rely on sampling. These artists also travel taking samples from the world to present them in museums, very much following the aesthetics defined by Kwon. This aesthetic is active on two levels in new media practice previously explained in terms of early recording found in the photo camera and the phonograph, and conventional sampling using the computer, as practiced in new media. These two layers are the foundation of Remix; they made possible the three stages of mechanical reproduction and directly support the four stages of Remix. The first occurs when something is introduced into culture; the second takes place when a remixed version of what was previously introduced is reintroduced based on the preexisting authority gained by the original object. These layers rely on a type of appropriation that is highly allegorical and dependent on metalanguages.

The work by Dion briefly explained above exposes how the first layer is key to research in science, while the second layer is necessary for the visual arts to develop a critical practice. This is a principle that becomes part of Remix once new media develops after the 1990s—when material with cultural value is recombined within itself or with other material, and is reintroduced in culture. Dion develops work that has no apparent value as art, but he quickly links it to pre-established art language to make it part of conventional art practice; while he may not be thinking in terms of remixing, but rather appropriating in the tradition of art, his strategy will become part of remix in new media. It is now time to look at some new media projects that expose this process.

New Media's Dependence on Collaboration

The questioning of authorship by Barthes and Foucault finds a home in new media projects like *the File Room* by Antonio Muntadas, and *1 Year performance* by MTAA. These projects make the interpretation and reinterpretation of the work by users part of its meaning. In such art, we also find a combination of onsite/offisite aesthetics as defined by Kwon.

The File Room by Antonio Muntadas is not an online project, but actually uses the web as an extension of art installation.[23] It was originally set

[23] Muntadas, *The File Room* April 1, 2005, http://www.thefileroom.org/.

up in the University of Chicago in 1994 where it received over 80,000 online visits. At that time, this amount of visits was considered high, which means that the project was a success in reaching a wide audience via the Internet. *The File Room* consists of a database of information focusing on censorship around the world. Anyone can contribute to the project, even to this day. The contributions range in the thousands, and each contributor has been credited at the end of each entry. *The File Room* is completely dependent on contributions by its users. Here the user is not only expected to view the work, but also to add something to it. And here the theatricality that Michael Fried reacted against is taken a step further. For not only must the viewer turned user "interact" with the work, but also change it by adding content. The user becomes a type of collaborator, and a type of curator by selecting information to submit to the project. Also, the notion of sampling the world, as defined in the transition period noted by Kwon is at play; only in new media, it is the participants as opposed to the artist, Muntadas, who contribute samplings of censorship cases. The position of Mark Dion as a selector of material to be presented as an art installation is passed on to the user in Muntadas's project when the user contributes examples of censorship cases. *The File Room* also puts into effect principles of the selective remix because it questions the authority of institutions, but not Muntadas' as an artist. It offers the installation as a safe space where other forms can be critiqued.

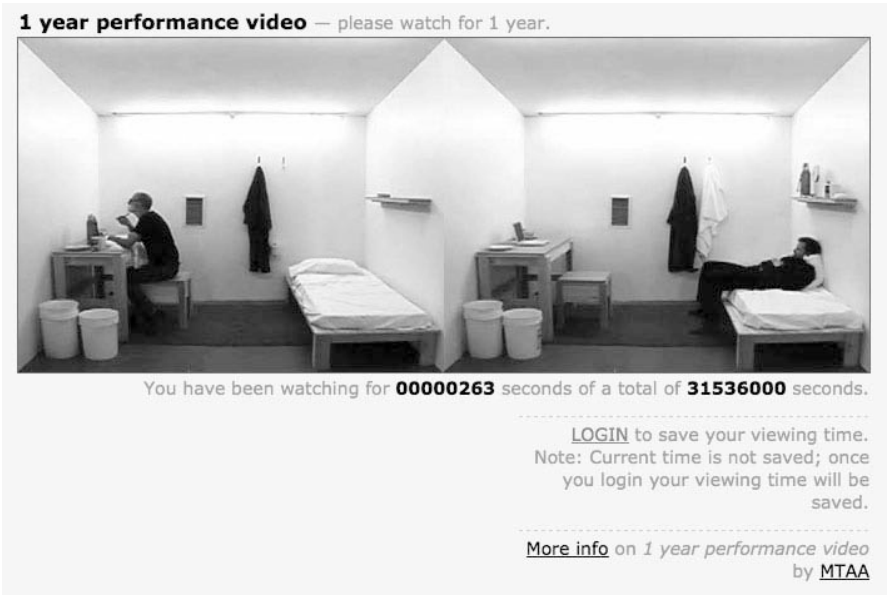

Figure 4.1 MTAA, *1 Year Performance Video (samHsiehUpdate)*, 2004

Principles of Remix are also at play in MTAA's collaboration *1 Year Performance Video (samHsiehUpdate)*.[24] In this web-piece, the artists update the work of Tehching Hsieh, in particular his "One Year Performance 1978-1979,"[25] where Hsieh spent a whole year in a cell. He did not leave the space; a person brought him food and took away his refuse. The piece was notarized by a lawyer to give it authenticity.

T. Whid and M. River, who collaborate under the name of MTAA (M. River & T. Whid Art Associates) have appropriated Hsieh's concept of committing to an activity for one year on to the web by presenting themselves in a room apparently spending time alone in *1 Year Performance Video (samHsieHupdate)*. At first glance the new media project mimics Hsieh's activities in the cell, as the artists appear juxtaposed in two video feeds, doing simple things that always correspond with the time of day when the internet user is accessing the website. In reality the artists prerecorded their activities and created computer files which now can be accessed according to the Internet user's computer clock.

In this piece the visitors are encouraged to watch the video files for the period of one year, and to sign up for an online account in order to keep track of their own time. The visitors do not have to be logged on for the entire year at once, and can leave and come back according to their personal schedules.

While the online piece may allegorize Hsieh's performance, it does so in a very unexpected way. Particularly, it exposes the drastic changes in art production since Hsieh developed his one-year performances (he did a few of them).[26] At the time that Hsieh was performing, the object of art was also being questioned, and like conceptual art (which we'll look at later), performance art was a way to negotiate meaning as a cultural product.

While Hsieh's art practice is often considered linked to art's role in culture, one thing that is not discussed is his particular position as an artist. Hsieh performed intensive actions that lasted for one year. He had to be able not to work for that time period in order to make art. This position is of course at play if the artist's work in the studio is not considered actual work by the rest of culture, a typical point of view in the United States. For this reason, it can be argued that Hsieh was interested in making the futile labor of art more obvious by creating pieces that led to no particular ends in themselves, but instead led to exposing the banality of the everyday, as well as the incidental position of art making in contemporary culture.

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[24] M. River and T. Whid, *One Year Performance Video Update (aka SamHsieh)* April 1, 2005 http://www.turbulence.org/Works/1year/.

[25] Sam Hsieh, *One Year Performance 1978-79*, April 1, 2005, http://www.one-year-performance.com/no1.html.

[26] Ibid.

Hence, his position not to hold a "real" job is important to note here. This is a direct comment on labor. We could say that codes of the art work, labor, and leisure time are mashed up *conceptually*, in terms of Remix. The work of art questions its signifying elements, and in this sense Hsieh produced a reflexive piece that puts in effect the codes found in the reflexive remix, as defined in chapter three; it questions everything, including the key codes that validate them.

This cultural position is passed on to the online user in MTAA's update, clearly informed by principles of appropriation that now are part of Remix; one which cites or appropriates, in terms of cultural recognition, the activity of Hsieh to turn it into a simulacrum; and in this sense MTAA's project is a reflexive remix, following the model developed by Kraftwerk and Underworld in music, as discussed in chapter three: they don't cite by copying or cutting from the actual source, but by citing the literal reference. In this sense their strategy is defined by discourse as analyzed by Barthes and Foucault, and the preoccupation of reading as Owens's observed in allegory during the postmodern period, as it is the user or reader who must complete the work; the project strategically keeps certain parts of Hsieh's piece intact in order to attain authority based on allegory. Here, the user quickly realizes that one year is a serious commitment that the average person is most likely unable to perform; thus Hsieh's particular role as an artist is questioned when the users are given the option to log on as they please. The user must think of the type of labor at play. Here we also note the collapse of time into space, as defined by Jameson: MTAA created files that allow the user to configure the experience of an activity in a virtual space according to their own time schedules. The power of modularity is exactly this—time can be manipulated for the sake of efficiency, and demand of experiences that are often designed for spectacular purposes.

The users, then, need to decide why they would commit to an online activity, especially when this activity will in the end validate the artists who were commissioned the project in the first place. This inversion, this transparency that is pivotal to the online project exposes the role of the audience in the work of art. In Hsieh's projects this is not so obvious because he is doing all the work, and all the viewer needs to do is acknowledge the final product through documentation. Hsieh's project is bound much to the tradition of print, where quality control is decided by the publisher; but in this case, it was Hsieh who exercised the position of authority, while MTAA extends the early principles of photography, of anyone potentially being able to take photographs, granted that online users have the proper equipment and acquire the necessary skills. And in this way, their work is a direct extension of the aesthetic found in photography, previously traced in chapter one, which enabled Barthes and Foucault to ponder on the role

of the author according to principles of selectivity, currently found in Remix.

1 Year Performance Video (samHsieHupdate), then, demands that the users acknowledge the work of art by completing it themselves, by actually putting in the time while watching pre-recorded files. The strain of the performance is on the viewer now, not the artist; but this strain is a virtual one, one that is no longer concerned with the body but with the dematerialization of such into a new type of action—a meta-action—in art making, and art viewing. *1 Year Performance Video* is in effect a sample of the physical act of being in a jail cell—Hsieh is in conceptual terms "remixed."

MTAA not only updates the passive demand that a work of art has always had on the viewer—that it be completed by the viewer's gaze—but it also makes obvious the interactive demand of any art object since minimal art emerged. Michael Fried's previously noted opposition to the demand by the minimal object to have its meaning completed by the interaction of the viewer inside the gallery as a sort of theater is exposed, once again. In MTAA's update it functions as a fascist imposition by a certain privileged culture—that of the cultured elite who decide what is and is not art, which can be even more effective today with new technologies. The imposition is not blatant because the users do not need to strain themselves on performing for one year all at once. This art work makes it easy on the users, who can put in their time whenever is convenient for them, by logging on as they so desire. And they do not need to be present since they can leave their computers running, logging time while they do other things around the house. The performance update, then, becomes background noise, like Television in the average home, or music following the theory of repetition by Jacques Attali: *1 Year Performance* can potentially become yet another Muzak.

Both Muntadas' *File Room* and MTAA's *One Year Video Performance* extend the interaction that Fried found problematic in Minimal art, only here it is no longer enough to acknowledge the work in some sort of metaphysical experience, but rather, the viewer turns into a "user" and is expected to contribute to the work as acknowledgement of its aesthetic value. Here we have the artists apparently opening up a space for the user to claim a role of authorship by choosing material, in the case of *The File Room* or to put in actual time allegorizing issues of labor as visited by Hsieh; but in reality the people who contribute material are not highlighted, only those who developed the structure for the user to contribute information or logged time as a form of labor-like action, reflecting on the motivations behind Hsieh's performance. One could say that the authors are more like curators than artists, taking *samples* or *citing* from pre-

existing material. If this is the case, then how would their practice be different from that of a new media curator? To understand this dynamic I also look at an exhibition curated by Christiane Paul called *CODeDOC*.

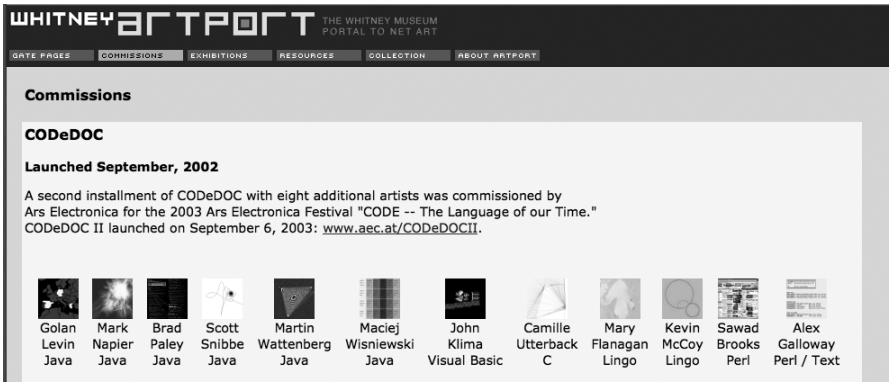

Figure 4.2 Front Page of CODeDoc, curated by Christiane Paul for the Whitney Museum, 2002

The Curator as Remixer

In CODeDOC, Christiane Paul invited 12 new media artists to develop their own interpretation of a simple algorithm she provided, which was "to connect and move three points in space."[27] The artists were free to interpret this "assignment" as they wished. Golan Levin interpreted the concept as a political act. His contribution consists of the map of the world, where any three countries can be connected.[28] When this is done by the user, then a comment appears explaining how the chosen countries are linked politically. For example, if the user were to choose Mexico, Iraq, and Venezuela, the software application will produce the following statement: "Axis of oil producing countries." Mark Napier, another invited artist, takes three points connected with green lines and moves them in space to create an abstract composition that can be adjusted by the user according to how she moves the triangular form.[29] This form is constantly fluctuating on its axis, and moves back and forth like an accordion, flip-flopping. The user can reposition the point of reference around which the three points move. As the points move in space, they leave an off-white trace of their travel on a grey background. Sawad Brooks, another artist who is part of the exhibi-

[27] Christiane Paul, curator, *CODeDOC*. September 2002, http://artport.whitney.org/exhibitions/index.shtml.

[28] Golan Levin, September 2002, http://artport.whitney.org/commissions/codedoc/levin.shtml.

[29] Mark Napier, September 2002, http://artport.whitney.org/commissions/codedoc/napier.shtml.

tion, interprets Paul's instructions by taking the html pages of three newspapers, the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, and *Asahi* and literally remixes them in one page.[30] The result is an overwhelming amount of information that is unreadable, but still carries a sense of authority due to the international recognition of the three newspapers.

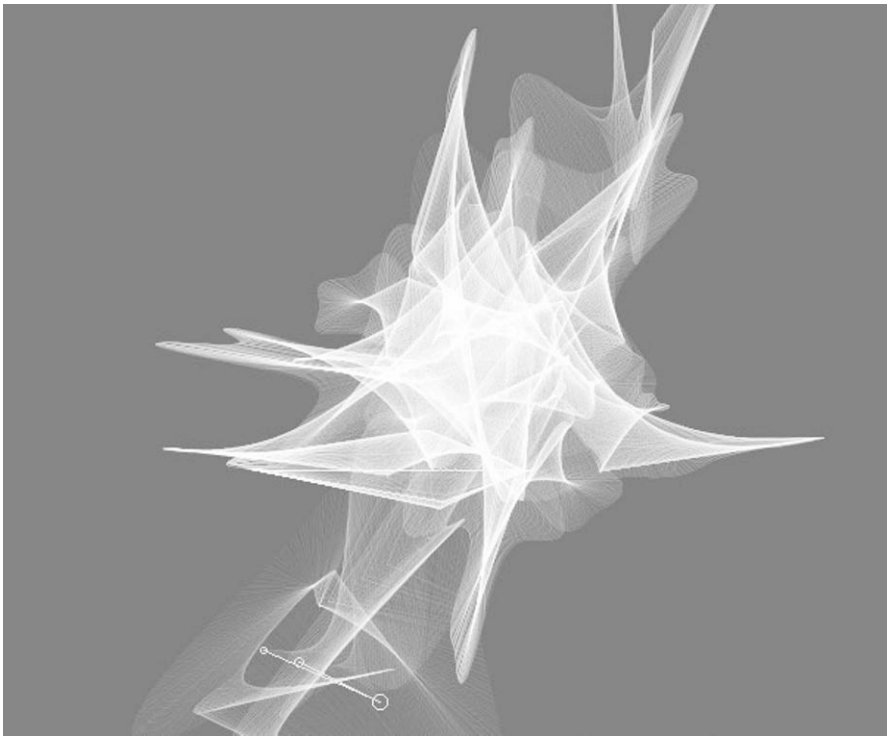

Figure 4.3 Mark Napier, *SpringyDots*, 2002

All three authors have interpreted the "instructions" of three points in space with drastic differences. Levin interpreted three points in space in terms of global politics and created an interface that exposed economic ties between different countries. Mark Napier created an abstract piece which literally explores how three points in space create a formal composition. And Brooks interpreted three points in space as gathering news from three major newspapers that are live on the Internet. In all three projects the user, who is the person who views the work online, is required to do something to make the project complete. In the case of Levin, the user

[30] Sawad Brooks, September 2002, http://artport.whitney.org/commissions/codedoc/brooks.shtml.

needs to choose three countries; for Napier the user needs not only to begin the movement of the three points by pulling or pushing them, but also by moving their point of reference, thus making each composition unique for each user; for Brooks, the user does very little except click the button to have the current pages of the three newspapers appear combined. Brooks' is the least interactive and least demanding of the three projects. The other two allow the user to have more choices in how to experience the work. But all three works function in the traditional form of a music remix. To be specific, in a music remix the name of the original song will provide authority and cultural validation; this is Remix as defined in the musical examples of Kraftwerk and Underworld, as discussed in chapter three. In all three online projects, the name of the remix is replaced by Paul's concept: "three points in space." These artists have reinterpreted her instructions—aesthetically speaking "remixed her concept." Without such concept, their works would not have the cultural authority that validates them. And in this sense, all projects are selective remixes because, while they may be questioning global culture within the parameters given by Paul, they are not questioning her authority as curator—if anything, they reassert it as is expected of selective remixes. Notice, however, that the selective remix, in this case, functions in terms of cultural citation: a variable primarily associated with the reflexive remix. This complexity demonstrates how the three basic definitions of Remix should be taken as starting points of analysis.

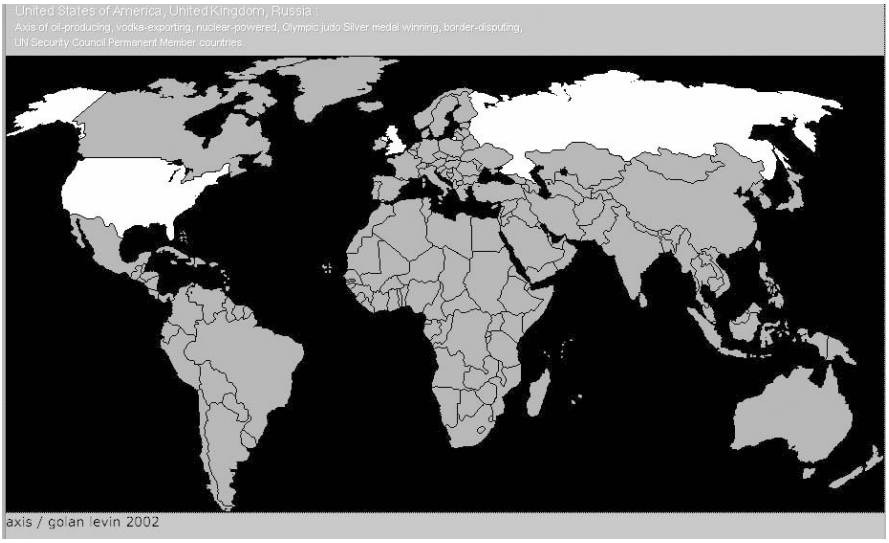

Figure 4.4 Golan Levin, *Axis*, 2002

Furthermore, here we have a three level collaboration dependent on the principles of sampling so far discussed. The first is the curator who provides instructions to the artists, then the artists who develop the artworks, and finally the user who will have to perform or complete the work through interaction in order to define it. Notice that the type of action demanded of the viewer in all three projects is not too different from how minimalist art demanded that the viewer defined the artwork in the gallery by "performing" with it, moving around it. The same is true for Vito Acconci's 1970s performance piece *Seedbed*, previously described, in which he masturbated under the wooden plank while the audience moved around the white cube. In CODeDOC all this is working as it has been mentioned according to three levels of collaboration, developed while relying on selectivity as manifested in appropriation art. Here the curator asks the artists to complete projects according to very open-ended yet specific instructions; then the artists create work that satisfies such instructions but also keeps the default aesthetic of new media work, which is that the user finish it for the artist. The curator is no longer "curating" in the traditional sense, but more or less working like a conceptual artist.

This is not a new model. During the '70s it was suggested that Lucy Lippard was the actual "artist" when she curated exhibitions of conceptual art, and that the artists were her material.[31]

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So far we have considered how the online new media artist and online media curator share certain activities and forms of production. The point here is that artists and curators use the same strategies of selectivity, made possible by the conceptual paradigm that runs parallel, and in terms of theoretical discourse, as defined by Barthes and Foucault, are linked to sampling as form to reconstruct the relation of the author and the reader. Muntadas's activity is much like Paul's; yet, it would be wrong to say that their roles are the same. Being called a curator is different from being called an artist. This goes back to Michel Foucault's "author-function." Foucault states that the author-function is an ideological method used to control discourse, a way to maneuver it to know where and how the work is flowing. To claim a specific type of authorship also creates specific dynamics for a specific discourse. The difference between disciplines is created to legitimize them and provide cultural authority. But something happens when disciplines start to share strategies of production; lines begin to

[31] Lucy Lippard, "Escape Attempts," in *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965 – 1975*, ed. Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: 1996), 29.

blur, and the definition of each discipline is questioned, making the critical mind wonder why such interchange happens.

In the case of the web, it has happened out of necessity to develop the discourse of new media. Artists had to find a way to share and show their work, not with the established institutions but rather with other individuals who shared their interests. Other activities developed which demanded that the artists performed the tasks of organizer, writer, critic, promoter, and, of course, curator—all using principles of selectivity found in Remix, dependent on intellectual and material forms of sampling.[32] Then curators enter the scene, like Paul, with the need to develop awareness and be open to the subtleties of online practice in order to produce effective curatorial projects that will be sensitive and do justice to the featured artworks. What further complicates this is the fact that much of the work one will find online comes from different parts of the world, although, conclusively, at the time of this writing, there are regions of the world that do not have stable Internet access (this is the case in underdeveloped countries), and are therefore unable to fully participate. Regardless, a global awareness is not an option but a demand for both the new media curator and artist.

It becomes evident that, while new media art may be borrowing a type of working "template," it certainly is executing it under a much different dynamic, in large part because there is actually no physical art object with which to work. To this effect, the following section explores how conceptual art has affected new media practice and informs Remix

Online Practice and Conceptualism

While it is true that artists part of the net.art group, who were active roughly between 1996 to 2000, were influenced by a certain type of conceptualism, the premises behind conceptual art as it is understood from its origins in the New York scene are practically irrelevant in new media practice. When this is brought up, it is often in allegorical form, as a sample in music composition to point to a previous strategy that is extended in new media. In regards to this, again, we can consider a work that has been reviewed here: MTAA's *1 Year Performance*,[33] which allegorizes Hsieh's piece as mentioned in the above analysis. It is important to add to the analysis of MTAA's work, that they allegorize the critical methodology of conceptualism, in this case, also to comment on performance art; and not

[32] I write this based on my own experience, as I have performed some if not all the roles mentioned at one point or another if not simultaneously. See my website for list of my activities as artist, curator, historian and theorist: http://navasse.net

[33] MTAA

on an actual object of art (the performance of Hsieh), but on the critical position behind the object — which is a meta-critique, a critique of a critique. In this way, a direct criticism on the object of art turns into an allegorical commentary; it is a discourse that is developed as a comment on conceptualism, but does not directly depend on the critical foundations and notions of resistance of conceptual art. The reason why this is so is now explained.

Conceptual art, mainly in New York, developed in reaction to Greenbergian modernism; this is specific to Joseph Kosuth and his contemporaries. However conceptual practice became quite diverse and took on many approaches around the world.[34] Critical art practices since the turn of the twentieth century have relied on a materialist approach to art making.[35] To be specific, the artist looks at the subject and considers key material elements to then make them obvious to the viewer, who, if the work is developed carefully, will come to question it according to the exposed contradictions, coherences, limitations, and excesses, which can be read as open-ended questions, or at times as forms subject to the sublime (the latter may be problematic for some conceptualists who are critical of ideology). The artist can claim that what she has done is nothing but show what was already there, thus appearing critical and detached with proper distance; and thus questioning not only what the role of the artist is, but also the idea of originality. This is what Duchamp did with his famous *Urinal*.[36] As it is commonly known, he did nothing but choose a work that exposed the artist's role in art practice and her/his relation to the growing industrial world. However, he was not directly questioning the material aspect of the work of art; conceptualism did—New York conceptualism to be exact.[37] Whether moving towards or away from the object, the point is that, in conceptualism, the materiality of the object of art was in question, or at least it was the subject of reflection. Yet, if this is to be contested, what can be said about conceptualism is that its subject was the idea as the object of art,[38] where as for Duchamp, his interest was in how art is defined as discourse. To be clear, Duchamp was not interested in making the object disappear, but rather explore the possibilities of making art with readymade objects.

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[34] Alexander Alberro , "Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977," *Conceptual Art: a Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: MIT Press, 1999), xvi-xxxvii.

[35] This tendency has been traced by many art historians and is considered common knowledge in contemporary art.

[36] The pros and cons are reviewed by Thierry De Duve, see Thierry De Duve, "Contra Duchamp," *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1998), 454-462.

[37] Joseph Kosuth, "Intentions," *Conceptual Art: a Critical Anthology*, 460-469.

[38] Sol Le Witt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," *Conceptual Art…*, 12-17.

With new media we experience works that are not materialized in the conventional sense to which conceptualism reacted. This is in part because new media works are easily reproducible. What is unique about new media art is that it did not face what other mediums had faced in the past to be legitimated. Issues of originality and purposiveness were previously explored in photography and, most importantly, film. In fact, new media was understood so quickly as a vehicle for efficient dissemination that it swiftly moved to affect previously existing media. New media is considered to have pronounced major reciprocal effects, especially in Cinema. As Lev Manovich explains:

> Computer media redefine the very identity of cinema. In a symposium that took place in Hollywood in the spring of 1996, one of the participants provocatively referred to movies as "flatties" and to human actors as "organics" and "soft-fuzzies." As these terms accurately suggest, what used to be cinema's defining characteristics are now just default options, with many other available.[39]

Here we notice how new media's language comes to redefine how previous media is negotiated creatively. And so, it can be stated that new media art rides on the histories of previous media, functioning allegorically. It uses the language of film and photography—not to mention painting—to create works that take on different forms according to specific contexts, and the viewers accept such work because the codes at play are already common knowledge. The power of such language allows the actual object to disappear and eventually lets information take over. And here is where a materialist art practice comes to play a role.

This we can experience in MTAA's allegorization of Hsieh's performance. There is no actual action or object in the work, just pure information configured to represent the allegorical concept of a performance. It is worth noting here that MTAA is extending a method of critique; they are "updating" it (to use their own term) but not taking a critical position with the resistance that is vital to conceptualism.

However, this dematerialization paradoxically makes the object of new media art incidental and often misunderstood, and new media curators, critics, theorists, and artists often find themselves explaining why new media work is important in art discourse. This is in part due to the fact that new media art appears to be quickly understood or misunderstood because it relies on codes previously introduced by other media; thus it appears unimportant in part to the general art audience, who in the past has assumed that it is so obvious that new media art lacks potential to be a vehi-

[39] Manovich, 293.

cle for critical discourse. It is often dismissed as "techie" or leaning toward "techno-fetishism".[40]

If there is no physical object of art with many new media projects—especially Internet art--one can argue that we have moved on to actual discourse and its new found form as pure information online becoming the object of contemplation; but when this shift happens the criticism also shifts. We can consider the role of an electronic mailing list such as Empyre in relation to intellectual capital (and an extension of conceptual practice, one dare say as online social sculpture) and its new power position within the gift economy as an example where discourse becomes the object of contemplation.[41] Their description reads: "Empyre facilitates critical perspectives on contemporary cross-disciplinary issues, practices and events in networked media by inviting guests—key new media artists, curators, theorists, producers and others to participate in thematic discussions."[42] In such a list, discourse is always incomplete, ongoing (as the list moves from discussions from month to month), and full of slippages due to the immediacy of e-mail correspondences. Yet, those who participate in such lists have intellectual capital that can be spent online to further their network connections. The lists depend on the academic institution to make it possible for those with the knowledge and the time to write and participate in an activity where no actual pay is expected. This is important to consider in relation to early paradigms of conceptualism, for the likes of Daniel Buren, who aimed to problematize institutionalization and academization of the object of art in the art institution.[43] Only with the Empyre list, there is no critique necessary according to previous forms of criticism.

What actually happens with this shift from object to information is that the artist—in particular the new media artist—can develop work using a materialist approach following the parameters of conceptualism while not worrying about a material object. This is in part why some people confuse new media practice following a materialist analysis with conceptualism as understood with the likes of Michael Asher who deconstructed the art institution or Adriane Piper who utilized conceptualism and performance art to question racism as a discourse ingrained in the artworld and culture at

[40] This comment is made after having attended lectures by Christiane Paul, who actually experienced such indifference from another curator in the audience, during a major conference at LACMA titled, "Institutional Critique." Paul found herself giving a quick historical explanation to the audience. See "Institutional critique conference" May 21, 2005. http://finearts.usc.edu/events/detail.cfm?id=307 .

[41] Empyre, http://www.subtle.net/empyre.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Anne Rorimer, "Daniel Buren," *Reconsidering the Object of Art*, 90- 93.

large.[44] However, the basic criticism that made conceptualism a specific movement of resistance is not inherent in new media; meaning, the object of art is no longer expected to be present, or critiqued in order to call something art in the realm of new media. The criticism performed in conceptual art has become institutionalized; it is now part of "Institutional Critique." This does not mean that there is no such thing as a conceptual online practice, that of critiquing the object or the institution, only that such critical practice is quite different because the object of art is information (data) that can be presented in various forms.

So, the object of art (of new media) is metadata/data. Materialization of information (however this may be) is an after effect of power relations ending in careful distribution through diverse forms--for the information can be reconfigured to meet the demand of a locality according to a global market. Here the artist can represent the idea as an actual symptom of specific contexts. This is the object of contemplation in new media practice and this is where artists who have made works of note in such a field have focused. In this space we can find renewed forms of resistance, and new forms of criticism.

To further complicate this, new media artwork is not easily labeled as just "art" since much of it crosses over to activism, hacktivism, and pervasive media. Without going into detailed definitions of these terms, it should be pointed out that they are all activities that actually influence the political spectrum around the world. It would appear, then, that the lines between art for a selective audience and mass media start to blur in new media art practice. And this is the model that carries the conceptual trace of sampling, dependent on the preoccupation of reading, or noting the citations of sources in a work, as discussed by Owens, also questioning the role of the author as defined by Barthes and Foucault. The reason being that in new media, and online practice, there is no actual object; the focus is by *default* on the idea. This is the major difference in the aesthetics at play; meaning that the type of resistance expected of a New York conceptual avant-garde practice is not expected of online practice, and can vary in new media art practice if the artist decides to implement certain technologies that demand actual objects. This does not mean that new media artists following the tradition of conceptualism are not critical; it just means that such practice is actually a choice. The model for new media practice is dependent on ideas, not material forms, and this is particular to new media, just like objecthood is to painting and sculpture – and in terms of institutional critique, conceptualism in the fine arts. The allegory of Owens enables us to see the links between conceptualism, minimalism, and per-

[44] Ibid, 58-61, & 196–199.

formance art. The principles of appropriation and citation at play in art practice are now part of new media, in large part because new media artists such as MTAA are aware of both discourses and put them into action even when they deliberately do not cite such strategies. Remix is primarily at play in this case as discourse, that is, as forms of citation.

The Regressive Ideology of Remix, Part 2

Sampling, as a form of writing and reading according to the theories of Barthes and Foucault, attains cultural value when its aesthetics becomes the thriving force behind works of art relying on allegory. Conceptualism was not the first to explore the allegorical possibilities of appropriation as a form of sampling in material form or in terms of discourse, but it certainly laid the ground for sampling to become a major element in future forms of art practice, once everything could be read as a text, after structuralism and poststructuralism became established as methodologies to evaluate media studies.

This trace of conceptualism in new media art, a practice that is not bound to actual objects by default, is possible because of the ideology of repetition that is at play in mass consumerism. The culture industry has reached such a level of efficiency that it no longer needs to be bound to objects. All it needs, as we have seen, is the intellectual or material sampling of information, which can be used as images, sounds, or texts that bombard people day and night, repeatedly, until they internalize the material and no longer question what is being put in front of them; people simply take it and become comfortable to the point that when they demand something new, they are actually asking for that which they find comfortable, that which is already known, only they want it reconfigured so that they then can feel they are progressive, even innovative. This is the ideology of the *regressive listener* that Theodor Adorno wrote about in relation to the culture industry, previously introduced in chapter three: "Contemporary listeners would always prefer to destroy what they hold in blind respect, and their pseudo-activity is already prepared and prescribed by the production."[45] This according to Adorno represses the individual, ultimately. It is in essence a form of false-consciousness:

> Regressive listening is tied to production by the machinery of distribution, and particularly by advertising. Regressive listening appears as soon as advertising turns into terror, as soon as nothing is left for the consciousness but to capitulate before the superior

[45] Adorno, 43, see my analysis in chapter three, 91-92.

> power of the advertised stuff and purchase spiritual peace by making the imposed goods literally its own thing.[46]

Adorno is specifically talking about music; and here we come full circle, as he also explains how this regressive ideology has spread to other areas of culture. It is within these forms which implement regression that resistance can be found. This is what happened when DJs in the '70s and '80s took prerecorded material produced for listening, and turned it into active music—a form of resistance. Turntablism took an electronic object, which functioned more like furniture, and created an instrument from it. I cite another part of Charles Mudede's argument, which was previously referenced in chapter three:

> The turntable is always wrenched out of sleep by the hand that wants to loop a break or to scratch a phrase. In a word, the turntable is awakened by the DJ who wants to make (or, closer yet, remake) music (or, closer yet, meta-music); whereas the instrument always sleeps when it is used to make real music.[47]

While Mudede goes on to elaborate that the DJ is doing something that no other music movement has done in the past, upon a historical examination, we can notice that with the turntable we have reenactments of previous avant-garde movements like Dada, as Ulf Porschadt explains:

> One of the most important contemporary forms of composition, collage, moved into pop music. But where Dada attempted the 'destruction of all meaning to absolute nonsense,' and where collage, through the punk dada revival, was used principally for the destruction of old structures of meaning, hip-hop and the early disco DJ worked with sound clips without any destructive impulse.[48]

This aesthetic of collage as the Dadaist performed it is now found in all of the work that we have examined in this chapter so far. Curators at the beginning of the twenty-first century are becoming aware of the DJ as metaphor. To be specific, Nicholas Bourriaud refers to the DJ to explain how contemporary artists in the international scene, not connected to new media, but falling in line with post-conceptual gallery art practice are in essence remixing as DJs: "Artists today program forms more than they compose them: rather than transfigure a raw element (blank canvas, clay, etc.), they remix available forms and make use of data."[49] Along these lines, we must note that this aesthetic has been considered in the realm of New Media:

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[46] Ibid, 47-48.

[47] Mudede, see chapter three, 91-92.

[48] Ulf Poschardt, *DJ Culture* (London: Quarter books, 1998), 163.

[49] Nicholas Bourriaud, "Introduction," *Postproduction, Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Has and Sternberg, 2002), 5.

> The essence of the DJ's art is the ability to mix selected elements in rich and sophisticated ways. In contrast to the "cut and paste" metaphor of modern GUI that suggests that selected elements can be simply, almost mechanically, combined, the practice of live electronic music demonstrates that true art lies in the "mix."[50]

Manovich explains that the remix is the aesthetic that developed out of selectivity.[51] This is perhaps one of the most important elements in the development of cultural value: knowing what to sample, or in terms of reading and the text, knowing what to cite is more important today than ever before; selectivity is at play in all the new media works examined above. And this is for what the DJ first became famous, as a selector, not a creator. The DJ is a person who knows a library of songs so well that he or she can combine it to create a vibe that is unique and original in its arrangement, which is not created from scratch, but always appropriated, much how conceptual artists, such as Joseph Kosuth, have done, as well as new media artists such as MTAA.

All of the activities discussed in this chapter rely on appropriation following art practice as defined by Kwon. The "free-lance artist" has moved on to practice the collage aesthetic as redefined by Ul Porschardt, and anaylized by Manovich in relation to DJ culture. And all this is possible because of the reliability and efficiency of sampling, after the death of the author and the author function, as defined by Barthes and Foucault, respectively. Sampling here is at play in terms of textuality; it is at the level of discourse that is most effective, not always in terms of direct material cutting or copying. This is the real power of Remix, which allows ideas and forms to move from one cultural space to another as spectacle, and heaps of fragments.

Bonus Beats: The Transparency of Remix

Throughout modernity the potential of the user to become proactive was more of a myth to create what came to be called pop culture, or the culture industry, to use Adorno's own term. The potential to have a voice in media never became a reality, until recently. The radio, as Raymond Williams explains, was often referenced as a form of mass communication,[52] but in reality it was a form of totalitarianism for the most part, since it functioned one way: the user could not speak back with the same efficiency as the ra-

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[50] Manovich, 134-35.

[51] This is based on lectures by Lev Manovich which I attended during a Ph.D. seminar at UCSD in the winter quarter of 2005. Many of his ideas relevant to Remix have been published in the book, Software Takes Command, released online, under a Creative Commons License on November 2008, http://lab.softwarestudies.com/2008/11/softbook.html.

[52] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York: Harper, 1958), 296.

dio announcer, or DJ. The same was true for Television. But mass media realized that if they tried to incorporate the opinions of their viewers in some form, this would make their audience feel empowered, and such reciprocation would make media's programming more popular. This is a tendency that, as already noted, Walter Benjamin noticed in the Soviet press in the first half of the twentieth century, when the reader began to gain a voice with sections like letters to the editor.[53] The voices of the audience heard in the early period of mass communication, however, were always edited by those who controlled media. Responses to a media program or news event would appear with a great amount of latency. As we entered the Internet era, this latency greatly diminished. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, bloggers can write immediately about an event. This activity is so normalized that it is now incorporated into mass media events like *The Emmys*, where bloggers are hired by TV producers to write comments about what is going on inside the theater, and then users can respond to such comments online. Ryan Seacrest, the host of the 2007 *Emmys,* at one point encouraged TV viewers to go online to read what bloggers seating in the theater were writing about.[54] In 2011 people tweet and use hash tags to share comments on major events that are televised live. Social spaces like Facebook can be used to take accurate polls on how their members feel about political debates.[55] This was done during the 2008 Democratic race, when Facebook users were able to opine about who they liked best: Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama, among other candidates who eventually dropped out of the race.

The latter activities support the theories of Barthes and Foucault, as the user/the consumer gains a voice as a type of author. In new media, users gain power in their opinion while, paradoxically, what they share can be carefully monitored with networked technology. This technology is optimized for data-mining, enabling corporations like Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation to create new lucrative markets, thanks to online social networks like MySpace (which at the time of this writing has lost great popularity). Emerging networked technology also allows the users to claim a voice of what they like and dislike. While this might be a new form of communication with great possibilities, the real danger lies in the fact that most people involved in such activities are not reflective or critical about

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[53] The role of the producer was entertained at great length in chapter three. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," 225. See chapter three, 120-124.

[54] Highlights of the *Emmys* can be seen on the Emmys' website. The blog appears to have been taken down after the awards were over. Emmy Awards aired on September 16, 2007 at 8/7c, Fox Network.

[55] Facebook, constantly updated, (10 March, 2008) <http://www.facebook.com/politics/pulse.php?type=1>

these developments. And here, again, we find at play the preoccupation that Adorno had with the regressive listener. Much of the material that I've discussed in this chapter, as well as others, shows that the power of Remix takes effect in part because it uses historical material for regression or progression. But the latter can only take place when a certain level of critical awareness is at play, as discussed in chapter two and three. Without an understanding of the real possibilities of new forms of communication, or an educated approach to these forms, it will not matter that now a blogger can opine if that opinion is not well informed. Opinions are becoming pure noise that can be well controlled and data-mined mainly for selling purposes. Culture is entering a stage where people are expected to constantly contribute information, to actually do some labor in exposing themselves, to then be told what to consume. People are expected to become content producers so that they can consume material created for them based on their own labored effort to share personal information in social networks, as well as the local gas station when they swipe an ATM card to conveniently pay for gas. If this becomes the default form of communication and exchange—if this becomes the norm—those who refuse to contribute information to become content providers for data-mining will be considered misfits. A real example of this today is the food clubs at California supermarket chains like Ralphs or Vons, who are always promoting savings on several items across the store to members. The members can save as much as two or three dollars on an item if they are willing to scan their member cards, therefore sending information about their consuming habits to the company's database. If the member refuses to swipe the card, then she will have to pay regular price for the item. This means that keeping one's privacy will come at a higher price with time, to the point that sharing one's habits and information will be the norm. The possibilities for this to happen are real if users do not become critical of how they use new technologies.[56]

All this is said to explain that sampling—or appropriation, the vital elements of Remix as a cultural activity—can be used according to respective interests. The real issue is how people decide to use forms of communication. New technologies can be used as forms of regression or as forms of reflexion. We can come to redefine how to go about our day to day activities, but only if there is a real possibility to think about such things. The way Remix functions, however, in large part, is to steer users away from this possibility, to keep them in a constant state of regression. Adorno's

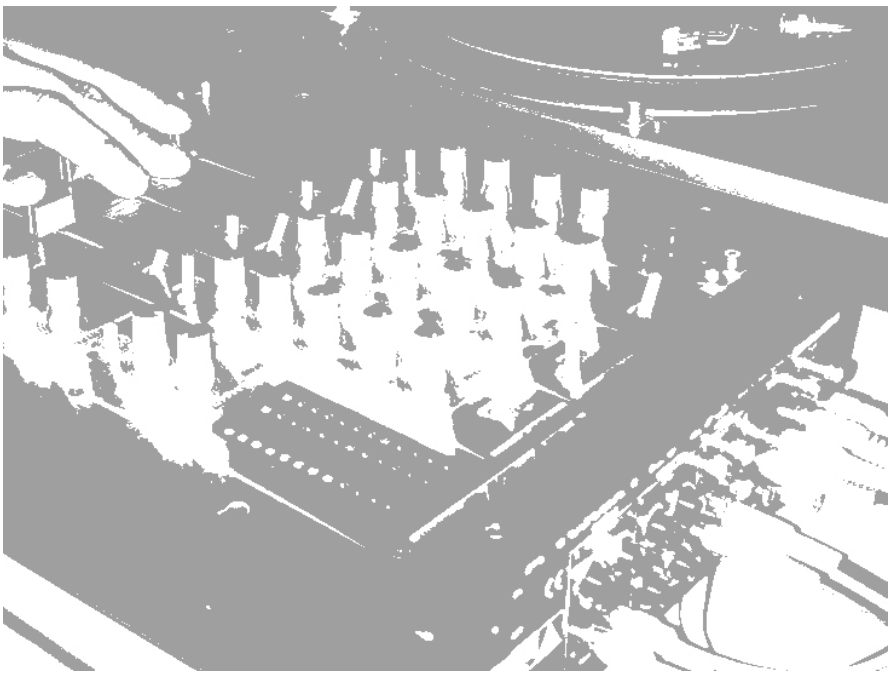
[56] Media artists like Beatriz da Costa has done research in what is known as RFID, in which this tendency to scan people for their personal information is exposed. See her project *Zapped!* 2005, (10 March, 2008) <http://www.zapped-it.net/> and "Swipe" 2002-2004, (10 March, 2008).

argument is still relevant at the beginning of the twenty-first century. We are much closer to forms of efficient control that paradoxically allow people greater convenience to produce and consume what they want, as long as they are willing to fully disclose their habits. Sampling and principles of Remix as evaluated in this chapter, then, have been turned into the preferred tools for consumer culture. The consumer/producer model found in blogging, for example, can be used to create an accurate profile of a person, and decide what to sell to her. This is what Google does with Gmail. It keeps tracks of members messages to then present well targeted ads. This model is basically an extremely efficient form privileging the commercial market.

The works of new media art that have been analyzed in this chapter function as moments of resistance, much in the same way as previous works of art have in the history of modernism. In many ways, these works function on the periphery of media culture; but because of the possibility of information to spread across the network rather swiftly, new media works do point to possibilities of real change, as they can become part of contagious media and reach a greater audience, which would not be solely bound to the esoteric and safely isolated white cube (the art gallery). Regardless of this potential, however, much of the work produced in new media tends to stick to its own aesthetic space, and a "new media art white cube" is currently developing—closely mimicking the more established white cube of the artworld.

Even with such limitations, Foucault's and Barthes's questions are still pending in new media, and given the current state of new media and the way that Capital has developed, there is no hint that the author function will disappear anytime soon. That it has been complicated and made more dynamic with the constant hybridization that is seen between different media and the crossing over of cultural activities of curation and art production is something to consider. The online activities described here, with their crossover, can be considered vital signs towards certain changes. This is a rich moment, one that is extremely political, and full of possibilities. But it is also a moment that can be missed. Sampling in Remix is mainly used as a recombinant tool that successfully proposes the old as new and the conventional as innovative because Remix allows for history to be suspended. The act of sampling in Remix privileges space, dismissing time, and allowing for the fragmentation of the spectacle in the beginning of the twenty-first century to be celebrated often as remix culture.

Conclusion: Noise and Remix



E. Navas, *Remix Theory*

Image: DJ sound mixer and turntable, San Diego, CA, February 2007

Periférico, Mexico City

Periférico happened at Laboratorio Arte Alameda, Mexico City on August 20, 2004. This was the second event in a series of three, organized to complement the *Centro + Media* Exhibition, which ran from August 19-22 for the inauguration of a new media and design school called Centro De Diseño Cine y Televisión in Mexico City. The three events featured local and international Latin American artists active in the new-media field.

Laboratorio Arte Alameda is a cultural center dedicated to the arts in new media and their crossover to established practices. The building used to be a church and its acoustics and large walls make it a great space to enjoy new-media performances. The set-up adopted for the event presented the artists in front of a large projection on the wall. People sat on two large sofas and on the floor, right behind the performers; this arrangement enabled the audience to view everything the artists did on their computers. There was also freedom to walk around, so audience members could sit very close to the artists to better understand what they were doing.

Periférico was an improvisational session bringing together artists who mixed noise and visuals. Some of the performers had never played together. Some were locals while others flew from different parts of Latin America. The performers included (more or less in the following order) Mauricio Montero (Mexico), Gillermo Amato (Mexico), Mario de Vega (Mexico), Antonio Mendoza (US, Cuba, Spain), Jorge Castro (Argentina), Ricardo Rendón (Mexico), Israel M (Mexico), Iván Abreau (Mexico/Cuba), Brian Mackern (Uruguay), Diang (Mexico), Laura Carmona (Mexico), Santiago Ortiz (Colombia, Spain), Christian Oyarzún (Chile) and Arcángel Constantini (Mexico).

In a lounge-like atmosphere, people settled on the couches and the floor, and the evening started with Mauricio Montero and Guillermo Amato. The sound was cacophonous, yet the melody was soothing; a slow dark pattern of noise was looped for several minutes. All the while the images projected repeatedly juxtaposed the close-up of a child's face and the silhouette of a man against a white background; the images were complemented with black, grey, and white geometrical abstractions.

In the next performance, Antonio Mendoza and Jorge Castro improvised visuals to the sound of Mario de Vega. Mendoza recycled images from movies and news footage, which were filtered with rich reds, greens, and blues. His images included planes, a hand pouring beer into a thin glass, multicolored dinosaurs fighting, the detonation of an atomic bomb along with several other explosions, and the flag of the United States. De Vega

created sound patterns that resembled the sound of channel surfing on analog radio by moving the knobs on his mixer back and forth. The sound was jarring and felt destructive to the ear. It consisted of tones with no rhythm. Jorge Castro mixed a set of over saturated abstractions of grid-like compositions with undefined reproductions of drawings and prints. His most engaging material came when he performed alone. He presented a video of a dancer whose moves turned into geometrical patterns, and became distorted in support of the smallest changes in sound. At times the dancer became a complete abstraction consisting of multicolored squares and circles—and then she would once again appear moving in sync with the music. The same woman also appeared under water in another video, which was slow in its development; here, she occasionally came up for air.

Figure 5.1 Performance of Jorge Castro, *Periférico*, Laboratorio Arte Alameda, August 20. 2004

Ricardo Rendón and Mario De Vega performed together. Rendón presented abstract visuals consisting of white and gray squares against a black background, while Mario played an instrumental arrhythmic composition. This was one of the longest performances of the night, as it lasted over forty minutes. It was quite demanding on the audience because both image and sound changed very slowly, and one could daze out and daydream,

losing track of the audio-visual development, especially when there was no obvious progression; both performers constantly played loops.

Next, Ivan Abreu and Ricardo Rendón took the stage. Abreu played a sound piece clearly influenced by electronic dub. He abstracted the traditional guaguanco pattern, an Afro-Cuban rhythm, which Rendón complemented with more abstract graphics that were, again, variations of black, grey, and white squares.

They were immediately followed by Brian Mackern who performed two sets. He manipulated sound and image simultaneously. His material consisted of slow melodies that, at the push of a button, swiftly switched graphics and composition. At times the graphics were as simple as a horizontal line in the middle of a black screen, and at others it was a collage of abstract geometrical shapes moving from left to right, up and down, covering the entire wall.

Next, Diang and Laura Carmona performed together. Unlike the other collaborators, they appeared to know each other's material well before coming into the performance. There were formal similarities between image and sound; for instance, Carmona's graphics had a steady pace much like walking. Her images, which consisted mainly of geometrical patterns with occasional human figures and landscapes, always filled the wall with over-saturated pastel colors. The overall look was grainy. Diang's sound was steady, but with no obvious beat. The sound and image allowed the audience to find a rhythm that crossed over from the aural to the visual. Much like Carmona's visuals, Diang's sound was always full of layers, and kept a consistent tone that shifted at a slow pace, carefully matching Carmona's graphics. Arcángel Constantini performed by himself. He mixed figurative and abstract images to a mid/slow sound composition. Here again the sound's formal qualities matched the aesthetics of the visuals, as the aural patterns corresponded with the visual fade-ins and outs. The graphics shifted from geometrical abstractions to porn images, which had been adjusted with color filters to match yet another over-saturated palette.

Santiago Ortiz, Christian Oyarzún, and Israel M were the last to perform. Ortiz and Israel M collaborated on the sound, while Oyarzún mixed graphics. Ortiz also showed his visual interface used to create the sound. Oyarzún presented graphic variations of a circle animation. Many of the previous performers had stayed away from a concrete rhythm (except for Mackern). However, this last performance actually presented very specific patterns that were self-referential, pushing noise as domesticated sound and image; here, again, no specific beat was heard. There was a back and forth resembling Mario De Vega's previous performance, but there was no

actual knob, just a virtual onscreen simulation part of a custom interface.[1]

The overall aesthetic was consistent throughout all the performances, and regardless of the fact that some of these artists had never played together, they created abstract sounds and images that in the end were slow to change while constantly relying on short audio-visual loops. The result was material open for interpretation, overtly denying a specific meaning other than the experience of the process of creating the composition through improvisational collaborations. The performers could claim autonomy--a momentary space outside politics, as their interests lied in the creation of images and sounds that challenged the immediate perception of the viewer. These artists often call themselves Ruidistas (noise-makers). Politics, obviously, do not disappear in these images, even when the propositions by the performers may implicitly claim to do so.

As the performances went on, people got up; some got closer to the artists, while others went outside to smoke and talk. The audience moved casually around the performers. There was a constant flow of people coming and going, and a low discussion buzz could be heard just outside the front door. Apparently it was understood that there would be no breaks and that people were expected to come and go as they pleased. Towards the end of the evening, the performances had almost become background noise.

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While it might be difficult to become engaged with, or find compelling, what took place during *Periférico*, the main point of my description of the Ruidista performance is to present a different kind of collective experience from that of a dance hall, or concert. In chapter four, I described the relation of the DJ with a dancing audience, where both became elated by the call and response dynamic that took place in a desolated building in Berlin, where everyone was likely in an altered state—if not with alcohol, certainly with drugs. They were having an extreme physical experience, and it would not be surprising if they ended with sexual intimacy at the end of the night; or rather, early morning. Altered states and physical experience was also the backbone behind dub music. Early dub music had power because it was part of a culture that was invested primarily in physical communication. This is what makes music a cultural force: it allows a person to stand next to another person and become physical, to get close and explore another body. Rhythm provides this permission; it is a social contract

[1] It was an interface made in Macromedia Flash, a web application used to create interactive animated platforms ranging from database access to animated features.

marked by time. This is what made dub and reggae, as well as all other genres, thrive in New York, London, and other parts of the world where dub became the point of musical reference.

In drastic contrast, the *Periférico* experience was detached and reserved, one might even say conservative. Everyone had time to think about the performance as it was developing. The emphasis in *Periférico* was the machines, not the body. From this point of view what becomes evident is that principles of Remix, which are clearly at play on various levels in the performances (most performers, even those who used abstract material, admitted to have sampled some source to manipulate), are part of a very controlled state of cultural production: the level of control throughout the performance could be read as a metaphor of the coolness and detachment of bodily experience possible with new media technology. Consequently, Remix can be viewed as the culmination of control as Attali foresaw with repetition. This is a paradox. At the time that more and more people are able to express themselves, "to compose," to use Attali's term, they do so when the greatest control over public activities is possible, which means that individual expression comes at the cost of privacy. Whether this is good or bad is not of interest here, but rather how and why expression has taken the turn it has, and what this might imply for Remix and culture. In this conclusion, then, I reflect on the many elements of Remix that have been explored throughout the chapters to take a critical position on the possibilities of remixing in networked communication and the ongoing development of new media.

After the Domestication of Noise

In the previous chapters I argued that Remix is made possible in large part due to conceptual strategies, technology, and techniques that materialized in the DJ music scene during the 1970s. I demonstrated how the activity of early mechanical recording and sampling helped shape Remix once the concept became an aesthetic, an attitude. Its explorations in music were extended to culture at large during its fourth stage at the end of the '90s with the conception of remix culture as a global movement (see figure 1.4). I also demonstrated how Remix is informed by the act of appropriation that was pivotal in the art of Duchamp, Heartfield, and Höch, who were all active during the first half of the twentieth century and became the models of production during the 1970s in art practice, a time when a preoccupation with textuality simultaneously developed in culture at large. Barthes's and Foucault's respective theories of authorship were referenced to argue that the preoccupation with "reading" culture as a text as defined by Owens influenced areas outside literary circles, particularly the arts,

and eventually mass media. The theory of noise by Attali was the conceptual framework for my theory of Remix, which I used to argue that at the beginning of the twenty-first century repetition and representation are in constant flux, and have become tools of production that can be repressive or expressive, depending on the inclination of the producer. I demonstrated how from the three basic forms of Remix, the extended, selective, and reflexive, a fourth form develops, which I called the regenerative remix. This fourth form extends principles of the musical mashup throughout networked culture, in social spaces like Facebook and Twitter, as well as the online search engine Google and the resource Wikipedia, among others. All this development is fueled by the possibility of individual expression in networked culture, but, as has been noted, this is made possible with efficient forms of data-mining, thus allowing resources like Google and Twitter to analyze trends. The real issue is to understand how criticality can be effective with the new forms of communication made possible and informed by Remix.

Extending the aesthetic of the *Periférico* performance to networked culture, it can be argued that a framework for people to behave reserved while in physical proximity is in place; nobody becomes excited; everyone appears to have proper critical distance from the development of the material, thus the result is an apparent critical distance for the media user—nobody sweats and everyone appears to be invested in disinterestedness. And, as previously mentioned, this is a very different setting from that of the DJ and dancers, in which the physical experience is pronounced. Thus, what Remix and its popular dissemination through remix culture make possible is a complementary activity to what already was in place in culture. The Internet, when used critically, can be a constructive form of communication. People who are uncritical and spend most of their days in front of a computer, dependent on the network for daily activity, may not think about such things. Thus, the real issue is to develop a critical conscience. Like all other technologies and tools developed in the past, it is up to individuals to use them as they find appropriate. The issue becomes political when certain parties adopt the technology for specific agendas. This has always been the case from the very beginning of societies.

New media technology, while it can be used to expand the possibilities of communication, it does so through advanced mediated forms, which push physical experience to take place not directly, but indirectly through content filters. The one thing that may be different at the beginning of the twenty-first century is that with the ongoing optimization of culture with technology, it becomes more and more apparent that the real issues, the real questions that have been with us since we entered the symbolic world

of language have not changed or been modified. They simply recur. Nietzsche considers this recurrence pivotal for the eternal return.[2] As Deleuze later argued, it is the repetition of difference itself that is experienced.[3] Because such repetition is manifested in pervasive diversity, it is hard to acknowledge at times that the real anxieties that push individuals to get up every morning and experience the repetition of difference have not changed. Remix as binder, as cultural glue, as aesthetic, as virus, as discourse, enables people to understand how the recycling of material can be progressive and constructive.

Within this critical framework, to reiterate, entities active on the Internet, such as Google and Twitter, are able to monitor daily activity with great precision. However, the technologies developed by these entities can be appropriated when people need to communicate with others about issues that are urgent. This is exactly what happened in June of 2009 when the results of the elections of Iran were questioned by the majority of its citizens. It became quickly known around the world that the government of Iran tried to stop people from reporting what was taking place inside the country. The government almost accomplished this by closing most online social networks, except for Twitter. Twitter became the main source of reporting to the point that the protests have been referred to as "Iran's Twitter Revolution."[4] The potential of social media shown in the events of Iran became predecessors of the Arab Spring of 2011, a series of peaceful protests throughout arab countries including Tunisia, Egypt and Lybia that were largely organized with the use of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.[5]

In this instance, Twitter, while it is designed to be a tool for optimization of Capital, was swiftly used for basic needs of communication, of mobilization of masses, and most importantly to create awareness of what was taking place inside the respective countries. All of this was possible because as networked technology develops, people no longer need desktop

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[2] As it is well known in academia, Nietzche's concept of the eternal return recurs throughout his many writings. I here specifically relate to his last work. See, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Trans. Walter Kaurmann (New York: Vintage, 1968).

[3] Gilles Deleuze's theory of Difference and Repetition are highly influenced by Nietzsche's theory of the Will to Power. See, Gilles Deleuze, *Difference & Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). Yet, in my experience, the best way to get a direct sense of Nietzsche's influence on Deleuze is to read two short essays by Deleuze on Nietzsche. See, Gilles Deleuze, "Active and Reactive" and "Nomad Thought," *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1997), 80-106 and 142-149.

[4] Ari Berman, "Iran's Twitter Revolution," *The Nation*, June 15, 2009, http://www.thenation.com/blogs/notion/443634

[5] See my own evaluation of these events: "After Iran's Twitter Revolution," Levantine Review, February 15, 2011 http://www.levantinecenter.org/levantine-review/after-irans-twitter-revolution-egypt.

computers or laptops to post information to the Internet. All they need is cell phones with text messaging capabilities and online access. This means that networked and new media culture are not only defined by people being alone in their bedrooms communicating with each other via the Internet; when necessary people can be outside evaluating and reporting on political developments. This is what happened in Iran and the Arab Spring. Remix culture then is complementary to remix in music, because as Richard Barbrook has noted, at the moment, people live in a mixed economy where private and public interests that in the past were considered incompatible are now functioning over the same platforms of communication with no apparent conflict. Remix culture, while it may be more efficient in data-mining, is no more or less repressive than any previous cultural activity. As previously stated, Remix can be used as an aesthetic of repression or expression. The real issue then is to develop a critical conscience to disseminate, not only knowledge, but also the strategies necessary to attain knowledge and nurture it.

Bonus Beats: the Causality of Remix

This summary makes apparent that while I have explained how Remix developed, mainly in terms of aesthetics, I have not explained explicitly why it has become a popular tendency in networked culture and new media at large. The reason goes back to Adorno's theory of regression, when he noted that people tend to look for something they can recognize in what is supposedly new. This tendency is made possible by the second of two layers in culture that I previously argued make Remix possible. The first is when something is introduced, the second when that which is introduced attains cultural value and is then "remixed" and reintroduced into culture. Prior to the concept of remixing, the secondary act would have been called appropriation, replay, repetition, or recycling; but, as I have already argued at the end of chapter three, and demonstrated throughout chapter one, once the concept of remixing became the frame of reference to combine and reintroduce material in culture, the understanding of the previous terms changed. At the beginning of the twenty-first century these terms are likely to be understood in terms of Remix, perhaps not by some cultural critics, who will likely claim in dismissive fashion that we have been "remixing" since we developed symbolic language, but certainly by the average person.[6] I could attempt to limit the term Remix to a specialized activity by

[6] Those interested in further evaluating this question on Remix should read my text "Remix[ing] Re/Appropriations," written in March 2010 for a museum exhibition at the MEIAC, Badajoz, Spain, http://remixtheory.net/?p=474. Also see chapter one.

restricting it with an even larger taxonomy than the one I have developed throughout this text. However, I believe that it is more beneficial to realize that Remix is an actual discourse that cannot be controlled by a theory imposed by an individual secluded in the ivory tower of academia. My goal here is to understand how Remix is so pervasive that it might become meaningless. The fact is Remix takes on many forms. But this should not deter anyone from understanding how it has become popularized since it began as a specific activity in music culture.

I further prove my point: once Capital entered its late stage as defined by Jameson, it is the second stage of cultural value that becomes privileged—that of combining pre-existing material. This is why sequels in Hollywood films are so common and, for the most part, very bad. They rely on the success of the material that was first introduced. But it may be the actual templates of stories that become the real forms of regression: action, drama, comedy films all have certain standards that must be followed. What is even more peculiar is that the audience often dislikes a film when it veers too far off the template because they expect it to be like the original, yet somewhat different.

In short, Remix, as it encapsulates the references of previous terms pointing to recombination, has become a popular aesthetic because it lends itself, both formally and ideologically, to the *bottom line* of capitalist interests. Remix as promoted in remix culture, is an aesthetic, an attitude in culture that enables people to reuse material and make it their own. It relies on the fact that material that carefully defines itself on the authority of something pre-existing has a better chance at success, because what is being presented has a track record of already being popular. At the same time, a remix cannot be too close to the original, or people will dismiss it as derivative. Even those who endorse the culture industry have this standard. Whatever is reintroduced needs to be disguised as innovative. This tendency is already apparent in the early days of dub, when it was obvious that instrumental versions of songs were being reintroduced, which had been manipulated enough so that people felt as though they were new. However, if the newer versions did not develop enough distance from the original, they would never be considered *cool* to be played in the dance hall. This is the norm in remixes in music culture even today, no matter what genre. This is also the tendency in the story templates in Hollywood films previously mentioned.

The concept of remixing is popular and influential in culture at large as Remix due to its simplicity. People are able to understand what the term implies by simply hearing or viewing a remixed production. They know that it is not a combination but a re-combination of sources that were already at play. People are unlikely to conceptualize all this as they hear the

word, or experience the material; instead, they will simply digest it. Aside from the fact that the word is easy to understand, the main reason, arguably, has to do with its popular link to music, a medium that is pervasive in all areas of culture, and therefore is a term that needs little explanation. Thus, when the term "remix culture" is pronounced, people are likely to understand that it has something to do with recombination of material, which extends beyond music to culture at large.

In terms of cultural change, I am not proposing a model for emancipation in the future, as many critical theorists tend to do by proposing resistance in the name of progress and History. Instead, I propose to take my analysis of Remix as synecdoche, as a methodological framework that stands for and exposes the bigger issues in global culture. My analysis is a window through which one can reflect on the many anxieties that have been with humans for many centuries. We are entering a stage where European modernity has been cannibalized and recombined by networked culture to the point that it need not live up to what its originators would have envisioned (if they actually had any vision at all).

Finally, with a clear influence by Niezstche and Deleuze, I challenge people to consider that we are creatures of conflict, defined by violence. I invite people to consider the possibility that through a critical reflection on destruction we are able to develop constructive models, because through the negotiation of destruction arises the concept of progress. Our ability to recombine what we already know is what enables us to accept such possibility. The power of Remix is that it makes obvious that there is no limit to recombinations in terms of ideas and/or forms. Therefore, the biggest challenge is to understand that one should be a cultural producer simply because that is all one can do until one no longer needs to go out into the world. Not everyone is willing to accept that life has already shown us that there is nothing "better" in the future, but that we have already lived what we will live: the repetition of difference itself, as Deleuze argues. This is not easy to perceive and ultimately to accept because of the inevitable feeling of pleasure, which finds its strongest manifestation in leisure. For if we are to live what we have lived, repeatedly, we should live it as well as possible. After all, repetition, with a critical conscience, can imply improvement: perfection through practice. Is this not what mastering a musical instrument implies? Is this not what artists achieve through constant investigation and materialization of ideas? Is this not what authors achieve through the constant polishing of their writing? This form of repetition is valid to live and fight for. Some people might dare demand this, not for themselves, but for their children. This leads to class struggle and the reason behind the ideology of progress. This is why people are willing to fight for a better tomorrow, as they want a better quality of life. Thus we are

slaves to material forms, and their enjoyment. And the battle ensues, to repeat itself as difference.