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Multi-Voice Commentary for Sample-Based Music: An Inclusive Approach

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Abstract Discussions of sample-based music are traditionally single-authored, despite the frequency of multi-genre content found within this repertoire. This article builds a case for a new approach for future analyses, justified by highlighting repertoire that embeds samples from different genres, times, and cultures and that calls upon a variety of disciplinary expertise to attend to these disparate contents. Multi-voice commentary is an approach that includes insider voices to speak to the content of sample-based music, building a reception network that runs counter to single authorial modes, broadening the narrative around sample-based music and its lineage. Certain sample-based works are most in need of this new approach, based on situations of 'sampling up', 'down', or 'sideways', tendencies developed from Nader's concept of 'studying up' and Walser's writings on 'appropriations from below'. Theoretical ideas from Fish and Barthes are also brought into this discussion to further the case for a multiplicity of readings.

Introduction

Academic readings and analyses of sample-based music (musics which have been constructed using samples of existing music)[1] tend to follow a standard format, shedding light on the inner workings of these pieces via a chosen methodology or musicological lens, dictated by an author's field(s) of expertise. These texts, typically crediting a single named author, may be multi-voiced insofar as they include interview materials, quotes, data, and theories extracted from others in the field which enable a degree of multivalence; however, the name appearing on the publication reduces this plurality to a single figure who edits, selects, and parses the available information. This article is an example of a single-authored text that draws extensively from sources and musical repertoire and uses quotations to express views and comments from others in one space. My role as author is to forge new conclusions from the content assemblage and critiquing, which is a process replicated many times over in musical scholarship (and beyond).[2] An alternative is proposed here that enables multiple authors and

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[1] The word 'sample' can be broadened to include audio recordings of nature, objects, voices, and instruments and does not necessarily have to only refer to samples of existing music.

[2] I recognize that the multi-voice interpretation method outlined in this text is not implemented within this article since it is written by a single person. The method is impractical and unsuitable for every

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contributors to take credit for and ownership of information by including them in the process. In part, this would not be dissimilar to what occurs in the sciences, where large teams and collaborators are reflected in the authoring of papers and literature through co-authorship, or in ethnomusicological processes exploring the collective voice, co-authorship, and co-creation of work via the integration of non-academic voices; but there are distinct differences, including the removal of hierarchical structure by positioning multiple voices adjacent to one another. A rationale for this different approach stems from the multi-voice nature of much sample-based music, where multiple artists may be found within a single musical work. If a musical work comprises other musics and sources, it seems only right to hear from those with relevant expertise and include them within the discourse, providing a dedicated space for their contributions and perspectives.

The move beyond singular musicological or interpretive responses is a new hypothesis that encourages multi-voice input for the purposes of the study of sample-based music, and is especially relevant in cases of audio take-up from across genres, eras, and cultures as it fully acknowledges the diverse musical snippets and snatches which become subsumed into new musical forms via the act of sampling.[3] There are two distinct drivers for this hypothesis: firstly, the contemporary moment stresses the urgency of encouraging and including a diversity of voices in the conversations, approaches, and methodologies of academic discourse. Larger movements, as in the case of Black Lives Matter, which brought attention to the ongoing presence of racism in societies across the globe, initiated a seismic shift in listening to marginalized and minoritized voices that have been overlooked. Black Lives Matter 'awakened millions across the globe to how Black people are systematically targeted for violence' and called for all sectors, communities, and populations to do better.[4] This article reflects on this moment and insists on change regarding the voices we hear from in academic texts that often fail as exemplars of inclusivity. In recognizing that 'music and sound studies have been historically slower than other disciplines to incorporate minoritised perspectives', my contribution emerges after observing the deficit of storytelling from those whose stake is undeniably central to writings about sampling.[5] Wider research has pointed to the success and benefits of inclusiveness and diversity in the workplace, sports teams, and committee boards, to name a few.[6] In these cases, it is the diverse make-up of teams

instance of musicological writing and may prove more suitable for alternate formats of knowledge (e.g. documentary making). For the purposes of introducing and outlining a new methodology in this text, a single-authored approach has been used.

[3] I appreciate that the 'newness' of this hypothesis is exclusive to musicology. As noted, the sciences embrace co-authorship more readily in publications reflecting collaborative processes and team-working due to the nature of the discipline. Ethnomusicology also provides models for multi-voice commentary through the higher frequency of co-authored texts and practices that seek to include diverse voices, practitioners, and non-academics in the process of research and output creation.

[4] Fabiola Cineas, 'The Legacy of Black Lives Matter', *Vox*, June 2020 <https://www.vox.com/2020/7/6/21311171/black-lives-matter-legacy> [accessed July 2021].

[5] Annie Goh, 'Themed Book Review: *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* by Dylan Robinson', *Feminist Review*, 127.1 (2021), pp. 150–52, doi:10.1177/0141778920962957.

[6] On sports teams, see Gareth Southgate's consulting of the FA Technical Advisory Board in preparation for the Euro 2020 championship: 'Members (all unpaid volunteers) include Sir Dave

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which accounts for their increase in performance, effectiveness, and innovation. Multi-voice interpretation works in the same way, setting out to witness the different effect when diverse contributions are brought in from authors who possess expertise in dissimilar disciplines that ought to be included in the research process. This approach also respects that 'while music may be *shaped* by the people who first make and use it, as experience it has a life of its own', which will naturally lead to individuals conveying differences in interpretation.[7] The second driver motivating the above hypothesis relates to the subject matter of sample-based music, which is inherently multi-voiced in its composition due to its use of and reliance on extracts of existing music, where many artists, musics, and non-musical contributions feature within a single piece.

My extensive study of sample-based music within the electronic music domain, and specifically within the experimental avant-garde category, has shown that literature on sample-based works appears to exclusively use the approach of using a singular voice.[8] Some examples include Degrassi's historical overview in 2019 of Ferrari's *Strathoven*, Polansky's 1983 commentary on Tenney's *Collage #1 (Blue Suede)*, and Mockus's 2008 feminist critique of Oliveros's *Bye Bye Butterfly*, all of which contain discussions of sample-based electronic music repertoire delivered from clear-cut points of expertise using specific musicological lenses; however, all remain somewhat barren of multiplicitous input to address the explicit genre-hopping taking place in the said works.[9] To explain further: an enriched story of Ferrari's *Strathoven* (a work known as the precursor to mashup music due to its extensive sampling of Beethoven's Symphony no. 5 (1804–08) and Stravinsky's *Firebird* (1910)) would emerge if scholars of Classical-era music (whose knowledge specifically addresses the Beethoven symphonies) as well as experts on Stravinsky and the contexts of twentieth-century music were consulted. Inviting further perspectives from individuals invested in early European electronic music as well would widen the commentary on and overall holistic impression of this sample-based work. What these people from these separate specialisms may have to say about this work is worth taking a moment to ponder; they and their expertise, with regard to time periods, composer outputs, and context, together with

Brailsford, a cycling coach, Colonel Lucy Giles, a college commander at the Sandhurst Military Academy, the Olympic rower Dame Kath Grainger, Manoj Badale, a tech entrepreneur, the rugby coach Stuart Lancaster and David Sheepshanks, mastermind behind the St George's Park national football centre. At first, football insiders were horrified by this group, with negative articles appearing in the British press. We are not "footballing men". But this is why the group is capable of offering fresh insights on preparation, diet, data, mental fortitude and more. This is sometimes called "divergent" thinking to contrast it with the "convergence" of echo chambers'; Matthew Syed, 'Euros 2020: What All of Us Can Learn from Gareth Southgate', *BBC News*, July 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-57698821> (accessed July 2021).

[7] Simon Frith, 'Music and Identity', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (SAGE, 1996), pp. 108–27.

[8] Manuella Blackburn, 'The Terminology of Borrowing', *Organised Sound*, 24.2 (2019), pp. 139–56, doi:10.1017/S1355771819000189.

[9] Franco Degrassi, 'Some Reflections of Borrowing in Acousmatic Music', *Organised Sound*, 24.2 (2019), pp. 195–204, doi:10.1017/S1355771819000232; Larry Polansky, 'The Early Works of James Tenney', *Soundings*, 13 (1983), pp. 144–50; Martha Mockus, *Sounding Out: Pauline Oliveros and Lesbian Musicality* (Routledge, 2008).

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their own personal reading of the music, warrant the consultation time demanded by this process, and collectively, they can offer alternative insights to the typical findings in present literature arrived at through source-based research. This process also takes account of the nature of sampling, which tends to segment the original work (which will be referred to as the *hypotext*), often transforms it through sound manipulation, and recontextualizes it in a new setting (the new work, known as the *hypertext*). Examining the intertextual content in these instances is quite a different activity to examining the hypotext in its original form; thus a case can be made for seeking fresh perspectives on the hypotext in its new surroundings.

The need for this shift in approach starts with Metzer's reminder of the distinct 'two-part gesture' inherent to all scenarios of musical borrowing — the new work and the work it borrows from.[10] Many others have commented on the dual-faced situation musical borrowing has to offer; for example, the concepts of the 'double-voiced utterance', 'double exposure', and 'simultaneous listening' all denote the importance of accepting intertextual procedures (arising from the 'text within a text') in musical communication, and all acknowledge that when we see a work in front of us, we can trace its line of influence, quotation, or borrowing from something older that possesses its own significance and historical context.[11] These expressions of the dual-faced situation demonstrate how scholars in significantly disparate fields of musical study (popular music studies, twentieth-century music, and musicology on early music, respectively) have individually grappled with the challenges of reading dual-faced music-making. This double workload of assessing the new and the original within the reception of musical borrowing, where 'two readings are active at once', calls into question accepted analytical modes or musicological study, which are predominantly solo quests, often limited to coverage in the author's area(s) of expertise.[12] Studying sample-based music with more voices on board offers an advantage, catering for the variety of borrowed components encased within the work. Researching sampling requires detective skills and expansive knowledge of diverse musical repertoire in order to recognize the legacies behind, historical influences on, and engagement with sampled material. Embarking on this journey alone risks creating limited viewpoints and findings that may overlook cross-genre lineages and, in the process, may leave out the voices who can adequately speak of the contexts found within the sampled material.

[10] David Metzer, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 5.

[11] The 'double-voiced utterance' is from Gregory Stephens, 'Rap's Double-Voiced Discourse: A Crossroads for Interracial Communication', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 15.2 (1991), pp. 70–91, doi:10.1177/019685999101500205; 'double exposure' is from Alastair Williams, 'Genres and Theatres: Wolfgang Rihm's Opera-Fantasy *Dionysus*', *Contemporary Music Review*, 36.4 (2017), pp. 279–310, doi:10.1080/07494467.2017.1399670; 'simultaneous listening' is from John Milsom, 'Attending (to) Masses in the Long 16th Century', *Early Music*, 48.2 (2020), pp. 251–57, doi:10.1093/em/caaa035.

[12] Eduardo Navas, *Remix: The Theory of Sampling* (Springer, 2012), p. 36.

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Sampling and Musical Borrowing

Sampling belongs as a subset under the 'musical borrowing' umbrella, but distinguishes itself from notation-based forms (e.g. those that utilize quotes, pastiche or paraphrasing) where dots on the page indicate instances of idea transfer, known in the sampling world as interpolations, 'allosonic quotations', or replayed material.[13] For example, Ariana Grande's use of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'My Favourite Things' (1959) in her pop hit '7 Rings' (2019) is not a sample but a quotation of the main theme, replayed as an interpolation and recorded specifically for this new track.[14] Direct sampling is different, bypassing notational instruction and instead involving the direct lifting of audio from an existing track and subsequently placing it into a new location via cut and paste, as in the case of Radiohead's 'Idioteque' (2000), which directly samples a passage of Paul Lansky's experimental FM-synthesis work *Mild und Leise* (1973) as well as an extract from Arthur Kreiger's *Short Piece* (1976).[15] Since sampling lifts audio from an existing track (via a copying process), it is unique in possessing production detail, depth, and density as a consolidation of whole mixes (the sample is usually a stereo render of a larger multitrack mix), which can contain complex layers and combinations of instruments and vocals.

The Two-Part Gesture

The two-part gesture which Metzer speaks of encourages us to take account of the new work and the work being borrowed from.[16] Studying sampling thoroughly is to know and understand these parts in depth, and since acts of sampling are not bound by genre, cultural contexts, or eras, sample-based works are capable of being complex sites of reference, cultural hybridity, and fusion. For example, hip-hop music does not restrict its sampling activity to existing hip-hop tracks; rather, the choice and selection process is wide open, enabling any musical material of any genre, era, and culture to be a viable sample, a freedom initially propagated through the act of crate-digging (searching for new and inspiring sounds from old records in record shops' crates). Schloss observes that hip-hop's crate-digging practice presented a means for producers to educate themselves with 'styles of music with which they may not be familiar'.[17] His exchanges with hip-hop producers reveal that accessing records from different genres 'is important

[13] Serge Lacasse, 'Intertextuality and Hypertextuality in Recorded Popular Music', in *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*, ed. by Michael Talbot (Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 35–58.

[14] Justin Morey notes that interpolations are 'where phrases, melody and/or lyrics are taken from a preexisting composition but without any attempt to copy the sound or timbre of the original recorded performance'. This is distinct from replays, which are concerned with recreating 'part or parts of an existing record with the intention of sounding as close as possible to the original'; 'Sampling Practice: The Threat of Copyright Management to its Future (and Past)', in *The Present and Future of Music Law*, ed. by Ann Harrison and Tony Rigg (Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 46–63 (p. 49).

[15] FM synthesis is short for frequency modulation synthesis, where a waveform is changed by modulating its frequency with a modulator (a second signal).

[16] Metzer, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning*, p. 5.

[17] Joseph Schloss, *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop* (Wesleyan University Press, 2004), p. 94.

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because it's gonna give you a lot more to draw on and it's [also] gonna open up your mind to different ideas of what you can do'.[18]

Appreciating creators' attitudes towards cross-genre sampling establishes a further rationale for the diversity of expertise required to interpret the sampled content and its new-found home. For example, hip-hop artist Kanye West uses a sample of Aphex Twin's 'Avril 14th' (2001), a Disklavier piano work that belongs to the electronic ambient classification, in his track 'Blame Game' (2010); Young Thug's 'Money' (2023), featuring Juice WRLD and Nicki Minaj, uses a sample from TV show *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (Eric Idle's 'Money Song', 1972); and Saigon's 'Get Busy' (2010) draws on the world of video-game music, using a sample from the 8-bit theme tune of Nintendo's Super Mario Bros. from 1985. These examples underscore the purposeful and intentional genre-hopping taking place within the creative stage that is integral to the art form. Williams reminds us that 'the hip-hop world includes a high degree of intertextuality within its aesthetic and that hip-hop cultures form an interpretive community that recognises a number of these references'.[19] These cross-genre liaisons, as an embedded part of the music-making, thus call out for multiple interpretations or readings.

Expanding the Network

The two-part nature previously mentioned deserves some further attention here; it may not be as clear-cut as first implied, since sample content itself may be a product of earlier sampling or borrowing activity — hence we may find 'a borrowing within a borrowing'. These samples within samples may flit across genres; thus sample-based musics referred to as 'cross-genre' become more multi-genre or 'fusionesque', defined through the cocktail of sampled 'ingredients' that sit within different branches and sub-divisions of musicological and non-musical study. Take, for example, the recording of Mozart's Queen of the Night aria from the *Magic Flute* (1791) sampled within Kelis's pop song 'Like You' (2006). These two works are separated by an impressive three-century gap, with the recording of Mozart's work but a simulacrum of the Classical-era composition (the exact recording sampled is unknown here, and Kelis's production team would have been able to choose from hundreds of versions sung by different sopranos, all produced within sixty or so years of Kelis's release).[20] The Mozart sample is transposed, sped up, segmented, and looped to form an ongoing backdrop to Kelis's vocals. Interestingly, Mozart's work is on a libretto written by Emanuel Schikaneder, widely known to be a 'literary magpie', indicating a further site of non-musical borrowing and influence

[18] Ibid, p. 95.

[19] Justin Williams, 'Theoretical Approaches to Quotation in Hip Hop Recordings', *Contemporary Music Review*, 33.2 (2014), pp. 188–209 (p. 204), doi:10.1080/07494467.2014.959276.

[20] I acknowledge that while the music-making is separated by three centuries, the recording used in the act of sampling is likely to be separated by decades, not centuries. This raises an interesting point about the specific recordings used in sampling, the differences in recordings, and recordings of historical pieces as simulacra of bygone eras.

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beyond the two works by Kelis and Mozart.[21] Importantly, the scholars who are invested in discussing these separate works and time periods are found in separate fields and sub-fields within the arts and humanities, and the connection and common ground is formed via a contemporary meeting of sources in the act of sampling and borrowing.

The above example provides an instance of a sampling (or borrowing) chain, which are common occurrences necessitating the expansion of the 'two-part gesture', where musical material serves as an ongoing influence for multiple works via a genealogical family tree-type process. Issey Cross's 'Bittersweet Goodbye' (2023), Dr Dre's 'Zoom' (1998), and, previously mentioned, Radiohead's 'Idioteque' (2000) are examples that are born out of lineages of musical material changing hands, one artist to the next, over significant periods of time. With each instance of transference, sampled content evolves further and further from its initial appearance via segmentation, transformation, and recontextualization.[22] Nabeel Zuberi acknowledges this movement, observing that 'samples have idiosyncratic half-lives as they take multiple routes and mutate during their travel'.[23] Sample-based music may not only be sites of dual content, but exist as tri-, quad-, or multi-faceted musical and non-musical compounds, as in the example of The Avalanches's track 'Since I Left You' (2001), which integrates samples from nine different identified works of varying genres (pop, disco, rock, jazz, and blues). Another interesting example is TroyBoi's trap work 'Do You?' (2015), which samples the TV theme tune from *Three's Company* by Ray Charles and Julia Rinker (called *Come and Knock at our Door* (1977)), 'Do You Love Me' (1987) by Lebanese band The Bendaly Family, and an eighties Texas Instruments Speak & Spell toy that utters TroyBoi's sound signature at the end of the work.[24]

Such works displaying multiple samples are particularly attractive candidates for multi-voice commentary, since possible interpreters or commentators invested in the origins of these samples are so varied and widespread (era-, genre-, and culture-wise). Sampled content within a given work can belong or pertain to a mixture of musical and non-musical specialisms; therefore it calls for commentary from voices within those disparate identified fields which, as shown, can fall beyond the overarching discipline of music. Sample-based music that engages with self-sampling and the sampling on non-musical content, e.g. found sound, are not excluded from this approach, as there is much to explore via multi-voice interpretation that could speak to the new contexts of

[21] Donald Grout and Hermine Weigle, *A Short History of Opera* (Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 327.

[22] It is of interest to add here that David Metzer proposes the concept of 'repeated borrowing', which refers to the incorporation of elements of a preexisting work in several new compositions. He notes that in these cases, 'borrowing becomes prolific and increasingly referential. Works not only borrow the same melody but also borrow from the ways in which other works use that melody'; 'Repeated Borrowing: The Case of "Es ist genug"', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 71.3 (2018), pp. 703–48 (p. 748) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26643945> (accessed 19 May 2025).

[23] Nabeel Zuberi, 'Is This the Future? Black Music and Technology Discourse', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 34.2 (2007), pp. 283–300 (p. 294), doi:10.1525/sfs.34.2.283.

[24] The signature is a common feature within TroyBoi's works: see 'Do You?' (2015), 'ili' (2015), and 'Don't Be Judging' (2014).

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sound, the movement from hypotext to hypertext, and any technical modification or embedding of the sample(s). Probing these views not through surveys of existing literature but as fresh, bespoke, requested insights is a novel step in seeking out multi-disciplinary input and demonstrates the essence of this new approach, which is one that respects multi-voice interpretation and receivership with the aim of acknowledging the wider narrative around sampling and appreciating that different writings 'allow certain moments of sonic experience to be heard while foreclosing upon others'.[25] This increased number of viewpoints may enable more voices to be heard within this arena. Instead of these voices being subsumed, parsed, or paraphrased into a single text, the approach here differs, providing space for all contributions on a given sample-based work to sit side by side in a compendium of perspectives that will no doubt overlap and diverge while extending the story of sampling. The membership structure of this multi-voice approach is optimistically egalitarian, in that no one voice rises above another, to ensure collective authorship (see the sections below on 'inclusive design' and 'instructional design' for thoughts on logistics).

Literature Review

Sampling as a subject of academic study proliferates in disparate pockets, finding most coverage in popular music studies, music production, electroacoustic music, sound studies, music technology, copyright law, media, and business and marketing literature. The topic of sampling captivates and sustains these areas in very different ways, while the action of taking existing audio is simultaneously a common thread through this typically unconnected network. These separate discourses report on technical know-how, sampling aesthetics, technological developments, case law, music sales, economic contributions, ethical implications, sampling politics, and analytical approaches. Laderman and Westrup (2014) recognize sampling studies as an 'interdisciplinary pursuit that puts into conversation scholarly ideas and approaches from art history, popular music, film, television, musicology, ethnomusicology, new media and cultural studies (to name just a few)'.[26]

Sampling is well explained in the literature via the work of key figures, pioneers, and provocateurs in the field, for example literature on John Oswald's Plunderphonics and Pierre Schaeffer and his early experiments with sampling and sound objects as early as the 1940s, as well as on the wealth of technology that facilitated the emergence of sampling in the twentieth century.[27] Legalities also provide extensive subject matter for

[25] Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), p. 1.

[26] *Sampling Media*, ed. by David Laderman and Laurel Westrup (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 6.

[27] Kevin Holm-Hudson, 'Quotation and Context: Sampling and John Oswald's Plunderphonics', *Leonardo Music Journal*, 7 (1997), pp. 17–25, doi:10.2307/1513241; *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, ed. by Chris Cutler and Daniel Warner (Bloomsbury, 2017); Jim Leach, 'Sampling and Society: Intellectual Infringement and Digital Folk Music in John Oswald's "Plunderphonics"', in *The Arts, Community and Cultural Democracy*, ed. by Lambert Zuidervaart and Henry Luttikhuizen (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 122–33; John Dack, 'Pierre Schaeffer and the (Recorded) Sound Source', in *Sound Objects*, ed. by James Steintrager and Rey Chow (Duke University Press,

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literature on copyright infringement cases and case law, while theories of postmodernism have a stronghold on the topic of sampling and intertextuality.[28] My literature scan casts its net wide, surveying individual sample-based repertoire and observing how these works are handled by authors; the finding that single authorial modes currently reign supreme is conclusive. My own early analysis work on sample-based music has, too, fallen prey to this norm; for example, my chapter 'Analysing the Identifiable: Cultural Borrowing in Diana Salazar's *La voz de fuelle*' would have been significantly enriched by establishing a multi-voice commentary from those with expertise in Argentine tango, Astor Piazzolla, and from Salazar herself, beyond the brief quotes included.[29]

Within the literature, there are signs of authors growing tired with well-worn narratives of sample-based music that have done disservice to their fields. For example, Tricia Rose has been particularly vocal in her dissatisfaction with the 'one-dimensional sound-bites' that have not only contributed to the 'demise of hip-hop but has also impoverished our ability to talk successfully about race and about the role of popular culture, mass media and corporate conglomerates in defining — and confirming — our creative expression'.[30] In this respect, the literature addressing sample-based music has bumped up against its own challenges and limitations that could be remedied with an alternative, multi-voice approach.

For the purposes of this article, the repertoire-focused texts, where a sample-based work is discussed as a case study for analysis, have been of most interest and use. My research process set out to observe the lens, handling and management of multi-component interiors (sampling), focusing especially on cross-genre, cross-era, or cross-cultural musical material. A noteworthy example of academic writing about sampling is Katz's breakdown of Fatboy Slim's 'Praise You' (1998), a work which samples Camille Yarbrough's 'Take Yo' Praise' (1975), articulated within his book *Capturing Sound*. Katz notices the 'unequal power relationship' between Cook and Yarbrough, and

2019), pp. 33–52; Hugh Davies, 'A History of Sampling', *Organised Sound*, 1.1 (1996), pp. 3–11, doi:10.1017/S135577189600012X; Carlos Palombini, 'Technology and Pierre Schaeffer', *Mikro-Polyphonie*, 4 (1997); Paul Harkins, *Digital Sampling: The Design and Use of Music Technologies* (Routledge, 2020); Tara Rodgers, 'On the Process and Aesthetics of Sampling in Electronic Music Production', *Organised Sound*, 8.3 (2003), pp. 313–20, doi:10.1017/S1355771803000293.

[28] Jeffrey H. Brown, 'They Don't Make Music the Way They Used To: The Legal Implications of Sampling in Contemporary Music', *Wisconsin Law Review* (1992), pp. 1941–91; Kembrew McLeod, 'Crashing the Spectacle: A Forgotten History of Digital Sampling, Infringement, Copyright Liberation and the End of Recorded Music', *Culture Machine: The Journal*, 10 (2009), pp. 114–30, doi:10.1215/9780822393214-014; Anca Buta Mușat, 'Music Sampling: Between Artistic Freedom and Copyright Infringement', *Romanian Journal of Intellectual Property Law* (2022); Lacasse, 'Intertextuality and Hypertextuality'; Göran Folkestad, 'Intertextuality and Creative Music-Making', in *Intersection and Interplay: Contributions to the Cultural Study of Music in Performance, Education, and Society*, ed. by Petter Dyndahl (Malmö Academy of Music, 2013), pp. 157–72.

[29] Manuella Blackburn, 'Analysing the Identifiable: Cultural Borrowing in Diana Salazar's *La voz de fuelle*', in *Expanding the Horizons of Electroacoustic Music Analysis*, ed. by Simon Emmerson and Leigh Landy (Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 288–309, doi:10.1017/CBO9781316339633.015.

[30] Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk about When We Talk about Hip Hop and Why It Matters* (Basic Civitas Books, 2008), p. 12.

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weaves in quotes from Yarbrough expressing her gratitude towards Cook for sampling her music and for elevating her fame from what it had been previously.[31] However, the chapter falls short in not allowing Yarbrough to fully articulate her perspectives beyond mere strategically positioned quotes. A unique opportunity is offered by way of the inclusion of the sampled original artist within the narrative of sampling (as found within this well-distributed academic book), but frustratingly, the opportunity vanishes since Yarbrough, the Black musician responsible for the success of 'Praise You', is relegated to the sidelines. To hear from Yarbrough, unframed by and separate from Katz's chapter, may well be different from hearing brief quotes and paraphrased content. Other voices that could speak to Yarbrough's original lyrics and her messages on the civil rights movement could have also been included or consulted. As Yarbrough states: '*Take Yo' Praise* was also directed at all people of African ancestry […] who had at that time been in the front lines of the battle to turn racism around'.[32] The lack of minoritized voices authoring, contributing to, or appearing within academic texts discussing sampling is a theme which will be returned to in due course.

There are more recent contributions to the literature which include the musicians of the hypotext within their commentaries, as in M. I. Franklin's *Sampling Politics.* Her analysis and historical excavations of Brian Eno and David Byrne's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1981) is atypical in bringing the voice of Lebanese singer Dunya Yunis (whose vocal track 'Abou el Zelouf' was sampled by Eno and Byrne) into the commentary, recognizing that 'her take on these issues matter[s] too'.[33] What is noticeably different when comparing this approach to that of Katz is the dedicated space, the unbroken quote from Yunis (which extends to three-quarters of the page) and her freedom of expression, which in this case is demonstrated by the inclusion of biographical detail about her. Franklin's commentaries (which cover five case studies of sampling) also actively encourage readers to engage their ears with the traditions and historical contexts of the hypotext as a means to appreciate what was there before.[34] This process is integral to Franklin's musicological rigour and demonstrates due service in going beyond sample identification and aesthetic appreciation by building on what was originally present musically, historically, and politically to arrive at a substantial interrogation.

Franklin's text epitomizes a shift in approach and attitude towards discussing and dissecting instances of sampling by conveying sensitivity to the voices represented in the music and by presenting bigger-picture views of hypotexts. Other offerings that move towards more progressive visions include Hannes Lietechi's book *This Track Contains Politics*, which seeks to broaden the discourse of sampling studies by spotlighting lesser-known and diverse protagonists. Lietechi provides five case studies of experimental electronica producers who sample and states:

[31] Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (University of California Press, 2004). For the sake of clarity, Norman Cook is Fatboy Slim.
[32] Quoted in ibid., p. 148.
[33] M. I. Franklin, *Sampling Politics: Music and the Geocultural* (Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 143.
[34] Ibid., p. 106.

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> It is not my goal to write a history of the great white men of popular music, but to contribute to a more diverse history. Therefore, big names in sampling in experimental electronic music only play a secondary role in my study, if any.[35]

Also of note in Lietechi's book is the evident self-reflexivity and positionality used to identify degrees of privilege through factors such as race, class, gender, and socio-economic status. The insertion of a sub-chapter on positionality enables Lietechi to justify his intentions, while he points to the limits of his knowledge. He reminds us that 'every scholar inevitably brings their own habitus into research' and that sample-based music 'remains a powerful tool to speak out about global injustice'.[36] While his text does not engage with voices that speak about the sampled content, he brings the artists who sample into the chapter content through interview material to deliver new insights on compositional intent.

Minoritized Voices within Commentaries on Sample-Based Music

Commentaries on and analyses of sample-based music that address repertoire sourced from distant cultures, countries, and traditions, as well as audio content derived from or associated with particular minoritized or indigenous groups, raise a particular set of considerations that underscore the need for this new multi-voiced approach in more explicit ways. To establish this argument, we can consider the tracks on Moby's *Play* (1999) and *B Sides* (2000) compilation albums, many of which sample Black musicians and also include Black voices sourced from the Alan Lomax archives.[37] Moby's sampling activity is significant across these two albums, and utilizes sizeable durations of recognizable audio from traditional American folk music, doo-wop, Motown, blues, African American gospel, and rap.[38] At no point within the academic literature do we hear from Black voices that may recount, critique, or comment on this music-making.

Incidentally, the texts available on this subject are provided by three white, male academics (David Hesmondhalgh, Richard Osborne, and Barry Shank), who draw attention to the unethical practice of Black artists going unremunerated, Moby's

[35] Hannes Lietechi, *This Track Contains Politics: The Culture of Sampling in Experimental Electronica* (Norient Books, 2022), p. 80.

[36] Ibid., pp. 78–79.

[37] Lomax's collection *Sounds of the South: A Musical Journey from the Georgia Sea Islands to the Mississippi Delta*, the set of recordings Moby sampled from, was created in 1961.

[38] Moby's tracks that sample from these genres are 'Honey' (1998), which samples 'Sometimes' (1960) by Bessie Jones; 'Find my Baby' (1999), which samples 'Joe Lee's Rock' (1960) by Boy Blue; 'Why Does my Heart Feel So Bad' (1999), which samples 'He'll Roll your Burdens Away' by the Banks Brothers and the Greater Harvest Back Home Choir (1966); 'Southside' (1999), which samples 'What's Up Front that Counts' (1971) by The Counts; 'Bodyrock' (1999), which samples 'Love Rap' by Spoony Gee and includes a replayed sample of 'Looking for the Perfect Beat' (1983) by Afrika Bambaataa; 'Natural Blues' (2000), which samples 'Trouble So Hard' (1960) by Vera Hall and 'All the Way' (1966) by the Banks Brothers and the Greater Harvest Back Home Choir; 'Run On' (1999), which samples 'Run On for a Long Time' (1949) by Bill Landford and the Landfordaires; 'My Weakness' (1999), which samples 'Danse Nyinewaco' (1990) by Kanak; 'Flower' (2000), which samples 'Green Sally, Up' (1960) by Jesse Lee Pratcher, Mattie Gardner, and Mary Gardner; 'Sunday (The Day before my Birthday)' (2002), which samples 'Sunday' by Sylvia Robinson (1973).

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crediting mishaps in using these samples (Hesmondhalgh and Osborne), the 'paternalistic recording strategies of John Lomax', and the 'political salience of racial difference in the cultures of the United States'.[39] The issue here is the convention of the discourse, where discussions of sampling mirror the colonial approaches and power structures being played out in the music-making: white male authors publishing texts on the marginalizing of African American musicians' contributions to an affluent white male artist's success, while simultaneously overlooking minoritized voices in their writing. With so few academic texts available in this area, the storytelling on this topic is told only from the white male standpoint, which is inexorably attached to lived experience and the position of privilege. For example, Hesmondhalgh describes Bessie Jones's vocal samples as displaying 'primitiveness' and having an 'unfamiliar timbre'; he goes on to say that his interest is in 'thinking about the way that Hall's blackness is represented here'.[40] I find these comments symptomatic of working as a lone voice and being in need of reflexivity. I would like to be clear that my argument is not about dismissing what white male authors have to say on the topic of sampling; it is more a plea to understand and learn about sampling from alternate angles, lenses, and positions, and indeed from those who affiliate more directly with the music's hypotext.

Since this particular sampling activity treads a path similar to that of colonial acquisition, and has been deemed a significant case of cultural appropriation, the case for exploring stories of the hypotext grows stronger, as a means to achieve balance, consider ethics, and seek understanding from those who have been perpetrated against. Richard Milner, in his positionality framework for racial and cultural awareness, expresses the view that researchers need not come 'from the racial or cultural community under study to conduct research in, with, and about that community'; instead they 'should be actively engaged, thoughtful, and forthright regarding tensions that can surface when conducting research where issues of race and culture are concerned'.[41] What matters here, according to Linda Tillman, is 'whether the researcher has the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences of others'.[42] While I appreciate these outlooks, possession of cultural knowledge is slippery and hard to ascertain; thus I am hesitant to fully agree with Milner's and Tillman's invitations to

[39] Barry Shank, 'The Political Agency of Musical Beauty', *American Quarterly*, 63.3 (2011), pp. 831–55 (p. 851), doi: 10.1353/aq.2011.0030; also David Hesmondhalgh, 'Digital Sampling and Cultural Inequality', *Social & Legal Studies*, 15.1 (2006), pp. 53–75, doi:10.1177/0964663906060973; Richard Osborne, 'Moby, Minstrelsy and Melville', in *Mute Records: Artists, Business, History*, ed. by Zuleika Beaven, Marcus O'Dair, and Richard Osborne (Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 169–81; Richard Osborne, '"Blackface" Minstrelsy from Melville to Moby', *Critical Quarterly*, 48.1 (2006), pp. 14–25, doi:10.1111/j.1467-8705.2006.00683.x.

[40] Hesmondhalgh, 'Digital Sampling', pp. 60 and 62.

[41] Richard Milner, 'Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen', *Educational Researcher*, 36.7 (2007), pp. 388–400 (p. 388), doi:10.3102/0013189X07309471.

[42] Linda Tillman, 'Culturally Sensitive Research Approaches: An African American Perspective', *Educational Researcher*, 31.9 (2002), pp. 3–12 (p. 4) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3594490> [accessed 19 May 2025].

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the academic community for discursive contributions from all on the topic of race, which they 'authorize' as long as the researchers are in pursuit of cultural competence.

Michael Awkward's book *Negotiating Difference* offers a more nuanced and balanced discussion on this topic, demonstrating both the debilitating effects of protectionist stances based on biological or racial heritage and an examination of the difference race can make in the interpretation of Black texts.[43] While Awkward is forthright in his belief that the possession of a Black physicality is not necessary for the creation of engaging and provocative critical texts on African American literature, his openness to exposing the differences in such readings is compelling.[44] His view is that such work is a responsibility which he himself, as an African American scholar, takes on. A key argument from his work is that Afrocentric readings of texts (or in this article's case, musics) are differentiated from those that are 'caucacentric' since they 'counter the negative effects on the black psyche and readings of Afro-American expressive culture'.[45] We may say these voices are 'differently invested' and thus have the potential to be different in their content.[46] Due diligence in researching and gathering insights and perspectives can take us so far, but there are inevitable blind spots stemming from positionality, considering the histories of oppression and daily injustices that inform and shape an individual's world views that need acknowledging through the different vantage points multi-voiced commentary offers. As Awkward observes, within the literary world, 'some have argued that the best readers of Afro-American literature are black critics who have firsthand knowledge of black cultural codes and the forms of racial oppression', whereas white readers of Black texts are perceived by some to have interpretive inadequacies or even interpretive disabilities.[47]

Franklin's analysis of 'Abou el Zelouf' (the hypotext within Brian Eno and David Byrne's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*) negotiates a similar challenge and includes a warning from Habib Hassan Touma to 'avoid the definitions and technical terms used in European music and rid oneself of the opinions expressed by European writers' on the subject of how the *maqamat* (the Arabic melody type and technique of improvisation used in 'Abou el Zelouf') works musico-culturally.[48] While the warning is sounded, Franklin proceeds with some 'cautious analogies' to cater to those accustomed to the repertoire of tempered tonalities in western music 'to get a sense of how

[43] Awkward asks, 'what is the relationship between race and reading?' and 'how does race direct, influence, or dictate the process of interpreting both black texts and Western theories? Is there a politics of interpretation that is determined or controlled by race in ways that can be compared to the ideologically informed readings of, for example, white American feminist critique?'; *Negotiating Difference: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Positionality* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 25.

[44] Ibid., p. 60.

[45] Ibid., p. 25.

[46] Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* (Palgrave, 1988), pp. 95–111.

[47] Awkward, *Negotiating Difference*, p. 26; Stephen Henderson, *Understanding the New Black Poetry* (Morrow, 1973); Joyce A. Joyce, '"Who the Cap Fit": Unconsciousness and Unconscionableness in the Criticism of Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.', *New Literary History*, 18.2 (1986), pp. 371–84 (p. 373).

[48] Franklin, *Sampling Politics*, p. 110; Habib Hassan Touma, 'The Maqam Phenomenon: An Improvisation Technique in the Music of the Middle East', *Ethnomusicology*, 15.1 (1971), pp. 38–48 (p. 38).

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and why Yunis sings in this way'.[49] As this example suggests, protectionist stances can emerge from recognized incompatibilities between western music terminology and music-making that sits outside these classifications, language, and perceptions, and provides a further rationale in support of multi-voice commentary for seeking expertise from those whose stake is more closely aligned with the musical tradition and culture under scrutiny.

An inclusive approach can ensure that majority (outside) voices learn about these processes and recognize and credit contributions from the Global South and other minoritized groups that are often overlooked, both in terms of their work and in commentary about how processes for absorbing their work can reflect their perceptions, attitudes, and feelings. Confrontation with the bounds of our knowledge is not easy, and much academic literature points to the discomfort of challenging hegemonic whiteness as an authority. Barnor Hesse's '8 white identities' explains the regime of whiteness, outlining a list of action-oriented white identities, while others, including Tracey Owens Patton, Katherine Sang and Thomas Calvard, and Azeezat Johnson, confront whiteness specifically within academic contexts.[50] Multi-voice commentary offers a way to alleviate the anxieties of individualistic perspectives, especially in cases where the sampling act is entwined with politics, power, and race. Activating democratic and decolonial considerations in the process of assessing sample-based works can only be a positive step in enacting social justice and honouring communities which have been neglected in the past. Shaw et al. have questioned who benefits from the production of knowledge about people from marginalized groups and urge consideration of our own perspectives and lived experience in shaping what counts as knowledge.[51]

The Moby case raises questions about the voices we should be hearing from within academic texts and why they are absent in such cases. Furthermore, there is the issue of who gets to have a voice in interpreting these instances. Epistemic injustice has ensured that certain voices are more audible and respected than others when it comes to interpreting such work, while the concept of hermeneutical injustice accounts for the gap in knowing when we see authors commenting on sample-based music who do not have enough shared experience with the minoritized groups that they are commenting on, while, regrettably, having 'an unfair advantage in structuring collective social

[49] Franklin, *Sampling Politics*, p. 110.

[50] Hesse's identities feature on 'Dismantling Racism & Oppression: White Privilege', Camosun College, n.d. <https://camosun.libguides.com/action/whitePrivilege> [accessed December 2023]; Tracey Owens Patton, 'Reflections of a Black Woman Professor: Racism and Sexism in Academia', *Howard Journal of Communications*, 15.3 (2004), pp. 185–200, doi:10.1080/10646170490483629; Katherine Sang and Thomas Calvard, '"I'm a Migrant, but I'm the Right Sort of Migrant": Hegemonic Masculinity, Whiteness, and Intersectional Privilege and (Dis)Advantage in Migratory Academic Careers', *Gender, Work & Organization*, 26.10 (2019), pp. 1506–25, doi:10.1111/gwao.12382; Azeezat Johnson, 'An Academic Witness: White Supremacy within and beyond Academia', in *The Fire Now: Anti-Racist Scholarship in Times of Explicit Racial Violence*, ed. by Azeezat Johnson, Remi Joseph-Salisbury, and Beth Kamunge (Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 15–25.

[51] Rhonda Shaw and others, 'Ethics and Positionality in Qualitative Research with Vulnerable and Marginal Groups', *Qualitative Research*, 20.3 (2020), pp. 277–93, doi:10.1177/1468794119841839.

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understandings'.[52] In their article on cultural production, David Hesmondhalgh and Anamik Saha emphasize the importance of agency in discussions of race, ethnicity, and power, which means 'recognizing the ability of oppressed peoples to exercise agency in producing cultural forms that provide pleasure, entertainment, and fecund meanings that may not be apparent to the outside observer'.[53] There is a chance here to extend this quote to not only include 'outside observers', but also 'outside authors', building on the vision of agency in welcoming minoritized voices to tell their own stories, whether that be by presenting full accounts of how systemic racism has shaped their lives and written work, recounting and dissecting their creative processes, or reflecting on the uptake of their music or sounds by majoritized individuals.

In considering such cases where marginalized groups and individuals are sampled, it is important to question whether 'sampling up' is as much a worry as 'sampling down', where 'up' and 'down' refer to the relative social position of the person sampling (and the sampled music) as well as those commenting on the sampling activity.[54] For example, it becomes important to ask: are the commentators who discuss sampling commenting up, down, or sideways? This thinking has been adapted from anthropologist Laura Nader's concept of 'studying up', which calls for a change in the scholarly examination of systems, structures, and subjects of power.[55] In Nader's manifesto, studying up or down refers to studying groups who are above or below you within society's power structures. Applying this thinking to commentaries on sampling and sample-based music, 'studying down' becomes 'sampling down' (where artists use samples from individuals in positions of less power) and 'commenting down' (where authors who write about sampling discuss content from individuals in positions of less power). Sampling down and commenting down are where the challenges appear to become most pronounced, since these downward-trajectory situations often involve appropriation, misappropriation, or expropriation, which are seldom discussed academically from the viewpoint of those perpetrated against; thus commenting down offers an observational view rather than an experiential or 'sideways' view. In these cases, sampling activity enters a territory that harms or inflicts damage, incurred from a lack of crediting or financial recompense.

Another useful means of employing analogous directional tendencies is Walser's contribution on heavy metal appropriations of classical music, where the high art/low art binary is employed to position popular music beneath classical music within a hierarchy that reinforces elitism and prestige, observing those on the outside of the

[52] Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 147.

[53] David Hesmondhalgh and Anamik Saha, 'Race, Ethnicity, and Cultural Production', *Popular Communication*, 11.3 (2013), pp. 179–95 (p. 190), doi:10.1080/15405702.2013.810068.

[54] I acknowledge my colleague, Professor Byron Dueck, for identifying and articulating sampling as a directional action relating to social, economic, and geographical status.

[55] Laura Nader, 'Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up', in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. by Dell Hymes (University of Michigan Press, 1972).

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classical music tradition as on the 'margins of social power'.[56] Nader's and Walser's analogous concepts shape a vision for what to prioritize in multi-voice commentary. While this article sets out a case for multi-voice commentaries on any sample-based work, there appears to be a greater sense of urgency and attention needed in cases where musicians and creators have 'sampled down' with respect to prestige or wealth, and also where commentaries and analyses are derived from 'commenting down' situations.

Host and Ancillary Genres

Stepping away from the specifics pertaining to situations of cross-cultural sampling, there are several concepts common to all multi-voice commentaries which require attention. A sample-based work will have a host genre or field of study associated with it; for example, Francis Dhomont's *Forêt profonde* (1994–96) is an acousmatic work, whereas its sampling of Schumann's piano pieces *Kinderszenen*, op. 15 (1838), is a work that belongs to the Romantic era within what is widely termed western art music. Here, the host genre is accepted as acousmatic or, more broadly, electroacoustic music; thus existing academic discourse relating to this work stems from expertise in this specific field.[57] These texts convey information relevant to the supposed target audience, with the assumption of a shared understanding of acousmatic processes. Seeking commentary on this work from those with specific knowledge of *Kinderszenen* (e.g. pianists) or from Schumann scholars who know its historical context (musicologists) reaches out to the work's ancillary genre(s) to augment the knowledge base, brings nuance to historical detail, and illuminates discussions about the source of influence, its segmentation, and its transference to a new musical work.[58] Interpreting the work and sampled content through the lens of the ancillary genre(s) potentially offers a new set of readings. It is a notably uncommon and unconventional practice to stray away from a work's host genre, for various reasons: in *Forêt profonde*, the sample-based work's host genre is considered broadly as 'electroacoustic', which, as a practice, engages with sound transformation and modification processes that can heavily distort a sample's appearance. Thus hesitancy in approaching a work with highly technical processes that obfuscate the original music (in this case, *Kinderszenen*) may deter commentary from the voices that can speak of the hypotext. One's confidence levels in approaching a musical work that appears to sit outside one's area of expertise may have a bearing on whether one participates in multi-voice commentary, and the genre barrier may itself act as an obstacle for outside, ancillary-genre input.

The presence of ancillary and host genres within sample-based music can account in part for the historical and typically exclusionary tendencies evident within commentaries

[56] Robert Walser, 'Eruptions: Heavy Metal Appropriation of Classical Virtuosity', *Popular Music*, 11.3 (1992), pp. 263–308, doi:10.1017/S0261143000005158.

[57] Anna Rubin, 'Deep into the Forest: The Narrative, Sonic and Reception Design of Francis Dhomont's *Forêt profonde*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 2000); Anna Rubin, '*Forêt profonde:* Fragment, implication et déflexion', in *Portraits polychromes: Francis Dhomont*, ed. by Évelyne Gayou (Ina, 2006).

[58] Incidentally, Dhomont's work is influenced by Bettelheim's text *The Uses of Enchantment* and includes quotes from a number of well-known fairy tales.

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on sample-based music. Within the context of this article, exclusion refers to the voices and authors left out whose expertise relates to the hypotext work. The absence of their input takes on more significance within the context of 'sampling down' cases and cross-cultural sampling situations, since these are typically sites where power imbalances (in the music-making) are observable. For example, in the case of a trap track which samples a historical Bollywood work, it would be conventional to see an academic with expertise in popular music or electronic dance music (the host genre) take on the role of analyst or commentator on the sample-based music, rather than the Bollywood music expert (the ancillary genre) leading or appearing in this discussion.

Scholarship on exclusion within music studies has recognized the issue of misrecognition, where the 'expectation is that musicologists who are visible minorities will study "their own music" rather than musics attributed to white European or Eurosettler groups', while 'scholars who are visible majorities are generally licenced to study whatever musics they like'.[59] Observing sample-based music with this consideration in mind, and the greater prestige that a host genre may hold (in comparison to any ancillary genre(s)), may well account for the lack of texts by marginalized or under-represented authors. The host genres as presented in this article are mainly electronic music, electronic dance music, acousmatic music, hip-hop, DJ music, and pop, while the ancillary genres can often (but not always) be regarded as 'other', as in the case of folk music from around the globe, indigenous music, field recordings, or esoteric music. Another contributing factor for the lack of diversity in literature on sample-based music is the focus on technology, which these works and practices are heavily reliant on. All sample-based music is dependent on technology for its existence, and the voices that traditionally speak about audio and music technologies have tended to be male. The host genre of any sample-based music will always be entwined with technological forces, and to talk about sampling is also to talk about the means of its realization. In addition to this, since the inception of sampling and audio recording, perceptions of complexity regarding rapidly changing technologies can challenge broader understandings of processes by non-specialists. This has led to a practice of leaving this analytical workload to the technologically minded, the operators of sampling devices and procedures, and those with audio-engineering backgrounds. This tendency encapsulates the view of those intimidated or blocked by such male-dominated discourses, cultures, and environments. Bringing the technological expertise in, together with contextual and historical views, via the multi-voice approach, enables an opportunity to better value the variety of voices that are typically left out of more traditional musicological discourses.

On the topic of excluded voices, a further perception is that of sampling as a less-esteemed practice. Opinions on whether or not sampling is a form of theft, together with arguments about originality, can limit whether more commentaries come forth. Mark Volman of The Turtles famously stated, 'sampling is just a longer term for theft. Anybody who can honestly say sampling is some sort of creativity has never done

[59] *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. by Olivia Bloechel, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 8.

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anything creative.'[60] Similarly, musician and electronic innovator Susan Ciani likens the act of sampling to visiting 'graveyards of sounds', while Morey comments on the observable 'snobbery' when the actions of those that work on musical scores versus those that manipulate samples are compared.[61] These perspectives demonstrate the recurring dialogues that diminish sampling practices as something 'less than' and also suggest why there might not be immediate support for or interest in contributing to this topic in music scholarship.

Inclusive Design

As mentioned earlier, inclusivity is a driver underpinning this approach so as not to further limit commentary from marginalized perspectives. Enabling and encouraging voices from separate disciplines to be heard alongside each other is a somewhat unconventional practice that makes a statement about valuing different readings of a single work, moving beyond roles of single authorship or hierarchical management. The formation of a multi-voice commentary assimilates key components from standpoint theory, which gives voice to marginalized groups and individuals. This theory, which has its roots in feminist social science, acknowledges the marginalized status of groups, and places value on their 'personal and cultural biographies'.[62] Steve Collins develops this thinking further in relation to Black intellectuals, 'especially those who are in touch with their marginality in academic settings' and who 'tap this standpoint in producing distinctive analyses of race, class and gender'.[63] Standpoint theory and multi-voice commentary find kinship in their respect for situated knowledge and their visions to expand narratives from knowing subjects.

Instructional Design

To create a multi-voice commentary on a work and its use of sampling, a facilitator first provides interpreters with a work to listen to and study; they are given the details of the sampled content and access to the work(s) it samples from. The facilitator asks the interpreters to comment on anything deemed relevant with regard to the sampled content, with the understanding that their perspectives have been requested because of their specialism and expertise in their separate field. Very little else is asked of the interpreter, and no other commentary from the community of those interpreting or commenting on the work is shared during the collection stage; individuals are free to provide as much or as little commentary as they want. The facilitator gathers the

[60] Volman, quoted in Steve Hochman, 'Judge Raps Practice of Sampling', *Los Angeles Times* (1991) <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-12-18-ca-617-story.html> [accessed July 2021].

[61] 'Interview — Suzanne Ciani', Radio New Zealand (2013) <https://www.rnz.co.nz/concert/programmes/hopefulmachines/audio/201812321/interview-suzanne-ciani> [accessed February 2022]; Justin Morey, 'UK Sampling Practice: Past, Present and Future', in *The Evolution of Electronic Dance Music*, ed. by Ewa Mazierska, Les Gillon, and Tony Rigg (Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 63–80 (p. 65).

[62] Steve Collins, 'Amen to That: Sampling and Adapting the Past', *M/C Journal*, 10.2 (2007), doi:10.5204/mcj.2638.

[63] Ibid.

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responses and presents them as a series of readings on a single work.[64] Multi-voice commentary offers an opportunity to allow different viewpoints to enter a space that intentionally encourages honest, present, in-the-moment readings of music. Here, receivership takes centre stage, where communication of the 'affect' can reveal individual 'truths' that ultimately stem from a person's lived experience. Commentaries from a coalition of various fields of expertise find an empathetic and hospitable space, welcoming difference as an intrinsic part of the receivership. This is an exercise where interpretations can exist side by side, gaps can be filled, insights and personal reflections can be captured, and histories challenged and, in some cases, revised.

Interpretive Communities

As indicated thus far, the concept of interpretive communities is important to multi-voice commentary, where differences among readings embellish the outcome of any analysis. This thinking builds on Justin Williams's work on the 'imaginary community' of hip-hop; he claims that 'hip-hop interpretive communities bring their understanding of hip-hop texts, shaping and inflecting that text through the interaction involved in the listening and interpreting experience'.[65] Roland Barthes's essay 'The Death of the Author' also offers a fundamental principle via its assumption that texts (in this case, musics) do not have a single meaning and that texts are 'composite[s] of different interpretations provided by readers'.[66] The term 'interpretive communities' is applied here from Stanley Fish's seminal work *Is There a Text in This Class?*, where he claims that we as individuals interpret texts because each of us is part of an interpretive community that gives us a particular way of reading.[67] A central premise of reader-response criticism is that the focus is placed on the reader, who completes the meaning of the work through reading it. My approach acknowledges Fish's general claim that all texts are, 'in some sense, about their readers and […] the experience of the reader, rather than the text itself'.[68]

Activating this concept in practice initiates a unique opportunity to alter how analysis or commentary usually occurs. The logic here reinforces the inclusion of multiple voices for approaching a single text (which is not so 'single', as explained earlier) and where these voices are regarded as 'readers' of the text as well as 'authors' when they contribute an interpretation. The multi-voice approach adopts this thinking, seeking out readership for sample-based music from individuals who, by self-identification and declaration of music specialism, belong to different interpretive

[64] I appreciate that the facilitator's role may inevitability establish unequal power over the process in terms of organizing, controlling, curating, and gathering the selection of readings. Minimizing the facilitator's overall intervention would be necessary to mitigate this unwanted effect, along with establishing this role as neutral and non-authoritative from the start.
[65] Williams, 'Theoretical Approaches', p. 202.
[66] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image — Music — Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 142.
[67] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class*? (Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 21.
[68] Ibid.

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communities. Membership of an interpretive community allows individuals to understand and read texts in a certain way; for example, Ingrid Monson explains that 'a chain of associations may be set off that engage the listener and unite her or him with a community of other individuals who share a similar musical point of view'.[69] Kim Christian Schrøder expands on this, stating that a text (in this case, sample-based music) is

> a meaning potential which triggers the recipient's meaning potential, which is in turn a product of his or her cumulative social and cultural experience. Since these experiences are unique to each individual, his or her meaning resources are ultimately unique. But since individuals have belonged to social groupings — which we have often called interpretive communities — since they entered this world, they inevitably share a large proportion of their communicative resources with other people.[70]

These accounts stress the benefits of communal reception for the shared building of meaning, but conversely, they also vouch for the gains to be had in reaching beyond a single, discrete interpretive community, as an avoidance strategy for the possible echo chambers they may yield.

The expansion of one reading to multivalent meanings via the establishment of diverse interpretive communities for the study of sample-based music implies that there is a much larger story to tell with regard to sampling in music and that the musical 'story' extends beyond discrete disciplines and the viewpoints of musical or non-musical fields. The ambition is to provide storytelling that is longitudinal in outlook, thus enabling new interpretations to come forth. Barthes dismantled the idea that a text can have a meaning at all in any singular sense, asserting that meaning is permanently fluid. In this respect, it is understood that a text's future meaning might change; in the sampling world, this is easy to imagine, as future sampling of a sample may well take place (as we observed regarding sample chains). A case in point is the BBC News theme composed by David Lowe, which was sampled by Rachel Leary in *Raving to the BBC News — Kitchen Remix* (2020) within a TikTok video, in response to the March 2020 lockdown in the UK, as she mimed a nightclub DJ set at home as a reflection on and response to the 'stay at home' message.[71] The context of the pandemic gave new meaning to the BBC News music that could not have been anticipated prior to the events of 2020. Future interpretations of music need to be open-ended and not tied to one critique or author, which ultimately 'furnish it with a final signification [… and] close the writing'.[72] When implemented, a multi-voice commentary will provide a precedent for fluid interpretations that are accepted for their variance. The process sets out a clear intention to value difference, by standing back once a particular

[69] Ingrid Monson, 'Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation: Irony, Parody, and Ethnomusicology', *Critical Inquiry*, 24.2 (1994), pp. 283–313 (p. 303), doi:10.1086/448712.

[70] Kim Christian Schrøder, 'Audience Semiotics, Interpretive Communities and the "Ethnographic Turn" in Media Research', *Media, Culture and Society*, 16.2 (1994), pp. 337–47 (p. 339), doi:10.1177/016344379401600208.

[71] See 'Raving to the BBC News Theme Tune Goes Viral', *BBC News*, 29 March 2020 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/health-52079006> [accessed 7 November 2020].

[72] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 147.

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"compendium" has been gathered to respect the new landscape of knowledge brought to the table. The mixing of genres, eras, and cultures that results from sampling offers an invitation to bring viewpoints together that, in usual circumstances, would rarely meander from their own discipline-bound application.

Multi-Voice Commentary in Practice

Drawing on recollections of my time researching Charles Dodge's *Any Resemblance Is Purely Coincidental* for piano and tape (1976), a work which samples from Leoncavallo's opera *Pagliacci* (1892) and specifically the aria 'Vesti la giubba' as sung by Enrico Caruso, my exploration took place in tandem with input provided by Kenneth Baird (CEO of the European Opera Centre). Conversations with Baird on the topic of the Leoncavallo, a work I knew little about, revealed specialist knowledge that superseded information available in any existing texts. Baird's information was experiential, some of it recounting specific recordings, and included first-hand testimonials of live opera performances of *Pagliacci*, together with cultural context that went beyond the initial remit of my research. This information struck me as somewhat alternative, and preferable, to the commentary stemming from the discourse on electroacoustic music, mixed music analyses, and American avant-garde literature, which account for Dodge's work in various paragraphs and passing statements. These academic discussions did not stem from expertise in opera (which Dodge's sample-based composition heavily relies on), and as I later discovered, no discussion in opera communities of Dodge's piece currently exists. Baird's commentary focused on perceptions of the emotive content, the interplay between opera samples and the live piano material, the specificity of the recording used, and the broader contextual understanding of the original work and its audiences. His comments contested a generally accepted viewpoint that Dodge's work is 'hilarious', 'witty', or even 'slapstick';[73] instead, he viewed it as an 'extension of emotional impact, expanding and compounding the angst-driven nature of the aria' from which this sample is taken. No literature matches Baird's response, since examination of *Any Resemblance Is Purely Coincidental* has never been made through an ancillary, opera-focused lens; this thus reiterates that existing writings on it have overlooked the need for viewpoints like Baird's in order to close the loop on 'genre-displaced' samples. This experience mirrors ongoing discussion within ethnomusicological circles about author attribution for field interlocutors, as Swijghuizen Reigersberg describes: 'interlocutors may receive an acknowledgement and word of "thanks"[,] and they are nowadays cited and accredited for having helped researchers with their work. However, not many arts and humanities researchers go as far as naming their co-creators as co-authors.'[74] Accepting that knowledge and expertise

[73] Joseph Franklin, *Settling Scores: A Life in the Margins of American Music* (Sunstone Press, 2006), p. 149; Pamela Jones, *Alcides Lanza: Portrait of a Composer* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), p. 187; David Bennett, *Postmodernism, Music and Cultural Theory* (New Formations, 2008), p. 164.

[74] Muriel Swijghuizen Reigersberg, 'Ethical Scholarly Publishing Practices, Copyright and OA', in *Whose Book Is It Anyway?*, ed. by Janis Jefferies and Sarah Kember (OpenBook Publisher, 2019), pp. 309–46 (p. 321), doi:10.11647/OBP.0159.

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exists beyond one's own capacities is a sentiment shared with collaboration theory, where a team's efforts and skills produce benefits greater than those achieved through individuals working alone.

The Challenge Ahead

This new approach requires its own inventory of measures to facilitate multi-voice commentary, in order to feed freely into the discussion of sampling. Logistically, there are challenges ahead, determined largely by the vision of inclusivity being sought: what is meant by inclusivity may have several iterations. Multi-voice commentary as an approach could operate entirely within the academy, where voices from separate disciplines would provide commentaries on a given work or track (inclusively, albeit within a rather exclusive club[75]), or non-academic voices within the process could be invited, to enrich a commentary that perhaps better respects the non-scholarly stakeholders, knowledge-holders, and readership that sample-based music both extends to and associates with.[76] Sample-based music serves wide non-academic interest groups, which include online databases such as WhoSampled.com, which members of the public can add to through identifying instances of sampling. The 'Sample Spotters' Facebook group enables users to query undisclosed acts of sampling, while Tracklib encourages the music production community (amateurs and professionals) to sample from music pre-cleared of copyright, offered on its website for a fee. These provisions, together with numerous blog sites and online forums dedicated to dissecting sampling, demonstrate the extensive appeal that sampling has ignited outside the academy.

As academic attitudes and modes of thinking begin to shift and align with inclusive practices, it is only right that the make-up of a multi-voice team is considered with appropriate scrutiny and care. While this has yet to be fully determined and is perhaps only discoverable through practical implementation, the need for a new approach is motivated by inclusivity — but whether multivalence equals inclusivity is another question entirely. This issue probes at the definition of inclusivity, questioning how much multivalence would be 'enough' (where would it end?) while also appreciating that multivalence does not equate to conclusiveness. I envision that the selected repertoire will dictate the initial make-up of the team, where the choice of host genre, ancillary genres, and accompanying fields are indicated by the delineation of the work's

[75] Academic membership is by no means diverse. 'Among all academic staff, 2% are black, 10% are Asian, 75% are white, with the remainder under categories of "mixed", "other or not known"; Sean Coughlan, 'Only 1% of UK University Professors Are Black', *BBC News*, 19 January 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-55723120> [accessed March 2021]. Discipline diversity within the subject area of music is equally limited by subject expertise and research interests held by those in these positions of privilege and authority.

[76] I acknowledge the power relationships that such a process would entail; for example, soliciting voices and challenges around articulation would need to be negotiated while aiming for a more inclusive approach. There are ethical questions around procuring the labour for contributing commentaries for a multi-voice interpretation and the need for remuneration for such work so as not to make claims on an individual's time and input with the expectation of unpaid labour.

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interior and sampled content. As I have begun working in this manner, I have noticed that the ancillary genre input has indicated further areas of expertise for the coalition through recommendations. Freedom to expand the number of perspectives is integral to the approach, as the process is based in discovery.

There are other challenges and unknowns with this approach when we consider the rise and prevalence of AI use to aid sampling. AI stem separation is perhaps the most profound and game-changing tool that sampling artists now have at their disposal to extract individual instrumental and vocal lines from stereo renders in their efforts to isolate the 'perfect' sample. The sample transplant process from piece to piece thus no longer needs to carry over the full instrumentation present within the original stereo mix; rather, a surgical extraction of lone voices and parts is possible, giving rise to greater flexibility in arrangement and production, and perhaps reducing audiences' certainty about sampling occurrences by playing more fluidly with the senses of familiarity and recognition of those who interpret and comment on these works. AI sample manipulation software also offers radical editing capabilities that promise to transform samples beyond what is normally possible, while others afford melodic and harmonic reconstructions (or interpolations) of sampled content in an instant. These tools have initiated reflection on what this means for labour, creativity, and sampling in the age of 'metacreativity'.[77] With these new tools in operation, and others rapidly advancing close behind, our assessment of, commentaries on, and analyses of sample-based music need to shift, adapt, and keep pace with a consciousness of what is possible technologically. This new frontier of burgeoning new tools offers an invitation for future research that assesses and comments on AI use within sample-based music, using a multi-voice approach both to document and to critically assess this shift in music production history.

Conclusion

This article has occupied itself with imagining the possibilities of multi-voice commentary for sample-based music, in contrast to standard single-authored modes. This approach has been conceived with an eye on decolonizing analyses, commentaries, and interpretations of sample-based music, making a case for improving inclusivity regarding the voices who report back on such music. Multi-voiced commentary stands as a suggestion for a change to the way in which writings about sample-based music are typically approached; it is not a recommendation for overturning or refashioning all musicological writing.

The proposal of an inclusive approach that moves away from a more logistically comfortable or normalized process for scholarly inquisition raises questions about feasibility, labour procurement, and shared authorship that run counter to fundamental principles within the academic publishing cycle as well as in academic research processes (such as, in the UK, the Research Excellence Framework output regulations

[77] Eduardo Navas, *The Rise of Metacreativity: AI Aesthetics after Remix* (Routledge, 2023).

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and open access rules).[78] These differences could well deter uptake. However, the process articulated here is not an impossibility but an invitation to reconsider convention, urging reflection on practices which have perhaps not served sample-based music or its actors, nor the readership of commentaries on this music, as justly or inclusively as they could.

It is important to note that what is proposed here remains hypothetical, however; my time is at present consumed with activating these theoretical ideas and realizing a pilot team of interpreters to bring this schematic to life. The results of this new venture may well show distinct differences to the usual single-authored publications and may simultaneously require the exploration of alternative modes of dissemination for this larger undertaking, where separate viewpoints are ambitiously congregated.

[78] 'The Research Excellence Framework' <https://2029.ref.ac.uk/> [accessed 3 March 2025].

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