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The Life History of Sound

Sophia Maalsen

The University of Sydney

December 2013

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent research and that all authorities and sources which have been used are duly acknowledged.

Sophia Maalsen
Abstract

In recent years, the emergence of cultures and practices of music-making associated with new music-making technologies has generated controversy and conflict, being both variously embraced and vilified. Just as some are determined to explore the possibilities that these technologies afford for the re-use and re-circulation of music, others have been determined to regulate such practices through aggressive assertions of ownership over sounds. Central to these controversies is a deeper question concerning the nature of musical sounds and their relationship to the people who produce and work with them.

In order to explore this issue, this thesis develops a new conceptual framework for thinking about the biographies of musical sounds. Drawing on concepts from material culture studies and feminist philosophy, the thesis critiques traditional conceptions of musical sounds as the property of a possessive individual, and offers an approach that seeks to better appreciate the complex relationships between sounds and human agents. This framework is applied and further developed across a series of case studies, which take an ethnographic approach to following the eventful biographies of selected pieces of music. These ethnographies trace the ways in which legal, ethical, economic and cultural concerns about the ownership of music are navigated in the practices of people who sample, collect and re-issue music. In tracing how these practitioners work with musical sounds, the research also uncovers the ways in which musical sounds work on those practitioners. In the process, these musical sounds develop a life of their own. Through these ethnographies, the thesis traces the life histories of musical sounds and demonstrates the ways in which those life histories are ‘multibiographical’, drawing together a range of actors and distributing their personhood and agency across space and time.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of how an appreciation of multibiographical sound could inform new approaches to the production and regulation of musical sounds in the digital age that are based on connection rather than control. This recognises that music making changes as new technologies influence its production and accommodates the distribution of both sound and human agency through the reuse of sound recordings that digital technologies encourage.
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, time and support of many people. Firstly I would like to thank Dr Kurt Iveson and Dr Charles Fairchild for steering me through my PhD, with their suggestions, belief in the project and being open to my sometimes rather left of field ideas. Special thanks also to Dr Leonn Satterthwait for cultivating such left of field ideas and for initially inspiring my interest in material culture. His informal guidance throughout the PhD process has been invaluable.

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All of this would not have been possible without the support of my family. My parents, Willem and Jill Maalsen, who inspired a love of learning in me and who believe in me more than I do. Anna, Melanie, Jodie, Kate and of course Angus Gair for words of wisdom, support and patience.

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Finally I would like to thank music. Not really in an ABBA-ish “Thank you for the Music” kind of way, but for being one of my favourite things. In that sense I would particularly like to thank The Rolling Stones whose records fascinated me as five year old. High Tide, Green Grass was one of the first albums I was allowed to play on the hi-fi system. I’m proud to say I didn’t scratch the record. The pleasure and experience of carefully taking the album out of its sleeve, the gentle click of the needle, the crackle, and then the magic of music, has stayed with me ever since. I love the smell of vinyl.
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Chapter 1

Entroducing

It’s just an incredible archive of music culture and there’s the promise in these stacks of finding something that you’re going to use. In fact most of my first album was built off records pulled from here. So it has a Karmic element you know. I was meant to find this on top, or I was meant to pull this out ‘cos it works so well with this, so it’s got a lot of meaning for me personally. Me and my buddy Stan that I used to dig with, he was a graffiti writer, we used to come here looking for things like you know, ‘Incredible Bongo Band’ and stuff. Every now and then we’d buy things and Ed or Mark or someone would say, “oh yeah we got a tonne of these in the basement”, or you know, “you should see the basement if you think this is something”. So after five years of hearing this, I just decided to just ask, can I just take a look? And we came down here and I couldn’t believe that there was still something like this. A cache this large and the fact that it is relatively untouched (DJ Shadow in Pray et al., 2003).

These words from internationally-renowned music producer DJ Shadow are spoken to camera as he is filmed in a record filled basement he describes as his “little nirvana”. They perfectly encapsulate the core concerns of this thesis (Track 1). This thesis is about archiving and curating music culture. It is about digging for records and making beats. It is about renewing the sounds and frequently, the agency and personhood of artists who recorded those sounds years earlier. It is about the agency, or to use Shadow’s words, “the Karmic influence” of old records, to draw people to them, and reciprocally, the agency people exert on the music through reissue and sampling. It is about the tensions between the art of renewing sounds and the impacts of law, economics, (sub)culture, ethics and technology upon that art. In short, this thesis analyses such musical practices with the intent of revealing the biography of recorded sounds in order to better understand the relationships, which shape music and the people who make it. This in turn

1 *Entroducing* is the title of DJ Shadow’s debut album, made from records he collected in the basement overstock of his local record store.
Entroducing reveals the persistent tensions between contemporary music making practices and the law, and the interactions between subject and object, the human and the non-human. But the actual cause of these tensions is not the act of renewal itself, as often suggested, but rather what this renewal means for current western notions of personhood and the division between human/nonhuman and subject/object. Sounds rarely exist in the original form in which they were conceived. Recently, there has been much debate over copyright and “ownership” of sounds, something supposedly increasingly under threat in an era of digital sampling. As Schumacher states, the 1976 U.S. Copyright Act protects “original works of authorship” where authorship is the capturing of sound in a tangible medium and thus effectively fixes it in time (Schumacher, 1995, p. 254). The opening excerpt from DJ Shadow reflects the practices which have led to the increasing tensions between law and music making and which destabilise this legally “fixed” music; namely the collection of records with the intention of sampling from these records in order to create new musical works. DJ Shadow “entroduces” and reappears throughout this thesis because he embodies the culture that has provoked regulatory reform and court challenges, yet which has also reinvigorated and renewed older music styles, and frequently the careers of the original musicians, showing us one way in which the biographies of music and people are interlinked.

The ability of contemporary music making technologies and practices to unfix, and repurpose these “fixed” sounds necessitates a re-evaluation of sounds and music from being the property of select individuals or groups to being an object with its own life history and biography. This implies that it is not the property or construction of one particular player but has multiple identities, which change depending on context and spatio-temporal position. However this changeability suggests that movement in context, ownerships, objecthood and subjecthood can be traced. Thus using a biographical method I intend to pursue these escapes from fixed categories to demonstrate that despite legal and subcultural constraints, sounds are subversive and do not act as they supposedly should. Therefore through chasing sounds as they rebel against their fixity, I am able to not only critique western ideologies of unity, wholeness, property and personhood, the relevance of which will be iterated throughout this thesis, but also demonstrate how both people and sounds are already currently subverting these restraints on creative possibility despite their powerful influence.
Critiquing Western personhood and property is necessary to give voice to other subjectivities and the many possibilities of being, as feminists have long recognised. In the process, I propose an idealistic model for understanding musical property. Framing the issue through such a lens is necessary in order to understand the ideological foundations of systems that demarcate the boundary between people and things. And by understanding the origins of these boundaries, the possibilities of transgressing them become more visible.

To develop this revised understanding, I develop and apply a methodology for the interpretation of sounds that can uncover their meaning by tracing their life trajectory and the different contexts in which they have been used. The biography of sound is essentially the personal history and geography of sound. Tracing the pathway of production and consumption of certain sounds reveals the agency of the sound object as expressed through its movements, which determine its interactions with human agents. This forces the re-evaluation of ideas of personhood and the subject and by extension possessive individualism. By acknowledging the agency and mobility of sounds, we must consider an idea of ownership that moves beyond exclusive possession through control to an identity of sound that exists through connection and relation. Emphasising connection rather than control accommodates multiple authorships and subjectivities, something that is necessary if the tensions between music renewal and property regimes are to be resolved. By implication, this provides greater insight into issues of contested ownership and the way that property structures divide subject from object and separate the wider network of relationships that go into producing music. To achieve this sound will be viewed both as an object, which enables analysis of the type proposed, and subject. Towards the end of the thesis an argument is made for sound and human agents existing as a hybrid subject. This metaphorical “musical cyborg” is exemplified by DJ Shadow. The excerpt, which introduced this chapter, indicates that his personhood is intricately bound with the music he samples and the music he creates. As such he is an embodiment of the hybrid subject – DJ shadow is comprised of Josh Davis and his music. Furthermore, this hybridity is also multibiographical. Shadow would not be possible if it were not for both Davis and musicians who created the work he samples – their collective biographies constitute his.

In this introductory chapter I will first define the term “sound” as will be applied in this thesis before discussing geographical forays into both music and material culture. I note that while
Entroducing

grographers have, in different contexts, studied both music and material culture, they have not typically brought these two concerns together. In contrast, this study applies a material culture approach to music and thereby extends geographical endeavours in these areas. Following this I will outline the research question and aims of the thesis. Finally I will briefly outline chapters’ two to nine, while drawing attention to the key themes recurrent throughout the thesis.

Sound as material culture

At this point it is relevant to define the sound object as it is understood in this thesis. What exactly is the sound object referred to and what does this mean for doing a biography of sound? The “sound object” is seen as that of any original performance that has been produced, recorded, distributed and consumed over a variety of media, re-issued, sampled, and sometimes appropriated within other music and media pieces. It can be a copy of the original performance, for example a cover version, or it can be a composite part of it, such as a sample. The various routes, changing materiality and media through which sound travels, is experienced, and influences other uses of itself, can be traced and culminate to form the life history of the initial sound.

Recordings are increasingly being conceptualised as cultural artefacts. Wallach (2003, pp. 34, 54) argues that it is time to “take recordings seriously as cultural objects” and that “recorded music should be examined as a phenomenon apart from performance and that its fundamental nature is rooted in sonic (that is, audiotactile) experience”. I would argue that there is merit in his claims, although recordings have been taken seriously as cultural artefacts prior to Wallach (see Straw, 2000, 2002). But whilst Wallach’s arguments give credence to focusing on the role of recordings and music artefacts in music experience, he does not place agency within the recording itself. The dichotomy between subject and object is maintained, and without this division being deconstructed it makes it difficult to achieve the “music-specific body of cultural theory that takes into account the material, embodied aspects of culture as well as the symbolic realm” (Wallach, 2003, p. 54) for which he argues.

It is important to note however, that even the original music performance, which I utilise as the beginning in the sound’s life history is in essence, not its pure beginning. The very nature of
Entroducing recordings is that, most often, they are not the product of a single performance. They are usually edited and produced to make a series of objects appear as a cohesive whole. As Wallach states, musical recordings can be seen as “musaics” (Negus, 1992, p. 31) or collections “of sound materials combined and manipulated in ways intended to achieve certain audiosensory effects” (Wallach, 2003, p. 38). Born (2011, p. 377) recognises the distinctive nature of the materiality of music which reflects the definition of the sound object I have proposed:

...music has its own particular material and semiotic properties. Musical sound is non-representational, non-artefactual and alogogenic...Music has no material essence but a plural and distributed materiality. Its’ multiple simultaneous forms of existence — as sonic trace, discursive exegesis, notated score, technological prosthesis, social and embodied performance — indicate the necessity of conceiving of the musical object as a constellation of mediations.

The nature of the sound object therefore demands a distinct approach to tracing its biography, different to that of a more materially tangible item. Unlike other subjects of biographies, sound is not physically tangible unless it is encased in a recorded medium. It simply cannot be consumed or commoditised to a significant extent until it has been mediated through notation, recording, repackaging and sampling. The performance that is viewed or listened to but not recorded, whilst “consumed”, cannot have the length of the life pathway that a recorded piece can. It can exist in memory and experience, but this has limited potential to be extended in that form. Once produced in recorded form, the potential life pathway has seemingly infinite possibilities. This reflects the objectification process through which things become “known”, and a process, which does not privilege the Western notion of personhood (Miller, 1987; Myers, 2001), the stance from which much in this thesis is surveyed. The crucial point, particularly when referring to the recorded form of the performance, is that, “It is only through the giving of form that something can be conceived of. The term objectification however, always implies that form is part of a larger process of becoming” (Miller, 1987, p. 81). This process encapsulates precisely the process which sound objects undergo to become something tangible and commoditised, accounting for the changing materialities of the sound. Through recording, the sound object is given form, which is one stage in its larger trajectory and continual process of “becoming”.

Taking this perspective contrasts with Middleton’s views on the recorded music object, when he claims, “We can certainly say that in an important sense a record is finished – finite, objectified –
Entroducing in a way that oral performance is not” (1990, p. 83). In one sense, Middleton is correct in saying the recording is a finished product. From many perspectives there is nothing more to do the music and the recording will not change by itself from that format and representation. Yet Middleton’s view fetishises the recorded product, reinforcing the distinction between object and subject, and placing it in a category rendering it complete and static. Taking a biographical approach means understanding the record not as finite or finished, but as having potential to increase its biographical possibilities, and that the recording is just one of many possible stages in its life. The recorded format is a significant milestone in the sound’s career through which it can enter various cycles of production, commoditisation and consumption. Recording and digital music making technologies therefore ensure that the sounds’ potential for reuse and reinterpretation increases with its life trajectory.

This does however present a challenge when tracing the biographical trajectory of a “sound”, essentially its geography, which has the potential to be highly mobile and fragmented, compared to a spatially and geographically stable object. It is this element however, which renders sound salient to understanding processes of production and consumption on a global scale. To trace the movement of sound therefore requires being able to trace its movement within commodity cycles. The commodity cycle is pertinent because it is at the points of entry, departure and re-entry that the sound object is categorised and thus traceable. Without these points in the market the sound object remains elusive.

Material culture, music and geography: Towards an integrated approach

My understanding of sound is therefore strongly grounded in a material culture approach, a perspective which has been influential in the work of geographers like Jackson (Jackson, 1999, 2000, 2002; Jackson & Thrift, 1996). Philo (2000) also astutely noted the dematerialization of geography through the cultural turn and advocated for a return to the material. Contemplating future directions for geographical research on consumption Jackson suggests, “One possibility is provided by the revival of ‘material culture’ studies that is currently taking place in anthropology and archaeology” (1999, p. 104). He modifies Appadurai’s (1986, p. 5) notion of things-in-motion as the illuminator of both their human and social roles, to tracing a “social geography of things
Entroducing as they move in and out of the commodity state, with different forms of commodification having variable effects on specific social groups in different places” (Jackson, 1999, p. 104). Jackson cites studies such as Cook and Crang’s (1996) research into culinary commodity circuits, and Bhachu’s (1998) and Khan’s (1992) studies on the commodification of cross cultural fashion, as examples of geographical work that follows the trajectory of things. In close alignment with this thesis is Hill (2006, 2007) who has produced some thorough studies on collecting and collections, practices which she claims are inherently geographical because such artefacts carry with them a “multitude of meanings that are intimately linked to such spatial dimensions” (2006, p. 340). Pain and Bailey (2004) provide an eloquent discussion of the movement of geography “From the material to the immaterial and back again” (320); But as Cook and Tolia-Kelly (2010, p. 100) note that despite talk of geography’s “de- and re-materialization, it is important to emphasize that there never has been, nor is there now, a coherent approach to materiality in geography.”

While geographies of consumption have proliferated in recent years (see Castree, 2004 for a critique of consumption geographies), the call to embrace material culture through geographical studies of consumption, have not developed to the degree they have in other disciplines such as anthropology. And while geographers have followed a range of “things”, particularly foodstuffs (Cook 2006; Cook et al., 1998; Cook & Harrison, 2007), it remains that little work has been done on music consumption through a material culture focus. In 1998, Sternberg (p. 330) claimed that “Geographers have given only modest — and recent consideration to the massive role that various types of music have played in the world’s societies and cultures”, something echoed by Connell and Gibson in 2004 (p. 343). There have been recent attempts to rectify this with studies that acknowledge music as a cultural form that actively produces geographical discourses (Cohen, 1991; Connell & Gibson, 2003; Duffy & Waitt, 2011; Duffy, Waitt, Gorman-Murray & Gibson 2011; Finn, 2011; Johansson & Bell, 2009; Krims, 2007; Kruse, 1993; Leyshon et al., 1995; Smith, 2000; Waitt & Duffy, 2010), and similar to other cultural artefacts, it is recognised as possessing the ability to travel from its point of origin to be adapted and adopted by other cultures (Waterman, 2006).

While numerous studies have looked at the movement of music across cultures, the authenticities of sound and the role of music in the making of space and place, few have drawn
on a material cultural geography approach to interpret sounds as having a biography and personal geography. Previous studies have focused on issues of technology enabling a greater reach of sound (Taylor, 2001), the ownership of sound and subsequent issues of copyright (McLeod, Kembrew & DiCola, 2011; Schumacher, 1995), and social, national and ethnic identity associated with sounds and music subcultures (Huq, 2006; Hutnyk, 2000; Regev, 2006, 2007). Schumacher (1995, p. 266) for example, sees rap music and sampling as challenging the notion of a singular origin to that of multiple origins which opposes the idea of a sound belonging to a particular place or group. Frith (2000) sees the increased popularity of world music as evidence of aesthetic cosmopolitanism and the acceptance of the foreign and exotic into the familiar, and geographers such as Smith (1994, p. 236) see sound and music as a way to “culturally inform geography of the political”.

Carney (1998) reviews the advances made in music geographies since Nash’s (1968) “Music regions and regional music” — the first music paper published by a geographer (1998, p. 1). He discusses nine general categories, expanding on his work with Nash (Nash & Carney, 1996), that are encompassed by geographical studies of music: styles, structure, lyrics, performers and composers, centers and events, media, ethnic, instrumentation, and, industry (1998, p. 2). Importantly, Carney reasserts the importance of music geography as a research frontier and suggests that geographers have still to tap into the plethora of music data available (1998, pp. 4-6).

Perhaps this untapped data is why little attention has also been paid to the materiality of sound although there are some studies which adopt material approach to understand the role of music or music objects in everyday life (see for example DeNora, 2000; Tacchi, 1998). Studies such as Feld (1988, 1996a, 2000) essentially trace the use of certain songs and sounds in various musical works, effectively applying a life history approach, and while discussing the ethics of the appropriation of non-Western sounds within Western music, they do not fully pursue the notion of sound having a biography, nor utilise it as a framework for understanding ownership and subcultural guidelines that impact on the use of sound through the mobilisation of such biographies.
While all of these studies have an impact on my inquiry into sound none primarily regard the sound itself having a social life, rather they view it from the opposite direction, focusing on the social circumstances of the people, subcultures or cultures that are associated with the sound or broader scope of music – materiality is subservient to the social. Despite the fact that some research may take an essentially biographical approach, the question is not extended in detail to ask why some sound objects are singularised or “auratic”, while others remain non-descript. Nor is it asked how biography has the power to mobilise certain sounds within certain regimes of value and commodity cycles, and consequently influence the sounds movement within these cycles. Further, little has been done on the making of biographies and construction of personhood through music consumption and production (notable exceptions are Straw, 2002; Wood, 2002; and Duffy, Waitt & Gibson 2007, which discuss the formation of identity and community through music; although this differs from the construction of personhood as presented in this thesis). This is somewhat surprising considering the richness music as field of study can provide for both music and material geographies, because as Cross (2001, p. 32) notes, “Music in its universal guise ... involves not only sound and movement, but also multiplicity of reference and meaning.”

The biography can act both as the story of the sound object’s history and as a way to track the potential options for its future pathways. Taking heed of Carney’s (1998) advocacy of the frontiers of music geographies as well as incorporating his suggested themes of media, industry, and the geographical implications of music technology and the music industry, as useful fields of enquiry (1998, pp. 2,5), I suggest that these themes can be addressed through aural biographies informed by a return to material culture, attributing to sound and music more broadly, an agency that previously has been lacking.

The possibilities offered by a return to material culture can take geographical research in new directions. Whatmore sees such a move as characterised by reinvigorated cultural geographies (2006, p. 602). This corresponds with a shift of materiality from a world “out there” to a more “intimate corporeality that includes and redistributes the ‘in here’ of the human being” and results in what Whatmore refers to as “‘more-than-human’ approaches to understanding the world” (2006, p. 602).
Whatmore’s reference to corporeality and the more-than-human, two themes consistent throughout this project, is suggestive of how these new cultural geographies are framed within this research. By engaging a material culture framework I am acknowledging the agency of objects and the challenge this provides to the stability of the subject/object divide in the way I approach my material. Thus I am engaging in a more-than-human approach to the world through my data. This facilitates multiple potentials of becoming and being known, indicative of a “dialectical relationship between subjects and objects, persons and things, but not one that privileges personhood as understood in the West” (Myers, 2001, p. 21).

To make the possibilities of more-than-human approaches, object agency and alternative personhoods more visible, this thesis will frequently employ comparative examples to locate these ideas contextually. These comparisons include not only music subjectivities but also alternative views to Western notions of ownership. While some may criticise the use of comparative studies, the relevance of such approaches are in accord with Strathern’s (1999, p. 24) argument that such comparisons are justified. As Strathern states, “if one is ready to contemplate the differences between temporal epochs, then it is helpful to be reminded of differences between cultural epochs” (1999, p. 24). This stance is at the heart of this thesis. By applying a biographical approach and considering cross-cultural examples, we are able to discover the process through which certain “things” became appropriate to own, and the historical and cultural positioning of the development of relations between the object and the subject that facilitated this. It is by doing biographies that we realise such categories are not as stable as they appear and that this consequently should encourage us to re-evaluate the position of the sound object and the relations between the so-called object and human agent.

Research question and aims

This thesis takes the following as its central question:

How does viewing sound as having its own life history affect our current ideas of sound and personhood, and what are the subsequent implications for ownership and the division of object/subject?
To answer this, this thesis is guided by a set of several related aims. These are:

1. To present a biographical approach to demonstrate the dynamic nature of sound and to interpret personhood, or indeed subjecthood, through music, forcing the re-evaluation of property and personhood through destabilizing categories of subject/object and questioning possessive individualism.

2. To understand how sounds are redefined and recontextualised as they travel across cultures and genres and between people. Each new use it is put to and the new meanings attached to the sound can be seen as different episodes in its life history. Kopytoff suggests that thinking of objects as if they are biographical, can help us understand, for example, “in situations of culture contact what is significant in the adoption of alien objects – as of alien ideas – is not that they were adopted but the way they have been culturally redefined and put to use” (1986, p. 67). It can also help us understand the qualities that determine why, out of the available assemblage of sounds, some sounds matter and accumulate considerably more capitals than others.

3. Concurrent with the redefinition of sound objects there also exists a redefinition of what constitutes personhood and this has implications for current understandings of ownership. Therefore an additional aim of this research is to understand these redefinitions and implications. This links to the project’s broader scope, asking what can applying a life history approach to sound do for understanding the nuances of ownership of sound within an era of digital sampling and reissues, and whether this can provide a useful alternative framework through which to understand ownership issues around sound and music.

Considering this, my research intends to contribute further knowledge to the study of material and musical geographies, property regimes and the object/subject debate, particularly with reference to notions of personhood.

I present an alternative framework for understanding ownership issues, and attempt to evaluate the validity of this concept as a methodology through the use of case studies. Doing this proposes a methodological shift in looking at the issue of ownership and curation of sound. In removing the focus from solely the legal perspective of ownership and authorship, I attempt to
move beyond the subject/object dichotomy essential to the Western understandings of ownership and the implicit social structures, which regulate power relations. In doing so I follow in the work of other geographers including Pile (1994) and Bondi (1990) who critique the binaries in Western thinking and suggest geographers move beyond these as the “abandonment of dualistic epistemologies offers the potential for different kinds of knowledge to become legitimate” (Pile 1994, 257). Using the words of Perry (2004a, p. 91), the shift proposed by this thesis is “one of theory in practice.”

Chapters and themes

In this thesis, I employ theories from a wider range of sources and disciplines, which is necessary in order to move towards a more coherent and theoretically integrated approach to the topic. This theoretical integration will become apparent as the reader moves through each of the case studies. These accumulated approaches will be discussed in detail with particular relevance to the findings from the fieldwork and the issues these raised, in chapter eight.

The theoretical basis and key concepts that inspire the interpretation of these themes in the context of the questions outlined above are introduced in detail by chapters two and three. I discuss the previous research and the omissions within the current literature that this thesis seeks to fill. The argument for a biographical approach is made and the broader constructs of material culture studies, consumption studies, and the creation and destabilisation of subject/object boundaries, are discussed. The project will take as its major theoretical standpoints material culture studies, allowing for both the social and cognitive life of things, and biographical approaches, which will be applied to destabilise the object/subject divide and to interrogate constructions of personhood and corporeality upon which many assumptions of ownership rely. The main purpose of the chapter is therefore to develop a theoretical framework which will unfold across the subsequent chapters based on the case study material.

These material culture studies and biographical approaches are useful in determining the life opportunities available to certain sounds at certain times. Despite this focus on the biography of certain items of material culture, I discover that this approach enables an understanding of the way human agents construct personhood through their engagement with the material. The
fabrication of persons and “things” through law (Pottage, 2004) is discussed, as are frameworks that critically analyse the construction of these norms, and which provide opportunities for alternative personhoods such as Butler’s (2006 (1990)) heterosexual matrix, Haraway’s (1991) cyborg theory, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizomatic subjects and the process of becoming, and Strathern (1988) and Gell’s (1998) distributed personhood. It becomes clear that in applying the chosen methodology, the notion of an object as an inert and bounded entity is destabilised, as are the current notions and assumptions on which Western personhood is built. Further, it is demonstrated that such destabilising threatens the notions of property law through challenging the concept of possessive individualism on which such law is informed.

Having established the theoretical framework in chapter two, in chapter three I discuss the methodology I developed to conduct empirical research in accordance with the theoretical position. Recognising that doing the life history of sound produces many challenges but is a worthwhile endeavour, I outline the methods I use to address the research question. I describe the applicability of ethnography for the project, in particular traditional participant observation and semi-structured interviews, as well as more contemporary approaches including “follow the thing” frameworks for tracing object biographies, and “soundings”.

After the theoretical and methodological frameworks are established in chapters two and three, the thesis then proceeds through a series of case studies on a variety of musical practices that play a role in shaping the biography of particular sound objects. The practices I study are hinted at in the earlier commentary of DJ Shadow, with the following five key themes appearing throughout the case studies and following chapters. These are:

- Archiving and curating sounds: “It’s just an incredible archive of music culture... And we came down here and I couldn’t believe that there was still something like this. A cache this large and the fact that it is relatively untouched”.
- Crate digging²: “Me and my buddy Stan that I used to dig with, he was a graffiti writer, we used to come here looking for things like you know, ‘Incredible Bongo Band’ and

² Crate-digger is a term used to refer to record collectors who often obsessively collect records and amass a large collection of vinyl. “Digging” refers to looking for records and crate refers to the milk crates records are often stored in.
stuff. Every now and then we’d buy things and Ed or Mark or someone would say, “oh yeah we got a tonne of these in the basement”, or you know, “you should see the basement if you think this is something”.

- **Sampling**: “there’s the promise in these stacks of finding something that you’re going to use and in fact most of my first album was built off records pulled from here”.
- **Object agency**: “So it has a Karmic element you know. I was meant to find this on top, or I was meant to pull this out cos it works so well with this”.
- **Construction of personhood**: “so it’s got a lot of meaning for me personally” (DJ Shadow cited in Pray et al., 2003).

These are recurrent themes, all of which interplay with ownership, subjectivity, agency and personhood. They relate directly to the border between subject and object; human and nonhuman.

Thus referencing the crate digging aspect of Shadow’s comments, chapter four focuses on musician Rob Thomsett’s Australian progressive psych recording *Yaraandoo* that is an album worth considerable cultural capital to crate diggers — Indeed Shadow himself has one of the few original copies that exist. This chapter will illustrate the key concepts which will be further developed throughout the thesis with their application to other case studies. Importantly *Yaraandoo* will act as an introduction to material culture studies, earlier discussed in the literature, and I apply its core theories to understand how the human and nonhuman interact to both define and place value on the other “thing” and oneself.

Chapter four introduces one of the key methods to extending a sound object biographically – the reissue. This plays into the themes of archiving and curating music, while additionally demonstrating the role of object agency through the way such practices influence the construction of personhood in relation to material things. Using the reissue, it demonstrates the impact reproduction may have on the aura certain people attribute to the sound object. This aura is mobilised at various times throughout the recording’s career, which invokes a belief in the increased value of the object. The power of the auratic object to co-define human agents through their relation to itself, and to assert an almost sacred status related to its authenticity and rarity, demonstrates the agency of objects to motivate people’s actions. *Yaraandoo* exhibits
an agency through its ability to help define those people who value it, and in its influence on their evaluation of both other people and sound objects dependent on the relational context.

Drawing from the theme of sampling as informed by Shadow’s practices, chapter five introduces the reader to sample-based music. The chapter begins with an overview of the development of sample-based music and positions this within the context of traditions of musical borrowing more generally. The development of copyright in music is also discussed, starting from its beginnings in the Enlightenment and continuing to its more recent extension beyond music in notated form to music as recorded artefact.

Perhaps an almost voyeuristic element of fieldwork, I follow two producers — Pat Dooner and Sean Dunstan — through their process of making beats. UK based producer Pat Dooner aka Pat D, works across a variety of projects, partnering with MC Lady Paradox, as well as the Broken Orchestra, a project involving both Dooner and another producer, that defines itself as a “collection of feelings, a mesh of ideas and an assortment of plans that take numerous detours on the way to fruition” (The Broken Orchestra, 2012) (Track 2). Sean Dunstan otherwise known as Edward Scrillahands, is a Brisbane based producer and regular on the Brisbane scene. The fieldwork takes me inside Dunstan’s studio where we spend time being taken through his process of beat making.

This fieldwork suggests that although both legal frameworks and subcultural ethics at various times act to constrain the movements of some sounds, there exist counter movements to redeploy such sounds. Thus these negotiations and subversions result in a continual process of de-territorialisation, re-territorialisation and de-territorialisation again. As the sound moves through this trajectory it has the potential to accumulate and distribute personhoods becoming multibiographical sound in the process.

Multiply referencing elements in Shadow’s commentary — personhood, sampling and curating sound, chapter six takes the notion of distributed personhood as outlined in chapter five and applies the theories that have been developed thus far specifically to Sven Libaek’s “Misty Canyon”. Through this case study I demonstrate how a sound accumulates multiple biographies and forges associations with a network of human agents. In this particular example, it is possible
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to recognize how the strength of the connection to its original creator maintains an
acknowledgement of Libaek through the various guises it assumes throughout its life — whether
these be its use as a sample, its selection on a beat compilation, or as a reissue. This strength of
connection plays out in questions surrounding ownership.

The chapter also more fully develops the concept of distributed personhood and the
multibiographical sound object as outlined in the previous chapter. The emergence of a musical
cyborg — part object and part human — begins to take form. This human/nonhuman/subject/object represents a challenge to the restricted version of
personhood provided by the possessive individual, on which copyright law is based, and further
destabilises this foundational construct through demonstrating the tension that is present
between them.

Chapter seven returns to the concept of reissue as discussed in relation to Yaraandoo and “Misty
Canyon”, further drawing the connection between curating and personhood. This chapter is
however devoted fully to the practice of re-issuing sound objects, and regards reissue as
paralleling the activities assumed as curatorial. Thus it heavily reflects the theme of archiving
and curating music. The similarities between reissue labels and traditional curating practices are
discussed through the use of two case studies — New York based punk and powerpop reissue
label Sing Sing Records; and the widely respected Smithsonian Folkways. Aligning this with the
notion of distributed personhood as previously developed in the thesis, contributes to the idea
that reissue labels are not only in the business of reissuing music but by extension are reissuing
people and personhood through this music. Again the idea of a multibiographical sound object
resembling a human/nonhuman music cyborg materialises through the chapter.

Chapter eight provides a discussion of the concepts raised throughout the thesis and highlighted
in Shadow’s commentary. In particular it attends to the notion of the alternative forms of
personhood that are encouraged by and distributed through music. In this way it inverts the
question of ownership from who owns what but to what owns who, for the human, bodily
bound, possessive individual has been usurped by a multibiographical music like cyborg, which
denies the sound object status as mere object and human agent its position as the sole
possessor of agency. What instead is present is a dialectics through which sound object and
human agent both assume parts of the other. Referring to Strathern and Haraway, among others, it is suggested that the definition of what constitutes a person or subject has never been stable across cultures or time, and that the subject emerging from my research is yet another opportunity for an alternative personhood. This presents an obvious tension between the individual defined in terms of copyright and the subject/object that is emerging from the marriage of the human agent/sound object/technology. Alternative options for property law and its application to the regulation of music-making are discussed. Consequently, it is suggested that copyright legislation needs to acknowledge the connections and alternative ways of being in and through music, before it can begin to sufficiently accommodate contemporary music making practices.

What becomes increasingly important to this thesis is the intimate corporeality that both includes and redistributes the “in here” or personhood of the human being. This return to corporeality and the body is enacted through the objects in my study. In line with the object’s developing biographical depth, it acquires an agency through which it facilitates not only its own movement but also those of human agents through the object itself. Essentially the human is distributed through the more-than-human. And this leads us to concern ourselves as cultural geographers, as Whatmore suggests, with “what bodies count and what counts as bodily” (2006, p. 606) or to refer to Butler (1993), “Bodies that matter” and which such bodies are those considered to matter. At the conclusion of this thesis an argument is made for a multibiographical sound comprised of “Somebodies”, which is clearly visualised in chapter nine. This is significant because while the connection between the more-than-human may exist in a fairly clear link to this thesis’ goals, corporeality and personhood may not be as obvious. However, this possible obscurity is negated by remembering that questions of ownership, such as those focused on throughout this project, are based very much on an understanding of a possessive individual – usually a subject, a person – owning an object and thus what constitutes personhood or a corporeal entity is at the very heart of this.

As this thesis will show, people and things are defined relationally and both exert agency to merge into a hybrid organism. Returning yet again to DJ Shadow, his philosophical take on people’s interaction with sound objects and his relationship with music, eloquently summarises the distributed nature of personhood through objects:
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Just being in here is a humbling experience to me because you’re looking through all these records and it’s sort of like a pile of broken dreams in a way. Almost none of these artists still have a career really, so you have to kind of respect that in a way. I mean if you’re making records and you’re DJing and putting out releases you know, whether its mix tapes or whatever, you’re sort of adding to this pile whether you want to admit it or not, you know what I mean. Ten years down the line you’ll be in here so keep that in mind when you start thinking like, “oh yeah I’m invincible” and “I’m the world’s best” or whatever cos that’s what all these cats thought (DJ Shadow in Pray et al., 2003).

Ownership of sounds therefore is more than just an issue of property. Curating, sampling, reissuing, owning and extending the biography of the sound is just as much about curating, sampling, reissuing and extending the biography of people through a distributed personhood. This thesis will argue therefore, that a biographical framework makes salient the accumulation and extension of both personhoods and sounds over time, and that this presents an new hybrid organism and alternative personhoods that current property laws must acknowledge and become flexible to if they are to have the potential to accommodate these.
Chapter 2

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...Then I analysed the sounds one by one, and wrote down the frequencies which I found at the dynamic level of the partials of the spectra, in order to know what the sound is made of, what the sound is, as a matter of fact...The idea to analyse sounds gave me the idea to synthesize sounds (Karlheinz Stockhausen cited in Taylor, 2001, pp. 56-57).

In order to understand sound in the manner Stockhausen suggests, its characteristics must be broken down to “pure” forms before it can be manipulated to form something new. Sound is a “constellation of mediations” (Born 2011, 377) moving through various contexts, modifications and commodifications. Yet Stockhausen’s search for sound is not limited to practitioners of musique concrète and early pioneers of electronic music. Producers, crate diggers, record labels, museums, and consumers all search for, listen to and analyse sounds in their own way. These diverse interests in music all influence the biography of sound.

By employing a biographical framework in order to understand sounds, I address Stockhausen’s analysis through a different kind of material lens. Analysing and understanding sounds within a biographical framework goes beyond an understanding through physics. Sounds are not only constructed by frequencies of atoms detected at the dynamic level of the spectra – a perspective, which reinforces a dualism between object and subject. I contend that sounds are also comprised of biographies and stories, both their own and those of the other human agents and sounds they encounter through their life course. As such they are multibiographical. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical background required for constructing a framework that accommodates the multibiographical sensibilities of sound.

This chapter is divided into four sections. Part one will provide the initial step to achieving an understanding of sound through a material lens by establishing the notion of the materialisation
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of sound. I establish the materiality of sound by arguing that sounds become material through the process of objectification which helps people to not only define what the sound object is, but also to define themselves in relation to the sound object. Thus it is social relationships, which influence the agency and object/status attributed to both people and things. These social relations are however not value free and influence the potential materiality of the sound object, the richness of its life course and the opportunities available to it.

Having established sound as material in this way, it is then necessary to analyse the implications of its materiality. Part two lays the foundations of my approach to sound’s materiality, drawing on insights from material culture studies and object biographies. I argue that a framework informed by these theoretical approaches is a particularly relevant way to study sound, through addressing its materiality, genealogy and agency. I summarise the development of material culture studies, and the relevance of the biographical approach and its intellectual history, before discussing its importance to geography. These approaches are central to my methodology through the emphasis they place on the relationship between people and things, and the potential for the mutual possession of agency.

Parts one and two therefore argue that the materiality of sound is produced through relationships between people and things. In the following two sections I focus on two important dimensions of this process that are particularly pertinent to my study. Part three considers the ways in which certain sounds come to be considered auratic through a range of value shaping practices. In part four, I consider how the processes, which materialise sound, also act to define its boundaries. However these boundaries are unstable and often blur the boundary between object and subject, thus they must constantly be regulated to maintain their fixity and this influences their materiality.

In part three, I begin to unpack the ways in which some sounds come to be invested with significance and value – or aura – through processes of commoditisation, collection, curation, and reuse. These practices emphasise sound’s materiality yet also can facilitate contested claims regarding ownership. Central to sound’s role as material culture is the production of values attached to it, in particular qualities of aura. Aura is a recurrent theme throughout the case studies and the frequency with which it is contested and mobilised by different agents as
demonstrated throughout the following chapters, suggests it deserves particular attention before the reader moves to the case studies. The previous discussion of materiality forces us to reconceptualise some basic approaches to musical qualities, such as aura, in relation to the sound object. Thus the materiality of sound is an important source of potential aura. The diverse ways through which people attribute value to a piece of music and come to regard it as auratic, reflects both the influence that people can assert over music and its associated value, but also the influence sounds can exert over them – an example of the human/nonhuman interaction referenced as significant above. These practices demonstrate the ways in which people both appropriate and control sounds, but as will be discussed in later chapters, the exertion of agency even in these cases is not one-sided human over object dominance.

These three sections outline how “things” are objectified and become known as either object or subject. However, this status is not stable, a factor which is made salient through biographical approaches, and which demonstrates that the borders between subject and objects are able to be transgressed. The border is constantly destabilised through both escapes and reterritorialisation, and to keep objects “fixed” they must be regulated. Acknowledging this, section four builds on this notion of control and regulation not only of sounds but also of bodies and personhoods. Western ideas of personhood are summarised and critiqued, as they will continue to be throughout this thesis, by understanding the relationship between people and sound as being complex and connected. Both sounds and people are regarded as an extension of the other, and both possessive of agency. As such, they blur the boundary between subject/object and the human/nonhuman, and it is this boundary upon which both ideas of what constitutes personhood and property are built. Thus by the end of this chapter the idea that objects can extend the boundaries of human agents and thus destabilise the boundaries between human and nonhuman, is proposed as being partly responsible for the tension between practices of music making which reuse sounds, and, copyright. I will demonstrate how the theoretical constructs developed in the chapter enable us to reach this proposition by emphasising the role that the interaction between human and “things” plays in the social life of sound.
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Part 1 Definitions and significant theoretical concepts

Materialising sound

The notion that sound is material and by extension a part of material culture, is central to this thesis and requires further elaboration. This is particularly pertinent if we are to regard people and things as mutually dependent and interdependent because “we need to show how the things that people make, make people” (Miller, 2005a, p. 38). I am conscious that my discussion on the materialisation of sound might give the impression that I view “music as an object to be analysed ‘in relation’ to other things” something less promising than writings which conceive of “music as a medium through which social life is made and can be known” (Smith, 2000, p. 617). Yet Bødker (2004, p. 5) however, sees this focus on materiality as a way of understanding the intangibility of music. This intangibility is expressed in the common reluctance to attribute value to music outside of its fixation in concrete, social forms and the preoccupation with the way music is mediated (Attali, 1985; Hennion, 1993; Straw, 2002, p. 148).

Sounds are materialised through the process of objectification. Rowlands (2005, p. 73) posits that materialism understands identity through formation and that “the action of making and doing constitute both consciousness and things as a process.” This means that it is through the process of objectification that we create form and therefore consciousness of form. Through this we learn to recognise the subject. It is not until we name and categorise, in this instance the sound object, that we are actually able to recognise it as that. This draws heavily on Hegel who argues that there can be “no fundamental separation between humanity and materiality, that everything we do arises out of the reflection of ourselves given the mirror image of the process by which we create form and are created by this same process” (Hegel, 1977; Miller, 2005a, p. 8). Therefore, as no form exists pre-objectification, it is through the making of things that things appear recognisable, and “everything that we create, has by virtue of that fact the potential to both appear, and to become alien to us” (1987; Miller, 2005a, p. 8).

Philosophically speaking then, sound should not be questioned as to whether it is an object or a subject, because objectification and Hegelian Phenomenology require an understanding that there is no separation between objects and subjects. This is why Miller suggests that Bourdieu’s...
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ideass on the process of socialisation are still relevant, as it provides the social link to why objects attain varying levels of materiality and agency – “It is not just that objects can be agents; it is that practices and their relationships create the appearance of both subjects and objects through the dialectics of objectification” (Miller, 2005a, p. 38). In other words, the materiality of things, and how people identify with these, contributes to people conceptualising themselves as subjects. Extending subjectivity to the sound object therefore requires emphasising how the social relationships around sound give agency and subject status to both people and things.

These social relations however are not value free and it is through categorisation and recategorisation that they become objectified and known to us. But this also influences the opportunities available to these forms. This applies to both people and things as evidenced by Rowland’s (2005, p. 80) discussion of the formation of consciousness as a political act and Steiner’s (2001, p. 212) observations on the classification of art objects as political and central to the emergence of definitions of value. Thus there are varying potentials for the level of materiality attainable. Applied to the sound object, it becomes obvious that all sounds are material but some are more material than others. The movement of some sounds through commodity cycles and associated regimes of value, areas which are “both culturally productive and dynamic” (Myers, 2001, p. 12), enhances their visibility and exponentially increases their potential materiality. As Tilley (2007, p. 17) claims “All materials have their properties which may be described but only some of these materials and their properties are significant to people”. Depending on a sound’s properties it may be appropriated, reused and recategorised, hence the possibilities of the original performance to extend its life trajectory increase.

The values attached to sound engender these possibilities but they are variable over its life course. Thus the way things become known and valued – objectification – is a key dimension of a biographical approach to sound. Take for example Arthur Verocai’s 1972 self-titled album (Track 3), which met with limited commercial success until it was rediscovered and sampled by high profile musicians, including MF Doom (Track 4), Ludacris (Track 5) and Little Brother (Track 6). The album has reappeared through samples, re-issues, DVDs and live performances and was consequently re-mobilised within the commodity cycle. This means that the original material

3 Sampling is the process of taking small sections of larger recorded works and incorporating them into a new musical work. Sampling will be explained in greater detail in chapter four.
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Form has proliferated and by consequence the sound’s materiality has transformed concurrent with exponential growth of biographical possibilities. Verocai’s work has been reinterpreted, relabelled and re-categorised from forgotten album to re-recognised classic. Objectification has increased the album’s mobility within the commodity cycle, which is further accentuated by the variety of formats through which the sound object has been re-contextualised. Yet this is not free of politics if considering that property is embedded within regimes of value. This not only refers to legal guidelines for usage but to subcultural values also. As Veorcai mentioned:

In recent years, Little Brother sampled my work for The Minstrel Show. I like their music and I got paid so I’m happy about that, but I’m very disappointed with MF Doom. He robbed my music on his album Special Herbs and Spices, signing my arrangements in his name. That’s not fair at all (Vella, 2008, p. 9).

Thus the object with the greater materiality achieved through objectification, retains higher visibility and more returns for its usage than the object relegated to obscurity. Taking a biographical approach to the materiality of sound therefore requires acknowledgement of the political element involved in the process of its formation as a recognisable object or subject and the subcultural and legal guidelines, which regulate this. These competing regulatory factors in part determine the material potential of the sound. Understanding these potentials however, requires a theoretical framework through which to investigate the variability in materiality. The next section proposes a framework to through which to achieve this.

Part 2: Material culture studies and object biography

Material culture studies

The previous discussion emphasised the importance of objectification as an area of interest, particularly in relation to sound, but how should we approach the process? I suggest that material culture studies and the biographical approach offer a suitable framework to do this. In a 1954 article, Collier and Tschopik (1954, p. 776) ask “Is material culture, as a proper subject for anthropological investigation, a dead duck?” They respond that such studies have certainly not “lost their significance as subject matter for research” (1954, p. 776). Renewed interest in material culture studies during the 1980s reasserted that “things” mattered and negated
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criticisms of fetishisation by acknowledging that material worlds are “not some separate superstructure to social worlds” (Miller, 1998, p. 3). Miller notes a variety of approaches that arose out of this, from material culture as being text as argued by Tilley (1990, 1991) to the sociological models purported by those such as Dittmar (1992).

Understanding material culture requires thinking in terms that go beyond and beneath surface appearances, emphasising the relationships between things rather than viewing them in isolation. Miller (1998) claims that the uniqueness of this approach is in its focus remaining firmly upon the object but in a way that avoids a simplistic fetishisation of the material form. For example he criticises Latour’s (1993) argument concerning fetishism and science, suggesting instead that it is the prominence of the idea of “society” and the subsequent reduction of everything to the social that is equally fetishistic:

it is precisely those studies that quickly move the focus from object to society in their fear of fetishism and their apparent embarrassment at being, as it were, caught gazing at mere objects, that retain the negative consequences of the term “fetishism” (Miller, 1998, p. 9).

The material culture studies model aims to avoid reducing the object to the realm of its form. Utilising objectification as lens through which to focus on the object ensures the constellations of relationships that make an object significant are not divorced from its form, enabling attention to be directed towards the object without fear of reducing it to fetish.

Having established that “things” are an important area of study Miller shifts focus, inquiring as to why objects “matter”. This manoeuvre enables a diffusion of meaning and places the onus for evidence on why something “matters” on those being discussed rather than reflecting the researcher’s ideas of what is important (Miller, 1998, p. 11). Therefore in relation to this thesis we should ask why do certain sounds matter? Why have these sounds been sampled, borrowed, reissued? Echoing Kopytoff’s (1986) sentiment about things being redefined cross-culturally, it is plausible that in these various phases the reasons for why a sound matters change depending on context. This context-dependent change can be revealed through object biographies, the concept of which I will now discuss.
Biographical approaches and the life history of objects

Objects are never culturally fixed, but always in the process of being and becoming (Woodward, 2007, p. 103).

A central way into this thesis establishing an alternative approach to understanding ownership is biographical and life history approaches. According to Kopytoff (1986, p. 67), viewing objects as having biographies makes visible properties that might otherwise remain disclosed and places significance beyond the adoption of foreign objects to the actual way that the objects have been culturally redefined. An oft cited example of this is Tilley’s observation on object polysemy where, “an object, any object has no ultimate or unitary meaning that can be held to exhaust it” (1994, p. 72; Joy, 2009, p. 543). Tilley illustrates this point with the safety-pin in Britain which changes its meaning dependent on the wearer, yet also in the context in of the interpretation – where it is happening, who is doing the interpretation and importantly why they choose to interpret that particular object in the first place (1985; Hodder, 1989, 1994, p. 72).

The concept of life histories and object biographies grew out of material culture studies, central to the emergent study of anthropology in the late nineteenth century and which concurrent with the then contemporary attitudes, asserted a trajectory of teleologically developing cultures in association with progressively sophisticated objects, thereby supporting social evolutionary theories in the process (Miller, 1987, pp. 110-111). The replacement of flawed social evolutionary paradigms by functionalism and structuralism meant that material culture studies became “invalidated in by their own historical associations” (Miller, 1987, p. 111) and research into these areas declined.

However, archaeology maintained an emphasis on material culture due to its reliance on physical objects to extrapolate information and reconstruct past events and it is from this field that much of the current thought on material culture has been re-integrated into broader anthropological paradigms (Miller, 1987, p. 11). The concept of a biographical approach has been successfully used in archaeology for a considerable time (see Holtorf, 2002; Shanks, Michael 1998; Thomas, 1996; Tilley, 1996) and Lash and Lury (2007) have demonstrated the usefulness of this approach in researching globalism, further supporting its renewed relevance.
That culture could be and should be a part of economic analysis has seen a re-embrace of the cultural turn. Distance from “static” representations of traditional culture as implicated within Boasian culture theory, British functionalism, and French structuralism, has encouraged this embrace, with culture being viewed as shifting, dynamic and continually sculpted by the political and economic context (Ferguson, 1988, p. 491). The relevance of reintroducing culture into the analysis of commodities was reflected in some of the major contributions to the literature, with Bourdieu’s (1984) Distinction, one of the most well known examples, however others also used the approach effectively (see for example Douglas & Isherwood, 1979) (Ferguson, 1988, p. 491).

The concept of object biographies can be traced to Kopytoff’s seminal (1986) article in which he stressed the value of regarding the entire life cycle of the object through production, exchange and consumption, to understanding the object and the networks in which it was involved. Objects were seen not only as in an ever occurring process of negotiation but as being able to accumulate a variety of histories so that the present significance of an object is a product of the people and events to which it is connected (Gosden & Marshall, 1999; Kopytoff, 1986). Thus they had births, deaths and potential rebirths, to which Moreland (1999, p. 209) more recently adds the possibility of “premeditated murder”.

By tracing object trajectories, it is possible to gain insight into the cultural and social factors of production and demand that work to create objects of value, and to determine what the varying degrees of value the object holds at certain life stages can reveal about the culture within which it interacts. As Ferguson notes:

"the key claim here..., is not simply that things are “social,” but that they have lives; the suggestion is that the social dimension of things can be narratively approached through the conventions not only of traditional historical exposition, but through that venerable anthropological device, “life history” (1988, p. 492)."

Importantly, it becomes the object through which social processes are interpreted. While objects have long been regarded as having social roles, as mediators and signifiers of status, gender and social position (see Askegaard & Fuat Firat, 1997; Baudrillard, 1996 (1968); Wertsch,
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1998), the biographical approach extends the idea. Objects are not just representative; they interact and have a place within society. The biography can as Monk (2007, p. 257) claims, represent the kind of “understanding that consists in seeing connections”, that Wittengenstein maintained philosophers should be striving for. It negates the static perception of objects exemplified by early anthropological thought, which saw objects as fixed, representative of “developmental stages” or characteristic of associated cultures. The biography however gives the object social agency. More recently Knappett (see also de Léon, 2006) has extended this concept to propose a “cognitive life of things” something he sees as a corrective to counteract the “prevailing assumption that only humans have cognitive lives, or agency” (2010, p. 81).

When trying to understand music renewal and ownership, the biographical approach will make salient the significant relationships in a sound’s social circle that have claim to ownership. By focusing on the engagement between people and things, this perspective acknowledges that it is not only humans who exert influence, but that the music has a role and rights too. The usefulness for geography of an approach that maps the movement of people and things in a manner that balances the relationship between the material and the human will now be discussed.

Particularly pertinent to geography are the links that such an approach can locate across diverse temporal and spatial terrains – as Knappett observes “certain kinds of associations between things serve to bring them together relationally even when are physically separate; that is to say they are closely connected in cognitive space despite physical distance” (2010, p. 81). Following an object’s movements enables us to view the interconnectedness of things and people, or indeed things and other things.

There are concerns however, that doing object biographies risks emphasis being placed on the social, to the detriment of the material. Buchli (2004, p. 182) claims that contextual approaches, such as those of the biographical, render materiality “subservient to the various social contexts in which it is entailed and as such is undermined in terms of its materiality as in the days of structural functionalism”. Acknowledging this consequence, this thesis seeks to extend the

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4 For an interesting example of commodities in motion refer to Cook’s Follow the things.com, Cook http://followthethings.com/, accessed 7 January, 2013.
biographical method beyond subservience to the social yet without making the social subservient to the material, by regarding each as relationally defined and contingent to the other. This has to some extent been achieved by studies of technology within social contexts (Latour, 1999; Latour & Woolgar, 1986; Lemonnier, 1986; 1992; and Mauss, 1973 (1935) who preempted this in the earlier half of the twentieth century). Buchli continues, claiming that forays into technological studies extended functional arguments for adaptational and technological evolution which shifted focus to the social and cultural factors through which such technologies developed along with their “shifting material/human interfaces” (2004, p. 182). From this perspective, “the materiality of the artifact becomes more the focus of study as an aspect of the social and technological forces that bring to bear a specific technology or corpus of material culture” (Buchli, 2004, p. 182).

However I would argue that there is still a need to further balance the material and the human. An approach that recognises that both objects and subjects have intertwined and mutually constituted biographies is required and to this end I engage theories of the cyborg, distributed personhood, and “Becoming” that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. People’s biographies are partly defined by the objects that are important to them and whose biography they carry. The same is true for the objects — the object biography is inextricably tied to those of the people who interact with it and in this sense it becomes a vessel through which its own biography and the biographies of people are carried through it via the mechanisms of distributed personhood. Instead of talking about the biography of a thing or a person, we need to start conceptualising these as a multiple biography. However, it is first necessary to discuss how sound itself is made material through technological processes and the complex interactions between people and things.

Part 3: Making sound material

Having established the relevance of material culture and biographical approaches to music and sound, it is necessary to look in greater detail at how sound acts as material culture. This requires building upon the biographical framework to consider sound as a commodity and something which is consumed, how this facilitated by technology which shapes sound into an object and how this sound object can then be collected, plundered and separated from its original source and subjected to copyright. Sound thus can be curated and as such the relevance
of material culture studies is reinforced, as an approach informed by this and museum studies, is argued to be a particularly relevant lens when looking at the practices of reissue labels where music becomes in some element, artefactual. I use the term, “in some element artefactual” because although these practices present it as an object, it is more complex – an agglomeration of people and sound biographies.

Because people and things are so complexly intertwined it is necessary to consider both the social and the artefactual in analysing their relationships. Schiffer and Miller (1999, p. 5) claim that as “every realm of human behaviour and communication involves people-artifact interactions, then all studies in the social and behavioural sciences ought to attend diligently to artifacts.” Therefore if we wish to understand the social context of sound it cannot be studied as separate from its relationships with human agents and both geography and musicology must attend to music both as artefact and agent – indeed Straw (1999, 2000, 2002) has made worthwhile forays in this direction. Studying subject and object as part of the same complex can therefore account for variations in status – as Miller notes, even “mundane objects possess some kind of biography through which their significance may radically alter” (1987, p. 126).

A subject is formed through and shaped by the events in its life history. For Hegel (1977), the “definition of the subject is inseparable from the stage of development it has reached” (Miller, 1987, p. 21). This means the subject is a result of its experiences and these carry the subject forward through a sequence of processes in which the subject is extended through creation and becomes aware that it created “something” that appears externally to itself (Miller, 1987, p. 21). This process continues until a dissatisfaction between the consciousness of the external and the level of separation from the subject is reached, yet it is this dissatisfaction that catalyses the recognition and reincorporation of the external back into subject. This transforms the subject by incorporating the external into itself (Miller, 1987, p. 21). The subject is in a continual state of becoming and this impacts on its interpretation. Its life events shape its self. As such the Hegelian model contends that a subject cannot be understood outside of the process of its own becoming and that there is no existence of an a priori subject which acts or is acted upon, meaning that the subject is inherently dynamic and adaptive depending on its experience and projections (Miller, 1987, p. 179). In its own attempt to understand the world “the subject externalizes the outwards, producing forms or attaching itself to the structure through which form may be
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created” (Miller, 1987, p. 180). Material culture can be one of these forms. Depending on the context, externalisations can become increasingly abstract and diverse as the subject is appropriated and incorporated into new realms (Miller, 1987, p. 180):

Although the subject may at certain periods appear lost in the sheer scale of its own products, or be subject to the cultural mediation of a dominant group, and thus fail to perceive these cultural forms as its own creations, the tendency is always towards some form of reappropriation through which the external can be sublated and therefore become part of the progressive development of the subject (Miller, 1987, p. 180).

For example, sampling is a form of appropriation and the distancing from the original form may appear abstract, however it is still a part of that form. Externalised, the sampled sound takes on a new appearance representing the dynamic elements of the form to diversify into the universe of possibilities that are available to it. Considering the variety of media also available through which to produce and present the subject, then these can represent the products which Miller contends may make the subject appear lost and not able to recognise these variations as part of its own cultural forms. Sound heard live, will be experienced differently to that same sound on a recording, or to an audiovisual recording of the performance. These products will influence its circulation globally, culturally and across genres, as the proliferation of form make it increasingly mobile and increasingly able to be reinterpreted and appropriated. The various meanings and re-inscriptions contribute further to the subject, its identity and the way it knows itself.

This identifies part of the problem when it comes to questions concerning ownership and copyrighted sound. At what point does the externalised form become so foreign that the subject cannot identify it? And at what point does this dissatisfaction between the subject and the external reach the level where the subject reincorporates the external and in the process incurring its own transformation in the next stage of its life. This new subject is still in essence the same as the original however through appropriation and reinterpretations it has developed, adding to the complexity of its meanings. It is hoped that the current research may provide insight on this question and one way of achieving this is through tracing a sound’s biographical movements through cycles of production and consumption – processes which facilitated by recording technology concretise sound into object.
Music and technology: Making sound an object

One of the main tenets of this thesis is suggesting alternative perspectives on music renewal complicating ownership. There are multiple examples of sounds being reused or copied and the practice has historical significance despite debates surrounding digital audio technology and sampling, giving it the appearance of a recent phenomenon. The copyright of music is complex however the increased discussion of “borrowing” or “stealing” of sounds is related to the ability to record sounds, exemplified for example by the inclusion of a category of Sound Recordings in the US 1976 Copyright Act, which incorporated protection for recorded sounds. Previously, copyright protection only extended to written music (Oswald, 1985). This essentially “fixed” sounds in place as enabled by recording technologies. Most countries, Australia included have multiple copyrights on musical works – the actual musical work, the written component, and the sound recording of music and lyrics. As a result of international treaties such as the Berne Convention, copyrighted works of member countries are protected in each other’s countries (Australian Copyright Council, 2012). Thus the legalities of reproduction or download of already recorded songs and sounds is a widespread debate.

Recording technology had important implications for the distribution of music and the material available for composition (see Sanjek, 2003; Taylor, 2001). Sounds which were previously unavailable to musicians could be incorporated into new works, significantly impacting on what constituted music and on the opportunities available to sounds. Recordings became, according to Jordan (2008, p. 253), “landmarks in time, representing more than aural experience.” Camilleri (2010, p. 200) claims that within the recording medium “Sound becomes the central parameter to develop” as opposed to pitch, rhythm, harmony and arrangement, and becomes organisational in its own right.

Recording technology concretises sound; enabling it to be accurately duplicated and therefore to be allographic rather than “autographic” (Camilleri, 2010; Goodman, 1976; Gracyk, 1996). Allographic objects are those which can be accurately duplicated and still be considered genuine, such as music and literature, whereas if a work is autographic the duplication is seen as

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5 Haring (2000, p. 5) however notes that the music industry had experienced large-scale pirating since at least the 1960s.
a forgery, as in the case of artworks (Gracyk, 1996, p. 31). However the notion of music being allographic can be contested, as demonstrated by Gracyk’s difficulty in accepting the idea that “any time a musical work ‘duplicates’ another by virtue of notational agreement, they must be the same work” (1996, p. 33). This critique feeds directly into practices of music renewal and contested ownership facilitated by new technologies, as discussed in this thesis.

The possibilities for new sound and its distribution have implications for the potential life histories of sound and its status as either allographic or autographic. Technology has accelerated the pace at which sound can be distributed and increased the opportunities for, and the amount of sound that can be incorporated and repositioned within other music. If Gracyk’s opinion is to be considered, then digital music practices and sampling techniques do not render a particular recontextualised sound any less authentic than the original. It represents another legitimate stage in the object’s biography. This perspective rejects the notion that an object of any type retains only one meaning and use and Gracyk uses Duchamp’s L.H.O.O.Q Shaved to demonstrate how one work can be appropriated to produce a new work of art with “distinct properties in its own right” (1996, p. 70). If music is autographic it has a biography. This reiterates the relevance of the biographical approach and emphasises the complexity of the authenticity and ownership argument. If works are authentic as copies, and can hold multiple meanings, then the issues of representation and ownership are further complicated as it would indicate that ownership and meaning is not the property of a particular group or person but the property of every listener/consumer. New digital music technologies are giving rise to new debates about authenticity and ownership, which I will now consider in turn.

**Aura and music in the age of digital reproduction**

The authenticity of the copy has been highly contested. This is increasingly so in the age of digital reproduction, where the ability of technology to rapidly facilitate copies and subsequent reinterpretation and manipulation of the original form, represents a challenge to the notion of “aura” as an attribute solely belonging to the original. Digital reproduction as a form of objectification, impacts on notions of “authenticity”, “ownership”, “aura” and their associated values, that are commonly mobilised in relation to artistic productions.
In order to interrogate these assumptions on the contested authenticity of the copy, it is useful to look to Benjamin and his insights on the “work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction”. In this Benjamin begins by claiming that in essence, art has always been reproducible but its uniqueness is a result of its unique existence in the here and now of its position, and that the history it has been subjected to during the course of its being produces the uniqueness of the object (Benjamin, 2009 (1936), pp. 229, 231). For Benjamin, this includes not only physical changes to its structure yet also includes the “fluctuating conditions of ownership through which it may have passed” (Benjamin, 2009 (1936), p. 232). Through these fluctuating conditions of ownership, the object of tradition is formed, the “pursuit of which has to begin from the location of the original” (Benjamin, 2009 (1936), p. 232).

These words resonate with sound biographies. The performance has to be traced from the original, or in some cases back to the original, to understand the lineages of ownership and different contexts that have combined to produce the performance in its current guise and enhance its subjectivity. Benjamin maintains that technological reproductions are more autonomous and place the copy of the original in situations beyond the reach of the original itself. This detracts from the “here and now” of the original which is partly responsible for the aura of the original thing (Benjamin, 2009 (1936), pp. 231, 232). This suggests that reproduction enables greater geographical reach and consequently, more opportunities for biographical paths.

For Benjamin, mechanical reproduction had a political and revolutionary potential. Mechanical reproduction could promote “more egalitarian and empowering forms of cultural and artistic expression” which could,

“herald the collapse of long-held hierarchies between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, art lovers and the general public (the ‘masses’) by upsetting the authority vested in an ‘authentic’ work of art and concomitant assumptions about the role of ‘tradition’ in providing this authority” (Franklin 2007, 603-604).

While potentially empowering, Benjamin also recognised that such technologies could be used to oppress. This included potential new forms of socio-economic exclusion and “new
(exploitative) productive forces, new and old forms of social and political economic alienation” (Franklin 2007, 594).

Benjamin’s premise of the nature of art and genuineness in the age of mechanical reproduction must be asked of the age of digital reproduction. What does digital reproduction do differently to mechanical reproduction as Benjamin conceptualised it? Does it offer the same opportunities for empowerment or does it maintain status quo? By extension, how can taking a biographical approach in part answer this question? The concept of aura compliments the life history concept as the complexity of the object’s identity increases and changes both in structure and ownership, as it lives its various lives, and parallels what Benjamin understood as forming tradition.

While for Benjamin the aura lies in the original, in the age of digital reproduction, it can be contended that aura is perpetuated and enhanced through reproduction and this is something that can be asked when investigating the life history of the sound. This then has implications for the type of empowerment that Benjamin realised some forms of reproduction could provide because as Davis (1995, 381) notes, digitalization transfers aura to the individuated copy. So here we have copies, which are both auratic and can be politically powerful. Benjamin had hoped that reproduction could change the power relations of capitalism (Franklin 2007, 597), and certainly digital reproduction has had an impact on this. While based on consumption, digital reproduction has the potential to transform into appropriation and thus to some extent disrupts the commodity flows associated with capitalism, as will be shown further in this thesis when discussing sampling and the subversions of copyright. Furthermore it shows that the transference of aura to the copy has its own potential to be politically powerful by enabling aura to be placed beyond the hands of the elite.

Moist (2008, p. 99) contends that Benjamin’s attitude toward the undermining of aura through reproduction is likely a “lingering high-culture elitism” yet that it is also possible that “he misgauged the new forms aura could take in the modern world” (2008, p. 99). It is unlikely Benjamin could have foreseen the digital age, and as such it is necessary to understand how the perception and production of aura might differ from his original views when looking at aura within the context of the digital.
Bartmanski and Woodward (2013, 16) note that despite Benjamin’s claims that his conceptualisation of aura could extend beyond the realm of art, to which he mainly applied it, he did not prove this sociologically and that to do so would be difficult. They suggest this for two reasons, namely that Benjamin’s “conception of uniqueness is too rigid” and that the “implied understanding of the ‘copy’ is not nuanced enough to account for the variegated forms we use today” (Bartmanski and Woodward 2013, 16). Their critique is based on what they regard as Benjamin’s use of the notion of aura to “disavow what he viewed as modern disenchantment whose symptoms included the loss of aura as absolute uniqueness” coupled with an intention that is normative rather than analytic (Bartmanski and Woodward 2013, 17). Despite this, they do not dismiss aura as a concept. They suggest instead that it be used in an analytic rather than normative manner, and that it should be treated as a more flexible concept (Bartmanski and Woodward 2013, 17). Doing so requires,

... First, replacing uniqueness with other categories such as relative rarity dislodges the concept of aura from its restrictive denotative structure. Second, understanding aura as relational and multidimensional, not just an intrinsic quality, helps grasp the iconic status of ‘mechanically reproduced’ objects that Benjamin deemed improbable (Bartmanski and Woodward 2013, 17).

This reflects what Davis (1995, 381) suggests is the physically and formally chameleon nature of digital reproduction and that as such there is no clear and conceptual distinction present between original and reproduction. Taking a more flexible and nuanced approach to aura can help us more adequately deal with the concept in relation to music. As Patke notes, if Benjamin’s ideas on authenticity and aura as operating on a gradient in relation to reproductive technology are to be relevant to music, then the multiplicity of music’s existence can separate authority from authenticity and thus, although authenticity is attached to ‘the here and now’, “music permits this to be actualized on a gradient in repetitions that do not aspire to, or need to aspire to, a first idea of an origin or an original” (Patke 2005, 189). Patke eloquently suggests, that music “hibernates in potentiality; and its transmissibility is not diminished by copies, on the contrary it requires iterability” (2005, 200).
The idea of aura being relationally produced and operating through categories such as relative rarity, and therefore enhanced in the age of digital reproduction will be referenced through the following chapters. It may be relevant to investigate whether the mobilisation of some biographies is to explicitly increase aura and by extension commercial or artistic success or whether conversely aura is maintained through its nonmobilisation. An example of this, as discussed in chapter five, are producers who hide the source of the sample by either using rare and unknown tracks, or treating the sample in a way that it becomes unrecognisable yet maintains the essence of the original, and thus demonstrate their skill as crate diggers and producers.

This plays into Benjamin’s argument that “authenticity is socially constructed and transcends ‘mere genuineness’” (Belk, 1995b, p. 61). In both cases the biographies constructed for sounds could potentially be seen as the mobilisation of aura for commoditisation and circulation. The biographical approach suggests that aura, like the sound object, is always in the making. In this it exists alongside, law, copyright, ethics, and profit, as one of the qualities that are mobilised in the process of objectification. Therefore asking what digital production does differently to aura, and examining this via life histories, can reciprocally comment on the nature of biography, the values that biographies can produce, how these can mobilise the commoditisation of the auratic object and consequently how this interplays with the ownership of the object.

It may be apt to ask whether the biography is the product of the aura or whether the aura is the product of the biography. To align with Kopytoff’s approach, it would be in the biographical moments of singularization that aura is attained (Belk, 1995b, p. 61). Referring to the Verocai example, the album’s initial limited commercial success, correlated with limited aura and the lack of aura prevented its attainment of both an outstanding biography and increased materiality which work symbiotically with increased potential life pathways. Consequently, not being of visible commercial value, its circulation within commodity cycles and any chance of acknowledgment being limited, determined that its auratic presence was constrained. In essence, to achieve aura the product must be recognised as existing within a regime of value, without which the object is limited in what it can attain.
Conversely, the Verocai album’s current aura and mythical status noted above would arguably not have been so profound had it not been due to its years in obscurity. People have constructed a heroic narrative for the music, achieved also because of the music’s agency expressed through the influence it commands since its rediscovery. In that sense both the biography and aura are interrelated in that the biography is the product of aura – Verocai’s continued success and the opportunities for new pathways for the album and Verocai himself, is partly due to its biography; and the aura is the product of the biography – the aura of the sound object would not have been as great if it had not had such a rags to riches story.

To answer the question posed earlier, what does digital reproduction do differently to mechanical reproduction, as Benjamin understood it? I suggest that mechanical and digital reproduction do not necessarily diminish aura but can increase it, and instead of asking how aura relates to reproduction which fetishises the original, forgetting that the original itself had a prehistory, it should be inverted to ask how biographies mobilise auras and how these contribute to materialities and extended life pathways. One important area where the mobilisation of aura, authenticities and values plays out in relation to sound is copyright law which will now be addressed.

Music, curation and copyright law

Before I can offer alternative perspectives from which to view property issues surrounding practices that reuse and renew music, it is necessary to summarise the current debates concerning music ownership. It is important to note that this thesis is not a legal piece but merely critiques property law from a cultural perspective. Cultural analyses of musical creation derived from existing works “can lend insight into ways in which copyright theory can better conceptualize both copying and creation within copyright frameworks” (Arewa, 2007, p. 478). Therefore, the broader ideals rather than the intricacies of property law will be interrogated.

Acknowledging this, it is necessary at this stage to define the use of the terms “property” and “creative labour”, as used in this thesis. Property refers to the relationship between subject and objects, and the boundaries between these enforced by law. As Hirsch, following Barron, notes, what is important to intellectual property is “originality” and the then causal relationship between creator and thing (2004, 176; Barron 1998, 56). This ties in with creative labour, as
property law attributes the creation (labour) of a thing (object/thing) to a creator (subject/person) (Hirsch 2004, 177). This perspective sees law as a technique of attribution itself, “creative of a creator/creation relation which can be socially enacted by intellectual property law” (Hirsch 2004, 177). Importantly, law becomes a technique of both establishing and perpetuating boundaries in that only,

... particular arrangements of subjects and objects are perceived as amenable to the dictates of law. The integrity of law depends on the ability to maintain its boundaries; to resist the influence of other ways of conceiving, for instance the creator and creation relation” (Hirsch 2004, 177; Barron 1998, 86).

The construction and maintenance of such boundaries is significant because it is part of what is challenged by new technologies, new forms of creative labour, and the contestation of object and subject through these. Digital technology is forcing a re-evaluation of copyright and the limits of fair and transformative use, as well as extending the demographics of those infringing copyright. Indeed the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) (2012, p. 21) recognise this and cite Kirby (2011, p. 4):

...worthy individuals and citizens, many of them children (some maybe even judges), are knowingly, ignorantly, or indifferently finding themselves in breach of international and national copyright law. And they intend to keep doing exactly as before.

Attempts to deal with this increasing infringement demographic have resulted in the Copyright Council Expert Group suggesting that,

...permitting private, non-commercial, transformative uses would preserve the balance in copyright law between interests of creators and users, and preserve public respect for the relevance and integrity of copyright law (ALRC 2012, p. 38).

However, this suggestion while addressing some of the issues raised by technology in non-commercial contexts is Eurocentric in terms of what music is copyrighted, and the personhoods it permits. It does not accommodate for the borrowing of unprotected works from other
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cultures, nor does it address deeper issues of subjectivity. But first, let us look at how technology is implicated.

Recording technology makes intangible music into something tangible, which can then be collected and curated. The acts of collecting and curating document the sound objects’ biography through categorising and these practices combined with the increased tangibility of sound facilitate ownership of the object through copyright. Hesmondhalgh (2006) questions the relationship between sampling and copyright practice moving beyond the more commonly researched black musical practice, as in rapping and hip hop, to sampling use in other music genres. Recent research in music and copyright has focused on the discrepancy in the fit of assumptions about musical creativity emplaced in Western property law and practices concerning musical creativity with those of African-American musicians and indigenous musical cultures (Greene, 1999; Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 54; McLeod, Kembrew 2001; Seeger, 1992).

The tenuous relationship between Western systems of ownership and creative musical practices such as sample-based music arises when Western copyright protects perceived “original” works against unauthorised copying, whereas sample-based works produce a “derivative” product (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 54). Hesmondhalgh cites Self (2002, p. 359) claiming that the debate over copyright is a reflection of,

...a broader tension between two very different perspectives on creativity and a print culture that is based on ideals of individual autonomy, commodification and capitalism; and a folk culture that emphasizes integration, reclamation and contribution to an intertextual, intergenerational discourse.

This divide is complicated by musicians who operate within “print culture” perspectives, yet who maintain an intergenerational and intertextual discourse through the influence of other musicians and styles, enabled by the dialogue with technology which Jordan (2008) refers to. This influence is not restricted to culturally similar music; with cross-cultural borrowings leading to what some refer to as “world” music.
The questions surrounding musical borrowing are complicated by new technologies that facilitate and accelerate West and non-West musical encounters. Stephen Feld has written much about the nature of “world” music and globalisation and the issues he raises are relevant to this research. Feld (2000, pp. 149, 151) refers to “world music” as being “curated,” a term which lends itself to the biographical approach of understanding sound. Citing Feld’s example of “pygmy pop,” Hesmondhlagh suggests that there exists in musical borrowing and copyright an element of cultural inequality which raises questions concerning the politics of representation and social and cultural hierarchies (2006, p. 55). While acknowledging that cross cultural borrowing is responsible for influencing innovative new musics and in part broaches social differences, Hesmondhalgh suggests that it is not free from the politics of cultural inequality, claiming that “relatively dispossessed peoples have had a proportionately large influence on global popular music” (2006, p. 55).

Many of the academic debates concerning these cross-cultural musical encounters cite the appropriation of ethnomusicological recordings by Western musicians into commercially successful songs with little acknowledgement or financial benefit to the groups from which the original samples were taken, as problematic (see Feld, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Lysloff, 1997; Zemp, 1996). This creates an exotic other, the category of world music, which negates issues of ownership as the term suggests something that is universally owned and has a right to be shared by everyone. Musicians who have used this to their advantage both artistically and financially such as Paul Simon and his Graceland album (1986) and David Byrne’s Rei Momo (1989), can be viewed as exercising a type of cultural imperialism. As Feld writes, curation of non-Western musics by western pop stars increased the commercial viability of world music in the 1980s and was facilitated by “the ability of Western pop music elite and their record companies to finance artistic forays into a world that would quickly come to be experienced as geographically expansive and aesthetically familiar” (2000, p. 149).

This process did not stop with the world music craze of the 1980s. Novak notes the popularity of “World Music 2.0” which rather than an appropriation of non-Western musics by Western musicians is the redistribution of regional music recordings as “new old” media (2011, p. 605). Despite the labels that both issue and reissue the regional music claiming that their work is “a
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corrective to the limited scope of academic field recordings” (Novak, 2011, p. 606), Novak sees the movement as an updated version of the debates surrounding world music:

World music, with all of its fascinated culturalist desires, anticorporate tones of collaborative resistance, and uneasy debates of appropriation, is back — but a new online public has recast its circulation as an open access project of redistribution (Novak, 2011, p. 606).

Despite being veiled in claimed ethical integrity and open access, World Music 2.0 still relies on the treasure hunting of sounds from foreign cultures, an activity which will be discussed below.

**Schizophrenia and plunderphonics**

The case studies described in this thesis do not explicitly involve music plundered from non-Western musics (the exception being chapter four which discusses the musical appropriation of an indigenous myth), yet most focus on music taken with or without permission from other sources, and therefore engage in either plunderphonics, schizophrenia or both. Regardless of a sound’s procurement, by following its biographical pathway, it is possible to make salient the motivations for its accumulation of economic or cultural capital, whether it constructs authenticity or aura, and whether it plays a role in the construction of personhood for those who collect the music – again emphasis is placed on the intertwining of people and sound.

The collection and curating of sound engages a politics of re-presentation and representation and in this sense is comparable to cultural imperialism – the subject of many recent debates (see Feld, 2000; Lysloff, 1997; Zemp, 1996). Schafer’s (1969) idea of “schizophrenia,” refers to the splitting of sound from its original source and reflects the increasing capacities of digital audio technology to manipulate sound. Separating sound from source brings to mind the practices of sampling and reissue and searching for sounds retains undertones of sonic imperialism, similar to the processes undertaken to procure collectable objects that became the property of private collectors and museums. This has implications for both the biography and ownership of the sound.

Likewise, Oswald’s (1985) term, plunderphonics also references the impact of digital audio technology on the conceptualisation of sounds and ownership, describing technology’s ability to
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extract and reposition sound objects. Lysloff (1997, p. 212) interprets plunderphonics as a
nervous word which asks if the “idea of ownership and the notion that acoustic materials, such
as sound samples used to inspire composition, could themselves be considered compositions”
(Oswald, 1992, p. 116). Lysloff sees a correlation between the increasing sophistication of audio
technology and the ambiguity in authenticity, ownership and appropriation. At stake is not only
the re-mixing of sounds yet also the “re-presenting” of the cultures from which they were taken,
with Lysloff noting that many popular artists, in particular Paul Simon, David Byrne, and Mickey
Hart, assume a position that is both curatorial and yet simultaneously exploitative of other’s
music (1997, p. 212). Recently, many sample focused producers have been searching for “new”
sounds in foreign, often third world countries. A notable example is popular American hip hop
artist Madlib’s Beat Konducta series, including the Beat Konducta in Africa and the Beat
Konducta in India (Track 7) in which he mixes tracks from those regions, combining the
aesthetics of beats and mixing with non-American sources. Indeed, his work has been referred
to as “stewardship” and described as “attempts to curate the past for music lovers of tomorrow”
(Blanning, 2009, p. 33).

This represents the flow of sound as a cultural commodity across geographical and cultural
borders, and musical genres. Like other material objects, this involves a politics of
representation and engages an aesthetic of value associated with economic and cultural capital.
Being in a curatorial position reflects Western ideals of having to preserve and protect the
“Other” to ensure the continuation of its cultural history and identity. At the same time it
exoticises the “Other” — in this case the sound. Similar to colonial collecting activities, the
hunting and sampling of sounds is imperialistic. The harder the sound is to locate and procure,
the greater its rarity and value. By consequence, niche specialist labels and producers, are
extending their cultural capital through these sounds.

Following Bourdieu, this is representative of the class structuring of consumption. Through
exhibiting the cultural and intellectual knowledge of form and genre and appreciating this
beyond a purely emotional level, consumers of niche re-issues or rare samples position
themselves in a manner that emphasises their cultural capital. As Born (1995, p. 28) suggests,
“the pleasure is highly mediated and readily articulated in exegeses and judgments”. The
consumers of such musics have become connoisseurs. This is value added by the work dedicated
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to finding such sounds, something, which will be discussed in chapter four. Participating in plunderphonics, while questionable both politically and proprietarily, is part of the process of gaining the knowledge required to increase cultural capital.

Cultural capital is one aspect of Bourdieu’s cultural theory that has been popularly taken up in studies of music sociology. Nick Prior provides an overview of the debates that surrounds the use of Bourdieu in the “new” sociology of music. He notes the cultural turn in music sociology towards Bourdieu’s work in the 1980s and which, also influenced by Becker, developed into an interest in questions of taste and popular music and an updated political ecology of music industries (Prior 2011, 129). Much of this work applied Bourdieu’s ideas on bourgeois aesthetic pleasure to the taste cultures of ‘lower’ cultural forms such as the popular music scene (Prior 2011, 129). The idea of cultural capital therefore became relevant to the aesthetic evaluations within popular music because “music’s currency was bound to processes of communication and sociality” (Prior 2011, 129). Prior continues, noting that although there has been recent critique of Bourdieu’s work reflective of a shift in broader intellectual fashions and from class and youth groupings to a more encompassing range of musical phenomena (Prior 2011, 129), that Bourdieu’s work has remained current. Cultural capital is one of his ideas that retain such resonance.

Cultural capital is one of two predominant forms of social power described by Bourdieu. In his landmark text, “Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste” (1984), cultural capital is both “an indicator and a basis of class position; cultural attitudes, preferences and behaviours are conceptualized as “tastes” which are being mobilized for social selection” (Lamont and Lareau 1988, 155). As a form of capital, it derives its value from intellectual and cultural authority, and it operates in an antagonistic yet complementary relationship with economic capital (Born, 1995, p. 26; Bourdieu, 1984). The division comes between the market sector, which seeks immediate economic gain and the avant-garde, which is motivated by cultural capital and “long-term cultural investments with no significant market in the present” (Born, 1995, p. 26). As Born states, the two systems work in an oppositional yet dependent manner in that the “accumulation of cultural capital is predicated on a refusal of economic success” (Born, 1995, p. 27). However, Born continues, quoting Bourdieu’s understanding of the paradoxical nature of the avant-garde in that it eventually accumulates “substantial economic profit from
the cultural capital … originally accumulated through strategies based on denial of the ‘economy’” (Born, 1995, p. 27; Bourdieu, 1981, p. 286).

This paradox can be seen in the reissue and small “art” record labels. By reissuing certain records and sounds, marketing them as rare, rediscovered finds rescued from obscurity, they create an aesthetic of distinction. Unlike the major labels or mainstream producers, these reissues initially rely on cultural capital rather than economic returns. However through their remarketing, emphasising the notions of authenticity and the “cool” of the nonmainstream, they in turn incorporate increasing amounts of economic capital. This reflects Thornton’s (1995) extension of Bourdieu’s concept to define “subcultural capital”, which creates value through distinguishing oneself from the mainstream. This type of capital “comprises artefacts and knowledge which, within a specific subculture, are recognized as tasteful, ‘hip’, and sophisticated” (Jensen 2006, 263). These qualities of taste, hipness and sophistication pervade the discourses surrounding niche reissue labels. The chosen sounds have transitioned from “lost” or “forgotten” records, to sound objects that have gained cultural capital, capital which provides status and stratification from the general assemblage of records, and facilitates their re-entry into the commodity cycle. This will be demonstrated through the case studies.

This contrasts with the market orientated and commercial labels, a comparison that will be further developed in chapter seven. While participating in both the practices of schizophrenia and plunderphonics, the monetary motivations outweigh those of connoisseurship, and rely on a less articulated audience to appreciate them. In this instance, it represents “naïve sensory and emotional gratification, baser denotative and connotative readings, and so a (relatively) unmediated pleasure” (Born, 1995, p. 28).

Tracing a sound’s biographical trajectory within each realm of capital can therefore reveal the cultural politics, economic motivations, and commodity cycles that act to inform and reproduce certain hierarchies and which in turn have implications for ethics, authenticity and ownership. Questions of ownership and authenticity are intricately tied with forms of capital and the biographical approach to studying the sound can provide further means to reveal these complexities, how they operate and their relation to the construction of personhood. The next section will discuss the links between schizophrenia and plunderphonics with institutionalised
practices of collecting by framing collecting and curating sound through the lens of material culture and museum studies.

The relevance of material culture and museum studies to sound biographies

Sampling sounds, plunderphonics, and property debates all suggest that sound, like other objects is “collectable” and furthermore able to be curated. It makes sound something tangible, that can be “owned”. It is then possible to represent the sound in a new context or in some cases, preserve it for future generations. Consequently, it is useful to apply the same critical turn that archaeologists, archivists, and museums have had to address over recent decades when dealing with representations of property and rights to ownership, to practices pertaining to sound. Thus this section will outline the relevance of museum studies for my consideration of sound biographies, particularly those sounds which have been collected, curated, preserved and re-presented. Therefore in the following discussion, I will draw links between the curatorial practices of reissue labels and producers with those of museums by situating music as cultural heritage.

Music is an important element of cultural heritage. This is reflected in many museums’ increasing interest in building musical collections that represent not only the traditional ethnomusicological recordings, and music of “High Culture” such as classical genres, but also more “popular” musical forms such as rock, jazz and pop. McIsaac (2007, pp. 12-13) notes traditional museum offerings have been widened to include areas previously outside of the museum, including rock music and a range of commodities; Shuker (2004, pp. 312-313) notes that institutional record collecting includes “sheet music and other printed literature, in addition to recordings, musical instruments, and popular music ephemera”; and the relevance of collecting traditional music as heritage has been long recognised (Dournon, 2000). Such institutions are vestibules for artefacts sourced from cultures both foreign and local, and the flow of these objects as cultural capital, is metaphoric for the same processes by which sounds and music travel across cultures, are recorded and transformed into something physical and then represented, modified or preserved, by “curators” of the musical world. Yet this representation is not without its own politics of representation and access.
The opportunity to explore a curated collection is restricted in terms of which people can access what objects, and what senses are allowed to engage with the collection. In their discussion of museums and colonial legacy, Edwards et. al (2006, p. 19; Duncan, 1989), claim that although museum environments rely on the prohibition of multisensory experience, generally privileging the visual, the other senses still remained central to the investigation of material culture, yet “they became part of the privileged access accorded to a new priesthood of curators and museum professionals”. These activities often occur in areas of restricted access, further delineating between the public and private spheres and marking out the hierarchical boundaries which regulate access (Edwards et al., 2006, p. 19). This same division of spheres can be related to record labels. While they offer the replica product to the public, the actual raw material is restricted to those “curators” within the label, and these are the people who are able to exercise the privilege of access to the sounds. Continuing their discussion on museums and their increasing professionalism and bureaucracy, Edwards et al. claim that such processes reveal the:

Western paradigm of museum preservation which works to arrest change in the object’s material state, that conservators have become the ultimate border guards, authorized to regulate the behaviours of people toward museum objects and uniquely possessed of the right to change the material states of objects (2006, p. 20).

The same can be said of record labels and producers who in possession of the sound are the gatekeepers who can choose to preserve and present it in “authentic” but “new” forms and formats, or to totally re-present it, through manipulation of sound samples. Much of this type of curation is through private collections, which as will be demonstrated act as a resource for both reissue labels and producers. The value of private collections, and collectors themselves, as well as the link between these and museums are acknowledged by professional curators (Leonard, 2010; Martin, 1994) – Leonard remarks:

For the purposes of popular music curation private collectors must be seen as a resource in themselves, not just as an out-of-house storage facility which can be drawn on to plug gaps in museum collections (2010, p. 179).
This idea of collecting and curating sound is explored in relation to reissuing music. I interviewed both small labels and a larger institutional label — Smithsonian Folkways — to understand the processes behind reissue. These labels make salient the link between label and museum and demonstrate that the processes they undertake align with the curatorial. There exist in the process the same ethical issues that confront the colonial practices of collecting which have informed and constitute many museum collections.

Unlike museums however, digital technology has enabled ordinary people to access sounds and use them in ways, which have previously been unavailable. Once the sound has been recorded and commoditised it is possible for anybody to access and use it. Technology as such, destabilises the cultural hierarchy and gatekeeping privileges, although this can be contested as demonstrated by debates regarding equal access to technology (Cockburn, 1992; Heenwood, 1999; Leggon, 2006; Mossberger et al., 2006; van Dijk, 2005).

This instability is however corrected by copyright law which acts to restore homeostasis to the hierarchy and ensure dominant power structures are maintained — as Strathern (1996, p. 30) comments, “Ownership gathers things momentarily to a point by locating them in the owner, halting endless dissemination, effecting an identity”. The fact is however, that musical borrowings and the production of cultural heritage have a long history, prior to the Copyright Act. Applying the biographical approach to studying a sound can therefore reveal a sound’s history and that of the human agents involved in its story.

In the preceding sections I have situated sound as material culture. I have outlined an approach to the study of material culture through a focus on the process of objectification, in which consciousness of things as objects proceeds in relation to the self as subject. Thus the definition of subject and object is relational. The biographical approach provides a framework for understanding these processes. I then discussed some of the key influences currently influencing sound objects, including digital technologies, processes of distinction-making focusing on aura and legal regulation. These practices establish the different trajectories of sound objects through their objectification, and suggest that the biographies of sound are implicated in the biographies of people engaging in these. The multiple biography that results from this interaction and the mutual possession of agency by both human and nonhuman, complicates the notion of
ownership and property. It is therefore relevant to question the foundations on which personhood and the separation of object and subject are based. This will be discussed in part four.

Part 4: Personhood

**Sound to subject and subject to sound**

What is the relevance of sound to personhood? The multiple biographical entity that results from the enmeshing of people and sound is the epitome of the dialectical relationship between the human and the nonhuman that is expressed by Miller’s description of objectification. The multiple ways through which things become understood as objects and the contrasts between the West and non-Western perspective of this has repercussions for “owning” sound – the status of the object changes.

Thus this section will look at both the making of subjects and objects. First I will discuss how law separates subject from object creating very specific and limited forms of personhood necessary to maintain the boundary that distinguishes them. This will be followed by a discussion of the potentials of object subjectivity and the hybridisation of person and thing that can exist if these boundaries are transcended. For this I draw on Haraway’s cyborg metaphor and Deleuze and Guattari’s lines of flight and theories of becoming. I suggest that digital technologies and practices of renewing sound through sampling and reissue are destabilising and deterritorializing the boundary between person and thing and which impacts on the notion of the possessive individual. Instead I suggest we begin to think about the possibility of becoming multibiographical sound.

**Personhood**

Personhood can be theorised in numerous ways. Radin (1982) reviews the common four types of personhood established through theories of the person. In these she identifies the Kantian view which focuses on universal abstract rationality and which sees personhood as possessing “no component of individual human differences, but rather by definition excludes the tastes, talents, and individual histories that differentiate one from another” (1982, p. 962). Radin claims that
this is closest to the persona of Roman law – an entity possessing legal rights and duties which now denotes human being (1982, p. 962).

Next Radin refers to the Lockean view of the person which emphasises the attributes of self-consciousness and memory (1982, p. 963). Indeed Kitcher (2011, p. 27) highlights this element from Locke:

...since this consciousness always accompanies thinking, and ’tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls self; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal Identity... (Kitcher, 2011, p. 27 citing Locke, 1690/1975, pp. 2.27.29, 335).

Both Kant and Locke purported views that are according to Radin “compatible with thinking of persons as disembodied minds or immaterial essences” (1982, p. 963). The emphasis for Kant is on rationality and autonomy (Radin, 1995, p. 424) and for Locke on memory and self-consciousness (Noonan, 1978).

This contrasts with the combining of humans and bodies to create a unified whole in which persons are seen as human bodies. As such “continuous embodiment is a necessary but not sufficient condition of personhood” (Radin, 1982, p. 963). This line of thought aligns with the ideas of Wittgenstein.

The final group of theories are those suggested by critics of traditional understandings of the person. Instead these theorists suggest that a projection of a life plan into the future is equally as valid as memory or continuing consciousness (Radin, 1982, p. 963). From this perspective people are constituted by “their past and future integrated by their character” (Radin, 1982, p. 964).

These understandings of personhood establish the division between person and thing denying the relationability of object/subject noted above. Radin recognises the increasingly debated terms of object and subject regarding property suggesting that the term “subject” is problematic as it obscures “the role of context in the construction of personhood” (1996, p. 510). Objects are equally contested. Western property ideology sees “property rights which are attached to
objects” which exist external to ourselves (Radin, 1996, p. 511). Traditionally these objects are regarded as “fixed” but increasingly this fixity is becoming problematic, “Works and the medium that embodies them are ceasing to be objects, and becoming processes” (Radin, 1996, p. 512). The debatable distinction between persons and things is recognised by Pottage (2004, pp. 1, 3) who critiques the “fabrication of person and things” in which the law treats the category of person/thing as something which is embedded in the world and thus natural. He refers to Thomas’ (2004) work on Roman legal institutions, which develops the idea that res (things) and personae (people) are fabricated from legal categories (Pottage, 2004, p. 25). Initially human beings could be classified as things in some contexts, however later in the Roman law tradition, various transactional personae constituted by legal technique amalgamated into the single legal form of a single legal persona. Only with the infusion of Christian doctrine (specifically, the doctrinal conjoining of mortal, perishable, body and immortal soul) did this artificial person merge with its biological substratum to compose a “whole” form ... If some compulsion could be exercised over the body so as to reduce it to subjection or turn it into a commodity, the human being became a thing. This was a one-way route: persons lapsed into things, not the other way around. In other words, “person” was the weighted side of the distinction, and the body was just the medium through which the person was exposed to the danger of just becoming a mere thing (Pottage, 2004, p. 30).

This fabrication of personhood as distinct from thing operates in modern legal systems and is no more apparent than in the debates surrounding biotechnology (see Hirsch, 2010; Parry, 2004; Sharp, 2006). With body parts and genes now essentially “detachable” the distinction between person and thing is current within individual bodies (Pottage, 2004, p. 31). In such contexts “‘Wholeness’ has to be fabricated by making body abstract, by exploiting its equivocal status as both person and thing to fictionalise its continuing integrity” (Pottage, 2004, p. 31). Body parts may be detachable and as such a “thing” but they are never seen as a “thing” in their own right – they are always referred to as part of the whole to which it once belonged (Pottage, 2004, p. 31; Strathern, 2004). This keeps the distinction between person and thing alive,

...this fabrication of ‘wholeness’ allows the body to continue being the gage upon which personhood is staked, and as a result the distinction between person and thing remains cast as an asymmetrical division (Pottage, 2004, p. 31).
It is this same wholeness that precludes the possibility of alternative personhoods operating within contemporary music making practices. As this thesis will argue, music enables a distributed type of personhood, which decenters the notion of a unified body and person. It also challenges the idea of an autonomous and rational agent as this distribution is frequently facilitated by the actions of others and results in a multibiographical subject. This multibiographical subject is a hybrid of both persons and “things” and therefore destabilises the fabricated distinction between these entities. Thus copyright, like legal attempts to deal with the problems for fabricated unity presented by biotechnology, acts to reunify body and personhood and at the same time distinguishing it from the sound objects associated with that person necessary to maintain the distinction between human and thing. Despite, postmodern claims of fragmented, fluid “protean” selves (Lifton, 1993), Western discourse, as Wolputte (2004, p. 264) notes, has “every interest in symbolically representing the person as indivisible and ‘one.’” While limiting personhood it also limits the agency of objects. The alternative discourses are discussed in the following section.

**Cyborgs and nonhumans**

The materialisation of sound and the historical basis of Western personhood having thus been established, it is necessary to look at the different forms of agency inherent in the relationship between people and the sound object. Analysing agency, as facilitated by a biographical framework, of both humans and nonhumans, becomes significant as this thesis develops. It becomes particularly salient when thinking about human agency and object ownership because the type of person and their bodily boundaries as outlined by law are limited. As will become clear, the boundary between the subject and object is neither clearly defined nor stable. As Casper (1994, p. 842), appearing to align with Butler’s ideas on performativity (1993, 2006 (1990)), comments, “there may be as many ways to do gender and/or human as there are sites at which, and technologies through which these categories are accomplished”.

Perhaps of particular relevance to a thesis that strongly aligns with a material culture approach is the concept of the cyborg. Most notably associated with Donna Haraway (1988; 1991) the idea of the cyborg presents a subject that is the combination of the human and the nonhuman. This shift is anchored in an ethical stance, as Baker (2000, p. 102) notes “Cyborg-status was more
than a simple and joyful release from anthropocentric values”. Such a body/technology hybrid, according to Garoian and Gaudelius (2001, p. 333), “enables us to expose, examine, and critique the ways in which the body is implicated and bound up in our understandings of art, technology and identity.”

This capacity to envisage a hybrid human is not dissimilar to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of becoming animal although Haraway criticises their “disdain for the daily, the ordinary, the affectional rather than the sublime” (2008, p. 29) with their focus on pack rather than domesticated animals. But the point to be taken away from Deleuze and Guattari here, is the potential to envision humans as a possible becoming of other, “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming Imperceptible” (1987, p. 256) in a way that challenges the object/subject binary — “In the experience of becoming, when one is fascinated by something before oneself, when one contemplates something before oneself, one is among it, within it, together in a zone of proximity” (Lawlor, 2008, p. 176). Brown notes that it is “Through becoming, we join with the other animal in a zone of proximity that dissolves our identities and the boundaries that we set up between us” (Brown, 2007, p. 262). Crucially for my purposes, Brown sees Deleuze and Guattari’s Becoming-Animal as decentering the position of the human agent:

In the process, the human being moves out of a position of dominance. She slips out of the position of centrality that enabled her to establish the binary of human-animal to begin with (Brown, L, 2007, p. 262).

This decentering of the subject reflects the qualities of distributed personhood. Such personhood can be understood as an alternative to twentieth century Western ideas of the self, from which the “person” is “an agent, a subject, the author of thought and action, and thus ‘at the centre’ of relationships” (Strathern, 1988, p. 269).

These various perspectives on “becoming” reflect Miller’s concept of objectification discussed earlier. In relation to this thesis, this allows us to interrogate how humans and music interact as mediated by technology and how this relationship entangles each with the other producing a human whose body and personhood reaches beyond their accepted bodily limits and a sound object which becomes increasingly personified and thus moving beyond the restrictions
discussed by Buchli (2004, p. 182). In accord with a biographical framework, both the human agent and the nonhuman contribute to each other’s biographies, and have the potential to accumulate many individual biographies over time. This creates what I have termed multibiographical sound.

The relation of objects as extensions or personifications is not a new idea nor is it restricted to Western technoculture. Strathern (1999, p. 13) discusses the reification of objects, the way in which entities are made into objects when they assume particular forms, such as “gift” or “exchange”, something similar to what Kopytoff (1986) refers to as singularization. In Euro-American thought, entities become “things” through this process of objectification as it identifies the properties through which they become known and comprehensible (Strathern, 1999, p. 13). Strathern also mentions the notion of personification as making objects knowable through the relations people have with one another and is seen as a process of humanising nonhuman objects. This is considered a special case within Euro-American cultures, however within certain non-Western contexts it is more common, with Strathern citing the Melanesian context where people “sometimes think of themselves as having to work to make things appear in their appropriate guise” (1999, p. 14). In this sense the attributes that people know objects through, determine the form the of object and consequently the form can only appear if it exhibits the appropriate properties — as Strathern notes, “a return gift is not a return gift if the items are too few or too poor” (1999, p. 15).

Strathern’s idea of the role of objects in social agency is in part influenced by Gell’s (1998) theory on art and agency. Strathern develops the complex relationship between objects and people further through the concept of distributed personhood. Here people can exert influence in places and times beyond their physical presence and location. This is done through the circulation of objects, which have strong connections to past makers and consumers (Gosden, 2004, p. 170; Strathern, 1988). As Gosden notes, “distributed personhood usefully reminds us that people’s efficacy is not limited to the confines of the body and a social persona may consist of things as well as a body” (2004, p. 170).

Things therefore, do not always appear as they are expected to and what constitutes their expected forms is more often than not, socially constructed. This reflects Butler’s (2006 (1990))

I adapt this idea of the matrix to that of what is understood as appropriate object and subject roles. This idea will be further developed in chapter eight however it is necessary to briefly outline it here. For Butler:

...the matrix generates a series of ideal relations between sex, gender and desire such that gender is said to follow naturally from sex and where desire (or sexuality) is said to follow naturally from gender (Lloyd, 2007, p. 34).

Intelligible genders therefore are those that adhere to these sets of relations. Yet despite being presented as natural, such relations “are the effect of the constitutive and violent work of certain gender norms” (Lloyd, 2007, pp. 34-35). Butler’s matrix highlights the “regulatory and fictive nature of compulsory heterosexuality” (Lloyd, 2007, p. 35) and thus works to destabilise this.

Thus the matrix for my purposes is directed towards object and subject agency, and ownership. The matrix currently at work in the world of cultural products, property and human agency, is one which generates a set of relations between people, objects, and property which sees agency as naturally following on from human subjecthood, denies objects agency due to their object status, and thus ensures ownership of things is only possible for subjects. Further the type of subject as made normative through property laws is that of a possessive individual, and whose agency in entity is tightly bound to its body. It makes natural the idea of human agent being a possessive individual. Thus objects with agency are culturally unintelligible and subsequent acts to regulate them through the matrix are intertwined through legal and cultural guidelines.
The matrix not only maintains normative ideas of agency, and the human and nonhuman, but it also has implications for how these are regulated both legally, culturally and (sub)culturally. By extension such a matrix also influences the channels through which objects become products of ownership and determines who does the owning of what. But why is this important? Both the practices of sampling and reissue have the potential to extend human and object agency in distributed form. Breaking free from their matrixed positions, object agency and alternative forms of personhood have bearing on the issues of ownership of sound, the notion of which will be discussed below.

**Property and personhood**

Copyright law, founded on ideas of the individual as constructed in the European enlightenment (Seeger, 2004, p. 74) allow for only a limited understanding of personhood and thus a consequent restriction of rights to ownership. Perhaps a pertinent example of the interconnectedness of property and personhood particularly in relation to sample-based music, are copyright suits over use of vocal samples as defamation. Chuck D famously sued the Notorious Big over the “Shut ‘Em Down” [vocal] in the track “Ten Crack Commandments” something he later claimed was pushed further by the songwriters behind the track and was not actually him having an issue with Biggie:

Taking [my] voice to me is a defamation of character, but really the songwriters pushed the issue as saying, “Alright, that’s part of our song too and we helped write that, so where’s our royalties? Who handles that?” (Arnold, March 12, 2012).

This demonstrates that distributed personhood, does indeed exist through sample-based music with Chuck D’s agency extended and appropriated by Biggie through its reuse, but the law ensures that any such lines of flight are reigned in through prosecution. Property law certainly works to maintain the possessive individual.

The approach taken in this thesis sees music as a line of flight for distributed and alternative conceptualisations of personhood to that considered the norm in Western societies. Unlike many ethnographies which situate alternative personhoods in the realm of “Other” cultures, this thesis attempts to displace this division by conducting fieldwork in the context of Western
cultural groups, demonstrating the mobilisation of multiple types of personhood and agencies that challenge the idea of a simple duality between non-Western and Western personhood. This confers with Willerslev’s opinion that such “bipolar types of personhood, even if conceived as ideal types, are widely overdrawn” (2007, p. 70). Willerslev makes reference to a Lacanian perspective of the body experienced as both object and subject. So while we can view the individual body as either object or subject, we can extend this notion to incorporate the idea that personhood can be experienced in or through objects.

Objects can therefore mediate, extend, absorb and accumulate personhood with regards to both human agents and thinghood. Knappett eloquently brings both the human and material elements together to describe this process:

How do human cognition and agency come to operate themselves through and beyond the surfaces of the body? How can the artefact be considered cognitive and vice versa?...In other words, mind is in matter and matter is in the mind (2006, p. 239).

This thesis contends that the matter and mind — or material and subject — bind is expressed through sound. Waitt and Duffy observe that bodies can be envisioned as an assemblage of sounds (2010, p. 461) and I extend this to suggest, that sound is an assemblage of bodies. Sound accumulates the biographies and elements of people that act on it and consequently carries these essences of human agents, and potentially those of other sound objects, with them, resulting in distributed personhood. The subject and the object extend each other’s potentials, forming a heterogeneous subject, in which the person cannot be separated from the object and the sound object cannot easily be extracted from the human agent. Yet beyond this, this musical cyborg mass has the potential to accumulate multiple biographies throughout its journeys and thus can accommodate multiple authorships in a way that current property law is too rigid to acknowledge. Thus when questioning the ability of current law to deal with the issues raised by contemporary music making practices, it is pertinent to also question the personhood the laws are built upon, and the alternative types created by practices that renew the biographies of already existing sound objects.

Conclusion
The increasing mobility of sound as a result of rapidly developing technologies means that sound as well as personhood is no longer “fixed.” This demands a new framework through which to understand the complexities of the sound object/subject and personhood. A biographical approach provides this, making salient why certain sounds matter and the relationships between the human and the nonhuman, demonstrating that the boundary between them is not clearly defined. A biographical approach ensures that sound is not just seen as social but that it is multibiographical and has social lives. Acknowledging the plurality of its lives is key to this new approach to sound. Paralleling Whatmore (1999, p. 31) such an approach requires,

...ignoring the effects of established contours and boundaries that mark the social landscape but, rather, recognizing that these spatial parameters inhere in a host of socio-technical practices – such as property, sovereignty and identity – that are always in the making, not in some a priori order of things.

This thesis therefore is a needed contribution to this area of research. It enables the traceability of sounds’ movement from places of origin to spaces of consumption and across genre and material boundaries. Such border and boundary traversing allows us to challenge the notions of sounds’ “proper” consumption. It is this area where issues of property enter the equation, as they exist to regulate expected consumption. It is only through tracing the biography of these objects that we are able to recognise these consumption practices. This approach recognises what Clarke, Doel and Housiaux (2003, 86) note in that “Consumption changes over space as much as it changes over time, revealing not only that consumption matters to geography, but also that geography matters to consumption”. And consumption matters to personhood.
In the previous chapter I established a theoretical approach to analysing sound, in which I emphasised the relevance of understanding sound as material culture, as well as the applicability of biographical approaches in achieving such perspectives on sound. Taking such a wide range of ideas is necessary to work towards a theoretically integrated approach to understanding the tension between traditional notions of property and personhood and the possibilities afforded by new music-making techniques. In this chapter I outline the methodology I developed to pursuing empirical research informed by this theoretical position.

There are multiple ways in which one could approach the study of music, but I believe the aims of this thesis are particularly suited to ethnographic approaches. Indeed, Schloss (2004, p. 6) claims that ethnography is a suitable analytical tool to inquire about issues in popular music and can ground general theoretical claims in the experience of the individual. However, while I will make use of ethnographic practices, I will also be using a mixed methods approach to the thesis. For the sound objects discussed, ethnography can only get me part of the way to understanding their biography. Acknowledging these limitations, I also gather my data through interviews, either in person, via phone or email, with interviewees that play a pertinent part in the sound object’s lives.

Thus, the first section of this chapter outlines both the usefulness, and the challenges, of ethnography as a method for studying the life history of sound from a material culture perspective. Addressing both Frith’s (1982) and Cohen’s (1993, p. 123) lamentations regarding the lack of ethnography within popular music studies, the second section outlines the specifics of the ethnographic method that I employed in the thesis. I discuss how I chose my case studies by being open to agency of the sound objects, thus acknowledging that they were choosing me
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as much as I chose them, and then outline how I approached analysing them and their associated relationships. This includes participant observation and semi-structured interviews, as would be expected, but also a “Follow the Thing” (Cook, 2004; Cook 2006; Cook & Harrison, 2007) influenced approach in tracing the movements of sound objects, and doing “Soundings” as advocated by Wood et al. (2007).

Material culture and ethnography

Ethnography used in material culture tends to emphasize careful variations of what people actually do and in particular do with things (Miller, 1998, p. 12).

The biographical approach can be seen as an ethnographic approach to understanding an object revealing that the “material identities ascribed to things are not their essential properties but the results of specific relationships of people and things: their very materiality is potentially multiple and has a history” (Holtorf, 2002, p. 49). Archaeologically speaking, this approach can fracture into “short” and “long” life histories, where short life histories study things until final deposition as per the classic post-processualist approach taken by for example Schiffer (1972), whereas long life histories study objects up until the present, an approach adopted by archaeologists such as Tilley (1996) influenced by theorists such as Kopytoff (1986), Latour (1987) and Strathern (1988) (cited in Holtorf, 2002, pp. 49-53). Translating this archaeological language for the purposes of this thesis would mean that deposition is in this context the original recorded sound — before it is commoditised, reissued or sampled.

Long life histories suggest that life histories do not end with deposition but continue through “activities such as discovery, recovery, analysis, interpretation, archiving and exhibiting” (Holtorf, 2002, p. 54). However both short and long life histories share the assumption that the although people can give a thing any meaning they want, their material essence remains the same, something that Holtorf claims can be avoided by using an ethnographic approach (2002, pp. 49-56):
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One of the most important characteristics of the ‘ethnographic’ method is that the observer maintains independence from both normative prescriptions of how things ought to function and from insiders’ own perceptions of what they are doing (Holtorf, 2002, p. 56).

This thesis will adopt the long life history approach following the sound through its uses after its recording and materialisation. But as we will see, taking this approach to sound presents a series of challenges. Sound objects can be approached as commodities — and in this sense, existing ethnographic approaches to production and consumption can offer a guide. But sound objects are also particular kinds of commodities — here, the aurality of sound objects presents challenges to standard commodity ethnographies. I now tackle each of these issues in turn.

**Sound as commodity: Production and consumption studies**

One priority for studying sound from an ethnographic perspective is to understand how material is treated, why some material is chosen to reuse rather than others, and reveal possible disjuncture between private and public selves. In this case it could reveal whether record labels and producers treat sounds differently or are guided by a different set of principles from earlier on in their career, whether they aim for a less recognisable sound, or have changed their decision process due to licensing limitations. Ethnographic approaches can reveal the ideologies of collecting practices and music use, which impact on the biography of the sound object. To achieve this type of nuanced understanding it is possible to look to production and consumption studies as one potentially useful model of an ethnography of things.

Consumption is inherently tied to the study of material culture and the materiality of objects. The act of consumption significantly impacts on the life history of an object. Colloredo-Mansfeld (1995, p. 211) recognises that the:

> ...sense that consuming involves the irreversible commitment of goods requiring their replacement emphasizes the passage of time, sensory experience, the occupation of space – phenomena basic to human experience and economic practice.

Thus the concept of biography can be linked to material culture and materiality, making salient the passage of time through consumption, the trajectory through which the commodity will pass and its relationship to economic and social experience. As Kopytoff notes, commodities are
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generally considered as items that have use values, as well as exchange values, but they must also be culturally marked as commodities, and as such there exists a moral economy shadowing the objective economy of visible transactions (Kopytoff 1986, 64). This reflects Appadurai’s notion that “commoditization lies at the intersection of temporal, cultural and social factors” (1994, 84). As such, references to commodities throughout this thesis refer to Appadurai’s and Kopytoff’s position, that a “commodity is not one kind of thing rather than another, but one phase in the life of some things” (Appadurai 1994, 85; Kopytoff 1986). This emphasises the relevance of applying a biographical approach to sound in order to understand the concepts of, and stages of production, consumption, ownership and reconsumption, which it may experience.

Expected consumption practices within Western cultures can be challenged by the appropriation of commodities. For example, within music, sampling and mash up practices have challenged the way people listen to certain music, juxtaposing songs and song fragments in settings and mixes that are removed from its original intended listening context. The practice of sampling and plunderphonics (Oswald, 1985, 1986, 1992) is a reaction to the rules that seek to regulate practices of listening and music consumption. Closer and more detailed ethnographic analysis of consumption processes is likely to reveal a more optimistic alternative to the hegemony of consumption in that people and objects can still subvert the way they consume and are consumed. People appropriate commodities in the way that best suits their current need, which in turn, results in multiple possibilities for the biography of the object. Objects can be “consumed many times over in different cultural contexts by different people” (Herrmann, 1997; Narotzky 2005, p. 86) which will affect the value of the commodity in certain exchanges and which are context dependent (Narotzky 2005, p. 86).

My decision to approach objects biographically, and hence ethnographically, is in part informed by previous studies that have analysed commodities through ethnography. Lash and Lury (2007) produced an exemplary commodity ethnography through charting the biographies and global movements of certain objects. Their approach provides a useful model for the current project. Heavily influenced by Appadurai (1986), Kopytoff (1986), Miller (1995 1987) and Gell (1998), they ask for example:
If we follow a particular film back in time and forward along its biographical trajectory: what are key components of story? Who are central figures? What are key moments? How are pivotal transactions managed? Where is the film released, successfully or otherwise? What apparently tangential issues divert, recast and redirect the initial project? Throughout how is the object transformed – and how does it transform from stage to stage, context to context? (Lash & Lury, 2007, p. 16).

They primarily draw from Appadurai for their method of “following the object”, and through this do not give primacy to any one stage in the life of the object (Lash & Lury, 2007, p. 19). This avoids a determining instance in which one stage of the object’s life defines it, and it negates the simplistic reductionism of a complex sequence of relations, which obscures the changes in objects by one structure from a set of predefined forms attaining reality (Lash & Lury, 2007, p. 19). The benefits of using a biographical approach were seen as allowing a focus on the actual movement of the object and avoiding global versus local dualism (Tsing, 2005). Lash and Lury (2007, p. 20) see this as using a “humanist method: but what was involved was humanism of the inhuman” and see their “ethnos as a community of things”.

Biographical approaches can therefore, contextualise “things” in new ways, allowing new avenues of interpretation. Lash and Lury emphasise that their understanding of media as objects dictates that media are not texts and cannot be interpreted as such (2007, p. 29). They argue that media have become more like objects than texts and contingent to this is a shift in the way culture is now experienced through “perception, experience and operationality” (Lash & Lury, 2007, p. 29). As they claim (2007, p. 29), “You interpret texts” but “You use objects”. However, it would appear that using a biographical approach, as they do, would enable both the interpretation and the use of the object. If agency is given to the object then it is not merely a matter of the object being used. It becomes another way in which the object acts on the world and the changes in these uses can be read like a text, hence the appropriateness of the notion of biography.

Like Lash and Lury’s (2007) media objects, sound too can be made tangible and material at least in a purchasable format. With music the recording of sound and advancement in music technologies facilitates this process of becoming material. By extension the materiality of recorded sounds enables an ethnography that can accommodate the aural.
Ethnography as auditie turn

Sound recordings themselves can be incorporated into the ethnographic process. The move toward sensory ethnography, has legitimised sound recordings as ethnographic evidence with Drever claiming that “soundscape composition [could be] ... a pertinent substitute to writing an academic ethnographic report and vice versa” (2002, p. 25). This is something Feld (1982, 1996b; Feld & Brenneis, 2004) has recognised as the concept of acoustemology, which is the “exploration of sonic sensibilities, specifically of ways in which sound is central to making sense, to knowing, to experiential truth” (Pink, 2009, p. 142). Feld extends this focus to sounds’ connection with place claiming that the “experience of place potentially can always be grounded in an acoustic dimension” (1996b, p. 97).

Recognising that place can be experienced acoustically suggests that both the presence and absence of sounds are meaningful, and can contribute to an understanding that goes beyond the visual. Pink discusses the relevance of aural ethnography by emphasising the inevitable presence of sound, with both noise filled moments and silences as potentially laden with meaning. She claims “making sounds and silences explicit in the representation of ethnographic places and experiences can be an evocative route to multisensory ways of knowing” (2009, p. 144). Sound can therefore be seen as both a method and subject of study for ethnographic practice. While sound environments specifically are beyond the scope of this thesis, they are not disregarded. In fact it would be impossible to research into people’s interaction with sound objects without acknowledging these, because sound and people are so interconnected that it is impossible to study one without the other. This would also align with Witmore’s argument for increased “diversity of modes of engagement and articulation than those orientated towards paperwork and visualization enabling an “auditie turn” (Welsch, 1997, 2006, p. 281).

It is timely that there is a turn to the aural within the social sciences. Since the advent of recording technology and the advances in the dialogue between music and technology into the digital age, both sound and images are continually open to reinterpretation, something that both Weibel (1998) with reference to images, and Jordan (2008, p. 255), focusing on sound, acknowledge, “with images and sounds freed from the material circumstances of their origin, they become open to recontextualisation.” With the increase in technology to harness sound
there is even less reason to relegate such studies as too ephemeral. As Witmore (2006, p. 278) states, “without our instruments and media we would not see anything,” so as the technology has developed it seems appropriate that investigations should embrace the new sensory qualities that can be explored with them and cast off the sound/temporal and visual/spatial dichotomies that have constrained more holistic approaches in the past.

Embracing the aural as an analytical tool can provide greater depth to interpretation of the material world. Witmore (2006, p. 271) criticises the textual interpretation advocated by academics such as Shanks (2004) and Hodder (1989) acknowledging, that although post-structuralist approaches are a valuable interpretive tool contributing more than a solely visual analysis, the textual analysis of the material world has limitations in the extent of its interpretation. Of all the sensory faculties available, sound is one of the easiest to mobilize (Witmore, 2006, p. 272), yet the potential of this property has not been fulfilled. This is the result of long held philosophical traditions separating the visual from the aural and within Western thought, associating vision with space and hearing with time (Witmore, 2006, p. 272), although Shapiro claims that criticisms of the visual are due to the “failure to distinguish among the different modalities and conceptions of vision, among different visual practices and visual regimes” (2003, p. 6).

This denial of the auditive is perpetuated in recent work on material culture and materiality. Jackson (1999, p. 98) critiques Harvey’s (1990) visual metaphor of “unveiling” suggesting we look for metaphors beyond the visual. He cites Whatmore’s (1995) terminology of “distancing” as a geographical metaphoric option however this still does not negate the primacy given to the visual. While Thrift (2005) posits three new material registers, sound is omitted. Despite looking at materiality in the context of new technologies, specifically what Thrift (2005, p. 231) refers to as “paratextual machines,” the material registers he puts forward are the screen, software, and the reworking of the human body (Thrift, 2005, p. 233). Although Thrift makes reference to hearing in regards to asking what senses will be extended due to new technologies in the future, he fails to give it the primacy it deserves, despite his acknowledgement that,

New materials produce new surfaces. New frames produce new forms of calculation. New avenues for, and combinations of, the senses are called into being. Perhaps if these things could be measured, we would find more senses, more possibilities for thinking (Thrift, 2005, p. 232).
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Music is an obvious way into the new possibilities offered through the auditive turn. Wood (2002, p. 60) claims that in the instances where music is incorporated into geography (citing Leyshon et al., 1995; Pocock, 1993, among others) it is treated as a cultural product, rather than an experience that can be felt and embodied. Sound is a new possibility for thinking and it is time to attend to it not just as a “perhaps” and as the “possibility” that Thrift seems to regard it. Indeed as Smith notes, “What we lack is not contact with the sounded word, but a sensitivity to sound, a curiosity about how it operates, how it affects us, how it interacts with various media” (1999, p. 22).

To understand sound through sensory ethnography would require both using sound and studying the meaning of a sound through its biographical trajectory. In the process it would address the lack of research into the audible in material culture studies. Not doing so would leave us with what Corradi-Fiumara claims is “an incomplete rationality (eloquent but deaf)” (1990, pp. 58-60).

Method

Having outlined the benefits of an aural ethnography approach for the study of the life history of sound objects, I will now outline the elements of the methodology, which I developed in my research, in order to accommodate such an ethnography. As noted earlier however, due to the nature of the sounds I have chosen to study, traditional ethnography can only provide partial insight and I therefore need to supplement my research with additional methods. These will be discussed below. It is also important to note, that this research proceeds as continuously unfolding and relies as much on the direction the music and the people I engage with through it, force me to take, as well as being directed by the questions I wish to ask and answer. Christophers (2011, 1076) astutely notes with relation to a “follow the thing” approach to money that the challenge is, due to its continuous circulation unlike other commodities, in asking where should the “analysis actually begin, and where and when should it end?” I contend, however, that the same challenge is represented by music and I hope that this will be demonstrated to the reader, through showing that sound has a continuous potential for reuse,
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but that this varies dependent on biographies and its relationships with other sounds and people. So where do we begin?

I began by asking, how do I produce an alternative framework for understanding ownership issues and the relationship between people and sound? I looked to Wood, Duffy and Smith (2007), who in “The art of doing (geographies of) music” argue for a new framework through which to approach music. In their paper, Wood et al. also noting DeNora (2000; DeNora & Belcher, 2000) admit that traditional ethnography, while useful needs to be furthered when considering sound, and thus as a musical method requires an audio-dimension (Morton, 2005; Smith, 1994; 2007, p. 874). They use this audio enhanced ethnography to alert themselves to noises and “soundings” which are parts of music, and music within concert halls, recording studios and musical performances.

I wish to further this approach to music through an audio-inspired ethnography by employing an approach that makes the music the subject of the ethnography rather than the people interacting with the music. Therefore the subject matter of traditional ethnography is inverted to place emphasis on the music itself. It also adds the sound object, to Wood et al’s concert halls, recording studios, and performances, as a site through which to study music. The approach is inspired by perspectives that acknowledge the agency of nonhuman actors, such as the biography of things (Kopytoff 1986) and Lash and Lury’s (2007) ethnography of objects associated with film. An ethnography of sound therefore involves tracing a particular “sound object’s” movements through uses and reuses, interviews with people associated with the sound object in its various forms and dependent on the sound, and studio-based fieldwork of sampling and beat-making.

The methods used in this thesis acknowledge the challenge discussed by Wood et al. (2007) in order to contribute to a biographical framework to apply to the aural. I took a qualitative approach to produce an “Ethnography of Sound.” The methods used included:

- Semi-structured interviews
- Soundings
- Tracing of movements of sound objects
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- Participant observation.

Having selected my methods however, I also needed to decide upon case studies to which I could apply them. Thus I will first discuss my process of selection regarding the chosen case studies, before further discussing the methods.

Case studies

In this thesis, I have chosen a series of case studies through which to study different processes that contribute to the biographies of sound objects. The case studies were chosen on the ability to procure sufficient amounts of data to answer the research questions. These choices were directed through connections with beat-making and record collecting subcultures, and the plausibility of the selected labels, musicians and producers agreeing to be interviewed. For research that specifically focused on the practice of reissue, rather than following a particular sound object through reissue as in chapter six, the labels chosen to interview were selected both pragmatically and in relation to a set of criteria. The labels had to be willing to be interviewed and discuss their practices, and it was preferable if they were not a branch of one of the major labels. Niche and specialist labels were preferable for this research as I was more interested in profiling sounds whose stories are relatively unknown compared to the often globally renowned and hence profitable acts that the major labels reissue and whose histories are already well documented. Thus I discuss Sing Sing records, a New York-based punk and power pop label, and Smithsonian Folkways, which is literally a museum of sound. Two other labels, The Roundtable and Votary are also discussed in chapters three and five as part of the broader story of two select sound objects.

For the chapters focusing specifically on a sound object, the chosen sound object must have been either reissued, sampled or both. However, if this thesis emphasises the agency of sound, then other factors must be considered beyond these criteria.

Multiple sound objects could fit the criteria so other factors must enter the equation. I regard this as a process of mutual agency where it was not solely myself that found the sounds but that the sounds also found me. I was introduced to Yaraandoo and “Misty Canyon” through
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connections I had established with crate digging and beat-making communities during previous research and these connections helped me to establish a relationship with sound objects and connections with the people who facilitated their renewal. At the beginning of the project, there were dalliances with many sounds, but none promised the continuity and substance of *Yaraandoo* and “Misty Canyon”, both sound objects that had been reinvigorated through recent reissue, but which had certain illusive, aloof, unobtainable qualities — the rarity of *Yaraandoo* and the desirability of “Misty Canyon” — these were star sounds within their genres, and my appreciation of these genres had been shaped in part by my previous research.

However, it was due to the relationships I had made during previous research, that these sound objects became approachable. Networks formed with both people and sounds, facilitated my introduction to *Yaraandoo* and “Misty Canyon”, and without the assistance of these gatekeepers, I would still be waiting for an invitation to get to know the sound objects. As will become increasingly clear throughout this thesis, the “life history” of sound is the product of both sound objects and human interaction, and the actual research methodology employed is no different – it relies on establishing a working relationship between people and sound.

Ethnography

For each of the case studies, a range of ethnographic methods were employed.

*Semi-structured interviews:*

I conducted semi-structured interviews with musicians, producers, DJs, record labels and record collectors. Questions focused on their opinions of an approaches to sample-based works, both the original work being sampled, and the work that used the sample; processes involved in reissue including selection of material to be reissued, the production of reissued material, and marketing strategies. The data derived from these interviews was combined and correlated with discussions concerning similar topics from online forums, and online record vendors which also had material regarding the potential importance, quality and value of a sound object.

Due to the specificity of the sound objects I studied — sometimes rare recordings or belonging to specialist genres — the number of potential interviewees was quite small. Thus for the two
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sound objects I followed, *Yaraandoo* and “Misty Canyon”, I choose interviewees who would provide the most insight. This included the original artists, Rob Thomsett and Sven Libaek, the record labels that reissued the material, collectors of the albums, and one of the groups who had sampled “Misty Canyon”. The information that could be gained from more interviews would be limited. There is a comparatively small group of people who are sufficiently knowledgeable about the chosen works, and respondents lacking proximity to the production, reissue, collection, or sampling, of the works, would be unable to be reached.

The rarity of some of the sound objects selected for study, also demonstrated the limits of ethnographic analysis in this context. For albums that were created decades ago, or for sites that I was unable to be physically present at, such as some of the reissue labels or the studios in which the sounds were originally recorded, I had to rely on interviews instead. These were conducted either face to face, over the phone, or via email. Thus there are certain stages in sound’s lives that are unable to reached ethnographically. This does not however, diminish the validity of the information gained from interviews.

**Soundings**

In their paper Wood et al. suggest that “music is practised. Methodologically, this provides scope to take soundings: to consider how sounds are produced to trace the way they are made into music” (2007, 873). But they also suggest that “Soundings, however, do not amount to music” (2007, 875). Instead soundings, are the parts of music, the rehearsals, the “markings rather than the making”, the “patchwork of sounds”, “Almost disembodied”, “an approximation of the music”, “disjointed and distracting”; “Or disembedded. Because it’s disrupting that flow in time; it’s actually chopping out bits” (2007, 875). Soundings then, approached from this perspective are never complete and therefore are not “music”, only the “approximation”.

This however, is one angle in which this thesis diverges from Wood et al’s take on soundings. This is because a significant part of this thesis is based on sample-based music — a genre which is primarily made of “snatches of sound” (2007, 876) and often disruptive of accepted and expected listening aesthetics because of that. Therefore taking soundings is a key method of research with beat-makers. The focus of my fieldwork with them was these snippets of sound, because it is at the scale of soundings, that changes in the sound object’s components can be
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understood. Importantly it is the combination of soundings and their associated agencies that comprise the multibiographical sound object.

Tracing movements of sound objects:

Conducting a biography of sound objects requires tracing its movements through commodity cycles, material and aural changes, as well as fluctuations in value. This required basic web and music press based searches to find mentions of particular sound objects, either on online retail sites, or review pages, discussion boards and collecting the data these provide on the movements of the sound object and its fluctuating biographical “eventfulness”, much along the lines of the approach taken by Lash and Lury (2007).

Participant observation:

As part of my research I both participated in and observed practices of crate digging and sampling. This not only familiarised me with both practices and therefore guided me in discussing the activities, through both informed questions and insights, but also allowed me to observe any discrepancies between what people reported they did and what they actually did.

Ethnographic fieldwork is an established approach to understanding music scenes. For example Ben Malbon’s work on clubbing effectively uses the ethnography to give ‘voice’ to the youth active in the scene, producing a multi-voiced narrative that moves work and the researcher beyond insider/outsider authority (Malbon 1999; Bennett 2002). Likewise, Thornton (1995) has produced an excellent account of subcultural hierarchies and capital through ethnography of the club scene. These accounts however, are scene based and perhaps do not address the intangibility of music that can be so hard to capture and relate. In this regard, Anderson’s work on recorded music and memory is a move towards this nuanced aspect of music. Anderson draws upon case studies of music in everyday life, which both removes the analysis from the spectacle of subcultures, to focus on the connection between “recorded music and daily acts of remembering” (Anderson 2004, 3). In the context of this thesis, the site is similarly intimate, focusing on the relationship between people and a certain sound, to produce an account of their mutual intertwining in each other’s lives. This is somewhat reflective of Prior’s (2009, 82) discussion where he devotes “attention to the digital recording practices and changing forms of
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musical creativity" partly to readdress the balance in which much research upon digital music has been focused on consumption.

Situated in this context, conducting an ethnography of sound requires following a “producer” and their relationship with a certain sound. This requires following the process from when the producer discovers the sound, for example, a sample selected from a record or other source, examining the reasons why they selected that fragment and isolated it from other sounds, the methods through which they alter the sound and incorporate it within new sounds, to the finished product of a sample based work.

The choice of carrying out fieldwork within local music scenes is relevant for understanding how members of the scene may treat biographies differently in terms of mobilisation of aura for commodification and circulation purposes, when compared to the reissue labels — both local and international — and record collectors that form the other case studies in this thesis.

The value of such an approach is in situating the theoretical paradigms contextually, providing a comparison to earlier sound histories. It makes salient any differences in the opportunities available for sound, whether there are any different social and political motivations for the adoption of new sounds, and whether notions of what is considered authentic shifts with the sound through any change in context.

The information derived from these sources was analysed in comparison to each other. Therefore comments were analysed in relation to the sound of the sound object, changes in its audio and material profile, ownership and royalty complexities, and the production of reissues. Discussion of reissued and sampling processes beyond the two specific sound objects provided greater material for analysis of these issues. Such analysis was theoretically informed by material culture studies and the materialisation of sound, and theories of personhood.

By inverting the subject of ethnography from human actor to sound object I conducted an ethnography maintaining the audio-dimension advocated by Wood et al. (2007). I found however, contrary to my expectations, that tracing the movements of the sound object actually made new forms of personhood intelligible, which would otherwise have remained obscured.
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Perhaps this is because by focusing on the spatiality and transformations of the sound object, I was not as interested in reinforcing the idea of a possessive individual, and bounded bodily entity as personhood is perceived in western discourses.

As Wood et al. (2007, 885) remark,

...musicking is an emotional process that builds identities, creates community and belonging, and has the potential to challenge paradigms and empower agency. Just as music exceeds the bounded spaces of concert halls, churches, social clubs, and muddy fields, just as sound mixes old identities into new socialities, so emotions overflow into scholarship and methods spill into practice. The challenge, then, is to think about how our practice as geographers might work with and through practices of musicking: to develop ways of expressing the ‘unspeakable geographies’ of music.

In giving the sound object agency, we allow it to express what it cannot when as researchers we deny it agency. Thus this thesis, improvises methods around the alternative framework for understanding the relationship between people and sound that it advocates. It therefore acknowledges Wood et al’s challenge but extends their efforts by explicitly considering the relationship between music and people as co-constitutive and representative of mutual agency.

This means taking Wood et al’s assumption of music’s potential to recreate our social and spatial selves seriously, to demonstrate that animating and giving agency to the soundworld create new ontological possibilities. This makes reference to DeNora’s (1995, 311) suggestion that “music provides a means for the construction of time, bodies, and courses of action for bodies and minds” and also reflects the increasing interest in the body and corporeality in geography (see Callard, 1998; Orzeck, 2007), further contributing a new insight into this discussion. Thus the mixing of “old identities into new socialities” Wood et al. (2007, 885) refer to, applies not just to people but to the music as well – the combination of which produces the multibiographical sound object.
Conclusion

I have argued that approaching sound as material culture presents a way of understanding sounds that is useful yet challenging, contributing to scholarship on both music and material culture studies. Navigating this challenge requires a methodology that is nuanced in its analysis of both people and things and their co-constitutive relationships. Thus I have chosen a set of methods that are both traditional, as with participant observation and interviews, and also more contemporary, such as “soundings” and “follow the thing” approaches. This has allowed me to engage with sounds in ways, which acknowledge their agency and reflect on how this influences my selection of case studies and research.

Doing so means that the process of this thesis is in a continual process of becoming, much like the sounds and personhoods that develop throughout the chapters. As such I am writing with and through this research, through the music, and through the people involved, and this takes the thesis in ways which I cannot control. In this way, it also follows the links between people and things over time and relates their story. This reflects what Cook and Harrison (2007, 40), hope is one of the benefits of ‘follow the thing’ approaches – that they present “evocative, engaging, affecting but jarring accounts of connected lives that readers can hopefully identify with and get wrapped up in as they read”. In this thesis, the lives are not just those of people but also of sounds.

Importantly, this methodology is suited to overcoming object/subject dualisms and therefore enables me to observe and ask questions of both the sound objects and people, in terms of how each influence the other’s biographical pathways. Consequently, I have been able to gain an insight into how the self is produced with and through things, and how personhood is co-constituted by objects, and that such self-definitional processes work in similar ways for things. As such the life history of sound becomes a project that is about the biographies of people and music and as such produces a sound which is not singular and isolated, but which is multibiographical.
Chapter 4

*Yaraandoo*: Biography, Music, and Personhood

In the homogenized world of commodities, an eventful biography of a thing becomes the story of the various singularizations of it, of classifications and reclassifications in an uncertain world of categories whose importance shifts with every minor change in context (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 90).

This chapter will adopt a biographical approach, as outlined in chapters two and three, and apply it to *Yaraandoo*, (Track 8) a progressive jazz recording inspired by an indigenous Dreamtime story. Tracing *Yaraandoo’s* “social life” reveals its unique position between place, space and material culture as well as highlighting the relationship between the human and nonhuman. The recording’s namesake indigenous myth relating the origins of the Southern Cross constellation was appropriated and musically represented in 1974, by a Canberra-based musician and as such, the album is an aural representation of one white Australian’s, not unproblematic, interpretation of the Australian Dreamtime landscape. Historically significant as one of the few examples of an Australian private pressing, the album itself gained legendary status over time. *Yaraandoo* thus embodies the construction of a mythical Australian album fashioned from an Australian myth.

The album’s story introduces the reader to key themes that inform this thesis — namely curating and archiving sound through collecting and reissue, object agency, aura, and the construction of personhood with and through objects. Thus the first half of the chapter relates the narrative of *Yaraandoo*’s biography and is descriptive by necessity. The second half of the chapter, through discussing the relationships and events made salient by biography, places greater emphasis on

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6 Appropriating indigenous culture is problematic, regardless of the appreciation that Thomsett expresses for it. It reflects an exoticism of indigenous culture and Thomsett’s appropriation of the dreaming story, reflects unequal power relations and effectively “Other’s” indigenous Australia.
the analytical, thus demonstrating the value of a biographical approach as methodology. By paying attention to the relationships between various people and this album, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that the boundary between subject/object and human/nonhuman is not as clearly defined as is often portrayed. This has implications for ownership, which will be discussed in further detail in subsequent chapters. Acknowledging the way people rely on objects to define their sense of self accords the object a level of agency. Objects are seen not as inert but as capable of influencing human agents. They are central to the construction of and often the extension of self. *Yaraandoo* will be used as a case study to demonstrate how identity is materialised through a constellation of relationships.

Applying a biographical framework acknowledges that “as people and objects gather, time movement and change, they are constantly transformed, and these transformations of person and object are tied up with each other” (Gosden & Marshall, 1999, p. 169). The biography of *Yaraandoo* is one of singularizations, classifications, and reclassifications, producing the type of eventful object biography Kopytoff (1986) referred to. Plasketes (1992, p. 121) notes that “Vinyl is biography. Vinyl is culture and subculture. And vinyl is history”, and it is the intertwining biographies of vinyl and people that will be discussed here. Charting the album’s history highlights the mechanisms through which its aura accumulates — a factor that has strong influence on its value — and which transforms its status from ordinary record to mythical album. This aura is produced in contradictory and competing ways as individuals invest their own understandings of value in the album. These personal regimes of value are directly related to an individual’s process of subject formation and their status as crate-diggers, collectors, or curators of niche sounds. It is through these relationships that people as agents define the album as special, yet contemporaneously, the album defines them.

Thus the chapter begins by focusing on the making of *Yaraandoo* with particular attention given to the construction of the album in relation to the Dreamtime myth of the same name. This is followed by an investigation of the stories of selected individuals for whom the album holds significance. The influence of people on the transformation of the album is dealt with in detail in the following section, which focuses on one particularly significant event in the album’s career — that of a commercial reissue. It becomes evident that the reissue process defines the value of the album, although the act itself results in the contestation of value and aura dependent on
how the album is used to construct the self. For some collectors it threatens the value of the album and by extension their status as collector. For the reissue label it corresponds to an increased value in the album as a vehicle to increase the status of the label. Thus it becomes an issue of various and competing mobilizations of aura, which is discussed in the following section. I investigate how at various times throughout the album’s life, aura is enacted for differing purposes and the effect this has on the value and life history of the album. Finally, the way in which Yaraandoo possesses a degree of agency is addressed in more detail.

The making of Yaraandoo

Baime- In the beginning Baime the All-Father also known as the Sky-King walked upon the Earth (Track listing Yaraandoo).

In 1974 Rob Thomsett recorded Yaraandoo and had a limited run of 100 vinyl LPs of the original recording produced for sale\(^7\). It is the size of this pressing and the subsequent rarity that for record collectors is one of the main points of value. Unlike the United States, where private pressings were not uncommon, the Australian industry at the time of Thomsett’s work was virtually non-existent (James Pianta interview with author 30 November 2011). Consequently, it is a significant part of Australian music heritage. It has subsequently become one of the most highly sought after Australian progressive jazz recordings.

The album was inspired by and designed to reflect the beauty of the Yaraandoo dreaming story. While over time the album accrues aura for attributes other than this legend, as will be demonstrated, for Thomsett, it is this myth that is the locus of value:

The original Dreamtime myth of Yaraandoo has had a profound impact on me. As you would have observed, the parallels between Yaraandoo and other "western" myths such as the various creation myths in Christianity, Muslim and Hindu religions is really striking. Yet somehow the temptation of the man to eat animals (rather than an apple) in the midst of an Australian drought and the beautiful images of cockatoos flying after the tree are with me forever. Whenever I see

\(^7\) Thomsett later re-recorded 500 copies of the album on CD which was not released and due to the subsequent lack of information about this version it is beyond the scope of this chapter.
cockatoos and look at the Southern Sky I think of that myth and it’s universal beauty and lessons
(Rob Thomsett email to author 25 March 2013).

Thomsett is evidently strongly influenced by the myth in his consideration of what image of
Australia he wants to represent sonically. But it also positions him as an outsider to indigenous
Australia by virtue of his whiteness, the result of what Whatmore (2002, 86) sees as the
“tortuous negotiation of the etymological ties between native and nation which ... nourish
nationalist mythologies”, a position that impacts on his interpretation even if his intent is
reconciliatory.

...I started thinking about writing something else and I was becoming really interested in what
was happening with Australian Aborigines, because I was raised in a traditional, you know
horrible racist Queensland family, and I went to the National Library and found a book on
Aboriginal myths and read the Yaraandoo myth and for those folks who don’t know it, it’s just
beautiful. God creates the Earth, creates two men and women. There’s a famine, which is a great
story for Australia. They’re all dying and God’s banned them from killing but they kill a kangaroo
rat and offer it to the third guy who goes off and refuses it like he’s true to the faith. And he dies
then this gum tree takes off with this spirit in it with the dead guy and carries the dead aborigine
up to the Milky Way and creates the Southern Cross. It’s just a breathtakingly beautiful story. And
of course you can see the similarities from that story and most of the other creation stories.

And that got me really interested in a whole bunch of standard creation stories and that just
inspired the hell out of me. I started writing, started blending that jazz that I was listening to into
sort of rock and that was Yaraandoo and we recorded it on a two-track tascam tape recorder
overdubbing to hell. It was recorded in the loungerooms and using lots of local musicians and me
playing a lot myself. And we put it out. Got great reviews in Rolling Stone and Chris winter, who I
mentioned Jordie, ran a radio program called Room to Move on Friday night on triple J (Rare
Collections interview with Rob Thomsett 4 August 2011).

In this sense Thomsett establishes the connection of Yaraandoo to Australian landscape and
space and cements the narrative’s Australianess. Not only was the album written and recorded
in an Australian living room, but also it is a song cycle accompaniment to the Southern Cross
dreaming and by extension an aural representation of the Australian landscape. As previously
noted however, Thomsett’s position as a white Australian makes his interpretation of the myth
problematic in terms of his right to both appropriate the myth and to present his work as a version of the indigenous story. As such it is an aural representation of the Southern Cross and Australian landscape informed by Thomsett’s sensibilities, rather than an indigenous worldview. Appropriation of indigenous culture is not unproblematic. Welch discusses the adoption of the didjeridu by New Age and new age Pagan groups, and observes that such practices can be viewed as continuing colonial theft, although she also balances this suggesting it can also be considered as representing the dichotomy of cultural trade and that indigenous people can resist the position of ‘victim’ (Welch 2002, 33).

Thomsett’s use of the myth reflects cultural appropriation through commoditisation. As Harrison notes, commoditisation and the markets in cultural products are an effective measure of assimilating minority groups and their culture (1999, 246). Harrison draws upon Hebdige’s (1979) observations on the incorporation of subcultural signs into the mainstream through commoditisation and commercialisation. Such actions essentially diffuse their threat to and position outside of mainstream culture. This can occur to the extent where such objects ‘become codified, made comprehensible, rendered at once public property and profitable merchandise’ (Harrison 1999, 246 citing Hebdige 1979, 96). In this way Thomsett viewed the Yaraandoo dreaming as belonging to the public, and a cultural product, which he could commoditise.

Thomsett drew on the significant events in the myth and used these to determine the mood, intensity and instrumental requirements for the piece.

The creative process involved me visualising the various steps in the myth i.e. flight of the gum tree with cockatoos following and deciding on the "mood", the pace, the volume, the overall soundscape and various instruments required that would fit the "mood". If needed I would learn the basics of an instrument i.e., clarinet enough to fit the mood. The technical level of the playing didn't matter as much as the sound and space of the instrument (Rob Thomsett email to author 25 March 2013).

The sound however is influenced from a geographically diverse set of musics. Thomsett lists a range of influences, from heavy rock such as Jethro Tull, Kansas, and Soft Machine; to modern jazz including Art Ensemble of Chicago, John Coltrane, and Gill Evans; as well as jazz-rock with
Miles Davis and the Mahavishnu Orchestra also being cited (Rob Thomsett email to author 25 March 2013). In this sense they are brought “in” from the global to the local and “in” to the domestic realm. From this contraction of sound and inspiration into private loci, it is sent “outwards” again into commodity cycles and music circles as a recorded product.

The dreaming of *Yaraandoo* thus attaches social meaning and objectifies the Southern Cross and the Australian landscape. Thomsett’s introduction to the creation myth positions him as an agent external to the culture of those who the dreaming belongs to, and through his appropriation and reinterpretation, results in a layered objectification of the Southern Cross materialised through both *Yaraandoo* the myth and the recording. As such it is an enculturation of both the physical and indigenous cultural landscape and is not unproblematic when it comes to social and cultural hierarchies. While not physically poaching sound, Thomsett is still engaging in schizophrenia and plundering of ideas for sounds through his appropriation of the myth for his own musical purposes. This demonstrates the process through which “the results of the interaction is the production of enculturated objects — that is, objectified matter creating cultural artefact, which plays a dialectical role (structured by, and structuring practices) in social praxis” (Jordan, 2003, p. 17). *Yaraandoo* as material culture already has multiple socially constructed meanings.

The process through which *Yaraandoo* transforms returns me to Hegel’s (1977) and Miller’s (1995) understanding of the process of objectification and my interpretation of materialising sound through this process. As there are no pre-objectified forms our recognition of “things” happens through objectification. Through a sequential process of objectification *Yaraandoo* became labelled as a rarity and as desirable, something distinguishable from other items that comprise the archive of recorded music. It has come to mean more to us than many of its contemporaries. If I reiterate Tilley (2007, p. 17) in that “All materials have their properties which may be described but only some of these materials and their properties are significant to people”, then *Yaraandoo*’s materiality is significant. This next section will discuss the multiple properties which render *Yaraandoo* significant to people.
Bevan’s, Callum’s, Jordie’s and Shadow’s story

Endless search- Uttering unearthly screeches, two Mooyi – yellow crested cockatoos – flew after the tree which had been their resting place (Track Listing Yaraandoo).

This section describes the stories of Yaraandoo’s movements through commodity cycles into the possession of the few people known to have the album and in this way parallels Cook’s (2004; 2006; Cook & Harrison, 2007) “follow the thing” methodology. For an album so rare, this is significant for providing insight into how the album gained aura and a mythological status. Knowing people’s personal stories of Yaraandoo is part of the album’s biography. It illustrates the various meanings attached to it that reveal fluctuations in value and aura over time. A biography of a thing is as much about people’s interactions with it, and its associated influence on them.

Yaraandoo has travelled far beyond its Canberra origins: “As I said to you I only recorded, printed 100 copies but they ended up all over the place” (Kilby & Kilby, Rare Collections interview with Rob Thomsett 4 August 2011). Of these 100 recordings I have managed to trace several copies. Establishing their whereabouts was ascertained through interviews, eBay searches and catalogue searches. One resides in the collection of a prominent Brisbane based DJ and record collector. Another to DJ Shadow in the US and unsurprisingly his connection is central to the production of this album’s aura. Yet another copy has remained in Canberra in the collection of a radio presenter and DJ. Two are in Sydney — one is in the ABC sound library and another in the old Sydney JJJ sound library. Finally, another three or four are in Melbourne, one of which belongs to the graphic designer from the record label, Roundtable, who reissued the next generation of Yaraandoo sound objects. Of the other Melbourne copies, one belongs to Dave Rietman from Licorice Pie records, who recently also sold a copy to Eothen Alapatt of Now Again Records, with up to two other copies belonging to an unnamed Melbourne collector.²

Before I continue with these stories, it is useful to refer to my own experience of the album, which could not have been possible without my interest in hip hop and crate digging subcultures

² The confusion here is that during my interviews two people mentioned another copy being in Melbourne but no name was given as to who it belonged to, so in this case it could be the same copy or two separate copies.
Yaraandoo: Biography, Music, and Personhood

for a number of years. While the term subculture has frequently been contested since it was made popular by the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies through the 1960s to the 1980s, it has been applied in multiple ways throughout the sociological literature. As Bennett notes, much of the critique is directed towards the use of “structuralist accounts to explain what are in effect examples of consumer autonomy and creativity” (1999, 599). Nevertheless, the term strongly persists throughout the literature and research often shows that the adoption of subcultural identities, whether expressed visually through style and aesthetics, or through specialist activities, “is a way of asserting cultural identity and a sense of exclusive community in the face of a society fragmented by divisions of class, race and gender” (Beezer 2003, 117).

I refer to those committed to crate digging as members of the record collecting and crate digging subculture, expressing their affiliation through participating in specialist activities or interests as described above by Beezer. This involvement can extend to involvement in other associated activities such as starting record labels or producing music, as will be discussed throughout this and subsequent chapters. Importantly however, subcultures have often been described, researched, analysed and presented as male dominant domains with McRobbie and Garber claiming that the scarcity of literature concerning females in youth cultural groupings and “exclusive attention paid to male expressions and male styles nonetheless reinforces and amplifies this image of the subculture as a male formation” (2000, 15). Fully aware of this gender imbalance while entering and conducting this research, I have nonetheless presented an account that is male dominant in terms of the members which are active in the scene and who have also produced the music popular within the subculture. As such it is necessary to situate myself within this story, both in relation to the subculture, and my introduction to the music I discuss, which in this chapter is Yaraandoo.

I was introduced to the record by Bevan Jee and Callum Flack whose stories are outlined below, and I own a copy of the reissue although I continue hunting for an original. I collect records, although I would not classify myself as a crate digger (see Belk, 1995a for a discussion on what defines collecting; Shuker, 2010). However this pastime and my relationship with the crate-digging community both through my research interests and socialising within the scene immediately alerted me to the importance of the album. The attraction Yaraandoo holds for me is partly due to its rarity and the sound of the album. Beyond this it has become a significant part
of my “self” through being part of my wider research. In this sense I am part of its fan base yet also its student and biographer. I acknowledge that by writing about the album, I am contributing to its singularisation. At the same time however, by acknowledging the agency of the album, I am challenging the criticisms often directed towards studies of the material as fetishistic and as representative of the “inauthentic, estranged and alienated modern being” (Olsen, 2003, p. 94).

**Bevan’s story**

My first physical encounter with *Yaraandoo* brings me to Brisbane and the record collection of prominent and internationally respected DJ and crate digger, DJ Sheep, aka Bevan Jee. It occurred to me after I had asked for the story of how he came to possess *Yaraandoo* that it could have been a difficult question to answer. Jee has a collection of up to 20 000 records which makes remembering the provenance of each one almost impossible. His ability to answer the question suggests that the album has significant qualities, which sets it apart.

I meet Jee at a Bar in Brisbane’s West End where he is DJing. The bar is busy and grows increasingly so as the night goes on. The decks are set up behind the bar on one side of the bar staff, not in their way, but still visible. I lean over the bar to talk to him. It’s loud and much of our conversation is carried out speaking loudly and straining to hear. As the night wears on and the punters are increasingly happy, Jee slips on a long track that will cover a brief break. We move to a quieter area, inside the male toilets, to talk about the record:

I found it on the Internet. What happened was that this lady listed this bunch of records but she listed them just as “record”. So there was a bunch of eBay listings which just said record, record, record record. There was like a hundred of them. So I clicked on them all and they were all interesting and there was this *Yaraandoo* record that my mate Dave Reitman told me about from Licorice Pie ... He’d mentioned to me that there was this progressive jazz record, never thought I’d found a copy. Went in chucked a bid on it. Only bidder. Won it. My copy has a letter in it that Rob Thomsett wrote to Triple J at the time in the 70s, 74 I think the record came out 74, 76, 74 ... The letter’s amazing (Bevan Jee interview with author 31 July 2011).
This description correlates with other contributor’s opinions discussed below, indicating that *Yaraandoo* is an exceptional record. The rumours, rarity and myth enhance *Yaraandoo’s* differentiation from other records and as such enable Jee to easily recall how it came into his collection. To refer to Kopytoff, the biography of *Yaraandoo* is an eventful one and this is what makes it significant.

Back at his house, we listen to parts of the record. The turntables are set up in the back of the house in a room partially filled with records. There is a couch, which I sit down on, and settle in to watch him with the vinyl records. He selects *Yaraandoo*. He’ll play bits, flip to other tracks and sections within those that he thinks are the strongest, then flips to another album. He works quickly and moves deftly with the vinyl, that I at times struggle to keep up with my note taking.

After listening to a selection of tracks we head back to his vinyl room where most of his records are kept. Like most diggers he has developed his own filing system, which allows him to quickly find what he wants and what he has. This is no mean feat considering the thousands of records that line his shelves. I gingerly remove the records he pulls out from their sleeves. The smell of decaying vinyl and paper seeps out. His collection is eclectic—rare and quirky Australian recordings including Libaek and Sangster, recordings from all over the world, and a variety of genres. I focus my attention back on *Yaraandoo*. Jee’s copy includes a letter from Thomsett describing his pleasure at the reception the album has received and his hopes for the Australian music scene (see Figure 1). The tone reflects an optimism that surrounded the album’s reissue, but also is a reminder of the ways in which music can travel from it’s making to garnering success and acclaim, if any.
Yaraandoo: Biography, Music, and Personhood

Figure 1. A letter from Thomsett to Lex that was found inside Jee’s copy of the album.

Jee’s record collection is extensive, so it is worth asking what then, compared to all these records, make Yaraandoo so important. The reasons are both aesthetic and cultural. Yaraandoo’s importance is validated by Jee’s position as a respected digger within both the Brisbane, national and international hip hop community and the subsequent cultural capital this accrues. Further support to the unique and prized status of Yaraandoo, is the esteem in which DJ Shadow, one of the world’s most renowned DJs and crate diggers, holds it. The Shadow
connection is repeatedly mentioned by contributors suggesting that his owning the album increases value and is central to the production of aura. In a conversation Jee had with Shadow:

"We actually spoke about it face to face and we, he was, I was, just like that’s best record from Australia right and he was, I mean it’s just so unique (Bevan Jee 4 August 2011)."

Interviewing Shadow, Jee asks if there is an Australian record that holds a special place for him. Shadow mentions Yaraandoo:

"I have a great progressive psych album from a group called Yaraandoo from Canberra” (DJ Sheep, 2011, p. 27).

Shadow’s role in the production of value of the album reflects what Hayes (2006, p. 62) notes with regards to record collectors, that the value of a collection, its contents, and by extension the collector, is only achieved in the presence of other collectors, confirming mutual good taste in records (see also Straw, 1997). For Jee, the album’s rarity, quality and esteemed crate-digging connections are conducive to the production of aura. Jee further emphasizes the cultural value of the album:

"Yaraandoo to me is priceless. There are Australian records that sound the same and are similar, but they’re not quite the same. Three people have it. Callum Flack, me, and Shadow (Bevan Jee interview with author 4 August 2011)."

To Jee, Yaraandoo is priceless as is reiterated by other contributor’s comments. But of course there must be some monetary value attached to facilitate its movements in and out of the commodity cycle. Jee’s copy of Yaraandoo cost him $90 however recent valuation would see the worth of the record increase:

"The last copy on ebay just went in questionable condition for $480 or $450… My copy is an absolute perfectly mint condition… I mean if someone came and said, I’d charge a grand for it. No doubt in my mind. I mean I was talking to Shadow about that record just on the weekend (Bevan Jee interview with author 31 July 2011)."
The record in question was described on eBay as:

**YARAANDOO – RARE OZ PSYC LP ’74 PRIVATE PRESS MELLOTRON- 100 PRESSED -UBER RARE!**

It was cited as being in very good condition although it is allocated a “Yellow” condition status, which is graded according to the vendor’s standards indicating that it is in, “good condition. These records can have marks that may pop or crackle, but will not skip. Pr may have numerous lighter marks”.

Further on the product description page it is described as “LEGENDARY DREAMTIME PSYCH RECORD. VERY VERY RARE OZ PRIVATE PRESS PSYCH/PROG”.

Reference is made to it being an “Original Aussie Private Press” and there being “Only 100 Copies originally pressed”. This copy also contains a note written by Rob Thomsett, “This one comes with a little hand written note from Rob inside” (see Figure 2).

*Figure 2. “Communication is a two-way process note”. Source: Downloaded from http://www.ebay.com.au/itm/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=290619326885&ssPageName=ADME:B:SS:AU:1123 Accessed 24 October 2011*
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The product description emphasises the album’s rarity perpetuating and reinforcing the qualities that make the album auratic to Jee. Terms such as “original,” “Aussie,” “Private Press,” and “Very very rare” locate the album spatially and artistically as Australian, as well as indicating that it exists beyond the public realm. The private pressing connotes that even its production was not a public act, placing it firmly in the domestic sphere. The inclusion of the hand written letter indicates that this album is personal and carries the essence of the creator, which helps to mediate the relationship between artist and fan. It is a physical connection to Thomsett, evidence of his presence and action on the album, and this contributes to its value.

By focusing on price, it is possible to chart the variations in perceived value that fluctuate throughout Yaraandoo’s life trajectory. Jee’s copy cost him $90 originally but he values it at around $1000. His bargain purchase was due to its listing as “record” with no other qualifier rather than a reflection of its worth. The copy described above sold for close to $500 in questionable condition — still quite a considerable sum. The most recent copy however, sold for less than half the price of the copy sold prior, but the album’s context had changed again. Yaraandoo had been reissued by Australian label, the Roundtable. The reissue process and the possible impact on value and aura of the original will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

But next we look at another collector for whom the primary value of the album is vested in Australianness.

**Jordie’s story**

The next copy of Yaraandoo returns us to Canberra, the city in which it was originally recorded. Jordie Kilby, record collector, DJ, and ABC broadcaster, was drawn to Yaraandoo by virtue of his collecting protocols — Kilby collects albums connected with Canberra. He purchased Yaraandoo at a fete purely because he recognised the musician’s names and Canberra connection, and without prior knowledge of its significance: “… the label and some of the musician names were familiar to me” (Interview with author 17 August 2011).

Kilby could find little information on the record and it remained in his collection for sometime without the broader association known. The album’s story gradually surfaced overtime, and Kilby mentioned that he often relied on the occasional Internet post about the record, to help him uncover and appreciate Yaraandoo’s story. This appreciation, led to Kilby’s Yaraandoo
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podcast, aired on Rare Collections, a local radio Canberra ABC666 program with the directive to profile less well-known and underground recordings, built on the album’s story thereby contributing to the recording’s collective information. Piecing together the biography of Yaraandoo reflects the sentiment of a letter that was with the album when Kilby bought it: “I found the letter in my copy…. it says ‘communication is a two way process. Provide the missing link and write to us’. It’s on the Glo Audio letterhead. A nice touch” (email to author 17 August 2011).

During our interview, it became apparent that the album’s aura for Kilby resides in it having been produced in Canberra. This again locates the album firmly in the landscape of Australian music. For him, its importance is not so much its rarity but rather its geographical origins. This reiterates that the production and understanding of aura is often relative to the individual, which can result in its contested mobilisation.

Trading networks

Comparatively, many of Yaraandoo’s known movements in and out of commodity cycles, have been acted out in a Melbourne based record store. Licorice Pie Records owner Dave Reitman has had three copies of Yaraandoo, one of which is still in his possession. He has purchased and traded the copies, which have been accounted for by other collectors, one of whom is Callum Flack, the graphic designer from Roundtable records. He is also responsible for the DJ Shadow connection, which demonstrates the channels through which information travels in such subcultures:

I have had 3 copies of Yaraandoo, still have one in my collection. My first was from a collection I bought about 10 years ago. The second I traded for, the 3rd I scored off ebay (it was listed as “rare Australian record” so I got that one cheap, the woman who sold that one said that her husband had the “studio” that it was recorded in). The 2 copies that I sold on went to local collectors.

I didn’t sell Shadow Yaraandoo, but I did show him my copy, and suggested he keep a lookout for it, and I guess he did… I think he got his copy from someone in Sydney (Email to author 24 October 2011).
Another notable customer is Eothen “Egon” Alapatt, who described his purchase and the album in a recent article for the Red Bull Music Academy:

I’ll be honest and admit that I’d never heard of this record before seeing its incredible — even from a fair distance — textured, fragile, minimalist sleeve over Dave’s shoulder at Licorice Pie. The price tag, backed by a couple more zeros than I would have preferred to see, demanded I ask for a listen and, when a lo-fi drum break set the pace for a spacey Mellotron lead on the first track, I was hooked (Alapatt, 2013, available at http://www.redbullmusicacademy.com/magazine/funk-archaeology-australia, accessed 16 July 2013)

I came across another Melbourne based copy of Yaraandoo after seeing it on a track listing for a local Melbourne radio program Get Down with Chris airing on Thursdays from noon-2pm. On Thursday the 11 of August 2011 he played the “Drought – Killing” track from the album. Chris Gill has had one copy pass through his store, Northside Records. He purchased the album because it was appealing to him: “I picked it up because it looked dope” (email to author 24 October 2011).

Incidentally, Chris Gill’s copy was traded to Dave Reitman at Licorice Pie, which has been the source of the record for other collectors: “The one Chris Gill sold was traded to me, one of mine went to Callum, and the other one I sold went to a Melbourne collector” (email to author 24 October 2011).

Roundtable records cohort, James Pianta makes reference to Melbourne’s appearance in the Yaraandoo story:

Well a lot of them have come out of... there’s a record store in Melbourne called Licorice Pie Records, and that’s where I believe Bevan got his from and Callum did as well. The other guy I do the Roundtable with Jeff, he was originally from Sydney actually, he found his copy in Gould’s Books in Newtown ... It was interesting because Jeff at the time was a teenager, and he thought it was a punk record so he bought it but he didn’t really like it and years later he discovered this record in his own collection and was like wow. It was amazing. He was the first one who showed

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9 This is the only recent program in which part of Yaraandoo has been aired. The other known time being on Chris Winter’s Room to Move program in the 1970s
me and at the same time Dave from Licorice Pie was finding copies and then he sold them on to people like Bevan. And I think people even like DJ Shadow and stuff have bought copies off Dave. And I think a few other kind of famous DJs have bought them off Dave as well (Interview with author 30 November 2011).

The Melbourne connection illustrates in microcosm the interactions between agent and object and the album’s movements in and out of the commodity cycle. The value attached to the album is not fixed, but rather open to change — it can be bought or exchanged, and in many cases it has appreciated in value as aura has been mobilised. These sites of exchange offer new biographical possibilities, coinciding with the remobilisation of the album’s aura, reflecting Myers (2001, p. 12) remarks that it is these areas that are “both culturally productive and dynamic”.

These personal stories thicken the biography of Yaraandoo, profiling its interactions with human agents who develop criteria to define the album. Through these encounters they both acknowledge the myth of Yaraandoo yet simultaneously perpetuate it by maintaining its prominence in their collections. In this way they singularise it. This is exemplified through the oft-acknowledged DJ Shadow connection in the sense that the albums life is in some part being shaped by Shadow and his involvement in the story is central to the production of its aura. This prepares the album for the next chapter in its life — that of the reissue — increasing its availability and in essence re-emphasising Thomsett’s sentiment about communication, the act of communication in this instance initiated by Roundtable.

The reissue

New life – Refusal – As they became stronger they called to the remaining man to join them. Not wishing to go against the wishes of Baime, he refused. Very weak he staggered off into the red desert (Track listing Yaraandoo).

This section views Yaraandoo from consumption to re-production and re-consumption. The Roundtable, a small independent reissue label based in Melbourne, reissued Yaraandoo in 2011. Roundtable describe the album as:
From deep within the Australian Outback comes Yaraandoo, the 40,000 year-old sound of antediluvian Aboriginal folklore channelled through Mellotron, hypnotic washes of Moog oscillations, Bamboo flutes and tape delay. Welcome to the unearthed, unheard of and undefinable genre of Australian Dreamtime Psych.... Re-presented for the first time, The Roundtable announce a much anticipated reissue of this mythical Australian Lo-fi concept recording composed by Jazz guitarist Rob Thomsett. Working in a similar impressionistic mode as other Australian originals Sven Libaek and John Sangster, Thomsett sets to music the Aboriginal Dreamtime myth of Yaraandoo, The legend of the dawn of creation. Self recorded on a two track in 1974 then privately pressed and distributed amongst friends, Yaraandoo is without a doubt the most desired and speculated Australian progressive recording in existence. With only 100 handmade LP copies originally pressed, copies of this phenomenal LP rarely surface. Yaraandoo is a true lost timepiece from the Australian underground (Available at http://theroundtable.bigcartel.com/product/rob-thomsett-Yaraandoo, accessed 14 February 2013).

This description immediately singularises Yaraandoo constructing an aura that is the result of the album’s musical qualities and surrounding mystery. It also speaks of a label who define themselves and their niche as relating to rarities of the Australian underground, again locating the music spatially and aesthetically as Australian. Indeed, a recent review of the album posted on the UK site Heritage Head, emphasises the Australian aesthetic:

> It is, to whit, an Lp of hair-raising, soul-searching beauty - with an overall dreamy, hazy quality that perhaps could only be written by an Australian fully conversant with the "Dreamtime" cultural feel for the myths and legends of the Outback.

(Available at http://www.headheritage.co.uk/unsung/review/2215/, accessed 10 July 2012)

These references to the Dreamtime, Aboriginal folklore and the Outback, portray the album as authentically Australian. It is questionable whether Thomsett was fully conversant with the Dreamtime and outback although he does emphasise his love of Australian countryside and notes on a trip to Uluru that “I have never felt more grounded than he how I felt there. I was home in a special way” (email to author 25 March 2013). However, considering his non-indigeneity, Thomsett’s actions can be seen as an enculturation of the myth as discussed earlier in this chapter. Indeed Thomsett’s emotional response to Uluru reflects the “white Australian consciousness” discussed by Whittaker which, reflects a strong attachment to rural Australia and
romanticises the Outback, and creates an Australian identity which is noninclusive of women, immigrants and ethnic groups (Whittaker 1994, 313).

This construction of consciousness and attachment to the Australian landscape and culture is one way in which colonial nations continue to control and appropriate indigenous culture, as both Harrison (1999) and (1994) note specifically in relation to the transferral of traditional ownership rights of Uluru back to the Australian Aboriginals by the Hawke government in 1985. They suggest that by acknowledging the Rock was an incontestably sacred site, white Australians claim that “the Rock is not specially or exclusively sacred to Aborigines; it is sacred in much the same way to white Australians as well, and thus has a very similar spiritual significance for the whole nation” (Harrison 1999, 246; see also Whittaker 1994). This national significance is also evident in discussions surrounding indigenous art, as Myers in his discussion on collectors of Aboriginal art. His reference to Carnegie’s claim that Aboriginal ‘paintings are mystical, spiritual art, deriving as they do from the very land we live in and are nurtured by. They are the heritage of every Australian of whatever ethnic background or skin color’ (Carnegie 1989), suggests that multiple cultural products can be used to create national imaginaries. In this way, indigenous culture is appropriated to assume a broader meaning for the nation as a whole, and by assimilating these values actively seeks to diffuse and obscure race related tensions.

Beyond the album description and the reinforcing of the reinterpretation of the appropriated myth, the label does not rectify the relationship between the indigenous and non-indigenous Yaraandoos. Despite this questionable association with indigenous culture, and perhaps partly because of it, the album has managed to accrue sufficient aura and influence, for labels such as The Roundtable to be interested in reissuing it. The Roundtable is:


It is a label formed by keen record collectors — James Pianta, Jeff Wybrow, and Callum Flack — whose collections host rare Australian titles and prominent musicians. Their record collecting
The background is key, particularly to musical education, “after a long period of time you know a lot stuff and you know what you like and so on” (Callum Flack interview with author 30 June 2011).

The label from this viewpoint is an extension of their record collecting:

As for records we choose; yeah stuff we’ve found & liked — that is always the starting point. We’ve now got access to some of the old Capitol label archive, which now means we could feasibly select something in reverse. ie. think of something cool on Capitol and we could probably release it. I’m not completely sure about this because I think Roundtable should stick to being one thing: interesting & obscure Australian releases. KISS. Keep it simple, do what your known for. Stick to a niche and that niche should be Australiana, or at least the lesser known, the underground spirit within it.

Definitely from our collections. I’d prefer our label to come from our collecting. I could only put things forward that I personally am into. Anything else, and I’m not that interested. Cause I ain’t doing it for the dosh! (Callum Flack email to author 22 August 2011).

Producing the reissue required Thomsett’s permission and the mutual acceptance of each party’s terms:

How was quite easy. Rob was easy to trace; he had (& still has) a website, & is an active, gigging musician. He’s also, by all accounts, a responsive, approachable person. All this contributed to him being open about the project. He agreed to our meagre terms, we were very happy to agree to his. Without that openness, a project won’t happen (Callum Flack email to author 30 September 2011).

James Pianta (JP): We basically just find a title we’re interested in and then basically just track down the ownership, whether it be with the artist or the record label if it still exists. In the case of Yaraandoo it was pretty easy really just because Rob actually had a website... So it was quite easy, he had a website and he had a website for his music, so he’s still active in music. So basically we just contacted him and struck up a deal and took from there.
SM: And he was quite happy to have that reissued?
JP: Yeah you know, he’s still pretty involved in his music so you know I think he was glad to see it out (James Pianta interview with author 30 November 2011).

This reference to openness reflects the broader attitude of the label and this fuels the motivation for Roundtable — the common desire to share music and the knowledge gained through years of record collecting rather than financial reward: “It’s a labour of love and a slog” (Callum Flack interview with author 30 June 2011).

_Yaraando’s_ mythical status rendered it particularly suitable for reissue. Mythical albums are defined within crate-digging cultures as incredibly rare and highly prized. Despite being highly sought after, they do not always fulfill their expectations — “When you found the record it was sometimes really underwhelming” (Callum Flack interview with author 30 June 2011). Contrary to this scenario, _Yaraando_ delivered a listening experience worthy of its hype. According to Flack, the album “ticks all the boxes” being “rare as hell”, “Australian” and “really good” musically (interview with author 30 June 2011):

Part of its allure for the generation of collectors for whom vinyl was not their environment’s fundamental musical medium (including those who collected records primarily after hearing hip-hop and searching for the samples, including "break-beats", on the original records) is its rarity. Secondly, most people, including myself, think it’s an excellent all-round record. While no one track stands out, the gestalt listen is a dreamy trip; a general anaesthetic of ambitious, imaginative jazz-rock sequences.

Finally, as an Australian located record collector, it’s a prime example of a native, rare lp that’s also a fulfilling listen. There are plenty of rare records, but not many good. Even less are excellent throughout the whole listen. And less so will that record happen to be Australian (Callum Flack email to author 30 September 2011).

In this way the record and its aura act on Roundtable to reissue the album and they in return, mobilise the aura and share the experience through the reissue.

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In a later email Thomsett said he had never been contacted by Roundtable nor had received any revenue however in the Rare Collections interview he mentions receiving emails from Wybrow and Pianta about the reissue and that they were working to release the reissued album.
The reissue process and reissue aesthetics

SM: So how long did the process take?

JP: Oh it’s been going on for years. Just when we do this stuff some projects just get held up forever for various reasons and Yaraandoo was one of those cases really. Like if we have other things on the go we can only really do one thing at a time just the nature of our label and Yaraandoo just kept getting pushed to the side. And so it’s a couple of years now but all going to plan we could have you know, it could have been quite quick process...

Well Yaraandoo is a really unique case as you know. It’s like a private recording and never distributed. It’s quite rare to have an Australian private press recording like Yaraandoo of that quality, just based on the industry of the time, virtually non-existent. But no, it’s a good choice for sure (interview with author 30 November 2011).

The reissue process requires considerable investment of both time and self. Through this process, the label owners infer agency upon the album, as the album begins to accumulate their biographies within its own. This follows what Hoskins (2006, p. 74) refers to when she claims that “persons can also be said to invest aspects of their own biographies in things”.

For old recordings such as *Yaraandoo*, where the master tapes are no longer available or are in poor condition, the music is lifted off a vinyl copy for re-recording. For the *Yaraandoo* reissue, the recording was taken from Wybrow’s copy:

SM: Did you do the reissue from one of your own copies?

JP: It came from Jeff’s copy.

SM: So what’s the process there like when you actually make the reissue?

JP: Well the first thing to do is to try and find if there’s mastertapes which in a lot of cases there isn’t because we strictly deal in records that are 40 years old. A lot of the time they’re just not available. And this is the case with Yaraandoo - they were long gone. Rob didn’t have them. And anyway you’ve got to wonder what would make much difference in a case like Yaraandoo
anyway, and that’s a two track recording, you know. So that’s the first step to find the master tapes and then get the right person to restore it.

SM: And in the case of no master tapes then you just use, that’s the vinyl you got it from?

JP: Yeah we would get a final copy and do a transfer. Obviously you can’t re-master from vinyl but you can restore it. The reissue was actually enhanced. We didn’t want to do too much to it because we wanted to keep that lo-fidelity, that lo-fi quality to it. But it does sound better than the actual original record. I don’t know whether you’ve heard the original?

SM: I’ve heard a little bit of it of Bevan’s copy but not the whole thing. It did sound a little bit, I don’t know whether it was just the age or what, sounded a little grainier (James Pianta interview with author 30 November 2011).

The aesthetics are carefully considered. Pianta noted their priority to preserve the lo-fidelity of the original and their resultant minimal intervention in the restoration process. The home-made sound of the original is regarded as part of the record’s charm and thus a necessity to preserve:

JP: yeah well it was the kind of thing, you know home recording. But that’s the charm to it. That’s where the quality is.

SM: Callum was saying that you guys like to keep it sort of close and not too shiny and polished?

JP: Well I think there’s a fine line between that and also making it [good to listen to]. You want it to sound good in a modern kind of bar or club system so you do have to do certain work to it. Just to make it sound good but at the same time you want to keep it close to the original for sure. And also a lot of the process of restoring, the digital process can actually take away certain qualities of the music so you’ve got to be careful about that (James Pianta interview with author 30 November 2011).

This reflects the observations of Jones and Yarrow on the paradoxical relationship between the extraction of historical objects from the temporal process as suggested by the “conserve as found” logic, and the actual process of conservation which ensure these objects “continue to change and develop, acquiring new meanings and values as they do so” (2013, p. 20). For
Yaraandoo, it is recognised that this new phase in the album’s life can produce opportunities, which require a subtle modification of the recording in order to retain the sound’s integrity in new environments:

JP: Well just a lot of filtering programs people use for beat making and getting out noise and all that stuff can actually take away from reverb and stuff. Sometimes you have to put that in. So it’s just about making it sound good. Sound like the original and also sound something that can kind of I guess sound good in a club environment or bar for people who want to DJ it out or something and also for listening as well (James Pianta interview with author 30 November 2011).

Connell and Gibson (2008, p.58) suggest that authenticity can be created “through the messages and descriptions of record sleeves”. This is particularly important to the reissue aesthetic at The Roundtable, which strives to respect the original and reproduce it in a way that best achieves this. The need to maintain a connection to the authenticity signified by the original and therefore maintain the album’s value, necessary for a successful return on their reissue, is reflected through the replication of the original low-fidelity sound and cover artwork. This requires exercising a level of restraint so as to avoid destroying the idiosyncrasies inherent to the original. From a technical perspective the original pressing had questionable sound quality and retaining that Lo-Fi character whilst ensuring the product was still viable, was a challenge the Roundtable accepted and aligned with their reissue aesthetic — they “don’t want the shiny stuff as it’s too easy” (Callum Flack pers comm. 30 June 2011).

The same principles, which guide sound reproduction, are applied to album artwork. Representing the album visually synonymous to the original requires precise reproduction of the artwork and font styles rather than altering the product image (see Figures 3 and 4). A graphic artist by profession, Flack is conscious of the influence fashion and marketing hold within this field. Flack strives to keep Roundtable products as representative of their era being “conscious not to buy into this [fashion] and re-present the record as more new and cool.” He strongly believes that “as far as records go, old music doesn’t believe in fashion. ... It’s willfully not cool” (Callum Flack pers comm. 2011).
Despite being willfully uncool, the cover art plays an important role for locating the music aesthetically, temporally, physically and culturally. There are certainly hints in *Yaraandoo’s* cover art that suggest its era, style, home studio production, and private pressing. Thomsett’s original
cover is reflective of de Ville’s (2003, p. 8) observation that cover art is “…amateur, faddish on
the surface (though in many ways rooted in symbolic continuity)” and can be considered a living
folktart of the West.

These attitudes reinforce The Roundtable’s aesthetic. Biographically the reproduction process
minimally interferes with the album enabling the music in its entirety to speak for itself. It
creates a relationship that acknowledges that the album has an agency effective through its
materiality, myth, and aural qualities, and these determine The Roundtable’s reissue process.
This reflects the multiplicity of agencies that ensure “things” and their relationship with people
retains fluidity, something that Edensor (2011) and Jacobs and Merriman (2011) observe
happening with other objects such as heritage buildings and architecture. Agency does not flow
only from person to thing.

Roundtable has extended the life history of the album, increasing its materiality and its potential
agency. Transitioning from consumers to producers, they have facilitated Yaraandoo’s re-entry
into the commodity cycle in re-invigorated form. Rather than diminishing the story and aura of
the album, they have perpetuated it. Yaraandoo in a sense defines the label — Australian and
underground — and reciprocally they have redefined Yaraandoo for a new generation.

Mobilising aura

The aura attributed to Yaraandoo has fluctuated throughout its life course. This section will
outline the competing auras invested in Yaraandoo and the various ways in which auras are
mobilised and contested. As described in the personal stories, this aura is partly due to the
album’s rarity, musical quality, Australianess and myth. These factors are not all present in other
works by Thomsett and are instead singular to Yaraandoo. For example in a discussion on the
Forums section of Soul Strut.com “roisto” posts a question about Thomsett’s less infamous
album Hara:

Found this today roughly 14000 kilometers away from where it was recorded (Canberra). Any
Australian strutters know this LP? When was it released? Is it raer (sic)? Looks like a very private
pressing (Roisto posted: 06 October 2011 03:13 PM, available at
Yaraandoo: Biography, Music, and Personhood

Kinetic replies:

Canberra record from, I think 1976. Definitely rare, but not as good as the other LP he did that was recently reissued: Yaarandoo (Kinetic posted: 06 October 2011 05:04 PM, available at http://www.soulstrut.com/index.php/forums/viewthread/71681/, accessed 24 October 2011).

As does DJ Sheep:

Hara turns up semi-frequently (in op shops) in Canberra. Yaraandoo does not. Hara is a average record, very guitar driven, with a half decent track. Yaraandoo is thorough the whole way through.... Not "RAER" (sic) because a blog said so (DJ Sheep posted: 06 October 2011 09:05 PM, available at, http://www.soulstrut.com/index.php/forums/viewthread/71681/, accessed 24 October 2011).

This discussion makes explicit the criteria that Yaraandoo fills which provide its reconfigured aura. In comparison to other Australian recordings, even by the same musician, the album is seen as superior. While, like Hara, it ticks the “Australian” and “rare” boxes as mentioned earlier by Flack, Yaraandoo also fulfills the “good music” criterion, and it is the combination of all these variables that elevates the album’s cultural status. The personal stories of Yaraandoo related earlier in this chapter, describe specific types of aura dependent on the qualities valued by contributors. These variously relied on its Australianess, rarity, musical quality and increasingly the way these specific sources of aura combine to create the myth of the album, which itself gains value over time with the incorporation of significant characters such as Shadow into its storyline. Indeed, it would seem that the entire story of Yaraandoo including the recent episodes of collecting and reissuing all contribute to increasing its aura.

The pursuit of the album motivated by the multiple roles it can play in the construction of self, and thus variably dependent on the individual, both increases the myth of the album yet contributes multiple auras that sometimes align with and at other times confront each other. This aura is not stable and alternatively increases and decreases throughout its career dependent on personal criteria by which individuals for whom it holds importance, assess it. Therefore, the mechanisms by which people mobilise aura to support their individual ideas of
the album’s value, can impact on others concept of aura, and cause a reassessment. An example of this is the reissue.

The reissue raises the awareness of the album and through this publicity, increases significance of the album and perpetuates its assumed indigenous connection. Reissuing both increases the auratic presence and materiality of the record, opening further possibilities for biographical pathways for *Yaraandoo*. However, the reissue relies on the mobilisation of “Australianess” and “rarity” for success yet alternatively it clearly diminishes the album’s scarcity, elusiveness and by extension the value it holds for people like Jee:

There’s something about that record. They’re about to reissue it and I this can go on the record too cos I don’t really give a fuck. But I, I don’t really agree with reissuing such things like that cos they’re like you ruin the sense. Yeah you want to get the music out to the people realistically 200 people are going to fuckin’ buy the 500 copies you press up. But that fucks it up because then people like myself who actually, that’s like something, which I really treasure. That’s my favourite Australian record. And I said that in an interview funnily enough before Shadow said it in his interview (DJ Sheep interview with author 31 July 2011).

Discussing the potentially negative impact of the reissue on the value of the original, Jee cites the most recent sale of a copy of *Yaraandoo* on eBay post-reissue:

...also a copy just went on eBay, dirt cheap compared to what the last one went for, although the condition was crap. Hence my point, reissues mess the game up and reduce an album’s overall worth (Email to author 24 October 2011).

This resonates with Benjamin’s thoughts on art in the age of mechanical reproduction, in that the reproduction of the original depreciates the aura of the original. Diminishing aura from Benjamin’s perspective is the result of modernity however Hirschkind (2001) notes that:

...scholars have increasingly recognised, an account of modernity can no longer be told simply in terms of the destruction of the old and its replacement by the new; modern lives have been shaped by the maintenance of continuities with past practice, as well as by revivals, reworkings, and rediscoveries of buried sensory experiences (Hirschkind, 2001, p. 642).
These “resuscitated practices” (Hirschkind, 2001, p. 642) are at play within *Yaraandoo*. Aura is attached to *Yaraandoo* the recording despite Benjamin’s worries that “the particular experiential quality that grounds the uniqueness and authenticity of historical objects had been all but effaced under the perceptual regime of modern technological culture” (Hirschkind, 2001, p. 623). Indeed technology can facilitate the album’s “experiential quality” and has the capacity to renew the agency of both Thomsett and the album. This relates to both the recording technology and information technologies such as the internet which raise awareness of the album. Despite using reproduction technologies to produce the reissue, the physicality of the album remaining vinyl influences value and authenticity — in the current digital climate vinyl is accumulating large amounts of cultural capital (see Bartmanski & Woodward, 2013; Farrugia & Swiss, 2005; Van Buskirk, 2008; Worthington, 2013).\(^{11}\)

As previously mentioned, information and communication technologies such as the internet, radio and podcasts, also promote awareness of the album, without increasing its ubiquity, both necessary to the production of aura. At the time of writing, a Google search for *Yaraandoo*, produced a majority of tourism and service results — *Yaraandoo* Eco-Lodge and Function Centre, *Yaraandoo* Lakeside retreat, and Southern Cross Care. Musical mentions including the *Rare Collections* ABC Canberra *Yaraandoo* podcast, The Roundtable site and even the Dusty Groove\(^ {12}\) link to *Yaraandoo* has in the time since I started searching disappeared from the front result pages further into the depths of the Internet archive. This means that technology in raising awareness of the album does not necessarily detract from the album’s aura. Mentions of it mobilise this aura to a greater public however the lack of search results indicate that it is hardly ubiquitous and almost frustratingly impossible to glean information related to it.

In cases such as *Yaraandoo*, where limited information is available on transactions and very few re-enter the market, it is difficult to assess whether the introduction of the reissue into the commodity cycle has impacted on the value of the original. However, on this scale, if the reissue is seen as the main variable between the first and second sales, it could be posited that it has

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\(^{11}\) Vinyl’s popularity has increased despite predictions it would be “all played out by 1990” (Hochman, 1988)

\(^{12}\) Dusty Groove is a record store that also has an online site specialising in a range of genres and niche recordings.
resulted in a depreciation of monetary value due to greater availability of the album. Greater availability impacts on the aura-dependent quality of rarity. However, coincidently it could be argued that the mention of the album by DJ Shadow and the cultural influence he exerts, along with the reissue, raises the album’s profile and by extension advertises its worth to a wider audience. Its value as an “Australian” album, appreciated by collectors such as Kilby, is also not diminished, and indeed is accentuated by its release the album through a reissue label devoted to Australian recordings.

It seems clear from the example of *Yaraandoo* that the production of the album’s aura is a two edged process. It involves both technology and cultural systems of value. Technology distributes the agency of the album and the people associated with it. Without knowledge of the record or its story, there is little opportunity for aura to be attached to the album. While technology facilitates the dispersal of information about the record, and subsequently aura, the other side of the argument, as mentioned by Jee, is the emotional value and through further analysis of his comments, the cultural capital, accrued by owning the record. To quote Belk, “If such mass-produced objects as books, even rare editions, lack an aura by themselves, their ardent pursuit, passionate acquisition, and worshipful possession in a collection can provide one” (1995b, p. 61).

*Yaraandoo*’s value to Jee rests primarily on its rarity, which he fears will be diminished by the presence of more copies. Within the crate digging community the cultural capital accrued through owning an original copy is significant. The reissue jeopardises the investment in the original capital. This reflects the antagonistic yet complimentary contract between economic capital and cultural capital in which cultural capital necessitates the denial of market success but paradoxically eventually accumulates substantial economic profit (Born, 1995; Bourdieu, 1984).

This raises two issues. Firstly that ownership is complicated by not just by economic capital but also cultural capital. The other is that the reissue does not necessarily detract value from the original considering the competing ways in which aura is mobilised and assigned. *Yaraandoo*’s aura is the result of its biography and mythical status. Arguably, had it remained dormant in record collections around the globe, the legend of *Yaraandoo* and its subsequent aura would not have been sustained.
Suggesting that more copies of the album detract from value and by extension cultural capital implies the presence regimes of value and a politics of access at work. Limited availability of album copies affords less opportunity to listen. My encounters with Yaraandoo before purchasing the reissue relied on having people who possess the original to play the album for me. As such there was a prolonged time lapse from when I discovered the album’s existence until I had the opportunity to listen to it. Limited access to the album therefore means that those who hold original copies act as the gatekeepers to an aural experience of Yaraandoo, and through regulating access to the album they can work to maintain its rarity-based value.

The circulation of only a few copies limits the potential of economic success if cultural capital is understood as operating on the denial of the economic. While in the world of crate digging the regime of value that operates in part for Yaraandoo is based on its rarity, this is not the only factor that accrues capital. There have been other qualities mentioned in this chapter that also raise its worth. Therefore, the production of more copies should not necessarily detract from the capital invested in it, just as a print of a famous painting does not devalue the original. Paradoxically, the reissue may plausibly heighten the aspiration for an original Yaraandoo with the album’s notoriety acknowledged by a greater fan base, increasing the value of the original both culturally and economically. This is evidenced by Jee’s comments about the worth of his copy of the record.

Despite the mechanisms of technology and reproduction, there may be other reasons for Yaraandoo’s maintenance of aura. This continuation of value despite increased consumption parallels with what Kramnick (1998, p. 8) notes occurred with canonical works during the 1700s:

Large-scale culture likewise, turns out, for some critics to ensure canonical status. This is that equally novel development in which consumer culture ceases to demean aesthetic value but becomes the means of gauging literary achievement, the very test of time of time itself … Canonical works neither lose their aura of rarity nor quit receding into the past. According to this model, cultural consumption transforms into a system of value analogous to economic consumption.

Kapferer notes a similar trend regarding luxury brands. Despite an increase in luxury sales, such brands are not aesthetically devalued and retain their desirability. Kapferer (2012, p. 459) sees
luxury brand management as reflecting Western social ideas based on distinction, class differentiation and the elite and that the increased consumption of these products should in theory reduce their exclusiveness. In contrast, luxury brands remain resilient to devaluation through increased consumption, which “seems at odds with the concept of luxury being tied to rarity and exclusivity” (Kapferer, 2012, p. 453). Kapferer determines that this maintenance of aura is possible through the adoption of tactics such as virtual rarity and qualitative rarity (2012, pp. 457-458). While Yaraandoo is not a luxury good by common definition, it is exclusive and rare. The reissue does not risk devaluing aura through applying similar mechanisms that work for luxury brands. The reissue still is released in a limited number and in a format — vinyl — that is not as ubiquitous as an MP3 or CD. Additionally, its rarity and quality are emphasised, worthy of the connoisseur, and is reinforced by releasing through a niche label. This contributes to a sense of qualitative rarity, accentuating quality regardless of quantity. This shift effectively manages to maintain aura as the product of assumed rarity.

The competing values attached to the album all establish Yaraandoo’s status as iconic. And this position, particularly in the context of Roundtable's ethic, presents the album as part of a greater musical heritage, something which will be a key issue in chapter seven. The recognition of Yaraandoo’s value as expressed through economic variables, cultural guidelines, the reissue and Rare Collections podcast, represents a shift from individual ownership to public ownership as cultural heritage. This reflects what Connell (2000, p. 39) suggests occurred with important works literary works:

Far more than stately homes, museum pieces, or other fine arts, the idea of literature as heritage tested the boundaries between private ownership and shared public culture to an unprecedented degree.

Yaraandoo maintains aura despite its material proliferation due to its iconic status as canonical of its genre, again paralleling Connell’s observations on literary works:

The canonical literary work could exist uniquely at this time amongst comparable cultural media as a first edition in a nobleman’s prestige collection, an expensive print in a wealthy doctors home, a circulating library volume, and an artisan’s cheap abridgement — while still retaining the symbolic aura of a collectively owned national treasure (2000, p. 39).
In this sense, ownership of the music of Yaraandoo, or at least access to it, is no longer restricted to a privileged few, but the property of a greater public as part of a broader musical heritage. In addition, the perpetuation of its aura provides it with a reified place within the history of Australian music.

**Yaraandoo and agency: the album as agent and patient**

The discussion thus far describes biographically the eventful happenings of Yaraandoo. In other words it has highlighted the interactions between Yaraandoo and humans where Yaraandoo assumes the role of either agent or patient. Describing Yaraandoo in such a way bestows a certain level of subjectivity, which adheres with the ideas put forward by Gell (1998) in his seminal work *Art and Agency*. Critics argue that Gell’s model is of “limited value in explaining how art objects can extend their maker’s or user’s agency” (Layton, 2003, p. 461). Although this may be justified, Gell’s theory does bring the role of the object to the fore, a point from which the object’s role in extending human agency can be developed, as I proceed to do in this thesis.

The social agent is “the one who exercises social agency” (Gell, 1998, p. 16). This can be explained as the person, animal or thing, whose actions are the locus of certain events’ causality. On a superficial level most would assume this to be relationships between one or more people, after all how could a sentient-lacking material object make someone do something? But as Gell (1998, p. 17) eloquently points out, his argument relies on the premise that the “immediate ‘other’ in the social relationship does not have to be another ‘human being’” and therefore “things” can be seen as social agents. The objectification process Miller (1987; 2005a) has discussed and which I applied to Yaraandoo’s biographical positioning, is seen by Gell (1998, p. 21) as the manifestation of social agency in that “objectification in artefact-form is how social agency manifests and realizes itself, via the proliferation of fragments of ‘primary’ intention agents in their ‘secondary’ forms.”

What makes Gell’s argument credible or at least comprehensible if one is not inclined to believing that objects can be agents, is that his understanding of agency in this case is relational rather than classificatory and thus concerns itself with agent/patient relationships at sites of interaction (1998, p. 22) and this allows both humans and non-humans to assume the role of
either agent or patient and where the patient’s role can also be viewed as a “form of (derivative) agency” (1998, p. 23). This means that *Yaraandoo* can act on people and also be the recipient of their actions. Agency is not uni-directional from person acting with intention to object. It flows in both directions, and the biographical approach applied in this thesis, demonstrates the levels at which these interactions take place.

Take for example, Jee’s opinion on the reissue of an album such as *Yaraandoo*. Indicating the album has subjectivity, the attitude that the reissue can “take away from it in a sense”, is regarded as personally damaging to the album, either physically or in reputation. It is seen as an affront on the collector himself as it “messes it up for people like me” (Bevan Jee interview with author 31 July 2011). This reflects Borgerson’s (2005, p. 439) recognition of the importance of materiality in identity construction, in particular “the relation and co-creation of objects” and emphasizes the process through which the “human organism-agent-person becomes inextricably enfolded with material culture” (Knappett, 2005, p. 12). Jee’s status as a collector is based on records which are difficult to procure, and increasing the ease of accessibility to others by extension devalues the hours and money spent accumulating both the knowledge of and acquisition of such records. It threatens the practices that are self-definitional for such collectors. The album both reflects the personhood and is an extension of the collector but also possesses its own personhood. I would suggest that this is slightly different to the role of music in identity construction as connected to nostalgia and memory as described by DeNora (2000, p. 63) and reiterated by Shuker (2004, p. 324).

Likewise the album helps define Kilby as a serious record collector and the premise of the *Rare Collections* podcast assists in constructing him as a connoisseur, reflecting Belk’s (1988) observations on the way that possessions contribute to and reflect people’s identities (see also Giles et al., 2007; Vaher, 2008). Kilby identified the Australianess of the album as an important quality to him and this is further reflected in the podcast material beyond *Yaraandoo*. Thus Kilby perpetuates the aura of the album which is specifically valuable to him while reciprocally his connection to it provides him with the necessary sense of authority to position himself as collector, radio and podcast host. And in the middle of the increasing trading networks of *Yaraandoo* originals is Reitman, whose profile as an astute dealer of quality records is enhanced with each new purchase or revelation of the album from his store. The myth of the album and its
famous connections not only raise the recording’s value, but also the status of Reitman as a dealer.

The life history of the album has also had an unpredictable impact on Thomsett as the original artist. Thomsett himself re-recorded *Yaraandoo*, in part out of frustration with the quality of the original recording and his desire to make use of new recording technologies to improve on the original. And yet, it is the aura of the original recording that has attracted the interest of collectors, curators, and re-issue labels alike. To a significant extent, *Yaraandoo* is not Thomsett’s to control, and the original recording is now exerting an influence on him – one that he may not welcome. In approaching Thomsett to be interviewed for this research, he noted apologetically on several occasions that he was very busy in a new profession and did not have much time available to talk about the album and his past as a musician. As noted above, he also seems to have offered a different account of the re-issue process to me than the account he provided in a radio interview on the subject. Through the objectification and circulation of *Yaraandoo*, Thomsett’s 1974-self has been extended into the present by the actions of others, and his control over the presentation of his music and the extension of his self has been limited. The album has acted on him, and this may have generated some discomfort. The tensions associated with such extensions are explored further in subsequent chapters.

Recognising music’s power in mediating object/subject relations is admittedly not new. Born (2011, p. 377) notes the perspective’s long held tradition from Adorno onwards. She makes reference to recent work on this topic, citing Hennion’s (2003, p. 90) discussion on the relationship between music lover and music in the co-production of taste, where “taste is grasped as a mutually transformative relation cultivated through a range of practices and techniques” (Born, 2011, pp. 377-378). Put simply, the music that people make or collect makes people. Hennion (2003, p. 90) makes a point, similar to what I aim to do through biographies, that concerns the redistribution of creation more equally between composers and society. By this he means that the making of the music, or what I refer to as the sound object, is constituted both by the composer and the public who listen to it. It is a collective effort. Yet it is also circular as Hennion notes, “it takes all the collectivity’s love to be able to say that everything comes from Rembrandt or Mozart” (2003, p. 90). He attributes this to why Elias (1993) is:
...caught in a double bind when he speaks of Mozart as a ‘socially unrecognised’ genius – a paradoxical pleonasm, considering how much this ‘unrecognition’ is a central figure of the social production of ‘genius’ (Hennion, 2003, p. 90).

Aura is important to revisit here. Aura is socially constructed, has different sources and is mobilised at varying times for different purposes. Considering the co-production of taste between music lover and sound object, we can relationally extend this co-production to the production of a subject (potentially both human and nonhuman). From this perspective, the fear of reproduction diminishing the object’s aura is actually a reflected fear that reproduction will affect the aura or self-defined personhood of those who own or maintain some form of relationship with the album. When aura is removed from human motivation and rested in the object itself, the fear of reproduction diminishing aura is negated. Instead, the fear is revealed as an assault on the individual and the possible change in personhood that this might require through redefinition. Crate diggers define the album as auratic, but in return it defines them, and their status within the crate digging community.

The reissue process is an example of Yaraandoo as agent *making* what in this case can be referred to as human patients, do something. The quality and rarity that contribute to its mythical positioning have *caused* people to reissue it. This represents what Pollard (2001, p. 330) recognises when commenting, “the agency of things structures the way people deal with them”. The Roundtable would not have reissued the album had it not acted on them in a certain way. Its actions also reciprocally entailed Roundtable to act on it, in this case inverting its role to that of patient – the subject in the relationship, which is “causally affected by the agent’s action” (Gell, 1998, p. 22). Thus when chosen for reissue and undergoing the process of re-pressing *Yaraandoo* is the recipient of The Roundtable’s actions. But this relationship is always in a state of flux as the material and audio quality of an aged *Yaraandoo* determines it is treated in particular ways, and its aesthetics determines that considerable time is devoted to re-presenting it in a manner that reflects the original.

It also helps the label construct an identity — one that reflects an informed and refined taste in music; a label that also strongly identifies with specializing in Australian rarities and thereby playing into but also being coerced by the auratic qualities of Australianess, rarity, musical
quality and myth that the album possesses as described by the stories in this chapter. This reflects the relational approach to aura as discussed earlier in chapter two – the idea that aura relationally produced and operates through categories such as relative rarity. The interaction between Yaraandoo and the people involved with the album, either through production or collection, is therefore a relationship in which neither party is passive and each is affected by the personalities of the other.

The relationships between the album and the individuals profiled demonstrate that “things”, in this case Yaraandoo, can influence people’s actions and sense of self. The practices of collection and reissue, and the qualities that are deemed important, are integral to defining not only the album, but those who interact with it. Thus both subject and object act on each other, something that suggests subject over object dominance and the separation of these two domains is not as natural as often portrayed. A biographical approach and one that acknowledges the agency of both humans and things negates the subject/object, human/non-human and subsequent active/passive determinism, which neutralises any causality on behalf of the “thing”, in this case, Yaraandoo. This does much to bring to light the type of “thing” as possessing personhood that Gell’s perspective posits, significantly if “we consider ‘persons’ not as bounded biological organisms, but use this label to apply to all objects and/or events in the milieu from which agency or personhood can be abducted” (1998, p. 222).

Conclusion: Yaraandoo and biography

This chapter employed a biographical framework in order to demonstrate the relationships between the human and nonhuman. The framework was aimed at destabilising the boundary often placed between the two, which renders the former as subject and the latter as object. As demonstrated, the situation is more complex and both entities possess agency through which they exert influence on the other.

The biography of Yaraandoo has illustrated how at certain stages in the album’s history, aura has accumulated and been mobilised, and this in turn has contributed to the singularisation of the album which has at times raised it above commodity status. This process is perpetuated by the further biographical possibilities offered by reissue. The mobilisation of aura and the singularisation of Yaraandoo, not only work to define the album, but also demonstrate how the
album becomes an extension of the people and landscape it is associated with, helping to establish their self within Australian music.

I have followed Yaraandoo’s life story witnessing the significant events framed by agents who invest their own particular sensibility of aura and seek to increase it in contradictory and sometimes competing ways. This has been variously mobilised to reach certain ends, extending Yaraandoo’s biography in the process, and adding to both the album’s aura and materiality. The reissue process, temporarily at least, heightens awareness of the album, bringing attention to and building upon the unique position it holds in Australian music and record collecting communities. The reissue does not claim to be original and arguably consumers know this. It does however increase accessibility to Yaraandoo. Simultaneously it increases the materiality of the album and the biographical possibilities than would have been available to the 100 copies of its original print run. A biographical approach therefore, makes salient the contested episodes in the album’s life and demonstrates that these have the potential to raise its profile and extend its longevity.

Yaraandoo shows in contrast to Middleton’s (1990, p. 83) assumption that the record is finished and finite, the recorded album is far from biographically complete. Tracing Yaraandoo through commodity circuits, its reincarnations, and the production of its mythological status, provides an insight into the process through which it moves beyond recording to a reified album and how it defines personhood both oppositional and its own. While death of the physical album may seem plausible in the biographical oeuvre, its sounds at least have the capacity to regenerate and reverberate:

Tears of blood – endless weeping- Knowing that Death had come to the Earth, the gum trees wept tears of blood and the swamp trees forever moan their sad song  (Track listing Yaraandoo).
Chapter 5

Sampling Genealogies of Sound

This chapter deals specifically with sample-based music and the process of beat-making. I review sampling practice and observe producers as they make beats, the aesthetic of which is reflective of the values of the crate digging culture as outlined in the previous chapter. Indeed DJ Shadow makes a reappearance demonstrating the interconnectedness of crate digging, one of the themes mentioned in chapter one and described in chapter four with sampling, which will also be discussed in the following chapter. Understanding the process of beat-making is essential to charting the biography of sampled sound and the changes in materiality and structure it undergoes during this. It is therefore possible to ask if the sample is the same sound object as before and what this means with regards to ownership. This would undoubtedly have implications if regarding property through the gaze of Anglo-American law however by focusing on the social actions involved and on the agency of both the producer and sound I suggest that sampling may not be straightforward stealing, as much reporting encourages us to believe.

Property is inseparable from notions of personhood and it is in this chapter that I further develop the ways in which personhood is constructed through musical practices, this time through the sampling of segments of recorded sound for the production of new sound objects. As Busse and Strang (2011, p. 5; Humphrey & Verdery, 2004) note “persons” as a bounded category is a particularism of certain cultures and historical periods. We can therefore question the ways in which personhood expresses itself and look for alternative options. These alternative modes of personhood are significant. I discover through doing the biography of sound objects that sampled-based music provides opportunities not only to extend the life pathway of the sample, but to also extend the biographies of the people who work on, or perhaps more appropriately, with and through, the sound. The sound accumulates human agent’s biographies
as it extends its own, and, using Deleuze and Guttari’s (1987) bodies without organs (BwO) terminology, provides a line of flight for these associated personhoods to travel through.

In this way I allude to fluidity of ownership and appropriation, and by extension the shape shifting capacity of personhood. To quote Busse and Strang (2011, p. 5), “This brings to the fore a reality that there are multiple ways of owning and appropriating, some of which run counter to and thus challenge dominant frameworks”.

Challenging such frameworks is at the core of this chapter. Through biography, alternative modalities of ownership, appropriation and personhood afforded through contemporary music producing practices are discovered. These alternative personhoods and the osmotic relationship between subject and object indicate that current property laws do not adequately deal with the complexities of ownership and creativity and this must be considered when discussing property relations and creative economies.

This chapter will briefly discuss the history of sampling before proceeding to an ethnography of the sampling culture. This will be followed by a discussion, which draws on observations from the ethnography and is posed around questions of ownership, biography and personhood.

Background to sampling

...using equipment that is readily available and becoming less expensive, those who sample have the history of recorded sounds at their fingertips (Brown, 1992, p. 1943).

The potential depth of musical memory in recorded sound that is available to be cut, remixed and interwoven into a new tapestry of sound by the enterprising DJ or producer is obviously. Schloss reiterates this notion claiming, “record collecting is approached as if potential breaks have been unlooped and hidden randomly throughout the world’s music” (2004, p. 37). The possibilities of what can be done with such samples are restricted only by the limits of creativity as well as technological and legal constraints. Sampling can itself be defined as the “incorporation of previously recorded works into new musical compositions” (Brown, 1992, p. 1942) and such practices according to Schloss (2004, p. 79) form the basis of hip hop production.
However the appropriation of sound has a much longer and broader history than its recent association with hip hop.

Sampling is not a new phenomenon and is considered “part of a broad musical and artistic tradition of borrowing from and elaborating on prior works” (Brandes, 2007, p. 100). This section will discuss the history of sampling and the implications it has for copyright. Undoubtedly the recognition that the current copyright regime is inadequate to deal with contemporary practices of music production is being asserted. As Born (2005, p. 25) states “moreover, digitized music’s hyper-mobility as code cause both the economic and legal property regimes associated with the pre-digital era to become outdated and impotent”. Perry (2004b, p. 114) questions the notion of sample ownership, asking “[I]f the sample forms part of a new artistic formation, why should copyright hold?”. Perry continues to discuss the use of the sample and its incorporation in a new musical piece, distinguishing between ripping the entire song and this smaller part of the whole. This understanding of the sample being organically different in new contexts and consequently complicating the matter of copyright is what this thesis seeks to understand through the biographical. If the sound is presented in a way quite distinct from the original, is it the same sound? What opportunity does the sample hold for distributing the agency of the original creator? Does the sample accumulate the biography of other agents as they act upon it and therefore complicate the idea of authorship? By tracing the biography, reflecting on where the sample has come from and where it is now, it is possible to gain a nuanced understanding of ownership issues and the independence of the material object.

Sampling has its origins in the music of Jamaica. These roots are located in the “sound systems”, essentially mobile sets of amplifiers and speakers that played hits to the predominantly economically disadvantaged local population, and bringing them music they otherwise couldn’t afford (Self, 2002, p. 348). The “Selector” was responsible for choosing and introducing the records and with time began to speak over the records rather than primarily announce them. The popularity of talking over the record, meant that to maintain a competitive edge, local musicians were commissioned to record Jamaican styled versions of popular songs, opening the whole track to rhyme over rather than just the instrumental breaks (Self, 2002, p. 348). This led to what Self (2002, p. 349) claims as a division of labour, with the selectors responsible for the music and the vocalists becoming “DJs” who would “ride the rhythm”.

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When the movement made its way to the United States, the titles switched, with the DJ becoming known in the United States as MC “Master of Ceremonies” and the Selector now being known as the DJ. Indeed despite being widely viewed as solely American in origins, the hip hop culture is the product of a highly multicultural mix. Immigrants from Barbados, Jamaica, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, in combination with black Americans lent their creativity and cultural stylings to hip hop (Thompson, 1996).

Clive Campbell aka cool Herc, regarded by Afrika Bambaataa as “the ‘father’ of hip hop” and its chief inspiration (Ogg & Upshal, 1999, p. 21) brought the concept of the sound system to the Bronx. In 1974, Kool Herc began to manipulate the turntables in an attempt to accommodate break-dancers, by isolating the instrumental breakdowns, otherwise known as “breaks” or “break beats” and then fading into the break beat of the next record (Self, 2002, p. 350). Sampling is break music extended. According to Thompson (1996, p. 215) “a fusion of break musics in the Bronx sparked the rise of hip hop”. Turntablism methods were further refined by the DJs that followed; notable inclusions are Grandmaster Flash (Track 9) and Afrika Bambaata (Track 10) (Self, 2002, p. 350).

Perkins (1996, p. 7) claims that Grandmaster Flash’s expertise in beat creating technology opened the doors for experimenting with sampling and launched the rap revolution. The use of multi-track recorders liberated a range of samples across all music and audio genres, including advertising and television, to be extracted and incorporated into new recordings creating the continual self-renewal of the genre (Perkins, 1996, p. 8). Perkins succinctly states that:

> Sampling was hip hop’s ongoing link with history and tradition ...; so one can say that hip hop generates its own history by recycling music and reintroducing the previous musical genres to new markets and audiences (1996, p. 9).

Sampling technology complimented the aesthetics of hip hop. As the technology became available and accessible, producers were able to utilise samplers to recreate what DJs attempted manually, to “isolate, manipulate and combine well-known and obscure portions of others’ recordings to produce entirely new and radically altered sonic creations” (Self, 2002, p. 350).
Sampling Genealogies of Sound

While the practice may have had its origins in manually recording looped breaks, sampling’s contemporary form sees the translation of an audio segment into digital code which can then be continually looped if required (Lena, 2004, p. 298).

Sample-based music has significantly increased in popularity and extended to other genres including pop, house and electronic, ambient, techno and the more recent trend for mash ups (see Serazio, 2008 for a discussion of mash ups.). Electronic artists such as Beck, Daft Punk, Felix da Housecat, the Chemical Brothers and more recently Girltalk (Track 11), among others, all meld samples into their work. UK based artist Robin Rimbaud, aka, Scanner, even goes as far as integrating fragments of people’s phone conversations detected on a scanner device (hence his artist name) into his musical works (Track 12). Simon Reynolds (1998) has a supportive view of sampling claiming that:

This is the fin de millennium sampladelic supernova, where the last eighty years of pan-global recorded sound is decontextualized, deracinated, and utterly etheralized....[S]ample based music at its best is fully fledged composition: the creation of new music out of shards of reified sound, an alchemical liberation of the music trapped inside dead commodities (Reynolds, 1998, pp. 45,47).

Despite Reynold’s appreciation for sample-based music, the law does not receive such practices with equal enthusiasm. Sampling enabled the manipulation and incorporation of previously recorded sounds into new sonic schemes and it is with this release from “fixedness”, that copyright issues were raised.

Sampling and copyright law

Sampling’s role in the development of hip hop and its influence on other genres, has been “challenged by the corporate and legal gurus who control the record industry, particularly in the publishing aspect” (Perkins, 1996, p. 8). From a legal perspective, the practice can be described in three words: “Sampling is theft” (Beadle, 1993, p. 197). Both the song and the recorded mechanical object of the song are copyrighted and following legal protocol requires the producer using the sample in their own new work, to gain copyright clearance first.
It is often claimed that the exorbitant cost of clearing samples would make it almost impossible to produce an album and indeed, some of the seminal and genre-defining albums would not have been produced had they undergone this process (Perkins, 1996, p. 9). Lena (2004, p. 301) supports this opinion, claiming that financial and time costs inherent in “accounting of payment of sample licenses based on royalties from rap songs are overwhelming” for many producers within this genre. McLeod and DiCola (2011, p. 210) demonstrate this financial complexity by analyzing two of the most successful releases in early hip hop — Public Enemy’s Fear of a Black Planet (Track 13) and the Beastie Boys Paul’s Boutique (Track 14). They suggest both albums would not be commercially practical to release under current licensing schemes, estimating the former would have cost $6.8 million and the latter $19.8 million (2011, p. 210). Clearly, such financial obligations would have a negative effect on creative output.

The creatively restrictive tendencies of copyright are further emphasized when Lena outlines the complex and cumbersome mechanisms of copyright law — “All of these complexities function as disincentives for the use of samples in rap production” (2004, 301). Indeed Norek (2004, p. 83) suggests that the adverse effect of copyright clearance costs on creativity in hip hop is seen by many in part to blame for the current lack of artistically compelling releases within the genre. Masnick agrees suggesting that time and financial input invested in clearing sample-based works, is done so at the cost of creativity (2011).

Much recent debate has centered on the inability of current copyright laws to fit a system where increasingly rapid technological advances enable new forms of musical composition and production, and the ability to incorporate not only a previously recorded song, but that actual recording of a song, into a new piece of music. As Achenbach (2004, p. 211), referring to the similarity in the essence of sampling to cover versions, and the ability of technology to enable an original recording to divine the new composition, posits:

...the composition produced by this divination is, in reality, a closer approximation of the composition than any score could be. After the producer reaches this point, technology again enables him to reinterpret the work without having to filter his reinterpretation through another set of musicians.
Sampling Genealogies of Sound

Originally, copyright was established to protect the interest of artists and encourage cultural growth by creating an economic market for artistic works, however this does not always facilitate an environment that is conducive to the production of art by progressive artists (Achenbach, 2004, pp. 212, 213). Indeed, it would seem that the possibilities enabled by new technologies, are hindered rather than encouraged by legislation that existed long before the technology was readily available. This is one of the major tensions between the artist and the law — one which, I later develop as being a tension between the types of personhood such technologies facilitate and those which law can accommodate. In the current climate the ability to incorporate old recordings into new pieces is a significant practice amongst artists and genres widely acknowledged as using samples, and which constitute a large slice of the music industry. This is clearly demonstrable through the lucrative financial colonization by the hip hop industry with Rhea (2002, p. 5) claiming that hip-hop culture will “continue to be a thriving creative and economic force in the foreseeable future”. As an example of the kind of profits a major artist can earn, Rhea cites Dr Dre’s net income earnings for 2002 which at $51.9 million out earn Madonna and the Beatles (2002, p. 2).

Much of the controversy surrounding sampling is related to earnings, particularly who is gaining earnings, and who might be losing income as a result of their work being sampled. Wallmark (2007, p. 110) claims that the fear of sampling impinging on artists earnings, which is commonly used as support for copyright legislation, is an unjustified one. He posits that:

> It is an absurdity to think that people were not buying Chic’s “Good Times” single because they owned the same groove on their Sugarhill Gang record, that audiences were foregoing the purchase of Kraftwerk’s “Trans Europe Express” because Afrika Bambaata used the same melody on “Planet Rock” (2007, p. 110).

Thus casting doubt on the financial loss to the original artist argument, Wallmark looks to McLeod (2001, p. xiii) who reasons that intellectual property is an ideology implemented on these grounds rather than in response to threats posed to the market. But this tension between music and the law has not always been the case. While copyright may make sense from a legal perspective, the restrictions such law imposes through financial obligation has the opposite effect of encouraging creativity that copyright initially sought to achieve.
The history of borrowing in music

While digital sampling has garnered much discussion around the issue of copyright, the use of borrowing and referential traditions in music is not new. Indeed Boon (2011) suggests music is built upon the culture of the copy:

Copies are everywhere in music: in turntablists’ use of old vinyl and hauntological pop’s attempts to revive and play with forgotten musical styles, but also in the way any musical genre involves an agreement that some stylistic elements, whether it be instruments, haircuts, rhythms, or song structure will be repeated, and the creative act will happen only within an agreed structure. In this way, folk music, string quartets, psychedelic rock, or new Country are all cultures of the copy.

Achenbach (2004, p. 213) claims “Great artists have always reached their heights by building upon the works of their predecessors”. This view is also acknowledged by Brown who notes that, “the practice of quoting previously recorded works of others as referents within a new composition has a longstanding tradition in the arts” (1992, p. 1946).

This “longstanding tradition” can be seen in Classical music where musical borrowing was common even amongst the well-known composers. This borrowing was facilitated by the fact that “ownership” of the music by the authors did not exist as it does today. Composers were subservient in recognition to their patrons, whether that be the Church, royalty or court, and thus ownership was given to the latter (Goehr, 1992, p. 180). By virtue of this fact the importance of recognition of authorship did not hold the powerful economic value that it does today. This facilitated open musical borrowing, a practice that was accepted and seen as fair:

The fact that musicians did not own their music, and because music was functional, meant that one musician could make use of any other’s music (usually part of it, but sometimes the entire thing) without requiring permission from the composer, and sometimes even without permission from the owner (Goehr, 1992, p. 181).

For example Goehr makes reference to a report from an anonymous writer of a public musical performance in 1739 that was partly constituted by components of Handel’s *Esther* and *Athalia*. 
Medieval troping a form of music which “constituted the first documented instance of altering, recontextualising and fragmenting musical materials for new purposes” (Wallmark, 2009), is another example of where practices similar to sampling have been acceptable and successfully employed.

However the contested nature of music ownership precedes the era of hip hop and digital sampling. In fact the current notion of ownership is contemporary and Western in its conceptual and intellectual location. Goehr (1992, p. 152) points to the romanticisation of fine art around 1800 as an opportunity through which people began to properly develop the idea of a musical product. As demonstrated through her analysis of the development of the work-concept, focus became centered on the musical work itself, emphasizing the end product and thereby objectifying the musical work. It was around this time that musicians began to be freed from guild and institutional restrictions and achieve creative freedom (Goehr, 1992, p. 152). This had implications for ownership of the musical work. As Goehr (1992, p. 218) comments:

> When composers began to view their compositions as ends in themselves, they began to individuate them accordingly. When composers began to individuate work as embodied expressions and products of their activities, they were quickly persuaded that that fact generated a right of ownership of those works themselves.

Goehr (1992, pp. 218, 219) cites Attali’s reference to a 1786 regulation in France by the *Conseil du Roi* where they noted the:

> ...the piracy of which the composers and merchants of music were complaining was so injurious to the rights of artists..., and ownership rights were daily becoming less respected, and the talented deprived of their productions (Attali, 1985, p. 54).

Thus copyright was established to protect the rights of the artists, something which it supposedly still contends to do today. Interestingly, Goehr notes that the copyright protection during the nineteenth century only covered what were deemed “original” works, these being labeled as original in regard to their use of independent labour and skill, not their artistic merits, and correlating to what was termed “civilized” music (Goehr, 1992, p. 219). This excluded forms of popular and folk music, and rather amusingly now, considering the amount of income these
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musics produce, a major argument against copyright being extended to popular music production was based on the view such musics were “artistically and economically worthless” (Goehr, 1992, p. 219):

Here is what’s new. There was just formed an agency for the collection of royalties for authors, composers, and musical publishers... the aim of which is quite simply to collect or help in the collection of royalties from ballads, ariettas, light songs, and potpourris used in salons and concerts. So from now on, one will not be able to sing a ballad without the threat of being taken by the collar on charges of violating private property... How can serious men spend their time on such twaddle?... At a time when we must loudly proclaim the freedom of thought, when art must enter the hearts of the masses through dedication, and most especially selflessness, they go bring up an issue that is as childish as it is ridiculous!... If you create operas, symphonies, in a word, works that make a mark, then royalties shall be yours; but taxing light songs and ballads, that is the height of absurdity! (Attali, 1985, p. 78 citing La France Musicale March 10, 1850).

This passage was referring to the Syndicate des Auteurs, Compositeurs, et Editeurs de Musique (SACEM) — an organization whose purpose was to ensure royalties were paid to authors of musical works, and was the first example of such a group anywhere in the world (Attali, 1985, p. 78).

Coinciding with the new copyright laws was a reconceptualisation of the idea of plagiarism lead in part by a reaction to the previous understanding of composing which had allowed borrowing of musical materials, and which was no longer concurrent with the notion of originality (Goehr, 1992, p. 220). Works became viewed as discrete and complete pieces precluding the practice of open musical borrowing (Goehr, 1992, p. 222). These ideas are manifest in current copyright regimes.

My concern here is not to say that practices such as for example, medieval troping, are comparable to hip hop, which would be a superficial insight regardless, but to demonstrate that borrowing and sampling have long been part of musical creativity and were not overly problematic until copyright made them so. Williams (2010, pp. 17, 18) makes note of the range of similar sampling practices over the course of history however again, while there is no doubt previous eras have encouraged such borrowings, the point of contestation with “borrowing” in
contemporary music is focused on music as individual property suggesting it has entered a new regime of value concerning financial gain. Of course with sampling and copyright the issue is that an actual fragment of a recording has been taken and re-used. However this could plausibly be viewed as utilizing the capabilities of digital technology, to easier facilitate musical creation, rather than an act of stealing (see Wallmark, 2009, 2010, for an interesting discussion on borrowing in music).

Property laws also influence the sound object biographically. Multiple copyrights on the same piece — generally one for the musical composition and one for the sound recording (Brown, 1992, p. 1950) suggest that the sound object is already being defined and classified in different ways, in different systems depending on which regime of value it is circulating within or through which framework it is being judged. This means potentially multiple agents can own the sound object and this ownership can be renewed, bought out, or appropriated throughout its life history.

Seeger (2004, p. 74) refers to at least five problems regarding music and current legislation. Among those, two are particularly salient in terms of this thesis, these being items three and four on his list:

(3) They ignore existing local concepts of ownership and control, imposing a single standard.
(4) Although the laws are international, they are fundamentally based upon European Enlightenment ideas of the individual and romantic ideas of creation (Seeger, 2004, pp. 74-75).

Such ideas do not accommodate ownership and the related issue of personhood beyond the possessive individual that current music making technology facilitates. They are also restrictive in that to accommodate for their definitions, they force the sound objects and human agents to fit into predetermined parameters, rather than allowing for flexibility to fit more easily with the object. Thus the sound object that may experience multiple identities and events will have to set aside these material changes to adhere to such laws’ conceptualizations of what it is and what it can be under such terms. Therefore as Seeger continues, “Copyright laws tend to apply European definitions of ‘creativity’ and ‘property’ to an area of human endeavour that earlier had a variety of definitions” (2004, p. 77).
Hip hop and by extension sampling has a cultural heritage and genealogy that the current global regime of copyright cannot accommodate. In a challenge to dominant Western tradition, sample-based music highlights these discrepancies. But making sampling illegal and an infringement of copyright will not stop such activity for as Thompson (1996, p. 219) states, “We saw you digging us. Come back. ‘Cause hip hop is here to stay”, and by the same token, sample-based music in all its genres is also here for the long run.

When Rose (1994) talks about rap as being “A style nobody can deal with”, the same can be said of the contemporary argument in terms of samples, technology and ownership. It becomes evident that the current systems are not capable of dealing with sampling and perpetuating a technological determinist position will not address this. Biographical approaches on the other hand allow us to follow the sound object and demonstrate the mutual exertion of agency between the human and nonhuman. While it may be true that sampling artists have all of the history of recorded music at their fingertips, it is important to remember that history was built on the memory and borrowing from earlier musicians and artists. Such pieces did not exist without reference to other works and genres. Practices of musical borrowing, including sampling acknowledge the trajectory of music and subvert its objectification inferring on the music a dynamism that recognizes the subjectivity of sound.

**Ethnography**

Having contextualised sampling with regards to technology and law and drawing out its role in continuing the tradition of musical borrowing, I now offer an ethnographic account of the sampling culture. This allows us to examine not only the technicalities of the practice but the ways in which it is both regulated by and exceeds legal frameworks. Sampling is not just informed by, or subverts, the law, it also is regulated by subcultural ethics, personal aesthetic criteria, and importantly, the character of the sound itself.

At this stage it is pertinent to introduce the main characters in this beat-making ethnography. The main contributors are Pat Dooner aka Pat D based in Hull, UK, and Sean Dunstan aka Edward Scrillahands who operates out of Brisbane, Queensland. I spent time discussing their process of making beats — each had their own styles — and observed Dunstan as he sampled music from
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his home studio. It is through Dunstan and Dooner that we are introduced into the world of sampling and beat-making.

I meet Dunstan at the house of a well-known and respected DJ and record collector — the purpose of our visit being to find suitable material for making beats. The collection is spread over various rooms — one room was packed wall to wall with vinyl, another was about half full, and crates of records were fighting for space in the living area, slowly taking over the floor. The owner jokingly commented on his record haul, opining that, he’s not worried about people stealing his collection as it took two days to move it in so good luck to them if they can move them out before he gets home. Once there Dunstan dug his way through the crates sorting out the records he wanted, and selecting ones the vendor recommended. We would listen to snippets of music to get a feel of the album and its potential for making beats, before it would be listened to in entirety later at the Dunstan’s home. This is common practice among DJs and producers:

> When listening to a record I will normally be able to tell within the first few bars of a track or quickly skipping through if I can use it, something will stand out at you, whether it’s the feel, sounds, instruments or swing of the rhythm (Pat Dooner email to author 7 Aug 2011).

Record collectors and producers possess an aural sensibility that has been finely tuned over years of listening to and experimenting with sound and rhythm. This reflects Ihde’s (2007, p. 5) comments on the thoughtful listener where he notes the “way instruments, particularly those of the electronic era, introduce ways of listening not previously available.” There is also a cultural sensitivity as to what is appropriate material to sample, and what approaches to sampling are acceptable:

> The process I go through when sampling begins in the record shop. Firstly I really only sample from vinyl. I feel vinyl gives a sound and a feel that can’t be matched with other formats. I know people will argue that it’s hard to tell but I think it matters, there is something about analogue music that just wins in my opinion (Pat Dooner email to author 7 Aug 2011, See Figure 5).
The materiality of the music is therefore a significant factor in its potential and by extension the biographical pathways made available. The value of vinyl for sampling purposes was reinforced by Dunstan who believed that relying solely on software to source music and make beats was an inadequate representation of beat-making, although the use of programs to manipulate the beat was considered acceptable and part of the art and process. His personal sampling ethic was to never sample anything off a compilation, MP3s or CDs (Sean Dunstan interview with 4 August 2011).

Sampling opens music to new uses and ways of listening, extending a sound’s biography. It is not just the possibilities of new formats and reuse that are explored but also interactions with new human agents. Throughout this chapter I follow the producers through their individual approaches to sampling providing an insight into how sound is appropriated to accommodate the biographies of multiple human agents. This demonstrates that not only the materiality of the music changes but also the association to people.
**Styles and aesthetics of sampling**

I have never cleared any samples, let’s leave it at that (Pat Dooner email to author 7 August 2011).

Sampling, like any music making practice is influenced by individual preference, and people develop their own style according to their aesthetic sensitivities. Sitting with Dunstan as he showed me how he made beats, he mentioned that even though I was learning his method of sampling, I would probably develop a practice that suited me. This gives credence to the idea that sampling, contrary to general criticism levelled at the practice, is a unique creative process and not a one-track formula. Different approaches to making beats were expressed by the contributors. For example, Dooner describes his technique thus:

I tend to chop my beats and drums, I will find breaks, take the hits and re-sample and edit them. I have never used a full 2 or 4 bar drum loop. I think that has more to do with the way I work than actual sound or ideas of sampling. When I take sections from records I will normally take a 2 or 4 bar loop. Sometimes the loop can need editing to help it flow better into the next section, this may require chopping and re-structuring making it sound quite different to the original, sometimes the original is so perfect for what I want I will leave it and do very little to it (Pat Dooner interview email to author 7 August 2011).

In a later conversation, Dooner also discussed variations in his own technique, for example focusing on the textures of sounds and experimenting with jazz fusion guitar samples, in which there is no real beginning or end to a break, opening up the sound to greater manipulation (Pat Dooner interview with author 17th August 2013). This individuality is also partly the result of the interaction between the producer and the sound — indeed Cook (1990, p. 10) claims that music itself “is an interaction between sound and listener”. Returning to Gell’s theory of social agency, we can see that the properties of the music determine how the human agent will manipulate it to best fit their purpose. In Dooner’s case we can see the amount of manipulation corresponds with the suitability and fluidity of fit for the sound he is after.
My first sampling foray is in Dunstan’s loungeroom which doubles as his studio. Home studios like this are the norm for the majority of beat-makers for whom the activity is often in addition to a day job with reliable income. Dunstan uses Ableton, a software program which along with others such as Logic, offer what Dunstan refers to as the “new school way” of making beats. Traditionally, the beat-making process would involve using an MPC (Music Production Centre, see Figure 6) and a multitrack recorder, but software such as Ableton incorporates all these elements in the one program and is according to Dunstan “basically an oversized MIDI” (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011). MIDI stands for “Music Instrument Digital Interface” – a protocol that presents musical performance information as electronic data and communicates this with electronic devices so that they can generate sounds. Ableton describe the capabilities of their program as:

Live’s unique Drum Rack combines drag-and-drop simplicity in a familiar drum-centric pad interface with unprecedented depth and control. Each of the 128 drum pads can have its own instrument or sample and your choice of effects, and then appear in the Session mixer for easy mixing. Drum Racks even allow you to slice and dice loops and import REX format files (available at http://www.ableton.com/live-for-beat-creators, accessed 29 September 2011).

Despite the criticism directed toward beat-making software, Dunstan maintains a distinction between using software to construct a beat from vinyl, as opposed to a program:

People say using software is whack. It’s not really...There are people out there who make beats without stuff – just a program and it sounds mechanic. I agree with that, that that’s whack.

Various criteria of authenticity operate within the beat-making culture. Despite the debates over “new school” versus “old school” technology, the main issue of contention is not the beat-making technology used, but the source from which the beat is made. Choosing an MP3 over vinyl reflects a disregard for the time-honoured practices of the culture and the lack of self-investment in music education gained through digging in the crates. This view was evident not only amongst the participants I interviewed but in opinions expressed across various media related to music culture. One particular remark listed as a top comment under a YouTube clip for Deep Crates — The Art of Beat Diggin’ exemplifies this point:

... i [sic] have a cousin trying to get in the hip hop game and all he does is go online for break beats thinking hes [sic] digging — then he plays around with his mouse and pro tools for about 3-4 hours and still aint got shit popping—fruity loopy-pro tools fools—young kids today don’t understand and thats [sic] why rap music sucks today lil waynes the hottest rapper out now and hes wack as ever (sonnieeba available at, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKpbB2LxM8g&feature=related, accessed 4 October 2011).

They certainly don’t make music like they used to.

Dunstan continues to instruct me on the beat-making process. We take a record and locate a place (the break) where we find some funk by first listening to the record on a turntable, take a segment and input this into the computer program. Although with this particular sample this is not overly complicated, it is important to sort out tempo and other issues using the turntable before inputting to the software for aesthetic reasons. This is the case during a later attempt and one, which I will come back to. This may mean altering tempo so as to increase the fit of the sample with another piece of music with which it will be cross-sampled, a process known as beat matching. Altering in analogue is important in retaining sound integrity. As Dunstan says, “If you slow the music down to half speed on a program, it will sound horrible. If you slow it down on the turntable, because it is analogue, it will sound much more natural” (Sean Dunstan interview with author 10 April 2013).
We locate the start of the sample using the sound waves visualised on the computer screen as a guide. Discerning the start of the break can be done using the program; however, for Dunstan this is seen as akin to cheating:

Beauty of this is I can zoom right in with wave form. Can zoom in and see where it starts. You can cheat and use where the software puts markers in but sometimes it’s wrong plus that’s kind of cheating (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011).

Dunstan makes notes throughout, ensuring any rearranging is methodical. We now have our “break”, although the sample we chose is not technically defined so. Next we crop our sample. Due to the busyness and depth of the track, it is decided that there is probably no need to cross-sample to add complexity:

Prob enough shit in this track no point cross sampling... we got our loop now what do we want to do with it? (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011).

Having successfully navigated our way to the sample Dunstan identifies the constituent parts, these being the drum and piano. The next step is to separate them and move the bass to the right-hand side. Using Ableton, he drops in markers effectively slicing the track although at this stage they are only a rough sketch. The markers each corresponds to a touch-pad on the MPC with each pad having a library of sounds mapped onto it. The markers are visualised on screen as wave formations and these can be dragged around into new arrangements. For example, if one does not want the high-hat at the start of the sample, one can move it elsewhere. This enables Dunstan to clean the sound. We experiment with turning on the high pass filter isolating the high frequencies so that we filter out the drums, giving it a “filthy low-fi sort of sound”, although we won’t keep it low-fi, it is currently necessary “so we can focus on the elements, where they start, etc.” (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011). Next we add a drum beat, which in this case is Snare 060. This is followed by more cropping and refining. Separating the sample’s constituent instrumentation is a practice with which Dunstan has only recently begun to experiment. He shows me another sample:
This is one I did the other day and I’m quite happy with it. This isn’t a proper loop. This is something I’ve obviously chopped up. Same set of samples but one used as background the other on top just filtered differently. This is what I was trying to get at with filtering. This is the kind of stuff you can accomplish (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011).

Our sample is close to complete. The process demonstrated that there exist multiple ways to treat samples and the technology affords considerable opportunity for creative practices. Individuals respond to and create from the technology in different and numerous ways. This suggests digital music is more complex than the oft-espoused opinions framed through the lens of technological determinism, which see the human agent as passive in relation to technology. Sampling is the geography of music at the microscale. The reorganisation of the sound fragments suggests that the original notational arrangement and work, traditionally considered the “correct” place for each note and sound, is in fact the space which Massey describes, “neither a container for always-already constituted identities nor a completed closure of holism” (2005, p. 12). The sample’s breaking out from its expected location demonstrates this.

While the above sample only used the elements from one track, we also tried to construct a beat by using two different pieces of music. We select a loop from the popularly sampled “Funky Worm” (Track 15) on the Ohio Players Pleasure album and try matching this with drums from Four Tops “Midnight flower” (Track 16) off Meeting of the Minds. However this drum beat illustrates the problems that can sometimes occur when using drums played by a human rather than a drum machine — people do not keep time as exact as a machine. This needs be corrected for sample use and to do this requires chopping it up once again, mapping it on to the MPD pads and playing the drums via these pads in order to achieve greater uniformity. The MPD gives greater control to play more rhythmically over the music and the more pads used the greater control over the music and rhythm the beat-maker has (Sean Dunstan and Alex Collerson interview with author 10 April 2013). Hitting difficulties though we decide to look at how others have used the “Funky Worm” for inspiration. Thus we decide to recreate the sample as used in “Ain’t No Future in Yo Frontin’” by MC Breed and DFC (Track 17), therefore using the same “Funky Worm” loop, which appears at 02:14 into the track, and combining it with the drum break as used in this track.

A MPD is a controller that has to be used in conjunction with other devices unlike an MPC which is a stand alone sampler.
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The beat constructed by using the “Funky Worm” sample within “Ain’t No Future in Yo Frontin’” does not consist of that sample only. “Funky Worm” has been combined with the drums that appear at 07:48 minutes into Zapp’s “More Ounce to the Bounce” (Track 18). Thus the beat is constructed of multiple samples. To reconstruct the beat, Dunstan had to alter the tempos of both samples so that they fit smoothly together. The Zapp sample was slowed down while the “Funky Worm” loop had to be sped up. The sample begins with the “More Bounce to Your Ounce” sample before the Ohio Player’s sample comes in. The two are momentarily layered before the “Funky Worm” loop is cut, leaving the Zapp sample to be heard by itself, before it recedes and the “Funky Worm” is audible again. This again gives way to “More Bounce to Your Ounce”. The following screen shots (Figures 7 and 8) are both a visual and aural representation of the reconstructed loop, demonstrating the constituent parts of each sample in the beat. The wave pattern at the top is the “More Bounce to Your Ounce” sample, while the one beneath it is the “Funky Worm”. The third wave pattern is the original sample from “Ain’t No Future in Yo Frontin’”:

Figure 7. Multibiographical sound: Each sound segment represents the input of either Zapp, the Ohio Players, and MC Breed, and melded together by both Sean and myself to create multibiographical sound.
These screen shots visually represent multibiographical sound — a subject comprised of the subjectivities and biographies of multiple people and sound. Such collaboration over time and space was, by virtue of the multiple actors involved, not without “negotiations”. Even using a previously made sample as a guide the beat still threw up challenges, a pushing and pulling of agencies of both the sound and us (Track 19).

The sample therefore creates a relational space produced through the mutually constitutive efforts of sound and producer. In fact, the process of beat-making is very much an interaction of agencies between the sample and the producer. Contributors spoke of the way the music and the music making process made them feel and how this impacted on their creative process:
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You can’t force it, with a particular beat you might think this is awesome but got to come back to try to listen to it later ‘cos after listening to a loop for two hours fucks with you so you’re better off going to another project – the one that irritated you yesterday and the one that irritates you today, tomorrow (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011).

My motivation for music is the feeling of creating... Music effects [sic] me in a way that nothing else does. The feeling of creating can take you through a range of emotions, frustration, joy, more frustration, feeling of accomplishments, feelings of worth and also a tremendous calming effect. Some days being locked away chopping drum samples up can help clear my mind and let me focus, other times I get impatient and just want to have an end product. Nothing else can give me all those feelings in one session (Pat Dooner email to author 7 Aug 2011).

There is considerable emotional investment in the process and producers are connected to the product of their labour in more than a solely physical sense. Interestingly this has implications for our understanding of intellectual property, as Leach (2007, p. 101) states, “the background to intellectual property lies in the notion of property itself, understood as a way of connecting people with what they produce.” Therefore using samples without prior clearance of copyright is problematic through the disconnection between producer and product. But what impact does this have on innovation and creativity if the sample is reworked and thus manifests the creative process of beat-makers to produce something that is distinct from the original? If a connection between producer and product is central to ownership, then the production of a sample is also representative of this process.

We attempt another sample:

We’ll do something mad simple. We’ll chop it into quarter notes where the kick and snare come in. A lot of people do it this way. I do sometimes. Now we slice those fragments at the end, they’re too small for me, so we’ll move it to the end together.... Might start with sample then drums, or drums then sample. Depends but always going back and forth... Make this sound better... put some reverb on it and this bit of snare... Beauty of this is you can go in and control this. Put in sub-bass. We can go in and change the root key of this sub and can pitch it up or pitch it down. The bass is clipping. I can compress it; it’s got that crunchy kind of sound. That’s what filters are for (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011).
This process is less complicated than the filter techniques we tried earlier and again alludes to the variety of ways in which samples can be made:

Speeding up or slowing down changes tone and produces more chipmunk vocals. Many people slow it down when they’re looking for a beat. I try listen to it at its correct tone and usual speed. I have a mate Alex, who makes use of slowing down or speeding up and he has a very distinct sound. Makes good beats though. Uses lots of ‘80s boogie (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011).

People therefore have sounds that are identifiable as their own — an embodiment of their self in music. Taking this perspective makes sense of Leach’s (2007) discussion of alternative systems of creativity and ownership. Someone else’s work already resides within the sample; however, the beat-maker extends this and infuses their self, so the sound not only retains this person’s biography but simultaneously contains the biographies of other human agents as well. As the sound object travels, so too do the personal elements of those who invested their selves in the sound; the sounds begin to represent distributed personhood.

This distributed nature is reflected in Leach’s discussions of complex exchange systems in which there is “nothing else to a person than their make-up in the work and thought of others” and that knowledge is similarly constituted (2007, p. 112). Knowledge is seen not as coming from any single person, and Leach has purposely described such systems to show alternatives to possessive individualism exist. This “shows that one can own knowledge, and land, and other people, without that ownership being property, or implying possessive individuals” (Leach, 2007, p. 112). A sense of authority and distinguishing oneself from others is achieved through connection rather than exclusivity of control (Leach, 2007, p. 112).

This relationship of connection seems an appropriate and innovative way of looking at ownership around the sample, especially considering the high value placed on the accumulation of cultural knowledge by those involved in the beat-making community. This cultural knowledge has been progressively built upon and connects the history and influential figures of the culture to its contemporary context. However, it does not prevent anyone from using that material to produce something new. Their contribution of self is carried through each reworking as distributed personhood and as such there is always a claim to the work. But this is the same for
each new agent who chooses to reuse and modify the sample. Ownership still exists, but it exists through a claim to connection rather than physical control or possession.

**Selecting sounds**

Throughout this process, the sound is moved in multiple directions, removed from the larger context of the original work, and then cut, chopped and spliced, with these smaller internal sections being rearranged accordingly. Considering the discussion above, it is possible to regard human agents as being both the force behind this movement, yet also moved by it as distributed agents. Born aptly states that “music is perhaps the paradigmatic multiply-mediated, immaterial and material, fluid quasi-object, in which subjects and objects collide and intermingle” (2005, p. 7). The way producers use and talk about samples, deconstructing the larger song into different pieces — the kicks of snares, high-hats, drum-breaks, and quirks of original recording technologies, suggests that they already regard the piece as a product of multiple players – both human and nonhuman. The recording itself is the product of the percussionist, instrumentals, sound engineer, recording equipment, and more, all of which contribute to a sound constituted of multiple biographies.

Additionally, if following the sound biographically, it would seem that a particular sample or the essence of it, once it has been rearranged, can exist contemporaneously in various stages of its life. If the sample has been taken from a song, obviously the song still exists as materially complete. On listening, the sample would not be conspicuous in its absence — the song would sound the same. Regarding the rearranged fragments of the sample, again it exists in its entirety, but presents itself in a different order. What then are the implications for ownership? While essentially the same as the original it has been manipulated to appear as different and in a different context, without actually altering the materiality of the original track. So is the sample a new biographical entity or another eventful happening in the career of the original?

The issue of ownership becomes increasingly complicated when agency is considered as self-definitional. If a person defines themselves through their input into a piece, whether this be the sampled or the sampler, who has the primary claim? Or do both have equal claim through the ownership of the self they invest in the process and that exists through the music. The concept of distributed personhood and non-possessive ownership may offer to some extent a plausible
and alternative way of viewing this issue. Considering that the sample is, because of its biographical trajectory, the result of multiple agents, ownership can exist through connection to the sound. This acknowledges the concept of ownership through the investment of self-labour, without this resulting in exclusive control of the product. Thus, the sample is open to use and re-use, encouraging creativity without denying the work of prior contributors. The work is potentially ongoing and numerous biographical pathways remain open to the sound.

Copyright and hiding samples

The life history of the sound is determined by the cultural and subcultural guidelines that regulate its use and by extension, determine its biographical pathways. Despite the discussion above, the reality is that current copyright regulations do not permit such a communal view of ownership and catalyse reterritorializing mechanisms. Regimes of possessive individualism, with their subsequent legal restraints necessitate that in theory, samples cannot be used without copyright clearance. The prevalence of sampling suggests two possibilities – that people are paying copyright fees, or that the laws are ineffective and people continue to sample without first seeking permission. However, fees are often exorbitant and while prominent names and financially successful producers may gain clearance before use, the majority find alternative ways to negotiate the use of recognisable samples.

This does not mean however that there is free reign to use whatever samples are available. Contrary to Brown’s (1992, p. 1943) comment, those who sample do not in reality have the entire history of recorded sounds at their fingertips. Subcultural guidelines regulate what samples can or can’t be used without being detrimental to community standing and respect, restricting a sound’s possible escape from its recorded “fixity” in the process. As Nikk C says “you can’t use a drum break somebody else has used” (pers comm. 2010).

The subcultural authorisation of a sample requires its own nonfinancial payment. What is paid instead is homage. These rules are predicated on respect and the historical basis of hip hop as Large Professor explains, when asked his opinion of Lupe Fiasco’s use of “T.R.O.Y” (Track 20); (Track 21):
Like I said, I look at a lot of the records from back in the days, and it was a format. Like, if you
touched somebody’s music you kinda like gave it up to them right then and there. Like, boom,
but I’ma do my version of it. It was like, we gonna pay homage first. There’s no homage today.
With the artists today, there’s little or no homage. But the ones that do pay homage are the ones
that are 1,000 in this. Those are the ones where it’s like, He’s the leader. …There’s a long history,
way before these artists of today, way before me [of paying homage to your predecessors]. So if
he [Lupe Fiasco] would have paid that homage I think it would have went different (Arnold, 22
June 2012).

The producers and beat-makers I interviewed did not clear samples before use. One prominent
DJ and producer remarked that he was happy to be interviewed but would not talk about his
sampling practices, expressing the opinion that until he made enough profit to pay the copyright
clearance fees, he was going to continue using samples without gaining clearance (the interview
process subsequently went nowhere). Clearly, of those for whom beat-making is not their
primary source of income, the financial costs make clearing a sample impossible. In parallel with
this, such producers are not gaining significant financial profit from their work. Even those who
release albums commercially admitted to using samples without first seeking clearance. When
the issue of copyright and sampling was raised among the DJs, producers, crate diggers, and
consumers of the scene, the consensus was that not clearing samples is not an ethical problem if
you are not significantly profiting.

It was raised, contrary to my expectations of creative restriction, that copyright was not as
significant a constraint as it could be, and on occasions actually forced people to improve their
skills:

Having to hide the sample or mask it. I mean it’s good. It helps your creativity sometimes (Sean
Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011).

This feeling is alluded to by Cut Chemist:

There’s no law that says anything other than if you take a piece of music and somebody
recognizes it – and that’s the key – they got your ass. But recognize the shit I’m using. I’m calling
you out. I use a lot of obscure stuff and I did clear a lot too. I cleared everything. But you can’t know everything (Cut Chemist interview with Agent B Dec 13 2006).

Therefore rather than feeling restricted by copyright, some inverted the challenge it presented and used it to develop their techniques. In fact the skills developed in sampling can be transferred to other genres and areas of musical production:

I think that many people who don’t understand sampling will look at it as purely stealing music, which I suppose can be seen as a fair assumption, however, I feel that the act of sampling is more of a technique. Personally my production style across the board is rooted in sampling. For example, when I work on new stuff with ‘The Broken Orchestra’ we use real instruments, no samples at all. But my way of working remains the same as it ever did, it’s just I have a much more vast range of sounds to choose from. When I record a guitarist for example, we sit down, work out the chord structure and idea that I want to get across, and we record take after take of audio, some exactly as I had in mind, some embellishments some ideas from the musician. From there I take this away and sit through and pick bits, arrange the track, chop and loop bits (if needed) and build a track up. It’s the same process with every element of the track. This process to me is still sampling, it’s the same technique just in a different context (Pat Dooner email to author 7 August 2011).

Copyright uses not only legal but financial mechanisms to reterritorialise escaping sounds. The exercising of such control through the financial burden placed on aspiring artists is seen as unjust and additionally many perceive the majority of revenue as directed to the record company. Blog discussions on websites such as warbeats.com, reflect this sentiment. Certainly the Internet allows discussion of such sensitive and potentially illegal practices through the anonymity of a username. Following Lysloff’s (2003) acknowledgement of the validity of online fieldwork and Kozinets’ (2010) proposal of online and computer mediated ethnography as “netnography”, this section incorporates data from blog posts and forums as well as interviews, participant observation and street press.

In a forum posted in 2011 on warbeats.com titled “So you wanna Sample? (teKs thoughts)”, dcteK, posts information pertaining to sample clearance. Respondents predominantly believed the original artists deserved royalties but maintained that they would continue their practice
Sampling Genealogies of Sound

until they could afford to pay clearance fees. Comments posted on the discussion blog by Weapon of Mass Creation (WMC), summarizes the general consensus:

If I ever get to the point, where Im [sic] am making enough money for the publishing companies to take notice, if they haven’t gotten their bread yet, I invite them to come after me. I really don’t get into the legal side of shit, I make music that makes me feel good. I f I turn a profit off it then cool, but I understand that I will have to clear samples if I ever “kanye west” this bitch, you know? (Posted 15 January 2011, available at http://warbeats.com/Community/Forums/aft/3468, accessed 20 September 2012).

This indicates why some sound objects are more financially important than others. It is not until the sample-based track “drops” and becomes a hit that any notion of royalties becomes exigent. Royalties cannot return profit off nothing:


Or in response to a question by Klymaccs:

So what u r sayin is that as long as I don’t make a “profit” off any beats that use samples, I’m good? (Posted 18 January 2011, available at, http://warbeats.com/Community/Forums/aft/3468, accessed 20 September 2012).

dctek responds:

@Klymaacs Well If it blows up they might give you some problems, but whats 3% of 0? “Most” publishers don’t care since there is no money to be made. One thing I would always do profit or no profit is give them credit somewhere out of respect. (Posted 19 January 2011, available at http://warbeats.com/Community/Forums/aft/3468/afpg/2, accessed 20 September 2012).
Recognising that the increased profits associated with the greater quantity of product sold will correlate with increased chances of litigation for copyright infringement is something that DJ Sheep suggests artists should understand:

Ultimately you need to look into it if you’re going to be moving a major amount of units. With the advancement of technology and firmer legislations regarding legalities of sampling, copyright law is a risk you run into (DJ Sheep pers comm. 23 May 2011).

Despite regulations artists find ways to negate copyright. Firstly, they can continue to incorporate samples into their work and hope they escape detection especially if the track doesn’t receive substantial air play or exposure; or they can use obscure samples that defy recognition. Red Giant comments in a separate forum about clearing samples:

The way I see it is that I would need to sell a pretty substantial amount of records before anyone who cares even knows about it, and then there needs to be something in it for them to make it worth suing me so I’d have to have made quite a few dollars/euros off of the song for them to even bother and I don’t think I’ll ever sell enough to have to bother with sample clearance, if I do I cross that bridge when I get to it (Posted 24 March 2011, available at http://warbeats.com/Community/Forums/aft/5343, accessed 20 September 2012).

GP reinforces this idea.

so make “YOUR” music however you feel inspired to do it, then in the end when its something others want to vibe to and even pay you for, let them decide what they are willing to pay and get clear to get that into the world...

Or if you’re a big name, let it “drop” and let your lawyers deal with infringement claims:

Kanye dropped “Through the Wire” without clearing it first, and Timbo does the same thing... drops a sample and lets lawyer sort it out after lol.
Another option is to change the sample beyond recognition. This may include splicing it, speeding the tempo up or slowing it down and chopping, cutting and changing the sound until it is unrecognisable as the original:

What about sampling beyond recognition? I used to sample some melodies; I’d take some slices from a song, twist it around and make it sound nothing like the original.


Obviously if no-one recognises the sample, chances of being caught are minimised.

An alternative option is to dig deeper for records containing comparatively unknown tracks, which again extends the beat-maker creatively. Copyright forces beat-makers to broaden their digging horizons and refine their technical skills. Unlike the “world music” and “world music 2.0” which fetishized place (Connell & Gibson, 2004, pp. 353-354), beat-makers seek to render the music placeless. Music that is recognisably placeless is generally ownerless. Obscure records, by virtue of their inconspicuous sounds, lack the type of aura, the type where aura is known as authentic, that is valuable to record companies. Therefore it is unlikely that a sample used from such rarities would be recognised by anybody willing to claim royalties:

Just another reason to dig even deeper into the crates to find those unknown records nobody recognizes. Like Onra who made an album from a bunch of Chinese records, I don’t think he cleared those samples.


Looking to foreign shores for source material was popular practice among the Brisbane-based diggers and beat-makers I spoke to. There was a noticeable penchant for Japanese records and Bevan Jee (aka DJ Sheep) makes regular trips to Japan to obtain these for personal use and resale. Hip hop and its associated activities, including crate digging are popular in Japan and may account for the rich vinyl stores which make it attractive to overseas diggers (for a study on Japan hip hop culture see Condry, 2006; and Hosokawa & Matsuoka, 2004, on vinyl collecting in...
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Japan). Plausibly, the enthusiasm for Japanese material is a result of Jee’s influential standing in the Brisbane hip hop community, a wider independent interest, or a combination of both. The October 2011 list for Jee’s record dealing site, the Tasman Connection, claimed to be “Australia’s #1 Digging Site” ([http://www.djsheep.com/tasman/](http://www.djsheep.com/tasman/)) announces the arrival of a “shipment of over 100 hand-picked goodies from Japan.” This reflects the popularity of “Other” musics, an influence reverberating also in the August 2011 Japanese Edition of Weird Gear, the monthly Brisbane gathering of (see Figure 9) record enthusiasts, at Rumpus Room, West End, the mix from which can be found on Soul Strut Mixes:


Foreign records accrue competing cultural and economic capitals along the same trajectory as local records. The moment the sound reveals itself or becomes associated with a renowned producer, the financial value of the record rapidly increases, while variably gaining or declining in cultural status. Browsing through Jee’s vinyl collection, he pulls out a Japanese record, The Beast Must Die, a soundtrack to a Japanese horror film (Track 22). Sitting me and the album in front of his television, he plays Deep Crates 2. Pete Rock appears on screen, holding a copy of the same record. The camera repeatedly cuts to him holding this record:

> You ever seen that before? I doubt it very much ...Take a look. Cos if you’re a digger you might find it but if you’re not you’ll never find it...You’ll be rushing on the internet to, to your fuckin’ record website. You think you’re going to find this shit? You ain’t going to find this shit ...You see the back and the front and you still won’t find it (Pete Rock inBeatdawg, 2007).

Jee quips, “That record used to be a one dollar record in Japan and when this doco came out it was $400 or something” (Bevan Jee 4 August 2011).
Much sampling practice is therefore conducted with the aim of not getting caught; obscuring the origins of the sound — changing the sample beyond recognition, or seeking material from foreign shores, are such obfuscatory methods. This does not mean, however, that artists deliberately set out to use samples without clearance to deny somebody their royalties. Sampling is not a profitable practice for the majority of those who participate and for many the inspiration is not money-making but the pleasure of making beats and being creative.

*The finished sample: Aura, essence and emanations*

That sample, I’m really happy with it because it sounds nothing like the original but still retains the mood. But hopefully because it does not sound the same, nobody is going to come after me and sue my ass (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011).
What makes a sample successful according to Dunstan is its reference to the source sound combined with its own distinctiveness. Despite the reorganisation and filtering of layers, the new sound possesses the old mood, retaining the agency of the original artist:

“This is what I was trying to show you at the start. Strip out two different elements, strip out lows and highs and arrange them differently (Sean Dunstan interview with author 5 August 2011).

The sampling process alters the expected events between sound and the ear but the pathway it pursues depends upon the interdependence between the producer and sound:

“I guess there is no set answer to that as it very much depends on the sample in question. Sometimes there are fairly subtle nuances within a segment of a record that are as important if not more important than the actual riff and sometimes those subtle nuances are enhanced when a segment is chopped and re-arranged. It is really specific to the sample I am working with and to me it really is about the overall feel and sound of the piece. I never really think too deeply into it (Pat Dooner email to author 3 October 2011).

Dooner’s comment references the interconnection between people and things acknowledging their mutual exertion of agency. The process is one of unearthing the sounds’ subtleties and positioning them in a way that places the importance on them but the options available are dictated by the sound. The filtered layers represent abstractions of the original sound object yet simultaneously are part of it and thus the original sound retains its influence on the producer. Abstractions reflect the simulacra diffused from the original surface similar to the Epicurean doctrine of emanations, where simulacra, according to Volk (2003, p. 250) are “the miniscule images that detach themselves continuously from the surface of objects and that, once they enter our eyes, bring about our vision of these objects.” Such simulacra “emanate” from the relational texture of social life; as objects designed to substitute for persons ...”¹⁴ (Küchler, 2006, p. 80).

Gell (1998, p. 105) utilises the Epicurean doctrine of emanations in his discussion of idols. He makes reference to Lucretius, whose explanation of such phenomena is the most suitable for his purpose:

¹⁴ Küchler is discussing Kimberly points in (Harrison, 2006) but the principles can be applied to the sample.
[Many visible objects], ...emit bodies, some in a state of loose diffusion, like smoke which logs of oak, heat and fires emit; some of a closer and denser texture, like the gossamer coats which at times cicadas doff in summer, and the films which calves at their birth cast from the surface of their body, as well as the vesture which the slippery serpent puts off among the thorns; for often we see the brambles enriched with their flying spoils: since these cases occur, a thin image likewise must be emitted from things off their surface (cited in Gell, 1998, p. 105; Lucretius, 1952, pp. 44-45).

Lucretius’s account is a theory of the visual. It posits that particles stream from the surface of all bodies such that “these particles take the figure of the objects from which they proceed, and thus form images of or idola of the things they leave” (Eckman, 2004 (1897), p. 50). It is tempting to apply this theory to the other senses, in this case hearing. The simulacra which take the form of the subjects from which they originate, and thus form images of those, can in this context represent the samples which taken from their original source are transformed but retain the essence of their source material. For Gell (1998, pp. 105-106; following Hirn, 1900) what is of interest is that:

...if ‘appearances’ of things are material parts of things, then the kind of leverage one obtains over a person or thing by having access to their image is comparable, or really identical, to the leverage which can be obtained by having access to some physical part of them, especially if we introduce the notion that persons may be ‘distributed’, i.e. all their ‘parts’ are not physically attached, but are distributed around the ambience, like the discarded ‘gossamer coats of cicadas’ in Lucretius’ memorable instance, which are both images and parts of the living creature.

Regarding ownership it could therefore be posited that these “appearances”, or perhaps in relation to music “hearances”, are part of the physical corpus of those who produced them and both the producer and the resulting sounds are distributed across time and space. This could then be in part a justification for why artists demand royalties for their products, especially those that are a physical and personal manifestation of their being, such as vocal samples. From the biographical approach the simulacra have more than one journey from original object to sensory perception.
The distribution of sound over time and space, and the distribution of the biographical elements of people through those sounds, means that when it comes to sampling, producers are not just working with sound but the agencies of other people also. At this point it is pertinent return to Leach (2007) and his discussion of alternative beliefs of creation and ownership, in that “there is no project that is not already the project of other people as well, because they are part of you as a person” (2007, p. 112). Though culturally specific, the concept does demonstrate that creative output is rarely truly original and relies on the practices, knowledge, and contributions of predecessors distributed in both time and space. Claiming ownership becomes problematic as it could justifiably be traced beyond the person claiming authorship. Samplers acknowledge that the sample has a pre-existing life and that people build upon this to create something new in another context, but in general they do not intentionally seek to further the sample’s biography or see the practice as an act of deliberate historical referencing:

My decisions are made purely on what I feel sounds best for what I am after and does not have a great bearing on the integrity of the original record. If I felt so strongly about keeping a record or song’s integrity then I would not use it in the first place. That is not to say I don’t have massive respect for all the music I sample, the musicianship, recording techniques and ideas are amazing (Pat Dooner email to author 7 August 2011).

Aura and the sampling process

Within the world of sampling, the locus of “aura” needs to be reassessed. That requires, if we follow Benjamin’s understanding of aura being constituted by authenticity and the real, a re-evaluation of what is authentic. Christie (2005, p. 79) refers to an age of plunderphonics in which the “Real” is no longer a “reality full of discrete objects to which we think we’ve been annexed through language or symbology,” rather the “Real” “is the annexation to a world of copies.” For Christie, the aura becomes processural, embodied in practice, and resides in the act of the manipulation of the original material. He claims that the aura that once would have been associated with a cultural product, “now enshrouds the activity of manipulation, and in this case, the act of plunder” (Christie, 2005, p. 79). Authenticity is located in the copies and as such the simulacra are no less real than the original. With aura located in practice, we could see sampling
as aura embodied in practice. This contrasts with Chang’s (2009, p. 149) views which recognises the reverence producers have for the historicity of vinyl but posits,

...the historicity of the source operates in counterpoint with the ahistorical intentions of the practice, as producers deliberately work against the aura of the original. ...Sampling celebrates the possibility of freplay, where the sample is never necessarily encoded with its aura, and is instead an infinitely flexible signifier.

My research indicates, however, that producers work with rather than against aura. By selecting a sample and investing their time, skill and self in it, producers are differentiating a particular piece of music from the substantial assemblage of sound possibilities and marking it as distinct. The qualities of the sound that appeal to the producer are dependent on the individual and the task at hand and thus act as criteria to refine the possibilities from the greater assemblage. Referring to the nuances that can become more important elements in a track than the major riff, one source commented:

Yeah exactly. It’s not as if you search for those nuances but they are just there, I guess that is why different records from different ages sound different. This also raises the point of original recording techniques from things such as original microphone choice, placement etc, equipment they were using at a given time such as what tape machines were popular and such as each individual element will give a different sound and feel to the finished track. These are the things that cannot be replicated when creating new music. Personally I feel this is why music from the 60’s and 70’s have always been so popular to sample, because this is really when some great mics, equipment, techniques etc were being used and the sound was always great! (Pat Dooner email to author 3 October 2011).

This also shows that the original production process and techniques used to record the source of the sample can themselves be auratic and contribute distinctiveness to sounds. A value judgement on the aesthetics of the sound is being levered, with the implication that each era has a sound with which it is associated. The impossibility of reproducing that sound from scratch in a current studio context makes the sound so significant — a quality that also raises its chances of being selected for use as a sample:
I find it interesting to try and do the reverse of sampling (sort of what I try to do with Broken Orchestra) where you take a live part and make the end product sound sampled. You realise how much you rely on those subtle nuances when you try and do that as when you sample there is much more to it than the original riff or melody, you have to take into account how it was recorded, where it was recorded, what equipment was used, how it was mixed, the musicians used etc... What is quite nice about sampling is that it sort of captures that moment of the recording, jazz samples recorded from a live album for example will have a lot of ambient noise that you just wouldn’t get if you record yourself. I think a lot of people overlook this as it’s easy to simply say “they used that part of the melody” whereas really there are much deeper elements that are much more subtle going on within the recording (Pat Dooner email to author 3 October 2011).

The aura for this particular producer is in the deeper elements of the sample — the ambient noise, the moment of recording. Indeed, the texture that these smaller elements can give a new composition is something Dooner is currently trying to emphasise in preliminary tracks for a new Broken Orchestra album (Pat Dooner interview with author 17th September 2013). The concept of these layered elements can be extended to taking a multi-level approach to the aura and one which alludes to the relational understanding of aura and idea of relative rarity as discussed in chapter two. It is the initial recording techniques that give the source of the sound an aesthetic quality that marks it as distinct and appropriate for sampling. If aura is embodied practice in this respect, it is the act and technique of recording that bestows aura on the sound. This is magnified at the sampling level, when that moment of recording and the ambient noise is brought forward into consciousness and manipulated to fit a new context. Sampling becomes the technique through which aura is attributed, and in this context the aura is mobilised by the “doing” of the sample.

The production of aura through sampling and the nuances of recording techniques as mentioned by the participants is reinforced by the comments of respected producers. For example, in a Zane Lowe “Versus” program (Lowe, 2011) where Lowe is having a “record off” with DJ Shadow, he makes reference to the aesthetic that makes Shadow’s music recognisable. The DJ Shadow sound is referred to as retaining the character of the music, this character having much to do with the original recording techniques:
You can hear it as well I mean it has certainly felt throughout out your music, through your career just the approach to drum programming... One of the things I think you’ve done throughout your music as a fan when I listen to it is that you’re a perfectionist but at the same time you leave a lot of the personality and a lot of the roughness in your records (Lowe, 2011).

The qualities that are extrapolated from the music as making it distinct are “personality” and “roughness.” These are the same nuances that Dooner referred to, those deeper elements that cannot be obtained by simply re-recording the instrumentals. Chang (2009, p. 154) raises a similar point when she suggests that for producers, “Not only does the original record qua object bear historical weight, the rawness of its ‘sound’ is an integral component of its aura.” Shadow’s reply indicates that he too locates aura in the unique sound resulting from the original recording technique that contrasts with the predominantly more perfectly polished and impersonalised recording techniques that are currently used:

When things are too perfect, you know with autotune or whatever, you know sometimes technology can make things kind of soft... and I liked particularly in this era of sampling how things are just, they’re out of key and it just sounds menacing and really in your face and that’s what was so potent about rap at that time (DJ Shadow interview by Zane Lowe 26 May 2011).

Shadow’s comment personalises the music providing the original source with a sense of agency. The music is “menacing” and “in your face.” This in turn forces the producer to re-work such music in a manner that acknowledges these attributes in order to retain the auratic elements. This may mean that even if the segment is cut, chopped and re-arranged, that these characterful nuances remain.

Developing a sense of what is considered “auratic” is a sensibility developed through years of crate digging and experimenting with beat-making. Again, the production of aura is an embodied practice. In this culture it is through the process of doing that it accumulates. Lowe refers to the cover of Shadow’s successful Entroducing album, which shows people rifling through vinyl in a record store (see Figure 10). It is this physical engagement in obtaining original material that is part of the education process:
I realise it might seem quaint for those that have developed their sensibility in the internet era. The break beat and knowing where things were to be found was sacred knowledge... We were also discussing Flash a moment ago. That’s how people like Grandmaster Flash and Jazzy J got their names. It was by cultivating these things and protecting that knowledge and demonstrating their personality through it. That’s what I grew up really treasuring and that’s what I wanted to reflect, that’s the culture I wanted to reflect on the cover of the record and just to say that sampling has a lineage you know, it didn’t just sort of pop up one day. It goes all the way back to the mid seventies (DJ Shadow interview by Zane Lowe 26 May 2011).

If aura is related to authenticity it follows that samples taken from vinyl possess a greater claim to aura than sounds digitally downloaded for re-use. The materiality of mediation matters. This refers to what Dunstan has already mentioned regarding the acceptability of using sounds from vinyl as opposed to sounds from a computer program which is seen as “being whack.” Returning to Christie’s (2005, p. 79) thoughts on the simulacra being the “Real”, then the sample as simulacra, taken from an original recording is equally as “real” as the source it was part of. Taking a biographical perspective the sample can be seen as the next stage in the sound’s life history, emanating from the original, and in the process attributing to its aura.
While there is consensus on what is auratic, unlike other examples of reusing music, such as reissues, the treatment of the aura differs significantly. Considering the influence copyright legislation has on the practices of sampling, and the effort some beat-makers expend to conceal a sample, then aura is, in this case, not something to be publicised and mobilized, but something to conceal. This is evidenced through the techniques beat-makers apply to make the sample unrecognisable, as well as the value placed on less well-known but quality breaks, which again would impede recognition.

To people lodging a copyright claim however, the aura is located in the original recording and the distinctive properties that facilitate recognition. To these people, aura is located in authenticity and therefore the “real” qualities in the original, and the sample, viewed as the simulacra, would from this perspective be inauthentic and thus a challenge to the original.

Beyond the producers and plaintiffs, there is another group for whom aura is the product of the competing pulls of mobilising and concealing. They are the fans, collectors and consumers who place value on sounds which have been sampled by respected artists. The Japanese horror movie soundtrack mentioned by Jee is an example of it. Both its cultural and monetary value increased after Pete Rock was associated with the track. This production and mobilisation of aura is not just limited to sampling. It is at play in other practices of music renewal such as reissue, which is discussed in greater detail in chapters four, six and seven. The reissue requires the same production of aura to justify its significance and for the reissue itself to be successful. Thus it is through the relationships between sound object and people that the sound becomes more “real”, authentic and auratic. But this status is not fixed. Instead it exists through a continual process of negotiation and change of both the human agents and the sound, representing a transition from simply “being”. Instead the dynamism of the relationships between auratic sound and people demonstrate that its aura is not static but is relational and always in the process of becoming.
BwO’s: Bodies without organs and biographies with ownership

It is clear that the issues surrounding the practices of sampling benefit from a biographical approach. Mapping the trajectory through which a sound has travelled to manifest itself as a sample, demonstrates that there are multiple paths available, but that only some, through the actions of human agents, are taken. This reflects open interactional space full of potential connections and juxtapositions, not all of which will be acted upon (Massey, 2005, p. 11). The biographical approach makes salient the agency of both the sound object and the human agents who engage with it. The sound acts on the person, and the person in turn, acts on the sound. This turn to agency reflects the trend that both Hoskins (2006, p. 74) and Ahearn (2001) have identified as a reaction to the:

...impersonal master narratives that leave no room for tensions, contradictions, or oppositional actions on the part of individuals and collectivities. It is because questions about agency are so central to contemporary political and theoretical debates that the concept arouses so much interest and why it is therefore so crucial to define clearly (Ahearn, 2001, p. 110).

For sampling, current copyright legislation is the master narrative, unaccommodating of different modes of ownership brought about by contemporary music production. Its paradigm of possessive individualism does not oblige multiple and distributed ownership where authority is based on connection rather than exclusivity. There a very few cases where an individual can claim exclusive authorship, and there is little opportunity for complete originality. Nor does property law accommodate the role sound assumes in determining its own treatment through qualities singular to it resulting in a dialectical relationship between producer and product.

This mutual agency can involve various human agents through space and time. Acknowledging the multiple agents involved in the sound’s life, also accedes that the biographies of these people are intimately connected with that of the sound and this has implications for ownership where ownership is the investment of self-labour into the product. Each person who does this has a valid proprietary claim, but this claim does not usurp those who have previously worked on the sound. In fact, a biographical element of the previous agents is carried through the new
life stages and thus the sample not only represents itself yet also accumulates personhoods. There is a multiple biography — the biography of the sound itself, and the biography of those with self-investment within it, all carried by the sound through its subsequent re-uses. This returns us to Gell’s understanding of Lucretius’s insight into the doctrine of emanations in which both the diffused bodies and the initial form are “both images and part of the living creature” (Gell, 1998, p. 106). The sound therefore exists as a double emanation as both image and physical substance of its original object, as well as existing as both image and substance of the human agents who laboured on it. This presents a new perception of ownership and sampling. By attributing agency to both sound and humans, the mutually constituted sound and individual materialises, demonstrating why current copyright cannot adequately deal with multi-biographical sound.

Smith (2001, p. 6) posits that modernization according to Nietzsche’s (1967) critique results in theories of “being” replacing theories of “becoming” as a human system to cope with simulacrum. “Being” represents a static conception of the object so that the object already exists and is the referent which the simulacra displace; however, such a view does not account for the state of “becoming”, which objects can maintain. This fear of the modern, or indeed post-modern, in which simulacra rupture and run riot over our conceptions of the real, feed into Benjamin’s concerns surrounding aura — the fear of the loss of the so called “real”. This in turn reflects the crisis in copyright, in that sampling as simulacrum threatens the perceived original and authentic. Simulacra can therefore be seen as creating a void between differences in the production of desire and the processing of cultural texts (Smith, 2001, p. 6), or in our case, cultural sounds. Smith contends “where referentiality is suspended, it is no longer possible to distinguish model from reality or simulation from its source” (2001, p. 6). To resist this, Smith (2001, p. 7) cites Baudrillard’s strategy of seduction as “resistance-as-object” as a form of political resistance. He also offers the rupturing potential of Deleuze and Guattari’s “schizoid” subject as an option, which through a rhizomatic response to subjectivity subsumes the subject/object dichotomy, and consequently that which connects the sign to the object is severed through the subject and becomes a “body without organs” (BwO) (Smith, 2001, p. 7).

It is this concept of the “body without organs” that interests me particularly with reference to distributed personhood. The BwO is a method through which to liberate oneself from the strata
that binds us and constructs the self, these being the organism, significance and interpretation and which separate ourselves from the plane of consistency (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 148, 176; Markula, 2006). These are the ways through which “our identities and bodies are structured as hierarchically organized unified entities” (Markula, 2006, p. 11). This traps us in a stabilized identity that forces limitations on our capacity, resulting in an ontological unified subject, which enforces stratification and inequality (Markula, 2006, pp. 11, 12). Deleuze’s solution to such a static perception of identity is the BwO, which enables fluidity, is always in the process of becoming and offers an alternative way of perceiving “reality” (Markula, 2006, pp. 12, 14). I wish to extend the BwO’s application to both the sound object and human agents connected to it. The idea negates the divide between the original and the “copy” as the “copy” can be viewed as the becoming of the original and as well as the people involved in its production — it is the project of both. In the words of Deleuze and Guttari, to achieve the BwO one must dismantle the strata, yet simultaneously:

You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of significance and subjectification...; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 178).

Relating this to a sound, this becomes analogous to the idea of emanations. Keeping enough of the organism to reform would require looking at the sample as containing enough of the original sound object to inspire a continual and potentially infinite reforming of the sound object. To work towards obtaining a state of BwO, Deleuze and Guttari suggest one should:

Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow connections here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment... It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 178).

Samples represent the potential movements of territorialization and deterritorialization and they are the possible lines of flight. As Bogard suggests, the ability to play, copy, share, sample,
cut, reformat, distort, edit, clean, music that has been captured on digital media, is a process of
territorializing decoded flows of sounds, that are assumed in practice to be “singular,
irreproducible and tied to their context” (2006, 108). He also suggests that such practices offer
forms of resistance through denying claims of originality, property, and context. It is in this way
that I view sampling as a process of deterritorialization. They resist what Bogard describes as the
surveillance assemblage’s, in this case the legal system’s, attempts to convert “flows into
properties or events” (2006, 108). Sampling therefore is a process of territorialisation and
deterritorialization, the act of sampling itself being a line of flight.

Samples offer both the sound object and the associated human agent’s opportunities to escape
their locked-in and static being and assume nomadic and multiple identities across space and
time, distributing personhood in the process. Samples are deterritorializing, breaking out of the
places that they are labelled and assumed to belong to and moving in and through spaces that
destabilise the notion of what they are perceived to be, creating smooth space in the process.
The sample is the result of experimenting with the opportunities the original and larger sound
organism offers. The sample is the advantageous place on the stratum, providing the sound
object with a multitude of opportunities through which it can move beyond its assumed
position, and simultaneously, through which the human agents engaged with the sound, can
extend their connection and affiliation.

Such deterritorialization destabilises the notion of ownership, which according to copyright sees
the owned object as “fixed” in place and the owner as a discrete entity that has power over the
object. It is this ability to fixate that enables claims to ownership in current property regimes. If
the sound is deterritorialized and no longer residing in stable territory, then the basis on which
this view of ownership is founded starts to weaken. This follows Bogard’s (2006, 108)
observations on the digital copying of music, when he claims that ‘In the same way that copying
anything resists its claim to originality or uniqueness, sharing anything resists its claim to be
property, or reformatting anything destroys its content’. It therefore also has implications for
notions of sole authorship. The BwO is multiple and in the continual process of becoming. This
would indicate that the same person, or the same manifestation of that person, cannot be
granted sole ownership at all stages. It can, as seen with Gell’s idea of distributed personhood,
be regarded as parts of that person, distributed in different intensities throughout the life of the
Sampling Genealogies of Sound

sound — the sound manifesting simultaneously as its own BwO and the BwO of human agents associated with it. It escapes identity determinism by acknowledging that it is a work in continual progress. This deterritorialization destabilises the matrix that works to regulate the relations between people, objects and property. What this means with respect to human agents is that their input can be continued throughout each manifestation of the sound, in varying degrees of intensity, and that this also allows room for new human agents to work on the sound object, introducing their own project at that point, yet also continuing the project of others, as others will do to them. Each new contributor, in selecting the segment to sample, thus offers a line of flight and deterritorialization of both the human agent and the sound.

Lines of flight are mediated however by technological, legal and cultural guidelines creating the striated smooth space described by Massey (2009, p. 417). The practice of sampling locates and forges disruptions that are facilitated by music making technology. Yet these are regulated by law and culture. Law has the capacity to both open and close these escapes from strata. On the surface law constrains such departures through copyright but as this ethnography has shown, sampling without payment of fees, is still tolerated. This is particularly true for those not significantly profiting from their work. Yet even when law superficially restrains the sample, the cultural and ethical code of beat-makers dictate which lines of flight are available and acceptable — they shouldn’t be forged through sampling from MP3s or lack creativity by using the same drum break.

Similarly to distributed personhood, BwO’s and increasingly, cyborgs, offer an opportunity to understand ownership as biographically multiple. More importantly it suggests a perception of ownership that does not separate human from sound. It allows us to engage with the idea that human agents can maintain a connection with an object through varying intensities over time by essentially combining elements of themselves with the sound, and that this allows both the presence of multiple identities of that agent, and, also the presence of new agents through time and space. Together they extend the biography of the sound object without necessarily relinquishing their claim to its existence. And they begin to reveal a new hybrid entity.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have contextualised sampling as another episode in the long tradition of musical borrowing. By working with producers I have demonstrated how the practice is both regulated by and subverts legal and subcultural frameworks. But it is more than this. Sampling also offers a critique of property, the production of value and aura, and importantly the type of personhood that is accommodated by the legal system. Thus sampling critiques the idea of the auteur, originality and the possessive individual, while offering an escape from these.

Existing copyright regulations, despite their original intent to encourage creativity, have in the current music-making climate, become obsolete, restricting new spaces of musical endeavour; however, despite this they cannot contain the rupturing lines of flight. As Bogard notes, “discipline produces its own unruly bodies” and lines of flight are such indocile bodies (2006, 107). Sampling is an example of such unruliness, which both responds to legal systems and subcultural guidelines, yet is simultaneously worked on by these same control assemblages as they act to reterritorialize the lines of flight it produces.

This case study has shown, the practice of sampling or beat-making is far more complex than the simple act of stealing. It requires a contribution of self into the music and the input of that music into the self, and as such is an ongoing project, that does not require limitation to one individual. This hints towards a personhood, which proves problematic to the personhood on which property laws are based. The re-conceptualisation of what ownership is and how it presents is required and this is especially pertinent in a field of music that exists through multiple inputs dispersed over time and space. Ownership through connection rather than exclusivity is one plausible option. It is hoped that this chapter goes some way to destabilising current conceptions and pre-conceptions of what constitutes ownership and who has the right to own what. This is also true of the need to reconceptualise the human/nonhuman binary that form the basis of property laws and the personhood that such laws can accommodate. As McLeod and Dicola (2011, p. 268) note,

Sampling is but one incarnation of the sorts of social exchanges that are defining the experience of being human in the twenty-first century. If we don’t address the impasse between samplers
and samplees, it will be to everyone’s detriment that the law and the practice of everyday life increasingly diverge.

By attributing agency to both sound and humans, the mutually constituted sound and individual materialises, demonstrating why copyright cannot adequately deal with multibiographical sound. This discussion has built the basis for conceptualising an entity that is not binary but combines both human and sound, therefore destabilising the personhood on which property laws are built — something which will be further developed in subsequent chapters.
Chapter 6

Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon”

As for the Sven Libaek sample I simply love that song. It has a very unique vibe and a production quality that is recognised by most people who listen to it (Metaform email to author 17 January 2012).

In this chapter I would like to extend the notion of biography that I have established and link the practices of reissue and sampling within one case study. I also consider sampling from the point of view of the person whose work is being sampled and therefore I am able to consider questions of ethics and economy from the other perspective of that discussed in the previous chapter. I have demonstrated how both objects and people are relationally constructed and considered that this is central to a biography of things and to understanding these things as having biographies dependent on the meanings attached to them throughout the various stages in their life course. Considering this relational element the concept of the biography of things will be further developed to consider things as possessing not only their own biography, but as absorbing the biographies of the people with which they interact — the navigational key to this thesis outlined in chapter two. This duality is exemplified by the connecting of people through things via the notion of distributed personhood as discussed in the previous chapter.

I do this using Sven Libaek’s “Misty Canyon” (Track 23). This sound object has an eventful biography constructed through the interaction between object and human agent and thus creates for both an identity that is relational. This particular sound is materially rich — originally produced as a library record for potential soundtrack use in film and advertising, it has been notably sampled and has also been reissued. These multiple uses and incarnations further open up opportunities for the extension of its biographical pathways. Additionally by focusing on “Misty Canyon” I also address an area, that of stage and film music, which Carney (1998, p. 5) suggests has been neglected by geographers, a neglect which is also cited by Marks (1979) in
relation to musicology and film studies. This genre will be discussed before the biography of “Misty Canyon” is related in detail.

I will describe “Misty Canyon’s” life story to date, through interviews with people connected to the track, and analysis of its multiple materialities, which act to perpetuate the sound’s life. This framework enables me to draw upon the connections between “Misty Canyon” and human agents and demonstrate how the sound object permits distributed personhood through which those most strongly connected to the track — primarily Libaek — maintain a sense of ownership and continue to exert agency. Libaek’s name and by extension his self are thus continued through the track’s subsequent reuse, to quote Munn (1992, p. 105) “In fame, it is as if the name takes on its internal motion travelling through the minds and speech of others”.

To understand the connection between Libaek and “Misty Canyon”, and the track’s ability to facilitate relationships with others, it is necessary to briefly describe its origins in order to extrapolate the reasons as to why it is so highly valued. This also establishes the relationship between Libaek and the track. Throughout its re-uses, a strong connection is maintained between the two and there are parallels here with descriptions of the classic principles of reciprocity. The connection between Libaek and “Misty Canyon” is almost reflective of the inalienable relationship between people and things in economies of gift exchange, described by Mauss (1967, p. 31) where “objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them” (Gregory, 1982, p. 18) which results in a state of reciprocal independence (Gregory, 1982, p. 19; Mauss, 1967).

I would argue that there are similar mechanisms at work with “Misty Canyon” considering its infallible association with Libaek. Others rely on the track to facilitate their own artistic endeavours, yet likewise Libaek’s continued fame and profit is reliant on these re-uses. As such this enables the regeneration of Libaek and “Misty Canyon” whereby the track distributes Libaek’s agency.
The making of “Misty Canyon” and Libaek: Social relations and regeneration

“Misty Canyon” was produced in 1970 as the second track on the Southern Music (now Peer Southern) library record My Thing. Despite Libaek’s classical music training, he has spent most of his career in the film industry, composing scores and soundtracks. As a library record specifically crafted for soundtracks, it was necessary for the included tracks to project a variety of moods, suitable for use in films or advertising. Thus there was a very specific objective guiding the making of the album, something that sets it and the tracks within it, apart from other less intentional sound objects. The mood created by “Misty Canyon” is central to its identity and quite possibly, its popularity. I contact Libaek to find out more about the track, its making and the recent renewed interest in it.

I sit in the office waiting to call Libaek. We have arranged a time and I sit with my questions, paper, and pen surround me. The office is empty. Everyone has gone home and I am left waiting anxiously, excited yet nervous to be calling him. I dial the number. The phone rings a few times, and then the voice of an elderly man comes down the line. The nerves settle as I proceed to ask Libaek my set of questions. He seems genuinely surprised at not only my interest but also the interest of Votary to reissue the track, and the young people who listen to his music and who are part of the market at which the reissue is aimed. He tells me the story of “Misty Canyon” which is also part of his own story:

...my background is as far as musicology is concerned, I’m a classically trained pianist and composer but most of my life I’ve been spending in the film business. So naturally most of the music that I’ve written for films has to fit into certain moods in the film, so when I was asked to do this library record, you know a hundred years ago whenever it was, I sort of sat down and wrote tunes and I sort of tried to be inspired by whatever I could think of at the time and when we recorded “Misty Canyon”, most of these things didn’t have titles until we actually heard them and it just ended up being “Misty Canyon” because that’s what I thought was a very suitable title for the way that the music turned out. And if it had been a film track then probably that would have been perfect for a “Misty Canyon” (Sven Libaek interview with author 9 January 2012).
Reflecting the lamentations of Carney (1998) and Marks (1979), little academic research has been undertaken specifically on library music however some efforts have been extended into soundtracks, an area which library music can cross over if selected. Smith notes the lucrative nature of soundtracks for film companies with the soundtrack album’s emergence in the fifties and sixties facilitated by the diversification and conglomeration of film companies with interrelated entertainment divisions (2003, p. 65). This created additional “profit areas” and cross-promotional activities whereby music subsidiaries became a prime means of marketing and additional profit (Smith, 2003, pp. 65-66). The late sixties saw many film labels subsumed by larger conglomerates in response to financial difficulties thereby negating the need for record distribution and talent acquisition (Smith, 2003, p. 77). The soundtrack has however had a strong and lasting influence on the industry, as Smith notes, “The soundtrack album continues to be the most common and vital form of film music exploitation: indeed this may be the most important legacy of Hollywood’s entry into the record business” (2003, p. 77).

Gorbman (2003, p. 39) claims that film music differs from autonomous music in that it is functional, utilitarian music with much in common with easy listening. Interestingly, Gorbman notes the use of film music as a cue to set the scene, create emotion and avert the “pleasure of uncertain signification” (Gorbman, 2003, p. 40; see also Prendergast, 1977). She notes that such music is “electronically regulated, and generally rendered subservient to the denotatively signifying elements of narrative discourse. Its effectiveness often depends on its not being listened to” (2003, p. 40) although she does concede that in some cases awareness of music is necessary and desired (see also Davison, 2003, pp. 343-344; Gorbman, 1987, pp. 162-163). This reflects Gorbman’s (1980, p. 187) idea of film music’s constant engagement “in an existential and aesthetic struggle with narrative representation”.

“Misty Canyon’s” first incarnation was a response to the requirements of film and was designed to be present but without consciously being listened to. The music was designed to tell a story, or to evoke a sense of place or specific feeling appropriate to the context:

...when you work in the film industry and you write music for a film, it’s a very close cooperation between the director and the composer and the director will always give you an idea of what he wants and if you don’t agree then you have a big argument and one of you wins in the end. But normally of course there’s love themes and drama, there’s chases, there is scary moments and all
this type of thing and of course calls for a different type of music. So it’s as simple as that really
(Sven Libaek interview with author 9 January 2012).

“Misty Canyon’s” origins distinguish it from other sound objects thus far discussed in that it was
designed to compliment other artistic creations, whether these are for film, television, or
advertisement. Therefore from the beginning there was an acknowledgement of collaborative
artistic engagement. Unlike other sounds there is the expectation of appropriation and multiple-
authorship. In this sense, the concept of library records pre-empted the now prevalent beat
compilations, such as Ultimate Breaks and Beats, where beat-makers can buy the album, and by
doing so, gain the legal right to use the beats it contains to make their own. This specific purpose
is key when considering its use as a sample — even if it is Libaek’s track it was produced for the
use of others although within a very particular market context of licensing that sampling as
discussed in the previous chapter is not wholly reflective of.

Origins aside, there are aesthetic critiques at work which singularise “Misty Canyon” amongst
the impressive and substantial body of work Libaek has produced over the years. It possesses
qualities both aurally and aesthetically that hold value for certain individuals and which exert
agency on these people. The track can be described as ahead of its time, and somewhat
consonant with the sounds and production techniques currently popular in some musical
scenes. Asking Libaek why “Misty Canyon” stood out, he replied:

I have no idea. I mean I know it’s unusual and certainly for its time it was very unusual. Because I
had all sorts of sliding instruments and doing funny things which weren’t really done back then so
I guess now it’s more common for things like that to be done and the fact that it’s going back so
far I guess has an extra sort of interest. There was a guy here in Sydney who actually built his own
synthesizer, way back when the Moog first came in which you know they started using in
Hollywood and so on and I got on to this guy and we wrote another big library thing called Solar
Flares which had all those space themes and using that synthesizer, and nobody in Australia had
done it before. And now it’s sort of right up to date all of a sudden again. So it’s been quite
interesting (Sven Libaek interview with author 9 January 2012).

The qualities mentioned by Libaek indicate why ”Misty Canyon” is reified; its progressive use of
instrumentation and warping of sounds. It is doubtful, however, considering the rest of Libaek’s
Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon”

extensive catalogue, that this piece exceeds his other works in all respects. There are mechanisms working through subcultural regimes of value — its genre, cutting edge qualities, and famed sample use, among others — that raise the profile of “Misty Canyon”. This is not to devalue the track. It was unusual for its time and remains unusual in current contexts, it used cutting edge techniques which are only now, frequently used. It possesses a renewable quality, almost regenerative, acknowledged in part by Libaek’s comment that it is now “right up to date all of a sudden again”.

Its increased popularity however represents a shift in the way the track is listened to. No longer is it the background music whose purpose is as Aaron Copland mentions “... the kind of music one isn’t supposed to hear, the sort that helps to fill empty spots between pauses in a conversation. It’s the movie composer’s most ungrateful task” (Prendergast, 1977, pp. 205-206). No longer is it subordinate to the visual. The renewed interest is regenerated by and generates, conscious listening. These practices of listening and regeneration with respect to “Misty Canyon” reinvigorate its life yet maintain a connection to Libaek while also raising his profile. Thus the importance of such practices in extending the biographical pathways of the track, and Libaek, require further discussion and as such this will be addressed in detail in the next section.

The Votary Records reissue

SM: So how did the reissue with Votary take place?

SL: Well I find that tremendously interesting myself because this music was done I think it’s going back to the 60s. Certainly 60s and 70s most of that television work here, you know Boney and Inner Space and Big Country and ABC and so on was done back in those days. And all of a sudden I get a call from James at Votary a few years ago and he wants to start reissuing some of this old stuff. And I said “well there wouldn’t be a market for that now,” and he said no, no we get all these requests and they’re all for people in their twenties,” and I think well that’s amazing like it’s done full circle, and all of a sudden this stuff that was written back in the sixties seems to have a new market. And not among people of my age but people of a new generation. And I found that very interesting and he’s done very well with some of the reissues and “Misty Canyon” in particular had a lot of requests in Europe and all over the place and he decided to reissue it as a single. And the other thing that he’s done is also reissuing some stuff on the old LP format because it’s become a collectors market (Sven Libaek interview with author 9 January 2012).
Votary records is a specialist reissue label based in Melbourne that specialises in Australian jazz and soundtracks. Libaek’s works feature prominently in their catalogue and they released “Misty Canyon” as a 45rpm single. The single is described on the catalogue as:

Votary Records latest release is a 45 lifted from the classic Peer library album My Thing. Long regarded as one of the grail LPs of Library music collecting, My Thing has developed a strong following partly due to the infamous down-tempo tune “Misty Canyon”. This much coveted tune has long been a favourite amongst library compilers and producers alike. Surely once considered a throwaway piece of stock music, it has since developed a unique presence in the Library scene due to its tough lethargic groove featuring droning trombone and shimmering vibraphone played by Australian jazz musicians Bob McIvor (Charlie Munro Quartet) and the versatile John Sangster respectively (Don Burrows Quartet/John Sangster Underground Band). The B-side Soul Thing is also taken from the My Thing album. Again heavy Fender bass, trombone and vibes jostle for dominance in this funky workout that offers the same warm and infectious Libaek sound similar to that of the legendary Inner Space and Solar Flares recordings (Available at http://theroundtable.bigcartel.com/product/sven-libaek-misty-canyon, accessed 30 January 2012).

This description emphasises the distinct phases and potentially varying fortunes in the track’s history, from “throwaway stock music” to developing a “unique presence” and representing the Holy Grail of music. It also suggests that, similar to the other sound objects studied, there exist a certain aura surrounding the object. In both Libaek’s comments, and, the Votary blurb, there exists recognition of a scene in which LPs, interesting music, and in this case, specifically library records, are highly valued. This expresses itself in both cultural and economic capital yet this aura is not inherent and partly accumulates as a result of the increased exposure of the piece through its inclusion on compilations prior to its sample use and reissue. There is also the acknowledgement that the piece is already multibiographical — Sangster and McIvor have a presence too — so that Libaek’s sound is in part due to his finesse in assembling people and sounds.

But how did a forgotten library track experience a new wave of popularity? James Pianta from Votary records points to a few influencing factors:
Regarding the interest in “Misty Canyon”, it’s been a classic tune since back in the mid 90s. It’s appeared on several UK comps and of course it’s been sampled a few times (James Pianta email to author 31 January 2012).

Certain processes thus act to mobilise aura. Being listed on UK compilations and being sampled increased the popularity of the piece and created demand for the reissue. This in turn increased its aura through the reification of the track. So while the track possesses qualities that make it an exemplary piece of music, the aura that currently surrounds it is not innate. Aura becomes dependent on trends and publicity, as something that is manufactured and manipulated:

I don’t think “Misty Canyon” is any more special than his other tracks of his amazing catalogue. Personally I like other Libaek tracks better. Anything from 1965 to 1975 is great. The reason why it’s coveted is due to the above mentioned comps and sampling but also because it’s a library ‘funk’ tune, not to mention rare as well. I guess it has a broad appeal because of that. Because of these reasons I think it was a good choice for a 45 (James Pianta email to author 31 January 2012).

As in the case with other reissues we have studied, aura is contested and finely balanced in its mobilisation. Although its increased visibility as a result of its recent guises of compilation track and sample increases recognition and subsequent auratic qualities, if it were to become ubiquitous, then this reverence would dissipate. Pianta qualifies this when he suggests that the interest in “Misty Canyon” is partly due to its library funk genre and rarity. Aura, while contested, is a major component in creating an eventful biography for “Misty Canyon”.

The usual process when reissuing is to track down the master tapes, and if these are not available, to transfer directly from the vinyl:

While it’s possible that the masters for MY THING (the library album from which “Misty Canyon” comes) exist I didn’t investigate too deeply. I knew it would be a nightmare to locate them so I didn’t bother. The people that own this music don’t know that they own it let alone care about assisting to find old tapes. It’s of no interest for them to assist somebody like me. In some cases if I have a lead that the tapes exist I attempt to track them down but in most cases I’ll not bother and just get on with a vinyl transfer. There’s actually a theory that vinyl transfers sound better. (But don’t ask me for a technical explanation there 😊). Regarding the restoration process, that’s in the hands of the sound engineer who’s working on it. I’ve had jobs turn around in a day while others can take months. I think Yaraando took about two years! I’ll note that these days we are much more efficient with releases and have task deadlines (James Pianta email to author 31 January 2012).

This process illustrates the earlier discussed notion of competing and aura. Aura is both idiosyncratic and context dependent (Satterthwait pers comm. 2011) and related in part to the production of self-identity and personhood. To have value, the sound object must at least reinforce some form of self-definitional process in the agent as described earlier through the Yaraando case study. Those who do not define themselves in relation to such material or see little economic investment from it, find little value in the object. Thus the company that owns the masters sees the track of limited relevance, whereas in the niche crate digging community, the track is highly regarded. This is exemplified by Pianta’s comments regarding the interest in the 45:

...45s tend to be a tough sell though. A lot of distributors won’t take them on. So it’s mainly up to individual sales. We’re speaking obscure old music here; sure there is demand but these reissues are always limited. Usually 500 copies (James Pianta email to author 31 January 2012).

The obscurity of the record is one of the reasons it holds appeal to certain groups. It is also the reason it holds no appeal to others.

Materially, “Misty Canyon” is regenerated from an original pressing into a new version but maintaining the vinyl format. Although Votary Records are based in Melbourne, the reissue process is geographically dispersed:
There’s a number of vinyl pressing plants around the world. I’ve used a number of them. Currently I press in Europe and sometimes in the US. I’ve also pressed in Australia in the past. Depending on where I think the most interest for that particular title is. They then ship orders to various distributors around the world direct from the pressing plant (James Pianta email to author 31 January 2012).

The reissue represents a part in “Misty Canyon’s” life wherein value has been condensed into a new representation of the original. It thus opens new biographical pathways and lines of flight, possibly through sampling, for the sound object to travel, and to distribute Libaek’s agency and effect in the process. This next section will follow the sound object’s journey along one of the various paths open to it, through its use as a sample.

Renewing interest: Sampling and “Misty Canyon”

“Misty Canyon” is experiencing a resurgence of influence through the mechanisms of sampling, compilation albums and reissue, both spatially and temporally diverse from its original form. This resurgence means, by extension that Libaek is also exerting renewed influence. The reinvigoration of both sound object and Libaek can in part be attributed to an element of aura. Indeed this regeneration is reflective of a broader trend of artist’s careers being reinvigorated by sampling practices. As Forman remarks:

...by the early 1990s, several musicians — such as James Brown, the Gap Band, the Isley Brothers, and the late Roger Troutman — whose work comprised this deep sampling archive saw their careers reinvigorate (2002, p. 162).

Without something that would encourage people to revisit “Misty Canyon” and continue the momentum by extending its life pathways through new mediums, then the track would remain obscure, in suspended life, in a dusty record heap. Interest encourages transformation, and transformation encourages the interest.

At the same time, it continues to build dimensionality, something Buchli (2004) contends is part of the cyclical process of rendering material culture either two-dimensional or multi-dimensional. In this instance, the renewed interest in “Misty Canyon” which in turn facilitates
the distributed nature of Libaek’s personhood, results in increased dimensionality of not just the track in question but also Libaek’s entire catalogue. Interest in Libaek and his work in general has experienced resurgence:

...if they like that piece then they might just go in and find other things you have done. And now that Votary records have started sort of re-releasing there are people I can put them on to if they say “oh I love that piece have you done something else?” Yes, I’ve done this, you know you can get it from them. So it all works out (Sven Libaek interview with author 9 January 2012).

The process of mobilising aura, extending the biography of the sound, and distributing personhood, brings Libaek’s catalogue alive. From a material culture perspective and the cycle of dimensionality described by Buchli (2004), this collection, has moved out of a two-dimensional state into a multi-dimensional one. There is room in Buchli’s theory, however, to bring the human back into the materiality of culture, and this as I have done here, can be through distributed notions of personhood. Much like Nunn’s comment on fame, we see that “Misty Canyon” enhances recognition and value of Libaek’s opus. The fame that “Misty Canyon” brings can be viewed according to Munn (1992, 105) as:

...an enhancement that transcends material, bodily being and extends beyond the physical but refers back to it. Fame is a mobile, circulating dimension of a person: the travels (-taavin) of a person’s name (yaga-ra) apart from his physical presence.

Thus the travels of “Misty Canyon” both distribute the agency of Libaek, and thicken the dimensionality of work through recognition. They also contribute to aura.

As argued aura is mobilised to various intents and purposes and this has an influence on the “eventfulness” of a biography. But if aura is central to an eventful biography, what is its connection, if any, to the alternative type of personhood facilitated through sound objects? It seems discordant to view aura separate from the processes of identity making and ignoring this leaves an intangible sense of disconnection. Ignoring the way aura and the making of personhood intertwine essentially reinforces the object/subject boundary. The type of personhood I contend is happening through the interrelated biographic moves of the sound
Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon”

object and human agents associated with it is distributed. Distributed personhood denotes that influence can be exerted across spatio-temporal divides and the sample is illustrative of this.

The samples

“Misty Canyon” remains one of Libaek’s most well known tracks because of its sample use. Most notable among these instances of sampling are Danger Doom’s 2005 track “Basket Case” (Track 24), Metaform’s 2008 track “Lonely Boy” (Track 25) and the Karminsky Experience’s “Departures” (Track 26) (refer to Table 1). In each case the sample is incredibly distinctive and as such the artists have not tried to obscure its sonic print.

Table 1 Samples of “Misty Canyon” (information source: Whosampled at whosampled.com/sampled/Sven%20Libaek. Accessed 4 January 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Album</th>
<th>Sample appears at (minutes into track)</th>
<th>Sample from original (minutes into track)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karminsky Experience Inc.</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Departures</td>
<td>The Power of Suggestion</td>
<td>0:24 and throughout</td>
<td>0:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fdel</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The Fuller Culture</td>
<td>Audiofdelity</td>
<td>0:00 and throughout</td>
<td>0:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danger Doom</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Basket Case</td>
<td>The Mouse and the Mask</td>
<td>0:01 and throughout</td>
<td>0:01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaform</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Lonely Boy</td>
<td>Standing on the Shoulders of Giants</td>
<td>0:10 and throughout</td>
<td>0:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereo Kollektiv</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Pénz Beszél</td>
<td>Stíluspak Kettő</td>
<td>0:15 and throughout</td>
<td>0:01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Geographically the artists who have sampled “Misty Canyon” are diverse. The sample has made its way into releases from Hungary (Stereo Kollektiv), the United Kingdom (Karminsky Experience), The United States (Danger Doom; Metaform), and Australia (Fdel). Beyond physical releases, the track has also experienced online modification — Noit & Fly have responded to a
In this next section, I will look in detail at the Karminsky Experience’s role in the “Misty Canyon” biography. This will be followed by a discussion, using Danger Doom’s “Basket Case” as an example, of how “Misty Canyon”, despite its association with other artists, is still strongly identified with Libaek. It is argued that the reason for this is due both to Libaek’s musical style, and, his personhood in distributed form.

**Lines of flight: Karminsky Experience and “Departures”**

British based duo, Martin Dingle and James Munns of The Karminsky Experience, sampled “Misty Canyon” in their 2003 album *The Power of Suggestion*. The sample appears at 00:24 and repeats throughout the track “Departures” (refer to Table 1). The track, like “Misty Canyon” is evocative of other times and places. Just as Libaek envisioned a “Misty Canyon” when he listened to the piece, the Karminsky Experience, drew on a sonic journey to places where the music can take them. I asked Dingle why it was they chose the sample for their track:

> The simple answer is that we chose the sample because we loved the sound of it. There is something melancholy about the line which suggests other places and times. It’s definitely a sound to get lost in. For us it conjured up the idea of traveling which is why we called the track "departures" and themed it around air travel with samples from airports. We also recorded a lot of the sfx [sound effects] at Heathrow Airport with a DAT recorder. We always like to have images in mind when creating music as this helps to inspire us (Email to author 16 February 2012).

Journeying and travelling is part of the “Misty Canyon” story. The addition of sound effects recorded from airport-settings adds dimensionality to the piece and begins to locate the track contextually. From Libaek to The Karminsky Experience, place and space appear to be a key theme in the track, and the track in itself is a way of making this space. For Libaek, place was constructed through the title, a “Misty Canyon”, inspired by the music. I re-emphasise Libaek’s words quoted earlier:
When we recorded “Misty Canyon”, most of these things didn’t have titles until we actually heard them you and it just ended up being “Misty Canyon” because that’s what I thought that was a very suitable title for the way that the music turned out. And if it had been a film track then probably that would have been perfect for a “Misty Canyon” (Sven Libaek interview with author 9 January 2012).

For The Karminsky Experience, space and place are similarly constructed through imagination inspired by the music. Unlike Libaek though, rather than a physical landscape, they construct place through envisioning and “enlistening” travel. By adding exterior sound effects, they recreated the aural environment of possibly any airport in the world. The sonic journeys one can embark on from here are multiple, reflecting the biographical possibilities for “Misty Canyon”. Dingel mentions that there is a certain quality to some library music that enables the listener to imagine these opportunities:

I actually think “Misty Canyon” is quite timeless. There’s a quality to good library music that allows the listener to add their own visuals or interpretation to it —- this space is what I think intrigues me about “Misty Canyon” (Martin Dingel email to author 17 February 2012).

The allusion to journeys is perhaps an apt metaphor for the music as “journeys begin with departures, and the sound imagery of making a departure is doubly representative in the work” (Satterthwait pers comm. 2011). It is representative not only of what the Karminsky Experience were inspired by and sought to evoke in their piece, but also of the multiple points from which “Misty Canyon” as a sound object has travelled.

During my fieldwork with beat-makers, I was shown various techniques for making beats. To avoid the sample’s detection and thus evade any copyright infringement issues (although it was also cited as a creative method), samples were often “hidden” within the track. Hiding a sample refers to chopping up a beat and modifying the sequence of these sections using a digital program (see chapter five). Thus the presence of the sample becomes less obvious. However, the Karminsky Experience treats the sample in a way that makes no attempt at obfuscating the original source:
SM: What was your approach to including the sample? I've been doing research with a few local beat-makers and I know they sometimes try to chop the sample up a bit and hide it. Your use of the sample seems to be quite true to the track (which I think does it justice). What were your reasons for approaching it in this way?

MD: The opening line is all we used and because it's such a beautiful line we didn't want to change it too much and only added a string line to the very end to compliment it. We used Sven's opening melody as a departure (sorry for the pun) and added our own strings and vibe line to what I guess you could call the verse to hopefully take the track away from the original. I think we end up in a different space by the end of the song to the original (Martin Dingle email to author 17 February 2012).

The minimal intervention enacted by the Karminsky Experience when sampling “Misty Canyon” indicates that the new version does not diminish the integrity of the original — Dingle and Munns’ work compliments the piece rather than detracts from it. This represents a relational practice between producer and sound object. The sound object exerts agency over the producer and through this determines how they use it, a process also influenced by legal guidelines. Not respecting the sound and its nuances would compromise the benefits the sample could bring to the new track as well as effect the value and associated aura of the original. Using such a well-known and highly regarded work as a sample requires skill. But it is not only the sound object that is exerting agency. At the same time, the producer subtly changes the sound, selecting only the opening line, adding some strings, and through this changing the context. This approach extends the object not only biographically through new forms but spatially as well. This is important to consider in constructing a biography for an object. The object may shift in form but it can also shift in place and context — the Karminsky Experience “Misty Canyon” exists as a segment of the original embodied in a new sonic landscape and is used for a different purpose to conjure different yet equally evocative responses.

It seems appropriate here refer to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) BwO’s as introduced in chapter five, with special mention of lines of flight. Here I will rework the concept slightly to accord with the biography and geography (biogeography) of the sound object which leads on to the notion of distributed personhood. The track title “Departures” and the images it evokes conveniently raise the issue. Lines of flight offer an escape from territorialization and the potential to
multiply. Ringrose claims that “De-territorialization is when energy might escape or momentarily move outside of normative strata, and re-territorialization describes processes of recuperation of those ruptures” (2011, p. 603).

In the case of a sound object, the Karminsky Experience’s “Departures” provides a line of flight for “Misty Canyon” from its formative status as track 2 on *My Thing*. The sample has moved physically, digitally and conceptually from the first few seconds of “Misty Canyon”, to recurring throughout “Departures”. It has also conceptually explored new terrain, hence Dingle’s comment, “I think we end up in a different space by the end of the song to the original”. This represents a proliferation of the sound object and opens up biographical possibilities that extend its life history. It also destabilises the categories on which sound object is defined as the product of one person. These normative categories essentially preclude the possibility of multiple authorships over time and space — the type of authorship and product that is increasingly evident in contemporary digital music making practices.

But more than just the sound object is being offered a line of flight. It is also being offered to people as the process facilitates distributed personhood. Territorialization occurs to police subjects and objects, to produce the smooth space that Deleuze and Guattari refer to as produced by society as a smoothing machine — a space where there are no ruptures and everything is perfect (Bogard 2000). Bogard notes, that many contemporary disciplining technologies act to ‘smooth’ the body; to make it fit a certain model of subjectivity (2000, 269). He also notes, that the same technologies can be used to facilitate a line of flight that subverts the intended possibilities (Bogard 2000, 269). That is what I suggest is happening here with sampling. While the legal frameworks that surround them actively try to separate subject from object, sampling working both within and outside of these frameworks as a practice of distributing not only sound but also personhood, liberates both sounds and people from their fixed and essentialised positions. As Bogard notes, “For every smoothing machine that submits a Subject to power, there are others which set it free” (2000, 269).

If personhood can be understood as being able to exist in various places both simultaneously and temporally diverse, then sampling can be envisioned as the possible line of flight enabling this distribution. The biography of the sound object is inalienable from the people who engage
Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon”

with it over time. In that sense, as the sound moves along certain lines of flight, the personhoods of these agents move with it. Furthermore the sound can accumulate multiple human agent biographies as it traverses these various paths.

What this means in relation to Libaek and “Misty Canyon”, is that the Karminsky Experience and “Departures” is one possible line of flight along which the sound travels. Libaek’s agency and personhood is inseparable from the sound and thus journeys with it. Libaek is thus both in the original, in “Departures” and in physical and digital existence; and such an existence maintain his legal ties to the tracks and therefore he exists economically through the songs also. By the same token, the sound has accumulated the personhood of Dingle and Munns and is thus in the process of becoming multibiographical.

Distributed personhood and “Misty Canyon” samples

It is necessary to develop the idea of distributed personhood further, particularly in relation to Libaek and his track. Gosden (2004, p. 170) draws on Strathern’s (1988) idea that people’s agency can be felt further afield than their current bodily location and in that sense is distributed. In Gosden’s (2004, p. 170) words:

Distributed personhood takes place through the circulation of objects a person has previously made and used, which in a situation of gift exchange, have unbreakable connections to past makers and transactors. Someone’s effects can range far beyond their physical body and last long after they have died.

This can certainly be said of Libaek and his “sound”. To cite Strathern (1988, p. 176) again, when discussing the concepts of objectification and reification, it is “the forms in which persons make things appear and the things through which persons appear, and thus the ‘making’ (-ification) of persons and things”. While the movement of Libaek’s music may not entail a gift cycle, there is no doubt that there exists the same “unbreakable connections” between Libaek and his music and an effect that reaches far beyond his physical location.

It is also interesting to note how the relationships between “Misty Canyon” and other agents came to be established. This is exemplified by the Danger Doom sample which illustrates the
idea of multiple agents being able to work with the sound object over time and space. Comments posted under YouTube clips of “Misty Canyon”, indicates how the sound becomes associated with additional agents through reuse. For example, in the top comments under one of the “Misty Canyon” clips, “NYBomber36” and “vanhalenman” both post their opinion of the music and who they associate it with:

NYBomber 36:
5 Stars. DangerDOOM - Basket Case.

vanhalenman1984:
Karminsky Experience (Dudes from Thievery Corp) used this as well. beautiful song by itself lol.
Where would we be without all this gorgeous music to sample these days?

A similar comment is posted beneath the “Misty Canyon” clip uploaded by Votary records. “Scarecrow” posts:

danger doom!

These comments indicate the beginning of an association of the track with an agent additional to Libaek, namely Danger Doom. Considering previous discussions of distributed personhood, BwO’s and accumulative biographies, it can be suggested that Danger Doom has created a line of flight through which the track can extend its life history and affect. At the same time, however, Danger Doom becomes associated with “Misty Canyon” via Basket Case and through this is acknowledging the influence that Libaek is exerting on him from afar. Indeed just as people make reference to Danger Doom below the “Misty Canyon” videos, the association is reciprocal: posted below the “Basket Case” YouTube video are references to Libaek. This perspective also emphasises the power that people can exert from afar through objects. The biography of “Misty Canyon” becomes increasingly complex as it absorbs different agents and becomes a vessel through which to carry their biographies as they reciprocally carry its biography (see Figure 11).
Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon”

Through this process they both gain value; as Gosden (2004, p. 169) notes “people and things gain values through their relations rather than starting out with these values”.

Figure 11. “Misty Canyon” network of relations.

This does not mean however, that all forms the sound experiences throughout its life are appreciated:

Dynospectrum:

dangermouse16 doesn’t cut up shit. he straight loops pretty large portions of great songs..it’s actually beggining to piss me off..hiphop

(Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNTHQm5Y2Dw, accessed 25 January 2012).

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16 Danger Mouse is the artist name of Brian Joseph Burton, who became prominent after making the Grey Album, which used unauthorized samples of the instrumentals from Beatle’s White Album and the vocals from Jay-Z’s Black Album. EMI tried to halt the album’s distribution despite Paul McCartney and Jay-Z having no issue with the use of their work. Danger Doom is the collaboration of Danger Mouse and rapper MF Doom.
Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon”

“Dynospectrum” is making a value judgment on Danger Mouse’s treatment of the track and, by extension, on Danger Mouse himself. The original track is praised as a “great song”. However, the comments referring to Danger Mouse’s attempt to sample imply that he lacks creativity in his use of the track and by passing judgment on this act, Dynospectrum is passing judgment on Danger Mouse — that the duo lacks the talents of Libaek. Again, to return to Miller (2005b, p. 38) paraphrasing Marx (1957-1962), “the things that people make, make people”.

Such comments reveal a correlation between value judgments, aesthetics and the relational links these establish between personhood and things. These relationships suggest that even Western societies possess forms of distributed personhood. Aesthetics is central to the type of personhood Gosden describes when he claims that, “distributed personhood operates through assemblages of objects, that do not so much have properties in their own right, but through sets of physical and aesthetic links to other objects” (2004, p. 171).

What this means if taking the Danger Doom “Misty Canyon” sample as an example, is that such usage helps to construct and facilitate the distributed personhood of Libaek. “Basket Case” likewise links Danger Doom to Libaek aesthetically through the use of his track and the perpetuation of his sound, and physically through the transfer from a vinyl copy of “Misty Canyon” of a loop which is digitally converted and incorporated into a new track, which in turn is then distributed to consumers through MP3, CD and vinyl formats. Without Danger Doom’s actions, Libaek’s personhood would not have been distributed in the direction of the hip hop genre and alter egos of Danger Mouse and MF Doom (this does not preclude other directions) yet had not Libaek’s sound exerted some form of influence on Danger Doom, albeit from afar, then it is doubtful that this line of acoustic flight would have been available.

Danger Doom’s association with the track reveals a type of feedback among the personhoods experiencing distribution. The connection between Libaek and Danger Doom allows each to travel the opposite way. This demonstrates that the value of one relies on the other and is defined in relation to it. It also describes how these aesthetics and physical links define personhood in a distributed form, a form that is manifested as an assemblage of interwoven, yet spatially and temporally dispersed, identities. That is not to say that Libaek had no value prior to “Basket Case”. Far from it. What it does suggest is that Danger Mouse is evaluated against
Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon”

Libaek, but simultaneously his use of “Misty Canyon” also increases the prominence and status of Libaek (as well as his own).

Aesthetics, Gosden (2004, p. 171) notes, “remind us that people’s sensory responses to objects are vital in attaching values to social-material relations”. So, for example, Dynospectrum’s response to Danger Mouse’s treatment of “Misty Canyon” is provoked by sensory response — the listening to and hearing of the sound in a context that Dynospectrum feels does not do it justice. This angst is projected onto the state of hip hop as a genre, criticising it for unimaginative use of existing works. This is oppositional to the sense of aura that surrounds the original “great” music Dynospectrum hints at in his comment.

Through this example, we can see that aura and aesthetics, with their associated sensory responses, are interconnected, and that if interconnected then they must operate as links in the assemblage-connecting that creates distributed personhood. Dynospectrum’s attribution of aura to the original track indicates to other participants in the discussion that he is, or at least appears to be, knowledgeable about “quality” music, thus establishing him as a connoisseur. Dynospectrum can only do so in relation to the sound object.

Importantly, this endowment of aura upon the track builds its dimensionality and with that, increases the distribution of personhood, providing the context in which it is located. The multiple biography surfaces — the aura that contributes to the sensory experiences and aesthetic sensibilities of the track, carries with it the personhood distributed by means of it. Likewise, the biography of the personhood being distributed is carried with the sound object, and both feed into the other. Buchli claims that, “Most material culture... transforms a mostly inarticulate realm of sensual experience felt over time and space with many senses into something inevitably static” (2004, p. 183).

He suggests that negating this static form is typically achieved through,

...the building up of aggregates “thick description” (per Geertz), “cultural thickening” (Per Lofgren 1997), or “aura” (another dimensionality further articulating three per Walter Benjamin [Shanks 1998]) (Buchli, 2004, p. 183 citing Geertz, 1973; Lofgren, 1997; Shanks, 1998).
From the sound objects I have studied, however, there appears to be a rejection of the static and instead the dedicated building of dimensionality. “Misty Canyon” is certainly not two dimensional and exerts an agency that as such continues the sensory-experiential nature of the work over spatial and temporal trajectories. Maintaining the multi-dimensional nature of the track are the relationships I have uncovered between object and subject and how these flow between each other and enable relational self-definition.

**Constructing dimensionality and thickening description**

This building of dimensionality is not restricted to the sound object but also can be extended to the agents involved. Samples aside for a moment, I focus on the relationship between Libaek and his track. Of all the cases studied thus far, “Misty Canyon” seems most connected with its original creator and ownership is minimally contested. On the surface, it would seem obvious that this is solely due to copyright holdings and legally binding connections between him and his intellectual property. He continues to collect royalties for his work and acknowledges the job of the Australasian Performing Rights Association (APRA) and organisations such as Sound Exchange in pursuing these earnings.

Well, I guess you know it’s very hard, it’s a completely new market and people like APRA they collect royalties and so on, on your behalf. They, I guess they’re behind in trying to collect from downloads and stuff like that but they’re on to it and we have to be fairly reasonable, I mean it’s the way things will be done in the future. And there’s an organization in America called Sound Exchange who collects royalties on behalf of artists and of course it might be your composition that somebody else collects but if you’re also the leader of the orchestra or one of the artists on the thing they will collect and they get a few cents every time somebody downloads something and it adds up. So, there’s a lot of stealing going on. Of course the film industry is feeling this as well. I mean people just download movies from China whatever, but we, they’re catching up. We get our fair share. I think it’s OK. And it’s not something you can stop anyway. It’s the future (Sven Libaek interview with author 9 January 2012).

Libaek acknowledges the way the music industry is heading but at the same time places importance on ensuring the original artists still profit from their work — something that does not suggest a full commitment to possessive individualism by the original artists but considers
the direction of the musical future. The perspective of possessive individualism, which informs much property law, is formed from the perspective of agent working over or above object — the sound object in this sense is subordinate. However, I have been destabilising this notion of unidirectional control through the concept of distributed personhood and the acknowledgement of object agency, and thus if regarding the situation from these viewpoints, we see something radically different.

Perceiving ownership from an angle that privileges the relationships between sound object and agent, instead of through the lens of Western notions of property, the strong associations between “Misty Canyon” and Libaek are forged by the almost familial ties between them. The processes through which Libaek and his sound become inseparable illustrate the connections by which new forms of personhood are envisaged. The following excerpt from an interview with Libaek is worth quoting at length:

SM: When I was listening to the reissue and also the samples... for the sample, for the people who do the sample, it's a very obvious sample, they haven't tried to hide it or anything and I was thinking it's quite distinctive. Do you think if you heard your music out somewhere, are you able to sort of pick it up as your own?

SL: Oh yes absolutely.

SM: You have a certain style?

SL: I did get a request for a record that I totally forgot that I did and I went to my files you know and it took me a couple of hours and I finally found it and I thought gee, I can't remember anything about it, and they asked you know, when was it recorded? Who’s playing on it? And so on and so forth and I wouldn’t have a clue. But I played it and thought yeah gee that was good....That's the life of a freelance composer. But it’s been an interesting life. (Sven Libaek interview with author 9 January 2012).

Libaek’s association with his style is reinforced by another interview:

DK: Sven, when you were talking about hearing your music in Paris and Los Angeles and wherever it was can you recognize every piece you’ve written?
Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon”

SL: Oh yes, yeah. I may not be able to remember what I called it but I will pick myself up any place including arranging.

DK: Go on.

SL: Because it’s sort of based on getting back to style. I mean I have my own way of writing for strings and using flutes and oboes and what have you and that’s one of the things I teach at the film school is that you know that I can only teach you the way that I do things but the whole idea is for you to develop your own way of doing things... there’s always people who come up with things that are not part of the norm, and there will always be people who come up with things that are not part of the norm (J. Kilby and D. Kilby Rare Collections Interview with Sven Libaek).

It is the strength of the connection between the creator and their style that reinforces ownership. Although, as Chang (2009, p. 153) notes, this “sound” as a personal style is something Théberge sees as a result of recording technology — “the idea of a ‘sound’ seems to be a particularly contemporary concept” (Théberge, 1997, p. 191). Indeed even Danger Mouse, sampler of other’s music including Libaek’s, is noted as having his own sound:

BP: I’ll tell you a story about that, I work at this music site, I get all this music sent to me, I got this Prince Po track sent to me and I said “Man, that cat is ripping on Danger Mouse, it’s got that 2/4 thing going...” (beat boxes 2/4 guitar hits). Then I look at the sleeve and it says track three produced by Danger Mouse...

DM: I didn’t realize I had a sound but then people started telling me I had a sound in Danger Mouse. It is only after you do things that you realize you have a sound. I realized that with other bands too. You don’t realize you have a sound until after the first record (Danger Mouse interview with Terbo, n.d.).

People who sample other people it seems, can even have their own sound, even if that sound is accumulative of other inspirations and influences, “ripped”.

Reflecting on the people who have sampled “Misty Canyon”, including Danger Mouse, and how they too, have become associated with the piece, there still appears to be a tenacious link
between Libaek and the track. I suggest that this is due more to the relationship between Libaek and his readily identifiable style as evident in his work, than to the binding ties of copyright. This is something Strathern (2006, p. 148) notes with respect to Melanesian songs when she claims that:

Items such as songs circulate readily between persons and groups... It is widely the case that although these forms of expression are in one sense detachable from, persons, their reference to persons is emphatically part of their value. In other words, the origin of such artifacts in the lives of others contributes to their distinctiveness and importance. Conversely, they demonstrate the reproductive power of those lives: the transferral of possession is at once an example of it and a sign of it.

This exemplifies what is occurring with Libaek and “Misty Canyon”. The value of “Misty Canyon” is vested in its connection to Libaek and the strength of his style demands that even when others sample or reissue the work the Libaek link is still strong. Such a relationship blurs the boundary between subject and object or human and non-human. There exists a type of reciprocity between the former and the latter even when other people are incorporating the latter into their own work. The song is still working for Libaek:

SL: So it’s just sort of become a very interesting situation to start earning royalties from things written that long ago.

SM: So you still earn the royalties from that?

SL: Yes of course you do know. And that sort of is almost like a, well some sort of a pension almost, because when you work for yourself of course you don’t have what other people have and it’s a good thing you’ve sort of added to the new things that you’re doing.

SM: Yeah definitely, sort of the song’s looking after you?

SL: Yeah, yeah.

(Sven Libaek interview with author 9 January 2012).
From this perspective, the song exhibits an agency because of the way it continues to “look after” Libaek. It does so because of reuse and because of the way reuse is regulated. Even reuse beyond regulation such as illegal sampling can contribute to the song’s ability to provide economically if it generates interest that leads to reissues. The track is certainly not inert and this agency challenges its position as subservient object within the matrix discussed in chapter two. It perpetuates Libaek’s personhood in the process and ensures Libaek is continually connected to and regenerated by his work. This is something Strathern (2006, p. 147) makes mention of when discussing items circulating in exchange relations:

These may be generative in the weak sense of creating or sustaining a relationship, but they may also be regarded as capable of magically multiplying themselves, as root crops planted in the ground multiply. The owner’s own regenerative capacity is demonstrated to the extent that he or she exercises the power to reproduce the artefact.

It has been suggested that the intertwining of sound and the human facilitates a new form of distributed personhood. At this stage it is useful to consider the work of Haraway (1991) to understand how our knowledge of what is objectified is connected to intellectual and scientific regimes. Regarding this case study, we could extend those regimes to include legal frameworks and acknowledge that the law perpetuates only a narrow view of ownership.

Like Deleuze, Haraway is concerned with a neo-foundational materiality as well as a theory of relationality (Braidotti, 2006, p. 200). Her theories, particularly her concept of the cyborg, which will be further discussed in chapter eight, are of use here. They build on the freedom that BwO’s and lines of flight have enabled the sound object as I have demonstrated, while complimenting the notion of distributed personhood. Haraway (1991, p. 197) notes how Feminists, among others, “have shied away from doctrines of scientific objectivity in part because of the suspicion that an ‘object’ of knowledge is a passive and inert thing.” This is relevant to my argument in two ways. First it alludes to my concerns regarding agency — that considering objects inert does not acknowledge the influence they exert. It also brings attention to the way, that such doctrines can promote things as “truth” and allow little room for alternative viewpoints:
Accounts of such objects can seem to be either appropriations of a fixed and determined world reduced to resource for the instrumentalist projects of destructive Western societies, or they can be seen as masks for interests, usually dominating interests (Haraway, 1991, p. 197).

Perspectives that account for objects in such ways are socially produced. Haraway traces this attitude to analytical traditions associated with Aristotle and to “White Capitalist Patriarchy” and believes such systems convert all matter into a resource that is to be appropriated and which gives power to the “knower” (Haraway, 1991, p. 197). As Haraway notes, “Here, the object both guarantees and refreshes the power of the knower, but any status as agent in the production of knowledge must be denied the object” (1991, pp. 197-198).

Therefore a matrix that maintains the normativity of the possessive individual through regulatory mechanisms such as property law and which reinforces the division between person and thing renders any object that exerts agency unintelligible. This is the process challenged in this chapter through demonstrating the reciprocal relationships between the subject and the object. The implications of admitting the agency of things would however render current perceptions of personhood lacking, and is problematic for maintaining the dominance of the subject over the object:

It — the world— must, in short, be objectified as thing, not as agent; it must be matter for the self-formation of the only social being in the productions of knowledge, the human knower (Haraway, D., 1991, p. 198).

But as shown, this self-formation of the social being does not have to be problematic. People define themselves in relation to and by the objects with which they have a relationship. However this process is reciprocal, with these relationships defining the agency and value of the object and emphasising the way in which it can act upon human subjects. These relationships are evident in the biographies of sound objects. Applying this framework has also made salient the fact that it is not just the biographies of sound objects being traced but also those of people. By extension it is not just a biographical renewal of the sound object but also the regeneration of human agents:
We knew that sampling would keep us alive and we also related it to cloning. If you take a look at how someone is cloned, you take a piece of them and make something new out of it, sampling is the same thing. You take one piece of music and you clone a new song out of it. Sampling kept us alive. That’s the bridge between Hip Hop and Funk. It kept us alive. It kept Hip Hop alive (George Clinton interview with The Company Man., 6 January 2012).

As George Clinton suggests, it is not an issue of sound object existing apart from people. Both combine to extend their longevity. Persons and “things” are relational and possess a mutual agency.

Conclusion

I return to Copland’s earlier comments on background music:

But at times, though no one else may notice, he will get private satisfaction from the thought that music of little intrinsic value, through professional manipulation, has enlivened and made more human the deathly pallor of a screen shadow (Copland cited in Prendergast, 1977, p. 206).

I would argue that through reinvigorated listening and music making practices more people than Libaek appreciate “Misty Canyon” both increasing the value of the track as well as Libaek. Significantly, it could be suggested that the reuse of the music has, alluding to the above screen shadow comment, made the sound object and associated human agents, more human. However, reflecting on Haraway’s cyborg theory and distributed personhood, I suggest the combined agencies of human and sound has enlivened something more than human and created alternative personhoods.

This co-dependence of sound and human for existence is exemplified through the story of Libaek and “Misty Canyon”. I have demonstrated how understandings of ownership and objects can be destabilised, to provide an opportunity to look at persons and “things” from a new angle. An angle that critiques the law’s use of personhood and property — a use which denies the alternative personhood described here and which was seen forming throughout chapters three and four. Yet both types of personhood coexist. So while law denies the alternatives to the
possessive individual described here, it does not as such have purchase over it, nor does it effectively control all lines of flight available to the sound.

I make mention of law’s inability to control all lines of flight because it exerts more influence over some than others. The reissue, compilation albums, cleared samples and royalties paid from these extend the potentials for the biographies of the song and the original artist while remaining within the legal framework. In one sense it could be said that this facilitates distributed personhood and thus the law and it are compatible. However, the legal framework regulates in which direction it distributes the agency — it is highly regulated and only in accord with areas it has approved. It also only permits the distribution of agency belonging to the possessive individual and cannot accommodate fully multibiographical sound. The compatibility exists in limited terms and in this sense is less line of flight than it is controlled release.

Sampling however is more problematic. This is because not only does it distribute personhood but it does so in directions law has less control over and more rapidly accumulates the biographies of other agents — both songs and people — than the practices of reissue. Sample clearance again only accedes the distribution of a possessive individual — ownership is through control rather than connection — but the very act of sampling emphasises connections. This emphasis of connections was illustrated by the way “Misty Canyon” became associated with other artists and songs who reciprocally became associated with the track and Libaek. Such connections produce multibiographical sound and suggest that the sound has gone beyond the control of the law in the way it is consumed and received. Thus the sound takes on its own life beyond that of one person, one owner, and proliferates accordingly. This is accentuated in situations where the sample is used without clearance.

Thus while it would at times appear the law can accommodate distributed personhood, I suggest this is superficial, and exists only in relation to the possessive individual. It struggles to accommodate the type of distributed personhood, which produces multibiographical sound, and to attribute agency to the music itself. Doing so would threaten the division between person and thing.
Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon”

The idea of the sample offering a line of flight was developed in the previous chapter which built on the notion of sound becoming multibiographical and possessing agency. The story of Libaek and “Misty Canyon” illustrates these ideas further demonstrating the push and pull of criteria — legal, aesthetic, subcultural, often acting to subvert each other — through which the sounds and personhoods burst out to continue becoming distributed, multibiographical and agency possessing.

This perspective is one that views both object and human agent as possessing agency and operating mutually to produce what I have termed a “multiple biography”. This allows a view of “ownership” not as something determined by a legal system that objectifies the world as resource (Haraway, 1991) and all of which it contains to be owned, but as something that is the product of connections expressed through the relationships between things and people. These relationships are not uni-directional but dually constituted by both people and things, and it is the duality of such relationships that determine connections, and thus offer a new way of looking at ownership. To quote Born (2011, p. 377):

Music may therefore appear to be an extraordinarily diffuse kind of cultural object: an aggregation of sonic, social, corporeal, discursive, visual, technological and temporal mediations – as a characteristic constellation of such heterogeneous mediations.

It would seem appropriate, however, to extend this heterogeneous mass even further than what Born has suggested, and define it also as a reticulum of people through distributed personhood. In the case of “Misty Canyon” the qualities of its materiality, perpetuate both its own eventful biography and accumulates those of others:

Yes I would agree with you that music has its own biography. “Misty Canyon” started out as a piece of library music in the 60’s and I think it’s fair to say that it’s travelled a long way in the intervening years. The upsurge in interest in 60’s library music in the early to mid 1990’s certainly helped bring it to a new audience (and hopefully we also helped) but ultimately the track has survived because it’s a lovely composition (Martin Dingle email to author 16 February 2011).

Thus the sound object with an eventful biography accumulates stories and people throughout its life course. As it continues its travels it carries both its own and the biographies of associated
people to become a multibiographical agent that challenges the boundary between subject and object.
Chapter 7

Reissues: Collecting, Curating, Connoisseurship and Cultural Mass

The term ‘curator’ derives from the Latin word for guardian, and originally had an ecclesiastical meaning, referring to a low-level priest ‘responsible for the care of souls’. From the seventeenth century, it started to refer to the custodian of a library, museum or archive – any kind of collection maintained by a cultural-heritage institution (Reynolds, 2011, pp. 130-131).

Mitchell (2005) asked what do pictures want? Gosden (2005) similarly posed the question, what do objects want? These questions often are directed towards those who “care for” the artefacts that comprise a collection and is part of the post colonial turn that has brought to the fore a politics of representation as critical to contemporary curation. I extend the context of these questions from the institutional realm of the Museum, Library or Archive, to the private collections that are the resource from which many a reissue is drawn. As Belk (1995b, p. 55) maintains “collectors create, combine, classify, and curate the objects they acquire...”. Therefore this chapter focuses on those who care for sounds through the sequence that Bradley (1999, p. 107) suggests marks an archive — archive, memory, the past, narrative. Thus throughout the chapter I will discuss these practices in an attempt to determine what it is sounds want. To answer this question, this chapter will focus on the practice of reissue as introduced in chapters four and six. As we have seen with Yaraanndoo and “Misty Canyon”, commercial reissues of music can play an important role in their ongoing objectification, and thus in the biographies of both songs and their makers. I build upon the ideas introduced in the previous chapters, by focusing on how people can both renew sounds and renew themselves through sound — the interaction between people and sound that is a central way through which to understand this research.

Thus this chapter operates on the following premises: that music is cultural heritage; and that like many other examples of cultural heritage, music can be archived and curated; and that reissue labels are doing precisely that, conserving and presenting alternative discourses on
musical heritage compared to the dominant discourse produced by the major labels who are the custodians of “heritage rock”. Therefore this chapter will first discuss music’s position as a form of cultural heritage before overviewing the history of music reissue. Using illustrative examples — punk and power pop reissue label, Sing Sing Records, as well as the widely respected Smithsonian Folkways — I position the process within contemporary curating practice.

In demonstrating that the sound has a biography it is logical that those who make this biography accessible, are doing curation and in some cases conservation. Reissue labels produce biographical accounts of the sound object, and they are able to do this through their curatorial skills, in essence preserving our musical cultural heritage. Parallels are drawn between reissue labels and traditional settings of collecting, curating and representation — that of the museum, library and archive. It is argued that like contemporary museum practice the reissue labels must acknowledge the agency contained within their collections and the role these play in distributing personhood. The leakiness of boundaries between the sound and the human agents involved in their creation and reissue as illustrated in previous chapters is furthered here, contending that it is not just “thinghood”, to use Deleuze and Guattari, but also personhood that is being curated.

Music as cultural heritage

Before I attend to the curation of personhood I will first discuss music reissue as curating music heritage. Cultural heritage is not just restricted to physical places. It also encompasses those intangible things that constitute culture. It is fairly obvious, that with respect to this thesis, that cultural element is music which has long been recognised as cultural heritage in tangible forms, i.e. sound recordings; intangible heritage, meaning the actual performance of music by the communities it belongs too (Kurin, 2007, p. 12; UNESCO, 2003); and is sometimes referred to as “living cultural heritage” (Kurin, 2004, p. 67). Until comparatively recently, which music could be considered cultural heritage largely eschewed popular music genres such as rock and punk acts. However, increasingly cultural heritage is embracing popular music in both official discourses as demonstrated by the 2012 London Olympic’s Opening and closing ceremonies inclusion of iconic British music acts17, and Visit Britain’s “England Rocks!” music-related tourism campaign both

17 The “whiteness” of these acts and lack of cultural diversity however is problematic and continued “painting a familiar landscape of British popular music that echoes the representation of British popular
noted by Roberts (2012) and in market and subcultural discourses with the creation of “heritage rock” and “heritage acts” as discussed by Bennett (2009).

This interest in popular music readdresses Marshall’s (1969) by now familiar lament made in the 1960s that popular music has never been taken seriously. I would argue in specific relation to this chapter that reissue labels take popular music incredibly seriously. This itself was predicted by Peterson (1970, p. 591) who wrote in response to Marshall, that “When today’s teenyboppers are middle-aged, re-issues of contemporary rock music will probably be packaged in some cognate way for the collector”. Indeed the major labels have even acted on this prediction, encroaching on the reissue space since the 1990s with box sets of popular artists such as Miles Davis, and The Beatles. This demonstrates that reissuing some of the bigger names in music history is lucrative for large labels considering the reach of their fan base. However, I am less interested in the repackaging of acts whose reputations are highly consolidated, and instead turn my attention to the curatorial practice of reissuing “lost recordings”. Therefore I will focus on niche reissue labels.

I argue that reissue labels act to protect our musical heritage in much the same way as does the machine of cultural heritage conservation, and sees our recent musical past as worthy of protecting and acknowledgment. This builds on Shuker’s (2004, p. 322) observation of collectors as preservers of cultural tradition including the particularly apt example of donating record collections to institutions.

Of further interest is that reissues deal with conservation in a way that differs from physical sites of heritage or the rarefied musical ephemera. This is what distinguishes doing the biography of the sound object from other approaches to the preservation of musical heritage and demonstrates why there should be further research into the area. For example, Schofield (2000) notes the instances where physical sites connected to significant events in the history of music, such as a house in London where both Handel and Hendrix each lived, or Graceland, have reached heritage significance and been listed on heritage registers (see also Schofield et al., 2010). This shows that there have already been moves to ensure these physical sites associated music by English Heritage and the British Music Experience exhibition” as discussed by Khabra’s (2013) reading of British Bhangra music.
with great musicians or moments in musical history are seen as integral to cultural heritage and are tangible to music fan and public. However, as Schofield (2000, p. 137; Stager, 1995, p. 115) comments on the listing of Graceland, “why recognise the house when it is Presley’s music that is important?” It is through this question and by placing emphasis on the music rather than physical site, and therefore regarding heritage as a process whose meanings are “socially, spatially and temporally enacted...constantly being remade and negotiated” (Roberts, 2012, p. 6) that we can start to frame the work of reissue labels as contributing to the curation and preservation of the recent musical past, representing the extension of heritage’s social base.

Reissue labels embody this extended social base often relying on collectors to preserve and represent the music that is significant to them and in the process “create alternative discourses of heritage rock discourses” (Bennett, 2009, p. 483). These collections are often the few places where original recordings — both the mundane and obscure — remain. As Schofield (2000, pp. 181-182) notes,

Old technologies and classic household items are often available in facsimile, but originals can be comparatively rare. So in that sense there is little difference between modern artefacts and genuine ‘antiquites’.

Indeed I would suggest that reissues bridge the gap between museum and open market, the difference in which Schofield sees as only existing in the way museums treat such material and “the general scarcity of museums of late modernity” (2000, p. 182). In this way reissue labels are a potentially democratic way of curating, conserving and extending the life history of music — processes alluded to in the previous chapters. It is plausible to draw parallels to the work of reissue labels to that of museums and archives. Like these more recognised cultural institutions, reissuing is in the business of conservation and preservation of musical heritage.

**Background to Reissues**

There is little academic work specifically on reissue labels and indeed the history of the development of reissue labels is sparse. A 1976 article by William Ivey discusses the rising use of reissued early commercial folksong discs as a result of academic scholarship:
Acceptance by leading scholars of folk music on commercial discs led to the widespread use of reissued early recordings for research on traditional music and in classroom teaching. To some extent, the admission that commercial record labels had frequently marketed material of equal quality to that collected by folklore fieldworkers encouraged both major and minor labels to undertake reissue projects (Ivey, 1976, pp. 162-163).

Ivey stresses the value of quality reissues and essentially the preservation of musical heritage for academic purposes — to be studied and compared stylistically and temporally. There was considerable emphasis in the earlier half of the twentieth century on the educational value of field recordings and preservation of culture. This extended to debates concerning the role of museums within anthropology, it being suggested with culturally imperialist overtones that “museums might aim at collecting motion picture and photographic records of primitive peoples, as well as sound recordings of their language and music” (Collier & Tschopik, 1954, p. 776). Aside from this primarily scholarly concern, Ivey raises some interesting points regarding the motivations for reissuing, the practices labels adopt, and the economic and cultural factors that shape the process.

Critiquing the larger labels Ivey sets out to debunk the notion that the “major label is best equipped to produce the most useful and aesthetically pleasing reissue recordings” (1976, p. 164). Part of their detractin is located in their drive for profit. Major label releases must reach a sustainable sales point otherwise they are deleted from the label catalogue (Ivey, 1976, p. 164). Ivey cites examples where such labels have performed poorly in producing liner notes and discographical information to accompany historical musical material. He singles out the RCA Camden sets of Fifty Years of Country Music (ADLS2-0782[e]) and Camden’s Blue Sky Boys Bluegrass Mountain Music; 20 Country Classics (ADL 2-0726 (e)) which reflect an approach taken when the reissued artist is no longer active in the scene and the label consequently sees little gain in contemporary packaging of the material (1976, p. 166). He does concede that if major labels significantly invest the funding, research, technical and marketing aspects of a release, the result is generally commendable, however the label initially has to be convinced that such effort will result in “sales and corporate prestige” (Ivey, 1976, p. 166). It is the major labels focus on the current music scene that marginalises reissues within their catalogues due to the length of the time they take to return profits, if at all (Ivey, 1976, p. 167).
Small labels are seen to have established themselves in opposition to the major labels by producing releases that are not focused primarily on wide ranging popularity and rapid profit. They possess, Ivey claims:

...a talent largely lost to the giants; the ability to issue material on its own merits, communicate with a small record-buying market, and sell without access to AM radio airplay (Ivey, 1976, p. 168).

He notes the moral drive that often appears to motivate these labels in their efforts to oppose what he sees as the mediocrity of pop music and recognises that they fill a niche in the market that larger labels don’t address (Ivey, 1976, p. 168). To the small label’s detriment however, Ivey (1976, p. 171) laments that the interests of the collector primarily drive their releases and that this often results in the rarest but potentially not the most significant (to the musical or folk scholar) music being released:

...it was (some would argue unfortunately) the record collector and discographer who most often controlled the selection and organization of historical materials to be reissued (Ivey, 1976, p. 163).

Although written in the 1970s, Ivey’s work on musical reissues identifies key dynamics in the process that became apparent in my investigations into contemporary reissue labels. The majority of the labels I interviewed, operate as small businesses, as sidelines to other careers and with a common genesis in the need to share music, offer an alternative to mainstream music (and often the mediocrity associated with it), and to provide an outlet through which these albums can be reached. The lack of financial gain as an incentive indicates that most do this out of passion. In response to Ivey’s criticisms of reissues being based on collector’s desires, I would argue that the label’s interviewed, including Votary Records, The Roundtable, and Sing Sing (see below) were all extremely knowledgeable and well informed in their specialist genres, and maintained that historical and cultural importance, as well as popularity played a role in their decision making process. Indeed consumers turned producers is a major segment of the reissue industry. Hatch and Millward (1987) support this claiming that the “reissue arm of the record industry is, on the whole, the result of erstwhile consumers becoming producers” and that consequently, “many reissue labels...are run by people who were formerly specialist...
Ivy does however recognise the value of reissue labels in preserving musical heritage and a commitment to original material (1976, p. 168), a quality that reinforces my argument relating reissuing to curatorial practice.

Reynolds (2011) provides a brief history to the culture of reissue from outside academia. It is generally accepted that reissuing began in the sixties satiating the needs of doowop collectors, of which the label, Times Square, was happy to oblige specialising in such obscurities (2011, p. 153). However, Reynolds finds earlier evidence in the label of United Hot Clubs of America (UHCA), “hot” referring to “hot jazz”, owned by Milt Gabler who both re-pressed classics and pressed unreleased jazz (2011, p. 154). This corresponds with a record review on Cajun and Zydeco music that appeared in the Journal of American Folklore in 1968. Wilgus (1968, p. 276) makes reference to reissuing activity, yet also notes the generally limited life expectancy of such labels:

The reissuing of early commercial Blues recordings continues apace and seems limited only by the depth of the catalogue, which is far from exhausted. (Because of the mortality rate of the reissue labels and because their pressings are smaller than the original issues, the process can stretch to infinity) (Wilgus, 1968, p. 276).

The next wave of reissue activity is regarded as the seventies, by the end of which, the first truly professional labels dedicated to repackaging and producing anthologies, emerged (Reynolds, 2011, p. 154). Reynolds claimed that labels such as Ace, Charley, and Edsel, raised the bar producing what would become the “industry standard: meticulously detailed sleeve notes, period style design, good quality sound” (Reynolds, 2011, p. 154). This is something maintained and at times taken to the next level by today’s labels. Hatch and Millward (1987, p. 165) also note that record company affiliated reissue programmes during the 1970s eventually resulted in the formation of:

...independent labels with the express purpose of leasing rock & roll and R. & B. recordings from the American majors, who by this stage had almost completely absorbed the small companies from which such items had invariably originated.
The reissue trend continued into the 1980s with what Hatch and Millward describe as “another wave of ‘minor’ labels (that is reissue companies)” that came to “challenge the domination of the established record companies” (1987, p. 7).

Reynolds, however, questions this chronicling and preservation of our musical heritage, his doubt rooted in his fear that the contemporary situation of music culture is one of stagnancy:

Archival labels like Numero group and Honest Jon’s raise difficult questions to do with cultural heritage: the extent to which it is possible or desirable to preserve and remember everything. Maybe we need to forget. Maybe forgetting is as essential for a culture as it is existentially and emotionally necessary for individuals (Reynolds, 2011, p. 159).

This attitude is somewhat reminiscent of what Beadle (1993, p. 244) expressed when he proclaimed that “Pop is always eating itself, but it seems to be producing the inevitable kind of waste as a result”. Reynolds lamentations about the effect of preservation on culture however, assume that there exists equal access to the preserved material and by consequence equal opportunity for people to remember — that every sound is equally able to be “re-newed” and “re-heard”. But if the sound object is the property of an individual then that individual regulates access to that sound object. The rights to access denote that not all sound objects can be preserved in the sense that Reynold’s sees it.

There is also the question as to what sound material has the potential to be remembered. The media has some influence on which artefacts maintain longevity, something music journalist and zine maker Bianca Valentino raises when discussing the differences in her work for mainstream media and her own independent outlets:

When I write for things like Rave or Rolling Stone, the publication usually wants me to take a certain angle or something whereas if I’m left to my own devices I can write whatever I want (Bianca Valentino interview with author 27 March 2011).

The role of the media in determining what music counts for longevity is a view acknowledged by Lumbleau, who also finds alternative media, particularly blogging, as a way of negotiating this,
... *Mutant Sounds* stands as a raspberry-blowing rebuke to the fates that have marginalized some of the most crucial information in history. At the time that I began working on the blog and that first lightbulb went off over my head, my feeling was that here, finally, was a means by which the entire shabby and ass-backward script that cadres of careless critics had foisted on successive generations of music fans could be undermined in one fell swoop ... (Lumbleau, 2011).

Thus Lumbleau sees *Mutant Sounds* as a way of increasing access to a variety of sounds objects that constitute the greater musical heritage.

But who does cultural heritage belong to? And can cultural heritage be seen as cultural property. It would seem that cultural heritage is viewed on the basis of being accessible for everybody, or at least in theory. Cultural property on the other hand is exclusive. It denies individuals the right to access (Busse, 2008; Petchesky, 1995). This is the problem that arises when cultural heritage becomes blurred with cultural property. The problem exists not in the word “cultural” but in the language of property. Busse (2008, p. 190) provides an interesting discussion of ownership and curatorial practices of the new museology. As he states:

Contrary to everyday use, in which property refers to things and objects, legal scholars define property as the right to exclude others in respect to a thing; in this view property is a right to something (or to something) rather than the thing itself. In the case of private property, property rights are exclusive or discriminatory in that they exclude others from using or benefiting from the object in question. Conversely, in the case of common property, property rights are both exclusive (vis-a-vis persons without rights to the objects) and inclusive in that they guarantee those persons with rights are not excluded from using or benefiting from the object in question.

Thus reissue labels are essentially working to provide greater access to the property of cultural heritage. Despite such label’s endeavours to provide a greater variety of music than enabled by mainstream labels, the licensing agreements mean that the sound object still exists as property and consequently is not a freely accessible heritage. The importance of access is something that will be further highlighted by Smithsonian Folkways who acknowledge their role as a museum of sound yet recognise the necessity to work within a capitalist system to continue their mission. Busse continues his discussion to look at objects in social context with the personhood of objects seen as taking two forms — that of distributed personhood and divisible personhood (2008, p.
He claims that, “Objects are both part of how people exercise their social agency and composites of the social relations in which they have partaken” (Busse, 2008, p. 195).

I would argue that reissue labels enact a type of curatorial practice that strives to make musical heritage accessible and through these practices they also facilitate distributed personhood. The items they reissue carry the biography of the people who made the music, sometimes explicitly in liner notes, and always in the recorded material. In this way they are disseminating information and as well as offering a line of flight for both music and personhood through reissue. The reissue itself is a product of the social relations between sound, reissuer and reissueree and can therefore be seen to unconsciously promote a distributed and dividual personhood. Labels collaborate with those whose story they tell. In all these ways reissue labels represent the future roles and type of curating that have developed in the digital age (Proctor, 2010).

While critics such as Reynolds (2011) provide a worthy discussion of the state of re-issuing, and ponder its relevance, they forget that it is not just a reissue of music but the dual biographies of people and sound. I would additionally argue, that Reynolds’ view of contemporary music culture as stagnant, and the blame he places on all the (re)’s – reissues, band reunions – what he refers to as the “Re” Decade (2011, p. xi), neglects the trajectories of sounds in their various guises and the people’s stories they accumulate, adding depth and diversity even to the same sound. It is this element that this chapter seeks to contribute to the literature. While objects have biographies, they also are comprised of the biographies of the people who were involved with them — often spatio-temporally diverse. A multiple biographical trajectory appears. In this next section I look at some of the people and labels devoted to the archiving and preservation of musical heritage based on an ethos of making these items accessible. These labels are Sing Sing record, a label that specialises in punk and power pop reissues, and Smithsonian Folkways, a label that is associated with The Smithsonian, yet who see their purpose as akin to that of a museum of sound, rather than a record label.
This email lead to a meeting in Williamsburg on a somewhat rainy winter day with one of the partners of label, Sing Sing records, Jeremy Thompson. Following Punk’s D.I.Y ethos Sing Sing records of New York, is dedicated to unearthing, rediscovering and reissuing punk and powerpop classics. Like The Roundtable and Votary (reissuers of Yaraando and “Misty Canyon” respectively), Sing Sing developed out of the personal collections of its founders and the desire to share good music. When asking Thompson whether the label initially grew out of his personal record collection and the associated need to share the music he replied:

I think that’s pretty accurate. There’s a collectors market, there’s these records that are really, really expensive..., and, are really good and no-one can listen to them unless they’re these cruddy sounding MP3s online. I’m a collector and I would appreciate, I always thought I would appreciate it if, someone would re-release these things in a way that really approximated the original thing. Like the same artwork, the same labels. Not exactly the same because you don’t want it to look like a bootleg but just really high quality because it takes it out of the collector’s realm, really exclusive. Most people can afford it. It makes it available to people but as far as what we choose I think it did start with stuff that was in my own record collection. And then there was also this book that came out called 45 Revolutions, have you ever seen that book? So it’s this encyclopaedia pretty much of independent UK records from 1976-1979. It’s kind of a history of all these indie releases and I got reading it and there was so much I didn’t know about and it really made me want to explore that. And the more I started digging into that the more I started finding these records that no-one really knew about that I felt really deserved to be given a second life. And then there’s also, once we started doing this and we started contacting the bands – I was really enjoying being able to pay them and give them some credit and some royalties. So that’s been it, but as far as what we did choose, yeah it really did start with that book and my own collection and then just stuff that I would hear. You know you kind of hear it and you know this is something that people would like and I really like (Jeremy Thompson interview with author 29 February 2012).
Thompson’s comments allude to two of the major roles of curatorial practice — these are the building of a collection, and, making a decision as to what to reissue, which would be equivalent in a traditional curatorial environment, to creating an exhibition. In fact Davis (1980, p. 97) mentions the curator’s role as being determined by a number of practices — these being the collection of objects, exhibition, public service and research. Sing Sing’s first role has been building a collection of albums, and gaining the knowledge to discern which albums both within and external to their collection are worthy of reissue.

Acknowledging that it is impossible to reissue everything, Sing Sing maintains a blog which is dedicated to profiling non-reissued albums worthy of mention. As they state:

> With so many great under-heard and under-appreciated bands, it’d be impossible to reissue everything; so this blogspot is a means to share some of our favourites (Available at [http://singsingrecords.blogspot.com.au/](http://singsingrecords.blogspot.com.au/) accessed 14 March 2012)

The blog represents one of the new roles of curating in the digital age. Proctor (2010, p. 35) details a modified list of that produced by Allison in a 2009 strategic planning meeting at the Smithsonian which outline what is “in” and “out” of fashion in curating in the digital age. I have further selected items from the table Proctor presents that are appropriate to value reissue labels as curators and with particular reference to blog keeping as a form of storytelling:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Out</th>
<th>In</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stability/Stodginess</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curators as experts</td>
<td>Curators as collaborators and brokers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monographs</td>
<td>Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
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Proctor emphasises that individual stories as opposed to monolithic volumes and the representation of these are important to contemporary curating. While Proctor’s emphasis is on curators as collaborators, it must not be forgotten that curators remain the experts and still
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process the collection for the public. The Sing Sing BlogSpot is one platform through which the individual’s story is at the centre. In this space the label owners share both the albums, and where possible, the artist’s stories, posting interviews they have conducted with the artists, and album descriptions. The nature of the BlogSpot enables external contributions, and many comments offer additional information to the initial post, which draws on the collaborative element that Proctor refers to. Yet at the same time, the label’s role in selecting and presenting sounds to the public is reinforced.

The curatorial value of the BlogSpot and its role in freeing access to cultural heritage is fully acknowledged by Eric Lumbleau of the Mutant Sounds BlogSpot. In an essay in The Wire he sees his work on Mutant Sounds as collecting and liberating sounds,

As a Smithsonian Institute of the musical sub-underground and a psychic enema, releasing a trepanned spill of the accumulated arcana compacted in my brain from decades spent feverishly burrowing into forgotten universes; as the Nurse With Wound list of recommendations re-imagined as a living text and as a decoder ring for historically situating networks of marginalia that have previously sidestepped analysis; as a freak fringe music fan’s Pirate Utopia (consider the rectangle around our logo as a Digger Free Frame Of Reference), where the most elitist artefacts are liberated from the closed circuit of heavyweight rare record collectors; ...

(Lumbleau, 2011).

It is clear, that as for Sing Sing, Lumbleau’s BlogSpot engages in the liberating of music artefacts and stories, increasing their accessibility to the public — an act which is heavily invested with curatorial tendencies.

Returning to collection building and selecting material, such an array of music determines the process must discriminate between what is nominated for reissue which by extension influences the opportunities for certain sounds’ life pathways. Sing Sing aims to achieve a balance between finding great music and making this available to others in a way which is affordable for both the label and the consumer. As a consequence the “saleability” of the album is a decisive factor in the process although Thompson is quick to point out the quality and value of the music takes precedence:
JT: That’s a definite part of it but it’s not the main part. I think the main part is just finding good stuff that needs to be heard, it needs to be knocked out of that collectors only circle that I really just don’t like. I think that that is not helping anybody learn anything about music. It’s really just fetishising stuff...it’s just walling it off from people. There’s this album that we’re going to do in the next round of records – this band called The Mets. And it’s this band from Texas. The record was done in 1974 and there’s only one known copy of the album and it’s awesome. It’s really, really, really good. It sounds kind of like New York Dolls but with some really weird acid fuzz psych parts in songs. So there’s one known copy of the album and the way I see it is it’s better to have that available to people instead of in just this guys apartment where nobody can hear it. Nobody can. You know? (Jeremy Thompson interview with author 29 February 2012).

The curatorial role of the label is exemplified in the process through which they discern what to reissue and how they present this material to the public. They release titles in batches connecting these through associations made between genre and assumed patron interest. This reflects Dallas’s (2008, p. 60, citing Hooper-Greenhill, 1992) comment on museum displays and exhibitions as “spatialisations of knowledge through the arrangement of objects and associated information”. Sing Sing start with a list of records and bands they wish to pursue and hope that a few on their list will result in a reissue:

I’ll start with a big list of things and projects and really just see...send out emails and see what the responses are and then cull it down and figure out our schedule that way and what we’re going to re-release. And I try to group things together that when the person’s buying it – we release three records at a time – we release them in batches. So I kind of want to think about the person who is getting the package and the records, like the assortment so they get different things. It’s not the same kind of sound. It’s a lot more interesting for them, because a lot of people buy stuff from us and they don’t know what it’s going to sound like. They just like the label and they want to know what’s good? So I try to mix it up for people.

SM: Particularly if you’re rereleasing stuff that hasn’t really been heard for a while, then you don’t really know what you’re buying.

JT: Yeah there’s a lot of...I mean there’s a lot of people that now will just buy stuff and they have no idea what it will sound like and that’s cool. That means that we’re doing a good job (Jeremy Thompson interview with author 29 February 2012).
Selecting artefacts and determining the aesthetics and mechanisms of release, presenting to the record buying public a considered assemblage of punk and powerpop recordings, is indeed curatorial (For an interesting discussion of curating domestic music collections see Sease & McDonald, 2009). Sing Sing acts to educate people about music, which is particularly pertinent in the current popular music environment. Again reflecting the DIY nature of punk, they are partly assuming the responsibility of more traditional cultural institutions, including mainstream record labels, to disseminate musics and in this case often “new again” music for many consumers.

The presentation of the music artefacts they reproduce and the experience these offer the consumer is something Thompson contemplates when reissuing material. The placement of liner notes is dependent on the minimal intervention with artwork, and both the artwork and additional information provided through the liner notes are seen as enhancing the experience. Such treatment of the subject matter is an affirmation of its physicality, something increasingly diminishing through contemporary music technology and consumption:

JT: Well we’ll do liner notes. I think it’s ok if you buy a record and it’s already this object you know, it’s like this physical...CDs are tiny and MP3s don’t even exist like you don’t care, you kind of listen to music on a computer or whatever. If you have a record ... I like personally when I listen to something, to read about it so if we can include good liner notes we will but I won’t let it interfere with the original art work on the inner sleeve or something just ‘cos I try to think of the experience of the listener where they can sit back and listen to something they’ve never heard before and also read the story of it. I think it’s cool. But we don’t alter the artwork as part of it. I don’t think we have the right to do that. On the blog yeah we’ll do interviews and stuff just because it’s interesting. I always just try to think of this stuff like if I was the person buying what would I want to see? How would I want to see it? A lot of reissue labels do take liberties with the design and stuff, and I just think, if it’s fine the first time don’t change it (Jeremy Thompson interview with author 29 February 2012).

Maintained throughout the process are certain unspoken personal and subcultural rules – the reissue must respect the original artist and sound object. The onus is on the label to do a good job:
There’s some rules right, like you should do a really good job with it and don’t make it sound like shit. Take it somewhere get mastered properly, do the sleeve the right way, don’t make it look cheap if it’s something of value. If possible find the people who played on the recording and pay them so that’s it’s morally kind of like you’re not taking their money (Jeremy Thompson interview with author 29 February 2012).

While the first criteria mentioned are predominantly associated with the sound to be reissued, financially rewarding the artist reminds us that reissue is as much about the people who made the music, as it is about the music.

In this sense the reissue curates personhood as well as the sound — the multibiographical sound/person materialises. This multibiographical entity determines that the biography of both people and sound impacts upon the other and has consequent constraints on the biographical possibilities available by either restraining them or conversely encouraging new pathways and extensions of personhood.

Pertaining to reissue, human agency has a habit of manifesting itself in either one of two responses. In Sing Sing’s experience, and that of other labels I interviewed, people reacted in the following ways when asked about the possibility of reissuing their material – they were either encouraged, excited even, and compliant with the process, hinting at an opportunity to relive their youth and regenerate that chapter of their life; or on the contrary they were opposed and in some cases extremely so, to the possibility of revisiting that music and life, hinting that for various reasons, not everybody is happy to relive past elements of themselves. This experience is reflected in comments made by the label owners of Acute Records, Dan Selzer and Todd Hyman, in an interview with Joel Penney from Dusted Magazine:

It really varies. Some people are surprised that we’re even interested in their music...they’ve forgotten about music, they can’t believe anyone would want to hear it. But they say “Yeah, sure, I guess. Do you think...?” And then the flipside of it is people who have this memory of how important their music was, and they expect a lot of it. Sometimes they have to be reminded that it’s just a small reissue label. Record sales have changed a lot (Dan Selzer interview with Penney, n.d.).
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I will look at two instances that profile each of these reactions and their impact on the biographical extension of the sound object, reminding us yet again that it is as much about the people as it is about the music.

**April South**

Thompson relates the story of his attempts to seek permission to reissue selected Northern Irish groups, in particular the punk metal works of April South (Track 27):

There’s a couple of groups from Belfast that I’ve contacted that have straight up just told me to fuck off on the phone when I’ve got them on the phone. I found this lady. I’ve been looking for this lady for months, her name is April South. And she was in Belfast in the late seventies she was kind of this metal punk crossover...did several singles and they’re really great, really hard to find. So I found her, tracked her down – she works for the State – I can’t remember what she does some sort of accounting job or something. I got her on the phone and she was horrified and she told me, she said fuck off. There’s been other times. There’s this band called the Peasants, they’re also from Northern Ireland, this really great record. The guy, he yelled at me when I got him on the phone, “Why you want to, you know this is crap, this is awful, why do you care about this?” That happens occasionally but it’s rare. Mostly people are really happy.

The thing with the April South recordings I can kind of understand that because I think she was more... in the seventies her image was really this risqué kind of... she wore lots of leather and stuff, and it’s really not something if she’s middle aged working for the state, like she doesn’t want that out, I can understand that. Still she was super rude to me on the phone, which was weird (Jeremy Thompson interview with author 29 February 2012).

Looking into April South’s story it appears she continued her music career but transformed her image considerably and reverted to her Christian name, Marian, as her stage name. She thus both distanced herself from her April South persona in image and name. “April South” represents a rebellious period in the life of Marian Curry, and represents the ability of music to both construct and through recording, distribute personhoods that may be in conflict.

The name, April South, was derived from Curry’s birth month and the geographical location of the town of Cavan, in the south of Ireland, from where her fellow band members hailed. The
alter ego enabled a risqué version of the singer as a “pop metal goddess” (Irishrock.org). Her act was controversial:

She penned a fake bio (claiming to be American) and played up the sex angle in her live act. Her act was described as “raw and crude” by Hot Press, and her “assertiveness vulgar rather than showbiz savvy”. Her show was “Rock’n’Roll Burlesque, a comedy of errors and eros, that absolutely leaves it to the eye of the beholder”. This kind of thing was simply ‘not on’ in 1981 and it led to bannings by the clergy, etc, but also a lunchtime show at TCD was picketed by feminists (Irishrock.org, available at http://www.irishrock.org/irodb/bands/southapril.html, accessed 22 April 2013).

In interviews and the current musician biography on the Ally Harron and Marian Curry official website, the boundary pushing April South is minimally referred to which can be interpreted as a distancing by Curry from her alter ego. Her transition to less controversial genres is described as bringing “her away from the hard rocks days and introduced her to a more mature choice of material, which eventually lead to singing and performing Country and Irish” (Harron & Curry, 2013).

During an interview with the Impartial Reporter, she claims "It was a rock and roll lifestyle. It’s an era that I look back on and think: ‘Did I really do that?’" (Monahan, 21 February, 2013). The article describes her April South days, claiming “Marian evolved too, from an innocent Irish girl in a smart dress and boots, to a leather-clad Suzi Quatro-esque rock diva” (Monahan, 21 February, 2013). Clearly this image is seen a momentary departure from Marian Curry as she notes that despite her controversy her parents "knew I’d come back to my roots" (Monahan, 21 February, 2013). The case of April South demonstrates the desire to limit the biographical possibilities of the sound object and restrain the distribution of personhood by the very person who created the sound and whose personhood is imbued within. This attempt to reign in the sound object, and prevent it following alternative lines of flight, may be the result of the discrepancy between the personhood of April South in her punk metal days, with April South the public servant and Irish and country singer. Here we can clearly see the effect of human agency on limiting the biography of the sound object and controlling the distribution of their personhood.
However the material presence of the album contains an essence of personhood, in this case belonging to April South that renders it difficult to shut down recalcitrant lines of flight. The reissue process has the potential to move beyond reissuing the album to reissuing personhood. The ability of the sound object to be discovered and take on new forms, creates a situation that threatens the creator’s control, somewhat reminiscent of a modern day musical Frankenstein’s Monster. The age old dilemma of technology interfering with nature in this case manifests itself as the earlier personhood of April South, haunting her contemporary personhood with which it is incompatible, through preservation of punk metal April South on vinyl.

**De Cylinders**

Not everybody attempts to restrain both the sound object and their associated personhood from venturing into renewed possibilities. Thompson mentions an example where their curatorial skills, particularly relevant to collaboration that Proctor (2010) highlights, extended beyond the physical album. In this instance, the link between curating the physical album to a deeper level of curating personhood is visible. Dutch band, De Cylinders, provide an example where the reissue offers not only the opportunity to renew the life of the sound but to contemporaneously regenerate their collective personhood (Track 28):

I mean it’s weird that what we’re talking about the lifespan of this stuff and talking about where it goes. I feel, for me that thing that kind of sucks, that for the people in all of this, it ultimately ends in a kind of disappointment for them I think because we contact them out of the blue and they get excited and we get excited and we release their single. But still, they want it to be really successful and we’ll sell a thousand copies or something maybe. There’s this one record which has sold 5000 copies which is the most we’ve ever sold. But still they want it to be more and more, they, want it to be because I think they had this time, they’d start remembering all they did – we did this band, we almost did this and we could have done this. And in the end, after a while they’ll email me about stuff and they’ll try to keep up with it and after a while, it’s like man that’s it, we sold the thousand copies, that’s it. It sucks you know. I’m sorry. There’s this band from the Netherlands that came over here, we reissued, they had two 45s. This band called De Cylinders, and these two singles in the early eighties and they’re really good, but it’s a really obscure group, and so we reissued their singles and then we got an email from them two months after we reissued their record, and they’re like we’re coming to New York, we’re going to play and is that cool? (Jeremy Thompson interview with author 29 February 2012).
Clearly objects can be associated with biographical events and Thompson’s comment about the band’s association of the album with a particular part of their life that they wish to revisit reinforces that aspect. Indeed Albano (2007, p. 17) suggests that:

Biographical objects, like souvenirs and memorabilia, are both tangible parts of our past as well as of our present because of the feelings and images with which they are invested or that they are able to evoke. They act as proof of the narratives through which we fashion the self and our past.

For the De Cylinders, it would seem that the album represents that part of their past that they still, unlike April South, value as an important construction of self. This reinforces the idea maintained throughout this thesis of the role material culture in people-making. Reissuing as curatorial practice must acknowledge this link and act in a way that considers the human side because as Albano continues, the consideration of objects in a biographical sense is essentially to “reveal something not only about the objects themselves but also about those who acted upon them” (2007, p. 17). Sing Sing acknowledges this responsibility, yet the lack of long-term support and the inability to facilitate an ongoing biographical pathway is seen as a downside of the business:

...and this is a band no one has fuckin heard of and no one really...this is when our label just kind of started, and no one knew our label, so ultimately I had to figure out...I had to make these shows happen where people would come to the shows. It was really hard managing their expectations and stuff. It was really difficult. It was a successful thing and I got them two really good shows and this radio show but it was like they were really acting out this thing that they should have done in 1980 and it was weird and that was really stressful for me. And I don’t like having to deal with that kind of stuff and that’s the one thing about doing this label that’s really hard – Getting the emails from people after the records out. They see it like a real, like a label that is currently, and can give artists support. Really I guess it doesn’t go past, too much past the actual object. And people owning the record and owning the recording. Weird. (Jeremy Thompson interview with author 29 February 2012).
This is important when it comes to extending the life of the sound through reissue. It doesn’t extend much further beyond the recorded object once again, although one could argue it does regenerate interest and possible alternative uses enabled by newer technologies.

This is reflected by the broader trend of renewed interest in older music, particularly by younger generations, prompting resurgence in many musicians’ careers, through sampling and reissue. Of note is Syl Johnson, whose work has been sampled by the Wu-Tang Clan and Kid Rock, among others, as well as reissued by Numero, whose *Complete Mythology*, was nominated for a Grammy. This regeneration is encouraged by interest from a new audience, interestingly for Johnson, of white youth:

NO! I made the right shit because that’s what’s got me hot right now with young white folks .... I was hot with the black folks back in the day but they don’t know me now, some of them are dead, some of them too old, some of them don’t want to be that old. But the young white people, jumped on and picked up my 60’s music and I’m up for a Grammy this year… My fans are 30 down and white…99.9% are white. I don’t care. The black people, a lot of them are too old. Some of them, you know, time passed on them (Syl Johnson interview with Jee, 27 August 2011).

Yet while renewing careers, the regeneration is limited.

The De Cylinders episode shows that there is only so far that biographical possibilities can be extended and thus the reach of both sound and personhood is limited. In fact the trajectory appears more cyclical. Like the first release, the sound object and the people involved in its creation experience a moment of interest, perhaps brief fame within certain circles, followed by a drift into the ether of records and artists that once were — the pile of broken dreams DJ Shadow described in chapter one. The same process is repeated with the reissue:

SM: I wonder whether it renews its life in a way. It might have had 20 or 30 years of being forgotten about and then the same sort thing happens again. You sell it and then it goes out there again …

JT: Yeah it is kind of the same thing. We’ll probably sell more copies than were sold originally of the records and people will…the thing with that band in the Netherlands, is that I think that their
country is really awesome in the way that they would do newspaper stories about them and they really cared. They were featured on some TV show over there when the reissue came out and people were interested over there, whereas most places people don’t care or maybe there would be a write up in the local paper or something. But yeah, there’s kind of the same thing happening to them twice. They’ll get a little bit of attention and people, people who want the record will get it and then it kind of just…it’s a very limited niche market. People are into really bad music now. People are into really shitty music so there’s not going to be a huge deal and they’re not going to get famous all of a sudden. And people, they will expect something like that and it’s a bummer (Jeremy Thompson interview with author 29 February 2012).

To elaborate this intertwining of personhood and material culture, it is useful in this example to look to Warnier (2009, p. 465) and his discussion of the relation between technology, material culture and the subject. Answering his own question of how material culture relates to the subject, Warnier simply declares that “material culture is partly included in the subject” (2009, p. 465). In this sense material culture is incorporated within and also constitutive of the subject. To continue with Warnier (2009, p. 465):

It (material culture) belongs with the body in motion. A subject is a subject-with-its-objects in motion. Of course, all objects are not embodied at the same time. Particular objects may be incorporated and excorporated at a turn.

While Warnier is primarily discussing magic and ritual as a technology of the body and also uses examples such as bike riding and writing to demonstrate the way the subject embodies the object through the “culture of sensorimotoricity” as implemented through material culture (2009, p. 466), it is possible to extend this to the embodiment of music. Reissue represents a salient example of the object, and by extension the body, in motion. The De Cylinders illustrate this subject-with-its-objects in motion. The selfhood of the band’s members is partly constructed through their music. But to reiterate Warnier, this is not a constant incorporation. The reissue offers an event through which the sound object is reincorporated into their self while their presence within the sound is reemphasised. The De Cylinders are essentially put into motion, and distributed, as the sound is remobilised. Coinciding with this mobilisation is reinforcement of that part of selfhood for band member’s that relies on De Cylinder’s music, leading to the
subject-with-its-objects in motion. April South however, by denying the movement of her recordings, essentially denies the existence of that part of her subject.

The personal side of the reissue process illustrated by Sing Sing makes it clear that music cannot be divorced from personhood. From a biographical perspective with personhoods located in the objects collected and reissued the process reflects Blom’s (2002, p. 191) comments that “Every collection is a theatre of memories a dramatization and a mise-en-scene of personal and collective pasts”. To that I add references to the melding of human and object, and human and technology that point us in the direction of cyborgism that I have previously raised and which will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter. The curation of music through reissue is as much about curating people through the changing materialities of their distributed personhood.

**Smithsonian Folkways**

This next section discusses an example where the role of reissue label and museum are explicit. I turn to the record label of the Smithsonian Institute, Smithsonian Folkways, which is driven by the mission of the original founder of Folkway’s, Moses Asch:

As Director, I have tried to create an atmosphere where all recordings are treated equally regardless of the sales statistics. My obligation is to see that Folkways remains a depository of the sounds and music of the world and that these remain available to all. The real owners of Folkways Records are the people that perform and create what we have recorded and not the people that issue and sell the product. The obligation of the company is to maintain the office, the warehouse, the billing and collection of funds, to pay the rent and telephone, etc. Folkways succeeds when it becomes the invisible conduit from the world to the ears of human beings (Asch, 1986 cited in Sonneborn 2005, 122).

This “Declaration of Purpose” (Carlin, 2008, p. 17) highlights Moses Asch’s vision for a label that represented the sound and musics of the world, pursuing an egalitarian approach to the music and musicians it represents. It is a label both for the music and for the people. Formed in 1948 the label would grow to become an encyclopaedic collection of sound and music documenting the music of the people and global sounds. Key to Asch’s mission was the insistence that all
recordings within the collection should remain available despite their varying levels of popularity — an idea not entertained by larger labels. Asch is famously quoted as justifying his approach by saying “Just because the J is less popular than the letter S, you don’t take it out of the dictionary” (Carlin, 2008, p. 10).

The origin of Asch’s purpose is etched its own mythology. It is purported that a young Asch travelled with his father to Princeton in the 1930s to interview Albert Einstein. During this visit, Einstein asked of the younger Asch what he planned to do with his future. Replying that he fixed radios, installed sound recordings and was interested in recording, Einstein supposedly challenged him to “make an encyclopaedia of sounds all the human ears might hear and this would be a worthwhile way to spend your life”. As Atesh Sonneborn, current Associate Director of Smithsonian Folkways ponders:

> Maybe that happened. I mean maybe that really happened just as recounted in several instances later in Asch’s life and maybe though it’s a metaphor for what he did. In any case it’s descriptive of what he actually did because the scope of the catalogue as you say is overwhelming. It just goes on and on and on and what is going on here. And all I can say is it truly is encyclopaedic” (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

Folkways became Smithsonian Folkways when the Smithsonian acquired it in 1987 after Asch’s death in 1986, the key advocate for the acquisition being Ralph Rinzler (Sonneborn, 2009, p. 124). As part of the deal to take over the label and its collection of 2,168 titles, Asch had ascribed the non-negotiable condition that every title on the catalogue was to remain available and this deterred major label interest driven by reissuing top sellers and discarding the rest (Sonneborn, 2009, p. 123). Sonneborn describes the situation:

> And the Smithsonian while it’s a quasi governmental organisation it is an independent public trust and finally Moses Asch who was I think realising he was getting old and wouldn’t live forever, while he didn’t trust government, he respected the fact that the Smithsonian was saying they would keep everything in the catalogue available forever. And that promise doesn’t exist in the rest of the world. So the major record labels wanted the catalogue for the famous iconic artists like Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie and within jazz maybe Mary Lou Williams and a few others but history tells us they would have thrown away all the master tapes for things like...
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sounds of outer space, and odd things that exist that for Asch were integral. And he didn’t care if he sold one copy in ten years or ten thousand copies in a year but everything was kept available. And the Smithsonian said they would do that and indeed the Smithsonian has done that and established this thing that appears to be a record label (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

Since the acquisition, Smithsonian Folkways has expanded the collection often acquiring whole record labels to add to the resource. Unlike other sound archives such as the BBC radio archive or the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv, Smithsonian Folkways utilises the institutional vehicle of The Smithsonian and its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge as a platform to profile the collection. Despite being nested within the Smithsonian brand, the label receives no funding from the museum or government and relies solely on grants, donations and income from its products. This situation in combination with the ideals set out by Asch has resulted in what is a “not-for-profit record label run by ethnomusicologists” (Sonneborn, 2009, p. 124).

The not-for-profit ethos is an important characteristic of the label and one that draws parallels with smaller reissue labels. Profit is not the primary motivation however the value of money in extending the label’s mission is acknowledged, as Font (2007, p. 32) observes Folkways is “expected to make a profit in order to sustain and ideally expand their operations.” Rather than viewing this irregularity of income sources as a detracting from their mission, the label approaches the situation as enabling their independent approach to publishing music:

So I think when we operate more as a mission with a means, the means being sound recordings. We don’t receive federal funds, you have to remember that we don’t have a minister of culture in the United States, and we don’t receive Smithsonian funds, we sell recordings. The Smithsonian houses the archive that’s all it was willing to do. It said anything that you do with it by way of outreach has to pay its own way. Well I think it’s probably really a healthy thing that we don’t have to, we don’t have to depend on that particular source for financial nourishment. Because we can operate more like an independent entity (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).
Despite this freedom from benefactors, Sonneborn reiterates the above observations of Font when he claims that money is “not a driver but it’s the means for the mission.” If unable to raise the funds their work could not continue to the degree currently achieved:

It’s not a driver but it’s the means for the mission. That’s what the money is. And if we ran out of ideas that would raise some money we wouldn’t be able to do what are purely mission based projects (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

This ethical stance may plausibly reflect the size of its role in the music industry. The label maintains slightly less than 0.00009% of the US$33.6 billion global recording sales market (Sonneborn, 2009, p. 124). These sales comprise of both new releases and reissues. To date over three hundred titles have been released which just under half — forty percent — of which belong to reissues of titles from the archive (Sonneborn, 2009, p. 124). Sonneborn (2009, p. 125) claims that approximately one-third of the label’s revenue is derived from their on-demand copying service where mostly analogue archival material is digitally copied on request. Sales of commercially manufactured recordings comprise the remaining revenue and “Of the manufactured products, new releases account for not more than thirty percent (30%) of sales” (Sonneborn, 2009, p. 125).

By asking what is important rather than how they can continually increase their profit margins, the label, although exhibiting a tension between finance and the retaining of musical heritage, manages to negotiate the difficulties inherent in that situation:

And you know I think the music industry as a whole, well I don’t know about it as a whole, we just started suggesting 38 percent of the music publications, in recording publications in North America and Europe are from independent record labels and I think either they figured out a new way to calculate or things have really changed. Either one is possible. I don’t know. But the major record labels are absolutely driven by money. It’s about money. And what is the need for making money is the question asked, not what’s important. I remember sitting next to a vice president of a major record label, I was in some panel and so was he. And we were talking about the music we loved and I said what is the music you love? How does it interplay with your work? He said oh in no way at all. And I said really, how can you be in this business? He said to make money. I didn’t
get it. I mean I don’t get it. I don’t understand that (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

The label’s role as a museum of sound undoubtedly influences their approach to the fiscal. Being explicitly linked with The Smithsonian also shapes their everyday practices and running of the label with relation to representing their archival material. Of all of the reissue labels I have encountered during this research, Smithsonian Folkways is unsurprisingly the label that makes the link between reissuing and cultural heritage salient. The products are seen as equivalent to exhibitions and presented in a way that attempts to attain the same educational and interest factors of a traditional exhibit (see Figure 12). To some extent Sonneborn expresses the opinion that being a label is indeed only an appearance:

Because in fact I think we are more of a museum of sound that uses the mechanisms of the capitalist marketplace to accomplish our mission. And so we’re, our exhibits are these little packages or downloads, the documentation that goes with it, the graphics that go with it, that’s what we do by way of putting things out but I think we only appear to be a record label (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

![Figure 12 Smithsonian Folkways ‘exhibit’. Woody Guthrie centennial release. Available from http://www.jambase.com/Articles/91599/Woody-Guthrie-Centennial-Woody-At-100-Book-3CD-Set, accessed 8 April 2014.](image-url)
This corresponds with what Gibson-Graham and Cameron (2007, p. 21) note is occurring through a range of enterprises “whose ‘core business’ is not to maximize private benefit but to produce community wellbeing directly”. While the label recognizes it needs to operate within a capitalist system, it does so in order to achieve its mission, which is ensuring greater community wellbeing through prioritizing musical heritage.

A portion of the responsibility of being a curator of sound is discriminating which sound objects out of the vast amount on offer are to be published or reissued. Sonneborn relates the difficulties of trying to represent the copious amounts of recordings that Folkways receives each year in accordance with their mission to preserve and document the cultural heritage of music:

If you think of it as an ocean we have a little boat and the little boat can only carry so much by way of drinking water, if this is going to work as a metaphor. There’s so much material out there and even when we get to the limitations of how much can we listen to, there’s still way more than we can do. So then the criteria of what is the mission, what are we trying to do, what music if it isn’t preserved may disappear. This then ties into analogously to the idea of endangered languages. The Smithsonian is going to do a cross museum multi platform look at the larger issue of vanishing languages. The concept of endangered music can be brought in, it has some limitations, because music isn’t endangered it just changes (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

Part of the curatorial effort is directed towards reissues. Smithsonian Folkways has developed a tailored approach to the concept of reissue within their collection boundaries. This is partly due to their in house service that reproduces requested albums on demand, and the statistics gathered from the online downloads that they now offer. Such data allow the label to analyse which recordings are the most popular and to decide their reissue potential through that:

Well reissue is in my own mind rather straight forward. We have this in house on demand fulfilment service that as people order we make CDs and include the notes and the cover art and send them out. So over time we begin to see what is, what are their interests in. And of course that goes into the digital download and streaming wall as well. We have a report of what’s accessed. So one sees that for example Songs of the Spanish Civil War still gets hundreds of orders a year. So after years of seeing this we finally say well lets reissue that. And that’s the
reissue part of things in a way. Although in the beginning, the first years of Smithsonian Folkways at the National Museum of the United States was in the period where people were migrating from LPs to CDs and so the iconic artists it was important to reissue them, reissue them in the new media (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

Analysis of wider market tendencies also enables the label to tap into current trends. Building on the success of the renewed interest in musics represented in their catalogue, they constructed compilations of the best examples from the depths of their vast collection of the current genre in vogue (Track 29):

...we started looking at other criteria and we were working for example in the time when the movie, Oh Brother, Where Art Thou, came out? You recall the movie? So here’s this film that features blue grass music and it was all new recordings done by contemporary musicians and some of the original recordings were in our catalogue. And we were watching these people sell millions and millions of copies and the marketing department said “oh, why don’t we put together a compilation of some of the cream in our collection of blue grass?” And we put out an album called classic blue grass from Smithsonian Folkways. And it sold as well as a Pete Seeger or Woody Guthrie album and that’s a, I don’t know for me I’m an ethnomusicologist and I want to go deep... and it never would have occurred to me to do something like that. And this, this started a whole new series that has gone into the collection that looked at genres where we have good strength and found someone that really understands and knows that genre typically in the scholarly world and put together a compilation and it conceptually works and in the market place it works. It operates as a gateway to the collection as well for some people who want to go further (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

Like Sing Sing records, the enrichment of the listening experience is taken into consideration when manufacturing a new release. Accompanying the majority of Smithsonian Folkways releases are booklets, text and images typically ranging from 28 to 36 pages and sometimes exceeding 80 pages (Sonneborn, 2009, p. 125). This is an essential part of the Smithsonian’s mission of education and access to knowledge and part of the curatorial role the institution plays in the label.

There are many 80 page books. I think the biggest is 250 pages long. But in the CD size package I think the biggest one is 80. There’s a whole series of those. Most of them are between 36, well 36
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is a very common size for us, the point being think an extension of Moses Asch’s vision to introduce us whoever us – whoever we are – to other music to other material and we I think, when we encounter something new we might have a fear based reaction or we might have a curiosity based, and the graphics and the text on the cover and inside mediate both fear or curiosity, if you can get someone to have the thing then a lot of meaning is in the text to overcome the what is this, the what is this part of it (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

The stories and information that these booklets hold bridge the gap for listeners, introducing them to the label and encouraging them to engage with it (for an example of an extensive Smithsonian Folkways liner notes booklet referring to the Woody Guthrie Centennial release see http://media.smithsonianfolkways.org/liner_notes smithsonian_folkways/SFW40200.pdf, accessed 8 April 2014). This is similar to the way that Sing Sing aims to enhance listener experience through liner notes. Smithsonian Folkways is a label comprised of biographies — both of the people involved with the label as producers and/or consumers; and of the sound objects they represent. Current Director, Dan Sheehy, and Sonneborn, make reference to this personal connection between the music, label and people in what they refer to as the “‘Folkways Moment’: the first encounter with a Folkways recording that affects the listener significantly. New sounds are heard; ears are opened; lives are transformed” (Carlin, 2008, p. xv). This transformation is relational with both the label relying on the people to evolve and the people being receptive to its influence.

Asch said that the record label succeeds on an invisible conduit from the producers of the sound to human ears. And that makes sense to me but I think ultimately all music is relational. All sound is relational. That you know if a tree falls in a forest and there’s no one to hear it does it make a sound? We as, we either as musicians or artists or audience are in a relational space. And I can’t, I mean what would music be without someone to hear it. Sometimes the music maker is also the audience but that’s still in a way dyadic although there’s only one person in that case. The people that are involved in the mechanisms the structures that move recordings from the point of origin to a public, there’s a whole range, it’s a community. Many of the members of the community don’t even know they’re in a community. People in our organisation are typically driven by a passionate love of music of one kind or two kinds or 100 kinds. Not necessarily the same music. And the idea of whatever it is that their experience was and of course this is projected from a psychological point of view of my own experience. Whatever their experience was that drew
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them to Smithsonian Folkways initially was or later for that matter, that’s what they want to transmit to others. So I think yes indeed the people are as important as the music. And in fact I would go so far as to say the people are the music (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

Smithsonian Folkways and the products it manufactures are therefore essentially an inextricable mix of human and sound, of personhood and thinghood. The curatorial practices engaged by the label, facilitate this intermingling by providing a gateway for people to both to familiarise themselves with the Folkways story and through their experiences of the music become part of the shared story of the label. Each product of the Folkways catalogue carries the ethos and consequently in part an essence of Asch. This is continued by his successors and is taken on by the consumers who purchase folkways products, ensuring that the essence of the label moves with the products. The personhood of Asch and his Folkways compatriots is distributed by the music. Yet these same agents extend the biographical pathway of the label and the records that make up its constitutive elements. Thus the emergence of both the person and the music is enacted through social relations so that both can emerge through the other and co-constitute the other — personhood can emerge through music as music can emerge through people — reflective of Empson’s understanding of personhood as “something that is achieved and constituted in various social transactions and activities” (2011, p. 20). When these relationships are developed, to quote Sonneborn “the people are the music” or similarly the music is the people.

As has increasingly been shown, both human agents and sound biographies are intertwined and each furthers the agency of those they are connected with through their own movements. Perhaps it would be fair to say that with respect to Folkways, the label is a part of Asch and continues his agency even today. As demonstrated by the successors to Asch, each individual brings part of themselves to the label. They are acutely aware that their curatorial decisions affect not just the music but acknowledging the co-constituency of both people and music, they in a sense are simultaneously curating the people who are responsible for the music. Representing the biographical bonds between the people and the music is a responsibility they take seriously. Through this approach the label manifests itself as both a museum of sound and a museum of the people who create these sounds. The integration of music and personhood
both in relation to ourselves and as something of value, is eloquently summarised by the mission of labels such as Smithsonian Folkways that strive to save our musical heritage:

It would be worth asking a question of why do we think it would be a shame if it gets lost but the response that I have to that is that it feels like a very powerful one. That it must not get lost. Somehow we know more about ourselves as human beings by having this material available. Cultural identities are embedded in what moves us in the way of sound (Atesh Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

Conclusion: Curating biography

I opened this chapter with W J Mitchell’s (2005) question enquiring into the needs and wants of pictures, so we could be begin to consider extending the question to ask what it is that reissued music wants? While Mitchell is making reference to the visual turn, I am suggesting that it is time to turn out attention to an audio turn or perhaps to turn up the volume. The question that curators can ask of images and objects is something labels can ask of the items in their archives and indeed, as Sing Sing and Smithsonian Folkways have exemplified. Framing it from this perspective inverts the question from what people want to be reissued to giving agency to sound. We have seen that which items are chosen for reissue is not solely up to consumer choice – witness Sing Sing pairing records for release, or people placing their trust in the label to purchase music they have never heard, or never had a chance to hear before. It is the qualities of those particular sound objects that determine they be heard even before the majority of people have encountered them. What does the music want? The music in this case wants to be heard.

But we cannot forget the role of distributed personhood in either encouraging or discouraging this re-listening. Music is imbued with personhood and with this exists a corresponding politics of representation. As Bjerregaard (2006) claims, it is appropriation and alienation that characterise the relationship between museums, collections and communities. In the context of this chapter where record labels are considered as fulfilling the museological role of curating sound — we should ask also whether the same relationships between the record label, the collection and the music community exists. To make this more explicit, Bjerregaard (2006, p. 1) comments that the problematic relationship between museums and their objects is because:
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Not only have museums physically appropriated objects from communities all around the world but through the museumification processes of registration, classification and display, museums have also appropriated the intellectual rights attached to objects, and the right to contextualise these objects.

Museums have moved to redress this balance by allowing greater community participation (Bjerregaard, 2006) and acknowledging object agency, but what of personal collections turned into public resource, such as reissued record labels. Like more traditional archival institutions, the reissue label enacts a similar “reissuefication” of sound objects, paralleling the registration, classification and display (in this context resulting in replication) to that of the museum. The expert commentary in liner notes and the decisions as how to repackage the music similarly alludes to the appropriation of intellectual rights and contextualization.

Yet as illustrated by Sing Sing, these elements that strengthen the divide between archive, collections and their public, are challenged by the partnership they encourage between these categories. The label is at varying times constrained yet also driven by the needs of both the sound object and the people who created it resulting in a more democratic approach to cultural heritage and memory. This represents in practice what Byrne et al. (2011, p. 4) suggest when they approach museums “not merely as material assemblages but also social collections”. It can be argued that the reissue process at both Sing Sing and Smithsonian Folkways makes these links salient. The collection of music they preside over is inclusive of the relations that created that music and which constrains or encourages the reissue as demonstrated through the examples of April South and De Cylinders. This is also clearly evident in Folkways with regards to the musicians yet also Asch. As Derrida notes, “the most private autobiographies comes to terms with great transferential figures, who are themselves and themselves plus someone else” (Derrida, 1995, p. 353). Personhood and thinghood are curated simultaneously.

This chapter has looked at curating both “thinghood” and “personhood”. Reissuing recorded material acts as a curatorial practice both in relation to the sound object and to the human agents involved in the making of the music. The objects become inherently biographical and as such extend beyond object to an agglomeration of subjectivities. It acknowledges the current
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moves among curatorial practice to view objects as having subjectivities and the representational politics of what their display presents in relation to the people affiliated with them — the postcolonial ethos of asking what objects want.

Yet we cannot fully delve into this discussion without returning to distributed personhood and accumulative biographies — recurring themes throughout this thesis. Bradley (1999, p. 119) recognises the potential for the absorbing of personhood through archival material with reference to her personal experience in that “reconstructions of the past are inevitably coloured by our current values and knowledge, so that in relating the past we alter it”. Bradley continues mediating this influence by acknowledging the agency of the archive, and citing Lowenthal (1985, p. 412) when claiming that the past is also “assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present”.

Altering the past in this sense also includes making a commodity out of cultural memory and past personhoods, renewing and commoditising these in the process. While curatorial in practice the reissue itself reinforces the commodity status of the object yet engenders the same politics of representation inseparable from its status both as cultural heritage and also its role in distributed personhood. There exists a paradox that Strathern notes is salient in an age when the commodity appears increasingly visible. She claims (2006, p. 25) there is an overall reification of things in that everything seems as though it can be bought or sold. However, there is contemporarily occurring a counter movement as:

...the possibilities of commoditisation reach into areas of human life and creativity that were never open to the market before, so too are commodities becoming personified, in the Euro-American sense that is (Strathern, 2006, p. 25).

This exemplifies the issues I have discussed with regards to reissues. While reissuing might not be as dramatic as commoditising the body through reproductive technologies and genetic engineering, we cannot divorce the commoditisation and curation of sound from the people that originally produced the music. Regarding this in light of reissues and the practice of biographical compilation and curation of sound in a form that is available for purchase, we can see that the
links to the agents, both human and non-human they emphasise in creating these products, shifts the sound from something that is reified to something that is personified.

While Strathern refers to personification in the Euro-American sense, and she does discuss alternate Melanesian perspectives, I would suggest that there is still room within this to accommodate the thought, that perhaps such processes are changing what we accept is personification in the Western sense. The boundary between subject and object is not stable however it is plausible to see the curatorial practices at work that give greater dimensionality to the sound objects, also are doing the personifying. The process is relational and through it they are imbuing the sound, literally with their own, as well as others, personhood. This results in the multibiographical sound/person hybrid that I am starting to formulate.

This has implications for the materialisation of things because there exists a fluidity and almost osmotic relationship between the “object” and the “subject”. The essence of reissuing and of curating is in effect — matter. Anderson and Wylie (2009, p. 328) claim while discussing the rematerialisation of geography that there remain dualisms between form and matter so that the material and immaterial exist in opposition with materialities participating in the world yet requiring an enlivening spark. They negotiate this dualism by demonstrating how immateriality is internal to rather than external to matter and thus “qualities usually associated with immateriality, figurative or affective effects, are of matter, rather than standing in opposition to it” (Anderson & Wylie, 2009, p. 332). Distributed personhood through reissues essentially demonstrates this in action. It is putting into practice what Kearnes (2003, p. 5) suggests is required of a material analysis — that is “to ‘collaborate’ with the physical, to enliven its own capacities and variances”.

The immateriality of distributed personhood — the essence of the subject —within the musical material is rematerialised in part through the reissue process, often with a simultaneous presence of the same personhood existing in an alternative spatial and sometimes temporal location. This determines that reissuing is as much about musical heritage as it is about the people who are imbued in the sound and offers a line of flight for both to extend themselves. As Anderson and Wylie (2009, p. 332) claim, “…materiality is never apprehensible in just one state, nor is it static or inert... materiality is perpetually beyond itself”. Distributed personhood
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facilitated through thinghood is just that – multiple, dynamic and always beyond its immediate self. Thus reissues as part of musical heritage are parts of people and objects intertwined mutually exerting agency.

Returning to the opening question, in asking what it is sound objects want it may be useful to consider how the personhood distributed throughout them influences their answer. In the case of the music of April South it might just be “Fuck off”, for De Cylinders, “let the music be heard” and for Moses Asch, perhaps it is “to remain available so when it chooses to be listened to, it can be”.
Chapter 8

Distributed Personhood and the Multiple Biography

People in Reite will say that a slit-gong ‘is a man’. The question here must surely be, not how is a drum like a man, but – echoing Primo Levi (1979) ‘What is man?’ (Leach, 2002, p. 731).

This quote not only echoes Primo Levi, but also holds correlations with Butler’s core concern, namely, “which bodies get to count as human?” (Brody & Schirato, 2011, p. 1). This parallels the questions that have been developing throughout this thesis. Indeed I would extend McClary’s (1991, p. 28) comment, that “Struggles over musical propriety are themselves political struggles over whose music, whose images of pleasure or beauty, whose rules of order shall prevail” to include “whose bodies count?” In this chapter I discuss in detail object/subject agency and the transgressing of boundaries through distributed personhood, themes that have been established through the case studies. The force with which these themes reoccur demands a re-evaluation of agency with respect to both music and personhood.

I will discuss my findings from the previous case studies in relation to theoretical paradigms that explain the predominant belief in the possessive individual and division between subject and object; why practices of reusing and renewing music are subversive in their challenge to these conceptualizations of the individual and personhood; and ways in which both legal institutions and subcultural regimes of value seek to hinder or encourage, lines of flight, to offer escape from the restricted opportunities of this world view.

I define my use of the terms, body and personhood, before discussing the historical understandings of these entities and how these have informed the current Western belief in the possessive individual and the subject/object divide. This will be contrasted with cross-cultural and alternative ideas of personhood. These understandings of personhood are inherently connected to ideas surrounding technology and its potentials, and I engage in an in-depth
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discussion of the relationship between technology and the body which mutually defines both, as well as technology’s ability to extend the body and distribute personhood.

I use this discussion of technology and the body as a departure point through which to explore how technologies and music making practices are regulated by both the legal system and subcultural guidelines to define an overriding sense of what are considered normative uses of music and the performance of subjectivity and personhood. I then draw upon Butler’s notion of performativity to suggest that the practices of music renewal and distributed personhood as discussed in this thesis exceeds and escapes these norms. This is followed by a discussion of the legal attempts to regulate and accommodate these new forms of music production and renewal, as well as the personhood such practices encourage. I also seek alternative solutions to copyright and reuse of music as suggested by the people who actually engage in these music making practices.

Personhood and technologies: Tensions and potentials

The tension between property laws and music making as it has emerged through my research, is directly related to conceptions of personhood. These challenges are posed to a personhood and an individual constructed as normative yet which are hardly representative from a historical perspective. Whatmore (1997, p. 38) claims that early modern, notably Lockean, interpretations of human reasoning as evidence of human ethical status,

...shifted accounts of this distinctively human capacity from the evocation of a ‘common good’ — the cluster of obligations generated by the patterns of interdependence in human social life — to that of an ‘individual good’ — the result of voluntary transactions between independent agents.

Significantly, and of particular importance to this thesis, is that this change from common good to an emphasis on the individual, raised the “moral significance of the separateness of persons” (Buckle, 1991, p. 168). What my research shows however is that humans do not exist creatively, physically and proprietarily apart from each other, nor indeed are they separate from so called objects — a weakness of natural law recognised by Buckle when he highlights the shortcoming in its “typical failure to go beyond the insistence that human nature is rational
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nature” (Buckle, 1991, p. 173). This has implications for the morality of human claims to exclusive subjectivity, ownership and agency.

Having established the basis of this argument throughout the previous chapters, this section will, drawing on feminist thought, discuss in detail the construction of alternative personhoods allowing the combination of the subject and the sound. This creates a music cyborg which, like the slit-gong, is a subject. This cyborg mass of subject and object is experienced in a distributed sense and thus the process of personification also has a spatial and temporal element. Engaging with this also requires an understanding of the historical and social construction of the boundaries made between subject and object that I am destabilising.

As the development of technologies alter the relationship between music, ownership and people, it also affects our perception of personhood and the body and this has profound effects on our conceptions of ownership as related to an individual. It also effects perspectives of the “collaborative” work exercised on the sound object that accumulates over time and with each renewal. This suggests that there are varying degrees of relationships that may experience different intensities of strengths between people and objects over time. To clarify what I refer to when I remark that the technologies effect our conceptions of personhood, the body and ownership, what I suggest is that technology, while affording new mediums and experiences for music, also affords these opportunities for humans or social beings.

At the core of this, are the new biographical possibilities for both sound and the people invested in it, that are offered by music making technologies, particularly digital practices and economies. This also extends to new alternatives for personhood. Just as Jones (2002, p. 214) notes the ability of technologies to move music, having “consequences for how people get to music, and how music gets to people”, I suggest that technologies also move people through music. In this chapter I further discuss the concepts of distributed personhood and the multiple biography introduced in the case studies, and explore the exciting opportunities for moving beyond our current categorical dualisms that create the tensions and contested nature of ownership. This demonstrates the applicability of the framework this thesis has formulated for understanding ownership in alternative ways inspired biographically.
Distributed personhood: Agency over time and space and implications for ownership

While the notion of distributed personhood has been described as operating within Melanesian cultures, it is less commonly suggested that such forms of personhood, including an emphasis on the dividual as opposed to the individual are experienced in the West. It is important to note as Lipuma (1998) does that these conceptions of personhood ascribed to Melanesia are also not stable under the forces of modernity and that there are cases to argue for the changes in cultural conceptions of personhood. If this is the case it would seem that there is an argument to be more reflective of the personhood experienced in Western cultures.

It would seem therefore necessary to extend the boundaries of human biography to its partnership with the material, and through revealing this relationship, previously concealed between the distinct separation of subject from object, and more accurately, subject hierarchically *above* object, that we can begin to comprehend the changing forms of personhood and notions of the body experienced in Western society. If geography is to be human, we must understand the relational factors that our personhood is built upon and challenge the perceptions of the body. As Gosden (2004, p. 171) suggests “all social forms provide conditions under which individuation and distributed personhood are possibilities” and therefore it is possible to conceive of alternatives to the possessive individual in modern Western society.

Before I can fully discuss the issues surrounding technology, corporeality, and being, it is necessary to define my use of the terms body and personhood. While the term personhood has been used frequently throughout this thesis, its relation to the body in terms of legal and alternative frameworks becomes increasingly salient in this discussion and thus must be clarified further. While scholars such as Knappett (2005, p. 23) and Mauss (1973 (1935)) use the term personhood to refer to “the social dimension, while reserving human “agency” for the psychological”, for the purposes of this thesis I see agency as still belonging to the domain of personhood. Personhood is physical, psychological and social and thus is part of what makes the body. Personhood is the element of the body that can extend beyond the presumed physical boundary of the body and thus can distribute agency in that way. This is not such a foreign
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concept, as Knappett notes, prior to the developing study of anatomy in the sixteenth century a “human being was more a node in a web of social relations rather than an individual as such” (2005, p. 31 citing Le Breton, 2001).

This idea of bodily agency beyond skin is accommodated for by a relational understanding of humans and nonhumans and is represented by the musical cyborg that will be discussed further in this chapter. It is reflective of a body that “does not exist as a bounded entity, a locus for the individual person, but is permeable, in a state of flux with its surroundings” (Le Breton, 2001, p. 18). Importantly this contrasts with the understanding of personhood and the body in Western modernity. Here the body referred to is bounded by skin and autonomous, separated from the mind through a tradition whose origins are traceable to Descartes. Such thought cannot accommodate the more heterogeneous organism outlined above, due to an emphasis on a bounded body and the possessive individual. And this influences the way people view “things”:

Commodity logic of Westerners leads them to search for knowledge about things (and persons as things); the gift logic of Melanesians to make known to themselves persons (and things as persons). For the one makes an explicit practice out of apprehending the nature or character (convention) of objects, the other their capabilities of animate powers (invention). If I call these practices reification and personification then in the first case people are making objects appear as things, in the second as persons (Strathern, 1988, p. 177).

This research has demonstrated the relational identification between the sound object and the human agent, in that one cannot define itself without the other, and that each inhabits the other, offering lines of flights through which to continue their trajectories. What appears is a relationship that has similarities with the latter of Strathern’s comments — objects seen as persons. This is in the way that the sound makes the biographies of the people associated with it, known to others (potentially who will further contribute to the biography), and that people begin to make the sound object known. This reflects Miller’s (2005a) dialectics of objectification discussed in chapter two whereby the relationships between people and things create the appearances of objects and subjects. Additionally, the sound has the potential to become so associated with a person or people that it in turn assists with constructing selfhood and without either sound object or human agent, the other would experience a lack — once again, “the things that people make, make people” (Miller, 2005a, p. 38).
In contemplating music making practices, we see that the creative process follows gift logic in that it looks beyond the nature or character of objects, in Strathern’s words, convention, and, looks to their capabilities, Strathern’s terming of invention. Utilizing Strathern’s concepts of reification and personification, therefore presents two viewpoints, which also underpin notions of accepted music ownership. In the first instance, Western ideas of agency and personhood are reliant on the objectification of things, thus neglecting their ability to act as agents, and thereby negating any threat to the boundary of subject and object. However, regarding the type of personhood uncovered through doing biographies of things, we see that many of the practices in which things and people are involved, actually are invested in and operated through invention, and through this make objects people.

Sampling is an example of this, making people, and connections to people, known through things. As demonstrated by the case studies, it is through the creative processes of digital sampling, a practice that relies on invention, that the beat maker imbues the original sound object with the essence of another person, and through this act, the sampled music, takes on links to the beat-maker. This association was demonstrated through the Sven Libaek and “Misty Canyon” case study. YouTube comments showed an association of the track with Danger Doom thus linking “Misty Canyon” to more recent creators. At the same the time reference to Libaek remained strong. The beat acts as a vessel through which to mobilise the personhood of those associated with it, and in turn accumulates agency and multiple personifications. It could almost be considered not just schizophrenic but also schizophonic. Viewing the sound object in this way has implications for accepted Western notions of ownership. It destabilises the foundation of Western personhood and thus has repercussions for individuation and by extension possessive individualism, on which property laws depend.

Conceptualising the body in this way makes reference to Benthien’s (2002) work on the change in the Western images of the body. According to Benthien, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the skin did not exist as a barrier marking the bounded bodily entity but instead was interwoven with the wider world (Benthien, 2002; Knappett, 2010). For my purpose this would provide no clear boundary between the sound object and human agent. Knappett charts the current separate and individualised body as developing over the past 200 years (2010,
p. 241). Perhaps it is no coincidence that this increasing individualism correlates with increasing stress on individual’s rights to ownership in property law over the same period, which contrary to its initial purpose of encouraging creativity is currently effectively doing the opposite. With restriction in personhood comes restriction in creativity.

I believe that it is opportune timing to look at modes of personhood that challenge the boundaries of human/non-human and which allow for more spatially dispersed agency. People can through this perspective, essentially be or have influence in, different places contemporaneously or temporally distinct. But there is a mechanism that enables this type of liberty for personhood and it is this mechanism that demands the need to re-evaluate Western personhood. This mechanism is technology.

**Technology and the body**

Strathern and Lambek (1998, p. 5) relate the omnipresence of the body in academia to technology, positing that, “perhaps the body is so visible now because its time is over, subject to takeover by an increasing array of technologies”. Technologies enable the lines of flight that facilitates distributed personhood.

Acknowledging the dominance of technology aligns with Haraway’s work, already encountered. Enter the cyborg. Technology acts as a mechanism through which to mobilise and distribute personhood, which suggests that there is a blurring of boundaries between machine and organism. The sound object, comprised of multiple biographies is an example of this. Chapters four, six and seven have demonstrated how reissue has facilitated distribution of personhood through individuals such as Thomsett, Libaek, April South and the De Cylinders, as well as an overarching personhood that informs an entire organisation — that of Moses Asch. Likewise digitisation has allowed fragments of music created by others to be incorporated into new musical works through practices such as sampling. Without the possibility of recording, reissue and sampling provided by technologies, then the extension of the above mentioned personhoods and associated agencies would not have been possible.

While Haraway’s cyborgs are undoubtedly female, and there have been other male oriented uses of the term (see Hables Gray, 2002; Hables Gray & Mentor, 1995), it does not preclude its
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applicability to what I am trying to achieve. As an aside, it is interesting to note, that the subjects
and findings in the case studies are predominantly gendered to the masculine. This reflects my
earlier comments, made in chapter four, that subcultures are generally researched and
presented as a masculine dominant domain. I acknowledged through situating myself within the
context of that subculture and my role within it the gender imbalance in my sample of
interviewees. Such a context makes a stronger argument for a feminist interpretation of these
results. How do we do this?

I would argue that the framework sketched through engaging in a biographical approach, takes
on a feminist stance in the process and is therefore one way to enable feminist interpretations.
The scopic regimes which dominate modern technoscience, have long been a site of critique for
feminists who recognise the role vision plays in producing political power and claims on the
truth (Kwan 2002, 648). By listening to and moving with sounds through their biographies,
instead of solely “looking”, I have been able to approach the subject from an angle that not only
offers an alternative to dominant and masculine regimes of “knowing”, but which also then
allows me to challenge the boundary work which both science and law have exerted effort upon.
It is hardly surprising therefore, that through our biographical work, I have found the need to
destabilise the notion of personhood and ownership, that this shall challenge the greater
structural factors which perpetuate them, these being heavily invested in capitalist and
patriarchal constructs. We cannot entertain the idea of a new personhood without challenging
these concepts also.

There is a lack of scholarship within material culture studies that recognises the influence
material things has on social constructions of gender and categorisation. This is problematic
because the gendering of objects obscures the practices through which material signifiers of the
feminine and masculine are created. Of specific concern is the “realm of the unmaterialized and
‘predisposed’ which ensures the stability of social categories, narratives and origin myths”
(Buchli, 2004, p. 183). Oldenziel (1996) provides a comprehensive discussion relating to the
gendering of objects demonstrating the process through which the aforementioned social
categories are solidified through material culture. She argues for the need to “map the
genealogies of incorporations, embodiments, and locations” (1996, p. 66) as integral to
understanding material culture from a historical perspective because it is,
Only then that we may see the ways in which gender has been encoded in material objects and how the material objects and technical artifacts have in turn (re)constructed gender relations and representations (Oldenziel, 1996, p. 66).

The biographical framework applied in this thesis has enabled the mapping of these genealogies. It has determined the incorporations, embodiments and locations that generate the sound object/human agent musical cyborg and encouraged the destabilisation of the accepted constructions of social categories through this.

As previously noted, from a gendered perspective the majority of participants are male. The relation of this to the gendering of music technology is plausible and something requiring further study beyond the current scope of this thesis. However it is worth noting that such technology may not necessarily predetermine technophobic attitudes and can instead offer through an embracing of technology, technophilic responses, whereby technology can offer new opportunities for gendered subjects. This is possible to surmise when looking to cyborgs. Reviewing the way new forms of personhood are made accessible, essentially makes visible the opportunities for destabilising any social category, including those, which are subordinate – even “object”. By taking an approach that is less reductive in analysing sound objects, I have instead increased their dimensionality, questioning the categories of “owned object” in which they reside and by extension questioning the use of categories themselves. Thus, through this process we destabilise both their assumed category and associated ownership, but also what is considered as personhood in the West.

The stability of social categories, particularly those we consider Western personhood and western notions of the body through artefacts, result in inalienability and near absolute understandings of what is considered normative. This is what possessive individualism and ownership is based on. If we take this bias away from material culture studies and look at how they work relationally then we are able to see beyond these and move to new understandings of the body and personhood and adjust our ideas of ownership to fit with continually updating technologies.
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Possibilities for future personhoods, music cyborgs and ownership

There exists a bounty of perspectives, which this theoretical framework referencing feminist approaches can bring to the question of sound objects and ownership. By integrating feminist practice into our investigations, we are able to see other possibilities, in this case distributed personhood and the cyborg. This is because feminism encourages us to think in ways that encourage situated knowledges. Feminists recognise that “politics and the substantive products of knowledge are essentially inseparable” and that:

...rationality, with its attendant notions of separability of subject and object, dispassionate objectivity, and neutral transcendence of personal states, is a mythical conflation that never obtains in actual scientific practice and, more significantly, itself represents a metapolitics of power relations (Conkey & Gero, 1997, p. 428).

Using a biographical approach has allowed me to critique personhood as defined by legal and scientific knowledges. This critique moves towards a knowledge, which is situated — to a knowledge that does not require separation of objects and subjects. Conkey and and Gero point us towards Haraway’s (1988, p. 583) comment:

All Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object.

Haraway argues for an objectivity that “privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformations of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing” (1988, p. 585). This is the type of objectivity I am seeking regarding the ownership of sounds and possibilities of personhood. There exists beyond the conceptions of personhood defined by powerful institutions of Western knowledge, possibilities for new understandings, which do not separate the object from subject. This relies on embracing the
connections and relationships between things and can provide alternative views for the contested and at other times resolved sound object/subject.

Through Strathern and Haraway I have developed a framework which can be applied to sound to look at a new form of personhood — part distributed, part cyborg. There are parallels here with Deleuze’s antiantthrocentric concept of “becoming-animal” as way to reconceptualise humanoid hybrids (Braidotti, 2006, pp. 200, 202; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). A decentered personhood results in an organism, which along the lines of the cyborg is part machine — as represented by music making technologies — but is also part person. This needs to be extended further however, to represent the way that people influence technology in that technological products take on human attributes of their own. This has been demonstrated throughout this thesis in the way biographies accumulate through and within sound. It is as much about becoming-sound to take liberties with Deleuze’s term, as it is about the sound becoming subject. This is reiterated by Sonneborn’s allusions to people being the music (see chapter seven).

While this framework is useful for looking at new forms of personhood and ideas surrounding property, we must also ask of it, how does it take in the apparent gendered engagement in sampling and curating sound? This is perhaps a much more difficult question to answer, but much like the discussion above on the framework’s strength in allowing feminist interpretation, I would argue that its strength here also is vested in its ability to deconstruct binaries, and its acknowledgement of the combination of the material and social in constructing identity. Kwan (2002, 646) argues that a belief shared by feminist geographers is that the “material and discursive construction of gendered identities is crucial for understanding difference in the lived experiences of individuals”. Record collecting, much like the discourses around subcultures, is a male dominated activity, and as Straw notes (1997, 4), the challenge is to account for the “gendered, masculinist character of record collecting” and that “the certainty that it is so gives way to often contradictory explanations as to why”. Straw’s argument pertains to collecting as connoisseurship and on competing images of collections as both,

Public displays of power/knowledge and private refuges from the sexual or social world; as either structures of control or the by-products of irrational and fetishistic obsession; of the
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homosocial information-mongering which is one underpinning of male power and compensatory undertakings by those unable to wield that power (Straw 1997, 4).

I have argued elsewhere (Maalsen 2006), that records are a form of subcultural capital that grant access in to djing, producing and crate digging subcultures and that females generally do not receive the same musical education to grant them interest and access to these circles. This in turn perpetuates the male gendered dominance of these practices. The material, social and discursive are clearly at play in constructing the gendered identities and thereby lived experience.

But how does this fit with the musical cyborg framework discussed here? Wilson (2011, 859) notes that feminists have returned to the material, positing that the bodily exceeds discourse. Here matter exists as agitated, in process and is an “emergent quality of hybrid relations and associations” (Wilson 2011, 859 citing McCormack 2010, 642-643). The agency being distributed is that of a predominantly male personhood and this is carried through vinyl recordings and sounds.

As Knappett (2005, p. 29) states in relation to artefacts and personhood, despite attempts to deconstruct the dualism that separates them, there remains the assumption that “being obviously inert and passive, an artifact is not really socially alive, but it may sometimes appear to be active by virtue of close association with living agents.” Further attempts to challenge this binary has resulted in the “shift of perspective away from dualism towards relationality” which has lead to the interest in distributed personhood, as demonstrated in this thesis, as “implicating both human and nonhuman entities” (2005, p. 29).

The music cyborg that is envisioned operates in both directions. The technology influences human personhood, but human personhood influences and begins to be absorbed by the technology.

Providing a narrative to the issues surrounding material culture, music and ownership, as done through biographies, challenges the creation myth, to use Haraway’s term, on which our current conceptions of personhood and property as possessive individualism are built. I am engaging in
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what Oldenziel (1994, p. 111) refers to as “Haraway’s call to mess up boundaries, to find points of resistance, to send alternative messages and to create novel narratives”, a process Oldenziel believes is equally as valid, if not more difficult, than when originally outlined by Haraway.

**Cyborgs, technology and personhood**

But first let us look at another origin myth that demonstrates the way in which tool use defines and is defined by humans and how the cyborg has come into being as part of this trajectory. Hables Gray (2002, p. 3) refers to the origins of hominids, taking us:

...back to the very beginning of the human, which some ‘ologists say began with *Homo faber*, man the maker, the tool user. Some versions of this story have very materialist plot lines: eye-to-hand-to-tool makes the brain grow and repeat; others are more nuanced. All share a particularly grounded approach to the question: “What are the origins of humans?” The evidence points to tools and the body, that very first human tool.

This provides a historical perspective to the making of categories and, in particular, to those of human as subject and tool as object. Hables Gray, does subtly denote however, that perhaps the boundary was not as stable as is thought, with the body being interchangeable for a tool. To be technically correct, it was *Homo habilis*, literally “handy man”, who is thought to have mastered the Olduwan (Lower Paleolithic) tool box (Leakey et al., 1964; Tobias, 1965). Such mastery of tool kits is one of the factors that attribute “human” qualities to the species, something cited as increasingly evident in the hominids that followed *habilis* resulting in the current technological prowess of *Homo sapiens*.

You may be asking what do early hominids have to do with the sound object and music? Of course it would be remiss not to mention Del The Funky Homo Sapien\(^\text{18}\) but the reason for taking this journey through hominid history is to demonstrate the strong association of defining what is human with reference to technology. This has two contradictory situations in which on the one hand it helps to solidify the boundary between object and subject, with human (subject) using tool (object); on the other, it simultaneously demonstrates that the two rather than being separate, are actually inextricably linked — one cannot exist without relation to the other — and

\(^{18}\) The performing name of hip hop artist Teren Devon Jones.
the tool as such is an extension of the body. The body itself can also be seen to be a tool. This concept of blending the body and tool is what the cyborg represents and, positioned within a historical context, I suggest that it is a continuation of that trajectory but a continuation, which challenges what, is human and what is personhood. As Bryant (2011, p. 10; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 2) notes “there is no such thing as either man or nature … only a process that produces one within the other and couples the machines together”.

Technology creates for music an environment in which to challenge these boundaries and offer points of resistance to the traditional structure of cultural hierarchies that form the body politic and indeed “body” of music. This allows us to realise that the body of music is not some distant objectification but constructed of and in relation to, human bodies. As Oldenziel (1994, p. 101) claims with relation to biomedical technologies, we have already “challenged the irrefutability of the body as the ultimate non-technical organism”. It is no great conceptual leap to consider music technologies as continuing this challenge to body and personhood.

This has implications for sound in two ways, in that if the sound object is accumulated personhood, it too is not above the forces of the technological realm, and that if this is the case, then the body as technical is reinforced, as this blurring of personhoods and objects demonstrates. While these possibilities are enacted through a matrix of social relations, they are generally rendered unintelligible by normative understandings of what is human and what or who possesses agency. Taking a position that allows for an alternative reading, as in this thesis however, makes them in contrast, intelligible, and questions whether they need to be disciplined.

To talk about cyborgs, as with distributed personhood, is to talk about the body or aptly the “body politic”. Hables Gray (2002, p. 19) makes note of his work with Steven Mentor (Hables Gray & Mentor, 1995), where they discuss the long tradition, since Aristotelian times, of the importance of, the “body politic”. To demonstrate the power of such philosophical stances, Hables Gray cites Thomas Hobbes use of the concept “Hobbes argued that the king’s living body was a model for the nation-state, body politic. Now the body politic is not mapped by the king’s body; instead it is a cyborg in form and fact” (2002, p. 19).
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If cyborg is the new body politic then it is metaphoric for, among other things, a democratic understanding of subjects and objects by being representative of both people and things. In relation to the music body politic in particular, it is constituted by all those things, including composers, samplers, collectors, record labels, reissue labels, digital technology — those things that comprise the music making organism. Contemporary democratic thought has interest in the body politic and thus the cyborg is suitable for understanding the associated distribution of personhoods that comprise the body and the sound object. This provides a more democratic approach to dealing with the schism between current property laws and contemporary music making practices — something, which I have shown, has its origins in subject/object dualisms. This democracy comes from an emphasis on a relational understanding of the relationships between objects and subjects, in a way that acknowledges neither is constituted without the other. As Knappett claims, it represents “understanding the critical role of objects in the constitution and negotiation of personhood” (2005, p. 29) which provides objects with a sense of agency, yet also levels the hierarchy between the two negating the need for dualism.

Being relational levels both subjects and objects on the same plane. However destabilising the primacy of the human subject does not necessitate replacing their authority with objects. To quote Miller (2005a, p. 38):

Having dethroned the emperor’s culture, society, and representation, there is no virtue in enthroning objects and materialism in their place. The goal of this revolution is to promote equality, a dialectical republic in which persons and things exist in mutual self construction and respect for their mutual origin and mutual dependency.

It is important to remember when deconstructing the subject/object dichotomy, that despite the “mutual self construction and respect” there remains an ethics and politics to the co-productions. This could be the colonial undertones of world music as discussed in chapter two, or the subcultural ethics of sampling as discussed in chapters five and six. Thus multibiographical sound while hierarchically levelling sound and object is still produced through a constellation of relations that is informed by politics and ethics. But the cyborg remains a powerful metaphor to understand this.
The usefulness of the cyborg is indebted to its call for multiplicity and to move beyond dichotomous descriptions of the world. Returning to Haraway, we can see how the cyborg metaphor is useful for overcoming the body and tool dichotomy. She notes that using, “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (Haraway, 1991, p. 181).

Knappett furthers this by drawing on the concept of a functional cyborg, or “fyborg” (Chislenko, 1995; Stock, 2002, p. 25), something defined as a “biological organism functionally supplemented with technological extensions” (Chislenko, 1995). Aptly complimenting the description of the body extended beyond the skin through personhood, Knappett remarks, “as fyborgs, postmodern humans are perhaps all very widely distributed chimeras, bodies unbounded by skin” (2005, p. 20).

There exists then a framework through which it is possible to escape the separation of body and material culture and forge the way for an understanding that incorporates both as part of a heteroglossia, to use Haraway’s term. In attempting to describe the cyborg, Hables Gray (2002, p. 19) claims that the:

*Cyborg* is as specific, as general, as powerful, and as useless a term as *tool* or *machine*. And it is just as important. Cyborgs are proliferating throughout contemporary culture, and as they do they are redefining many of the most basic political concepts of human existence.

What I would like to draw from the above excerpt is the notion of the proliferating cyborg taking on contemporary culture. For my purpose I will specifically focus on an element of contemporary culture that has been the context for our argument — that of popular culture of which music and the sound object are undoubtedly part.

Proliferating cyborgs creates a sense of immense activity, something fluid and in motion. In response to Reynolds (2011) claims that pop culture has stagnated, I argue that it has done the opposite and produced a community of music cyborgs effected through machine and personhood of a distributed kind.
While discussions of cyborgs make note of the multiplicity or heteroglossia it provides, few explicitly state the nature of the cyborg subject and break down that cross between machine (essentially material culture) and person, to its constituent parts. We know it is a combination of both — that has been reiterated frequently enough — but what are its specific components? I wish to slightly deepen the description using Strathern’s notion of distributed personhood. What we have in the music cyborg — the heterogeneous sound object — is the multiplicity of authors, that is obvious, but also the multiplicity of these individuals in the various forms as well as the multiple identity of the sound. So in fact it is an agglomeration of an individual in multiple guises, a multiplicity of different individuals, and a sound that can take on multiple forms. In other words, it is an energetic mass of multiplicities, of lines of flights, of blurred boundaries destabilising categorization, and importantly, through distribution, new opportunities for personhood. But as suggested earlier, these assemblages are still informed by a politics through the way they negotiate or subvert both legal and subcultural guidelines for appropriate use, and biographical extension and accumulation.

Libaek’s “Misty Canyon” suitably illustrates this point. Here Libaek himself exists in various forms, Libaek as original composer, Libaek the composer that Danger Doom sampled and as gaining financial returns from extended uses of his track, Libaek the composer experiencing a renaissance, and Libaek the composer with a reissue arrangement with Votary. Danger Doom is present as the duo who sampled Libaek for “Basket Case” and who were generally acclaimed for doing so. There is also the Danger Doom who were criticised for their lack of creativity and cutting technique in using the sample and thus in this scenario are not considered to be abiding by subcultural guidelines for sample use. Then there is “Misty Canyon” the sound object as nameless track before being titled by Libaek; “Misty Canyon” as track 2 on the library record My Thing; “Misty Canyon” as a sample; and “Misty Canyon” as a reissued 45”. This particular production of multibiographical sound extends the economic gains for Libaek, the samplers and Votary.

This demonstrates the complexity of the parts of the organism and multiple guises each component can assume at particular given times. To reiterate Strathern, it is part of the process through which things are made known to people but also things as people. This materialises the difficulty of trying to fit current property laws, appropriate for homogenous objects or an
individual, to such a heterogeneous and constantly evolving mass. Yet such laws are not external to the process of constructing new personhoods. Although an impediment it can also be seen as an enabler by forcing more creative responses as seen by the attitude that copyright forces people to stretch their creativity, as discussed in chapter five. The creativity is not just applied to the sample. The matrix in which the law, music making and personhood exist also extends creativity to the making of personhoods. The Cyborg, inclusive of distributed personhood, offers an alternative way to looking at ownership, and rather than viewing such issues as contested, can provide an avenue of potential ways to embody the object, re-envision personhood free of established categorisations, and argue for a multiplicity of rights.

**Cyborg potentials**

I have argued that the boundaries are no longer concrete – if they ever were. Oldenziel (1994, p. 101; see also Cockburn and Omrod 1993) claims:

> We only have to look at the number of technical artifacts such as spectacles, pens, telephones, answering machines, computers, ovens and cars with which we maintain symbiotic relationships to realize we are already half-human, half-machine, half-organism and half-fiction.

Acknowledging that this is the case, my argument moves from demonstrating that these boundaries are fluid, to the opportunities that such open borders provide.

With respect to sound, it opens the possibility of viewing its materiality in revolutionary ways that suggests different possibilities for personhood, being and music making. Rather than viewing technology as threatening the sacredness of the sound object, either through contestation of ownership in the case of sampling, or stagnation through revisiting old music as per Reynolds’ (2011) fears of sampling, reissues, and other “re’s”, we should be embracing the opportunities to explore new forms of personhood, music making, ownership nuances, bodies and personhoods, that it affords. It provides biographical extension of both people and sound, but allows the shape shifting of personhood and body in the process.

Taking subjects to trial over copyright disputes is essentially putting the music cyborg, the sound object/subject, the collective of distributed personhoods that make up the sound object — all of
which make up the music cyborg body politic — on trial. A trial which, beyond ownership, is actually about maintaining the boundaries between object and subject, alluding somewhat to Hables Gray’s (2002) reference to the trial of Data the android, during a *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode, where the determination of his status as citizen (subject) or property (object) was the central issue. I have demonstrated throughout this thesis that this division is decreasing in relevance in correlation to an accelerating interaction between technology, material culture and agents. The schism this creates with Western views of property is not the fault of new music making practices, but rather is located in the inability of such laws to deal with such plurality and always changing, unstable personhoods. The freedom of the new music organism is characterised by its agency, leading us to ask as per Seeger, that “if an existing form of property becomes uncontrollable by its ‘owner’ is it then no longer property?” (2004, p. 80).

**Technology, aura, dimensionality: Value through connection to people**

While I have outlined the nature of distributed personhood and the cyborg in relation to sound, the question that still needs to be asked is, how does it affect another recurrent theme in this thesis — that of aura? At this stage we can start to suggest the ways in which these things act relationally. People are constructed through processes such as sampling and reissue, resulting in a distributed personhood and an accumulation of biographies to make a heterogeneous and multilinear sound object.

Aura, according to Gosden (2004), is produced to give material culture an element of dimensionality. In the examples thus far discussed, the sounds certainly gain multidimensionality, yet if am to take a relational perspective, then not only are they multidimensional, but they are also multilinear. The notion of lineage refers to the multiple authors and agents who have exerted agency on the sound, and also on the other sound objects related to it, through reproduction cycles of reissue and sampling. It is this complexity of relations between people and things that determine which sounds hold a greater degree of aura compared to others and explain why aura is mobilised at varying intensities throughout an object’s career.
Yaraando has exemplified these various intensities of mobilisation of aura throughout its life course. The relationship with a figure like Thomsett, the relations of its production which informed a run of only 100, and its association with names such as DJ Shadow and Bevan Jee demonstrate the multilineal structure that generates its dimensionality. Further contributing to this dimensional depth is the The Roundtable reissue which through reproduction and the cultural capital afforded by the label’s niche market, further builds dimensionality, multilineality and thus aura.

Contrary to Benjamin’s fear of loss in aura through reproduction, I would claim that reproduction enables a greater opportunity to strengthen ties of personhood through the object but in a way that does not encourage possessive individualism. Correlating with this strengthening in personhood is a reinforcement of aura. Surveying the biographical case studies, traditional understandings of aura as per Benjamin, apart from being biased toward the visual (Chapman, 2011, p. 244), reside in singularisation and possession by an individual, restricting accessibility accordingly. Such an aura exists in technologically reproduced objects with collectors able to possess a singular item if they choose. However it is the social value ascribed through the esteem associated with the relationships the object has established and, not necessarily related to quantity, that perpetuates aura (see chapter four). This social and qualitative as opposed to quantitative perspective of aura is something Moist (2008, p. 119) refers to when he suggests that “Benjamin’s “aura” is not removed by modern technologies, but instead transformed”. Indeed, this is alluded to by Blomster (1977, p. 70) when he claims that:

The electronic composer, it seems has even surpassed the painter in his creation of a work which can be reproduced infinitely – indeed, a work designed for mechanical reproduction and capable of reproduction only mechanically – with no loss of authenticity through reproduction.

The case studies have demonstrated such maintenance of aura. It became apparent that the authorial strata and the multiple biographies of both people and sound provided the music with heightened dimensionality and increased aura as per Gosden.
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But as discovered, this dimensionality also allows for the new form of personhood I have discussed — a type of music cyborg comprised of multiple agent’s biographies, both people and sound — that are effected through the distribution of personhood. This in itself operates through a multilineal personhood that is distributed across time and space. It is the associations with these persons that is part of their value and by extension, aura.

Strathern discusses Melanesian forms of intellectual property, which make salient the arguments of distributed personhood and cyborgs being put forward here, and is thus useful to quote:

Songs and narratives are forms of expression that Euro-Americans may class as intellectual products. I have embedded some Papua New Guinean examples in what seems like another description altogether – of the ways in which persons reproduce themselves over the generations (Strathern, 2006, p. 147).

It is not obtuse to incorporate the reproduction of individuals into the debate. My observations of the interactions between people and material culture, demonstrate that this reproduction can be said to exist in Western contexts too. Reynolds’ (2011) lament of the “re-decade” failed to recognise the reproduction of people, something of which could be seen as central to the development of music – as such reproduction also produces new subjects – rather than be blamed for pop culture’s stagnation. The sample and the reissue reproduce the image and body of the author but through this add other images and personhoods.

Therefore the sounds associated with people, and the people associated with the sounds, have the capacity to multiply. This multiplicity is part of the process of re-creation and the multilineage I have referred to and is evident in sampling and reissue practices. Bringing the concepts of BwO’s and lines of flight, cyborgs, distributed personhood, agency and aura together, an excerpt from Strathern (2006, p. 149) provides a fitting summary of what I have described, namely that:

Transactions at the moment of transfer not only secure the release of the practices for use but multiply its origins; both those who had it and those who obtained it may be considered sources of the new practices (even if not to the same degree). Beyond these originators, what is also
brought into being are multiple destinations for the creation, in the people who will witness the display. The propagation of object means attachment to new people (Demain, 2001; Strathern, 2006, p. 149).

It is possible to extrapolate from this that aura is a result of the original and its subsequent forms. It is also dependent on the destinations, to use the above term, of the object located in people who experience the work. Viewed in this way aura is not something threatened by multiplicity but actually embodied by it. The transactions mentioned are the eventful moments in the object’s life that give it currency in the appropriate regimes of value in which the item may circulate. An auratic presence in the derivative is however, also due to rich connections between people and sounds. The strength of these connections corresponds with the amount of aura the object can possess. In this case, as revealed through the case studies, aura and personhood are inextricably related, as it is connections to people that give sound objects/subjects value.

The object subject matrix: Subversive subjects and objects

The above discussion and preceding chapters denote that people and objects do not always behave according to their classification. Drawing from Butler’s (2006 (1990)) idea of the heterosexual matrix, I apply a similar concept to the mechanisms that facilitate the becoming of an object or subject. Butler uses the heterosexual matrix to explain how gender is produced and how heteronormativity maintains dominance. Gender is produced through the matrix “in which real expressions of masculinity and femininity are embedded within a presupposed hegemonic sexuality” (Renold, 2006, p. 493). The challenges to the matrix through deviations from heterosexuality, what Butler refers to as “unintelligible” genders, are quelled by the “shaming and policing (or ‘othering’) of ‘abnormal’ or Other (i.e. ‘unintelligible’) sexual/gender practices” (Renold, 2006, p. 493).

The multibiographical sound object demonstrates another matrix by which human and nonhuman, subject and object, and possessive individual as opposed to a common good, is defined in relation to each other and through which they are formalised. I see this process working in a similar way to Butler’s matrix through the way human’s as subject and the idea of the possessive individual are normalised. Thus anything else with agency cannot be considered
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an agent as they clearly do not fit this narrow description of subject — they must remain the passive object.

Therefore the act of re-newing the sound object challenges the normativity of “individualist” and “whole” unilocational personhood — the type of personhood the legal system generally demands and accommodates. Yet these norms also extend beyond those of the law to the subcultural norms that regulate how certain sounds and the associated personhood are treated. This is evident in the often-contested opinions of which sounds should be reissued and sampled, and which should remain above this, effectively biographically suspended (see chapters four and six. These norms dictate how such processes must be approached — the reissue labels discussed in this thesis all had ideals and standards guiding the presentation of the reissue, respectful of both the music and the people associated with it; the same can be said of the producers that were interviewed, in that many adhered to an aesthetic that would complement the sound.

Renewing the sound object not only challenges what is normative in legal or subcultural systems, yet also challenges agency as the domain of the human subject and the autonomous individual that Whatmore (1997, p. 40) dissects:

The reified figure of autonomous individual represents a cipher of abstract reason which inscribes the binaries of mind-body, self-other, subject-object onto the very possibility of ethical agency in modern society.

The multibiographical sound object is subversive in that it refuses to maintain its part of the binary against which subjectivity is defined. In fact it crosses the boundary moving toward the subject. The human agents who facilitate this disruption of the matrix — whether this is through sampling or reissue — also assume a subversive personhood through its distributed nature which in turn is facilitated by subversive sound objects. The tension this creates with the legal system provokes a reaction on its part to return a level of stasis to the normative positions according to the matrix. In this sense mechanisms of the law can be considered an example of a “strategy of spatial organization deeply bound up with the social production of identities” (Massey, 1998, p. 127). Laws are established to punish subjects and objects who do not “do” their subjectivity or personhood correctly, in much the same manner that Butler, through her
idea of gender performativity, claims that “we regularly punish people who do not do their gender right” (Butler, 2006 (1990), p. 190).

Yet these alternative forms of personhood and subjectivity are no less legitimate or real but only appear that way. As Butler notes, “The historical possibilities materialized through various corporeal styles are nothing other than those punitively regulated cultural fictions alternately embodied and deflected after duress” (Butler, 2006 (1990), p. 190). Therefore the multibiographical sound object/subject as possessive of agency and blurring the boundary between object and subject is a status discounted only by the set of relations, which govern a normative human agent and “other” object, and not something, that is actually vested in reality.

Acknowledging that the intelligibility of personhood, subject and object agency and ownership is socially and subculturally constructed it is necessary to adopt a response to current music making techniques that does not need to discipline them because of their unintelligibility but instead are designed to render them intelligible. This can be done by innovative perspectives on property law.

**Alternative copyright suggestions: Personhood and technology**

Many have been grappling with the issues the renewal of sound through digital sampling and reissue present to property laws, particularly regarding the commerciality of the work. For example, in Australia in 2011, the Copyright Council Expert Group recommended an “exception for non-commercial, transformative use of copyright works” particularly “relevant to the rise of user-generated content” (ALRC 2012, p. 38). Alternative approaches to copyright regimes have been suggested and it is useful to discuss some of these with relation to this thesis. I pay particular attention to the ideas of Johnstone and Wolf, however, for an interesting discussion of creative commons licensing and its suitability to digital music cultures see Porter (2010) and for a review and evaluation of alternative licensing options see Ruiz de la Torre (2005). This is followed by a brief discussion of a theory of copyright based on personhood which addresses the construction of personhood through things yet only partly achieves this as it still maintains the usual binaries.
Some scholars recognise the need to distinguish between sampling for creative purposes and piracy. Johnstone (2003, p. 426) for example, suggests a compulsory license scheme that is limited to transformative use of digital samples, with piracy considered separately. Sampling would, according to Johnstone be defined as “the extent to which the behaviour of the alleged infringer is transforming, manipulating, or completely recontextualising an old work in the process of making an expression with new meaning” (2003, p. 426). This would help to distinguish between sampling and piracy and simplify the processes that establish de minimus use (2003, p. 426). He also advocates the barring of sampling any work for 10 years after its commercial release unless the author decides to sell sampling privileges (2003, p. 429). This Johnstone claims, accommodates issues of personhood suggesting the “proposed compulsory licensing system attempts to mitigate potential problems by allowing for a ten-year lag on access and adequate compensation for the invasion into the author’s personhood” (Johnstone, 2003, p. 431).

While not completely negotiating the contestation of ownership, Johnstone’s approach does make the distinction of what is a transformation of a sound, in essence the biographical extension of the sound, from outright piracy clearer. The acknowledgement of personhood inextricably associated with the sound is demonstrated through the ten year author exclusive ownership rights, after which it does not preclude new personhoods to be associated with the sound.

Wolf (2011) posits an innovative system of aggregating (through web-based media platforms) and tagging sounds. In this model Wolf sees the potential of digital technology to produce new and improved relationships between the sampler and owner of the source material. Digital aggregating mechanisms such as iTunes among others, are viewed as offering possibilities to restructure contentious relationships by “shifting from a two-party model premised on an idea of sampling as unilateral taking to a multi-party model premised on an idea of exchange” (Wolf, 2011, p. 30). This exchange inspired model Wolf argues, sees “source material owners trade rights to use their materials to sampling artists in exchange for audiences primed to purchase source materials themselves” Wolf (2011, p. 30).
This would accommodate both reissue and sample-based music, as the sample increases interest in the original, which increases the need for reissue. This is poignantly demonstrated through Libaek’s surprise at the renewed interest in his work, an interest essentially inspired by his works use as samples and the regard in which it is helped by crate diggers, and samplers, values that have made the reissue of his work feasible. Wolf’s system would therefore ensure Libaek receives his royalties but also that the samplers are rewarded for the work they do in reinvigorating his profile and sales.

Wolf’s approach stems from the premise of using “source disclosure, coding, digital aggregation, and click-through, to alter the equities and revenue flows of the sampling relationship” (2011, p. 19). This would involve a central clearing house and the development of a standardised coding system to tag sample-based music that would identify the samples. Samples are classified into instrumental rate, non-chorus rate, chorus vocal royalty, and mix royalty in ascending rate order. The sampling artist can submit his intention to sample, which is then assessed, based on the above categories by the clearing house. The work is encoded with metadata readable by aggregators and including details of the sampled songs (Wolf, 2011, p. 20). This enables listeners to purchase the new work as well as providing them with the opportunities to purchase the original source recordings by following the links on the website (Wolf, 2011, p. 23). Listener data is then sent to the clearing house which lists:

...not only the total number of the sampling artist’s units sold, but also the total units of each source recording sold on the basis of click-through from the sampling artist’s digital aggregator links. A more radical version of this compensation scheme could also reward sampling artists credits tied to the number of plays of source material (as opposed to purchases) that their song generated (Wolf, 2011, p. 22).

Further Wolf sees this system as economically benefiting owners of source material through samples functioning as a “relatively aggressive and pervasive advertising for source songs” (Wolf, 2011, p. 22). This also benefits the sampling artists by “providing listeners with the opportunity to defray the sampling artist’s license fees and royalties by purchasing source materials directly from their owners” (Wolf, 2011, p. 24). Thus Wolf sees his licensing regime as “facilitating, rather than limiting sampling” (2011, p. 21) with potential benefits of reducing the price of sample clearance, preserving the economic benefits of original creation, expanding
access to cultural material, minimising corporate control over culture, increasing cultural continuity, and enforcing distributive justice (Wolf, 2011, pp. 26 - 29).

The obvious flaw in Wolf’s scheme is that it would require all music that is sampled to be digitally tagged, a feat that would not be easy to accomplish. It does however take a perspective that understands the networked rather than oppositional nature of the musical environment. Using the terminology of this thesis, the lines of flight that the samples offer, are to Wolf, opportunities for musical education and economic returns, through tracing them back via a digital pathway to the original artist. In fact effectively integrating personhood and music through a digitally networked archive of musical pathways makes salient some of the biographical accumulation that is occurring between sound and human agent. And making biography visible, and returns possible and fair are the two priorities, which should be articulated for a revised property regime.

It also reiterates, though perhaps unconsciously, the combination of human and technology, a legal framework to accommodate the musical cyborg that has been sketched in this thesis. It does however stop short at recognising the agency of the sound in the process. The sound is something to be manipulated, tagged, economically evaluated, and digitally imprinted. It is always the work of, or worked on, by people. Never is the reverse considered. Nor is the opportunity for alternative personhood despite the recognition of the opportunities digital technology affords for culture and economics.

In fact there is still an inherent hierarchical bias in Wolf’s sample categories based on content dependent value, with instrumental content being ranked lesser than human vocal content. In this sense, while less informed by a binary human/nonhuman, subject/object perspective, the framework does not fully accommodate a hierarchical levelling of subject and object, which would see neither category relevant, but view them as agents, and neither does it allow for the subsequent personhoods that such a relational approach would create.

Radin (1996) recognises the current difficulties facing intellectual property regimes as they struggle to deal with objects that are now fluid rather than fixed. This is because, Radin claims, “our notion of property is rooted in the notion of fixed objects” (1996, p. 512). O’Regan (2009, p.
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39) draws on the work of Radin on property as personhood and Hegel's theory of abstract right to advocate a form of copyright that rather than focused on competing interests is “based on principles of correlativeity, reciprocity and freedom”:

In this respect, a theory of copyright that is based on personhood respond to many problematic factors associated with the digital era. Through a positing of the creator’s rights as central to the debate, the corporate intermediary can be both left to hold and enforce copyrights, and yet bypassed for the purposes of justification. Similarly, while authorship is “revived,” it is not done so at the expense of commodifying the intellectual labour of the author. Rather, the manifestations of will embodied in intellectual works are methods by which other subjects are recognized as such. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, the role of the would-be-copier is made central, suggesting a form of self-regulation whereby the infringement of another’s personal rights results in the negation of one’s own self (O'Regan, 2009, p. 38).

While this to some extent acknowledges the construction of personhood through things it maintains the same separation of subject/object, human/nonhuman, and person/thing that Western law is based upon. Both Radin and O'Regan focus primarily on the issues that new materialities of property cause for understanding property rather than the potentials for new types of personhood these facilitate. A theory of copyright law based on personhood does in part attempt to deal with the issues new technologies pose for property, but the types of personhood deemed acceptable are still restricted.

It is pertinent to return to the thoughts of Miller (2005a) and his emphasis on ethnography based research to bridge the gap between philosophy and reality. So perhaps we should ask the people who sample for their opinion on solving the sampling dilemma. Cut Chemist succinctly suggests that “somebody just needs to make a graph, you use such and such amount and you owe this much money” (Cut Chemist interview with Agent B, 13 Dec 2006 available at [http://archive.ohword.com/features/543/cut-chemist-interview](http://archive.ohword.com/features/543/cut-chemist-interview), accessed 9 August 2012).

This demonstrates Miller’s observations when he comments on his fascination with the:
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...constant encounter with juxtapositions in people’s lives which, for cultural theorists, ought to be incommensurable and contradictory, yet appear to be lived with and through, accompanied by more than a little shrug of the shoulders Miller (2005a, p. 41).

People therefore live these juxtapositions and referring again to Butler, performativities of norms, counter-norms and non-normative practices. The normative influence of copyright regulations and subcultural guidelines, act to reign in disruptive practices and bodies, however, just as there can be counter-normative genders as per Butler, there exist counter-normative practices of making music and by extension the production of counter-normative personhoods and subjectivities. Sampling and its products enact a performance of unintelligible subject/objects and in this way subvert the matrix of what is deemed acceptable personhood – in particular the bounded entity of the possessive individual.

The stories that unfolded through this thesis suggest that a revised property regime should acknowledge the agency of music and the way it facilitates connections between people and other sounds, becoming multibiographical in the process. Ownership should therefore be considered through connection rather than control. Connection is the salient word here. We have seen how practices of music renewal can generate increased financial return to the original artist through licensing arrangements. But they also generate increased earning potential because of the way sampling and reissues raise the profile of both the artist and music (see chapter six). This even occurs with illegal sampling because of the potential for increased audience increases the potential for increased profit.

The contributors in this thesis expressed respect for the artist’s and the music that they use to create new works and recognised the need to pay their “dues” (see chapters four to seven). Payment could be made through sample clearance and licensing fees, or in situations where this was financially impossible and they were receiving insufficient returns from their own work to do so, they adhered to subcultural guidelines and their own personal aesthetic and ethical code, and therefore paid dues symbolically. At the same time, the original artists recognised the role these people, sounds and practices of music renewal play in reinvigorating their profile, career and profit.
What is needed therefore is a property regime that accommodates such constellations of relationships and networks. As discussed in chapter six, current regimes can only partially accommodate distributed personhood and struggle to deal with multibiographical sound. It requires an approach as I earlier iterated, that makes biographies visible and returns possible and fair. One that recognises that the original artists and those that reuse their music, as well as the musical products of both, are all implicated in each other’s profit potential and thus should both be appropriately rewarded. After all they are both becoming multibiographical sound. As suggested in chapter one, this perspective may be an idealised way to understand musical property but such idealism is necessary if we are understand the foundation of current practices which shape divisions between people and objects. Through this we are able to recognise the possibilities for new ways of doing, being and becoming things.

Returning to all the becomings we have discussed, that of Deleuze and Guattari, Haraway’s cyborgs, and Strathern’s distributed personhood, it is salient with respect to law and renewing sound objects that according to Brown (2007, p. 272), Braidotti sees “becoming as a recognition that old ways of doing things — both social and symbolic — are no longer satisfactory”. Braidotti herself comments, “Breaking out of the official mould of oedipalized, socially productive libidinal economies, Deleuze’s becoming paves the way for all kinds of other economies and apparatuses of desire” (1997, p. 70). People continue to sample, reissue, reuse and regenerate old music through alternative subcultural guidelines regardless of laws. In the process they regenerate and mobilise the human agents associated with them. Essentially they mobilise the musical cyborg, the multibiographical human/sound organism – the becoming sound. I would argue samplers and reissuers are already unconsciously doing this.

**Conclusion**

Human geography must move beyond the human. What on the surface appears as a collection of case studies about music is, in fact, an argument for the necessity to re-conceptualise subject and object. The framework I have sketched reveals the interdependency of human agent and material culture dissolving the supposedly strict boundaries between them. This requires recognition on the part of human geographers that their research is now beyond human. The model of distributed personhood and of the music cyborg makes salient the realisation that to
study either material culture or human agents requires a blending of both, and, that human geography must move beyond the human to accommodate this.

A sound can be constituted of multiple people in distributed form, and therefore reducing it to property means, by abstraction, the possession of people. Even utilising the cyborg, it would still demand the “owning” of this hybrid organism, part of which is human. If reflecting on the way new technologies have facilitated a new form of personhood, and potentially a musical cyborg body, then ownership of this becomes increasingly ethically problematic. It results in the type of objectification, which throughout history has denied certain groups of people, personhood, rendering them slaves, owned by and existing as the property of somebody else.

Using a biographical approach however makes salient the multiple authors who have influence in varying degrees of intensity over the sound objects life. The result is an agglomerate of distributed personhood. It is evident therefore, that the concept of ownership is problematised by the reification of property, when the relationships that constitutes the sound object/cyborg would be more appropriately viewed as a “multiplicity of rights” (Battaglia, 1994, p. 640; Bloch, 1985; Petchesky, 1995; Strathern, A & Lambek, 1998). The samples, the reissue, the sound object — all have rights. At this point, acknowledging the subjectivity the multibiographical sound has attained, it seems appropriate for me to subtract the object from “sound object”, and refer only to sound.

The case studies and this discussion have fulfilled the aims as presented in chapter one. I have used the biographical approach to demonstrate the dynamic nature of sound and to interpret personhood through music. This has destabilized the subject/object dualism and the challenged the acceptance of the possessive individual as demonstrated throughout the previous chapters. The biographical approach has enabled us to understand why some sound objects are more valued than others and how they are redefined and recontextualised throughout their life. It has shown that such alternative perspectives on object agency, personhood and ownership are possible.

Employing ethnographic methods and biographical approaches to the case studies has revealed the tension that exists between stable ideas of personhood which inform property laws and the
dynamic possibilities for personhood enacted through material culture that enable these new forms. This dynamism is not new, as Robb (2009, p. 28) claims, the body changes as the social world around it changes and I would extend this beyond the social to the technological also. It becomes a question of where the boundaries of the “body begin and end” something which as Herle et al. (2009, p. 73) mention is difficult to do. And this refers to object bodies and human through object bodies and thus makes the personhood that law relies on difficult to contain. By acknowledging the social and cognitive life of things we are better able to frame the complexities of ownership issues. Because as Malafouris and Renfrew (2010, p. 4) state it is:

      By knowing what things are, and how they become what they are, you gain an understanding about what minds are and how they become what they are – and vice versa... More simply, things have a cognitive life because minds have a material life. Thus, very often, what we call an ‘object’ is part of what we call a ‘subject’. In short, things are us or can become us.

I return to the quote which introduced this chapter, and which posed that, when a slit gong is referred to as a man, the question is not how this can be but rather what is man. Of this thesis we can ask not what possessive individual a sound belongs to but, what individuals is the sound made of and whose agency and essence the sound object can continue to mobilise in distributed form. For the like the slit drum, the sound — whether sample or reissue — is a person or indeed people.
Chapter 9

Conclusion: Somebodies Multibiographical
sound

I do feel that I mean, what’s interesting for me is when you have an artist’s name attached to a
piece of music, a video or a recording, on some level I guess, it makes the artist like the God head
of that piece of culture, whereas you know in reality, it’s very rarely ever only that artist who has
made that cultural artefact come into existence (Wally de Backer interview with author 30 June
2013).

I want to start this conclusion with a story that locates the ideas of distributed personhood and
multibiographical sound firmly beyond the musings of my thesis. I do this to demonstrate the
potential of multibiographical sound and the framework developed in this thesis to offer original
insights into debates about music making and consumption in the contemporary digital age. A
particularly current example that illustrates what I have described as the constraints and
potentials offered to music and personhood through the reuse and renewal of music is Gotye’s,
aka Wally de Backer’s, Grammy Award winning track “Somebody that I used to Know” featuring
Kimbra (Track 30). The story of this track reflects many of the themes in this thesis.

The track samples Louis Bonfa’s “Seville” from Louiz Bonfa Plays Great Songs (Track 31), an
album de Backer came across at his local op shop. Intrigued by the title, de Backer purchased the
album to find out if Bonfa really did play great music. And it turns out he did. De Backer was
particularly taken with the simplicity and texture of the nylon string guitar and Bonfa’s style of
playing a fairly simple series of four chords that he immediately felt compelled to loop that short
bit of music from “Seville”, which acted as the starting point for his own song (de Backer
interview with author 30 June 2013). De Backer is often attracted to samples by qualities such as
the texture of the recording, or the lilt of the playing, the aura of the original music recorded on
vinyl. In an “In Conversation” interview on Sydney community radio station 2SER 107.3 de
Backer discusses the financial and creative constraints of sampling. Changing his approach to
Conclusion: Somebodies Multibiographical sound

sampling from his previous album where he had professional musicians replay the sample and thus negated clearing the master recording, he decided to sample directly from the original for “Somebody That I Used To Know”. Part of the reason for this was that aura of the original recording was often lost in the replayed version (de Backer in Pompor, 2013). I asked de Backer if he felt the song’s fortunes would have been different had the track forfeited the aura of the original by having the sample professionally replayed:

I don’t know, I don’t think maybe the fortunes of the song and the recording would have changed that much had I replayed it. ... Like the whole track falls apart as a result of not quite having that right mixture. So yeah, you know some of that might be in my head. I really I don’t know, maybe sometimes I wonder whether I’m a bit out of touch with the detail at which I look at music. Whether other people would accept great, I mean, clearly people have very varied levels of detail in their listening or what they care about that connects them to a piece of music. I mean, I do like to think there will come a time, I don’t know, that focus I put into those seemingly innocuous things is a part of the potential appeal that my recordings have. I go by the feeling of ‘well, if this has some peculiar, peculiarly attractive quality, texture, or chord to me then I think it might have the same thing for other people’, and I think if you replace that with something then it would lose some of that quality for other people. Maybe not all other people but maybe at least for some (interview with author 30 June 2013).

The decision to sample directly from Louiz Bonfa’s “Seville” in this track however not only cost the initial clearance fees, but despite earlier negotiation of a more modest percentage, a considerable fifty percent of royalties from the song, driven partly as a result of the success of the track. This royalty arrangement with the Bonfa estate demonstrates that quality of distributed personhood where someone’s effects can range far beyond their physical body and long after they have died. Indeed Bonfa is making considerable profits despite his being deceased (Dharmic X, 2013). The song therefore demonstrates the importance of maintaining aura and the agency of the original artist, but illustrates that this incurs financial and creative constraints, something less established and less profitable artists are unlikely to be able to successfully negotiate. De Backer was only in a position to afford sample clearance fees due to the success of his previous work.
Conclusion: Somebodies Multibiographical sound

However, the track itself also vividly illustrates the potential for sound to accumulate personhood and become multibiographical. The song’s popularity — it topped the charts in multiple countries, reaching the coveted number one position in the US charts and Billboard top 100, as well as selling over 13 million copies — encouraged a plethora of interpretations and cover versions posted on YouTube of which De Backer downloaded 300 and remixed into “Goyte - Somebodies: A YouTube Orchestra” (Track 32). The mashup is the epitome of multibiographical sound that has moved beyond the control of the possessive individual:

I think some are fantastic, some are beautiful, some are wonderful, some I feel very honoured to have other people interpreted my music and turn it into something that I really appreciate, that I really love as a piece of music and be fascinated by how that can happen, like something so familiar to me that I've put together especially, that it's come often through other people you know like Louis Bonfa's work and other people I've sampled can then become something else that I really appreciate as an original piece of music.... It speaks volumes to me about the fact that once you have a piece of work that enters the public domain in a way, enters the mainstream so deeply, it will just be co-opted by every possible articulation of that culture and so you can't really control it, and neither can you really probably, kind of imperialist to think that, to kind of hate on the fact that some people will enjoy something that you, a version of it that you don't like (interview with author June 30 2013).

Noting the ability of the song to conquer music spaces of the internet and proliferate, and offering him the opportunity to be immersed in such a dynamic cultural flow, de Backer prefaces his effort by noting:

Reluctant as I am to add to the mountain of interpretations of Somebody That I Used To Know seemingly taking over their own area of the Internet, I couldn't resist the massive remixability that such a large, varied yet connected bundle of source material offered.... Thankyou to everyone who has responded to Somebody That I Used To Know via YouTube. It's truly amazing! (Available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opg4VGwj3M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opg4VGwj3M), accessed 15 March 2013)

“Somebodies” has become multibiographical sound, but the mashup offered more than an opportunity for de Backer to acknowledge the creative appropriations of his material by others. Clearly demonstrating that music has agency, de Backer relates how at one point he felt
Conclusion: Somebodies Multibiographical sound

possessed and almost controlled by the original “Somebody” thus people can own and be owned by songs. The mashup gave him the opportunity to release him from its grasp:

It almost felt to me after a period, I did feel a bit like I was onerously possessed by it and that I wouldn’t be able to move through it because I had this strong feeling that I wouldn’t have any other material that would, I don’t know somehow, so in such an unlikely way worm its way through the various gatekeepers of the contemporary music world and find its way onto such a massive scale as this song did.

But it was almost like that I also felt exonerated by the fact that so many people took it on that it went beyond being my song and that I could then, could be let free from it. Which has been a kind of wonderful experience. I think partly for me that was a conscious thing because I was conscious enough of the fact that I didn’t, didn’t want to be defined so much by it that I would focus energies elsewhere... then I guess to be able to put the mashup together, was a little bit like me actively being able to both feel like I was taking control of it again, not to take control of it but take control of the experience of how I had been let go of being the originator or even the question of whether it mattered to me that I was the originator... (interview with author 2013).

The agency of Bonfa, De Backer and the “Somebodies” combine to act on, be acted upon and be extended by an additional multitude of authors over space and time, in this way reinforcing the agency of others while additionally contributing their own to create a heterogeneous sound/human organism. Multibiographical sound is facilitated by technology, which shapes sound into an object, and therefore able to be possessed, yet conversely, technology can also deconstruct the sound’s object status. The same technologies that concretise the sound image, can offer lines of flight to unfix and liberate sound, making it available to many more potential authors than previously possible. “Somebodies” is an apt example of the potentials for multibiographical sound and demonstrates the resonance the theoretical framework developed in this thesis has with, and helps us to understand events in the world.

Yet this conceptualisation of sound as multibiographical could not have been achieved without understanding the processes that constrain and both liberate its movements. And this in itself could not have been deciphered had it not been for the relationships between people and sound as revealed throughout the preceding chapters.
Conclusion: Somebodies Multibiographical sound

When I began this thesis, I was determined to demonstrate the agency of objects and thus sought to place emphasis on them, while I necessarily relegated human agents aside. However, the more I researched, interviewed and observed people during my fieldwork, I quickly came to understand that the objects in this thesis are inseparable from people and even potentially extend them through distributed personhood. They reciprocally define each other and exert mutual agency as eloquently displayed by the “Somebody I used to know” anecdote that introduced this chapter. This realisation and changed approach to the multibiographical henceforth, in part overcomes Buchli’s (2004, p. 182) critique of biographical approaches rendering materiality subservient to the social, and the criticisms, such as Miller’s (1998, p. 9), directed at approaches such as Latour’s (1993) that fetishise the object through reducing it to the social. By becoming multibiographical, neither the social nor the material is subservient to the other, and instead offers insights into the complex interconnections between the two. This was quite an epiphany for me and it was this point that also radically altered my perception of what were the causes of the inadequacies of copyright legislation to deal with sample-based music and understand the dynamism of the sound through its biography.

As I intended to use a biographical framework through which to understand issues of property pertaining to music, I realised that I would have to consider personhood within this frame of reference. I therefore changed my initial question from:

What effect does appropriation of sound in a new production context have on the identity of the sound and what impact does the departure from the sound’s original identity have on ownership and authenticity?

To:

How does viewing sound as having its own life history affect our current idea of sound and personhood, and what are the subsequent implications for ownership and the division of object/subject?

For it was not only the sound that was being renewed and redistributed — the people associated with the sounds also experienced regeneration. The inadequacy of intellectual
Conclusion: Somebodies Multibiographical sound

Property regimes are not only due to new possibilities offered to sound via digital technologies, but also what these technologies offered human agents in terms of alternative forms of personhood, and this destabilises the very limited and concrete view of personhood that forms the basis of property laws.

In essence sounds therefore are representative of Whatmore’s (1999, p. 31 citing Thrift, 1995) comments when discussing attempts by geographers to disrupt the geometric configuration of the world as single grid referent:

In contrast, they elaborate a topological spatial imagination, emphasizing the simultaneity of multiple and partial space-time configurations of social life, and the situatedness of social institutions, process and knowledges as always contextual, tentative and incomplete, however long their reach.

Sounds as I have understood them demonstrate these qualities. They indicate the situatedness of social institutions, knowledges and processes such as the legal system, while showing that its reach is context dependent, certainly tentative and incomplete. This situatedness is one of the reasons for the current tensions between the law and contemporary music making practices. The multibiographical sounds and the individuals associated with them are themselves the embodiment of simultaneous multiple and partial spatio-temporal configurations of social life.

Multibiographical sound emphasises the relationships between people and people, and people and things, affirming the importance of acknowledging these connections. This understanding goes against the Lockean inspired idea of “individual good” based on the “voluntary transactions between independent agents” (Whatmore, 1997, p. 38) and which signified a shift from the notion of a common good that relied on the “cluster of obligations generated by the patterns of interdependence in human social life” (Whatmore, 1997, p. 38). This resulted in what Buckle describes as the increasing importance given to the “moral significance of the separateness of persons (and their preferences)” (1991, p. 169). Sample-based music therefore, challenges this emphasis on the individual by existing as a product of interdependence. Both sampling and reissuing reinforce the interconnectedness and interdependence of both people on people, people on object and object on object, through the dispersion of agency by the means of
multibiographical objects/subjects. This also suggests as per Gracyk (1996, p. 33) that sounds can be autographic because they possess through reuse a polysemy of meanings and forms, becoming increasingly multibiographical with each listening and use.

This thesis engaged with both reissued and sampled sounds. The choice of these case studies offered a continuum through which to visualise the biographical possibilities for sound and distributed personhood as either restricted or facilitated by legal, economic, and cultural guidelines.

The reissued sounds demonstrated how life could be renewed while adhering to protocols of property law as well as subcultural codes. The materiality of the reissue necessitated the acceptance of licensing and associated financial obligations as well as fulfilling subcultural guidelines as to how to reissue in an acceptable manner including aesthetics and respecting the music, artist and audience. Yet despite this acknowledgement of protocol, the desire to make a reissue did not always ensure a new biographical opportunity for the sound or for distributed personhood, as permission was closely determined by the agreement of the original artist, or the current holder of rights to the work, and in that way enacted an agency that impacted on the life course of the object.

Samples on the other hand assumed a materiality distinct from reissue and which increased legal and biographical complexity. In the case of sampling, there were more mechanisms through which to evade the clearance of copyright fees and to escape detection. The selection of only a segment of a song provided more options for creativity, and more areas for the distribution of personhood through the deconstruction and reconstruction of a beat, perhaps akin to dismembering, disembodying and re-embodying personhood. It offered new biographical possibilities for both sounds and human agents through new contexts, new associations, genre shifting, new audiences, and extended agency.

Both the reissues and samples however offer the continuation of both sound and human subject and allow for the accrual of multiple biographies over time and space. They therefore produce a multibiographical subject, which does not heed the doctrines of the individual good but reflect more aptly the interdependence of common good.
Conclusion: Somebodies Multibiographical sound

Yaraando introduced the reader to some of the key theoretical themes of the thesis, namely the ideas of object agency, object biographies, and, aura. The album was offered a biographical line of flight through the reissue. It was found that over its life course the album had experienced varying degrees of aura, and, that the reissue both facilitated and required that aura in order to be successful. The aura was however context dependent and contested. For some individuals, the reissue detracted from the aura, and for others it enhanced it through recognition and affirmation of its value. These reactions were dependent on the relationship between the individual and the sound. For some the sound was engaged with as a mechanism of self-definition — the possession of a rare record represented the investment of time and self into the practices of crate digging, and defined the collector’s status by accruing a certain degree of cultural capital that distinguished them from less committed and less knowledgeable collectors. For others the reissue reinforced their position as a disseminator of sound, either as a record label or a journalist, and this was similarly integral to at least part of their identity. Acknowledging the competing claims to aura, I suggested that the album’s aura was not diminished by reproduction because of the maintenance of qualitative rarity.

The power of the album to catalyse such reactions represents the agency inherent within. The album encouraged self-definition and identity construction in alignment with its auratic qualities. At the same time, the processes of identity making, contributed to the aura of the album, and in essence defined its singularised position — both sound and human exerted agency through the power of mutual definition. If objects are inert and lacking agency, with agency generally considered the domain of human subjects, Yaraando certainly cannot be solely regarded as so and therefore is not completely “object.” Thus the story of Yaraando was an introduction to destabilising the boundaries between subject and object.

Chapter five drew further on the ideas introduced by Yaraando — particularly object agency and biography — and extended them to demonstrate the increasingly complex interaction between sound and people. I applied these ideas to the process of sampling from source procurement to end product in order to begin to challenge the foundations of property law, a theme which continued to develop throughout thesis. The fieldwork I conducted with beat-makers provided an insight not only into the process of sampling but also into the
interconnectedness and mutual dependency between the sampler, sample and original creator. What was revealed was a highly skilled perspective from which to listen and interpret music. These sensibilities brought to the fore qualities of the sound not always readily acknowledged. Often the production and stylistic qualities of older music were appreciated and frequently were one of the elements the new beat aimed to capture. The technology used to make beats allowed for the modification of the original. This process offered the sound new materialities and possibilities. Often the order and structure of the beat was chopped and rearranged resulting in a sound that was related to but also a distinct reinterpretation of the original.

It was suggested that contrary to Benjamin’s thoughts on the loss of aura through reproduction, that in the digital age reproduction actually enhanced rather than detracted from the auratic qualities of the sound. Producers work with aura rather against it, the nuances and authenticity of the original providing the auratic qualities that they wish to extend. The individual determines these qualities and therefore what is auratic for some may not be for others and may be mobilised to contested and varying degrees. However, rather than decreasing the authenticity of the original it is through relationships between sound and people that the “sound” becomes more real, authentic, and auratic.

From an individualist perspective sampling practices are undoubtedly problematic. But such a perspective does not account for the creative opportunities afforded by digital technologies that extend individual sound. Sampling does not primarily seek a proprietary claim to the original manifestation of the sound, yet rather modifies it and through this new version offers the sound and original creator lines of flight — new links to human agents, genres and sounds. The relationship between the sound and the people associated with it varies in degrees of strength dependent on the contribution they make and their corresponding agency. As demonstrated in the case studies, sampling frequently regenerates not only the sound but also people originally associated with it.

Understanding the process of beat-making is particularly useful for illustrating the way such technologies offer lines of flight for sound and humans and for facilitating distributed personhood. In this manner, the original agents can exert agency and maintain a claim to the work over time and space without precluding additional creative input by different agents at
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different times and places. This perspective enabled the consideration of alternative discourses on property, where ownership was established through connection rather than control, to reiterate Leach “there is no project that is not already the project of other people” (2007, p. 112). In essence, the sample is a collaboration performed over a diverse set of spatio-temporal nodes. This relies on an interconnectedness of agents and objects on which to build creativity.

The story of “Misty Canyon” developed the ideas introduced in the previous chapters particularly articulating the possibilities of biographical extension of both the sound and human agent. The chapter linked the life spectrum continuum of the track from original recording, to sample through to reissue and adopting the idea of distributed personhood demonstrated the continuation and dispersion of not only object biographies and agency, but those of people as well. Through its changing materialities it was discovered that the record assumed new associations through a diverse social life. These interactions increased the tracks financial and cultural value yet significantly through singularisation and reification, also attributed aura. Its use for sampling purposes connected it with new artists, in particular Danger Doom and the Karminsky Experience, and demonstrated the track’s agency through its obviously strong influence on the artists. The reissue offered the sound increased life expectancy and an association with a label for jazz connoisseurs, thus placing the track’s quality in context and reinforcing its value.

Significantly, it was not solely the sound that experienced new biographical possibilities and renewed agency. The original composer, Sven Libaek, also experienced these benefits. The samples and reissue offered lines of flight through which to distribute his personhood and by extension, agency. But these opportunities also demonstrated the close relationship between Libaek and his track. Despite its association with a new range of artists, Libaek’s stylistic essence permeates the piece and establishes a clear hierarchy in terms of acknowledging ownership and creativity. Regardless of multiple authors over a space and time aggregate, all of whom have some influence on the sound, the track remains closely associated with Libaek. This association, is however relational and requires the renewed opportunities afforded by the samples and reissues for it to be established. Thus yet again, the biography of “Misty Canyon” represents an interdependent set of social relations between sound and people, which in turn move the track beyond mere object.
Chapter seven returned to the concept of reissue as introduced in chapter four however this chapter focused on parallels with curatorial practice. Reissuing records is akin to curating and my research revealed that it was not just music that was being curated, but personhood as well. The process of reissuing acted as a mechanism through which to facilitate personhood and agency in distributed form. Yet which sounds are selected for reissue is a collaborative process, which can be constrained or facilitated by the sound, original artist, or the reissue label. As demonstrated by the April South example, not every artist wishes to revisit their former self and music through reissue, thus they exert an agency, even from afar that prevents the sound from developing biographically. The opposite can also be true as demonstrated by the De Cylinders, with the eager anticipation of the reissued artists only partially met, as market factors limit the reissued sound’s renewed travels to an extent lesser than that desired. However, before these outcomes of intended reissue even have the chance to develop, there is another factor to be considered. Reissue labels act as gatekeepers to sounds, assuming a curatorial role as they discern which sounds from the entire assemblage of music are to be reissued. Such decisions are aligned with the collection protocols and scope of the label. For Sing Sing, this means focusing on choices from punk and power pop genres. Likewise, for the Roundtable, this necessitates primarily selecting from rare and underground Australian recordings.

Smithsonian Folkways is a label, which embodies curatorial practice to the fullest extent of those profiled. Here the label operates as a museum of sound and acknowledges the role preserving musical heritage plays in driving the label. This label in particular is an example of how personhood is accumulated and carried by sounds. Of primary importance to the label, is not only the personhood of the artists themselves, yet significantly that of label founder Moses Asch. Asch’s vision is evident in everything the label does and thus the label is an embodiment of the man, to reiterate Sonneborn, “the people are the music” (Athes Sonneborn interview with author 15 May 2012).

In all instances the reissues contributed to making sound multibiographical through adding a new chapter to its life course. Significantly, this opens up further possibilities for sounds to progress through as well as regenerating the agency of the associated human agents. Importantly this process cannot be successful through individual endeavour. The nature of the
labels and their drive to some extent preserve our musical heritage relies heavily on the cooperation of individuals and sounds. The process approaches property in a way that reflects the common good as dependent on the interconnectedness of social life that Whatmore (1997, p. 38) refers to and represents a challenge to the individualist matrix. It is not just interdependency on human agents however. Reissuing relies on a form of agreement by sounds to permit their reissue through possessing the qualities that make them desirable and accessible, and their ability to inspire people to establish a label devoted to their renewal. The distribution of associated personhood is also dependent on the sound as it mediates this process. In this sense sounds too exert an agency — something that moves them beyond classification of object.

In chapter two, I drew the reader’s attention to the interaction between the human and the nonhuman, the essence of material culture studies, as a tool with which to successfully navigate this thesis. The mutual dependency of person and thing to define and extend each other has strongly been demonstrated through the biographies of sounds, which comprised each case study. It was this interaction and extension of people and things that facilitated a multibiographical sound and it was that multibiographical entity which challenged the dualisms of object/subject, human/nonhuman and personhood/thinghood on which property law is constituted. It was revealed that the tension between the law and practices of music renewal went deeper than irreverence for law, to the more fundamental issue of what it is to be a person. I suggest that the music cyborg, a hybridity of sound, technology and people that was sketched through this thesis, threatened the possessive individual, representing an unintelligible personhood that subverted the subject/object matrix. In response to this, legal guidelines attempt to restrain this hybrid in order to restore homeostasis and the dominance of the possessive individual. This is because, as Leach (2004, 161-162) observes, the “correct conditions for recognising personhood among Euro-Americans” is “control over the object world by the thinking subject”.

The multibiographical sound while offered deterritorialising lines of flight through reuse, is constrained by legal influence and at times subcultural codes, which although based in a different ideology to law, exert their own techniques of control and regulation as to what and how sound should be renewed. As a result, not every sound is granted the possibility to extend
biographically but those which escape the reterritorialising mechanisms have potential to continue accumulating the biographies of other people and sounds, always in a process of “becoming”, always becoming multibiographical.

This thesis set out to provide a framework to look at ownership issues surrounding music from the perspective of biography. This has been accomplished. The biographies have shown that not only does sound experience renewal or modification at each eventful moment, it is at these moments that sound accumulates biographies of human agents. In each new context these human agents become in essence part of the sound, and thus the sound distributes these personhoods as it travels. I have demonstrated what Smith (2000, p. 635) alluded to when she suggested:

But I remain convinced that in the making – the performance – of a soundscape there is a world of politics, economies, emotion and embodiment that may offer a rather different way of knowing than those we currently rely on.

The multibiographical sound which includes a trajectory of human associations which each modify its forms in different contexts and thus have claim to ownership, if ownership is considered to be demonstrated through working “on” an object, forces the consideration of new perspectives on ownership which acknowledge multiple authorship over spatial and temporal distances. But to return to one of the primary tenants of this thesis – that of object agency – we see that the sound exerts agency on human agents and therefore is in a sense working on them too, and therefore also has some claim to its future directions and perhaps a type of ownership of the human agents it biographically absorbs.

It is pertinent to return to Stockhausen’s quote that opened chapter two, but it is perhaps apt, after the conclusions drawn from my research to modify it slightly:

Then I analysed the sound objects one by one and wrote down the biographies of multiple agents found at the biographical level of the fragments of the sound object’s stories, in order to know who the sound is made of, who the sound is, as a matter of fact... The idea to analyse sounds gave me the idea to synthesise biographies.
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And it is these biographies of both human and nonhuman which contribute to multibiographical sound and which demonstrate that there is no clear boundary between subject/object, human/nonhuman and personhood/subjecthood, something, which current intellectual property regimes are struggling to accommodate. These are also the boundaries to which human geographers must devote study in order to fully incorporate a more-than-human geography.


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