

- ARTICLE -

Staging Critical History Within the Space of the Beat
or
**What Cultural Historians Can Learn From Public Enemy, NTM,
MC Solaar & George Clinton**

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Abstract

NTM's *That's My People* (1998) echoes through the Paris Metro, whilst director Mark Pellington stages a history of Black resistance across a New York wall. Images of *le graff* flick over as though on an antique slide projector, while Chuck D reminds us of when 'Black people died' and 'the other man lied'. Hip-hop and related sample-based musics inhabit a world which is deeply historicised—indeed *historiographic*. What then might we learn from hip-hop, and what kind of historical relations does it make possible? The syncopation of beat stages the gap between now ('get up on the down beat') and then ('get down on history'). Funk as history. MC Solaar's 'Nouveau Western' does not simply comment on the past and Americanism. Rather director Stéphane Sednaoui's fluid, tunnelling montage moves us through space and time faster than a train bearing the latest tag, faster than the iron horses linking America's Westside with the East, faster even than the TGV joining Les Halles to the banlieues. Hip-hop is less a narrative project, than a spatial and acoustic one. It enables us to rethink history and music as spatial juxtaposition: the aesthetics of the montage. NTM's bass and Terminator X's noise bounce off and penetrate concrete, bodies (do you feel it?), history and location. Hip-hop as an acoustic dialectics. Expanding on Kodwo Eshun's model of AfroFuturism, I characterise hip-hop's spatio-acoustic project as ethnographic Surrealism (James Clifford 1981), in which juxtapositions defy normal narrative time and space, producing new insights and confluences, from the Mothership to Ancient Egypt, from Mississippi to West Germany, from Picasso to the Ivory Coast. In George Clinton's words, this 'shines the spotlight on 'em!' onto various non-dancing subjects, placing them into a shifting acoustic space wherein all things dance and clash.

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Figure 1: Spatial Occupation in the Heart of Modernist Paris: The Palais de Tokyo art gallery and former site of the Exposition internationale des arts et techniques, 1937 The graffiti reads 'OPEN YOUR EYES, ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE!!' (Photograph by the author)

It has been nearly forty years since the staging of the first block parties and other events which spawned hip-hop, and there is now a significant body of criticism on the form (see especially Rose 1994). The relationship between hip-hop and historians has, however, largely been one way, with critics writing about hip-hop much as they would any other topic in the history of music. True, music journalism has added an element of poetry to many such critical accounts, but few authors have paid close attention to the *acoustic* qualities of hip-hop itself: what Tricia Rose has insightfully described as 'noise' (see also Fink 2005). In what follows, I aim to reverse this trajectory and to explore what history written in the manner of hip-hop itself might be like. This would produce a form of historiography which echoes the very aesthetic and acoustic qualities of hip-hop. Such a form of hist-hip-hop-ography has potential applicability beyond hip-hop itself and certainly beyond those US-centric histories of hip-hop and US-focused histories of sample-based-musics which currently abound. Fusing the work of Kodwo Eshun (1998 and 2003) with that of glocal and Francophone hip-hop commentators such as Marina Terkourafi (2014), I wish to further decentre an already inherently fluid or mobile discourse by focussing on precisely this *mobility* of hip-hop form.

Whilst Robert Darnton (1984), Aby Warburg (1986) and Georges Didi-Huberman (2005) have proposed that we read history *as images*, I would like here to build on the work of Douglas Kahn, Jacques Attali and Jonathan Sterne to consider the dialectical processes of global history using models of *acoustic* and *musical* collision derived from hip-hop.¹ This produces a historiographic mode which challenges normal ways of considering time. To write history in this fashion, one must do more than simply adopt the language and the stories of hip-hop or of popular musical culture. Hip-hop is more than rap or poetry alone. I contend that hip-hop is first and foremost a form of acoustic installation. Sounds are projected from one space—the space of the recording itself, or that of history; the space of the sample and of the body—into another site, namely the space of the sound system, and the specific locale within which the column of vibrating air pumps and moves. Bearing in mind the debt which hip-hop owes to funk and jazz, I further contend that this does not effect a simple fusion into homogeneity at the level of space, time and aesthetics. Rather one must pay attention to how sound *echoes* within these new spaces. Sound crackles, it reverberates. Spatial installation is dialectics made material in sound waves. It is, as Eshun would have it, dialectics ‘sonified’.

Hip-hop is heir to funk, and its dialectical force operates within the spatial *gap* between the heterogeneity generated by the uneven syncopation of the beat itself (get up for the down stroke), or via the opposition between samples (the acoustic encounter of Kraftwerk’s cool European techno sound with the golden jazz stabs of James Brown’s horn section, for example; Grandmaster Flash 2002), and other forms of spatial, videographic and radiophonic installation (the sites wherein hip-hop is replayed, and across which it moves). Dialectics depends on both distance (a dialogue of difference), as well as the development of new relationships and links, thereby mixing a ‘thesis’ with a potential ‘antithesis’ into a new third entity produced out of the interaction of these disparate but still vibrating and ‘funkifying’ objects. Dialectic acoustics and dialectic musical composition enables more than simply the telling of stories about the past (histories and counter memories), but might enable the audience to listen for, or otherwise perceive, the space of temporal *en-counter* across which relationships occur. Dialectics, and those metatemporal forms embodied by dialectic acoustics, activate critical reflection and re-structuration.

The article that follows then was initially written for oral presentation. Whilst I make no pretensions at being a rapper, as an academic and as a critic of culture, the project I am embarking on here takes seriously the challenge of theorising history in the manner of hip-hop and its practitioners. Accordingly, the polemic that follows uses Eshun’s highly poetic yet acoustically astute criticism as a starting point to explore the possibilities inherent in staging history across the space of the beat; to consider history as funky. This is perhaps less a rhythmic or even a poetic concept if one considers poetry to be fundamentally a literary and signficatory form. Rather such an approaches requires we think about hip-hop as activating a particular kind of noise (Rose 1994; Attali 2003) or a form of acoustic installation and intervention into various locations. Hip-hop functions

as portable sonic material—what I term ‘radiophonics’, though this project also applies to the carrying of boom-boxes and tape-decks, the famous peripatetic block parties based around adaptations of the Jamaican sound system staged by the likes of Kool Herc or Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation, and the general deployment of playback, amplification, and broadcast media. These sonified forms of funk are fundamentally mobile and spatially provisional; they act across distance, just as the beat of funk or the space of the scratch and of the cut act across the gap of excision and suture. Seen in these terms, hip-hop is a re-deployable form of acoustic dialectics. In order to emphasise how the provisional spatiality and mobility of hip-hop radiophonics can bring new locations and associations into dialogue, anachronistically seeding spatial links which precede the moment of deployment, I have also sought here to move beyond the usual parameters of Anglophone hip-hop to show how such links may be further extended to Europe, across the Mediterranean, and even into the Pacific.² Hip-hop provides a way of physically experiencing and listening to globalism and its antecedents.

Bass bounces off concrete. Noise infiltrates. As George Clinton reminds us, ‘Dis Beat Disrupts’ (1993). What is it that hip-hop does to not just history, but to space and time? Is there something which I, as a cultural historian, should learn from hip-hop? Could the aim of history and its analysis perhaps be to ‘Bring the Noise’ as well? (Public Enemy 1988)

The film-clip for the song ‘That’s My People’ (1998) by French hardcore rap outfit Suprême NTM (based in the Mediterranean port town of Marseille) shows us a group of men walking along a Parisian metro platform. Resting on-top of a light texture of noise and static, the simple, plangent piano refrain of four notes from Frédéric Chopin’s ‘Prelude in E Minor’ is gently looped as we see slides of French graffiti clicking over before us on an old analogue projector. This is then a history of spatial interventions (Fig. 1), travelling from Louvre-Rivoli and its glass pyramid located in the heart of the city, through to Boissière on the Passy route which runs out to those *banlieues* on the outskirts of Paris where so many of France’s African and North African populations have settled.

If we take ‘That’s My People’ as broadly representative of the formal and acoustic characteristics of hip-hop in both its US and international contexts, one might conclude that hip-hop as an art form is defined in part by the sounds of movement. Hip-hop infiltrates, and it echoes. Down the subterranean corridors of Paris’ metro and across the overpasses high above in New York and elsewhere, hip-hop takes us upon the proverbial ‘Night Train’ of both James Brown (1961), and the sampling of Brown’s recording in Kool Moe Dee’s ‘How Ya Like Me Now?’ (1987) and Public Enemy’s ‘Nightrain’ (1991). Hip-hop moves, shifts, and creates links between some of the most unlikely places: from the metro station of Passy to the birthplace of hip-hop itself in 1980s New York; from Les Halles to the Bronx; from *les Pyramids* (on the Louvre-Rivoli line) through to the Pyramids of Egypt themselves, which lie deep within cultural memory.³ This is not a flattening of space per se, but something more like a creative

collision. New relations and possibilities of the historical anterior are produced by the movement of sound and space. The strangely empty Paris metro shown in the clip for 'That's My People' cannot simply be assimilated into those of the earlier Bronx spaces and recordings from which the song's call-out chorus has been harvested ('I make music for my peoples'). Samples echo, whilst the very antiquity of the slide-projected graffiti generates both distance and breakage, even as this material serves to link and affiliate. *Le hip-hop francophone* is funky too. It is the empty space between the beats in the haunted tunnels of Paris and New York which are speaking to us also.

Paul Gilroy has characterised these kinds of cultural movements along the lines of the Black Atlantic. The condition of hybridity and historical memory which Gilroy identifies within Black Atlantic forms were generated principally from the travels which the Atlantic slave trade both facilitated and enforced. Hybrid, make-shift markers of identity—such as the 'Extensions in her hair / Bamboo earrings at least two pair' of LL Cool J's 'Around the Way Girl' (1990)—come to be seen here as authentic precisely because they reflect the makeshift modalities taken up by survivors of such forcible translocation.⁴ What is authentic about such a musical intervention for Gilroy is the way that it bears traces of a history of oppression, even if that experience of transportation has eroded or even erased the ability of the Black Atlantic subject to depict him or herself as heir to a readily accessible history of cultural continuity or African origins. Like Isaac Hayes at the Wattstax concert, the Black subject instead now wears his chains 'on the outside' (Stuart 1973)—literally, in the case of Hayes at that concert, himself being a funk and soul guru endlessly quoted and recycled in hip-hop by the likes of LL Cool J and others: 'It was Isaac Hayes who turned chains—once symbols of slavery and degradation—into ornaments, a decade before Mr. T. and decades before the arrival of bling-bling' (Isaac Hayes Company website). The bamboo earrings of 'Around the Way Girl' harken back to the Motherland even as they indicate the subject's creative and historical separation from such a past.

Gilroy's focus however leads him to ignore what Michael Rothberg has more recently identified as 'multidirectional memory'(2009). Rothberg's own case study was the persistent re-emergence within the rhetoric of those opposing French dominion over Algeria with references to the Holocaust. By linking one event in the present: the decolonization of Algeria and its peoples within both the mainland and the North African continent, with another from the past: the Holocaust, uncanny, previously unseen links swam into being. The act of memorialisation itself helped retroactively generate these links, or at least their visibility. Moreover contemplation of each event in terms of the other enabled both the history of French colonialism and that of anti-Semitism to be reconceptualised. Rothberg considers how best to memorialise trauma:

Against the framework that understands collective memory as *competitive* memory—a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources—I suggest that we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation,

cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative (2009, 3).

Rothberg's insight here is itself uncanny in the way it recalls the processes of musical and cultural practice, particularly those of hip-hop—a form extremely popular with French musicians of North African descent such as the members of NTM. Memory and historical reflection involve sampling and association across difference. Through this process, new insights, novel material, and new critical fantasies and realities might arise. Memory must be installed for it to have force, and hip-hop does precisely this through its fantasmatic acoustic energies and acoustic emplacement. It is unwise, as these dialectic movements come into view, to disallow one as 'authentic' versus another as 'false' or fictional, since it is through the spaces of literary, poetic and particularly acoustical and musical fictions that these affiliations are sown.

Echoing this approach to history and the past, Kodwo Eshun observes that, 'The field of AfroFuturism does not seek to deny the tradition of counter-memory' as championed by Gilroy. Rather Eshun's aim is to extend this tradition of critique and historical reflection 'by reorienting the intercultural vectors of Black Atlantic temporality towards the proleptic as much as the retrospective' (2003, 289), much as Rothberg did with traumatic memory. Eshun takes issue then with Gilroy's attempt to rediscover something like an 'authentic' experience of the past in the midst of such sono-musical forms as the pulses borrowed by hip-hop and from such unlikely sources as the Palladian European techno of Kraftwerk, or the Arab-language Yemenite Jewish vocals of Ofra Haza.⁵ The latter for example was deployed within Eric B's and Rakim's 'Paid in Full' (1987) before Eric B and Rakim were themselves almost immediately recycled on M/A/A/R/S' 'Pump Up the Volume' (1987). The cool techno imaginings of Kraftwerk were moreover to serve as the basis for 'Planet Rock' by Afrika Bambaata and Soulsonic Force, amongst many other electro-hop records.

The crafting of these highly mobile, futuristic Black experiences out of the fragments of German kosmische musik and its electronic fantasies (Kraftwerk) and Mediterranean diasporic acoustics (Haza) signals for Eshun that hip-hop serves less as a site for the replaying of direct experience, or even our distant memory of it, but rather as a site for fantasmatic creation and projection, a multidirectional process rather than one of simple return. The opposition I am proposing then is between counter-memory as a locally installed model of authenticity and 'real' connection (Gilroy), versus counter memory as both a more creative and mobile model; counter memory as a provisional, multidirectional and hence potentially excessive or fantasmatic installation within the space of the now. The electronic sound and the sample gesture towards an almost complete displacement, a mobility and imagination so radical that it exceeds normal time and space. In the work of Bambaata or Kid Koala—the latter being a turntablist who claims to communicate with flying saucers (Pray 2002)—these acoustic inventions and combinations acts as a site where an alien future has, in a sense, already happened through the logic of musical fantasy and technology itself. As Eshun notes:

In Trad terms, it's widely assumed that Techno [and electro-hop] isn't a 'black American music' because it really started with Kraftwerk. Those of Techno's supporters who still insist that Detroit brought the funk to Machine Music will always look for Techno's Af< > Am origin [sic] to answer these crits: Sun Ra? Herbie Hancock? Kraftwerk's love of James Brown? All of these are routes through Techno—yet none work, because Detroit Techno is always more than happy to give due credit to Kraftwerk as the pioneers of Techno.

Kraftwerk are to Techno what Muddy Waters is to the Rolling Stones: the authentic, the origin, the real. Techno therefore reverses the traditional 60s narrative in which the Rolling Stones stole the soul and vulgarized the blues of Waters et al. Kraftwerk epitomize the white soul of the synthesizer, *die Seele der Synthesizer*, the ultra whiteness of an automatic, sequenced future. To [Black techno artist] Model 500, '[Kraftwerk] sounded straight up like they were living in a computer. I even had doubts to whether they were actually human'. Happy to be the interloper, the latecomer, Bambaataa steals the synthetic soul from Dusseldorf, bastardizes it into *Planet Rock* (Eshun 1998, 100).

In what follows then, I pursue Eshun's lead by trying to write in a manner consistent with hip-hop's techno-media aesthetics; to create a fantasmatic 'mash-up' of ideas through sampling and juxtaposition across the space of apparent antimonies and oppositions. In these worlds, spatial and temporal gaps of anteriority, futurity and distance may be collapsed so as to highlight emergent trends and dialectic relations within the complex, multidirectional routes of the past.

Far more than Gilroy in fact, it is the music critic Greil Marcus (1975) who is the champion of authentic roots music against whom Eshun rails, Marcus having defined the Mississippi Delta as the depressed, cotton-growing heartland of US blues, rock, and all of its successors. As such, Marcus might be considered an avatar against whom the work of Eshun often launches its interstellar flights of fancy. I would like to depart from Eshun though, and speak in the manner of George Clinton's Starchild, to suggest that our resident Sir Nose D'Voidoffunk here (Marcus) and Starchild himself (Eshun) might also have more in common than they admit. Hip-hop radiophonics might also enable us to 'shine the spotlight' even on Marcus and have him dancing in the Mothership of George Clinton, Sun Ra and Kodwo Eshun. Even the difference between locating the heartland of African-American musics in the delta of Egypt's Nile River (Clinton, Ra, Eshun), versus centring it firmly on the banks of America's own great muddy Mississippi River (Marcus), may not then be as great as might otherwise seem. 'Dusseldorf as the Delta' need not be an opposition, but an insight into the nature of history as 'mixadelic', a point to which I will return below.

The early hip hop anthem by LL Cool J, 'Can't Live Without My Radio' (1985), taken together with its personification by director Spike Lee in the character of boom-box toting Radio Raheem from the film *Do the Right Thing* (1989), both serve as reminders of the key role played within hip-hop by *radiophonics*, or the dispersal of sound into mobile, territorial units of acoustic media which may be redeployed, sampled, and passed on. To put it another way, the collapsing and clashing of distinctions within time and space is a key operative principal of radiophonic media and its intervention (see Kahn & Whitehead 1994; Wilkins 2000). Nor can such spatio-historic connotations be confined to radio alone. The same is true of the mix-tapes which Mixmaster Mike used to make before he could afford turntables (Pray 2002), and the other legal and illegal recordings and scraps of sampled or found materials that have long moved in and out of every 'hood' in the world. Indeed, many have argued that this is what *sound* itself does, that acoustic media are not in the first place narratives or signifying practices, but spatial interventions which only fully exist in the moment that a column of air is realised within a specific realm (see Marshall 2011). All of which takes us back to the bass that smashes against the concrete of the modern urban city and echoes around the world in so many forms, shapes, mutations and re-installations that it beggars the ability to chart them.

The spatial mobility of radiophonic deployment realised within the hip-hop 'block party' finds its parallel within the acoustic materiality of sound re-deployed and re-shaped by the walls, forms, bodies and the other material objects which it encounters in the metro and elsewhere. At the level of physics, as well as lived experience, no recording is ever the same once it has been played. The reflective or absorbing nature of the nearby walls, the tunnels along which noises echo, the soft fleshy entities which sound penetrates, all reconfigure broadcast sound, making the act of listening to media an inherently historiographic process, one which activates a dialectic relation between a past (the moment or moments of recording, generation and assembly) and a present (the moment of reconfiguration as speaker cones pump specific volumes of air into environments only very rarely predetermined at the moment of recording). Hip-hop radiophonics then is a form of dialectical acoustic installation.

Bearing in mind how the sonic virtual of the un-played recording materialises when it is released into multiple locales by its media distribution, it becomes apparent that there is less difference between that great champion of authentic roots music Greil Marcus, and Eshun, than one might think. Marcus noted of Van Morrison, for example, that he sang with a 'yarrrrragh' which is 'his version' of the 'Leadbelly . . . jazz' and 'blues' from the Delta which Morrison grew up listening to on the radio. Waxing lyrical about the influence of the airwaves upon Van Morrison and its mobile mythologies of music, Marcus concludes that:

Morrison is heir to a tradition of mysteries. . . . He is a Celt . . . a spiritual descendent of the Irish prelate St. Brendan, who set out from Ireland 1500 years ago and who, according to legend, reached America itself, and perhaps

founded a colony . . . So there may be a sense in which Morrison can understand that he was always an American (could have been, was meant to be); that his place in America is fated, even if it is unsettled, as he stretches out toward that mythical Caledonia, even believing, sometimes, that in a long and intricate manner, the blues came not [just] from Africa, but from Scotland. That here came from there, that there are no divisions, that all parts of himself are, somehow, linked (1980, 322).

Considered in this light, Morrison's transplantation of the blues through reference to a fantasmatic recreation of possible pasts comes to be seen as remarkably similar to what Eshun identifies in the work of George Clinton. In the latter's *Clones of Dr Funkenstein* (1976)—one of many Parliament authored Ur-texts for later hip-hop, along with the songs 'Chocolate City' and 'Atomic Dog'—Clinton intones:

Funk upon a time, in the days of the Funkapus, the concept of specially designed Afronauts, capable of funkatizing galaxies, was first laid on Manchild, but was later repossessed and placed among the Pyramids, until a more positive attitude towards this most sacred phenomenon—clonefunk—could be acquired (Parliament 1993; see also Clinton 1996).

As Eshun points out, the cloning of funk through hip-hop sampling and other actions serves to 'reactivate an archaic science. The futuristic feeds forward into the anachronic futurepasts of Atlantis and Egypt' (1998, 142; see also Perchard 2011). Indeed the ubiquity of such references and imagery in the work of hip-hop artists from Del tha Funky Homosapien and Crew Hieroglyphic through to the Jungle Brothers, Coolio and Snoop Dog is striking. Atlantis and Egypt seem now inescapable components of hip-hop's diverse historiographic imaginings. As Eshun notes, 'Chronopolitically speaking, these revisionist historicities may be understood as a series of powerful competing futures that infiltrate the present at different rates' (2003, 297).

The point which I am trying to make here through Eshun is therefore rather different than Gilroy's own discussion of hip-hop as an essentially historical practice of counter-memory, based as it is on the quotation and sampling of past materials and oppressive experiences. Whilst Gilroy sees the diasporic experience of time as conflicted, caught between the reference to lost origins and modernity, this temporal disparity comes to serve as an all but static signifier for the experience of Black modernity. The scission out of which diasporic bi-temporality is birthed becomes stabilised as the marker of the new Black Atlantic subject. Gilroy's only explicit discussion of hip-hop itself may be found in his rather cursory analysis of LL Cool J cited above, and within this passage, his principal focus is on its lyric rather than acoustic or spatial manifestations. The 'Around the Way Girl' of LL Cool J's song represents a way of celebrating Black diasporic identity now that it has moved to the new locales of the US and Britain. As Eshun readily admits, such a reading clearly has merit. My own aim here however is to place more emphasis on the subtle but significant shift from the historical experiences which Gilroy seeks to

uncover—that which references the past—and instead look towards the historiographic—that which interrogates, and may indeed unsettle, any and all relationships to such pasts. Rather than considering how hip-hop might *historicise* then, how it might represent stories about a journey from bondage or across the oceans, or indeed how hip-hop might offer a guide for how one might move on from such a past, what I am emphasising here is spatio-temporal *cohabitation* and *dialectical anachronism*; the conflation of past and present within the mix, and, indeed, within experience itself. This complexification and disturbance of conventional historical time and anteriority finds its expression not simply within the lyrical content of hip-hop, but within the spatial, technological and corporeal practices articulated by hip-hop. Through such technological, acoustic and rhetorical practices, hip-hop functions in a dialectical fashion akin to critical historiography itself.

Even in the digital age, much hip-hop and related sample-based musics function according to a fundamentally spatial logic. Central hip-hop tropes such as cutting up tracks on the turntables and splicing tape, travelling on trains and moving through the airwaves, are first and foremost spatial actions. To understand history through hip-hop then is to understand historical development not so much according to narrative—stories of a temporal transition from the past to the now—but according to space, where past and present may cohabit, overlay and interact. The question is where you *drop the needle*, more than the song that is sung. Indeed, ‘dropping it’ is one the fundamental metaphors of hip-hop discourse and logic, repeatedly referred to in both lyric and practice: dropping the rhyme, dropping English, dropping science—even if DJ Yella does ‘make it a cappella’, Dr Dre will ‘still express’ himself, moving across the airwaves (NWA 1988). At the drop of a needle or through the layering over the field of view an image or quoted historic portrait, the audience is encouraged to travel through time and space. We move ‘Straight Outa Compton’ and on to other locations, like Malcolm X’s home, so famously quoted and collapsed into the cover of Boogie Down Productions’ record *By Any Means Necessary* (1988) where KRS-One is shown reproducing the famous image of an armed Malcolm as X/KRS-One peers through the curtains to survey the street below (Massaquoi 1963).

To consider hip-hop as a spatial practice is therefore not simply to see hip-hop as associated with spatial *occupation*—although that is obviously part of its practice through the deployment of graffiti, tagging, and block-parties. Nor is it simply to see hip-hop as about the construction of alternative narratives and alternative stories—although again, hip-hop is also that. Rather it is to see hip-hop as an alternative way of looking, of hearing, of moving, and of thinking. Hip-hop and related musics are not just about things coming together, but about the space between them. It is, in short, about *the funk*.

In breakdance in general, and ‘popping’ in particular, the body is not reconstructed into a fluid stream of movement. Rather the body breaks, it pops, it oscillates, at one moment poised between the first position and the next, and then goes slamming into the

following sequence, hurling the body to the ground, or sharply cracking the joint into a new position. This funky strategy of bodily deconstruction and isolation might be seen to echo such precedents as Josephine Baker's equally discombobulated dance, or the aggressive explosion of limbs outwards and then back within the Lindy Hop style which was so beloved of Malcolm X (1999, chap. 4). The breakdance body might be considered then as a kind of *montage*, a spatial construction of unlikely confluences brought together by the energy of the beat—but not in a smooth way, not in a seamless way, but rather *as funk*. Funk and breakdance recover what Thelonious Monk enunciated within jazz, namely that it is the *space between things*, the *space between notes*—which he famously played (Bergerot & Merlin 1993, 29-32, 124-5). It was this proto-breakbeat principal of playing *between keys* which Monk contributed to the Harlem Renaissance and the history of modernism as a whole. Nor is it any accident that Monk's music in particular has been at the centre of a number of highly self-conscious and self-reflective historiographic interventions within hip-hop, such as those by UK artist Guru (1993)—who worked with Solaar—Japan's DJ Mitsu, as well as New Zealand's Mark de Clive-Lowe (2000) and Pasifika diaspora artist King Kapisi. These artists do not so much quote and blend Monk into a new, seamless aesthetic, but bring the two into a bop-hop dialogue of syncopated funk.

In describing hip-hop as a mode in which sound inhabits and fragments bodies, I am not attempting to sketch a post-historical site for some manner of funky utopia. Public Enemy, at their most critical, once called succumbing to the rhythms and energies of the public, historic beats which surround and overpower us all as going 'Niggatronic', where one becomes completely occupied and destroyed by the sounds and forces that come bubbling up through history and back down into the present (1994). Artist Saul Williams has expressed similar fears about succumbing to acoustic occupation. Refusing any simple revival of those traditions which came out of the history of slavery and the chain-gangs that built the railroads linking the Eastern seaboard with America's mythical, violent West, Williams screams in 'Twice the First Time' (1997) for the listener to: 'Get me the fuck off this track! . . . They got us using drum machines now' (DJ Spooky 2001). Dystopias lurk within the conflation of space and time, as readily as do sites of reflective freedom and historical critique; 'as if the heart were not enough', Williams reminds us.

I would however contend that there is something useful in trying to tell history *as funk*, to adopt a breakbeat into our historical method, and to try to echo Mixmaster Mike and Kid Koala in communicating with alien galaxies and ancient intelligences through the action of cutting and rearranging things across a spatial realm (Pray 2002); a realm one might metaphoricise as being akin to a kind of acoustic window or visual field which vibrates each time we 'drop the bomb' and refocus our ears and our eyes.

Discussing the influence of Surrealism on the practice of French anthropology, James Clifford has described the sort of mode of practical juxtaposition which I am trying to

promote here as ‘ethnographic Surrealism’, whereby culture, reality and its histories are seen to be composed of arbitrary, or:

artificial codes, ideological identities and objects susceptible to inventive recombination and juxtaposition: Lautreamont’s umbrella and sewing machine, a violin and a pair of hands slapping the African dirt (1981, 550).

In the terms I want to employ then, the moment of the cut, the scratch, the break or the sample becomes what Clifford calls a ‘moment in which the possibility of comparison exists in unmediated tension with sheer incongruity’ (563). It would be overstating things to draw a direct line from Surrealism and European modernism through to hip-hop as a whole. There are nevertheless significant parallels between modernist montage and hip-hop media practice (see also Young 2012; Perkinson 2010; Smethhurst 2003). This is perhaps most visible in the early jazz fusion work of Herbie Hancock, which has been extensively sampled within hip-hop, and indeed Hancock explicitly joined the hip-hop fraternity when he collaborated with turntablist Grandmaster DST on ‘Rockit’ (1983; see Pray 2002). As Stephen Feld notes, Hancock’s 1973 record *Headhunters* featured a quasi-modernist cover: ‘designed in vibrant purple and yellow colors with jungle-primitivo lettering . . . [Hancock’s] head is transformed into a Baule mask, with an analog VU meter in the mouth position’ (1996, 6).

The shape, texture and content of the image reconfigures the earlier appropriation of African art and influences by European Futurist, Dadaist, Surrealist and Cubist artists with Hancock’s own Afrocentrism. As in Futurism, a fusion of the African mask and the modern machine is both made visible and sonified. In Hancock then, as elsewhere, the image and the airwaves intersect to carry listeners and viewers on a journey far beyond a simple search for authenticity per se, and into a trajectory marked by the AfroFuturist interrogation of a past which is always fluid and moving, like the relentless, squelchy beat of Hancock’s synthesiser in ‘Chameleon’ (1973). The electrofunk which Afrika Bambaata, ‘Rockit’ and Grandmaster DST were to spawn is the logical outcome of this novel spatial project.

The true Ur-figure here of hip-hop’s project of critical sampling and dialectical juxtaposition is not so much Breton, Picasso, or indeed Hancock, but rather again, the bandleader of Parliament and Funkadelic, George Clinton. Ethnosurrealism is implied within Eshun’s characterisation of what Clinton himself named ‘doo-loops’. As Eshun explains, these quoted, looped materials form:

the iterative processes that maintain consensual hallucination. Because tapeloops [as well as hip-hop cuts and breaks] form the basis of mixadelic sound, Clinton abstracts this studio technique, this technical machine, into a mental machine, a concepttechnics that switches on the social machines which generate the ‘operative signals directing modern life’. The world is a

reality studio where all the tapes run all the time, do-this . . . [and] do-that loops, internalized by humans as tradition (1998, 145).

If the world itself is seen as a kind of studio wherein sounds may be sampled, repeated, converted, and projected, then the dialectic play and conflation of samples caught up within these histories and transits is all but inevitable. Eshun continues that funk and hip-hop is:

extraterrestrialized through the mixing desk. Through multitracking, reversing, equalizing, slowing down, speeding up, double backwards tapeloops, it becomes what Clinton . . . calls mixadelics. Clinton's concept of mixadelics means the psychedelics of the mix: the entire range of sonic mutation through studio effects. Mixadelics makes funk fictional, draws you into an offworld universe, a world of loops where loopzillas, bootzillas and atomic dogs hunt in packs that 'really dog you', in Prince Paul 's words. Tape techniques create new sounds, which are fictionalized into audio-lifeforms, bred by reiteration (1998, 146).

To this I would add that as samples, the fictions so produced act to render conscious our relation to history as a site of oppression (do-this-loops), and as a site of critical reformulation, possibility and change (discovering the Mothership in Ancient Egypt, or the Algerian subject in Auschwitz). Mixadelics is not only a process of acoustic fiction; it is also one of spatio-sonic historiography.

Having followed Eshun into the stratosphere and the heady realm of creative historiographic fiction, I would like to come back to the more certain landscape of concrete and brick we started from, and draw attention to two possible examples of history as hip-hop montage, namely the film-clip for *Shut 'Em Down!* (1992) by Public Enemy and that for *Nouveau Western* (1994) by MC Solaar (Claude M'Barali). These two audio-visual documents demonstrate the manner in which hip-hop reprocesses historical precedents and presents, acting within the dialectical spaces of the beat and of spatio-acoustic occupation.

It has of course been argued that the technology of the music video is inherently mixadelic. The tendency for music videos to eschew narrative cohesion makes them a form particularly apt to defy normal rules of narrative time and chronology (Frith et al 1993). My concern here though is less these narrative or even these temporal qualities of the music video, and more those of spatiality and historiography.

The video for *Shut 'Em Down!* was directed by Mark Pellington in collaboration with animator, collagist and poster artist Stephen Kroninger. The latter has explained that he wanted the clip to 'echo' Chuck D's style and the rapper's 'message'. To achieve this fundamentally *acoustic* effect of *echoing* rap within a visual medium, the pair employed what Kroninger called 'a visual collage of performance and historical footage, stills, and

animated sequences' across the space of the screen (EW 1992). The visuals feature figures such as Huey P. Newton, Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Angela Davis, W.E. Dubois, and others, as well as shuddering images of the rapped words, torn fragments of the US flag, money printed with African-American heroes on it rather than whites, and finally footage of racist 'picaninny' cartoons from the 1930s and 1940s. The montage of sonic elements from which the track is composed, such as the extended cry of pain and outrage that forms the tonal ground of the recording, and the ringing call of electronic strikes that counts down the start of each verse, is matched here by the visual montage. Cut ups of sound encounter and clash with cuts ups of images. It is not simply empty sounds or images that are sourced here, however. Rather, these are cut ups of history or of histories. The video does not only tell a history of oppression. Rather, such historical reflections are deployed within the now so as to make claims upon both the present and the future. As Chuck D intones: "The corporations which owe / Gotta give up the dough / Or else I'm gonna shut 'em down!" The video might be said in this sense to enunciate a historiographic project, cast into the 'anachronic futurepasts' which Eshun speaks of, in which money becomes literally newly minted with the images of historic African-American leaders. A story is not merely presented on the screen of the television or monitor. Rather Pellington and Kroninger explicitly stage these montaged creations as playing across and reflecting off a brick wall which rests behind Chuck D and Flava Flav during the rap. The clip therefore stages the act of bringing the past into the present—it enacts a metahistorical critique across time and space. In this manner, to borrow Greil Marcus' phrase above, 'here becomes there', history being re-enacted now, as past injustice slams against and bounces off the contemporary realpolitik of the wall behind the posters. The action of the camera, which features an irregular shudder of horizontal and vertical lines crashing behind the rappers, highlight this as a process of unresolved contemplation; not as something fluid or smooth, but rather as *dangerously funky*. All of this occurs in the public space of the *wall-as-billboard*, another site against which the bass can 'boom and pound'—a phrase which is literally presented to the viewer as the beat asserts itself.

My second example is perhaps more complex, because it tells us not only about the *forms* which a hip-hop historiography might take, but through the *context* within which it is embedded—namely hip-hop's 'second kingdom' of France (see Huq 2002; Marshall 2015)—it evokes something of the spatial juxtapositions and constructive anachronisms which I would place at the heart of much hip-hop practice. The example is director Stéphane Sednaoui clip for Solaar's *Nouveau Western*, featuring a mix by Hubert Blanc-Francard, a.k.a. Boom Bass. *Nouveau Western* is a brilliantly conflicted, ambivalent and confusing piece of art which endlessly startles with the contradictions its spatial geography and references put into play. Just as Saul Williams warns us, Sednaoui has the camera locked into a dolly track visible before us, and down which the camera relentlessly progresses, zooming in and taking us forward into the locales and streets of Paris. At regular intervals however, we approach a framed screen or mirrored surface, and suddenly find ourselves transported to another location; this time the dusty,

roadside stop of Sheffler's Motel, Salome, and other locations within an ill-defined realm running along Route 60, Arizona. Space is literally flattened here, as each window collapses the two alternate but linked environments we pass between. Paris is defamiliarised, and the American West becomes a site of Francophonic dreaming and nightmare.

If one leaves aside M'Barali's brilliant, playful lyrics about a Parisian tough guy who imagines himself to be a cowboy with a metal *deux chevaux* (two horsepower Citroën), the principal sample of *Nouveau Western* causes it to function in part as an alterative version of the famous duet between French chanson artist Serge Gainsbourg and actress Brigitte Bardot, in which the two performers laconically compare themselves to characters from Bonnie and Clyde to Jesse James whom they vocally inhabit; a nouveau Western indeed. As soon as one goes beyond the seductive yelps recorded by Bardot for the song and M'Barali's wonderful reworking of the kind of 'word juggling' and alliterations which the French chanson is famous for (see Laroche 2007; Morin et al 2003)—'Arizona' is rhymed with 'Harry zona', for example, as in Harry is zoned out, is wandering, lost—one discovers that Solaar is offering us a blistering critique of US Imperialism: 'Hollywood nous berne!' or 'Hollywood fools us!' This attack however is woven within the laid back, cool yet critical mode of address which has characterised French song-writing since the time of the *chanson réaliste* movement out of which so much French vocal material has been generated. Solaar especially is famous for his chanson-like sophistication and almost soporific delivery, which shares much in common with Gainsbourg's deep, rolling tones (see Liu 2008; Marshall 2015).

The anger expressed within M'Barali's occasionally abrasive vocal interjections is in this sense belied by the sonic quality of the overall piece. Solaar's liquid, intermittently syncopated, style of enunciation meets its match in the distant, soothing echoes of the saxophone from *Bonnie and Clyde*. Gainsborough's original orchestrations embrace us and our ears from far away within the mix. Solaar moves both vocally and visually amongst a landscape which is literally resonant with names such as 'Sitting Bull'—a phrase he pronounces with heavy emphasis as it hovers before our ears—and in which 'saloons' have become bistros selling cigarettes. Even though trains do not whistle anymore, words such as 'cinemascope' and 'Cochise' resound within the acoustic space of the mix, arresting the listener like a hieroglyph of unrealised potential.

In other words, MC Solaar—through this spatio-acoustic framing as much as anything else—reminds us not simply of the US cultural imperialism which has today become mapped onto Paris. Rather, M'Barali's very presence within the French cultural system, as the son of Senegalese parents in Chad who have since moved to Paris, reminds us that such distant locales have always been linked in the spatial imagination. Africa has, indeed, always been part of Europe, and it was not just Othello who lived the fraught life of a Black man on the Continent. We should speak not just of a Black Atlantic, but of a Black Mediterranean as well. It was, after all, this proximity which permitted African art to speak so directly to European modernists who make up the distant prehistory of

contemporary hip-hop via Baker and Picasso. Contemporary Europe as we know it simply could not have come into being without cross-cultural samplings and migrations from *Afrique beur* (or Algerian and Arabic Africa), from the Near East of Persia, Egypt and its surrounds, as well as the *Afrique noir* of Senegal, Chad, Nigeria, Mali, and so on. As the recent exhibition *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe* reminds us (Spicer 2012), it was in no small part African merchants and, yes, sometimes slavers, who, through trade and exchange, enabled the development of the maritime powers of Portugal, Spain and Venice—just as it was to be new generations of such mercantile, cultural and imperial relations throughout the Mediterranean and the Atlantic during the 19th and 20th centuries that set the tone for European modernism, Cubism, and Baker's *Revue Nègre*. As far as France is concerned, it is important to remember that both the European Renaissance as a whole, as well as the birth of the continental poetic troubadour tradition from which French chanson continues to draw, was itself enabled and promoted through the transmission of previously lost Arabic and Persian documents within Europe from the 12th century onwards.⁶ To bring us back to Greil Marcus, when we start to creatively trace these kinds of histories through acoustic space and radiophonic culture, we do indeed find that 'here came from there'. We might characterise this rich interval of cultural exchange as what Solaar has called '*jazz de souk*', or jazz of the North African market or bazaar.

What this speculative journey through hip-hop discourse and acoustic space might teach us then is that there never has truly been a time before the sample. Reading history for such sampledelic borrowings and dialectical relations converts the experience of historical time into a fantasmatic, multidirectional phenomenon. We do not remember the past simply to revive it, or to lament its loss, but to creatively and retroactively reformulate it. Memories and samples, by being played in the now, alter the anterior and the proleptic, sending a Mothership of potentiality spinning into the future. We need to recognise that history itself is neither unidirectional, nor even bidirectional, but multidimensional and mutually inter-contaminating. There is always funk, a beat, a gap, across which difference flows, and it is through the identification of both these novel links and these acts of acoustic distortion (like the mirrored windows in the clip of *Nouveau Western*) which generate critical dialectic discourse in acoustic form.

Seen in these terms, the idea of the historiographic sample and the mixadelic has been lying dormant within the cultural heritage of the griots of the Manding Empire, and Clinton's Afronauts exiled from the Pyramids. In drawing upon such rhetorical flights of fancy, and looking towards mixadelic 'clone-funk' as a model for how culture seeds itself within the very past it emerges from, it can be seen that cultural exchange operates according to metatemporal structures which exceed those of conventional narrative.⁷ To give George Clinton the last word, 'free your mind, and your ass' definitely will 'follow'.

Notes

1. Even before the rise of Marxism, Structuralism and psychoanalysis (all of which are dialectical models of analysis) dialectics has underpinned history since its disciplinary origins in German historicism; see Clark 2004. I have covered some of the themes highlighted here in other works. I offer a gloss of sonic approaches to history, and the need to move beyond linguistic models such as those of Walter Ong, in Marshall 2011. I discuss how Didi-Huberman, Aby Warburg and Bertolt Brecht construct history as a set of dialectical gaps or elisions located in the space *between* images or iconographic elements—rather than within the icon or image itself—in Marshall, forthcoming.
2. Although Derrida and Benjamin's *Angel of History* was one of the distant inspirations for this essay, I have deliberately avoided using the now ubiquitous Derridean concept of hauntology as a focus for this piece. For hauntological considerations of the relations within modernity, Japanese culture, and/or hip-hop, see Marshall 2013; Fisher 2013.
3. Les Halles metro station is the main arrival and departure point for much of the banlieues, and has been immortalised in much francophone hip-hop; see DJ Poska et al 2000.
4. Gilroy himself is more interested in the larger field of Black Atlantic music, making only passing reference to hip-hop itself, offering close analysis only of the LL Cool J song cited above (1995, 72-110).
5. The astonishing story of the appropriation of Kraftwerk's European sound by electro-hop is told by Fink 2005; see also Stubbs 2014.
6. The precise relation between Arabic traditions in Spain and the emergence of the French troubadour tradition is not entirely clear, but that Arabic and Persian documents had an impact is certain. See Paden & Paden 2007.
7. Eshun's collaboration with director John Akomfrah for *The Last Angel of History* (1995) expresses this transhistorical, metatemporal formula very well.

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