This is to certify that the

dissertation entitled

SONGTEXTS/CONTEXTS:
RHETORIC AND IDEOLOGY IN THE
DISCURSIVE PRACTICES OF ROCK MUSIC

presented by

Larry R. Juchartz

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in English

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Major professor

Date April 24, 2000

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE

SONGTEXTS/CONTEXTS: RHETORIC AND IDEOLOGY IN THE DISCURSIVE PRACTICES OF ROCK MUSIC

By

Larry R. Juchartz

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

2000

ABSTRACT

SONGTEXTS/CONTEXTS:
RHETORIC AND IDEOLOGY IN THE
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While rock music has become an established form of text for use in many higher-education classrooms, the contexts behind the musical texts (songtexts) offer more insight into rock's varied discursive practices than does a mere examination of the lyrical messages and their delivery within certain social spheres. Beyond its musicality and lyricism, contemporary rock has become a discourse community in its own right, presiding over the identity formations of numerous diverse groups who use rock as their central point of connection.

By applying critical lenses and scholarship from the fields of both cultural studies and rhetoric, this dissertation explores a number of discursive genres—theatrical rock, heavy metal, grunge, hip-hop and others—and illustrates some of the contexts grounded in the corresponding social and historical settings for each genre. It further provides a critical analysis of concrete manifestations of rock's rhetorics and ideologies, including the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame where rock's "official" history is not only kept, but also created. Written from a pedagogical standpoint, the dissertation ultimately focuses on classroom applications of rock discourses and the challenges faced by teachers engaged with—and engaging students with—those discourses.

For Robert and Helga Juchartz,
whose favorite refrain was to "Turn that noise down, now!"

AND

For Christy—
without whom, not.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In one of Alanis Morissette's recent songtexts, the artist thanks India, terror, and disillusionment for their abstractly-defined roles in her life. It's a great track, but I'd like to make my own note of gratitude is a bit brighter and more focused:

My first true mentor, Nancy Nelson, saved me from a slow Death by Trigonometry by encouraging me with a simple suggestion to "do what you're best at" and supporting me through all the years since I followed that advice. Elizabeth Capwell's many articulations of a mature lived experience through the 1960s music scene added depth and texture to my own dim memories of a decade I'd witnessed only through a child's eyes. My own children today continue to add a wealth of musical diversity to my otherwise limited ability to keep up, while my other "kids"—my students—have opened their CD cases, video boxes, and underground 'zines to me along with their classroom observations, office conversations, and written explanations of rock's role in their lives. And my wife, Christy Rishoi, has provided four years of pushes, pulls, prods, props, and especially *patience* during times of both intense work and intense avoidance of work. She rules.

Finally, Diane Brunner, Dean Rehberger, Kitty Geissler, and David Stowe have earned my immense gratitude for their vast understanding and empathy, gentle guidance, warm friendship, and endless kindness while sharing their expertise and knowledge with me—both within, and far beyond, the scope of this immediate project. And Russ Larson provided the final spark needed to set the project itself into motion.

Much more than mere friends, students, family, and teachers, I count all of these people as true blessings in my life.

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INTRODUCTION:
Once, There Was—Now There Is

Closing time—
Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.
- Semisonic

The parents forced the boy to take a nap, even though he felt much too old for napping; they promised a "special treat" later in the evening. So he feigned sleep long enough to earn the prize: a stay-up with the folks to watch something called the Ed Sullivan Show. The night's "treat," it turned out, was Mr. Sullivan's introduction of a strange-looking group of British musicians who called themselves The Beatles.

Is this how it begins?

Although his parents were obviously huge fans, the boy was uninspired by the group. (Later, re-remembering, he wonders if the disinterest and dislike existed mainly *because* his parents were such big fans—but so *soon* rebellion?) His negative response to these Fab Four lads from Liverpool stayed consistent, even after the band completely alienated his parents by its drug use, increasingly scruffy appearance, and gradual turn toward both Eastern mysticism and "psychedelic" music. Other kids in school, especially girls, toted the *White Album* around with their portable record players. With some remorse, he declined their invitations to come and listen. The potential sixth-grade romance wasn't worth the ordeal of such awful music.

So maybe it begins here:

Meanwhile, other things were happening. War things. Protest things. Anti-authority things. Long hair, low-slung jeans, love beads. Drugs; overdoses. Riots. One night a police car rode through his suburban Detroit neighborhood at seven o'clock, its PA horn cautioning everyone to go inside, close the curtains, lock the doors. The suburb rolled up its sidewalks; just ten miles and two drawbridges to the north, the National Guard rolled its tanks down the main streets of Motown, home of Marvin Gaye (who asked, on Top-40 radio: *What's goin' on?)*, and the Temptations (who answered, on Top-40 radio: *Ball of Confusion.)* Some kind of dialog was happening out there, broadcast to the boy's nascent political awareness by a tin-sounding AM transistor radio which he and his friend James took to a park at river's edge every chance they got during summer vacation. They sat, watched freighters pass, and listened to music.

On rainy days, they visited one or all of the three "head shops" that had come to town. Neon posters, black lights, incense. Bead curtains and American flags instead of doors. And *music:* Loud, clear, non-transistorized, stereophonic *heavy* music, with *bass.* Santana. Led Zeppelin. The Stones. Uriah Heep. And then, one day, Iggy and The Stooges. "Now I Wanna Be Your Dog," Iggy Pop sang from the gloriously loud and clear speakers. The allowance money of a lifetime came out of its glass piggy bank that night, went into the hands of the head shop owner the next morning. "They're all on drugs," the boy's mother announced as soon as he showed her the album cover. "Take it back. I don't approve." Which, of course, didn't matter at all.

Or maybe it starts this way:

Encouraged to listen to lighter fare like Johnny Cash and Glen Campbell, who *were* approved by his parents, the boy slipped further into darkness. Record stores were heaven. The Stones came out with their LP *Sticky Fingers,* with its Warhol-designed real zipper at the crotch of a photographed pair of jeans. The sexuality of the cover alone was strong; combined with songs like "Bitch" and "Brown Sugar" playing overhead it became almost overwhelming—in an extremely confusing way. He was not yet twelve. He didn't know this world. It was the world of older kids, high school kids. It scared the hell out of him. And at the same time, it intoxicated him.

He began to live at James's house, because James had a brother. Seventeen. Nearly expelled from high school for refusing to cut his hair. Wore a T-shirt sometimes that said "fuck amerika." Had a poster that asked, "What if they gave a war, and no one came?" Announced often that he'd move to Canada if the draft board came calling after graduation. Went to a rock festival where the Stooges played. And was, in the boy's eyes, a god because of it all. Even more so when he loaned *The Who Live at Leeds* and *Grand Funk Live* to the boy for "as long as you want," and finally achieved Godhood Unlimited when he invited the boy to a neighborhood yard concert.

It didn't matter that the audience was only about forty people, or that the police came to stop the "concert" after only a few songs. There was enough time to see *actual* teenaged boys playing *actual* electric guitars through actual amplifiers, singing into actual microphones, and actually disturbing the hell out of neighbors for blocks around. The band played the Stones' "Brown Sugar" Creedence Clearwater's "Fortunate Son," Led Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song." The police arrived during "Helter Skelter" and cut it short, but no problem; it was a Beatles song.

Or maybe this is how it begins:

The boy, ecstatic and awed, went home. Now almost fourteen, he'd decided on his next major purchase. The guitar was a Les Paul knockoff, sunburst paint job, dual chrome pickups, chrome whammy bar; the amplifier, basic black, kicked out all of eight watts. The whole package was department-store grade, Sears & Roebuck, but man, did that distortion and feedback sound *good.*

A slight problem: Having faked his way through several years worth of piano lessons by simply imitating what the teacher did, he couldn't read a lick of music. Worse yet, he found that he couldn't force his fingers into the contortions required for traditional guitar chords. But after fooling around long enough, he discovered the magic of open tuning, setting the instrument strings to one major chord so that a single finger across the frets created the same chord in a higher note. (There are limitations to such a system, but it'd be many years before he encountered them.) Open-tuned chords let him hammer away to Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Humble Pie, and every other group using raw power as its basic musical foundation. Trying to be courteous, he did his chord-hammering in the basement; his parents yelled to turn off the noise. Restricted to playing when they weren't home, he hammered in his room; neighbors came from as far as five houses away to knock on the window and yell to turn off the noise. And so he did the only logical thing one can do under such hostile circumstances.

He bought a bigger amp. And with it, moved his music into a garage across town. His network of friends having grown quite a bit since his enlistment into counterculture, he teamed up with Tim (lead guitar), Ronny (drums), Joe (keyboards), and a series of bass players at the home of an overweight, unpopular boy named Chuck who contributed

his dad's garage, a home-made mixing board, and some makeshift lighting made of coffee cans, colored cellophane, and a frightening jumble of wires and circuits.

Ten minutes into the first jam session, the police arrived to shut it down. Music took a back seat to carpentry for a week as the boys collected egg cartons from local grocery stores, nailed them to every board inside the garage, then covered them with foam panels. Finally, they plugged in their instruments once again and played, not realizing that the garage door, made of steel and incapable of being soundproofed, worked as a giant transmitter to the neighbors. Again the police arrived, this time with citation booklets out and ready to write up the band for disorderly conduct. Finally, one of the more compassionate officers suggested a wall of foam in front of the metal door as a sound barrier.

Chuck's dad wasn't happy about parking on the street, but he was a cool guy, and he understood. Out stayed the car, in went foam cushions from dozens of junkyard couches and chairs. Although the band fully expected sirens to override guitars during the *third* session inside this now sweltering and stifling but fully soundproofed practice space, the police stayed away. At last, the boy and his friends could rock freely.

Very quickly, other kids came to listen and hang out. Then, magically, *girls* came to do the same. Girls from neighboring suburbs, girls in grades two and even three levels beyond the boys'. Girls who quickly started to "go with" someone in the band, then eventually broke up: the lead guitarist, then the rhythm guitarist, then the bass player. But never with Chuck, who only worked the lights and mixing boards.

A lot of teenagers populated the garage every night. Sometimes, when the number was particularly high, the police came because the neighbors got scared. But most times it was just powerful, incredible *fun*, courtesy of bands like Foghat, the James Gang, T. Rex,

and Deep Purple, who provided the songs and the lyrics that worked as a talisman to bond the group into a tight, unbreakable circle.

Then one night the band and its circle headed off to a nearby burger joint for dinner. Dozens of happy teenagers returned to the garage for a night of music. But the door was open; the instruments were gone. Every piece of equipment, even the cellophaned coffee-can lights. All that remained were foam panels and egg cartons to amplify the silence. For the first time, the police arrived at the band's request. "We'll take a report," they said. "But realistically, you'll probably never see those instruments again." The circle broke up, went home, began the search for another place to hang out, another band to attach itself to. The band itself sat in the empty garage for a long time. "Screw it," the boy finally said. "We weren't really all that good anyway."

The band's lead guitarist became a table-soccer star at the local arcade before quitting school for a job at the steel mill. The drummer sold his spare drum kit for a rusty but reliable motorcycle. And Chuck went on to become the concert lighting director for a number of internationally-famous rock groups, culminating with Pink Floyd.

Or perhaps this is the real beginning:

Cars. First an embarrassing hand-me-down from his parents, then, after he took weekend work washing tanker trucks at an oil refinery, a 1966 Mustang. Gigantic tires in the back; the sound of gigantic power from the tricked-out engine up front. Machines like this one tended to get lots of attention, and soon he and the car were surrounded by others like him, others like it. Cultures blended easily: Ford, GM, Chrysler existed peacefully side by side, differing only in the size of their engines, the style of their custom chrome wheels. They were all lifted to the breaking point in order to fit the back

tires. For the drivers, difference was harder to spot. All had long hair, cut-off shirts, ragged jeans; all preferred rock 'n roll at maximum volume. One day they decided to form an organized group, calling themselves Street Freaks. They even got T-shirts made with the name and a ready-made logo on the front (a sneering mouth with a heavy mustache, chosen only because it was the least silly of the in-stock, and thus cheap, available choices). The group's sole purpose: to cruise, with radios—and exhaust systems—turned all the way up. The activity turned a lot of heads at county parks, but it also got the attention of police officers during the trips to and from those parks. Citations for excessive noise mounted up; more expensive tickets for drag racing on city streets did, too. Which may be the reason that the group disbanded after only a couple of months. But even as a solo act, the boy could think of nothing more self-defining and empowering than the feeling of that Mustang growling down a deserted street late at night, pawing at the concrete and wanting to scream ahead *now*, while Deep Purple filled the night with its song "Highway Star" and Roger Glover's incessant bassline seemed to push, unaided, on the accelerator pedal. Without the music, it would have been just a late-night drive. With it, that drive was an *event*.

Or perhaps, ultimately, it begins here:

The fast cars gave way to practicality, and the band went away, but the music remained constant. The radio played always as Alice Cooper's "School's Out" gave way to Rush's "Working Man," but work collapsed with the auto-and-steel economy a few years after high school ended, so the boy, now married, went to college. He intended to go into the sciences, but then calculus came along to suggest a serious reconsideration. In the middle of a What-Now phase, he enrolled in an English Composition course and was

told to write something called a "definition essay" about an abstract word. So he wrote a paper citing dozens of rock songs with *love* in their titles. Then, told to examine the character of Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House,* he framed his central argument within the lyrics to Lynyrd Skynyrd's guitar opus, "Free Bird." There was a little trouble with comma splices, but the professor overlooked them enough to suggest that he make English his calling.

At home, fatherhood attached itself to work and school with the arrival of a daughter. He took some personal time from the job to be with the child for her first month. The two of them listened to old Stooges and new R.E.M. records together while he held her formula bottle in one hand and his college textbooks in the other. As her language progressed over time, the girl developed a list of favorite songs, which he put onto tape for her. She had a fondness for George Thorogood and the Destroyers, but also an affinity for the 1950s-era rock on the *Stand By Me* soundtrack. He admired and encouraged her varied tastes.

He'd earned two degrees by the time graduate school ate his marriage. He drove around for weeks listening to Metallica's "Fade to Black," then Queensrÿche's "Silent Lucidity," then "Hurt" by Nine Inch Nails. All were terribly sad and depressing songs; each gave him greater resolve to push forward toward one more round of schooling at the same time that he began a full-time teaching job. The job gave him confidence in his teaching; the schooling gave him the tools to see beyond lyrics, to avoid simple nostalgia, to beware of idealized constructions of the music that had surrounded him since that day long ago when he'd been forced to nap just to see a band that his parents, for some reason, admired.

He took these tools into the classroom, where he engaged students in lengthy discussions of the endless topics in rock music. When he'd mention a paper he had in progress, students sometimes asked to read—and critique—his work, often going on to offer extensive suggestions for further reading, listening, and MTV-viewing in their margin comments to him. A young man whose clothes reeked of marijuana every morning brought him collections of European death metal to instruct the teacher in the sounds of "real" heavy metal music; in return he loaned the young man the latest recordings of Johnny Cash, who had done slightly countrified covers of songs by Soundgarden, Danzig, Beck, and Tom Petty and earned the respect of a whole new generation of grunge-rockers as a result.

As had happened in the Top-40 Motown songs that played during the riots long ago, another form of dialog was taking shape through music, but this time the boy—now the Teacher—was an active participant *in* it, rather than an interested observer *of* it. Yet in another way, the converse was true as well: Once upon a time, as a performer in a garage, he had talked—forged a discourse—through his guitar, and others had listened. Now, as a performer in the classroom, he'd learned to reverse that process, to listen as *others* reshaped, refreshed, and ultimately reclaimed that same discourse as their own. The students thought he was teaching them; he knew that he, too, was being taught.

This dialectic—more specifically the discourse surrounding it, vast and far-reaching, shot through with a vital and richly-textured rhetoricity, is the focus of my work here. But the music is the magic that made it possible in the first place. It's been a long and winding road on the way from all of the other beginnings to this one, but for every turn, there's been a songtext. Beethoven and Mozart, Hank Williams, Jr. and Lacy J. Dalton, James Taylor and Indigo Girls, John Lee Hooker and Lightnin' Hopkins, Enya

and The Orb, Sam Cooke and Smokey Robinson, Megadeth and The Cult, Ice-T and Public Enemy, Slade and the New York Dolls: All of these have been my teachers, just as surely as all of the professors who ever allowed me to bring rock into *their* classrooms. My hope now is that I may give back to them as much as they have given me.

To begin that process requires putting on a number of the hats described by Stephen North in his groundbreaking *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*—I must work simultaneously as Historian, Philosopher, Critic, Ethnographer, and Practitioner—much as a student engaged in the production, consumption, and ultimate analysis of rock discourses will likewise operate concurrently in multiple spheres of critical practice. But why choose *rock* as the subject of serious analysis? Surely this is a question, a complaint, an objection to be raised by traditionalists, but while the objection is easily anticipated, its refutation requires a bit of patience and willingness to traverse into fresh sites of inquiry where value and commonality with tradition will reveal themselves only slowly. When I began this project, industrial/hardcore musician Marilyn Manson had become the national press's favored whipping boy for his alleged role in motivating the winter 1999 slaughter at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and members of Congress spoke of publicly "shaming" Manson's record company into withdrawing his music from the market. This despite the fact that there had been no concrete evidence that the two teenaged Colorado assassins had any particular affinity for Manson's music at all. What *could* be verified was their fondness for the German industrial group, Rammstein—and for a variety of other things German—but the American public had little familiarity with this group, much more with Manson. The story goes where the public knows, and the only things lost in that process are accuracy and relevance.

To put my argument into the simplest of terms: While an awareness of post-structural semiotic slippage prevents me from claiming that any capital-T *truths* are to be found in rock, there are nonetheless relevant discoveries to be made about it, discoveries that illuminate and reflect the conflicts and contradictions of everyday life within the larger culture. While rock has steadily pushed its way toward serious scholarship in the last decade under the meticulous guidance of cultural theorists like Lawrence Grossberg, Andrew Ross, and especially Simon Frith, conservative defenders of the faith like George Will, Rush Limbaugh, and others, themselves fully immersed in popular culture and deified by the faithful as pop icons, have been there to sound the alarm bells whenever studies of pop-cult artifacts make the transition from scholarship to news—and to reduce the scholarship to rubble through a scorched-earth campaign of mockery. Michael Bérubé has recently acknowledged that other criticisms of using popular culture materials in the classroom—criticisms more intellectually and ethically grounded than those of media squawkers like Will and Limbaugh—are on their faces "reasonable" at times, but he notes that those criticisms tend to break down along two lines. In the first charge, based squarely in the High Art tradition, popular culture "is unworthy of serious study, lacking the textual and cultural density that defines the masterworks of the arts and humanities" (B4); in the second, pop cult is something students already, through a lifelong exposure to it, know much too well, so why teach it? Bérubé argues that the latter argument "overlooks the vast difference between being immersed in the stuff and looking at it critically," while neither line of criticism "take[s] into account how complex and contradictory contemporary culture really is" (B5). But isn't this the typical pattern for

High Art preservationists? By flatly ignoring possibilities for value, any value becomes impossible. The Sharif (to paraphrase the old Clash tune) don't like rock in the Casbah, so the only way through the defensive razor wire is to get jiggy with it, emulate the Beastie Boys, and fight for the right to party.

While I have no intention here to provide a "How to Teach Rock" for other classroom practitioners, I do hope that other educators will glean from this study the ingredients for creating their own pedagogical methods when using rock in the classroom, and especially for avoiding the easy trap of merely substituting one form of practice for another (e.g., trading model essays for model lyric sheets). Trying to determine exactly where my work fits beyond this is a bit of a problem, since the same lack of a knowable "beginning," in Derrida's terms, which overwrites my travels back through time to identify where the work itself may have come from also keeps me from naming a precise originary narrative or, if you will, a primary knowledge tree upon which to graft my contributory branch. Nevertheless, if there is a particular niche being filled by this work, it may be that I have tried, from the fragmented history informing my own lessons learned and costs extracted from a lifetime of immersion in rock, to focus exclusively on rock's potential pedagogical applications, while those many other works about rock and music which have already been published, and which have greatly informed my own work, have not focused on the specific *teachable* aspects of rock discourse which I address here. Nor has there been a lengthy analysis thus far, from a purely pedagogical standpoint, of the intersections of rhetoric and ideology that exist within rock discourse or a prominent illustration from the same standpoint of the existence and application of rhetorical concepts in the discursive practices of rock culture.

Toward these ends, following a comprehensive overview of the theory informing my study, the chapter entitled "The Controlling Metaphor of 'Authenticity' in Rock Discourse" continues a discussion of the authenticity trope which I begin in the overview, tracing the notion of "authentic" experience to a Romantic notion of the self and illustrating the contradictions present in rock's attempts to construct authenticity within a collective ideology. These contradictions are illustrated by cases involving Milli Vanilli and the Sex Pistols, Pat Boone, Marilyn Manson, and Kurt Cobain, among others, with those cases illustrating the ways in which the rhetorical and ideological systems behind rock discourse have created—and continue to preserve—a tightly-codified discursive practice demanding both change and stasis, both intermusicality and confined genre, both poverty and wealth, both deep roots and a magical self-genesis. That such impossible expectations and desires are somehow rendered as both possible and natural is testament to the hyperactivity of the hegemonic systems controlling such a contradictory narrative.

In regard to musical genres and the fixed boundaries those genres will often inherently create, "History at the Impending Merger Between Rock and Rap" examines the ongoing negotiations between a relatively new and particularly racialized form of contemporary musical discourse and the older, more tightly defined form that has reached out to rap for revitalization through "street cred" (and again, a renewed authenticity) in exchange for commercial assistance. These negotiations reveal the continued tensions of racial difference while at the same time suggesting a tentative hope for easing those tensions as the two rock forms cross each other's borders toward a cautious discursive co-existence. This focus on difference gives way, in turn, to a chapter titled "Making Sense at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame," where I provide a rhetorical analysis, primarily Foucaldian, of rock's largest physical artifact, the I. M. Pei-designed riverfront shrine in

Cleveland which, as a literally concrete manifestation of rock's official history, reveals in tangible forms the ways in which race, class, and gender politics appear everywhere in rock's ongoing attempt to discipline itself into a coherent grand narrative. Similarly, in "The Politics of Power: Case Studies on Metallica and Rage Against the Machine," I take discussion of the political in rock to a further level by examining the perceived rise and fall of Metallica, one of heavy metal's longest-lived acts, within a continued focus on hegemony and attempts to resist its desires. Such a motivation—to resist existing power structures and narratives—constitutes the whole existence of another group, Rage Against the Machine, which allows for a discussion of what I've termed a "rhetoric of rage" (*double entendre* intended) when a politically-focused rock performer (and, as I argue, educator) succeeds at working against hegemonic norms from a vantage point fully within another such norm. The key difference, as I attempt to show by putting Metallica and Rage Against the Machine side by side, may lie in the focus of one's protest.

Finally, since theory is the guiding tool for making sense of not only research methods but also classroom practice, my concluding chapter titled "Radicalism, Resistance, and Reading in the Classroom Arena" ends this study with an extended discussion of the pitfalls facing educators who desire to teach rock without sufficient awareness of the extremely delicate balance of power—more aptly, the delicate *negotiations* of power—required when teaching a discourse removed, by several degrees, from the teacher's lived experience, and when the goal of such teaching is the promotion of collaborative knowledges and shared values while engaged in forging a vital "pedagogy of the contemporary" (Bérubé B5). Since I have produced this study at a time when higher education is moving steadily toward a corporate, competition-based model of increasingly isolated forms of knowledge transmission, the promotion of any form of

pedagogical praxis which can be both democratic and dialectical, and thus by necessity communal, may be the most valuable contribution that previously non-canonical resources, like the songtexts of rock, can make to current sites of institutionalized learning.

In regards to stylistic matters, I need to offer only a couple of explanations. First of these is a minor stylistic adjustment in my decision to follow an American spelling and diction system for all citations. This does not change meaning, and it is intended only to prevent the momentary distraction for readers who would otherwise stop to note: "Ah, s/he's a *British* critic," or "Hey, I always thought that musician was from the States." (It's possible that I may be making too much out of very little here, but I know that such distractions have been exactly the case as my own reading has taken place through the years.) Second, due to the persistence and prevalence of the singular masculine pronoun in writings up through the early 1980s—and in a few cases, through the present day—I have simply converted those gender-specific/exclusive pronouns to gender-neutral/ inclusive plural constructions. Toward an aesthetic of less visual clutter, those conversions do not appear in brackets; nor is there any loss or change of meaning to the original work. An exception to this lies in the case of very old works, old voices speaking from a distance of centuries before the present; in these instances a stylistic change would result in a strangely modern syntax that cannot ring true to the original (*authentic*) contexts of the writer's time and place. Back then, it really *was* a "man's world," and to eliminate the sexist language of that world would be to alter an important, but unfortunate, reality.

Finally, regarding method, I should explain that although I do take popular, corporate, "mainstream" rock journalism to task on several occasions in this study, there

needs to be a distinction between rock journal*ism* and rock journal*ists*. As Robert Palmer, Reebee Garofalo, Armond White, and others will all illustrate here, mainstream rock journalism in the forms of *Billboard, Rolling Stone, Spin*, and the like is a site where a blatantly commodifying, racist, and misogynistic set of practices has frequently operated under the guise of an alleged objectivity and a liberal, progressive, wide-open ethic. But the individual writers/critics contributing their ideas and insights about rock on the pages of those magazines are nonetheless highly capable and adept at illustrating the same conflicts and issues which Frith, et al. have explained in the pages of more distinguished (and academically favored) research-library hardcovers. Moreover, rock journalism is the site where *musicians speak*, contributing their own voices to a conversation that would otherwise take place only about them, not with them. Granted, those voices can at times be filled with dense ideological silences, the perceptions clouded by a mist of nostalgia and mythology, but even those blinders can make a significant contribution in forming an answer to Marvin Gaye's classic Motown-era question, "What's Going On?" As Robert Christgau has written: "If [schools] ever teach Rock 101 like they oughta, such informal, idiosyncratic, yet intellectually legible" rock writings as the ones I'm discussing here will form the core curriculum for the course (*Stranded* x). It is for all of these reasons that I have included in my research the arguments and insights of both professional rockers and those mainstream writers who earn their livings writing about them.

2

OVERVIEW: Ideological Rhetoric/Rhetorical Ideology— What is Rock, and Why Should Teachers Care?

Rock and roll should corrupt kids enough to think. There's nothing wrong with thinking.
- Alice Cooper in *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part II: The Metal Years*

[I]t should be one of our central obligations to teach our students how to think critically about the present.
- Michael Bérubé (B5)

Any new idea . . . is asked two questions. The first is asked when it's weak: *WHAT KIND OF AN IDEA ARE YOU?* Are you the kind that compromises, does deals, accomodates itself to society, aims to find a niche, to survive; or are you the cussed, bloody-minded, ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion that would rather break than sway with the breeze?—The kind that will almost certainly, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, be smashed to bits; but, the hundredth time, will change the world.
- Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (335)

If I had to choose between rock and Marxism, I'd choose rock.
- Simon Frith ("Beggars" 38)

Although I am primarily a practitioner in the field of English composition, my heart lies with rock music. Even as I write, from a small and secluded "gentleman's farm" in very rural Jackson, Michigan (proud "Birthplace of the Republican Party" as the road signs all say), I am literally surrounded by rock, not only in the form of tattered LPs, cracked cassette-tape boxes, haphazard piles of CD cases—and of course the infinite and appalling jumbles and heaps of articles, magazines, and books about "my" music that are necessary for the writing taking place—but also by my rock neighbors: Metallica bassist Jason Newsted came up in Kalamazoo, 50 minutes to the west; Iggy Pop and Bob Seger in Ann Arbor, 45 minutes east; The Verve Pipe emerged from Lansing, 45 minutes north; and Ted Nugent, that puzzlement of hard-rocking, headbanging advocacy for Gibson guitars, gun ownership, bowhunting, jacked-to-the-sky 4x4s, and ultraconservative

politics, lives right here in sleepy little Jackson. (As for my southern neighbors: Corn and soybeans, cattle and hogs—all the way to Indiana. Along with a very special and magnificently odoriferous verification of being deep in. . . well, farm country.)

But long before I ever settled down in a locale where the local "burgers and rock 'n roll" bistro has an ominously heavy-looking John Deere tractor hanging from chains on the ceiling over the jukebox—and long before my formal education ever began in composition, rhetoric, and literature—the germinal texts in forming my world view were found not on bookshelves, but on the radio and turntable. Artists like The Who, Pink Floyd, The Stooges, Deep Purple, and Alice Cooper, through both their lyrics and the accompanying mood created by sound, taught and encouraged me to examine my life and the lives of those around me. When I first began to question the concept of God, it was Jethro Tull's *Aqualung*, not Nietzsche, who caused it. The war in Vietnam was over, but the music it had generated lingered as the huge social force which had affected my friends' older siblings so profoundly. Edwin Starr and Country Joe McDonald had condemned the war; Creedence Clearwater Revival had exposed the hypocrisy of the draft system; Jimi Hendrix had massacred the National Anthem itself by forcing it through a hellish wall of feedback and distortion. When all of this power and glory (as I saw it then) of 1960s music gave way to the art rock/disco/pop-rock mutations of the mid-70s and early 80s—yes, punk happened then, too, but in my Detroit suburb punk was only a vague rumor, unsupported by radio or local clubs[1]—it created for me a huge textual void. This was, after all, a time when, as Nick Kent puts it, "[a]ppalling groups with names like Supertramp and Gentle Giant were selling millions of records with their hideously insipid 'hey nonny no' concept crap. The Bee Gees were on the comeback trail; Peter Frampton was about to come alive" (254). And so I took a time-out from rock, turning to classical,

folk, and even country music as background sounds while attending college and studying other forms of discourse. But then came the 90s and an explosion of "alternative"—to mean non-formulaic—rock music, and my radio once again came alive after a long cryogenic freeze. By now I was a teacher, and in my newfound enthusiasm for rock, I found myself focusing on it more and more in my writing and literature classrooms.

In his book *Disturbing Pleasures*, Henry Giroux tells a similar story. After paying tribute to Little Richard and Fats Domino for being hugely influential in his education—before he ever went to school—Giroux writes that, once relocated from the streets of Providence to the classroom for his learning, he quickly discovered that "what we learned had little to do with where we came from, who we were, or where we thought, at least, we were going" (x). Now many years removed from that experience, he reflects that his identity "has been largely fashioned outside of school. Films, books, journals, videos, and music. . . did more to shape my politics and life than did my formal education." As a result of this realization, he explains:

> I no longer believe that pedagogy is a discipline. On the contrary, I have argued for the last few years that pedagogy is about the creation of a public sphere, one that brings people together in a variety of sites to talk, exchange information, listen, feel their desires, and expand their capacities for joy, love, solidarity, and struggle. . . . [P]opular culture, precisely in its diverse spaces and spheres, [is where] most of the education that matters today is taking place on a global scale. Electronic media . . . have drastically altered how identities are shaped, desires constructed, and dreams realized. (x)

I cite Giroux so extensively here because I want to argue that a rock-centered classroom presents a fitting site for the creation of the kind of public sphere he describes, one engaged in the collaborative production of knowledge, democratic values, and social identities. Moreover, rock is a vastly suitable topic for bringing students together to

exchange, shape, and sharpen the theories they already bring in its regard to the discourse since students have biases, preferences, and conceptions about music's origins, functions, and genres that can let them explore stereotypical assumptions and prejudices with, if not eagerness (I make no claims regarding the *ease* of rock's presentation in the classroom) then perhaps at least candor, transforming rock's discourses into a serious subject for critical analysis and the creation of new ideas regarding human agency, social dynamics, and power politics. Students know this text very well; they have, after all, been surrounded by rock music from birth to graduation—if not by choice, then by force. As Grossberg notes, rock has become omnipresent, forming the backdrop for advertisement, TV and film, visits to dentists and doctors, and even trips to the mall (*Gotta* 9). Therefore, "teaching rock 'n roll. . . differs from most other subjects in that it involves bringing into a school setting material with which the students often strongly identify and upon which they have already placed strong interpretations" (Shumway 223). Because they're still largely unaware of the ideology underlying these interpretations, students are apt to approach the act of *re*-interpretation with a level of interest that comes from having a previously granite foundation suddenly begin turning to sand.

It's also helpful to understand how and why students have aligned with rock long before entering the post-secondary classroom. For Herbert Gans, all adolescents share a "taste culture" within the larger popular culture, from which they create social contexts for themselves (24-5). Many of them will form friendships based solely on shared taste in music, and these friendships are strengthened as they then share in the escape which the discourses can offer them. As a result, music can form a common background for the peer group—resulting in an *en masse* resistance to anything against which the group's preferred musical taste stands, but also against other discursive genres in which the

group's politics are not articulated in the same way, or at all. Building on Gans's conception of taste cultures, a 1993 study by Ernest Hakanen and Alan Wells finds that shared appreciation and an ability to communicate with others about musical discourses is "crucial to an adolescent's participation in the world of other youth," and that a "closeness" develops—from the perspective of the adolescent—between musicians and their admirers due to the discourse's omnipresence in the lives of admiring youth (57). While a great deal of their study is focused on examining the percentage of listeners in specific age groups who prefer only certain rock genres, the two researchers also contribute the formulation of what they call "clusters" of taste cultures, defined by musical genre, and the cluster labeled "Music Lovers" (not pegged to any single genre) "rate[s] rock higher than any other group, enjoy[s] heavy metal, pop, and easy listening, and even g[ives] a positive rating to classical, country, and jazz" (65). Tying in with studies of group preferences and alliances, James Lull notes that for adolescents, audience participation takes place at five separate but interconnected levels (19), and these same levels can apply to the shared "taste culture" of a given peer group. Participation in the music begins at a physical level (e.g., slam-dancing or stage-diving in the mosh pit), then moves on to an emotional level in which anger, sadness, or joy are universally-shared responses to the music. From there, young listeners progress to a cognitive level where they can identify with the themes and sentiments in the music's narrative and place themselves in it; and this in turn leads to an internalization of the lyrics at a personal level. A songtext is no longer about a shared human condition, performed for a *universal* human audience, but rather it is about the listener's *specific* condition, and it is performed for that listener alone. Because of this personal relationship, listening and buying moves beyond mere consumption to situate consumers as what I'll call consumer-theorists,

actively engaged voices of consent and—even more often—of *dis*sent when "their" performers step beyond the boundaries of consumer expectations and desires. From here, with time, participation moves beyond the personal level to a social one, and at last, the music offers some tangible insight for dealing with the world outside the peer group.

If a clearer understanding of the people who consume rock is possible, approaches to examining the object of their consumption are perhaps more limited. Charles Keil and Steven Feld have suggested, in their distinction between "uptown" and "downtown" modes to criticism and analysis, that there are two ways to understand music—a "high, scholarly, theorized" approach and a more "participatory, dance floor, feelingful sonic, directly articulated, embodied, primal" approach (172). Since the latter, "downtown" form would require a multimedia presentation of prohibitive cost and extreme technical demand (not to mention a need for dance lessons), I can only go "uptown" in form here, while in intent I am reminded by Robert Palmer that rock always comes up to social and critical awareness from neighborhood hangouts and clubs, never down from the "rarefied air" of criticism and top-ten charts to lived practice (11). Accordingly, my first specific methodology is borrowed primarily from cultural studies. There's really no such thing as a purely "cultural studies" approach in and of itself since the field, as Grossberg et al. have explained in the overview to their *Cultural Studies* collection, is best described as a bricolage, a wide-ranging hybrid and synthesis of numerous disciplines without whose methodologies and theories cultural studies would not exist as an autonomous field of scholarship. But this interdisciplinarity has lent to cultural studies the enhanced ability to perform "readings" of a wide range of "texts"—a term whose definition, of course, has today been vastly expanded from its formerly limited usage as a synonym for printed page(s)—based on the languages with which those

things offer up their narratives for analysis (Mukerji and Schudson 10-11). With the redefinition of buildings, art, social practices and customs—and rock music—as texts, contemporary cultural critics can employ an array of disciplinary tools and approaches, and a text takes on added dimension in the depth and breadth of the critique being performed in order to both demonstrate and interrogate how textuality and rhetoricity, no longer confined to the narrow limitations of literature, are present wherever one encounters culturally-constructed signs of meaning.

Within the signs of meaning constructed by *rock* culture, specifically, lies a vigorous ideology working toward the attainment and preservation of power, and the getting-at of this system requires some fairly extensive theoretical foundation. As Foucault charges, a subject cannot reasonably expect to exist transcendent of its working field, nor can it "run in empty sameness throughout the course of history" ("Truth" 59); there must be an accounting of what has constituted the subject's prescribed "knowledges, discourses, and domains" if the subject's history is to be open, and thus dynamic, rather than closed and therefore fixed in stasis. Who, throughout its relatively short history, have been the shapers of rock's discourses[2], and what did they hope to gain for themselves and others? Who has benefited from the discourses' applications, continuation, longevity of practice and theory? Who has spoken from the pages of rock's texts during its history—and who has been rendered silent? What caused the silence? Where are the ruptures in rock's codification of its discourse? Answers to any of these questions will not be possible without an examination of ideology and hegemony within rock culture. A Gramscian conception of ideology as "organic" or contextually/ historically effective allows for a view of political spheres not as determined, but rather as sites where "forces and relations, in the economy, in society, [and] in culture have to be

actively *worked on*" (Hall, *Road* 169; italics added). Gramsci also provides an understanding that hegemony is, rather than a control by force as Althusserian models present it, more realistically a control by consent, defining relations of force as "moments" that developed through discrete times and stages, a process Gramsci terms as "[having] as its actors individuals and their will and capability" (209)—an important turn away from Althusserian notions of unwillful interpellation where the primary actor is, rather than individuals, the ideology fashioning them to fit its particular construct(s). Because a recognition of hegemony allows for the creation of "new ideological terrain" and a reformation of consciousness (192), it is capable at times of moving beyond connotations of constraint and limitation to instead discover possibilities for promotion and advancement. Gramsci's definition of political-force relationships describes hegemony moving outside its own limits to "become the interests of other subordinate groups" under a mandate for "unison of aims" and "intellectual and moral unity" as a new hegemonic entity is created (205) in connection with what Laclau and Mouffe term "fissures that have to be filled up, contingencies that have to be overcome. . .[as] the response to a crisis" (7). By this definition hegemony is not brute force; rather it seems protective and at times, if not quite compassionate, then at least not merely repressive, manipulative, and exploitive. For Stuart Hall, hegemony becomes transformed into "sets of strategic alliances" that constitute, by their differential makeup, the bases for "new cultural orders" (*Road* 170) that, as Tony Bennett explains, do not consist "simply of an imposed mass culture that is coincident with dominant ideology, nor simply of spontaneously oppositional cultures, but [are] rather. . . area[s] of negotiation between the two within which. . . dominant, subordinate, and oppositional values and elements are mixed in different permutations" ("Gramsci" xv-i). All of these conceptions of

hegemony, and of the ways in and by which it functions through ideology, must appear in a thorough interrogation of rock's discourses if teachers hoping to lead students to an enhanced awareness of social and political negotiations of power are to understand that *rock* means much more than simply a photocopied set of lyrics—especially those penned by now-shadow figures like Bob Dylan, Simon and Garfunkle, or even Bruce Springsteen[3] —to supplement or replace more conventional course readings.

One important aspect of rock's hegemonic structure is found in much of contemporary, popular (non-academic) rock criticism, which, while it may at times be rigorous and theoretically informed, still acts primarily as a capitalist tool for product promotion by its reliance on the weekly *Billboard* sales charts, special issues listing the "100 Greatest" songtexts, albums, concerts, groups, etc., and a consumption-focused evaluation of the aesthetic merits or failings of new rock artists or works. In this way it tends to follow after a Leavisistic tradition in which the humane arts are to be tightly canonized under a rubric of "great tradition" works focused on a moral/aesthetic "balance" in life in order to prevent the act of consumption—for my purposes, that of music rather than literature—from becoming simply a leisure activity as consumption-for-pleasure is taken up as a popular, and—for rock's producers—profitable aspect of of mass culture. But contemporary rock criticism does not functions to preserve the music's purity or enhance one's life through an increased appreciation of its forms and functions; rather, it constructs simple consumers as knowledgeable purists, connoisseurs, and most importantly *collectors* so that they will perceive a *need* to possess rock's Great Tradition works, and a *need* to pay $85 to $250 (and above) for upper-level nosebleed seats when one of rock's Canonized Artists—the hoary, rock-till-they-drop Rolling Stones, the

reunited Eagles, the reassembled and revitalized E Street Band with its boss, Bruce Springsteen—comes trucking into town.

A similar perception that yet another "great tradition" was likewise being manipulated alarmed Adorno and Horkheimer, who argued in their mid-1940s article "The Culture Industry" that music and art were in grave danger of being transformed into "mere" leisure activities by the captains of the relatively new entertainment industry who, among other gross violations, ignored (skipped past or rewrote) complex musical passages as musical genres became transformed, e.g. as jazz became popularized and blended into swing, be-bop, and the blues. Coming as it does from these two founding members of the Frankfurt School, this essay demands an especially careful reading as Adorno and Horkheimer struggle, only somewhat successfully, against the formation of a "high/low" dichotomy for art and strive instead to articulate the inherent loss being imposed on consumers—not only in their lives as a whole, but also, more importantly, in the way they viewed their world—by the *kulturindustrie.* In this articulation, popular presentations of music become exploitive and transitive rather than artistic (celebratory) and fixed forms of the real thing, a perversion of desire fulfillment which, gradually, might be capable of completely replacing the lived experience. Mass-produced and commercialized art, for the consumer, becomes a kind of cruel voyeurism in which the subject of desire can never become a known object; the tragedy for Adorno and Horkheimer is that the desirer will, after enough exposure to these media forms, no longer discern the difference. In music, if enough bars disappear from a given score in order to fit an acceptable playing time, the music becomes increasingly more minimal, less complex and challenging, and less fulfilling—for both musician and audience alike. While the two authors stop short of arguing for a strict canonization of "great tradition" art, their

argument is no less aesthetically originated in its focus, and they mince no words in their assessment of the entertainment-industry leaders whose violations of art earn them a description as "virtually Nazis, replete with both enthusiasm and abuse" (42).

In citing this last, there is also a reminder that the style of much cultural studies writing differs from the standard depersonalized and detached model of academic/ intellectual analysis by including the writers' views, emotions, and personal narratives as an integral part of the analysis itself, challenging the dearly-held (but crumbling) prescription that intellectual/critical discourse must present itself as "scientific" in order to establish and maintain academic and theoretical validity. Clearly, Adorno and Horkheimer's labeling of entertainment producers as "virtually Nazis" is not an objective observation; nor can any study of a cultural discourse, such as mine of rock, be completely free of ideology or preference. While I've done my best to avoid wandering into any personal theories of aesthetics and leave such journeys to those much braver critics (such as Adorno himself) who have tried nonetheless to theorize beauty and appeal within art and sound, I'm sure to lapse nonetheless into "downtown" perceptions and the occasional use of aesthetically-oriented terminology as my study unfolds. (It seems that the labels of "power" and "glory," appearing in one of the opening pages of this chapter, are just such terms—no matter that I did attempt to qualify them immediately after their appearance.)

None of this is intended to claim that cultural studies is in some way more valuable than the more established field of rhetoric, from which I take my second approach for this study. Indeed, while I agree to an extent with Louis Althusser that the ways individuals are interpellated by ideology—in this case, the individuals constituting rock culture, the ideology of rock's discourses—are at least in part the ways they are

constructed to fit given ideological standards, my critical definition of the hegemonic entities surrounding the larger rock culture, entities which thus dictate to individuals what is right, what is needed, what is to be desired, what is constructed ideologically as "common sense," is drawn most notably from the field of rhetoric in order to theorize, beyond *what is taking place* in the given dynamic, a more precise understanding of *how that dynamic functions* as discursive practice. At the same time, since cultural studies has much in common with rhetoric in that there is a clear intersection between rhetoric and ideology, the cultural dynamic of rock can begin to illustrate this intersection through an interrogation of rock's consistent striving to "rebel" and make its own space, apart from the culture of its elders, and especially through an analysis of how rock's perceived need to be "authentic" is linked to a larger need to prove an actual existence—a need to, as Grossberg argues, confirm the act of being alive and in control. Grossberg places the history of this phenomenon in the "set of apocalyptic images and events" forming the background for life in the 20th century (*Gotta* 203): events such as the Holocaust, Oppenheimer's gift of nuclear weapons, the Apollo 11 mission, Chernobyl's meltdown, and others worked to remove stability and permanence from the former canon of reliabilities. For youth (including aging baby-boomers), Grossberg writes, "the ground on which they had to construct their own sanity and survival" began to *threaten* that same sanity and survival, with the result being that "perhaps the only identity that could be achieved was that of the 'identity crisis'" (203). Thus musical acts who, mirroring their youthful fans, constantly redefine or else reassert their "authenticities" do so from a recognition that instability and impermanence are as inherent to rock as they are to the life that the music both celebrates and condemns—a redefinition that by Derrida's terms would be "a series of substitutions of center for center" in the quest for some kind of

stable, if temporary, "presence" (249). The temporary nature of that new center is part of the entanglement of rock's rhetoric, since the moment a new construction is born regarding what is accepted as "authentic," it is also always already beginning its slide toward *losing* that authenticity (Grossberg, *Gotta* 208). Example: Nirvana was a band from the little town of Aberdeen, Washington. Its founder, Kurt Cobain, had a new sound, the sound of anti-formula—of loud, screaming music that wasn't exactly as hard as heavy metal, wasn't exactly as refined and polished as hard rock—a sound of *no long and self-serving guitar solos!*—a sound so new and exciting that the national press quickly proclaimed Nirvana as the Hot Band of the Age, its alleged hometown of Seattle as the Hottest Music Scene Since Liverpool, its musical genre as "grunge," and its 1991 major-label release *Nervermind* as the Must-Have CD of the Decade. Incessant interviews, photo shoots, headlines, magazine covers, and gossip followed, and just three years and one more album after Nirvana's national debut, Cobain put a shotgun to his head after writing a rambling treatise on alienation from his music and the loss of his initial vision.

The perpetual rhetoricity of rock—the omnipresent applications of rhetorical strategies and practices underlying and framing the discourse—also serves, for teachers, as an important connecting point between rhetoric and ideology if that point is viewed as the connection between traditional approaches to textforms and newer modes of cultural criticism. If rock is seen as a site of endless struggle between hegemony and resistance, as the Cobain example suggests, then the link can be illustrated by likewise seeing how, as Victor Villanueva explains, rhetoric is the vehicle for carrying ideology as well as for both preserving and changing hegemonic structures (121); at the risk of oversimplifying, ideology is rhetorical and rhetoric is ideological since, for Villanueva, hegemony relies on effective language use—i.e. on rhetoric—in order to continue receiving the consent of

those under its domain, while counter-hegemony relies on "active rhetorical practice," in the shape of effective communication and collaboration, to change the structure of hegemony and eventually take its place (126). The overarching rhetoricity that is everywhere in the discursive practices of rock stems from the intensely personal and highly ideological experience that its artifacts—music, fashion, television shows, and so on—offer to the individuals inside its discourse community. The ideological struggles taking place within that community, I argue, constitute what Kellner, in describing ideology, defines as a system that "presents the specific interests of groups as universal, as in everyone's interests" (112) thus "represent[ing] the world upside down, with culture and the historically contingent appearing as nature and the eternal; with particular class interests appearing as universal; with highly political images, myths, and stories appearing as apolitical." The discourses of rock, however, are sometimes capable of seeing through such illusions of harmonious homogeneity and making any attempt to create them their call to arms—if not always appropriately, then at least with fervor. As Kellner describes it, our current mass-mediated culture offers an endless stream of "representations that help constitute an individual's view of the world, sense of personal identity and gender, playing out of style and lifestyle and socio-political thought and action" (112), and these—identity, style, lifestyle, and protest—are the exact issues around which rock often tends to polarize itself, and from which it launches its counterhegemonic excursions into hegemony while unable to see that the imagined rebellion against standard norms is, itself, a standard norm for the particular culture doing the rebelling. For Kellner, rhetoric (as tool) is at one point in his argument an *ingredient* of ideology since ideology is "as much a process of representation, figure, image, and *rhetoric* as it is of discourse and ideas" (59-60; italics added), while in another, ideology

is nearly *synonymous* with rhetoric (as system) in the articulation that "*[i]deology is thus a rhetoric* that attempts to seduce individuals into identifying with the dominant system of values, beliefs and behavior" (112; italics added). In this way Kellner joins Villanueva in making a case for the possibility of defining the intersection between the two, in simplified form, as a case of their being not only highly complementary but also inextricably bound to one another.

Rock's discourses, although formed and practiced by individuals with their collective ideologies, also form a "network of communication" (Crowley, *Ancient* 5) in the rhetorical sense when those discourses illustrates a rhetorical system operating from a sort of Aristotelian golden mean of shared values, structured on the employment of commonplaces both rhetorical and hegemonic which the discourses can fashion into a naturalized communal code to strengthen the shared ideology. In this network, empirical evidence does not count so much as testimony, and the result becomes a giving way of individual ideologies to the collective, socially-constructed master narrative of rock culture. In Bakhtinian terms, whenever the language used to describe experience is examined critically it presents a conversion from what he called the "I experience" to a more collective "we-experience" as experience itself will "relinquish [its] ideological clarity and structuredness and testify to the inability of the consciousness to strike social roots" ("Marxism" 934)—the I-experience—and give way to "ideological differentiation, the growth of consciousness...in direct proportion to the firmness and reliability of social experience"—the we-experience. The discourses of rock entail, ironically, a *collective* ideology of *individualism,* which, again through Bakhtin, can be seen as a "special ideological form of the we-experience of the bourgeois class," one that "derives from a steadfast and confident social orientation" (935); given this, it becomes easier to see how,

rhetorically, rock's relentless focus on the authentic is an outcropping of the desire of its individual members to remain "individual"—thus authentic—even while trapped within a collective that remains to them, because of its own ideology, invisible. If the whole concept of rock discourses as I am defining them here—as allegedly homogeneous entities possessed of heterogeneous values, and employing a barrage of rhetorical appeals to the commonplaces of their members in a dizzying quest for a cohesive hegemony of conformed rebellion and authentic constructed identity—is articulated as any or all of its primary labels—homogeneous, rebellious, authentic, and so on—then the culture controlled by and constituting the discourses exists not so much as a tangible reality in its own right, but primarily as an extension and manifestation of the discursive practices which, by the very fact that they are constituted of an inability to examine their own unrecognized and thus ineffable contradictions, renders them more "real" and "true" to the practitioners.

Bakhtin, in terms of rhetoric, supplies the term "behavioral ideology" to describe a dynamic in which the perception of any given phenomenon is "combine[d] with the whole content of the consciousness of those who perceive it and derives its perceptive values only in the context of that consciousness" ("Marxism" 937)—thus rock's blindness to the fact that, again in Bakhtinian terms, "'creative individuality' is nothing but the expression of [the individual's] basic, firmly grounded, and consistent line of social orientation." A songtext, artist, or live performance may be truly awesome in an individual's view, but if that judgment goes unshared by the larger social group to which the individual has subscribed—the "taste culture," as Gans has labeled the alliances made around given aesthetic/stylistic preferences—then the songtext/artist/performance's doom

to obscurity is due not so much to a lack of popularity as to a failure to exist meaningfully and tangibly within the larger hegemonic entity controlling the discourse.

What may be most problematic, for classical-rhetoric purists, in my defining the discourses of *rock* as rhetorical is the ideology of the classical-rhetoric discipline itself, claiming as it often has to know what is "acceptable" and "suitable" to the extent that those values may be noted, studied, taught, and promoted in what Edward Soja terms an "unbudgeably hegemonic. . . historicism of theoretical consciousness" (136) where rhetoric is rendered somehow timeless and is employed not to adjust to new forms of discourse so much as to question them as suspect. As Soja argues, theory moving largely unchanged through time will tend to privilege time over space, with the result being that a classically-oriented rhetorical analysis attempts to make new discourses take on a still-classical rhetoricity to fill the available designated space. An alternate and more productive methodology would create an amended, because fluid, theory to fit the new arrangement of existing spatiality. While rock culture and rock discourses may appear better suited to an interrogation of their ideologies than to a mapping of their rhetoricities, such a mapping can nonetheless be performed and explained. Very simply, a band's external *ethos,* its internal character as translated and constructed by group-consensus ideology of the audience, becomes suspect when it is perceived to have abandoned the trope of "resistance" in rock's rhetoric, and for groups playing harder-edged music this trope is particularly disabling, especially as it is defined through the kind of dangerous-creature metaphor supplied by British critics Mark Putterford and Xavier Russell:

> Unperturbed by any need to conform, and oblivious of media courtship or crossover recognition, [heavy metal] moves at its own pace, sometimes hardly at all. It either retreats into its own shadowy circles, derided by the

> masses and misunderstood by most, or advances like a monster with meat in its mouth, never worrying about popular taste, never wanting to be flavor of the month. (5)

Of course this criticism too is highly problematic. Any binary approach like it which presumes a naturalized homology requiring all aspects of a discourse—especially its composer/performers—to reflect a teleological "radicalism" or "opposition" leaves little space for the composer/performers to experiment, grow, change, or—worst of all—"sell out" by compromising their desires in deference to the music industry's requests for a more marketable product. Ideologically, this view seems to bear out Althusser's claim that ideology constructs the subject since, rhetorically, the ideology set forth by Putterford and Russell removes musicians from any viable subject position or autonomous agency, rendering them instead as the patient to be acted upon. But here again is Soja's argument against an artificial preference for time over space, coming into play in the ideology of this particular rock rhetoric by the fact that *no space can be made* for the artist as agent when the artist's agency defies hegemonic desires, simply because *no space exists* for that agency. There is only time, through which a given ideology has proceeded unchanged and unchallenged, or at the very least unshaken by any artistic desires to throw off the constraints created by the consensual norms of rock's codifying rhetoric. Such an ideology, that no space exists for change, ignores any possibility that while the music industry certainly represents what Bakhtin called "unitary language" (*Imagination* 270), a language of systematic "normality" serving to codify the available discourse forms of its members, some musicians nonetheless have been able to throw off the definitions placed upon them and to replace them with an active agency shaping a more "literary language" of artistic freedom. Whether this ability accomplishes anything

is unclear, however, since the typical response from rock culture will be an instant reification of that freedom under the label of rebellion, or else a kind of magic act in which the attainment of freedom goes uncommented upon as a "natural" growth— usually, toward slow oblivion—and is thus rendered invisible, a not-happening event in a history that never exists.

While it would be exceedingly difficult for me to make a case for human agency under the weight of Althusser's model of ideology, wherein those who work to change hegemony only serve by their actions to bring the outlines of its power into clearer view, his conception of interpellation nonetheless applies in an important way to the rhetoric employed in rock's discourses since the ideology within that rhetoric functions exactly as Althusser defines it to both "constitute concrete individuals" and ensure their compliance as subjects unaware that they have been so constructed. This is an effective trick, as any first-year student's face will attest when, in the middle of a tirade concerning how, for instance, Metallica "sold out" and "lost their individuality" by cutting their hair and making MTV videos, it's suggested to the angry student that long hair and anti-commercialism may actually be part of the rhetoric (as tool) wielded by a *majority* of allegedly "individual" artists. What you expected of the artist was not what the artist did, the student hears—so how is it that he/she/it "sold out," exactly? The expression in return is the face of clarity trapped in ideology: there's something wrong with the picture, but what it is cannot be articulated easily—or comfortably. It's much easier, inside such a trap, to simply proclaim in disgust, "They just did [sell out]," and have done with it. I borrow here from James Clifford to argue that, in the discourses of rock in which self-identity for the consumer is so closely entwined with artist-identity of the producer, "an excessive . . . need to have [fixed possessions] is transformed into rule-

governed, meaningful desire. Thus the self that must possess but cannot have it all learns to select, order, classify in hierarchies" (53). Ideologically, the artist may have transgressed most by failing to live up to the rhetorical delivery of his/her/its message; the message, spatially, was expected to remain fixed in time but instead forged a new space where time has been neither granted nor created. And since the particular ideology of authenticity makes no allowances for such an event, the most "logical" result, for rock's consumer-theorists, is a reorganization of hierarchical structure so that the transgressor falls out completely—and then ceases to exist meaningfully in the void of not-space.

Since the trope of authenticity itself is well defined by Grossberg as an "ability to articulate private but common desires, feelings and experiences [of its audience] in a shared public language . . . which must somehow transcend that experience" (*Gotta* 207)—a clear echo of a Gramscian theory of hegemony—it can also blend its rhetorical footing in *ethos* with a definition of what Crowley calls an "ideological positioning" or "ideological standpoint" (*Ancient* 141) that will be open to any member of the rock discourse community at any time. In addition, as Peter McLaren points out, all ideologies are selective, and as a result they have both positive and negative functions ("Resistance" 188): The positive function of authenticity-construction in rock ultimately helps the definers to place themselves in the world, while the negative function ultimately validates the music as worthy of belonging in the same world the definers desire to live in. Thus rhetoric (as discipline) can examine the dynamic of authenticity as it applies to the interactions of message, messenger, and audience where perceptions of character and motivation can determine the degree of "success" in the processes, and ideology can come into focus through a schematic outlined by Hall ("Encoding") in which paramount is the

perception of a useful, meaningful identity between the "encoder-producer" (in rhetoric, the messenger) and the "decoder-receiver" (in rhetoric, the audience) interacting through discursive practice (in rhetoric, the message). Yet attempts to find correlation between rhetoric and ideology are challenged by the fact that they are not the same thing in Hall's paradigm, if for no other reason than that the encoding-decoding process employs semiotics in relation to the "technical infrastructure" of a known social topography while ancient and even some Enlightenment rhetorics were concerned with tropes and what must be seen as a clearly ideological system of appeals to morality and justice. These are significant differences, but the two paradigms appear to coincide logically by merely juxtaposing the terminology of each approach. When a sign—a linguistic symbol of an arbitrarily agreed-upon idea—is encoded by the source of transmittal in Hall's schematic, it is somewhat analogous to a rhetor having employed a successful topic within a suitable style and delivery; the difference may lie in ancient rhetoric's fondness for predicting the manner in which a topic will be received and acted upon by the audience. Yet in another way there is no difference, for in the choice of signs to be encoded also lies the employment of still more signs to fashion a "meaning structure" for the primary message so that the receiver, in Hall's paradigm, will know exactly how to decode what has been delivered. With rock, one can consider the PR campaigns surrounding new album releases, upcoming concerts, television appearances, and so on—any of these has potential to be lauded as "the event of the summer/year/ decade/century," "the most important album ever released," a "killer" soundtrack that "no true fan can afford to be without," etc., all of which are designed by the source as signs-superior to place the primary sign-inferior directly within a specific ideological context for the receiver. Where ideology differs significantly from classical-rhetoric approaches in this model is that one is much less

likely to encounter predictions and dictations for successful transmission since semiotics must by nature allow for massive slippage when meanings cannot be fixed with any certainty.

To return to that favored, and problematic, trope of "authenticity" in rock rhetoric, Simon Frith takes the problem to another level by arguing that the figure doesn't necessarily indicate that a cultural entity *is* actually authentic in any tangible way, but only that it *represents* something authentic (*Pleasure* 97)—what counts more than meaning itself then is an ability to read the signs which point to meaning's possibility. Frith argues that the term "authentic" in rock discourses is never bound to mean a lived experience, but only a convincing portrayal of such experience (98), yet Richard Weaver, echoing Bakhtin's dichotomy between the I- and we-experience, would likely forgive rock's consumer-theorists this apparent contradiction on the basis that, for Weaver, all individuals are constantly turned toward what he called the "tyrannizing image" of culture itself, a term that he hoped would be "excused its sinister connotations and understood as meaning unifying and compelling" (20) since he intended by *culture* the denotation of "a complex of values polarized by an image or idea." By this Weaverian view, members of rock culture would earn the label "pessimists," defined by the rhetorician as individuals for whom "novelty is not always originality nor a fresh departure toward a new horizon" (5), but because they possess such an intensity of ideological feeling, they are perfectly suited as "custodians" of the culture to which they so strongly adhere. It's helpful here to recall Terry Eagleton's description of the 20th century's movement away from language-as-definition and instead toward an ability to "use [language] in particular ways" (*Benjamin* 194). For Eagleton it is productive to consider the signs and signification in language use since signs, as an element of discourse, are "inherently social and practical,"

and a continued labeling of "false consciousness" for particular ideologies gets one nowhere if the sheer longevity and wide range of many deeply-held doctrines is itself a sign that those ideologies must successfully "encode, in however mystified a way, genuine needs and desires" (*Ideology* 12). A thorough interrogation of rock "authenticity," then, would ultimately surrender any charges of realness or falseness as well as notions of an existing, fixed consciousness and endeavor instead to see how it is that the *discourse* behind the ideology can so often remain unchanged and to take so many adherents into its grasp.

Viewing rock through a methodological lens of cultural studies and rhetoric can ultimately work to suggest a new praxis through an analysis and explanation of the ways in which a wealth of subject matter exists in rock for application in contemporary classrooms. Ethical, moral, and critical issues have always surrounded rock, and the value of rock music as the central focus of any course based on critical reading, thinking, talking, and writing is derived from the fact that rock is both a discourse and a general rubric under which its various metadiscourses are shaped. Today's rock is a network of music, video, performance, celebrity, and political activism, giving the basic rhetorical interchange between speaker and audience a host of added dimensions whereby the basic speech act becomes embedded in, and also serves as a foundation for, a multiplying of itself into numerous other acts. But how do teachers and students begin to understand such a cultural practice as rock that presents itself as rebellious and resistant to codification, yet at the same time remains highly territorial about what it considers an authentic expression of that cultural practice? From the moment when the term "rock and roll" was coined, rock's practitioners have defined themselves as positioned outside the mainstream, always rebelling against bland conformity and challenging dominant cultural

discourses. On the other hand, in the last twenty years or so there have been numerous examples of rock's desire to legitimate and institutionalize itself, and many rock historians and critics attempt to tell a coherent story of its music that allows for no contradictions or subplots. Therefore an unpacking of the ideologies in rock's discourses, for teachers in rock-centered classrooms, is crucial in aiding student understanding of how our larger culture works to reproduce dominant discourse even within a cultural practice, like rock, that situates itself as outside hegemonic values, and to see how clearly the music associated with a social conscience that spoke out against blind acquiescence to national values, music that championed the misunderstood and oppressed underdog, can actually be complicit in perpetuating the colonization, appropriation, and blatant marginalization of the other. As the Canadian group Rush has put into songtext, "One likes to believe in the freedom of music / But glittering prizes and endless compromises shatter the illusion of integrity."

Having recently been subjected to a scathing critical reception for a proposed composition textbook that would blend cultural studies with traditional rhetoric in promoting the ancient art of *imitatio*, I've gone into this study of rock discourses fully aware that some rhetoric purists will have nothing to do with any perceived "Marxist" viewpoints or even cultural studies, since it employs so much of what they perceive to be "Marxist" terminology. This is unfortunate, since rhetoric, having been through the centuries intermittently altered, expanded, condensed, mislabeled, and even for a time forgotten, remains at center a primary tool for the examination of discursive practices, and the introduction of marxist theory and cultural studies to rhetoric's growing canon, along with their adoption by some of the primary established voices in the discipline—Berlin, Villanueva, Crowley, Schilb, to name only a few—has provided a vitally important

lens—ideology—for the ongoing critical interrogation and expanded application of just about everything constituting what we call *rhetoric.* Newly revitalized by its gradual embrace of cultural studies, rhetoric is an ideal lens for examining the systems and codes of rock's discourses, and those discourses have the potential to suggest an expanded form of praxis by illustrating the promise of a contemporary conception of rhetoric for traditionalists who may remain focused on an "available means of persuasion" approach in the classroom.

Since I am by primary definition a classroom practitioner, this study ultimately warrants a discussion of classroom practice since teaching rock can often reflect the subject matter as resistance takes place in not only the text but also the pedagogy around it. In the latter form, such resistance occurs because the teacher is also by default a critic, presenting a "discourse distinctly other from the students' discourse, [which]wounds the students' narcissism because it claims to be a superior discourse and seeks therefore to deprive students of their previous claim on the music" (Shumway 229). What happens then is that students resist teacherly insights, methods, and authority in a single gesture of defiance, "because their identification with rock is threatened not only by the teacher's interpretations, but also by the character of the student-teacher relationship itself." Tapping into this resistance can create a new, less pejorative definition for what Crowley calls "full frontal teaching" by changing its meaning away from a lecture-oriented presentation style, to become instead a teacher's willingness to present his or her age and experience as an ancillary text to the primary one of rock itself, subjecting one's own generational difference to the same critical analysis which the music undergoes. From what can be vastly diverse places in the musical-cultural margins, two generations have

the potential to move equally toward a center which is always already undergoing redefinition.

In teaching rock under the shadow of postmodernity's multiplicities and fragmentations, however, the teacher must walk a fine line between entering into conversation with students about it (speaking *with* them) and simply telling them what they need to add to their "limited" knowing (speaking *for* them). Teaching rock, within a guiding framework of meta-awareness of one's practice, can be transformed into collaborative *learning*, and in such a classroom, teachers do not censor themselves into silence by claiming representational illegitimacy, but rather rely on students to work with them in taking the teacher—and the class itself—apart in order to rebuild academic communities and literacies in better ways. Rock discourses, specifically, show particular promise for the enhancement of this rebuilding process at the dawn of a new century, a time when, as Bennett et al. have noted, "the influence of old discourses is present but waning, and new ways of thinking about music as culture are slowly being forged" (*Rock* 5). It's my hope that the chapters ahead will make a contribution to that forging process.

3

KEEPIN' IT 'REAL':
The Controlling Metaphor of 'Authenticity' in Rock Discourses

How can I convince her (Faker!) that I'm invented, too?
I am smitten; I'm the real thing (I'm the real thing)
We all invent ourselves, and—uh—you know me.
- R.E.M., "Crush with Eyeliner"

I don't know why people pay such tribute to Madonna. She had a lot of great disco records, and certainly sustained that for a long time. [But] she was a girl who wanted to be a star. . . . [S]he just wanted to be up there. She chose the kids-from-*Fame* route. And it worked. But it was never rock 'n roll.
- Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders (qtd. in Juno 199-200)

[We called our band] the Originals, but there was another group, up in the east end, called the Originals, so we had to change our name to the *New* Originals. Then they changed *their* name to the Regulars, and we thought, "Well, we could go back to the Originals—but what's the point?
- Dialog in the rock documentary parody, *This Is Spinal Tap*

Epigraphs can be wonderful things, but they can't always fully explain the intended role and function of their appearance on the page. The three above, for instance, all point toward a similar story, but each one points to a slightly different aspect of that story than do its two neighbors. Michael Stipe of R.E.M., with his "Crush" lyrics, indicates a self-awareness carried by current rock musicians in regards to the pursuit of an authentic self and practice, interrupting his own such pursuit by first reminding himself that he's a "faker," then with an argument that he's "the real thing," and finally becoming terribly confused by the two warring conceptions. Chrissie Hynde, on the other hand, sets out a rhetorical pattern of exclusively past-tense verb forms in order to construct Madonna as a no-longer-relevant figure, using that pattern as a system of proofs for the warrant that Madonna "was never rock 'n roll." And finally, the parodic "metal band" Spinal Tap, by poking fun at the whole notion of originality, provides verification of an

awareness *outside* rock of the same complexities that Stipe's lyrics testify exists *within* rock as well. Yet the notion of the authentic—addressed, rebuked, and at times even mocked—remains both compelling and problematic within rock's discourses. And so, in an attempt to explain how and why this is the case, I'll start with a story:

Once upon a time, there was a music group that went by the name of Milli Vanilli. Fronted by two very handsome young men, Rob Pilatus and Fabrice Morvan, this group put out a few songtexts like "Blame It On the Rain" and "Girl You Know It's True"—exquisitely catchy tracks highlighting appealingly clear tenors—and of course the requisite promotional MTV videotexts which revealed the singers' fine Afro-European looks, long braids, and smooth dance moves. And Milli Vanilli sold millions and millions of records because of those songtexts and videotexts, and Rob and Fab (as the group's fans knew them) became *huge* celebrities, and they were very happy. So happy, in fact, that an evil record producer, Frank Farian, who knew a terrible secret about Milli Vanilli, began to see Rob and Fab's happiness as outright *hubris.* He thought this because the young men were enjoying a success that, to Mr. Farian's mind, they really had no claim to.

And so one day Mr. Farian did a mean and awful thing: He went public with his secret. Rob and Fab had never sung a note of those top-selling tracks, he said. In fact, neither one of them could even sing worth a damn. It was all just a lip-sync performance, moving to tape, even in their live "concerts." And as for those long braids? *Hair extensions.* Milli Vanilli, in truth, was merely a studio concept, an invented image—the real singers weren't as pretty as Rob and Fab, so those two young men had been hired as faces for the vocals. But now they had taken their "own" stardom much too far. They had literally started to *become,* not merely a part of the lie, but all of it, showing great disrespect for their benefactor back in the studio. They were even demanding a chance to

actually sing on "their" next album. And so the evil Mr. Farian—who was really just being an honest man, not an evil one—had been forced to stop them.

Rob Pilatus and Fabrice Morvan were very sad. Now they were derided and mocked around the world. The whole situation was, as the Germans like to say (for Milli Vanilli had originated in that country), *schrecklich.* In the United States, Arsenio Hall (whose own cult of late-night TV celebrity would soon come to an end) made Rob and Fab the butt of his most cutting jokes. When the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, itself extremely embarrassed, made them return the Grammy Award they'd received for Best New Artist, the humiliation was complete. Rob and Fab went into seclusion and tried to become invisible. Then, after a long time away, they began to speak quietly of a "comeback" album to prove their genuine vocal talents. They even made that album, which no one bought. And in 1998, Rob Pilatus committed suicide in a German hotel room. The news came in the form of little sidebar notes in newspapers and magazines. And no one really cared.

But nearly 20 years prior to the sordid "Milli Vanilli Affair" (Shuker 21), as at least one rock lexicographer has come to call it, a man who owned a little hip-clothing shop in England decided that he wanted to start a punk band. Not as one of its musicians or songwriters, mind you, but just as its *creator.* And not that he'd had any previous experience in creating punk bands, but just that he felt like doing it now. The clothier's name was Malcolm McLaren; the band he had in mind would call itself the Sex Pistols. And this band, like Milli Vanilli, would be *huge,* selling hundreds and maybe even thousands of records. Its lead "singer" (for singing was not exactly what he did), "Johnny Rotten" (whose real name was just plain old John Lydon), would become a punk legend, eventually finding himself implicitly connected, through a Neil Young lyric, to 90s

punk/grunge suicide Kurt Cobain. Its bass "player" (for playing was not exactly what *he* did), "Sid Vicious" (whose real name was just plain old John Ritchie), would become a legend in a different way after he accidently murdered his girlfriend Nancy and then overdosed on heroin three months later while awaiting trial. Greil Marcus would go on to write a massive tome, published by Harvard University Press, claiming that the Sex Pistols were influential to the point of becoming a whole epoch and culture in and of themselves. And all of this even though the band's flame, like Milli Vanilli's, burned for little more than one year, and even though, as Marcus admits: "Punk began as fake culture, a product of McLaren's fashion sense, his dreams of glory, his hunch that the marketing of sadomasochistic fantasies might lead the way to the next big thing" (*Traces* 69).

What's the moral to these stories? There isn't one, really; there are only contradictions. To Arsenio Hall and all the rest of rock's consumer-theorists around the world, Milli Vanilli *clearly was* a fraud, a fake, a manufactured facade that quickly crumbled; Milli Vanilli *clearly was* a sham, a joke, an embarrassment. Now those Sex Pistols, on the other hand: That McLaren chap was a pure *genius*, taking four raw kids off the street, putting instruments and a microphone into their hands and telling them to make some noise—this is the stuff that punk music was supposed to be all about, right? No smooth edges anywhere, no hooks, no melodies, no commercial appeal, and certainly no *physical* attractiveness (although guitarist Steve Jones did go on to become a fairly handsome guy by the time he formed the Neurotic Outsiders, with other rock veterans and survivors[4], in 1996). The Sex Pistols, regardless of their careful construction by McLaren, were never perceived as invented; instead, the perception was that each of its

members invented him*self*, especially Lydon and Ritchie—er, that is, Rotten and Vicious. Like Milli Vanilli, they couldn't sing or play worth a damn—but of course that was the *whole point*.

While the late Lionel Trilling's work has come under fire in recent years for his tendency to essentialize both authenticity and "sincerity" as inherent aspects of human nature (and indeed one is well served by a caveat to read his ideas "against the grain" of postmodern awarenesses), much of his later writing is framed in such a way that the esteemed critic's overviews of philosophical thought through history themselves contain at least some indications of his willingness to problematize some of these "essential" human qualitities. And while a handful of rock performers—R.E.M., Talking Heads, and David Bowie come to mind—are very much informed and influenced by postmodern thought, the vast majority of rock's discourses linger and thrive in modernity and romanticism, so it is here that I find Trilling's writings most productive for contributing to a contextualization of authenticity in rock. In regards to the issue at hand, for instance, I turn to his writing that "we are impelled to use some word which denotes the nature of [sincere being] and which accounts for the high value we place upon it. The word we employ for this purpose is 'authenticity'" (*Sincerity* 93)—and with this, in a discussion of the Sex Pistols, a question forms: Were the band members *sincere* about being punk rockers? The immediate answer seems to circle right back: How could they *not* have been? They were putty in McLaren's hands, babes in the rock woods, street kids suddenly told they were punk-music "stars." And most importantly, whether a total fabrication or not, they sang their own songtexts, played their own instruments. We tend to empathize with those qualities; although it was a British enterprise and thus an immediately Other kind of experience, we in the U.S. nonetheless know how to value the

work ethic surrounding the Sex Pistols' artistic endeavor (made all the more valuable, in the ideology of rock discourses, because it failed to become a *successfully commercial*—i..e. wealth-generating—endeavor as well), and so we tend to polarize around a positive form of what Raymond Williams calls "structures of feeling"—something less than ideology or *Weltanschauung*, something more than mere impression: a tangible manifestation of our "concern with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt" (132) and of our desire for "evidence of forms and conventions—semantic figures"—that accompany widely shared "living processes" (133). Meanwhile, structures of feeling for Milli Vanilli differ greatly due to a lingering and troubling sense that Pilatus, Morvan, and Farian blatantly violated, in concrete form, the most significant of the meanings and values which their fans and admirers brought to that band's ultimately corrupt and fraudulent enterprise. Work ethic? None. Moving lips and hips to a pre-recorded vocal—a vocal performed by *someone else* (even though the specter of reified labor is unlikely to raise many eyebrows in the States, the specter of plain old "laziness" will function sufficiently)—is no ethic at all; nor is it any kind of real *work* in the sense of sweat and energy and concentration, the kind of physical and mental labor shown in Simon Frith's description of a *real* singer:

> [Otis] Redding's approach to singing—making a vocal noise—opened up the question of speech itself, celebrated its possibilities, fought against its constraints. . . . [H]e applied Little Richard's frenzied gabbling to Sam Cooke's precise tones of feeling and ended up with a sort of vocabulary of desire, a dictionary of soul. Words for Redding weren't simply semantic devices, conventional signs of meaning. They were also always sounds, carried their own aural implications of rhyme and rhythm. His style had . . . repetition and experiment, the voice as the vehicle for the body, a form of power: Bam-A-Lam! Bam-A-Loo! You can hear Redding *making*

> meaning, and it's hard not to grimace and crunch the mouth muscles in sympathy. He constantly stops to savor a vowel, to consider a consonant. No syllable is safe. . . ." ("Redding" 138).

This description is grounded in aesthetic critique, but that critique is at the same time squarely focused on notions of an authentic style, an authentic originality, and especially an authentic labor. What is Redding doing in this passage, if not *working* his voice off? And what are listeners doing, as they lock their jaws to prevent spontaneous spasms of grimacing and crunching, if not *working* just as hard? Now we have a proud point of contrast for those Milli Vanilli *poseurs,* those fashion models, those. . .*not real singers.* It isn't a matter of self-*written* songtexts, since Deena Weinstein's articulation of changing notions of authenticity regarding cover tunes—modern updates of older songtexts or even reinterpretations of very current ones that have been penned and performed by others—has shown how such work is "no longer relegated to the periphery but share[s] the center with original work" since "[t]he raw material of rock is no longer life, but culture" (145). Further, Weinstein argues, "If God is dead and all things are allowed, the god that was knocked off by punk was the myth of the individual, along with its master name, Authenticity. Musicians can now plunder the past with abandon." While there is a great deal of evidence to support this claim of individual worth gradually giving over to an equally prized cultural tradition and history from which songtexts may be "plundered" without penalty for the plunderer, I have to counter that evidence of punk having "knocked off. . . the myth...of Authenticity" in rock's discourses is much harder to find. Even the slow re-positioning of cover material as itself "authentic" is very much a work in progress inside many of those discourses, but in the case at hand, Milli Vanilli had not *covered;* it had merely *fronted.* And as for the millions of records bought by

millions of its young fans (most often with millions of their parents' dollars), well, if Milli Vanilli had to return that Grammy, then how about refunding the cash, as well? Owning one of these albums now was something akin to having bought a fake Rolex in a back alley somewhere: Sure, it might keep time (literally, in each of its formerly formidable hit singles), but what exactly did you have? Something pretty, but also worthless, valuable only as a reminder of how easily you'd allowed yourself to be swindled. "A person is he," wrote Thomas Hobbes in 1651, addressing both legal tribunals and the theater, "whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man, or of any other thing, to whom they are attributed, whether truly or by fiction" (480; italics removed). If Pilatus and Morvan had merely "represented the words and actions" of other studio musicians, admittedly "by fiction," then why all of the accompanying shame and disgust? Simply because, as Hobbes explained: "When they are considered as his own, then is he called a *natural person;* and when they are considered as representing the words and actions of another, then is he a *feigned* or *artificial person*" (480). And in the discursive practices of rock, especially, *artificial people* are not made welcome.

Yet the figures in rock discourses, time and again, demonstrate that artificiality will be tolerated to an extent. Vanilla Ice, with an invented *ethos* of fraudulent background and stunningly co-opted riffs, enjoyed his fifteen minutes of fame as a white rapper in the early 1990s, fending off attacks on his authenticity not by discussing his race but by trying to demonstrate that whereas the famous Queen/David Bowie bass line from "Under Pressure" informing his own "Ice Ice Baby" had seven beats—"Duh-duh-duh-duhduh-duh-duh," said Mr. Ice in an MTV interview—the version in *his* songtext had *eight*—"*Duh* duh-duh-duh-duhduh-duh-duh," he said, and with this explanation he

disappeared into the mist of *Where Are They Now?* But then again, Vanilla Ice was a white boy, so the boot he received might appear to "make sense," at least until we look at black rapper MC Hammer (later just Hammer, bigger than a mere Master of Ceremonies) likewise copping a whole bass line from Rick James's "Superfreak" to inform his own "U Can't Touch This," following that initial offering with a boast of being "2 Legit 2 Quit"—and then promptly joining Vanilla Ice in early retirement. Why? My 16 year-old daughter, sitting around a summer campfire one night and recognizing the disposable nature of pop icons, declares Hammer to have been "all dance and fashion, plus too much overkill—he was the Spice Girls of his time." Admiring this insight, I begin to see more clearly how a deeper issue is an ongoing conflict between "real" rap and "fake," of a powerful rap culture forged of lived experience coming to bear against what it perceives to be a transient group of pretenders who will corrupt and taint not just the music, but the lived experience itself. (This issue is further taken up in the next chapter.)

Nor is this last exclusively a rap "thang." In the area of folk music, Kit Rachlis describes a 1960s-era drive for folk purity requiring a "blanket repudiation of pop, everything from Jerry Lee Lewis to the Ronettes" and an insistence on "unadorned performers" since "[e]lectric guitars and drums, perfectly calibrated hooks and neatly hinged lyrics. . . [all] spoke of slick-talking salesmanship and money-grubbing ambition" (173). And even in classical music, Robin Maconie has suggested that a similar conflict over authenticity has arisen over the fact that contemporary symphony orchestras have become "a hybrid" with "some instruments [that] are old, some relatively new. . . instruments from the East and instruments from the West, some virtually unchanged from ancient times and others embracing the most up-to-date technology. An orchestra today is a compendium of civilizations" (57). As a result, Maconie writes, "Authenticity has

begun the process of reintegrating early music with its time and place by readopting period instruments, performance practices, and locations" (151). (Christopher Hogwood's Academy of Ancient Music, for instance, plays only on period instruments in an attempt to re-locate the music within its original context. The debate over whether one can hope to replicate the *social and historical* context behind those instruments and that music, however, is something I leave to other studies.) But with classical music, struggles over authenticity can generate at least one measurable result, as Maconie describes how the sheer size of many modern orchestras creates a minuscule lapse in sound wave reception for musicians on the far edges of the platform who "would have great difficulty in keeping together if they were not kept in time by a conductor. The consequence. . . of having to rely on the visual cues of the conductor and having to ignore what they themselves hear, is inevitably a loss of sensitivity of response" (83)—a corruption of what is, to Maconie, an important, because genuine, human musical ability. As a result of the authenticity movement's turn to a smallness of scale, "employing fewer numbers and less strident timbres, and making use of more intimate recording environments," orchestra musicians in smaller symphonies "are beginning to reap very real benefits in terms of balance and quickness of response" (83).

Such measurable results are much harder to spot in the ideological conflicts over authenticity in rock, where the term *authentic* functions as a rhetorical trope in the sense that it works to substitute for an infinite number of often contradictory structures of feeling which are at once aesthetic and ideological in their origin, and as a recurring figure working to preserve the conflict and promote its arguments through an ever-changing conception of its central meaning. Moreover, as indicated by the title of this chapter, authenticity as it is applied in rock discourses becomes the controlling metaphor

for the discourses. By this I mean that, whereas a poem like X. J. Kennedy's "First Confession," for example, is controlled by imagery of religion in opposition to a skeptical and slightly blasphemous humanism, and whereas Adrienne Rich's "Living in Sin" is controlled by images of housekeeping in opposition to a sick and dying relationship, a controlling metaphor of authenticity presides over rock discourses to illustrate a central connecting point between otherwise disparate ideas. By holding up the authentic in the discourses, there is an accompanying and immediate dragging along of the *in*authentic; in reverse order, naming the inauthentic instantly holds up its opposite. The words of Walter Benjamin in his essay on mass-reproduction fit here—"The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity" (4)—and what Benjamin called copies, Baudrillard calls "equivalence" as simulacra replace original artifacts and "only affiliation to the model makes sense" (101). The range of disparate ideas within these two definitions appears to be limitless. In rock, authenticity continues to function in the way that Trilling once described it, as "implicitly a polemical concept, fulfilling its nature by dealing aggressively with received and habitual opinion, aesthetic opinion in the first instance, social and political opinion in the next" (*Sincerity* 94). An old Chuck Berry songtext illustrates the above "first instance" when Berry sings that he has "no kick against modern jazz / Unless they try to play it too darn fast / And change the beauty of the melody / Until it sounds just like a symphony"—a point at which he is forced to "go for that rock and roll music" instead—while Lucy O'Brien illustrates Trilling's "social and political" realm of the authentic in her description of Joan Baez: "Never considered an 'authentic' folk artist—once described as an 'outsider singing to outsiders'—she still conveyed the integrity of rural songtext, from the Appalachian mountains to the Arizona

badlands. . . . [Baez] was the million-selling singer of other people's stories" (371). While Baez's politics found favor in the 1960s—perhaps most vividly recalled by her appeal to the crowd at Woodstock[5] to remember her husband, who had recently begun a prison-house hunger strike to protest the Vietnam draft—they could not, O'Brien writes, match the rage of 1970s punk which "dismissed 'hippydom' as a failed experiment" or prevail against "the knowing iconists of the postmodern MTV 80s [who] derided notions of acoustic 'authenticity,' leaving the traditional protest voice submerged" (372). Berry watches the "modern jazz" of his lyric slipping into a form that seems and feels like something other than jazz, while O'Brien describes what is ultimately a protest against protest itself when its form—acoustic on the one hand, "outside" on the other—is deemed inauthentic. "I'd like to get something together," said Jimi Hendrix, "like with Handel, and Bach, and Muddy Waters, a flamenco type of thing. If I can get that *sound*—if I could get *that* sound—I'd be happy (qtd. in Burks 22). But such happiness, in today's rock culture, would instantly earn him a one-way ticket out of credibility. Then again, would it? We are speaking here about *Jimi Hendrix*, a "guitar god" to both fans and critics, and deities sometimes earn privileges that mere mortals may not attain. I can only speculate here, since the "thing" that Hendrix mentioned never went beyond a mention, but it seems likely that, in the eyes of contemporary consumer-theorists, the performer's pre-established *ethos* could allow him to maintain an authenticity that the musical product, on the other hand, would not be allowed to share (see my discussion of Metallica ahead for a more detailed analysis of this division between performer and product).

No More Mr. Nice Guy: The Strange Case of Pat Boone

The whole idea of being in a rock band, in the first place, was to say, 'Hey, I'm an ugly duckling, fuck you.' The point was to be non-competitive, to say, 'I don't have to prove anything. This is me. I walked in here, off the street, and this is it. I'm not an actor. I'm in a rock band. I'm not going to compromise myself to look or be something to make you accept me.

- Chrissie Hynde of The Pretenders (qtd. in Juno 199)

I admired you. You, in your black leather jacket.

- Joe Rasnick (Michael J. Fox) to his rock-guitarist sister Patty (Joan Jett) in *Light of Day*

Now comes the plaintiff, Pat Boone, praying to the court that it would permit the dissolution of his previous identity as a good Christian man in white shoes who had a career in rock 'n roll during the 1950s and early 1960s by flashing his impossibly straight and white teeth at audiences of clean-cut American teenagers who came to hear him perform sanitized versions of songs by black, and thus commercially limited, artists. Mr. Boone prays that the court would accept into evidence for this petition his 1997 CD, *Pat Boone in a Metal Mood*, upon which he has performed swinging versions of songs by groups such as Metallica, Guns N' Roses, Led Zeppelin, and AC/DC. He has stated, inside the liner notes to this collection, that such songs and artists have worked as "a revelation" to him, and he now prays that the court would grant him authenticity as a Heavy Metal Musician. As the first set of evidence in support of his petition, Mr. Boone submits the following specific items regarding his *previous* claims to authenticity:

1. He has informed the audience for this collection, by way of its liner notes, that he is a "*product of the whole rock revolution*, musically, having come along. . . just when rhythm and blues was becoming a new thing *we* were calling 'rock 'n roll' (italics added). Further, Mr. Boone writes that "[s]ome of *my* early million sellers included *Little Richard's* 'Tutti Frutti'. . . *Fats Domino's* 'Ain't That A Shame,' and other. . . simple,

lyrically lightweight songs" (italics added). These songs, he claims, received "new life" from his endeavors; thus is implied his altruistic nature as a cover artist.

2. He has informed the audience that one of his early methodologies for determining the commercial appeal of his recordings was to "watch the girls" for signs of "grooving, dancing a little, and really enjoying the feel of the thing." Upon those occasions when all such signs were present, Mr. Boone reports that he "knew we had something."

3. He has informed the audience that he once made a recording which he describes as "a tribute to *my buddy* Elvis" (italics added); further, that he did rebel against the desires of that "buddy"'s manager, Colonel Tom Parker, by releasing said tribute recording under a title which did not contain Mr. Presley's name and thus would not require the transfer of royalty funds to Mr. Presley's accounts.

4. He has informed the audience that he is a "direct descendant of Daniel Boone," therefore generating a speculation that "it may be in my genes to like to go where no one else has gone before, to explore new territory."

With all of these proofs of a *past* authenticity does the plaintiff, Mr. Boone, pray to the court for its permission to be re-authenticated *now*, as a performer of Heavy Metal. As the second set of evidence in support of this petition, he offers the following proofs of *current* authenticity:

1. He has adorned this music collection with photographs of himself bare-chested save for a leather vest, seated upon a motorcycle, wearing an earring and much related

jewelry such as a pair of bracelets and multiple rings upon his fingers, his eyes hidden by sunglasses. These, he hopes, will function as signs of a sufficiently "metal" aura.

2. He has rendered the subtitle of his work, "No More Mr. Nice Guy," in an 18-point, bold, Olde English-style font, thus establishing an appropriately "gothic" appearance for these five words. (It is hoped that the court would overlook a failure to also employ two umlauts—another visual trope favored by earlier metal bands such as Mötörhead and Mötley Crüe—in the spelling of the plaintiff's name; thus, *Bööne.*)

Mr. Boone assures the court that he will promote this new collection of "metal" quite heavily, likewise assuring all of the television hosts he encounters during his initial interviews that he holds a sincere admiration and respect for the music he is performing. However, when early rumblings of protest and confusion are detected from his core audience of good Christian folk, Mr. Boone prays that he might reserve the right to look earnestly into the camera while informing Jay Leno that this new collection of music is "a four-letter word: J-O-K-*E*." Furthermore, when this explanation proves insufficient to prevent the swift and punitive cancellation of Mr. Boone's own television program on a Christian cable network, Mr. Boone prays that he might reserve the right to call off the whole venture and slip back into the shadows from which he has presently emerged.

Thus does the plaintiff pray to this court that it would grant him the dissolution of a previous identity and the formation of a new one which he now seeks, and thus shall the plaintiff ever pray.

More Difficult Cases: In This Case, Yes—That Is, Unless. . . .

It's real. Everything is so slick now. . . what I do is something else. Just let me play my autoharp, my guitar or my banjo, and I'll play for you what I feel. It's pure. It's me.
- June Carter Cash on her 1999 album, *Press On* (qtd. in DeCurtis 33)

We're not like Kiss. We break real guitars, not the fake stuff.
- Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick [6]

Obviously, John Locke never wrote a word about rock discourses, but I'd like to introduce him to the subject here. Identity, for Locke at the end of the 17th century, came from the knowledge that if something exists at one time, we may compare that thing with its existence at another time—thus forming notions of identity and diversity. Beyond their clear application in the Boone case just concluded, Locke's thoughts likewise linger in less aberrant current arguments over rock authenticity: That was rock then, so this is not rock now; that was rock once, but now is no more; this is rock now, therefore all that follows will also be. Following the lyrics of Don McLean's "American Pie," and like those lyrics unable to pinpoint a specific date or cause of expiration, a number of critics and fans alike have named the period 1959 through 1969—Buddy Holly's plane crash through the dismantling of Woodstock's plywood stage—as "the day the music died." And this death certificate is underwritten by a totalizing ideology through which current rock music, due only to its *diversity from* the "classic" rock of that ten-year period, is somehow constructed as *less than* the sum of its preceding parts. Moreover, much of this difference itself is due to changes in the cultural backdrop—politics, fashion, sexuality, and other elements of "subcultural style" defined by Dick Hebdige—which lent themselves to lyrical content then but would be laughable now. The music of the late 1950s and that of the 1960s admittedly played an integral role in that backdrop, but since today's version of background scenery is more crowded and noisy,

lacking the same level of focused intensity of the earlier period (perhaps because of the crowdedness itself, making focus difficult if not impossible), current rock often appears to lack the power and stature that would give it the same relevance bestowed upon its predecessors. The formula, for Locke, in determining difference from matter with an established identity was fairly simple: "[T]hat which had one beginning is the same thing, and that which had a different beginning in time and place from that is not the same, but diverse" (654). Thus would be explained the necessity for constraining commonplaces within the rhetorical and hegemonic systems in rock's discourses, for *topoi* that would help to make allegedly quantifiable measurements in the discourse's omnipresent and relentless search for the authentic—were it not for the fact that Locke also noted a concomitant "difficulty about this relation" which stemmed from "the little care and attention used in having precise notions of the things to which [the relationship] is attributed" (654). And as a young and confused Shakespearean prince once said, there's the rub.

Difficult Case # 1: In rock discourses, the inauthentic is that which is, by Grossberg's observation, "'establishment culture,' rock that is dominated by economic interest, rock that has lost its political edge, bubblegum music, etc." (*Gotta* 206-7). Elsewhere, Grossberg asserts that the rhetoric of authenticity "is built upon a strategy of differentiation; always distinguishing between the authentic and the co-opted," an opposition which "easily and often slides into a narrative war between authentic youth cultures and corrupting commercial interests ("Anybody" 42). And this "war" is complex to the point that its own rhetoric can collapse under the weight of the endless qualifiers often required to hold itself up. For instance, since Ozzy Osbourne is still an

influential force and a relevant figure in contemporary rock culture, when his music blasts from TV sets to help sell Nissan's latest sports car the discourse simply adjusts to remove Ozzy from the picture, to place him safely "out of the loop" as neatly as George Herbert Walker Bush during Iran-Contra. The syntax, just as Grossberg has indicated, typically goes this way: *Nissan is co-opting Ozzy's music.* It does not go: *Ozzy sold his music to Nissan for its promotional use.* And yet, there's Bob Seger on the TV, too, singing that Chevy trucks are "Like a Rock." When the ad campaign begins, more than one journalist asks Seger how he can allow this to happen when so many other musicians have protested the increasing number of corporate "corruptions" of rock music. Seger explains: *I* like *Chevy trucks. And many of my fans drive trucks.*[7] *They'll understand.* But by this time, Seger is as relevant to the contemporary rock culture as, well, Milli Vanilli. He has been gone too long, and most of his later work was starting to "go soft," anyway. As Dave Marsh has written:

> Unlike average consumers, the most committed rock fans. . . feel empowered by the very rhetoric of the music to make judgments—sometimes punitive judgments—about their heroes. Furthermore, they not only expect to be entertained but expect to have certain 'needs' met in the process. Rock stars carry a heavier load of symbolism than any other contemporary performers. (18).

So, unlike the protecting discursive shield that forms around Ozzy, the discourse here makes no adjustments for Bob Seger. Its syntax holds firmly that Seger sold out to General Motors, and worse, that he paved the way for even more corporate corruptions of rock. Except that, well, his music wasn't really what we'd call *rock* by today's standards, and except that the Nissan thing with Ozzy isn't a *corruption* on equal footing with the Chevy/Seger thing, simply because it's *Ozzy,* and the Oz would never. . . .

Difficult Case # 2: In which a rock journalist struggles to pin down a precise meaning for one particular genre of rock:

> Let's try to be specific about what metal means: aggression and guitars; tattoos and thrash; endless songs in the key of E, with special tunings to make them sound slate cold and disturbing; maybe a nod to the Nineties with a smidgen of hip-hop or electronics (but wait—what do you call Rage Against the Machine? what's Rob Zombie?); mostly white, although there are creditable bands [from non-white cultures and nations]; nothing to do with the precious collegiate 'indie' aesthetic, though death/black/dark/doom metal forms a distinct underground identity whose foremost practitioners tour college towns. . . ah, forget it. (Ratliff 19).

I think this paragraph speaks for itself.

Difficult Case # 3: Kendra Smith, bass player for a band called Dream Syndicate and then another called Opal, quit each band just before it signed a corporate record contract. An interview with her, appearing in an anthology titled *Angry Women in Rock,* is primarily focused on organic gardening and country living, her current interests. She has made two albums in twelve years, neither of them a commercial success. By all of this, under the strict constraints within that part of rock rhetoric which holds that financial success is immediately parallel with the inauthentic, Smith should have earned the status of Authenticity Icon. But she has not; she is known only to the smallest of rock-discourse communities.

Difficult Case # 4: It is 1988. Bill Gazzardi, aged 60, self-styled "godfather of rock and roll," is the owner of Gazzardi's on the [Sunset] Strip, a California rock club. He wears a suit and tie, a hat. And he has a weekly dance contest. Tonight he comes before the crowd, before the contest, to make an announcement: "There's been so much fuckin' bullshit about this contest being fixed that—I'm gonna make damn sure you all

understand this—at the end of the contest, when they've announced the winners, the judges' sheets will be available at the front door for *any motherfucker to inspect.* And that oughta take care of all the fuckin' bullshit about this contest being fixed!" The crowd cheers wildly; the old man has spoken their coarse, profanity-laden language of disrespect and rebellion. He's one of them.

The contest begins. One by one, women parade before the panel of judges—a panel made up of testosterone-fueled hard-rock hopefuls who will perform their music later in the evening—to gyrate to a heavy metal soundtrack and receive a completely impressionistic score. The judges seem to be enjoying their jobs more than the dancers. Finally, one woman's dance builds to the point where she strips down to a bikini made only of white strings.

Bill Gazzardi steps forward to put an end to this meltdown in protocol. "Uh, I'm gonna let that go, but the, uh, rules of my contest is [sic] that—that's a little bit too skimpy because—we're looking for Gazzardi *dancers*, not kind of a [sic] little skimpy risqué stuff like that. There will be *no* bikinis or G-strings or stuff like that. They have to wear foxy, rock and roll *clothes.*"

The audience considers this, then offers its collective reply: *"BOO!"*

Gazzardi takes a step back from the microphone. "Boo? *Boo?"* There is a momentary pause while the audience confirms its determination. "Okay, I'll tell you what—why don't *you* guys run the contest?"

The audience instantly responds: *"YEAH!"*

"You mean you *want* a strip show?" asks Gazzardi.

Later, draped on each side by a young woman barely out of her teens, Gazzardi beams at an interviewer and explains his longevity: "They say, 'Bill, you're not a 60

year-old guy, you're like three 20 year-old guys, all the energy you have. Rock and roll for*ever*!" (*Decline).*

Difficult Case # 5: The Verve, an English band, have a platinum album in 1998 due to a hit single titled "The Bittersweet Symphony," a songtext most infectious due to a soaring symphonic hook between its verses. Rolling Stones catalog administrator Allen Klein identifies this hook as having been taken from the Andrew Loog Oldham Orchestra's classical rendition of the Stones' 1960s hit "The Last Time," and he demands 100 percent of the songtext's royalties. In the eventual settlement, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards receive 70 percent as songwriters, plus full writing credits for the Verve songtext's music minus its lyrics and some main-verse passages (an arrangement that results in some fairly complex liner parentheticals). Allen Klein, as the Stones' catalog manager, receives another 30 percent, leaving The Verve with exactly nothing. A year later the band breaks up. In retrospect, the lyrics to its breakaway hit seem telling: "'Cause it's a bittersweet symphony, this life. Try to make ends meet, you're a slave to money, then you die." One night about a year later, an English teacher working on a book about rock discourses hears that same infectious hook, slightly slowed, playing on National Public Radio, is confused because this is supposed to be NPR's evening broadcast of *classical* music—and discovers that the passage came from Antonin Dvorâk's "Slavonic Dances."

Aesthetic and ideological preference (in the first case), imprecise articulation (in the second), concrete manifestations of incompatabilities between ideology and lived practice (in the third), a failure to interpret successfully the cultural desires implicitly connected to one's discourse (in the fourth), and raw issues of ownership and originality

(in the fifth) are but a few examples of the "difficulties" mentioned by Locke three hundred years ago, difficulties that continue to pervade the ideological and rhetorical systems at work within rock's discourses and their incessant drive for authenticity now. And the immense blind spots sometimes manifested in that drive can, at times, be puzzling indeed. "I never identified with [Kiss and Alice Cooper]. . . because both of those bands were always very specific that their show was an act," says a certain Brian Warner, better known by his stage name, Marilyn Manson. "I wanted to meet what was on stage. I didn't want to meet some old guy who plays golf" (qtd. in Fruchtman 21). Pressed to speculate on any possible contradictions in who has just said what, Warner explains that *he* is different from *them* in that he "can't wake up and not be Marilyn Manson. It's not like I turn off Marilyn Manson and I'm an everyday guy who goes and has another job and doesn't think about any of this stuff. Marilyn Manson is the most real thing that can come from me." While Frith validates Warner/Manson's insistence on the "real" when he writes that "young rock bands and musicians put the highest value on originality and self-expression, on music as a means of defining one's identity" ("Cultural" 174), Warner/Manson concedes nothing to the possible existence of an act of his own, on par with the same theatrics of Kiss and Cooper that so alienated him in his youth, or to the fact that, as Hobbes explained centuries ago, "*persona* in Latin signifies the *disguise*, or *outward appearance* of a man, counterfeited on the stage; and sometimes more particularly that part of it which disguiseth the face, as a mask" (480). More recently, Trilling wrote that "[t]he work of art is itself authentic by reason of its entire self-definition: it is understood to exist wholly by the laws of its own being . . . . Similarly, artists seek their personal authenticity in their entire autonomousness—their goal is to be as self-defining as the art-object they create" (*Sincerity* 100). Thus, behind its gothic

mask of death-pale makeup and black lipstick, a clouded contact lens covering one iris, Warner's "Marilyn Manson" persona feels free—much like Pat Boone behind his sunglasses and clip-on earring—to assert its *own* "real" identity by fast-forwarding right past its creator, who is much less significant than the artistic manifestation he has fashioned, reflecting what Jon Spayde, in arguing for a general return to substance over form in everyday life, has after Baudrillard termed a "move from the fake that stands starkly inadequate before the real, to the hyperfake (or, if you prefer, the hyperreal)—a fake so big, and so imbued with [social] hubris. . . that it makes the merely real seem puny" (49). This move leaves the rock journalist interviewing Warner/Manson trying to determine whether the act of disavowing an act is itself an act before ultimately abandoning such a determination completely and simply moving on to describe the persona's continuing claims of authenticity:

> Manson's pursuit for originality was a priority since [his band's] early days, when throwing peanut butter sandwiches into the audiences and caging and crucifying nude women was a cult favorite at concerts. Manson address[ed] individuality in an unreleased [early songtext]: 'You want to look like me, you want to act like me, you've got no sense of your own identity. . . imitation's not a flattery, you're a pitiful thief.' The [band] practiced what they preached. Manson designed and drew [his] own playbills and flyers, etching them with amateurishly-drawn Dr. Seuss [characters], skulls, ghosts, handguns, and hypodermic needles. . . . [E]arly stage shows were also highlighted by other unusual gags including a 'blood-spattered' Ronald McDonald doll, raw meat, and a few shredded Bibles. (Fruchtman 21)

Unusual, indeed. Surely millions of goth-rockers were astounded by the use of *skull* imagery to promote heavy metal. (Okay, the sandwich thing sounds fairly unique, although I have no idea of what it might have been meant to represent. Maybe, since this is the "Satanic" "Reverend" Marilyn Manson we're dealing with, an imagined corruption

of one of the church's sacraments?) Still, what's most visible in this description is a struggle by Warner/Manson, through his journalistic mouthpiece, to "find what is significant in [his] difference from others" (Taylor 36). Charles Taylor, in *The Ethics of Authenticity*, explains that such a discovery is crucial because the act of naming one's particular abilities and qualities places the individual "in the domain of recognizable self-definitions" where "[w]e understand right away that [these] properties have human significance." The recognition comes largely from the fact that the abilities and qualities having been specified have at the same time been recognized previously *in others*, thus creating what Taylor terms an *a priori* "horizon of significance" (38) upon which "some things are worthwhile and others less so, and still others not at all, quite anterior to choice." The rhetoric of authenticity, holding up its simultaneous images of the genuine and the diverse, puts these horizons of significance into play, but Taylor warns that when the rhetoric "implicitly denies" and thus attempts to "collapse" those horizons (37-8), claims to authenticity should be identified as illegitimate since such claims abandon the very context that will "save them from insignificance" (66). In contrast to earlier performers like the Rolling Stones, whom Frith labels as "intellectuals" who "share an acute, almost contemptuous grasp of their own paradoxes: British makers of American music, white romancers of black culture, [privileged] triflers with working-class urgencies, adult observers of youth, aesthetes of body music" ("Beggars" 30), Warner/Manson attempts to conflate ego with alter-ego, private self with stage persona, performed life with lived performance, thus engaging exactly in a mission to collapse horizons of significance, denying the knowledge and lived experience of his audience and therefore limiting the value of his enterprise to a small population of 15 year-olds who will ultimately base their allegiance on a mere untested and unquestionable "fact" that

Manson's intricate juxtapositions of identity are so complex as to make him the real thing. In such a case, however, Warner/Manson is less the agent than the subject of this confirmation, since the act of confirming renders the pronouncer, more so than the pronounced, authentic. As Taylor notes, all claims to authenticity are "clearly self-referential; this has to be *my* orientation" (82).

Moreover, the historical amnesia that results from a crowded, hyperpaced cultural backdrop can prevent pronouncers of authenticity in Warner/Manson's case to recognize similarities between the monikers *Marilyn Manson*, chosen for its factors of both gender-blurring and tribute to a notorious mass murderer, and Vincent Furnier's stage name *Alice Cooper*, chosen for its factors of both gender-blurring and a hoped-for invocation of an aural kinship with the name *Lizzie Borden*, notorious practitioner of parenticide[8]; nor can those pronouncers detect Warner/Manson's similarity to the conflation of David Bowie with his stage persona, Ziggy Stardust, two decades earlier. Since "[a]uthenticity is itself an idea of freedom . . . involv[ing] finding the design of one's life for oneself, against the demands of external conformity" (Taylor 68), such an amnesia can also be selectively, purposefully induced in order to dismiss Bowie's recognition of the constructed persona which Warner/Manson hopes to dissolve through sheer denial of its existence. Bowie, describing his adolescence, speaks of being "painfully shy, withdrawn. I didn't really have the nerve to sing my songs on stage, and nobody else was doing them. I decided to do them in disguise" (qtd. in Lenig 8). Picking up on this admission, a recent film about the glam-rock era, *Velvet Goldmine*, presents its Bowie-esque character "Brian Slade" (Jonathan Rhys Meyers), himself fashioned as a modern-day incarnation of Oscar Wilde, announcing that "[r]ock and roll is a prostitute. It should be tarted up, performed. The music is the mask." Later, the same Bowie/Wilde character, holding a mask over his face,

tells his audience that "[m]an is least himself when he speaks in his own person," then squints to read from a cue card: "Give him a mask and he'll tell the truth." When the audience appears to have trouble comprehending this, the character suddenly drops his mask to exclaim, "We're going to rule the world!"—and follows this announcement with bitter, self-derisive laughter, clearly crushed by the hollowness of the words which his unmasked self has just uttered and the failure of his masked persona to connect in any significant way with its audience. This was the dilemma of rock theater both during and immediately after Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust" incarnation, along with the wider gender-merging, form-and-substance-equalizing movement of "glam rock" as practiced by T. Rex, Roxy Music, and Bowie in England, with the New York Dolls as that genre's foremost practitioners in the States. The genre eventually collapsed under its own ideological aesthetic of "art for art's sake," confusing (and in time boring) its audience by its inability to demonstrate any relevant connection between cosmetics and rock, between lyrics like Marc Bolan's "I have never ever nailed a nose before / All schools are strange" and everyday life where nails, noses, and schools had no immediate correlation, between the music itself—its rhythms and volumes—and the glam movement's preferred method for its performance. Ultimately, as Stuart Lenig has explained, glam theater was rejected and subsumed under rock's own preference for "the arena concert format, large crowds, large overhead, and large payoffs" since theatrical rock had shown itself to be both too expensive and too far beyond the comprehension of its intended audience. And then came the ultimate dismissal: "[C]ritically, performance was seen as a sham, a means of covering up poor music" (12). With this decree of inauthenticity, the glam movement imploded. Even James Westerberg, better known as Iggy Pop, striving through both

physical self-mutilation and constant manifestations of utter contempt for his audience to take his raw brand of rock beyond mere musical performance into the realm of spectacle, found nothing authentic in glam. Through the venom-and-bile prose style of rock journalist Nick Kent, we see an Iggy living in London at the time and wondering how it was possible that

> [a]ll this 'cute' shit—this glam-rock—was selling up a storm over in limey-land and all it was was a bunch of wimp pop written by more cynical hack [people] and sung by talentless dorks wearing too much make-up who were too dumb and lame even to be mistaken for real [homosexuals]. Over in America they were lapping up this homogenized crap by the Eagles and all these other clowns singing about feeling like Jesse James and James Dean and pretending they were modern-day outlaws when, in reality, they were just another bunch of denim-draped self-obsessed faux hayseed hippy morons. (250)

In short, we see an Iggy who sees himself surrounded by inauthentic pretenders, but of all the bands coming out of the glam tradition, the New York Dolls (whose lead singer, David Johansen, went on to become a lounge lizard incarnation named "Buster Poindexter" whose "novelty" scored big with MTV) offered what was essentially a how-to-read-this-stuff set of directions with its songtext, "Human Being":

> Well if you don't like it, go ahead and find yourself a saint
> Find yourself a boy who's gonna be what I ain't
> And what you need is a plastic doll with a fresh coat of paint
> Who's gonna sit through the madness and always act so quaint.

The Dolls even anticipated the most intense objections that would be fired at glam, suggesting that "[i]f it gets a bit obscene" (as it often, for mainstream rock fans, *did* seem to get in a genre where women's clothing was the male performers' favored fashion, where some of those musicians pretended to fellate one another on stage, and where others were

widely rumored to have experimented sexually with one another in private life) and "[i]f I'm acting like a queen," then one needed to keep in mind only one thing: "Well, babybabybaby, I'm a human *being*." This was High Concept for mainstream consumption by a drug-addled audience, ensuring its failure to communicate glam's two primary theses: First, that Wilde's famous line in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*—a claim that "art should never try to be popular; the public should try to make itself artistic"—was a mission to be carried out in tangible ways, and second, that even if the audience should come to grasp the concept, *authenticity could not be locked in by any definitive means.* Those who objected to David Johansen were free to "find themselves a saint" in the form of "a boy who's gonna be what I ain't"—and such a person, of course, would be none other than David Johansen himself, unadorned of his glam-rocker persona. But since, as Johansen saw it, the audience both expected and demanded from him much more than that, what they got was "a plastic *doll*" (self-referentiality at play) with a "fresh coat of [cosmetic] paint," while the actor beneath the makeup could simply "sit through the [glam] madness and always act so quaint." And if the audience missed that (which it did), if it interpreted the lyrics as more of the same rebellion-against-everything sentiment (which it did) that had always informed so much of rock, then the Dolls came through with one more opportunity to learn: "I'm [just] a human *being* [someone else]," they pointed out over and over again in the chorus. And no one, to borrow from Neil Diamond in "I Am, I Said," heard at all. Not even the chairs.

"The Worst Crime I Can Think Of": The Sad Case of Kurt Cobain and the "Death of Grunge"

My prince was satisfied with all of my works and I received applause. As the director of an orchestra, I could make experiments, observe what elicited or weakened an impression, and thus correct, add, delete, take risks. I was cut off from the world, no one in my vicinity could cause me to doubt myself or pester me, and so I had to become original.

- Joseph Haydn, c. 1800 (qtd. in Bonds 56).

I am what I am, but I'm not what you think.

- Crack the Sky, "Lighten Up, McGraw"

When Simon Frith writes that rock owes its conception and birth to Elvis, its maturity to the Beatles and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and its ultimate demise to the disbanding of the Sex Pistols in 1976 *(Pleasure* 1)—a lineage and lifespan that are, for me, highly questionable (and debate over it would ensure bringing the outlines of our individual musical taste and definition ideologies into clear view)—it's important to recognize that Frith isn't performing a eulogy for the music itself. Rather, he is trying to identify the end of an *era*, and the end of a vaguely-defined essence that would make true rock distinguishable from false. But in justifying his post-mortem analysis, Frith as a Marxist critic inadvertently creates an opposition in which either today's commercialized rock is a blatant imposter of its earlier form, or else its current tendency toward commercialization "proves that it was actually no different from any other leisure product all along." This slip into such a binarism tends to lock out any possibility of rock being both commercialized and still "true" to its origins—especially since the either/or opposition is made from ideological constructs of a naturalized role and function the discourse must play out, most notably a resistance if not outright immunity to commercial exploitation and purpose that transcends the vision and desires of the music's consumer-theorists, and, by extension, "their" bands. It is curious, as well, that Frith should pay tribute to Elvis Presley within the context of his argument since, as Jerry

Hopkins has shown, Presley launched his extremely lucrative career by co-opting a range of pre-existing music and "melding the best of four musical categories: country 'n western (or hillbilly). . . 'race music' [of] the early 1950s, gospel music, and pop (Dean Martin was a personal favorite). The 'new' sound was called 'rockabilly,' and Elvis began touring as 'the Hillbilly Cat'" (131). Regardless of this, Frith presses ahead with the view that rock is rock, commerce is commerce, and the two must somehow remain mutually exclusive. That next week's Aerosmith concert may be brought to us by Calvin Klein and Reebok is a perversion, not a sign of economic reality. Sponsorship, through the traditional lens of Marxist analysis, is synonymous with alienation, so the purity of rock is forever gone. Under such constraints perhaps only Neil Young, the Woodstockian grandfather of grunge rock who "ain't singin' for Miller, ain't singin' for Bud," and his grunge-rocker grandson Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam, whose personal war with profiteering Ticket Master has become the stuff of legend, could remain untainted since "[m]oney, in short, is the principle of the inauthentic in human existence" for early articulators of Marxist thought (Trilling, *Sincerity* 124). But rock's current consumer-theorists have a bit more tolerance for commerce than does Frith's form of Marxism; as Dave Marsh explains, the majority of rock fans do not "automatically reject crass commercialism—millions of Kiss and Bon Jovi fans prove otherwise"—but under the controlling metaphor of authenticity they do at least expect and demand evidence of "a *self-generated* crass commercialism" (19; italics added). It may be odd, then, that the crassly *anti*-commerce anthem, "This Note's for You," which helped to return Neil Young to prominence in the current rock culture—largely through its accompanying videotext's heavy rotation on MTV before the corporations named in its lyrics demanded that the videotext be pulled back *out* of that rotation—has been labeled by Young himself as "the most idiotic fucking

song I've ever written. I still can't believe that such a dumb little song could have helped resuscitate my career the way it did" (qtd. in Kent 329). Young had spent the 1980s experimenting with early forms of techno-industrial noise, feedback-filled garage rock with his untrained band, Crazy Horse, and other completely uncommercial ventures (including a foray into country music with Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings) that caused his record label great angst before focusing his interest on the formation of an R&B band he called The Blue Notes and, within that context, writing "This Note's for You." But the success of this songtext's social critique, and the fact that its album's accompanying promotional tour was proudly advertised as free of commercial endorsement or backing at a time when so many other bands had agreed to drape corporate logos above their stages, had less to do with Young's major repositioning on the spectrum of relevance than did his unfortunate association with the death of Kurt Cobain in 1994 when the Nirvana guitarist and songwriter cited a line from Young's 1979 songtext with Crazy Horse, "My My, Hey Hey," in his suicide note.

Cobain shared Young's distaste for rock commercialism, appearing on the cover of *Rolling Stone* in a T-shirt reading "CORPORATE MAGAZINES STILL SUCK," but he ultimately came to realize and understand the reality that to play in a band, to sell music, was his profession—and therefore his sole source of income. Although often constructed by the music press as a poetic soul tortured by his reification at the hands of a capitalist rock industry, this journalistic form of valorization-through-martyrdom is built of the same need for a rational explanation that follows any suicide. What's more, such an explanation goes against ample evidence that Cobain knew exactly what he was getting into when he formed Nirvana and brought the band's music to the attention of Seattle's independent source of punk/grunge marketing, Sub Pop Records—a label described in

1995 by its co-founder, Bruce Pavitt, as "essentially one big prank. We've always pretended we were something we weren't. Now that we're huge and have a lot of money, we're trying to pretend that we're small and indie[9] and have street cred[10]" (*Hype).* Indeed, an early draft of the band biography that Cobain wrote for Nirvana's first Sub Pop single reveals a young musician as knowing and self-aware as his promotors at that label, but one who is both repelled by and attracted to the business side of music:

> Nirvana sees the underground music SEEN as becoming stagnant and more accessible towards commercialism and major-label interests. Does Nirvana want to change this? No way! We want to cash in and suck butt up to the bigwigs in hopes that we too can get high and fuck wax figure hot babes who will be required to have a certified AIDS test two weeks prior to the day of handing out backstage passes. Soon we will need chick spray repellent. Soon we will be coming to your town and asking if we can stay at your house and use your stove. Soon we will do encores of "Gloria" and "Louie Louie" at benefit concerts with all our celebrity friends. (Document displayed in Azerrad 108)

Moreover, Cobain's first draft describes Nirvana—in contrast to the second-coming-of-Christ adulation bestowed by the rock press after the group's first major-label release—as a band that "sounds like Black Sabbath playing The Knack, Black Flag, Led Zeppelin, and the Stooges, with a pinch of Bay City Rollers"; so much for any claims to originality. But behind the clear sarcasm in these statements is also a sense of humor about the whole impending journey toward rock stardom, the kind of yes-I-know-corruption-is-easy-but-I'll-be-okay self-awareness that Joe Walsh had put into songtext many years earlier: " I have a mansion, forget the price / Ain't never been there, they tell me it's nice/ I live in hotels, tear out the walls / I have accountants who pay for it all . . . / It's tough to handle this fortune and fame / Everybody's so different, I haven't changed."

But Cobain's nod-and-wink writing took place in 1988, still three years away from the media's *blitzkrieg* assault on Seattle as the Hottest Music Scene On The Planet, an assault that, as shown in the grunge documentary *Hype!*, causes Eddie Vedder to lament of the so-called Seattle Sound: "It's so profitable—it's *so* profitable—and they [commercial interests] just keep taking, and taking, and taking"—here he grits his teeth—"they just *don't know how to restrain themselves*!" In this lament Vedder is joined by Soundgarden guitarist Kim Thayil, explaining that the music

> was *our* thing, and then all of a sudden it belonged to people who we never thought we were sharing our music with, like mainstream periodicals and fashion magazines. And you start realizing there's a whole lot of people out there making money by selling the idea of a 'Seattle Scene,' or 'grunge,' or whatever. But that's what makes pop culture so significant to all the little consumers out there. They have no interest in history or economics. . .they're interested more in gossip, the nature of celebrity. And that's not at all encouraging, to find out that you participate in that society, one way or another.

As *Hype!* shows rather painfully, Seattle's bar- and club-based music scene quickly became a surrealistic zoo after the early successes of Alice in Chains, Screaming Trees, and especially Nirvana in 1991. When the pressure built to bursting, some involved in the city's besieged music business began to fight back; Megan Jasper, a secretary contacted by *The New York Times* for an article which that esteemed newspaper would go on to print on the front page of an inner section under the title "The Lexicon of Grunge," invented completely bogus terms and definitions for the inquiring reporter's eager and unknowing note-taking, a move she justifies by saying that "[i]f they're lame enough to try to scrutinize this totally stupid thing, then why not fuck with *them*?" (*Hype*). The words *grunge* and *Seattle* were pasted into the headlines of virtually every entertainment-oriented publication in the world, with journalistically-concocted

phenomena like the so-called "grunge look"—flannel shirts, long johns, stocking caps, and other everyday necessities for staying warm in the northwest corner of Washington State—suddenly co-opted for display in *Vanity Fair* and for mall consumption by kids in Phoenix and Houston where "cold" meant 70 degrees. And even the "real" grunge people, the sons and daughters of loggers and construction workers whose everyday clothing had suddenly become a must-have commodity, the band members whose best claim to authenticity was that they wore the same clothes on stage that they wore at home, believing with Scott Ian of Anthrax that "[b]ecause we have no image and because we go onstage in our jeans and T-shirts, people relate to us better" (qtd. in Eddy 227), were to at least one rock veteran only imitators themselves. As Kent writes:

> [A] whole new generation had. . . started dressing exactly like Neil Young in flannel shirts and rancid old jeans festooned with patches and playing stoned, willfully eccentric electric rock 'n roll music. . . . They called their stuff 'grunge,' but it sure sounded like Neil Young to Neil Young. He caught some of these young cats on MTV. . . and he quietly marveled at the unavoidable fact that, after thirty years as the most carelessly dressed musician in rock 'n roll, his stumble-bum's wardrobe suddenly made him a major fashion symbol. . . . 'I only hope they don't take my old flannel shirts after I die and stick 'em behind glass in some Hard Rock Cafe,' Young remarked. (334)

Working at the fore of this incredibly noisy, at times ridiculous, and often frustrating cultural backdrop was Kurt Cobain, very much caught up in a still-compelling Romantic ideology of the pure expression of uncorrupted truth, of an honest and sincere self, untouched by the corrosive powers of establishment structures, and at the same time very much a product of the liberal humanist tradition that compels individuals to not only identify their uniquely authentic and original qualities but to nurture them as uniquely their *own* qualities, self-made, self-chosen, self-driven. Surely many of his experiences

toward the end of his life, in both his private and public lives, in both his emotional and physical states of being, hurt badly enough to help drive him toward his irrational decision to end that life and that pain, but Cobain also came out of a *rock* tradition in which aspiring groups and individual musicians can literally see no alternative to a successful rock-oriented life—by whatever measurement of success, from incredible riches to simply a decent meal each evening. Dozens of such aspirants, asked by Penelope Spheeris in her documentary *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part II* what they will do if they "don't make it," reply without exception: "But I *will.*" The question is therefore moot—but it is also impossible to address since no space has ever been made for it in the respondents' ideologies. All reality has been fused around its opposite, making the specter of failure something that cannot possibly exist. Pressed harder by Spheeris to nonetheless consider alternatives, some of the interview subjects finally name two: abject poverty, or death. "Yeah," sings Michael Stipe in "Let Me In," R.E.M.'s tribute to Cobain, "all those stars drip down like butter, and promises are sweet. We hold out our pans with our hands to catch them; we eat them up, drink them up, up—up—up." But that lofty place is the site where, in the oft-quoted words of Marx, "all that is solid melts into air." Saint-Preux, a novelistic character acting as literary representative for his author, the founding Romantic philosopher Rousseau, describes the experience in this way:

> I'm beginning to feel the drunkenness that this agitated, tumultuous life plunges you into. With such a multitude of objects passing before my eyes, I'm getting dizzy. Of all the things that strike me, there is none that holds my heart, yet all of them together disturb my feelings, so that I forget what I am and who I belong to. (Qtd. in Berman 18)

Echoes of these words, and of the determining Romanticism still very much alive and well within not only rock culture but its larger host cultures as well, nearly leap off the pages of Cobain's suicide note. Self-murder, as his farewell letter suggests, has become for the musician the only move possible to reclaim his authenticity from the unnamed but still-identifiable forces that have intoxicated him, dizzied him, and taken charge of him; moreover, and most tragically, a shotgun to the head has become the only way he can possibly atone for his self-perceived "crime" of alienation. Cobain's note, only lightly edited but italicized to highlight relevant passages, reads as follows:

> Speaking from the tongue of an experienced simpleton who obviously would rather be an emasculated, infantile camplainee, this note should be pretty easy to understand. All the warnings from the Punk Rock 101 courses over the years, since my first introduction to the, shall we say, ethics involved with independence and the embracement of your community, have proven to be very true. *I haven't felt the excitement of listening to as well as creating music along with reading and writing for too many years now. I feel guilty beyond words about these things.* For example when we're backstage and the lights go out and the manic roar of the crowd begins, *it doesn't affect me the way in which it did for Freddie Mercury*[11] who seemed to relish in the love and adoration from the crowd. Which is something I totally admire and envy. The fact is *I can't fool [anyone]. . . . The worst crime I can think of would be to rip people off by faking it and pretending as if I'm having 100 % fun.* Sometimes I feel as if I should have a punch-in time clock before I walk out on stage. I've tried everything within my power to appreciate it, and I do. God, believe me I do, but it's not enough. I appreciate the fact that I and [Nirvana] have affected and entertained a lot of people. *I must be one of those narcissists* who only appreciate things when they're alone. *I'm too sensitive. I need to be slightly numb in order to regain the enthusiasm I once had as a child.* On our last three tours *I've had a much better appreciation for all the people* I've known personally and as fans of our music, but *I still can't get over the frustration, the guilt and empathy* I have for everyone. There's good in all of us and I think *I simply love people too much.* So much that it makes me feel too fucking sad. *The sad little, sensitive, unappreciative, Pisces-Jesus man. Why don't [I] just enjoy it?* I don't know. I have a goddess of a wife. . . and a daughter who reminds me too much of *what I*

> *used to be.* Full of love and joy, kissing every person she meets because everyone is good and will do her no harm. And that terrifies me to the point to where I can barely function. I can't stand the thought of Frances becoming *the miserable, self-destructive death rocker that I've become. I have it good—very good—and I'm grateful*, but since the age of seven I've become hateful towards all humans in general. Only because it seems so easy for people to get along, and to have empathy. Empathy! Only because *I love and feel for people too much I guess.* Thank you all from the pit of my burning nauseous stomach[12] for your letters and concern during the past years. *I'm too much of an erratic, moody baby! I don't have the passion anymore* so remember, it's better to burn out than to fade away. Peace, love, empathy.
>
> - Kurt Cobain (Azzerad 347-49)[13]

One popular conception of artists that has remained with us since the Romantic period, Trilling has written (and critiqued), shows "creative people as being, in the very nature of their calling, alienated . . . or at least isolated beings" ("Talking" 143). Cobain, although he clearly addresses a multiple audience here (his wife, the industry, his fans, and less directly, his daughter) is a writer in isolation just as he has become a musician feeling isolated from the world and work around him. Trilling's account goes on to describe artists who "must always aim at originality, even uniqueness; what they make must be different from what is made by any other artist. That is one reason why they conceive of their life histories as being a long experience of misunderstanding and rejection." These issues are addressed by Cobain only obliquely by way of the "warnings from Punk Rock 101"—a screw-everybody-else-and-rock-*your*-way aesthetic that he saw as maintainable throughout his stage of unsigned-band "independence" (Azerrad, var.) but which subsequently fell apart following the implicitly *un*"ethical . . . embracement" that his independence received from a "community" of ambiguous origin, although one that certainly included, if not fans directly, then at least the Sub Pop and Geffen labels along

with the mainstream press. But what is perhaps the most jarring discovery to be made in reading Trilling's decades-old writings on authenticity comes when the noted critic details the "violent meanings" in the ontology of the word, *authentic:* "*Authenteo*: to have full power over; also, to commit a murder. *Authentes*: not only a master and doer, but also a perpetrator, a murderer, even a self-murderer, a suicide" (*Sincerity* 131). In connection with these ontological histories, Trilling writes in completely *un*critical fashion:

> [We forget] how much violence there [is] in art's creative will, how ruthless an act [is] required to assert autonomy in a culture schooled in duty and in obedience to peremptory and absolute law, and how extreme an exercise of personal will [is] needed to overcome the sentiment of non-being. . . . Surely something not less than violent [is] needed to startle [the] dull pain of the social world and make it move and live, to retrieve the human spirit from its acquiescence in non-being. (131-2)

Of course, I am not suggesting that Cobain, like his grunge colleague Eddie Vedder, hoped to "startle the dull pain" of the *physical* "social world" around him or to heed Vedder's warning that if Seattle's music "doesn't make some kind of change, some kind of difference. . . if this group of musicians finally gets to the forefront, and nothing comes of it, that would be [a] tragedy" (*Hype).* Rather, the dullness he experienced was located within himself, in the *spiritual* social world, if you will, and because of its presence he could no longer retrieve his formerly vital spirit from its now-lethal state of "non-being." But beyond the issues behind the immense sadness, more significant to the discussion here is the manner in which Cobain's farewell message is filled with claims regarding not only his *in*authenticity--his loss of the determining qualities valued in rock discourses —but also his still-valid *au*thenticity—his lingering ability to see those values as important and to recognize their loss; at times these presentations of contrasting yet complementary sentiments take place within the same statement, as I'll indicate here with

markers for claims of inauthenticity as **(I)**, of authenticity as **(A)**, and of both/and as **(I/A)**, followed by a bracketed explanation:

(I) *I haven't felt the excitement of listening to as well as creating music along with reading and writing for too many years now.* **(A)** *I feel guilty beyond words about these things.* **(I/A)** *[Performing] doesn't affect me the way in which it did for Freddie Mercury* [inauthentic because of the loss of performance's felt impact; authentic because of the recognition of another performer's correct response to performance]. **(A)** *I can't fool [anyone]. . . . The worst crime I can think of would be to rip people off by faking it and pretending as if I'm having 100 % fun.* **(I)** *I must be one of those narcissists.* **(A)** *I'm too sensitive.* **(I/A)** *I need to be slightly numb in order to regain the enthusiasm I once had as a child* [inauthentic because of the need for "numbness" (most likely through a widely-publicized heroin addiction and other substance abuse); authentic because of a still-clear recollection of earlier "enthusiasm"]. **(A)** *I've [recently] had a much better appreciation for...people, but I still can't get over the frustration, the guilt and empathy. I simply love people too much.* **(I)** *The sad little, sensitive, unappreciative, Pisces-Jesus man. Why don't [I] just enjoy it?* **(I)** [My] daughter. . . reminds me. . . of *what I used to be.* [I don't want her to become] *the miserable, self-destructive death rocker that I've become.* **(A)** *I have it good—very good—and I'm grateful. I love and feel for people too much I guess.* **(I)** *I'm too much of an erratic, moody baby!* **(I)** *I don't have the passion anymore.* And as for the last line of the text, "It's better to burn out than to fade away," Cobain biographer Michael Azerrad suggests that making this lyrical nod to Neil Young's germinal proto-grunge songtext from 1979 was a "sarcastic way of showing that [Cobain] knew exactly how his death would look" (354): like a flashy, stupid move by a gifted,

stupid man who wanted to join Hendrix, Joplin, and Morrison in live-fast-die-young rock mythology. Neil Young's songtext, which also dragged the Sex Pistols into the Seattle tragedy with its line, "The king is gone, but he's not forgotten; this is the story of Johnny Rotten," also told another story: "It's out of the blue and into the black / They give you this, but you pay for that / And once you're gone, you can never come back." It was a cautionary tale that Cobain, the romantic, took to heart.

Nearly six years after his death, Cobain's image continued to be appropriated by commercial interests such as *Rolling Stone*, which in its May 13, 1999 issue offered the late musician up to the reading public as that magazine's "Artist of the Decade," his noisy, resistant virtues extolled by the venerable Greil Marcus who in the cover article makes no mention of any of the numerous stresses and conflicts, both personal and professional, that Cobain endured as he neared the end of his life, but who does concoct a clever label for an ailment that Nirvana, as a whole, allegedly suffered—something Marcus calls the "folk virus," defined as "the suspicion that if what you do is accepted by a mass audience, then it must be either devoid of content or a sellout, and you yourself the enemy you mean to destroy" ("Cobain" 47). And the victim-blaming continues as Marcus goes on to note that "the band made great drama even out of something as puerile as this," apparently operating under the assumption that no one will remember how another primary actor in the same drama was, during its overheated coverage of the brief grunge era, a magazine called *Rolling Stone*. But no matter, since the grunge/alternative movement, like Kurt Cobain, is gone now, its own death announcement first printed in the pages of *The New York Times* in December 1996. (Note to conspiracy theorists: There is no evidence that the "Gray Lady" killed the genre and movement in retaliation for that embarrassing "Lexicon Of Grunge" piece.) Thomas Frank, writing in *The Nation*,

describes how a simultaneous attack from both the *Times* and *Time* magazine portrayed grunge as suffering from "a full-blown authenticity crisis, [having] lost its ability to conjure up that basic cultural commodity without which the lifestyle trade grinds to a halt." While the *Times* offered advice for remedying the situation, *Time* picked away at the fact that grunge, like Seger and Ozzy, was being used to sell cars, and worse, that newer bands were "devaluing" the genre and "robbing [it] of even the illusion of sincerity" (Parales, qtd. in Frank). In response to this resurgence of mayhem surrounding the music that had already lived through such stuff once before, Frank writes that the rebuke handed to grunge/ alternative by these two Establishment icons—themselves the kinds of entities that the Seattle-born discourse was "supposed to" itself rebuke—constituted "a cultural contradiction of staggering arrogance, a bit of I'll-have-it-both-ways-at-once-thank-you presumption that comes closer than anything. . .to defining the spirit of this corporate-hegemonic age." And with this we arrive at Eagleton, arguing in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* that

> it is no longer possible to pretend, given the transition from market to monopoly capitalism, that the old vigorously individualist ego, the self-determining subject of classical liberal thought, is any longer an adequate model for the subject's new experience of itself under these altered social conditions. The modern subject. . . is less the sharply individuated source of its own actions than an obedient function of some deeper controlling structure, which now appears more and more to be doing its thinking and acting for it. (316)

Of Services, Talent, Payments, and Power

Flying in the face of Eagleton's compelling argument, many of the primary discourse producers within rock strive nonetheless, through their lyrical and performative ideologies, to situate themselves as *counter* to any such obedience, as *opposed* to the

presumptions of corporate/monopolist hegemony, as struggling to stay clear of direct involvement in neither commerce nor success. For consumers and critics observing the verbal manifestations of this stance, the opposition often seems contradictory, even ludicrous. Peter Wicke, in his *Rock Music: Culture, Aesthetics, and Sociology*, provides useful insight into understanding the oppositional stance and the struggles behind it by citing the late Frank Zappa's claim that rock "is original, composed by the people who perform it, created by them—even if they have to fight the record companies to do it—so that is really a creative action and not a commercial pile of shit thrown together by business people" (qtd. in 93). For Wicke, Zappa's statement created a "sharp dividing line. . . between rock music, released from every suspicion of commercial motivation, and the usual chart-style pop music," but the nature of this division was such that rockers subscribing to the ideology expressed by Zappa only "distanced themselves from their real activity as musicians" (93). In a lengthy passage, Wicke explains and defines the "real activity" being denied:

> Rock musicians earn their living by selling a service, their ability to make music. . . . [They] can only offer their abilities; the purchasing decision rests with the music industry. This particular socio-economic process leads musicians to develop a particular perspective from which they consider themselves and the whole process of rock production and distribution. . . . Although in an economic sense musicians are only service operators for record companies, agents, and tour promoters, the particular nature of the services they perform demands that this service should be related to a quite different target group from the one which actually claims the service and pays for it. In terms of earning a living, musical performance is an economic relationship between musicians and the music industry, but in terms of the real nature of music it is a relationship between musicians and their audiences. Thus, what musicians sell to the industry is not merely their musical abilities, but those abilities in relation to the particular audiences for whom the music is intended. This allows musicians to occupy a position in which they represent the audience to the

> industry, [and] this relationship reflects the musicians' personal conceptions, ideals, and values as those of their fans, indeed as those of young people in general. . . . The key to the ideology of rock lies in these thought patterns" (95).

What can be understood through Wicke's careful articulation is that rockers and the discourses they produce are *not* merely commodities to be traded for cash, as the most cynical critiques of rock production and consumption would have it, but rather that they represent the full *rhetoricity* of the discourses. The messenger, the message, and its audience are so interconnected in Wicke's definition that it causes what he appears to view as an ultimate confusion by the messengers, but which in another view might indicate a more overt and even critical awareness by those same individuals that the overriding *contexts* of a songtext sent into commercial action are so intricately constructed and entwined that commerce becomes the least of a songtext's roles or functions. While such an awareness is instantly downplayed due to the long history of resistance so often appearing as a merely ornamental trope in rock's rhetoric, the extreme emotions generated by "mere" commodification-and-complicity models of interrogating the "non-artistic" aspects of rock production are at times so intense that dismissal itself ought to be questioned. For Edward Said, "musical performance. . . is the central and most socially stressed musical experience in modern Western society, but it is both a private musical experience for performer and listener, and a public experience too. The two experiences are interdependent and overlap with each other" (12). The key to approaching the discourse, then, becomes "understand[ing] the connection between the two" and examining not only the connection, but also the ways by which it is interpreted. Said suggests that the "more interesting" of possible interpretive models would help to illuminate "the enabling conditions of performance and [how] their connection with the

sociocultural sphere can be seen as a coherent part of the whole experience." Thus, for instance, hearing Lynn Breedlove of Tribe 8 announcing, "I don't ever want to let go of my righteous indignation, because I feel like that is what fuels me" (qtd. in Juno 66) can become less a case for exploring the musician's entanglement in an ancient notion of anger mysteriously but vitally feeding creativity, and instead an example of the performer's awareness that one's active choices help to determine the limits of the role and reception of agency in the rhetorical interchange between musician, performance, and audience. As Robert Palmer has argued, the choices made in rock have been manifested by "different attitudes toward the organization of sound and rhythm, different ideas concerning the nature of *the song*." Accordingly, the "distance" between current songforms and their "pre-rock norms cannot be explained by advances in musical instruments and recording technology alone" because, for Palmer, "these sounds proceed from what amounts to a different tradition. . . . Generation after generation, musicians have made artistic *choices*, opting for the values of what we might call the rock and roll tradition over those of the popular tradition that preceded it" (9).

Problems of authenticity may lie in the conception of this "rock tradition" which Palmer names, since the tradition carries its own rules for the communication that will be generated under the rock label and millions of consumer-theorists stand ready to judge a performer's message as art or fluff, rock or pop, worthy or worthless. The available categories and classifications for responses in the consumer-theorist's domain extend as far as those individuals maintain their interest in the exchange; for performers, then, resistance and its accompanying desire for authenticity may be seen as a result of the vast number of impasses set before them after each choice is made. In Breedlove's perception, for instance, the source of intense *counter*-resistance to her own desires to

align her openly lesbian, and thus instantly othered, band with fellow musicians and political groups who support Tribe 8's strongly feminist creeds and pedagogical aims is the rock press:

> [T]he structure that is trying to control us is going to constantly try and drive schisms between us. In our case, they're going to do their best through media hype and commodification. The media have a lot of power in representing who Tribe 8 is, and that's why we're paranoid. They can manipulate us. Our efforts to ally ourselves with other groups are going to be constantly fucked with by the mainstream media, who are going to try to keep us separated" (qtd in Juno 67).

When Breedlove has before her ample evidence of her band's being either ignored or else fetishized as a mere curiosity, a critique of her statement along the lines of its "standard rock rhetoric" becomes difficult. What appears to have happened, at least to an extent, is that rock's long history has worked against itself when the recurrence of such statements has rendered each repetition gradually less compelling. And as a child of the cultural revolution in the United States, rock in its middle age is held constantly in check by its own childhood as the time when the majority of those statements were forged. Dylan constructed the evil corporate "Masters of War" in a memorable songtext by that title, and corporate/hegemonic/commercial involvement has been a moral and artistic affront ever since. But what happens when a performer is *genuinely* outraged, frightened, or disillusioned? If every utterance is only an ideological construct or a favored rhetorical trope for these particular human beings in this particular industry, what are our own critical motivations in shutting down their messages of disaffection by simply hauling out the required responses, the tried-and-true forms of critique? "The 'music industry' is fat and satisfied," writes rock survivor Iggy Pop. "They can buy anything, and turn anyone into a spiritual eunuch." To which one is inclined to instantly answer, "Yeah, we've

heard that one before. Aren't you wealthy, famous, respected—*set* in life? Where's my basis for empathizing?" And this kind of uncritical response is itself perhaps even more standard than the rock lament being addressed. What's more, it is situated squarely, simultaneously, on a pole of Puritanical and capitalist extremes through which the messenger (a) has fallen prey to the wicked excess of wealth and (b) successfully attained the enviable status of wealth. Surely there is a more productive way to frame a considered response to the message and its contexts within the ongoing struggle by rock messengers to preserve some semblance of agency in a discursive field so often situating them as patients. For another rock survivor, Joan Jett, the struggle begins almost immediately upon a group's "arrival" on the rock scene:

> A new band will come out, a song will get on the radio, the video will be played, and all of a sudden—they're the hot new band. Even though they might want to go out and tour and become more well-known, they're sort of ripped from their community and their regular lives, shoved into this limelight, just to wait for the next record of some *other* band to come out. (Qtd in Juno 80)

Today cattle futures, tomorrow hog bellies; surely there is something like shock, something like disappointment, something like bitterness after enough years have passed and a discursive form once so magically powerful to a dreaming adolescent has become no more than a product fighting for shelf space in the highly competitive music market. In the rock film *Velvet Goldmine*, the Iggy Pop character, Curt Wild, sums up the experience with a simple admission: "We wanted to change the world. All we changed was ourselves." Alice Cooper, early in his career, put into songtext the discursive methodology required to cope with Wild's realization: "I thought this was living, but you can't ever tell / I'm trying to get away from that success smell / I'm caught in a dream—so what? I don't know what I'm goin' through / I'm right in between, so I'll just

play along with you." But these paradigms for experiencing and narrating the process of involvement with rock's alienating tendencies, are themselves choices. A rhetoric of reification, of naming the reifying processes which "divide" artists from their art, is part of the the baggage of music's role in human history as an art form different from all other kinds of production-based enterprises, as a product above and beyond basic materiality, as something uniquely, innately wonderful and mysterious. But as Williams has explained, art is also one of the most extensively mediated forms of social expression (98). In the end, then, every claim of authenticity, or its "inauthentic" counterpart, must be filtered through an understanding of those mediation processes to see how rock practices need not remain trapped within a fixed—and fixing—discourse of limiting terminology to define the extent to which rock, and rockers, may operate. A turn to social and political awareness can open many of the discursive spaces previously closed, and one such turn becomes my focus in the next chapter.

4

CROSSROADS:

History at the Impending Merger Between Rock and Rap

Mister Charlie said, "Lookit here, boy"—the boy just kept on pointin' back—
He said, "If you can't talk about it, then just sing it."
So the boy sang: 'Oh, Mister Charlie, do you know your rollin' mill is burnin' down?'
- Lightnin' Hopkins, "Mister Charlie" (version recorded 1969)

Listen for the lessons that I'm saying inside music / That the critics is blasting me for
They'll never care, for the brothers and sisters / Now across the country has us up for the war
We got to demonstrate, come on now: Turn it up! Bring the noise!
- Public Enemy, "Bring the Noise," 1987

Fuck these magazines leadin' hip-hop off course! Ya print about black mayors, black senators—
Why you ain't got no black editors? Every time I do a interview in *Rolling Stone*,
They sellin' me a writer that look like he's home alone. Ignorant to the culture and the microphone.
This has got to stop. . . . You don't understand why you're publicly banned
Until you recognize the writing skills of a black man—black *editor*. All of us ain't thuggin',
Gossipin' over who's homosexual—some of us are black *intellectuals* up in Harlem world.
You can't get with me, so now, in midtown, you wanna stop and talk with me? Bitch-ass journalist.
Is this your fake hip-hop publication? You can burn in this.
- KRS-One, "Bulworth (They Talk About It While We Live It)," 1999

A lyrical progression takes place in the three samples above: From a veiled early-blues allegory about a stuttering black child who, unable to speak in a way that will be understood and validated as important, puts into songtext his warning to the ubiquitous "Mister Charlie"—code for the white boss man—that his entire wealth- and power-generating system is about to go up in flames, to a typical 1980s rap blend of self-referential (and empowering) lyrics with still-tenuous references to a vaguely-defined war, demonstration, and "noise," and finally to a not-at-all ambiguous rant against the mainstream periodicals (among which, in the unabridged lyric, are *Spin*, *Details*, and the rap-oriented *The Source* in addition to *Rolling Stone)* that have, for KRS-One, misrepresented rap music and hip-hop culture. On their faces, these lyrical changes

reflect a growth in their respective writers' confidence to challenge hegemonic systems and structures, but more than just this, they also reflect the increasing power that black musicians have forged with their songtexts over a very short span of years at the end of the 20th century. In the 1960s, audiences of both African and European descent tuned in to early forms of sociopolitical criticism from Motown acts like The Temptations, Marvin Gaye, and Stevie Wonder, but when the "Motown Sound" gave way to disco in the 70s and the punk movement arrived as a backlash against both disco and art rock, the previous decade's tentative form of racial "harmony" in the form of shared musical appreciation gave way to a gradual division. And as the gold-chain-and-white-powder era of disco danced its way to a close at the end of the 1970s, a new discursive practice was taking shape in the inner city: A musical form of record-"scratching," beat-keeping, and fast talking known in the 'hoods of New York as "hip-hop" was being solidified into what would become the single most influential musical genre of the 1990s. Fine distinctions are made (and enforced) by the music's fans between *hip-hop* to mean the *culture* behind the beats and *rap* to mean the creation and delivery of vocal stylings—but very often both the genre and the culture it created are referred to by all but the most strident terminology purist and genre divisionist simultaneously and interchangeably as both hip-hop and rap. To call it a musical "genre" is grossly inaccurate; the music has branched into a wide array of discursive styles, philosophies, and purposes that constitute the leading edges of contemporary popular musical discourses just as the songtexts of white groups from Creedence Clearwater Revival to Led Zeppelin once did in the Sixties. My focus in this chapter is an examination of both the discursive forms of rap itself and the current moves being made by white musicians to re-enact the 1950s-era

appropriation of African American musical discourse by fusing rap with white hard rock and heavy metal.

Frith has noted that "Each moment in rock history fused moral and aesthetic judgements: rock 'n roll, rhythm and blues, and punk were all, in their turn, experienced as more truthful than the pop forms they disrupted" (*Art* 266), and this has been the case with rap. Militant rappers from the gangsta/thuggin' or just "conscious"/message schools deliver rhymes of revolution, crisis, aggression, and violence that—Tipper Gore's PMRC to the contrary—defy easy moralistic response simply because the "obscenity" of the songtexts often lies not in their profanity or thematic revulsion, but rather in the *tragedy* expressed within contexts of a differing form of catastrophe. These contexts spring from the *de facto* chained-below-decks-and-kept-hidden enslavement created by a misrepresented or *un*represented black culture in white America, from the dire nature of inner city life and its maddening stasis, from the endless struggles of a black existence within a white hegemony that, in ways ranging from the mildly ideological to the severely penological, strives daily to keep the "savages" in their "rightful place." With all of this, it might seem more than a little curious that the discursive forms of rap have, like the Motown songtexts of the 1960s, once again crossed racial lines and become appealing to both white and black audiences who share a deep admiration and respect for the discourse. As Judith Hanna has written:

> Rap is surely not at odds with the experience of many people, particularly in the inner cities. Others, including youth of the upper classes, often admire its attack on the establishment and identify with its rebellious qualities opposing mainstream life. . . . [Y]outh identify with performers as outrageous and provocative, as they fantasize themselves to be. (190)

Because of this appeal, rap has itself been sampled/interpo(pel)lated by musicians better known for their more traditional approaches to rock songtexts. Early on, hard-edged groups such as Red Hot Chili Peppers, Faith No More, and Anthrax took a shine to the form for its "outrageous and provocative" braggadocio, and the results were songtexts such as Anthrax's "I'm the Man," in which the band proudly told listeners that, "[l]ike Ernest and Julio, before its time / Seven years later [this song's] holding up fine. . . / We stretched our boundaries, we opened the door / That no one [had] attempted before." Now, just a few years later, groups including Korn, Limp Bizkit, Blink 182, Barenaked Ladies, and Rage Against the Machine have forged from both metal and hip-hop a sound that—although *Rolling Stone* has begun to call it "Metal Rap," *Newsweek* has labeled it "Rock 'n' Rap," *The Source* has noted it as "Hip Rock," and my local record boutique places it in a special bin under the category of "Extreme"—is in practice referred to as none of these. No labels come into play at all; instead, the sound has simply become synonymous with its performing group—if I tell you I listen to Korn, Bizkit, and/or Rage, then you instantly know what kind of sound I'm into. To address phenomena like this one, Gene Bluestein has, in his study of folklore, borrowed the term "syncretism" from linguistics—"the fusion into one of two or more originally different inflectional forms" (5)—altering it slightly to mean "a development in which strong elements in two or more cultures combine to create a new and different product in which none is overwhelmed" (2). And it might seem in at least one way fitting that rap and metal have begun to bond in this fashion, since both forms have (as my local music peddler's categorization suggests) taken more traditional conceptions and definitions of *music* to an "extreme"—in rap's case, lyrics have clear precedence over individual notes, although a strong and sometimes nearly overpowering bass or keyboard riff keeps circling around in

the background; in the case of metal, lyrics can at times be completely obscured by the riffs and chords at the foreground, rendering *vox* parallel with *instrumentum*. To merge the forms, then, lyric and accompaniment come together to share a common foreground in a loud postmodern pastiche.

But metallized forms of rap remain by nature hybrids: The origin of hip-hop is centered around the same kind of youthful rebellion against standard musicianship that the punk movement championed around the same time. While punk was pushing the three-chord Chuck Berry riff to its variational limit, hip-hop deejays listened for a great note or series of notes (the "breaks" in a song's arrangement), sampled the sound through a combination of turntables and mixing boards, and blended it with others to form a usable backbeat for the general entertainment of a neighborhood audience and the growing reputation of the mixer. The backbeat in turn could be sped up, slowed down, or staccatoed by the deejay's "scratching" the record on the turntable. This whole process, again, mirrored Dada in its non-musicality—or better, its non-*musical* "purity" by conventional musicological standards—and for the kids looking for a new musical form, it was perfect. What better form of rebellion against bloated dinosaur bands like Yes, Queen, and even the Rolling Stones than music that required no *musicians*—by conventional/traditional definitions—to play it? "Rap embodies and reproduces perfect postmodern themes," writes James Lull, since its

> Lyrics are sounds. Segues match grooves and beats, not words. . . . Melodies disappear. Deejays *make* music [as opposed to simply playing it]. Popular music today may be the perfect soundtrack for life at the end of the twentieth century—a choreography of musical and cultural impermanence that matches the quickening pace and uncertainty of the times. (11)

These ideas of impermanence and uncertainty take audible shape in songtexts such as Naughty by Nature's "O.P.P." and its sampling of a long, intact passage from the Jackson Five's much earlier "ABC," including a young Michael Jackson singing "Come on baby, come on, let me show you what it's all about"—thus placing little Mikey, pre-sparkle glove, pre-cosmetic surgery, wholesome child star of the 1960s, into a story about the unethical theft of "other people's pussy" (the "O.P.P." of the songtext's title) in the 1990s. About this technological ability to rewrite history by simply cutting and pasting electronically, Walter Benjamin has written that "technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself" (4), and like the newly-located Michael Jackson, the 1960s ensemble Sly and the Family Stone are transported, although to a differing end, by Arrested Development's total remixing of that group's bass-heavy, shouted-vocal party anthem of the Woodstock era, "Everyday People," into a light, reggae-flavored 1990s songtext titled "People Everyday." In this case, the remix and consequent relocation was a matter of gradually making the earlier version fade and then disappear as even listeners who clearly recalled the older work gradually lost the memory under the power and contemporary appeal of the new one.

For Grossberg, the complex nature of musical life within postmodernity is such that "the relationship between musicians, music, fans, and history is constructed around an increasingly common celebration and production of energy in the midst of a global 'blackout'" ("Search" 175). Although both the celebratory and the energizing may have been musical constants throughout history, Grossberg's conception of a current "blackout" is echoed by Erica Hunter, one of my former first-year writing students who later went on to become a collaborator in an early publication venture:

> Students born after 1972 have not had any social events of huge importance to identify with—no racial integration struggles, no Vietnam war (the quick and easily-forgotten Desert Storm barely counts as a "war"), no presidential assassinations. . . . [Finding out] about another generation's conflicts and conquests may give us something to think about, but not to identify with and savor. Contemporary works, more relevant to our lives, our world, and our conflicts, provide us with the opportunity to identify ourselves and our places in the narratives. (Juchartz and Hunter 77)

By this young consumer/producer's argument, an old songtext like, say, the Ronettes' "Soldier Baby of Mine" may still be enjoyed by contemporary youth for its value as an amusing antiquity, but it won't be "identified with and savored" simply because so many present-day listeners see the predominantly casualty-free wars fought by the present-day version of smart-bomb soldiers—ventures like the afternoon invasion of Grenada, Operation Just Cause in Panama (named, by my students who served in it, as "Operation Just *Be*cause"), Desert Storm and its sequel, Desert Fox, and the prolonged multinational fly-overs in Kosovo—as the "quick and easily forgotten" kinds of engagements Hunter mentions. Most problematic in this particular argument is its preclusion of the possibility that the songtext can work against the historical amnesia and generational displacement that together block all memory of the catchy Ronettes number having been written and performed at a time when U.S. "soldier babies" were "only" "advising" Ngo Dinh Diem's South Vietnamese troops in methods for their self-defense—"advice" that would go on to claim nearly 60,000 American lives and more than half a million more for the NVA.[14]

The songtexts of rap, in contrast, enjoy a more enhanced continuity of cultural relevance, since the spoken and rhymed word, like the written text, shapes a narrative whose form is substantially different from that of the sung lyric, not as easily dated as sung textforms since the vocal stylings share a consistency of style (even within differing

rap genres) and the backing tracks, borrowed (as they often are) from all periods and all genres, defy easy identification with a specific era. This allows rap a significant increase in longevity of relevance that other genres in rock's discourses cannot share, in turn allowing rappers a longer span of influence in narrating often cutting observations about the society and cultures around them. As Lull notes, the U.S. "has had a rich history of music as an agent of organized resistance to many forms of oppression" (5-6)—examples here would include "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Roll, Jordon, Roll" informed by slavery, "Bread and Roses" (1912) and "Joe Hill" (1936) by labor abuse, "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" (1929) and "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" (1932) by poverty, and any of a hundred Vietnam-era protest songs by war. Although nearly all of these issues have been gradually dimmed by the unfocused "blackout" Grossberg mentions, the dimming in this case is the result of a long series of what I'll call "not-changes" (credit to Faulkner and his way of dealing with opposites) in which, for example, starving people are still not fed, inner-city education is still not improving, entry-level blue collar wages are still not going up, and politicians remain unconcerned by the everyday struggles of their constituents. While more recent songtexts like James Taylor's "Millworker" and Springsteen's "Youngstown" have updated the issue of labor abuse to address its current form as laborer anonymity and thus commodity as disposable debits to be dropped from the accounting ledger when profits slump, the issue still lingers; ditto for the poverty addressed by Dolly Parton's "Coat of Many Colors," Stevie Wonder's "Livin' in the City," and more recently, Live's "Waitress." (I do not include here the Elvis Presley/Mac Davis *bathos*-from-essentializing/racist-tripe vehicle, "In the Ghetto," for what are now obvious reasons.) And one other thing has not changed: Children still become adolescents, and adolescents still rebel against the status

quo. Since the status quo does nothing, it leaves itself wide open to the strong probability that youth will do *something* in protest—like reject the traditional rock genres their parents enjoyed and embrace a newer, louder, more objectionable form instead—a move that Grossberg suggests fits right into "the heart of rock and roll, and the soul of youth" ("Search" 175).

KRS-One, previously known in connection with Boogie Down Productions, speculates that, as a result of exposure to rap, "kids are becoming more socially and politically aware, I think. . . . Of course, music is not supposed to play that role" (qtd. in Denski 39). But he makes this latter statement with great irony. The role music plays in a young audience should be clearly understood by anyone able to recall his/her own youth and replay the musical soundtrack that accompanied the progression of those years. Chances are, there's a songtext to frame a first kiss, another to surround first love, a number of them to contextualize the teen ritual of driver's training (on those horrible, crackling AM stations that the instructors preferred, or the cars exclusively provided)—along with the songtexts one turned to, during adolescence, for guidance and identification in the narrative. Regardless of KRS-One's tongue-in-cheek claim to the contrary, rap *does* play a significant role in the process of "coming up" into socio-political awareness, primarily because it really has no other choice. The *Billboard* Top 100 sales chart[15] for September 1989 showed rap releases making up 17 percent of the entries, with metal and what could be called "standard" rock making up 35. (The remaining percentages went to country, light pop, Christian, film/stage soundtrack, and other musical genres.) By September 1994, the figures had changed only slightly for rap, with 18 percent of sales, but for metal and standard rock more significantly, down to 29 percent. The charts at the end of 1999 indicated 36 percent for rap, only 20 percent for metal and standard rock.

But since the top-100 charts tend to reflect sales of current releases within the first 50 listings and of older, more archival works below that line, a reconfiguration of these percentages to indicate the popular/commercial reception of *new* work moving quickly in each of these years appears as follows:

YEAR	RAP SALES	METAL / STANDARD ROCK SALES
1989	7%	19%
1994	24%	20%
1999	40%	14%

To state the obvious: With the passing of the short-lived grunge era and its brief infusion of energy for both rock and metal in the early decade, traditional-form rock songtexts are no longer at the helm of the discourse. Seventy percent of rap's consumers are white, and in recognition of this fact, there seems to be a choice of responses: Dismiss rap as an iceberg named Other and cling to rock as it goes the way of the *Titanic* in 1912; embrace rap and leap away from rock so as not to get sucked into the whirlpool of its sinking; or get busy with some engineering feats that can keep each of these floating behemoths on an even keel. Not an *equal course*, mind you; such a project would be in no way intended to gloss over the fact that rock has already slipped dangerously low into the waves, and that it is slipping further with the passage of time. Rather, although standard rock and its harder-edged siblings are unlikely to sink completely into the fathomless and unrecoverable depths anytime soon, it is just as unlikely that the presence of rock—as we know it now and remember it from before— will ever return to the same prominence it once enjoyed. Therefore, perhaps the time has come to recognize hip-hop *as rock*, and to acknowledge this previously-othered and highly racialized discourse genre as such. As

Billy Joel has suggested in songtext: "Everybody's talkin' 'bout the new sound, honey—but it's still rock and roll to me."

No. Stop; rewind. This is exactly the kind of white-supremacist thinking and hegemony-maintaining rhetoric that surrounded the mystification of black "jump blues" into white "rock 'n roll" in the 1950s. Moreover, this would be a move intended solely to flatten out the many real differences between hip-hop and standard rock, and a way to subsume rap's hard-won cultural and commercial prominence under the banner of an older, more established, and thus more respected discursive practice. And yet, in another perspective, an argument holding that "rap is rock" could be constructed as a move intended to *include rap in the conversation* as the more established practice loses increasingly larger amounts of cultural capital each year, ultimately resulting in a situation whereby, in the place of the noisy and always myriad signifying activities taking place in what we now know and remember as rock, there would be, not rap to fill the empty space, but only a huge and awkward silence resulting from a continued rhetoric of Otherness. Like this: *There used to be rock. Now there's. . .not.* To prevent such a silence, this alternative viewpoint would claim, the rhetoric must shift to one of inclusion. Therefore, since either line of argument has the potential quickly to become nettlesome, I will try to offer a bit of rap history in order to suggest that, regardless of the final determining outcome in ideological and future-historical perspective, in some ways *rap* appears to have always-already followed side by side with several of the same foundational practices and ideologies underlying *rock*'s discourses.

First, the charts. In trying to determine the precise causes for rap's rise to record-selling leadership, a number of critic/historians have credited MTV and two specific programming decisions made by that network early in the hip-hop revolution: first, to

put the video for Run-DMC's rap version of Aerosmith's "Walk This Way" into heavy rotation during the mid-1980s, and second, to design a half-hour show titled (with economy of creativity) "Yo! MTV Raps!" in which the network could showcase the latest hip-hop stylings by the most recent challenger to Run-DMC's heavyweight crown. Every Saturday morning (the original, pre-expansion—and in retrospect, utterly tokenistic—"Yo!" time slot) some new group or, less frequently, solo performer would climb into the ring and get knocked back out of it. And then Public Enemy arrived. Although PE had been making records before Spike Lee included its late-80s songtext, "Fight the Power," in the soundtrack to his film *Do the Right Thing*, rappers Chuck D and Flavor Flav assaulted a mass public consciousness for the first time during the movie's opening sequence. As the titles rolled and a then-unknown Rosie Perez performed a street dance both provocative and threatening, Chuck D slapped at least two whole generations of Americans across the face with the lyrics:

> Elvis was a hero to most,
> But he never meant *shit* to me, you see.
> Straight-up racist that sucker was, simple and plain—
> Motherfuck him *and* John Wayne.

These lyrics, wrote Elizabeth Wurtzel in *The New Yorker*, functioned to let Public Enemy "dismiss two white pop icons as if they were just a couple of flies that needed to be swatted" (113). And American youth loved it. To counter Mom's collection of Elvis LPs and Dad's library of John Wayne videos, they made PE's next two releases—*Fear of a Black Planet* and *The Empire Strikes Black*—gold records. In response, Chuck D uttered the now-famous pronouncement that rap had become "black America's CNN" (echoed a decade later by Ras Kass's less polite definition of rap as "the Nigga News")

and white kids were free to watch it, too. The message was in the music, and vice-versa. Public Enemy and its fellow rappers were "bringing the noise" to *all* of America's young people, moving a prominent aspect of African American culture right next door to wholesome white Suburbanville, and with the advent of gangsta rap from NWA's Ice Cube and Dr. Dre, participation in the rituals and codes of the 'hood was as easy as strapping on the headphones. Rap's construction of its listeners, as those listeners saw it, was one of street-smart and self-sustaining latchkey kids against whom all odds were stacked and for whom establishment symbols—especially police officers, politicians, and educators—held nothing but contempt.

And its own self-image was all rough edges. Where black Motown musicians in the 1960s had been required by label head Berry Gordy to go to charm school in order to become "more palatable to white America" (Leland, "Race" 49) in their presentation of what Reebee Garofalo calls "the perfect metaphor for the integrationist phase of the early civil rights movement: *upbeat*, gospel-tinged black pop, produced with *a white audience* in mind. . . *threatening to no one in tone or content*, and. . . irresistibly danceable" (241; italics added), rappers who'd never seen integration become manifest in any real way simply showed up on MTV with gang attire and assault rifles, wearing dark glasses and scowling the most menacing impending-murder expressions they could muster. All of the nation's Ideological State Apparatuses identified by Althusser—especially those of family, church, school, and media—were scared witless by the posturing, and so it was only a matter of very short time before teens of all races not only flocked to watch it but also to adopt its signifying styles (in Hebdige's terms) for themselves in order to experience what Wurtzel described as "the great high on rebellion which has been mostly sanitized out of music since the sixties (112). For Michael Eric Dyson, the "white panic"

arising from young white America's huge migration to rap was nothing new since the same response has taken place each time black musicians have attracted white listeners over the decades. The difference this time, in Dyson's view, was that the clear *sexual* attraction rappers held out to white girls—young women who then both stated and demonstrated their desires to act upon the attraction—created a perfect situation for white hegemony to respond to what it immediately perceived as a crisis. Thus, a narrative was crafted by which both rap and its generative culture could be constructed as inferior, flawed, undesirable. Dyson writes: "It wasn't until rap made a huge impact on white kids that the music was so roundly attacked. As long as the 'bad' effects of rap were restricted to black kids, its menace went undetected, unprotested, or was flat-out ignored" (116). Indeed, while many of the nation's ISAs tried simply to make like Burt the Turtle in those old Defense Department propaganda films for schoolkids (in the event of nuclear attack, simply "duck and cover") in response to this panic, their more Repressive State Apparatus cousins in law enforcement began to suit up for action; after all, rap was a discursive form forged by groups named *Public Enemy* and, even more threatening, *Niggas With Attitude,* whose first big contribution to the discourse was a happy little ditty titled "Fuck Tha Police." Rapper Ice-T's own border-crossing foray into heavy metal, with a band he named *Body Count,* was a self-titled release with cover art portraying a hulking, scowling black man wielding both gun and chain, with the words COP KILLER—also the title of one of the disc's songtexts—carved into his chest. The controversy over "Cop Killer" has been well documented in a thousand different places: In brief, police departments across the country, at both state and local levels, banded together to protest, picket, and threaten a boycott against Time-Warner, Ice-T's label, due to lyrics like "[m]y adrenaline's pumpin', I got my stereo bumpin', I'm 'bout to kill me

somethin'—a pig stopped me for nuthin'!" Eventually, law enforcement was joined in its complaint by both Congress and the White House, with the result being—in contrast to the mere FBI monitoring of Public Enemy and NWA—that Ice-T's Body Count was silenced by both the removal of its offensive songtext from all new pressings of the offending album and by the further dissolution of its record contract. (This was, of course, a "mutual agreement," in the finely-crafted legalistic phrasing required of both Time-Warner and Ice-T at their respective press conferences.) Wurtzel used *The New Yorker* to remind everyone that Body Count was a *metal* band, not a rap group, and that the use of the tag phrases "rap" and "rapper" by both the media and police agencies was a rhetorical device functioning to create "a racially divisive slant [that] helped inflame the terms of the argument even further" (110), and Dyson has written more recently that "the rhetorical marks and devices of blues culture, including vulgar language, double entendres, boasting, and liberal doses of homespun machismo" forge a close link between the blues and gangsta rap (121), Ice-T's pre-metal rap genre. But it was Barbara Ehrenreich, in no less than *Time* magazine (this issue might well have been titled "Yes, We Caved, But We're Still 'Down With' Rock") who stepped forward most convincingly in Ice-T's defense:

> The 'danger' implicit in all the uproar is of empty-headed, suggestible black kids, crouching by their boom boxes, waiting for the word. But what Ice-T's fans know and his detractors obviously don't is that 'Cop Killer' is just one more entry in pop music's long history of macho hyperbole and violent boast. Flip to the classic-rock station, and you might catch the Rolling Stones announcing 'the time is right for violent revo-loo-shun!' from their 1968 hit 'Street Fighting Man.' And where were the defenders of our law-enforcement officers when a[nother] white British group, the Clash, taunted its fans with the lyrics: 'When they kick open your front

> door / How you gonna come / With your hands on your head / Or on the trigger of your gun? (89)

Ice-T himself tried to offer yet another analogy in which rap was like country music, explaining the "parallels" in country musicians "sing[ing] to their own neighborhood. . . wear[ing] jeans and hats to the Grammys. . . sing[ing] in their own language, to their own people" (qtd. in Guccione 93). What's more, the embattled rapper and metal vocalist pointed out, his protesters needed only to "look at Johnny Cash, [who] makes a record and says, 'I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die'. . . . It's very aggressive, and a lot of times violent, but it's from a country-western perspective." The problem, of course, is that responses to T's observation are formed of a massive dominant-ideology rebuttal which tramples the observation into oblivion. Even country's strongest detractors are often willing to conceive of its discourse as just a big ol' harmless cliché, and this picture of innocence combines with a further, even more entrenched argument holding that the Stones and the Clash, as representatives of an earlier and therefore *better* rock era, were *different from* all these scary rappers in the same way that Johnny and country are. What's more, Johnny Cash has long been known to Americans as a good guy, a folk icon, even though he's always dressed in black, even though he once played the part of Satan in an MTV video. (But way back before MTV ever came along, he also had a wholesome little "variety show" on the TV, back when the TV still had programs like that, and he sang along with his wife, and in the comedy bits he was all funny and sweet and such.) For their part, the Stones had made it perfectly clear, through one of their 1970s album titles and its corresponding songtext, that what they did was "*only* rock and roll," and furthermore, that they *liked* it that way. And the Clash—this is a no-brainer—were just basically *British* punks. Their beef was with the English

"Bobbies" and Scotland Yard, not the LAPD and the FBI. And the biggest no-brainer of all, of course, is that all of these guys were *white.*

Goodbye Yellow Brick Road, Part 2: (Steal That Funky Music, White Boy)

[White rap] is not a racial issue. To be real with you, white MCs usually aren't good—it's as simple as that. It's like if you saw a black person in a hockey rink: It's gonna get some attention, but he'd only be there if he was good.
- Dr. Dre (qtd. in Diehl 32).

When I moved in[to rap in the late 80s], there wasn't any of this black and white. Then around 1992, after Vanilla Ice and Marky Mark screwed the whole thing up, there was this distinction—that white rappers were stealing rap just like white rockers had stolen rock 'n roll.
- Kid Rock (qtd. in McCollom, "Divide" 3E).

[R]ock 'n' rap offers anxious white males a chance to act out their top-dog fantasies without having to take full responsibility for them
- N'Gai Croal (61).

From *Entertainment Weekly* to *Rolling Stone*, no black artist's album has ever been chosen as the best of the year.
- Armond White (17)

In the spring of 1998, I stuffed a couple of suitcases full with books, dragged those leaden bags to the airport, and flew off to Rhode Island to spend two weeks with a good friend in Providence who'd agreed to open her house to me while I plied the books in preparation for a comprehensive exam in pedagogical methods and issues. My friend, a former post-secondary English teacher herself, had been forced into premature retirement from that profession due to an insidious eye condition that was steadily destroying her sight, yet the caustic wit and clarity of expression that I'd always admired in her had, if anything, become more formidable than they'd ever been. Because of this, I made it a point to give my own eyes a rest each evening by simply sitting with her at the kitchen table or out on the porch and enjoying what would inevitably become the *challenge* of conversation—and it was in such a context that one night I happened to bring up rap as

the focus for one of my upcoming dissertation chapters. The diatribe that ensued quickly became such that I asked if I could write down every word of it, and after obtaining permission (along with self-mocking laughter and disclaimers that whatever she thought was unimportant), I broke out pen and legal pad and began to transcribe the following "interview," although it was really just a talk between old friends.

Q: *Define rap for me.*

A: Monotonous, relentless bass that lacks any kind of subtlety. It's like having sex with someone who never varies the rhythm—after a while you just go numb.

Q: *Okay, but still—what's* wrong *with it?*

A: What's *wrong* with it! Here, I'll tell you: Rap is used as a weapon by teenage drivers who play it so loudly that your house windows rattle when they go by. Or your car windows rattle if you're stuck next to them at a light.

Q: *Why do you think kids play it loud?*

A: They like it partly because they know that other people *don't* like it loud.

Q: *So is it rebellious, then?*

A: I don't mind rebellion, but I hate being assaulted.

Q: *Isn't rock—especially heavy metal—also pretty loud?*

A: Metal assaults the *senses*, and it does so creatively. Metalheads don't inflict their music on others like rappers do—and the music has all kinds of changes in rhythm. In rap, so-called 'music' serves as background for doggerel—not any astute social commentary as critics claim. It's just a general bragging game. There are some exceptions, but mostly it's boring. The only *real* music is the stuff they sample!

Q: *Some critics say it's an art form.*

A: Maybe it is. Collage is an art form, but you need to have something uniquely your own, too.

Q: *Explain?*

A: Well, I guess there *is* something unique about rap: the ability to aggravate the hell out of me, to turn me into a closed-minded old fart, the thing I told my parents I

would never be. Look, if *you* bring me some rap and say it's good, I'll listen to it with an open mind because you've recommended it, but I know I'll be struggling constantly to overcome my revulsion.

Q: *Always?*

A: The rhymes, the rhythm, the lyrics—there's just nothing there that pleases me. Maybe I'm missing some appreciation for black culture, but how? I grew up on black music and I loved it. People told me that I 'danced like a nigger'—and at the time, that was understood as a high compliment. I find black urban conditions horrifying, and maybe that's why rap is bad art as I see it.

Q: *How so?*

A: There's a lack of fresh insight; it doesn't open the senses in a new way. I'm not saying that art needs to be subtle—look at [Robert] Mapplethorpe, who shocks me into an awareness that I don't know how to deal with.

Q: *If Mapplethorpe were to have used only two models, always in the same poses, then would his photos have been like rap, as you see it?*

A: Exactly. But Mapplethorpe engaged audience emotions in startling ways instead. Or look at [Andres] Serrano's 'Piss Christ,' which is absolutely tragic. The image conveys what happened: the wonderful, positive message that Christ brought to the world was just pissed on by the church. Rap, on the other hand, is facile; it's a pat answer.

Q: *To what?*

A: Well, 'fuck you' has always been a pat answer, and there's nothing that angers me more than being told "fuck you" for five minutes straight, even if it's done creatively.

Q: *But rap often* is *doing it creatively, since it's based in part on 'the dozens' and 'toasts' in African-American oral tradition—*

A: But they're the *same* dozens, over and over!

Q: *Is there any inherent racism in your view of rap?*

A: Of course there is. How can there not be? Any white person who says that she bears no racism is deluded. I'm very empathetic, but I'm also totally removed from black experience. Still, it would be even more racist to pretend I like or respect rap music.

Q: *You said you grew up on, and liked, black music –*

A: Yes, but in that sense it's less a matter of racism and more one of simple taste. I don't want a purple car. I don't like liver. My mother made me eat liver once, and I puked instantly. Rap is like liver.

As I look back on this conversation now, I see several things not apparent to me at the time I engaged in it: first, my friend's many turns to Romantic notions of authenticity and Enlightenment conceptions of originality by way of the "creative" sensory assault by metal musicians, her claim about the "only *real* music" in rap coming from the works which rappers sample/interpolate, her argument that even a collage artist must make a "unique" contribution, and so on; second, my own counterclaim that rap's authenticity may be found in its employment of recurring figures in African-American oral tradition; third, the fact that every analogy drawn between rap and something else—metal, black music of the 1960s, the art of Mapplethorpe and Serrano, and finally a forced meal of cow's liver—is one that ultimately functions to construct rap as an inadequate failure. And in response, I find my own ideologies stirring into action: How could another *English teacher* not recognize in rap even such basic worth as found in Dyson's reminder that rappers are, in many ways, skilled wordsmiths able to

> use a variety of rhyme schemes, from couplets in tetrameter to iambic pentameter. . .[r]hyme schemes [that] can employ masculine and feminine rhymes, assonantal and consonantal rhymes, or even internal rhymes... enjambment, prosody, and sophisticated syncopations to tie their collage of rhymes into a pleasing sonic ensemble? (121)

If not any of these, then what about rap's basic ability to *influence confident writing*, as found in Jon Spayde's testimony that, as a former creative writing teacher, he has often "been thrilled when students turn their fascination with the cadences of rap—delivered to

them in all its layered, sampled, synthesized richness. . . into an awareness of their own power as poets" (54)? Instead of any such recognitions of value and worth in rap, even at such practical levels, there are only the standard complaints—rap is too loud, too repetitive, too (falsely) confrontational—and each of these complaints is "supported" by either "fact" or anecdote. But this is in no way a moral or intellectual failing on the part of the speaker. Rather, as explained by Maconie in his study of classical music, such complaints are a common practice with a common function:

> People who dislike a certain musical idiom will claim that it isn't music, even though they know very well that it falls within the customary definition of a musical composition and actually gives pleasure to other listeners. We are not dealing here with a definition of music, but rather with a definition of individual response, a deliberate distancing of personal taste from the imagined preferences of others. (14)

As a result, I see in the speaker not a "closed-minded old fart," as she herself claims to be, but rather someone attempting to reconcile her own awarenesses and memories with a fixed individual response that is completely shut to any desire, whether weak or strong, to change it. Since Adorno has likewise pointed out that simplistic notions of mere "taste" are irrelevant by the fact that the aesthetic *preferences* implied by "taste" are more accurately described as a moral *judgments* which function to close the issue entirely when "no more choices are made, the question is no longer put, and no one demands the subjective justification of the conventions" ("Character" 270), what is ultimately revealed by this struggle is the compelling nature of Raymond Williams' "structures of feeling," falling short of strict ideology but at the same time standing beyond mere personal opinion. "The perception of music," Maconie writes, "has as much to do with attitudes and conditions of hearing as with the nature of sounds themselves" (15). And it is this

issue of attitudes and conditions—of *contexts*—which leads me to my next point of discussion.

White Mythology, Black Containment

Ike Turner, who with his former wife Tina has contributed a number of songtexts with a high level of appeal for earlier white fans of rock, is one who has heard all of the stories regarding the "invention" of rock, and he says in response to them that "when somebody puts a name on something, that [doesn't] make it the beginning of it. Fats Waller, Cab Calloway—if you just take the color off of it, man, these guys rocked and rolled way back then. So how could the first rock and roll be when they decided to *name* it rock and roll?" (qtd. in Palmer 7, italics added). The answer to Turner's question forms what Foucault calls, at one point, "the episteme," that is, "[t]he total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems," and thus the episteme for the "invention" of "rock 'n roll" is a collective of cultural codes which governed popular music's "language, its schemes of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, and the hierarchy of its practices" ("Intellectuals" 191). Later, Foucault changes "episteme" to "discursive formation," an entity less concretely defined not as any specific ideas or practices being codified, but more the kind of character that a code assumes because of the rules that govern it. These rules are not likely to be consciously made and often can't be articulated; even so, the end result as Foucault sees it is that "the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures" (*Archaeology* 216). As a result, in contrast to the dissent and doubt in Ike

Turner's questioning, the preferred white narrative of rock's origin is sanitized, fixed, and at times even utopian. In that narrative, the primary figure is, of course, the so-called "king," Elvis Presley, the long-deified alchemist who, as described by Henry Pleasant in *The Great American Popular Singers*, "introduced young white America to the music that had been fermenting in the black subculture since Louis Armstrong's prime" and "stimulated in an enormous young white public an appetite and a readiness for the real thing" (qtd. in Hopkins 131). But since black music by black musicians—the implied "real thing" in this passage—was (as Dyson has already said here, too dangerous for the allowance of mass consumption by white mainstream teenagers)—I mean, that is, rather *not widely available because it had not been widely advertised or broadcast*—white consumers (for it was too early for the formation of what I've been calling *consumer-theorists* to have taken place yet) had to stick with white musicians for the filling of their appetites and the consummation of their readiness. In this, Presley was more than happy to oblige; since his first band "ranged far back into the hills" and "kept the radio tuned to the latest Memphis blues," he was able (with the help of producer Sam Phillips and backing musicians) to preside at what Marcus calls "*the giant wedding ceremony*" which "*marr[ied] white culture to black, and invented rock and roll*" ("Treasure" 285; italics added). So magnificent was this "wedding ceremony" that, for Marcus, "[i]t was as if all the contradictions of American music had been resolved in a dream." Early rock 'n roll, which Marcus elsewhere acknowledges as "black music altered in one way or another by white culture," was only "something like a secret" when black musicians still owned it, although "[b]y about 1955 it had achieved the status of a rumor" ("Introduction" ixx). Clearly such a slow growth would be detrimental to such a vital and energizing form of discourse, and so the descent of Elvis from his heavenly throne was not only beneficial,

but *necessary* for "turn[ing] rock and roll into a deeply shared culture, the password of millions, a means to identity and delight" (ixx). Yet even such an exalted being as Presley couldn't carry such a complex undertaking all by himself, so he cried out to his makers, *Lo, it is not good that I should be alone; you must make a helper for me,* and so, in Marcus's narrative, "the advent of the Beatles intensified th[e] process." (Let us also not forget Pat Boone's generous bestowing of "new life" to tired black songtexts here.) And while all of this happy helping and marrying and sharing may have taken place in a society described by Bluestein as a site where "African Americans and whites live on separate and unequal scales—in education, employment, housing, and all the other indices of well-being, including life expectancy" (2), this does not prevent the author from pointing out, more optimistically, that "in connection with music and dance, the United States is clearly the most integrated society in the world."

Now, none of this is to suggest that Elvis Presley actually had no real hand in helping to shape what we now know as rock. Nor is it even to suggest that I, personally, don't own any of his music. (I do: two "best-of" CDs.) What I *do* mean to suggest is that white people can no longer hope to rely on an exclusively white coming-of-age narrative for rock in which racial difference—make that the sheer *existence* of racial difference—is mystified so tidily by simply confining it to quick, vague mentions and in this way rendering it unimportant and unproblematic. Moreover, Robert Palmer's *Unruly History of Rock* effectively cancels even Bluestein's optimism by noting that the early genre classification of *rhythm and blues* was a code established by a writer for *Billboard* magazine and intended to signify "any sort of music that was made by and for black Americans," while *rock and roll* (an early blues-songtext code for sex, as is well known by now) was intended by white deejay Alan Freed to signify "music that was black

('R&B') in style but not necessarily made by black artists or aimed primarily at black audiences." To his credit, Freed aired black-performed original versions of songtexts rather than white covers, but even so, Palmer notes, "somehow the term 'rock and roll' came to designate guitar-based music with a 'black' beat, primarily played by and for whites" (8) and in short time the term's meaning became so Caucacentric that labels like *soul* and *funk* came around to keep black music/ians entirely separated from it. So pervasive has the rhetoric of segregation become that, for many rappers and consumer-theorists alike, the current labels of *rap* and *hip-hop* have thus far carried very few connections with *rock 'n roll* discourse at all—a situation which Palmer argues is preferable for those (including many rappers themselves) who maintain the separation (8). While Bluestein's observation about integration may still have validity in the sense that there *is* and *has been* a great willingness by whites to come out and play with black-written and black-performed music—even when the play required them to reject "their own people" as represented by such anomalies as the Average White Band out of Scotland and KC and the Sunshine Band here in the States during decades past—there has been no such willingness to let the music remain black-*owned,* nor any indication that whites have ever been willing to give back to black musicians the same amounts and forms of capital that early black music made possible for white musicians. A particularly painful and clear example of this one-way relationship took place on NBC's *Saturday Night Live* in the fall of 1998, when Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs appeared with Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page to perform the metal/rap songtext "Come With Me"—a Puff Daddy lyric over a 20 year-old Zeppelin riff accompanied by a full and formally-attired orchestra. When the performance ended, "Puffy" bowed deeply to Page, once and

then again, before laying himself nearly prostrate at the legendary guitarist's feet. Page, in turn, smiled and nodded to the rapper before finally returning a little half-bow at the waist.

Decades ago, Chuck Berry sang this chorus: "Just let me hear some of that rock and roll music / Any old way you choose it / It's got a backbeat, you can't lose it / Any old time you use it." But in practice, those last two lines were changed by whites to read this way: "It's got a *black* beat—*we* can use it / Any old way *we* choose it." Charles Keil, for instance, in *Urban Blues*, provides a concise history of Willie Dixon's songtext, "Little Red Rooster," which upon being recorded by Howlin' Wolf in the mid-1950s sold roughly 20,000 copies; a later update by Sam Cooke, whose rendition is described by Keil as "somewhat more relaxed and respectable...with an organ accompaniment and slightly altered lyrics," sold roughly 60,000 more than that. But when the Dixon work went on to catch the attention of the Rolling Stones in the mid-60s, whose version "adhered closely to the original, replete with bottle-neck guitar techniques," the white cover moved over half a million copies worldwide (48). Because the term, *cover*, always offers a pair of practical denotations by which (1) a musician who covers the material of others can do so out of tribute and deep respect for those others, and (2) a cover can function literally, as a concrete entity which completely hides the context beneath it, the "Little Red Rooster" catapulted into popularity as a hit record (at a time when half a million was still considered a massive number) became known, not as a Willie Dixon or Howlin' Wolf or even Sam Cooke tune, nor even as an example of the blues, but as a *rock 'n roll* songtext by—and from—the Stones in an early and doubled form of what has become known as a "crossover": The Stones crossed over to the blues for "their" material, which in turn crossed over to the rock 'n roll charts. And even the charts that

record the numbers resulting from such excursions are not problem-free in respect to race issues, since Garofalo has explained that

> pop charts are constructed on the basis of reports from mainstream radio and retail outlets; the rhythm and blues charts [are based on information] from outlets based in the black community. For a rhythm and blues release to become a pop hit, it must 'cross over' from the R&B charts to the pop charts, which is to say, it must first sell well in the black community. A recording is listed on the pop charts only after it is distributed and sold in mainstream outlets. (237)

As a result of this two-tiered system, for any major black artists to become *major* by mainstream definition in the first place requires them to "cross over" first, while Garofalo notes that no major white music groups or solo artists are ever required to follow suit simply because they are *already* located on the primary pop chart as their *starting point*—and in this way, black artists are "held to a higher standard of performance than white [ones]" (238). The issue is further taken up by Nelson George, who in *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* demonstrates that, for many black musicians, "one of the consequences of crossover was that if you altered your style but failed to broaden your audience. . . you ran the risk of alienating your core audience and never getting it back" (183). The number of flaming hoops and spiked pitfalls involved in crossover for black artists—endless tests of stamina, will, and the financial means to persevere which simply don't exist in the same ways for whites—are practices that can be seen as nothing less than racist, but when combined with the fact that even the attainment of "major" status for black artists will not be enough to warrant an equal placement with their white contemporaries, the issue goes beyond racism into the realm of a more overt *apartheid.* As Marsh notes, "[T]he music that the industry most loathes and fears—rap—remains its commercial powerhouse" (20), and so one way to keep that powerhouse in line, as

with Body Count/Ice-T's controversial songtext, is simply to attempt to maintain rap as the same kind of "secret" that Marcus suggests was the status of early, black-performed, electrified, walking-bassline discourse.

The secret is kept first by radio, where Garofalo notes that "African-American performers do not gain any reciprocal access to rock [stations]" (243) in exchange for black-oriented "Urban Contemporary" radio formats having been opened to the so-called "blue-eyed soul" of performers such as George Michael, Hall and Oates, Michael Bolton, and Eric Clapton. (Wait, surely this charge can't hold. Let's see: there's Jimi Hendrix on the rock stations, that's one, and Living Colour, that's. . .*it.* One dead, the other defunct.) White-owned rock stations more than happy to play the "extreme" songtexts of Korn, Bizkit, Faith No More, et al. will *never* be caught spinning equally "extreme" songtexts by black musicians RZA, Ice Cube, DMX, or even the metal of Ice-T's incarnation with Body Count. It will play Anthrax, but not Anthrax with Public Enemy; Aerosmith, but not Aerosmith with Run-DMC; it will play white rapper Everlast singing/rapping (mostly rapping) a profanity-bleeped version of "What It's Like" from his solo release *Whitey Ford Sings the Blues,* but not Everlast with his Irish-American "hardcore" (but often profanity-free) rap ensemble House of Pain. Relevant here is an open letter to owners and programmers of black radio written in 1986 by Jack Gibson, who in 1949 had become the first black deejay to broadcast his voice from America's first black-owned radio station:

> . . .[B]lack radio [has taken] an ass-kickin' and when you boil it down, the reason is [that] so many of you are tryin' to go ofay or pop on us, figurin' the more pop or ofay records you play daily will cause your ofay or pop listeners to increase. . . . Black radio, who has sold you that bill of goods? 'If you play pop music, white folks will flock to your station'. . . . Why would ofay listeners come over to black radio to hear [the] few pop

> records you play, when they got their own pop stations that can and do play more of their kinda music that you'll ever be able to [even] if you stayed on the air 28 hours a day! You can't be white, so come on home. . . . (Qtd. in George 184)[16]

And where white rock radio is the first site of rap's containment, the second is that of print publications of the kind named by KRS-One in the third epigraph to this chapter. It is these information outlets, as shown by both Will Straw and Armond White, which control—through editorial selection and preference, in turn filtering down to become an unofficial official style guide for journalists in their employ—what will be interesting, valuable, notable, and newsworthy for their readers. Observations made by both Straw and White show that the recurring names deemed as matches to these criteria belong exclusively to white performers; for Straw, these are individuals (Springsteen, Emmylou Harris, Tom Waits, Lou Reed) who have been moved into "archival" status by the magazines, while White sees a strong tendency for white musicians *in general* to receive a level of "steady praise" which is not bestowed upon black ones, as well as a dichotomy of labels in which "intelligence" is the preferred attribute for whites and "sexuality" the one most common for blacks (Straw 375; White 17). As further evidence here, Marsh points out that "[Irish rockers] U2 got headlines for selling about 350,000 copies of [their ultimately poorly received and quickly dismissed album] *Pop* during its first week in the racks. [But the rap ensemble] Wu-Tang Clan's *Wu-Tang Forever* sold almost twice that many in *its* first week" (20)—an accomplishment that went unreported and so passed unnoticed. By all but the Wu-Tang's hordes of admiring consumers, that is.

Black Faith, White Negotiation

Ultimately, the impending merger of rap with rock all comes down to color lines demarcating territories drawn on sand. By the rhetoric of multiculturalism and progressivity, this should not be the case anymore, but the memory of the first hostile takeover (or, to adjust Marcus's metaphor, the first shotgun wedding) of black musical discourse by White Entertainment, Inc. remains clearly recalled. Those who ignore history are bound to repeat its mistakes, one saying goes, while another holds that history is a philosophy fashioned from prior examples. Each maxim offers an equal number of problems and possibilities in the challenges facing the merger between standard/traditional rock and its new primary form of discourse. For the many black rap artists and their white consumer-descendants who appear ready—regardless of history—to engage in the merger, the *current* historic moment requires a long and critical look back to the *last* one. Since "[o]ppressed groups have always studied the oppressor in order to survive" (Whatley 120), events of the last 50 years offer a record in which whites turned to black music once before but in that turning, made the discourse their own; in which blacks were then (and are still) required to transform themselves and their cultural re/presentations in order to be noticed by a white rock entertainment bloc that has indicated in multiple ways how it has/had no more need for them; and in which, with the passage of years, that bloc's continued attempts to keep itself separate from black discourses and black discursive practices resulted in a significant number of black street entertainers finally recognizing—and naming—the futile ritual of pushme-pullya for what it was. "It might feel good, it might sound a little somethin', but damn the game if it ain't sayin' nuthin'!" said Chuck D in the 1998 resurgence of Public Enemy (once again by way of a Spike Lee

"joint"). That naming process, in turn, provided a hard blow to the soft midsection of a discourse that many bored consumer-theorists of white standard rock were yearning for ever since "their" entertainment bloc had turned its back and walked away from black performers and songtexts. And thus arrived the current historic moment in which rappers and rockers, their discursive forms already beginning to blend into a full merger but with no language available by which to clearly identify that process, stand at a line on one side of which lies the repetition of past mistakes and on the other of which lies the formation of a new philosophy by prior examples, and prepare—with great caution and a great deal of faith—to act. But how?

For Dyson, rap has never been "an exclusively black affair" by the fact that "African-Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, Latinos, and progressive whites all shared in the Bronx parties where hip-hop was spawned in the States." And beyond just this, even "[o]ld-school [hip-hop] legends like DJ Grandmaster Flash experimented with a wide range of music, from Frank Sinatra to [70s Irish rockers] Thin Lizzy" (124). Thus begins a possibility for a partial erasure of color lines which is outlined further by Chuck D's shift from color to abilities: "It's twenty years since rap began. It's really irrelevant what a person looks like and where they're from. The music has spread . . . to the point that it's *over*stood. Saying, 'just because I'm black, I'm more hip-hop than you'—that's got nothing to do with skills" (qtd. in Diehl 32). Reflecting a recent turn to/desire for peace by hardcore gangsta rappers whose own lives have been shaken by the murders of their colleagues Tupak Shakur and Biggie Smalls/the Notorious B.I.G. at the end of the 90s, former NWA member and founding gangsta Dr. Dre has softened his discourse markedly, saying that "[r]apping about one brother killing another brother is just not where I'm coming from these days. And I think with the recent deaths no one should. . . .

Hip-hop has to continue to evolve if it wants to survive, and part of that evolving is getting back to the positive" (qtd in Samuels and Leland 64-5). But that "positive" goal is offset by the standard boasting element in hip-hop, a lingering trope by which one is compelled to call out and trash at least *something* in order to place oneself in a position higher than what has been knocked down. Thus, in his songtext titled "Cowboy," white rap/rock practitioner Kid Rock describes himself by citing NWA's 1988 album title, *Straight Outta Compton,* and saying "I ain't straight outta Compton, I'm straight out the trailer," a move intended—along with the CD's inside-cover photograph showing Kid walking toward the trailer park which buyers are to believe is his home—to lower himself to an "authentic" status as white trash[17], but the nature of the boasting game is such that white fans could easily take his words (and their photographic "evidence") to mean that Compton's *rappers*—its *black* rappers—are inferior to "trailer"—i.e. *white*—ones, keeping the conflicts of color alive and unwell. Likewise, when Detroit-based white rapper and shining hip-hop star of the moment, Eminem, reinforces the note of "positive" change outlined by his mentor, Dr. Dre, by suggesting that racial harmony lies beyond the stage as much as on it—"[I]f there's one music that could break down racist barriers, it's hip-hop. When I do shows, I look out into the crowd and see black, white, Chinese, Korean. I see all these nationalities there for one thing"—he also offsets the observation instantly by following it with a boast (not to mention a lexical degradation to excrement status of the same unity he has just promoted): "You don't see that shit at a country show, you don't see that shit at a rock show. It's hip-hop that's doing it" (qtd. in Diehl 35). Since it was this kind of I-rule-you-suck boasting that caused the deaths of Tupak and Biggie, if any real move toward peace is to come of the impending rock/rap merger, then this trope would first require serious revision if not outright abandonment.

Another area that must be examined is the power still held by notions of a *black essence*, a particular form of rap authenticity that evades the sometimes ridiculous "crises" generated by searches for the real in standard-rock discourses due to black essence's own grounding in lived practice and recallable history. Houston Baker, for example, engages in such an examination by way of responding to those who break blackness down into even more discrete categories, and he writes that such a practice cannot hold. Calling such division of the whole into its parts a form of "intersectional thinking" and "confus[ing] binarism," Baker argues that these divisions

> rel[y] heavily upon essentialist assumptions difficult to credit in [an] age where any of us might encounter. . . a black, Vietnamese-American, potential MBA, Ivy-League, basketball-playing woman who is fully at ease with the transnational, material, and indisputably hybrid space in which she dwells. (*Studies* 71)

For individuals to deconstruct themselves into specifically-named and separable parts of identity, Baker suggests, can do little good as they face such "contemporary multiplicities," other than to make "a case of special pleading" (71). In this he's joined by Barbara Epstein's argument that "[a] politics based on identity encounters not only the problem of the fragility of particular categories of identity, but the fact that everyone occupies various categories at once. One may be female but white, or black but male; virtually everyone is vulnerable to some charge of privilege" (34). That Epstein appears to go on the assumption that all white females and all black males share two universal stations in the power hierarchy—a kind of self-evident truth that is surely not held by every individual represented in her example—is exactly why those white performers who want continued access now to the privilege of rapping and otherwise engaging in a highly racialized discourse will need to operate within a state of heightened awareness of

themselves as symbols of the specific genders, races, and social classes they carry if a repetition of history is to be avoided. While whites in rap may not necessarily be viewed by the audience as "a *repetition* of power relations," as Lott writes in his study of blackface minstrelsy (8), they will nonetheless represent "a *signifier* for" those relations and their historical position(s) within them, necessitating a careful negotiation of the subject positions being at once presented and perceived.

Here I should note that very similar challenges of representation exist in academic circles, where Sherley Williams argued nearly thirty years ago that white critics had only a "minuscule" and "negligible" place in the black-literature genre since "with only the rarest exception, white critics have proved time and again that their perceptions are neither deep enough nor precise enough to give us the insights we need into our literature and our experience" (234). And nearly twenty years after Williams' attack on white critics, with black literature having made huge gains in canonical representation and literary importance, African-American scholars were still being warned to expect "even the most apparently self-conscious and self-referential white investigation [to] conclude with the advocacy of older, Caucacentric orders" (Awkward 601-2). Moreover, Michael Awkward writes, if both race and gender were accepted as being social constructs,

> then whiteness as a dominant position in the Western racial hierarchy is potentially as formidable an obstacle to interpretive competence vis-à-vis black (con)texts as maleness is to persuasive feminist exegesis. . . . [R]acial privilege may create interpretive obstacles or, more importantly, points of resistance that [affect], in racially motivated ways—perhaps even in hegemony-maintaining ways—the effects of an exploration of blackness. In other words, white reading can mean the adoption of a posture anti-thetical to Afro-American interests. (582-83)

There is a direct correlation between literature and songtext here. Since all rap artists are also writers—not only in the literal lyric-creation sense but also in the sense

that they constantly inscribe their discourses and performative practices with the word-processors that are their bodies—any attempt by white rappers to feign racelessness only reinforces "the norm of whiteness as an ethnic category that secures its dominance by appearing to be invisible" (Giroux, "Redefining" 225). And this position of "racelessness" is exactly what Eminem attempts to create by saying, "I don't put myself in the white-rapper category. Anybody who puts me in that category—fuck 'em! Every white rapper that's come out, people have tried play on it like a gimmick. I'm like, 'Yo, when you put me out, put me out as a *rapper*, strictly based on the talent'" (qtd. in Diehl 34). No amount of profanity, parallel-drawing, or boastful pride in this statement can be enough to disguise the fact that the rapper *never directly addresses* the issue of his whiteness. Since the position of Euro-American rappers like Eminem who are engaged in a predominantly Afro-American discursive practice is a precarious one in light of past history, both black rappers and black consumer-theorists of rap must remain highly skeptical about white involvement with hip-hop, and simply dodging the question will not help matters. But Cornel West, in writing on the issue of race and its conflicts, concerns himself less with racial *authenticity* than with moral *integrity*. Calling for a more "prophetic viewpoint base[d on] mature black self-love and self-respect," West explains that a moral approach to race is one that "assume[s] neither a black essence that all black people share, nor one black perspective to which all black people should adhere," but instead tries to promote "the variety of perspectives held by black people and [the selection of views] based on black dignity and decency that eschew putting any group of people or culture on a pedestal or in the gutter" (28). This is not to say that West avoids the issue of racial authenticity completely; rather, his response to the issue offers an expanded view when he asks:

> Who is really black? First, blackness has no meaning outside a system of race-conscious people and practices. . . . [A]ny claim to black authenticity —beyond that of being a potential object of racist abuse and an heir to a grand tradition of black struggle—is contingent on one's political definition of black interest and one's ethical understanding of how this interest relates to individuals and communities in *and* outside black America. *In short, blackness is a political and ethical construct.* (25-6; italics added)

The possibilities opened up for white rappers by West's "prophetic viewpoint" are generous indeed; moreover, they provide a model for what *could be* if the principles involved in the current rock/rap merger take the time to think, to plan, and to act with the same level of integrity for which West advocates. On the other hand, if white rappers simply try to appropriate the experiences and practices of black culture once more as their own—under the same rhetoric of "skills" and "abilities" which some of their black predecessors/current colleagues are likewise employing—while simultaneously inserting their obviously and unavoidably white bodies as symbols of the experience being represented, they will ignore all of the clear disconnects between their own names as "authors" of the discourse and the material they are naming (Foucault, *Counter-Memory* 122). Thus they will ultimately engage in a process that Peter McLaren calls "enfleshment," denying all of the conflicting elements that stand between one's words—and the body generating them—and the more tangible signs pointing to the concrete/observable authorship of the position being taken ("Schooling" 154-5). By its nature, McLaren points out, enfleshment is typically built of failings and mistakes when individuals "unproblematically identify with the symbols. . . or subject positions. . . which [they have] appropriated" (155), and it has been these kinds of mistakes and failings that have already consumed the brief careers of white rappers such as Vanilla Ice and Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch, and which have hovered constantly over the

heads of the Beastie Boys since their inception in the mid-1980s. But since the Beasties, like the now-defunct rap group 3rd Bass, are white Jewish rappers who have openly acknowledged their conflicted location and all of the social symbolism behind it, while at the same time making clear the intentions and desires behind the songtexts they present and the social contexts from which they draw those presentations—and especially since, unlike Eminem, they have directly addressed the very real potential for *failure* in all of these endeavors—they have actually served to *invite* criticism and suspicion from rap's consumer-theorists. This in turn has formed a basis for dialogue between the band members, their consumer-theorists, and media critics, transforming the assembled group into consumers and co-producers of the discourse in their own right. As McLaren notes, none of us can "put on new bodies before we desocialize our old ones. . . we cannot act in and on the world *as others* if we want to see from [our own] positions critically" ("Schooling" 152), and this is the challenge for white rappers at this historic moment when an opportunity exists to revise completely the numerous conflicts extant in, and harms inflicted by, the first "marriage" between black musical discourse and white performers in the forced "wedding" of the 1950s. As one fan of white rap says now, "If white kids use hip-hop as a way to defy their racial destiny, that's a good thing" (Croal 62)—and it might be a good thing indeed, were it not for the fact that the same speaker, moments later, adds this: "You can love what black people represent without loving black people." Although journalist N'Gai Croal immediately comments on this last by writing that "curiosity doesn't necessarily translate into cultural understanding," what goes overlooked is the fact that the fan has perfectly described the exact dynamic present during the 1950s white takeover of black music.

Clifford Geertz, for one, has recognized that "an ethnographer's data are nothing more (or less) than an interpretation of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (9). Given this, white rappers would, ideally, be able to make explicit their awareness that when they interpret an Other's discursive practice they are, in fact, constructing or fashioning an interpretation based on their own histories as admirers and lifelong consumer-theorist-practitioners of the discourse. But as I have mentioned earlier here, they would also have to forego the currently "mandatory" claims (boasts) that their interpretations are both definitive ("the real thing") and incontestable ("the only thing"), since Geertz has also argued that any outsider interpretations are second and third order; only "natives" can make a first order interpretation of their own culture (15). These exact observations appear in the 1986 white-boys-can-play-the-blues-too film *Crossroads*, in which during an early scene a professor of classical music at Julliard, informed by his white student Eugene Martone (Ralph Macchio) that he wants to be known as "Lightnin' Boy," abandon classical guitar, and pursue the blues instead, tells the misguided and clearly confused student that "[e]xcellence in 'primitive music' is cultural—you have to be born to it" (quotations added). And when Lightnin' Boy later meets one of his blues-harmonica playing heroes, Willie Brown (Joe Seneca), he is met with scorn: "Long Island blues man!" the old man shouts at him. "Soul from the golden ghetto!" And what is most relevant in these scenes is the same notion of a pure *essence* with which I began this whole discussion many pages ago. As Baker has shown so well in his book *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature*, this essence is forged as much through lived practice and still-memorable historical events as it is through the ideologies sprung from those two things. The phrase "behind the mule," for instance, which Baker refers to in several places and which appears either intact or in varying form throughout

Alan Lomax's acclaimed blues history *The Land Where the Blues Began*, denotes many things at once: that one has actually *been there* and *done that* kind of living necessary to have been truly *immersed* in the discourse now being practiced; that the *content* of one's songtext must likewise be a true manifestation of that real immersion; that the *audience* must be able to detect—to *feel* in its soul—the immersion shining forth through that content. And from here it becomes even more complex. The larger point, however, is that *behind the mule* is also, as shown in the works of both Baker and Lomax, a widely shared trope of authenticity among blues practitioners and within their discourse. Baker, for example, cites bluesman Booker White as employing the phrase in his statement that "[t]he foundation of the blues is walking behind the mule way back in slavery time" (qtd. in *Blues* 188). And here on my desk is a brief biography of blues legend Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins in which appears an even fuller narrative account, using the same phrase, provided by this blues player as well:

> The reason we had the blues was because we had something to have the blues for. . . . We wash our face and eat our breakfast, we grabbed a mule, man, and put a bridle on him. We go to the field and we plow that row. Well, what can you have but the blues? All you can do is sing down that row behind the mule. But here's what you would think. You will be hoping that some day you will not have to be walkin' behind a plow. That's when you really got the blues. Well, I was plowing [with] a mule one morning and I knowed I had the blues. I tied the mule to the post and walked on across the field. . . . (Orig. qtd. in Charters 183)

If it is possible for so many blues practitioners to have been *behind the mule* simply because, as Baker writes, being *behind the mule* has been a real lived experience for thousands of American black slaves (*Blues* 188), and if many of the tropes and figures of the blues have, as Dyson shows, been carried directly over to the discourse of hip-hop, then it may be possible to argue that the protests, cautions, concerns, and general

hesitance of many black rappers and their supporters who do not subscribe to a rhetoric of skills and do not condone an unregulated "crossover" into their discourse by all of the "ofays" lining up at the door is, by at least one important criterion, understandable and perhaps even admirable. And the criterion would be that no Anglo/Euro individual has *ever* been *behind the mule* in the same way that the vast majority of rap's immediate foreparents have. Nor, for that matter, has that mule ever really been put out to pasture, since it continues to be a burden to current black musicians in the fields of white radio and journalism. So in just this one sense, being *behind the mule* moves beyond a claim to authenticity based on shallow individualism, becoming instead a collective social identity which transcends simple meaning as the *essential experience of misery*, becoming instead the *phenomenal accomplishment of perseverance* in misery's presence. This kind of accomplishment, to coincide with a satisfaction at having re-made from the rubble of the blues a new and powerful form of black discourse after having witnessed the old one being wrested away and made into the image of its captor, is not something you feel like sharing freely with anyone who wants a piece of it, especially when that *anyone* has proven, over and over again, in a number of damaging ways, to be unworthy of trust. As Benjamin has written:

> The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object. (5)

Because the "object," in the context at hand, is at once discourse, culture, agency, and an opportunity to rupture longstanding codes of hegemonic practice, Benjamin's words are no small matter. As the doors of rap discourses are—by some individuals

pulling from within and many more of them pushing from without—gradually opened to an increasing number of skilled white communicators *this* time around, history is something for everyone involved to keep in mind. While many of hip-hop's discourses are grounded within the same "traditional" (and tiring) pronouncements of the real versus the fake which crop up so often in *rock* discourses, those pronouncements have also led to a growing sociopolitical awareness of the music's active roles, origins, and possible destinies in larger cultures. Thus history is carried at the fore, and by a turn from a limiting discourse of *authenticity* to larger examinations of the *social interaction* which shapes and changes discursive practices through social spheres of influence, a space begins to open for a dialectic between music producers and their consumers. This space, and the dialectical practices that can take place within it, is my point of development for the following chapter.

5

THE POLITICS OF POWER:

Case Studies on Metallica and Rage Against the Machine

If now we pry a little closer into the poet's business, we shall see that the realizement of his Aim consists solely in the making possible an exhibition of. . . an Expression which shall in so far claim his active aid.
- Richard Wagner, 1851

Just victims of the in-house drive-by—they say jump, you say 'How high?'
- Rage Against the Machine, "Bullet in the Head"

Heavy metal is, like all culture, a site of struggle over definitions, dreams, behaviors, and resources.
- Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil* (3)

Mama, they try and break me.
- Metallica, "Hero of the Day"

Decades ago when I. A. Richards reconceived the role which rhetoric played in the social arena, his reconception gave rise to two arguments. The first, that "[r]hetoric should be a study of misunderstanding and its remedies" (3), was accompanied by a second urging that rhetorical theory turn away from "macroscopic," generalized conceptions of "the sources of the whole action of *words*" toward more "microscopic" approaches that "look into the structure of the *meanings* with which *discourse* is composed" (9; italics added). In keeping with this turn toward the group and away from the individual, Douglas Ehninger writes more recently that "[i]f the classical rhetoric may be characterized as "grammatical" and the 'new' rhetoric of the 18th century as 'psychological,' the rhetoric of our [current] period may best be described as 'social' or 'sociological'" (333). Similarly, Lynn Worsham has argued that "[r]hetoric thus far in its history has been a rhetoric of the product, of style, and of consumption" but has

neglected to set up "a new discursive economy based on a rhetoric of production." Such a task, Worsham writes, would require "formulating a new rhetoric [through] a reworking of the idea of form and order" (149), and the end result of such a reworking would be "[n]either a reified rhetoric (an institutional and repressive rhetoric) nor a purely aesthetic rhetoric of the figure, [but] a rhetoric of production whose principal arts. . . would link a new aesthetic practice to political and ethical rhetoric and produce a reconstructed social order" (149). Richard Ohmann, in describing a major shift between classical and contemporary conceptions of rhetoric, has similarly argued that "[t]raditional rhetoric tends to conceive the task of eloquence in terms of overcoming resistance to a course of action, an idea, a judgment. There is an intimate link between rhetoric and action, rhetoric and decision. . . . Modern rhetoric. . . shifts the emphasis toward cooperation, mutuality, social harmony" (65-6). This "intimate link between rhetoric and action" which Ohmann describes had been developed at length, decades earlier, by Kenneth Burke. By way of a sweepingly interdisciplinary methodology, Burke contributed the vitally important theory of *agency*—the means and abilities for accomplishing an act—to a growing awareness of social and political interchanges of power.

A gap exists between a rhetoric (in the sense of a historical system of knowledge) and those who have practiced, shaped, and interrogated the system unless there is also a thorough explanation of that system's foundational discursive formations, spheres of influence, and guiding epistomologies in order to render its history open, and thus dynamic, rather than closed and fixed. In other words, gaining a clear view of the power relations at play in a discourse and its practices first requires asking some crucial preliminary questions about the nature, tradition, and possible rupturing of that rhetoric's system(s) for codification. As Berlin has written, "[a] rhetoric can never be innocent, can

never be a disinterested arbiter of the ideological claims of others because it is always already serving certain ideological claims" (477); in this light, the issue of rock-discourse acts and utterances presented, repeated, and possibly subscribed to becomes more compelling when the reception of those acts and utterances can determine whether one is a passive and captive patient of the rhetoric, or an active agent. Each of these participatory acts, Clark warns, also requires a full awareness that "[r]hetorical statements are assertions of ideology because their claims to consensus present particular preferences as if they were absolute principles. Our rhetoric does that because we each perceive our particular preferences as inherently correct" (*Dialogue* 53)—a possible explanation for the dynamics at work behind choices made by rock-discourse participants who view the myriad issues within the discourse in a singular and simplified way. A multiple viewpoint of the world can only come about when those participants understand how, as Crowley has noted, a system of rhetoric is "tied to, and is complicit with, the social practices and relations that produce it" ("Straight" 10).

And so I have turned in this chapter to heavy metal, a particular strand of rock discourse that from its aggressively entrenched beginnings in the far margins of popular music went on to become what Will Straw, in a 1990 update of his study of the genre two decades earlier, has redefined as "one of the coolest, most critically respectable and most diverse of musical forms" (381). Once loosely defined and haphazardly classified as any songtext with loud, distorted guitarwork at its fore, today's metal strives for a no-pretense stance to distance itself from showy "corporate" acts along the lines of Scorpions, Def Leppard, and Judas Priest, to disavow the tired pseudo-Satanic theatrics of Black Sabbath, Danzig, and Iron Maiden, and to expand into newer discursive subgenres of thrash, doom, and grindcore. Leather, spiked gloves, and crucifixes (inverted

or upright) just don't get it anymore; blue jeans and T-shirts—"the Metallica look" defined by Chuck Eddy as a style which "reinforces the populist myth that hard rockers aren't jetsetters or design-school theorists, just grimy-haired streetkids in ripped pants" (207)—will do just fine when sound and lyric are what really matter in an updated genre practiced by "kids who grew up with hard-core punk and early thrash" who strive to "combine the velocity and aggression of hardcore with the more flamboyant fretboard virtuosity traditional to metal" (Palmer 286). Moreover, today's metal has had the accumulated weight of three decades worth of stereotyping to overcome, the kind of misunderstood and inaccurate notions about it shown by Andrew Ross in the introduction to his otherwise excellent Routledge anthology *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture:* "[Metal's] gothic variants remain the home of choice for the death trip and the suicide tendency" (7-8). Never mind that other discursive genres, most notably gangsta rap and country, are chock full of those same themes—or that when metal addresses these themes, it reveals a strong connection to the blues, a particular form of discourse which set out not to surrender to despair, but to *overcome* it through naming and articulating its pain (Bayles 189). In short, current metal is undergoing a metamorphosis of both sound and image, freeing itself of its former affect-driven goofiness and moving into increasingly more voluminous and abrasive forms. Part of this change is due to the ascendance of the still-unnamed metal/rap merger, a dynamic still very much in progress but having introduced a specific style of discourse championed and in large part forged by the politically-motivated group Rage Against the Machine. And the other part of metal's significant change stems from the presence, over two decades, of the San Francisco-based group Metallica as the genre's premier shaping force.

Before launching into these bands' histories and their struggles for power within

the headbanger genre, however, I'd like to first "map the conditions of existence" for heavy metal itself by making an argument for "how its genesis was made historically possible" (Redhead 20), and in doing so to push the origins of this particularly raw form of rock discourse further back than the era of Elvis, Buddy Holly, and Bill Haley—or, less often, Chuck Berry—so frequently named as the Official Start Date for rock in general. While Robert Walser has written that "[a] heavy metal geneology ought to trace the music back to African-American blues, but this is seldom done" (8), an even fuller understanding of metal's connection *to* the blues can come from starting even before the appearance of blues discourses in music history. Although the title of Martha Bayles' polemic, *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music*, gives clear warning of the jeremiad between its covers, it is Bayles who nonetheless situates contemporary rock's origins in "the entire history of Afro-American music," to include such early black discursive forms as plantation work songtexts and spirituals[18] (135). These sounds of slavery gave birth over time to the blues, whose performers in the 1920s took part in the Great Migration from the rural South to cities in the northern United States, most notably Chicago, where Bayles notes the songtexts also underwent a significant transformation in moving from acoustic guitar to electric when Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf used amplifiers for the first time to combat the noise of nightclub crowds (190). From there, one need only pick up a guitar, plug it in and turn the volume "up to eleven," as the guys in Spinal Tap say, and then quadruple the tempo of any three-chord blues tune in order to experience the same process through which the discourse of John Lee Hooker became that of metal's Mötörhead, not by appropriation but through slow transformation. Appropriation itself, Nelson George suggests, is not

possible in this case since blacks had willingly "disposed of" the blues (108) long before Lemmy Kilmister and his Mötörhead bandmates arrived on the scene:

> The black audience's consumerism and restlessness burns out and abandons musical styles, whereas white Americans, in the European tradition of supporting forms and style for the sake of tradition, seem to hold styles dear long after they have ceased to evolve. . . . Blacks create and then move on. Whites document and then recycle. (109)

George's observation is more than a little problematic in its vast generalization if not outright essentializing of African-American musical habits, not to mention its flying in the face of the intense recycling and outright reclamation of older "traditional" musical discourse which not only took place in early blues but also occurs in hip-hop sampling and interpolation.[24] But in another way it succeeds in making a larger point that the habit of canon-formation, expansion, preservation, and codification—a *systematic* approach to musical discourse—might distinguish white attitudes and practices, while remembering and re-honoring prior discourses and forms—a *celebratory* approach—may be the distinguishing points of contrast for black practice just as white habits of religious worship tend toward a silent deferral to ministerial authority and a focus on ritual while African-American worship habits tend to be more fully participatory and focused on the liturgical. In any case, what's most significant here is that by "recycling" the blues, heavy metal got tagged with the same label—"devil music"—that its source genre once wore. The myth of blues practitioner Robert Johnson having sold his soul in exchange for artistic and commercial success is part of American folklore now, but the connection between blues and Satan comes from another such lore. As Jon Michael Spencer relates in his history *Blues and Evil*, both whites and their black slaves in the old South named, on a purely arbitrary basis, certain instruments as belonging to the devil since he himself

allegedly played them (26). For the Europeans, these were wind instruments; for the Africans, stringed— especially the guitar, or "box"—and the result was that blues singers and guitarists were "shunned by the church faithful" (27).[19] So labeled, blues guitarists incorporated their devil associations into their songs—a tradition carried forward by a number of metal bands both current and defunct—but practitioners of the blues also sang of other themes which metal has preserved: migration and restlessness, prejudice and racism, magic and occult (called "hoodoo" by the blues), alcohol and chemical use/abuse, crime and poverty, prisons, wars, sickness, death, religion, and hell (Oliver; qtd. in Bayles 190). For early white metal musicians such as Led Zeppelin, the attraction held by the blues was the same as that offered to whites by black jazz musicians decades earlier: "[N]ot just new sounds and rhythms, but new relationships, those of the hitherto inaccessible culture. . .[the music] seemed to offer an alternative set of values" (Small 330). In this attraction, it's also possible to view the blues as a desirable discourse seen by white metalheads as a way to "disrupt the prevailing array of [other] discourses through which subject identities are formed . . . so as to produce new articulations that will produce new subjects and new forms of political alliance" (Bennett; "Texts" 5) through alternative conceptions and formations of identity. Sensing, then as now, that standard rock had begun to sound like what Adorno had called popular music in the 1940s—"Aunt Jemima's ready-mix for pancakes extended to the field of music" ("Critique" 211)—for what were protest songs and psychedelic "feed your head" anthems, if not recipes for rebellion?—early metal practitioners made their own discourse faster, louder, angrier, and *less* palatable to mainstream commercialism. When the MC5 began its most famous songtext with the now-legendary call, "Kick out the jams, motherfuckers!", it could not have been from a wish for widespread airplay, no matter

how "underground" 60s FM radio may have been. Metal came into being as anti-listener, anti-industry, and anti-*songtext*—even if mainstream rock radio did find a way to broadcast the MC5 through an overdubbed call to "brothers and sisters" rather than the initially-named audience.

Reading Metallica: A Pedagogy of Agency

There's very few outside factors involved. It's not your typical "Give the people what they want" or "Yeah, we're here to play rock and roll for you and party all day," or any of that. This is fuckin' *our* shit, and we wanna do what's right for us, what we feel good about. If you like it, you're invited along. If you don't, well, there's the door.
- Lars Ulrich of Metallica

And my ties are severed clean; the less I have, the more I gain
Off the beaten path I reign: rover, wanderer, nomad, vagabond—call me what you will.
- Metallica, "Wherever I May Roam"

They dedicate their lives to running all of his
He tries to please them all, this bitter man he is
Throughout his life the same: He's battled constantly
This fight he cannot win....
- Metallica, "The Unforgiven"

At first glance, it would seem ridiculously easy to track Metallica's rapid ascension from resistance to hegemony, from counterculture to mainstream power structure. But such a study, Steve Redhead warns, is of the far too typical kind of "cynical" critique that focuses on the "exploitive, shallow, and thoroughly commodified culture underlying [popular music]" (13) and ignores the inherent richness of the discourse as a "site of intersecting cultural struggles" where, as Grossberg notes, current rockers "constant[ly] reassert that we/they are getting screwed . . . and keep trying to name the power, to identify those who are doing the screwing, so to speak" ("Anybody" 57). More importantly, "cynical" critiques focused on commercial complicity and corporate commodification of rock's discourses overlook, or perhaps only cast into too

deep a shadow, the important power struggles a band can find itself engaged in over the direction of its discourse, the perception of its image, the manifestations of its desires, and the transformations of its varying textual and cultural forms. In short, critiques focused solely on a triad of production, consumption, and the reifying processes between them tend to short-change or eliminate altogether issues of agency. Therefore as a longtime consumer-theorist of metal myself, I too will embody its own position of resistance by likewise shrugging off the easiest, most "obvious," i.e. critically favored, possible readings of the discourse form. To get there, I'll offer a pair of readings—Metallica the Unapologetically Complicit, and Metallica the Defiantly Resistant—drawing in part from Chris Crocker's *Metallica: The Frayed Ends of Metal* and Mark Putterford and Xavier Russell's *Metallica: A Visual Documentary* as sources to supplement my own knowledge of the band and its history.[20] Crocker, an American, tends to offer a largely uncritical and at times even fawning account of the band's rise to popularity, while British writers Putterford and Russell take a clearly cynical position that at times will have many readers wondering how *A Visual Documentary* can claim to be "THE book for Metallifans," as advertised on its front cover.

By all accounts, Metallica's formation as a band is credited to drummer Lars Ulrich, a Danish junior-ranked tennis player who developed a rabid affinity for a type of hard-edged discourse that was called, by music critics in the late 1970s and early 80s, the "New Wave of British Heavy Metal." Abandoning his tennis racquet for a drum set following his parents' move to Los Angeles and the States, Ulrich worked as a newspaper carrier, taught himself drumbeats by following along with NWOBHM records, and advertised his desire to join with other musicians in performing cover versions of the songtexts he loved. James Hetfield, a fellow teenaged admirer of the New-Wave genre

who worked in a print shop and had picked up the guitar after many years of despised piano lessons, responded to Ulrich's ad; the first and most significant realization the two fledgling musicians had, upon jamming together, was that Hetfield had no singing ability and Ulrich's drumming skills were even worse. Hetfield, in fact, gave up all hope for the partnership after Ulrich's cymbals flew off their stand whenever he hit them. Pressed nonetheless by Ulrich to stay with the project, Hetfield recruited two other musicians to round out the lineup, and Ulrich appropriated the new band's name, *Metallica*, from a list of fan-magazine titles submitted to him by some writer friends for his recommendation. Liking this name best, he simply deleted it from the list and suggested the friends go with *Metal Mania* for their publication. Untrained and raw, but now newly named, the four teens cut a demo of an original songtext titled "Hit the Lights" for a compilation album to be released by a local independent record label. The album's cover, upon release, misspelled the band's name as "Mettallica" and further misspelled the last names of each of Ulrich's and Hetfield's bandmates. Moreover, the lyrics to "Hit the Lights" were standard jock-rock machismo that began with a tribute to an influential work in the metal canon, Mötörhead's live album *No Sleep Til Hammersmith:*

> No life till leather / We are gonna kick some ass tonight
> We got the metal madness / When our fans start screaming
> It's right, well all right / When we start to rock
> We never want to stop again. . . .
> You know our fans are insane / We are gonna blow this place away
> With volume higher / Than anything today, the only way. . . .

In a purely aesthetic and lyric-based analysis, any originality in this "original" composition would have to be limited to the vivid imaginations which Hetfield and Ulrich showed in dreaming up a history of "screaming fans" and any sort of "place" to "blow away," since performance of their music had thus far been limited to the living room of

James's parents' house. But the *music* behind the words followed a tempo faster and louder than anything previously recorded by an American metal band. The record was a local success, and the group—praised by area fans and critics alike for this new form of "thrash" discourse—found steady work. Soon after, they replaced their bassist with the more accomplished Cliff Burton, who taught them music theory and introduced them to classical works, especially Bach, and their lead guitarist with Kirk Hammett, who'd studied under rock-guitar maestro Joe Satriani and introduced Hetfield, Ulrich, and Burton to a style of soloing that moved away from "American" blues-based fretwork and incorporated "European"-flavored minor notes/chord progressions instead.[21] Signing with yet another independent label, Megaforce, headed by record-store owners Jon and Marcia Zazula, Metallica cut its first full-length album, which the band members wanted to title *Metal Up Your Ass.* Corporate distributors, however, who would be stocking the album in record-store bins, objected to the title and refused permission for the band to use it; in response, bassist Burton uttered, in reference to the executives behind the refusal, "Just kill 'em all, man"—and *Kill 'Em All* became the substitute title.

In approaches to metal discourses that require all aspects of the discourse—especially its practitioners—to reflect a naturalized essence of "radicalism" or "opposition," there is little tolerance for a band credited with the founding of thrash metal to embrace classical compositions, learn music theory, receive training from a master musician, and compromise its own desires in deference to industrial power. So, in this Metallica-the-Unapologetically-Complicit reading, the band is already seriously losing its resistant footing—and its story has only begun. Having developed a following by playing faster and louder than its rivals, Metallica traveled to Denmark to record its second album, *Ride the Lightning.* The title of this work, prison slang for execution by electric chair,

reflected a new politicized content to the band's songs which, Crocker notes, can be directly attributed to the success of the first album since the proceeds from its sales allowed the band members to buy their first television set and use CNN as a supplier for topical, news-based themes (64). But along with this thematic change, Metallica also went "experimental" on the new album, slowing its tempo and introducing acoustic guitar to the lead-in for its anti-suicide song, "Fade to Black." The group's consumer-theorists, sensing an impending crossover to mainstream metal, voiced collective displeasure; Ulrich responded by saying he'd already become

> fed up with the mentality shown by so many thrash[ers]; all they want to do is play faster and faster. What does that prove? Anyone can concentrate on speed for its own sake, but this doesn't allow any room for subtlety, dexterity, or growth. Metallica is always seeking to improve, which is why we're getting attention now. (Qtd. in Putterford & Russell 45)

Already constructed by many former admirers as a sellout, his agency as a resistant force called into serious question, Ulrich's next move only served to support their continued condemnation. He persuaded his three bandmates to abandon the Zazulas and their Megaforce label for a much more lucrative deal with Elektra Records. Moreover, he also pushed them to sign with Q-Prime Management, a firm very much in the music mainstream. Q-Prime, in turn, got the band a slot on a major European tour—during which bassist Burton was killed when the group's tour bus overturned on an icy highway. Between Metallica's next two albums—*Master of Puppets*, with Burton on bass guitar, and its successor *And Justice for All*, with replacement Jason Newsted in the lineup—the group nudged further into conformity by allowing truncated "radio edit" versions of two of its songtexts to be released as singles, and by abandoning its pledge to forswear videotext as a promotional tool. The vow was initially broken by the release of the

$19.98 Home Vid: Cliff 'Em All, in which the band attempted to qualify and validate its decision first with the price-locking title preventing Elektra Entertainment from profiting excessively at the hands of Metallica fans, and second by a hand-scrawled, error-plagued explanation on the videotext's back cover:

> Well, we finally went and did what we always talked about not doing, releasing a vid! Before you throw up in disgust let us tell you the idea behind this. First of all, this is not your typical shit home vidio [sic] ~~(its worse)~~ done with high-tech camera production and sound, its [sic] a compilation of bootleg footage shot by sneaky Metallifux, stuff shot for TV that was never used, but we've held on to, home footage, personal fotos [sic] & us drunk. But most important, its [sic] really a look back at the 3 1/2 years that Cliff [Burton] was with us and includes his best bass solos and the home footage & pix that, we feel, best capture his unique personality and style.

The disclaimer presented an argument supported by evidence difficult for judgmental consumer-theorists to refute: this videotext release was made possible through bootleg (i.e. fan-generated, not band-commissioned) footage, unused (i.e. not commercially valuable) television clips, and especially an *ethos*-establishing intent of paying tribute to a musician whose skills had been admired, and whose death had been mourned, by a great number of fans. But all of these rhetorical contortions went to waste in 1988 when the band, at the behest of Elektra, *did* go on to commission a "high-tech camera production" MTV promotional videotext for its songtext "One," from *Justice;* when "One" went on to be nominated for that most mainstream and socially-sanctioning of musical awards, a Grammy; and especially when, although it did not win in its category, the band performed live for the tuxedo-and-ballgown set at the ceremony. With Ulrich watching and directing the band's finances, Metallica entered the 1990s with a lucrative recording contract, high-powered management representation, two videotexts in the stores,

numerous royalties pouring in from clothing and memorabilia sales, and a touring entourage of eighteen trucks and sixty full-time employees who followed the musicians to five-star hotels as they traveled the U.S. and Europe. After its initial loss at the 1989 Grammys, the band collected two awards from that same institution before going on to record a sixth album, this one eponymous. *Metallica*, in sharp contrast to all of the releases before it, contained very short, formulaic songtexts perfect for radio play, five of which were accompanied by MTV videotexts, and one of which was a tender love ballad. The album's producer, Bob Rock, was a technician best known for making slick, radio-friendly music sanitized of all rough edges, and who persuaded James Hetfield to take voice lessons in order to sound less raw. *Metallica* arrived in stores boasting the number-one spot on the *Billboard* sales charts; its 1993 follow-up, *Live Shit: Binge and Purge*, was a combination disc/video/book package bearing a retail price of ninety dollars. In just ten years, Metallica had gone from "cult to culture" (Crocker 4), losing all of its credibility as a force of resistance to both commercialization and commodification and being thoroughly consumed by the rock-culture hegemony it had held in contempt early on. Once content to shun mainstream practitioners of what Eddy calls "nerf-metal" (302)—soft melodies framed by loud volume, as performed by such groups as Starship and Journey—to the point where the members of Metallica flatly refused to record music at studios where these groups had worked before them—they eventually shared a stage with no less than Elizabeth Taylor and Liza Minelli at the 1992 AIDS benefit tribute to Queen's Freddie Mercury. The band, in Putterford and Russell's British-based critical view, "had clearly been transformed into the kind of highly-polished corporate money machine they once existed to rebel against. They were just another fat turkey on the production line, bearing no resemblance to their former selves" (78).

Dealing out the agony within / Charging hard and no one's gonna give in
Living on your knees: Conformity / Or dying on your feet for honesty....
Following our instinct: Not a trend / Go against the grain until the end.
- Metallica, "Damage Inc."

Never cared for what they say / Never cared for games they play
Never cared for what they do / Never cared for what they know—And I know.
- Metallica, "Nothing Else Matters"

As the first reading, of Metallica the Unapologetically Complicit, comes to a close, the critics have no lack of evidence in making their assessment of the band's position. Yet one also has to wonder whether the "fat turkey on the production line" decree works to deny options for seeing Metallica fully, as a site of discursive practice grounded in conflict. What's more, such a quick verdict of corporate complicity may also ignore any possibility that, while the music industry of late corporate capitalism surely represents what Bakhtin called "unitary language" (*Imagination* 270), a language of systematic "normality" that serves to codify the available discourse forms of its members and dispense controlled measures of cultural capital to those same members, Metallica might still be seen as having brought forth a more "literary language" of agency that created an empowering position of control over its discourse and forced the validation of that agented discourse by the very groups—Elektra, MTV, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (the Grammy people), radio programmers, fellow metal bands, and especially Metallica's own consumer-theorists—who wished it so hard away. If alternative readings do exist, then the Metallica lyrics used as section epigraphs thus far, easily constructed as standard fare in metal discourse and as a necessary reflection of teen angst and rage as recalled (but not lived) by four musicians now well into their thirties in order to attract the attention—and the dollars—of metal-discourse consumers, might also show how, even while dancing (or moshing) inside the capitalist market

economy that would embrace, sanitize, and thus commodify the group's discourse and agency, the primary focus of Metallica's struggle as reflected in the admittedly Romanticized lyrics cited here has been to ensure that the dance will always move the band a few more steps away from the defining and identity-fixing clutches of mainstream rock culture. Already enmeshed in an artificial and wholly reified construct of metal as a leatherbound, slobbering beast whose purpose is to threaten everyone over eighteen and validate everyone under, Metallica's own fall into such an image and tradition occurred in its very early years when the still-teenaged band members conformed to every outside-authored expectation and definition of what a metal band was and should do. "Hit the Lights" was, as I've already said, typical metal-discourse blather in its lyrical content, and the band performed its early *Kill 'Em All* songtexts in standard metal garb—leather—under a huge barbed-hook logo (see figures 1 and 2 ahead) while encouraging its audiences to chant obscenities between songs (*$19.98 Home Vid*). While the musical style may have been in some ways innovative, everything about its delivery was basic rehash.

But after the band's early posturing allowed it to come into its own as a discursive force, Hetfield and the others likewise came into an awareness of agency by focusing on their own private desires as writers of the discourse and ignoring the common desires of the audience as readers, with the result becoming an ongoing project to subvert every favored trope subscribed to as a permanent truth and unquestioned requirement by both music industry executives and metal's consumer-theorists. On the group's second album, Hetfield abandoned his affected screech, the standard sound of metal vocalists, dropping his voice to a deeper, more normal register. The songtext "Fade to Black" introduced acoustic guitar to a thrash tune, arguing that headbanger music did not, in fact, preclude an appreciation for the softer sounds of earlier times and genres; indeed, that it could

be *made* of those sounds. And the overall tempo of this album, in response to the awestruck appreciation by consumer-theorists for the blitzkrieg pace in the first one, was slower. Signing with Elektra and abandoning its independent-label affiliation unquestionably nudged Metallica several steps toward the mainstream, but in response to its courtship by the suit-and-tie corporate set, the band did several things to confirm its agency. First, it refused to restrict the length of its songtexts on its initial major-label offering, *Master of Puppets,* to anything near the three-minute limit imposed by commercial radio, in effect rendering the album unpromotable through airplay. To make promotion even more of a challenge, in a fairly brilliant reading of the silently-subtextual ideology behind the warning labels being advocated at the time by Tipper Gore's PMRC, the group designed a stop-sign shaped sticker for the cover of *Puppets* which read: "The only track you probably won't want to play is 'Damage Inc.' due to multiple uses of the infamous 'F' word. Otherwise, there aren't any 'shits,' 'fucks,' 'pisses,' 'cunts,' 'motherfuckers,' or 'cocksuckers' anywhere on this record." (The "warning" was simply covered by oversized price stickers at all but the most extreme record shops.) The band then followed *Puppets* not with another major studio release, as Elektra had hoped, but with a brief collection of NWOBHM cover tunes partially recorded in Lars Ulrich's garage. To prevent Elektra from gouging buyers, the group titled this new work *The $5.98 EP,* a move later echoed in the title of its first videotext release. After releasing its fifth album, *And Justice for All,* Metallica received critical praise and attention for the politically-aware content of the new songs and the literary quality of the anti-war songtext "One," inspired by Dalton Trumbo's novel *Johnny Got His Gun.* As before, the band immediately overturned these new and unwelcome subject positions of activism and intellectualism by making clear that what it knew of world politics was only as much as it could gather from

CNN in brief sound bites while traveling from one concert to the next, and that its reading of Trumbo's novel had been, if anything, a quick scan—a fact made clear when Ulrich, in a televised interview, referred to the main character in the novel as "Johnny."[22] And when it gave in to Elektra's push to make an MTV video for the radio-edited (shortened) version of "One," the band first set out a lengthy list of rules that culminated in its having absolute final-approval authority for the clip. Embarrassed by the standard metal-videotext format, in which groups either lip-synced or played out melodramatic scripts in high camp, Metallica insisted that its first MTV-promo venture would consist mostly of outtakes from the 1971 film version of Trumbo's novel intermixed with brief black-and-white frames of the musicians performing their songtext in an empty warehouse. No script, no skulls, no nearly-naked women stalked by demons; the videotext did its job for Elektra and no more.

Metallica entered the 1990s with Hetfield steadily confronted by evidence of an ever-increasing modeling of his discourse by other hardcore thrashers. His singing style, which had effectively killed the falsetto screech that had once dominated metal vocals, was now also the sound of Pantera, White Zombie, Helmet, Slayer, et al.—everyone growled. His songs had stretched into six, eight, eleven minutes of complex chord changes and multiple bridges; this was now standard metal tunesmithery. His lyrics had become politically and socially thematic; this too was commonplace. Having cleared out a comfortable space for Metallica inside the headbanger forest, Hetfield was now surrounded by upstart sapling clones that seemed to close off his band's main avenues of growth. In response, Metallica threw off every reifying definition it had accumulated: It hired a "mainstream" producer for its new album, whittled its songtexts down to three or four minutes and an equal number of chord changes, replaced CNN

themes with topics from Hetfield's now-adult perspective on his childhood life, called in an orchestra to supply string accompaniment for the love ballad "Nothing Else Matters," and commissioned videotexts for almost half of the new songtexts. The new album, *Metallica*, came out with a nearly all-black cover, the band's logo barely visible, the faces of its members appearing as gray silhouettes. Continuing in its drive to function as a force of resistance against outside objectification and to preserve its agency as a leading entity in metal's discursive practices, the group subverted everything, including itself—and in doing so, it presented to the market the first number-one selling heavy metal album in the history of music sales charts.

Here, for critics searching for evidence of the vast power of the "culture industry" which the Frankfurt School described, is the most satisfying ending for the story, whereby that industry has forced resistance into a corner where the last available act of defiance is required to take the form of total capitulation, instantly rendering moves of resistance and struggles for agency invisible as political acts. For Metallica, separation from metal's commercial (and commercial*izing*) aspects is made all the more difficult since the band's two-decade effect on the market is formidable. Independent record labels, like the one that gave Metallica its start, went on to become a thriving part of the alternative-music scene. The headbanger press, which in 1982 had only one publication outlet, Britain's *Kerrang*, (Putterford & Russell 73) now has over forty titles between the U.S. and Britain alone; this does not account for Japanese and European publications of which there are dozens more. And where metal was once considered off-limits by radio programmers, it is now common practice for many mainstream-rock stations to set aside whole time blocks for nothing *but* metal songtexts. Metal "pretenders," especially those in the short-lived "hair band" genre covered by Spheeris's documentary *The Decline of*

Western Civilization, Part II and made of acts like Poison, Ratt, Faster Pussycat, and Skid Row in the 1980s, were dismissed by consumer-theorists nearly as quickly as they appeared; other acts like Mötley Crüe and Guns N' Roses quickly dropped the makeup-and-mousse routine in order to stay alive in the metal arena. And through Metallica's appearances at such televised events as the Grammy Awards and the Freddie Mercury tribute, the band succeeded in forcing metal into the living rooms of millions of viewers who discovered there was much more method than madness involved in the music. As Will Straw has observed, metal at the start of the 1990s had become respected as a valid and important form of musical expression. Indeed, Metallica can be seen as having *become* a form of culture industry itself by wielding influence of a magnitude that more established business entities could never have hoped to possess, much less exert.

And yet; and yet. Perhaps Metallica, in its two-decade struggle to resist total capitulation to the desires and definitions of both the capitalist music market and the consumer-theorists who feed that system, can be seen as having built both a career and a reputation from—to paraphrase Laclau and Mouffe—the creation of fissures for a fan-based hegemony to fill in order to maintain a permanent state of crisis. By this alternative reading, it might be possible to argue that in order to keep its discourse vital, the band imposes upon itself a requirement for constant transformation in order to challenge, and ultimately to corrupt, the codes by which "heavy metal" is fixed as a discursive form and by which metal's *practitioners* are likewise fixed merely as patients, rather than agents, of the discourse. As Eagleton has written, "[t]he most efficient oppressors are the ones who persuade their underlings to love, desire, and identify with their power; and any practice of political emancipation thus involves that most difficult of all forms of liberation, freeing ourselves from ourselves" (*Ideology* xiv). This becomes the basis, in an alternative

reading, for casting Metallica as the agent of not so much its own liberation from the freezing power of those outside its own realm of discourse production, but more of the liberation of the very consumer-theorists whose intense love, desire, and identification of and with the band leave them most in need of a *new* form of identity, made possible through "their" band's own position of emancipation from the cumbersome weight of a fixed and immobile identity and role in discursive production. For Michel de Certeau, any form of production that is by nature "rationalized, expansionist, centralized, spectacular and clamorous" is placed into immediate conflict with its audience, defined as "an entirely different kind of production, called 'consumption' and characterized by its ruses, its fragmentation. . . its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity" (31). The perplexing nature of this conflict, as it is experienced by individuals involved in the initial production, lies primarily in the tendency of consumer-based "production" to "show itself not in its own products...but in an art of using those imposed on it" (31). De Certeau's many arguments to suggest that "consumption" by those at the "margins" has in fact become an inextricable part of *production*—not in a repositioned center, but by a reconceived notion of the marginal—lead to an ability to view Metallica's songtext, "The Struggle Within," as neither a rhetoric of teen angst nor a Romantic ideology, but rather as a first-hand narrative of the power struggle between the primary and secondary producers of a discourse:

> Reaching out—for something you've got to feel
> While clutching at what you thought was real. . . .
> Closing in—the pressure upon you is unreal
> What the hell—What is it you think you're gonna find?
> Hypocrite—Boredom sets into the boring mind
> Home is not a home, it becomes a hell / Turning into your prison cell
> Advantages are taken, not handed out / While you struggle. . . .

The most significant aspect of these lyrics is the complex way they can illuminate de Certeau's argument by functioning as valid perspectives for *each* of the discourse "producers" involved in the struggle. For the band-producer, the "you" in lines one, two, four, and five becomes the consumer-theorist, clearly recognized as a co-producer by the "unreal pressure" exerted on the band in line three and turning the band's discursive "home" into a "prison cell" where "advantages are taken, not handed out" in lines six and seven. Yet at the same time, the force of the consumer-theorist, having asked a variation of a foundational question in philosophy—"If a musical text falls into the rack of a record store, but no one is there to buy it, does it make a sound?"—establishes the means to see *itself* as the entity being "pressured" by the band-producer's constant turns, *itself* as posing, in response, a question for the band—"What is it you think you're gonna find?"—and itself as accusing the band-producer of hypocrisy for failing to deliver what its overseer, the consumer-producer, has demanded and expected. A charge of hypocrisy could not be possible without the presence of the controlling metaphor of authenticity, and as Taylor has written, "the ethic of authenticity [reveals a] site of an ineradicable tension [which] comes from the sense of an ideal that is not being fully met in reality. And this tension can turn into a struggle, where people try to articulate the shortfall of practice, and criticize it" (76-7). Returning to Eagleton, then, the "other side" of the liberation narrative cited earlier must also be examined, since any form of oppression which "fails to yield its victims sufficient gratification over an extended period of time" will face the surety of eventual rebellion (*Ideology* xiv). Metallica bassist Jason Newsted has articulated the conflict between his band and its fans in this way:

> A lot of groups still play real fast and they do it well. And that's okay, we've already done that. We helped to invent that. . . but we have more to

> offer than that as well. We're more than just metal, okay? *Fans just want us to be in this little thing right here, and we're not happy with that.* . . . If you want just the fast stuff, [support] Napalm Death and Rage Against the Machine. . . go to their shows, buy their T-shirts, but don't disrespect the guys who helped invent the fast stuff that these [bands] learned from. All we're doing is doing what we feel. . .[b]ut *it's better when fans say we can't [change], because then we want to do it that much more.* (Qtd. in Miller 14; italics added).

As Eagleton has written, rebellion itself is "rational . . . when the miseries clearly outweigh the gratifications, and when it seems likely that there is more to be gained than to be lost by such action" (*Ideology* xiv). Thus a look at the Metallica lyrics from the songtext "Wherever I May Roam" can work in tandem with Newsted's articulation to reveal something more than a Romantic yearning for a knowable self: "And my ties are severed clean; the less I have, the more I gain. Off the beaten path I reign: rover, wanderer, nomad, vagabond—call me what you will." In a more expansive view, the lyrics may also present the heart of a dialectic taking place between the primary and secondary producers of everything that has come to be known as Metallica. With the multi-platinum success of their most experimental and confrontational album to date, the band faced a formidable challenge in overturning the immediate and vehement charges of "selling out" which accompanied the commercial and critical success of the "black album" as a collection of discourse, but made all the more subject to hostile reception by core consumer-producers who did not condone the flurry of videotexts and radio singles to which the band had always stood in opposition. Ultimately, the band's reply to these charges and suspicions took five years to formulate, and it came by way of utterly suspending every practice and style that could be defined and defended as heavy metal.

Figure 1: Metallica (from left)—
Hetfield, Hammett, Ulrich, and Newsted as they appeared until 1995.

Metallica Digest Volume 6 (1996): Issue 017
Subject: Re: release date for Load

First of all, this digest is getting pretty shitty lately. . . . For the people that don't like the band, why are you even on this listserv? GROW UP PEOPLE. Moderator, can't you do something. . .???

---

i can do something. but i shouldn't have to do something. . . . most opinions about bands & musicians are no different than religious zeal. i am not running a religious zealot digest. i had hoped you folks were far enough past puberty to carry on rational conversation. perhaps i've been wrong. . . .

When an announcement came in 1996 that Metallica had been added to the list of performing bands for the summer's Lollapalooza tour, Eddy writes that "accusations of integrity-loss [on the part of the event] started flying. . .[and] the only conceivable explanations were fishing-for-headlines, conspiracy theory, or short-term memory loss" (67). And the reason these charges were leveled at concert organizers was that Metallica, in 1996, had become a bitter enemy to not only metal and hard rock discourses, but to the whole *ethos* of the rock carnival which Lollapalooza represented. Lars Ulrich, a year earlier, had previewed the change to come as only a stylistic turn *musically*, saying that his band, in the studio recording its first album of new material in five years, was heading into what he called

> a dirtier, looser thing, not so tied into the idea of. . .'the mighty guitar riff.' It's so corny to say 'bluesier.' I like the word *greasy*. When I listen to

> [our earlier albums], I still hear a tension, a staccato thing that we've always been a slave to. We've done that. It doesn't have a lot of soul in it. The human spark gets put to the wayside. (Qtd. in Fricke 98).

What Ulrich did not disclose, however, was the *delivery* by which this stylistic turn would be presented to the band's vast audience; that is, the *image* of Metallica's new "human spark" which itself would turn as well, but in a way far more radical than the mere sound of the band's discourse. The 1996 album, *Load*, stood the band's definition by core consumer-producers completely on its head. The CD bore a cover photo by Andres Serrano in which a mixture of blood and semen were pressed between panes of glass, and the band's barbed-hook logo had been replaced by a softer, rounded, and rather undistinguished set of capital letters. In addition, the numerous photos inside the CD booklet presented the band members, in Eddy's critical description, "male-bonding shirtlessly and flaunting Freddie Mercury coiffures and glam makeup, a notably gutsy [move] for San Francisco guys who'd never exactly specialized in songs about sex with women" (50). Kirk Hammett's appearance was the most severely altered: In contrast to

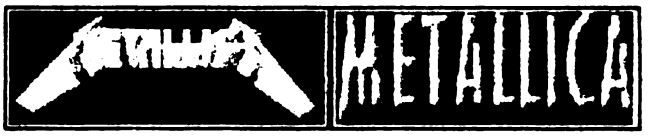

Figure 2: The old "barbed" logo (left); the new "plain" logo (right).

the mere short, college-athlete haircuts of his three bandmates, Hammett had shorn his formerly waist-length curls to a tight Afro style which lifted his forehead by several inches, while also piercing his lower lip with a silver spike, having his stomach and left side tattooed, and hiding his eyes behind gobs of black mascara. The Internet immediately began to burn with howls of confusion and alarm on the part of the band's core consumer-

producers: Had Metallica been a *gay* band all along? Were rumors true of an affair between Hammett and Ulrich (who appeared, in a few liner photos, in a white fur coat and makeup to rival the lead guitarist's)? Could anyone verify that the semen and blood in that disgusting cover photo had come from *Hammett himself?* And even if not, *what the hell was going on here?* As bassist Newsted has explained in retrospect:

> People saw these photographs and they freaked, and I freaked too, as a fan of Metallica. Because it didn't look like *my* Metallica, the Metallica I know and what was a part of me. . . . I argued from day one that I did not want to do those photos, that I did not want semen on the cover; that doesn't represent Metallica. We're not homosexuals, that's not something I'm into. I don't think we should put on eye makeup. That's not me; I don't agree with it. . . . [But] I had to go with [the photos] because we agreed—those guys talked me into it. . . . What threw me the most [about the *Load* controversy] was that whole haircut thing. It was probably too much at once. (Qtd. in Miller 13, 16.)

The lack of agency in Newsted's solitary vote against the image changes is a holdover from his replacement-guy status after the death of Cliff Burton in early 1987, and it confirms Metallica's tight direction by Hetfield and Ulrich. For Newsted, Ulrich's consistent inclination toward full rock-star imagery is something that particularly rankles—"Lars is really into making the scene and being seen. That's what makes him go. . . . Lars and I are getting to be more and more like polar opposites as we go on" (qtd. in Hedegaard 119)—but the image of Metallica which formed the overriding context of *Load*'s vehemently negative reception was not the only sign of the two band leaders' awareness of the power held by signs of success and, more importantly, its acceptance. The album's back cover (see figure 3) consisted of what might well have been a giant middle finger raised by the group to its core group of definers: a photo of all four band members seated at a vast wooden table, dressed in gaudy shirts and black sportcoats,

wearing sunglasses, with Hetfield and Hammett smoking cigars, Hammett and Ulrich drinking white wine from delicate stemware. (Newsted is noticeably removed from the pose and has no props.)

Figure 3: (From left) Hetfield, Ulrich, Hammett, and Newsted as they appeared on *Load* in 1996.

This photo, combined with Serrano's artwork on the front cover, was a sign guaranteed to trigger protest and dismay from every consumer-producer who joined in Newsted's own lament that this was "not *my* Metallica," the confrontational, resistant, and yet still *known* entity producing metal/thrash discourse for over a decade. But to coincide with all of the semiotics of image, Hetfield also indicated quite clearly, on the songtext "Hero of the Day," an awareness of the turmoil his band would create with the most code-disruptive offering in its history:

> Someone there is sighing—
> Keepers of the flames, do you feel your names?
> Can you hear your babies crying?
> Excuse me while I tend to how I feel
> As things return to me that still seem real.

In a continued reading focused on articulations of agency and power of self-definition, the last lines here are intriguing in that Hetfield seems to suggest that the *former* Metallica is no longer a reality at all, while this new incarnation as a short-haired, slowed-down, metal-tinged (but no longer metal) rock band *is* real—yet the only way to establish this point is to disguise the new "reality" under a barrage of images conveying phoniness and pomposity. As the verse continues, Hetfield addresses the five-year-old charges of "sellout" status for his band and places the responsibility for Metallica's new turn squarely in the hands of consumer-producers themselves: "Now deservingly, this easy chair," he sings, "but the rocking stopped by wheels of despair." As in the *Metallica* album's lyrics, Hetfield once more provides terminology that functions equally for both band-producer and consumer-coproducer: The "rocking" (a pun) *has been* stopped, on the part of the band, in response to the "despair" created *by* its outside definers, while for those same definers the rocking *will be* stopped, on their own part, in response to the despair created *for* them by the band's refusal to be known in any fixed way. And so Hetfield completes the verse: "Don't want your aid, but this fist I've made for years can't hold or feel. No, I'm not all me, so please excuse me while I tend to how I feel." As the songtext ends, the vocalist repeats the words, "Mama, they try and break me, Mama, they try and break me," each repetition gaining in volume until the words become an extended howl.

For John Fiske, the "tactical maneuvers" of De Certeau's consumption-based coproducers of popular discourse constitute an act of "constructing *our* space within and against *their* place, of speaking *our* meanings with *their* language" (36)—with *us* being the secondary, consumption-based producer and *they* being the primary, production-based competition for ownership of *our* products (which, remember, have been *co*-produced;

there is no *their* sound without *our* ears—and our wallets). On *Load*, Metallica's most significant step in the political struggle for discourse ownership was not the act of changing its physical image through bodily appearance, cover art, or logo redesign, nor to convert its former "thrash" metal into radio-friendly hard rock, but to combine these two smaller steps in a way that would effectively remove *their* language from usability by *us* through the act of rendering that language so complex as to become unintelligible. But toward what end this often bitter and always complicated struggle for ownership? If the goal is something as simple as forcing consumer-coproducers not to remain solely in that role, but to strive for the creation of their own discourses and avoid the shallow, ultimately unfulfilling *appearance* of discursive co-production shared with a more privileged and better-connected primary producer—if the message could be boiled down to something as simple as "get a life, don't just attach to someone else's"—would the struggle best be read as merely a frivolous enterprise? Perhaps an exercise in sado-masochism? Or as a dialectical opposition that might be seen as mutually liberating?

Metallica's two follow-up releases after *Load* may hold clues. If the band were a novel, then *Load* would be its pivotal, climactic scene, but beyond that scene could lie a narrative of gradual understanding and acceptance on the part of both the musicians and their consumer-theorists old and new, and an enhanced view of the power politics that can at once generate and stem from an ongoing dialogue, one in which harsh confrontation is sometimes necessary for the most constricting edges of a fixing ideology to crumble and allow for a more unencumbered agency within the bounds of mutually-constitutive conceptions and appreciations of power. Metallica's 1997 album, *Re-Load*, offered a number of tracks that had been kept off the '96 release due to space considerations; the first songtext to gather major attention, "The Memory Remains," told a tale of a fading

Hollywood actress recalling her former days of glory and adoration. What generated the attention for this songtext was not its thematic content but the guest appearance of Marianne Faithfull, playing the role of the "fading prima donna" in Hetfield's lyric by singing a wordless chant of "la la la" during the chorus and fadeout, finally convincing a significant number of former Metallica admirers to accept the possibility that change, through experimentation, might not be such a terrible thing. The band, in turn, acknowledged that too much change at once might not be such a *good* thing, as shown by only a limited number of MTV videotexts being commissioned and a return to black-and-white footage, this time of stock-car racing, as the visual context for the back-to-thrash songtext, "Fuel." Internet discussions praised and condemned both band and album as always, but did not howl in anguish as they had after *Load*'s release. Some kind of mutual understanding, based on a recognition and respect for difference and movement in the place of bitter alienations from sameness and stasis, was taking effect, as reflected in the words of music critic Ben Ratliff:

> Up until the turn of the 1990s, Metallica stood at the terminus of everything heavy metal was about, including its side streams of punk and thrash. Since then, James Hetfield and company have become full-fledged rock stars with a fat, comfortable, limousine sound. They lost some orthodoxy, gained a lot more fans, and did it all with consummate grace. (24)

Well, maybe. To end their second decade of involvement in rock discourses, the same Hetfield and company released a double-disk compilation of raw and underproduced cover tunes, under the title *Garage Inc.* (a play on the 1987 Metallica songtext "Damage Inc." but also an appropriate blending of the two colliding spheres in which the band members have tried to operate), as a way to pay tribute to all of the groups of the 1970s and 80s whose influence helped to shape Metallica's own discourse. And although

controversy continued to surround the band for its inclusion of Bob Seger's 1970s ballad "Turn the Page" in the tribute, the outrage was softened a bit by the reappearance of Metallic's old barbed-hook logo on the new CD's cover. The group's final release of the 20th century, *S&M*, was a live recording of its April 1999 collaboration with the San Francisco Symphony—an event which, combined with the recent appearance of a Metallica-on-four-cellos European chamber ensemble calling itself Apocalyptica—has caused numerous *orchestra* patrons to howl in protest. After sixteen years of struggle, the band's highly conflicted position of power appears to have been temporarily settled with an agency still contested at times by consumption-based coproducers, but one mediated by a group of secondary-level "laborers" whose own role and function may be more clearly defined through the ongoing struggles of its primary opposition.

Reading Rage: A Pedagogy of Confrontation

All of the people we meet in the course of daily life, no matter how unlettered they may be, are groping with sentences toward a sense of their lives and their position in them; and they have what almost always goes with an impulse to ideology, a good deal of animus and anger.
- Lionel Trilling (*Imagination* 275)

See right through the red, white, and blue disguise—
With lecture, I puncture the structure of lies.
- Rage Against the Machine, "Take the Power Back"

Young performers like Rage Against the Machine create their own forms of resistance. That they have found listeners who respond and that they have inspired others to emulate them suggests that the celebrity system obscuring so much of contemporary reality can be undermined. Corporate rock has already proven that it cannot learn.
- Dave Marsh (21)

Within the discipline of rhetoric and composition, a number of recent theorists have begun to turn their attention toward the political aspects involved in the inclusion and exclusion of voices within academic conversations. Lester Faigley, for instance, looks out at academic discussions of literacy and finds that while they "often follow in

the tradition of John Dewey, whereby one of the main goals of teaching literacy is to create more politically active citizens," this is not the case for discussions centered on educators working outside the United States. Faigley notes that although "the radical pedagogy of. . . Paulo Freire is frequently cited, efforts similar to Freire's in the U.S. to teach literacy so that people might challenge existing social and political orders have not been widely praised or supported" (69). Dewey's "politically active" citizens are, for James Berlin, "critically literate" citizens, and both of these versions derive from Isocrates's "great" citizen who would "love wisdom" in order to become a productive and admirable "statesman." While the United States, by sheer size alone, cannot realistically produce "statesmen" at the rate which Isocrates envisioned in classical times of relatively tiny city-states, it can—and for Dewey and Berlin, *should*—produce citizens who become actively involved with the political system. As Gregory Clark notes, schools teach writing so people can "participate in self-governing communities" (*Dialogue* xvii). What one hears in Faigley's words, however, is that this involvement has clear limits within American culture, which values and condones existing hegemonic structures in such a way that a truly radical involvement is deemed dangerous.

Such an involvement is exactly the message presented by the always politically-charged and thus extremely "radical" group, Rage Against the Machine. Free speech and critical awareness for all are the central focus in Rage Against the Machine's discourse, and political education and activism are the band's primary purposes in songtexts such as "No Shelter" and its condemnation of "American eyes, American eyes, see[ing] the world through American eyes. Bury the past, rob us blind—and leave nothing behind." The inside cover photo for Rage's second release, *Evil Empire,* features a wide assortment of books laid out in a random pattern, among which are Sartre's *The Age of Reason,* Walter

Adamson's *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political & Cultural Theory,* Lise Vogel's *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory,* and Sonia Kruks, et al.'s *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism,* along with copies of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *The Marx-Engels Reader.* In another medium, the videotext for the group's early songtext "Freedom" alerted the MTV nation to the plight of Native American activist Leonard Peltier, while a series of benefit concerts to fund a new trial for African-American journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, awaiting execution in Pennsylvania for the 1981 murder of a Philadelphia police officer, has produced outraged protests from police organizations and conservative media commentators nationwide. Elsewhere, as activists at the 1993 Lollapalooza concert in Philadelphia, the band took to the stage naked, each of the four members having taped his mouth and painted his chest with a letter from the acronym PMRC (the same "warning sticker" group mocked by Metallica) and stood in silent protest for 14 minutes. And on a 1996 episode of NBC's *Saturday Night Live* hosted by billionaire presidential candidate Steve Forbes, the group draped its amplifiers with upside-down American flags as a way to signal, according to guitarist Tom Morello, the group's "contention that American democracy is inverted when what passes for democracy is an electoral choice between two representatives of the privileged class" (qtd. in Moore). Seconds before taking the stage to perform "Bulls on Parade," the band members watched incredulously as NBC stagehands came in to pull the flags down, and with the protest censored, they refused to perform. As Morello saw it, the sharpest irony was that "*SNL* is supposedly this cutting-edge show, but they proved they're bootlickers to their corporate masters when it comes down to it" (qtd. in Moore).

For mainstream music critic Dave Marsh, what is most appealing about Rage's

overtly political practice is the band's simultaneous resurrection of activism as a component that might once again become part of rock's central discourse. Following Steve Redhead's earlier appeal to avoid "cynical" readings of rock politics, Marsh writes that

> today's rock, with its roots in and continuing links to society's most dispossessed, somehow effectively does promote resistance, even critical thinking. . . . Rather than lapsing into cynicism, newer rock performers already show signs of recognizing these links. Rage Against the Machine . . .used [its] stadium shows [as opening act for U2] to talk about, among other things, the injustice of Mumia Abu-Jamal being on death row. And [the band] made this work because its members don't talk about such issues coldly but with real rage. They project a sense of conviction that speaking out will make a difference" (20).

When Marsh catches himself in the aesthetic judgment of "real rage" and corrects it to a less value-laden "sense of conviction," I have to admit that, as an education worker, it was this same *ethos* of a "genuine" passion on Rage's part which immediately drew me to the group and its songtextual messages. As a mediator and traffic controller for daily choruses and collisions of student voices engaged in the production of knowledge both for and *about* school, I was particularly intrigued by the critical illumination that Rage provides on its eponymous first album in a songtext titled "Take the Power Back":

> In the right light, study becomes insight, but the system that dissed us teaches us to read and write. . . . The present curriculums, I put my fist in 'em—Eurocentric, every last one of 'em. . . . The teacher stands at the head of the class, but the lesson plan he can't recall. The students' eyes don't perceive the lies bouncing off every fuckin' wall. His composure is well-kept; I guess he fears playing the fool. The complacent students sit and listen to the bullshit that *he* learned in school. . . .

These lyrics reflect both the "institutional violence necessary to ensure that 30 or 40 million children sit mutely at their desks so books can instruct them," as Kurt Spellmeyer

has defined it, and the "ideological violence" that connects language to so many historical acts of carnage where "the speech of the few has drowned out the bitter silence of the many" (10). But this is not enough to impress critics who immediately see only a *rhetoric* of rage—to mean an ineffective system of solely ornamental appeals and figures—rather than a situational *ethos* of conviction or outrage on the performer's part. For Eddy, this band is no more than part of what he calls a "rage genre," a particular kind of performer and discourse that simply "turn[s] rage into an easily digestible schtick, an impotence that might jar grandma or grandpa, but big deal" (167). To defend such a dismissal, Eddy falls into a common critical rhetoric in which the primary failings of the new discourse form are made mystifyingly clear by comparing them with the failings of older forms. Thus Eddy writes that "music that's all fucked up and [endlessly shouting] 'fuck you' tends to be even more useless than tripe that admits to nothing but peace, love, and understanding" (167), and since the shouted epithet seems to be the critic's sole conception of protest and activism, he later turns to a zippy *ad hominem* attack upon those of differing (or, as he sees it, no) aesthetic sensibilities in order to veil the limited view:

> [M]ost metal and rap acts seem to think protest can compensate for some *lack*, so they wind up stiffening their beat and uglifying their voices to make room for it. When 'reality' is the entire package, it's bound to fall flat—Rage Against the Machine play clumsy, sexless, pogo-funk crud... [but] needless to say, they're lauded by tastemakers who can't tell good intentions from good music. (177).

Of course, neither Rage nor its politics are quite so easily defined—or dismissed. With "Take the Power Back" in particular, there *is* a rhetoric at work, but not in a pejorative sense of the term. Rather, the band's argument regarding the oppressive

nature of the educational system takes on a stance which is both confrontational and unforgiving. Although there are still general implications left to be deciphered by the audience, these tend to follow a single vision: If the current system is rotten, then a new one will be better. Likewise, Rage creates no space for debate on the issue, and discussion would be pointless since the audience will only encounter more "one sided stories. . . from the system that cares about only one culture" in creating—and maintaining—the ideological state apparatus of American schools. In creating this stance, the band employs a rhetoric that "is intrinsically normative; it utilizes observational research, not simply in order to describe what is, but as a basis for claims about what should have been or ought to be" (Simons 52)—and so, because the central issue in Rage's songtext regards the extensive harms inflicted by a Eurocentric curriculum which disregards the contributions made by other, non-Western cultures through history, and by teachers who fall into the damaging habit of teaching the same materials in the same ways every semester regardless of the interest level students may show for those materials and methods, the audience is literally trapped into agreement with the messenger. For who would stand up to counter that Eurocentrism and professional sloth are fine practices, to be preserved? The only way left to engage in dissent with Rage's argument in "Take the Power Back" is to examine its logic, and to isolate the substantial assumptions made by vocalist Zach De La Rocha in his lyrics. To begin such a process, the audience must first ask if *all* teachers, in *all* classes being offered, at *every* school in every year of one's education, have been guilty of the evil practices described in the songtext; by these questions a counter-argument may form in which Rage is charged with faulty assumption, implication, and generalization, without exception or qualifier, resulting in no more than purely negative destructiveness and hatred of the same kind it attempts to oppose. But

the same line of questioning is ultimately connected to the implicit preservation of the corrupt system being defined by Rage, so that any rhetorician attempting to engage in a little dialectic with the polemic only becomes more complicit in the power structure being confronted. In this way, the key issue for the band becomes the compelling nature of *logos*, the function of the message to form a tight noose around its possible counter-arguments.

Yet in another way, the key issue becomes *ethos*. If the message, in unaltered lyrical form, were delivered by Sheryl Crow, the Rolling Stones, Alanis Morissette, or even Metallica, while it might represent what Wicke has called an "accelerated expansion of aesthetic codes" as cover tunes and crossovers increasingly take place in rock's discourses (155), it would more problematically become one more case of what Iain Chambers has seen as "musical and cultural styles ripped out of their contexts, stripped of their initial referents and circulated in such a manner that they represent nothing other than their own transitory presence" (qtd. in Wicke 155). Unlike Metallica, whose four members strive to preserve their own power in opposition to fan desires, Rage struggles to raise its audience's collective consciousness to oppose power in a number of political spheres not related to rock in any direct way. Rock for Choice (abortion rights), Refuse and Resist (freedom of information) and the dire circumstances of Peltier and Abu-Jamal are just a few of the causes for which the band has advocated in print, electronic, and songtext textforms, and for Marsh, Rage becomes a master of a liberatory "aesthetic coup" in its connection of "agitprop" in the form of these causes to "the kind of dense metallic noise that lefties have always frowned upon," resulting in a "raised profile... among rock fans" for those causes and individuals (21). Once again, however, the band's rhetoric of rage seems to me more carefully constructed than to generate merely a "raised

profile" for political miscellany. What appears in Rage's discursive system is partly illustrated, for instance, by Wayne Brockriede's move to join discursive practice and presence into a single issue when he examines the notions of power and "distance" at work in rhetoric:

> Knowing how much power of what kind each rhetorical participant has may be less immediately relevant than knowing the relationship among the power statuses of the people involved. That is, power is relative rather than absolute. . . . Two questions especially are important in an analysis of the power structure: How disparate are the power positions of the various participants of an act, and does the act function to increase, maintain, or decrease the disparity? How rigid or flexible is the structure, and does the rhetorical act function to increase, maintain, or decrease the stability? (315)

Brockriede's assertion that power is 'relative' rather than 'absolute' is further developed by Foucault, who argues that power is not a structure or collection, but rather a practice of establishing and organizing relationships; likewise the case with knowledge and discourse. In the case of persuasive discourse, Gregory Clark notes that "[b]y presenting our beliefs to others as if they had already judged and accepted them, we not only assume their assent, we demand it" (*Dialogue* 51), and this is the case with the rhetoric of rage practiced by Rage Against the Machine in songtexts such as "No Shelter," in which both capitalist industries and advertisers are condemned for having the power to

> . . .[get] you thinkin' that what you need is what they sellin'
> Make you think that buyin' is rebellin'
> From the theaters to malls on every shore:
> The thin line between entertainment and war.

As with "Take the Power Back," this songtext presents a strategic problem within the band's argument, since there is no role for consumers in this particular rhetoric other than to be duped and manipulated—false consciousness prevails untroubled by Gramsci's

notion of the *consensual* nature of hegemony and hegemonic practices. The band members are young Marxists for whom subscription to a theory of control generates a more effective rhetoric than one of consent—perhaps especially so since Rage is positioned squarely in the midst of a capitalist entertainment enterprise—when the driving purpose behind the rhetoric is a pedagogy of *liberation from control* in order to generate a gradually-increased awareness of consumeristic bestowals of consent. The challenge, then, in looking at the power relationship within Rage's communiqués to its audience is to attempt the "reworking of the idea of form and order" set out by Worsham at the beginning of this chapter, by identifying the successful functions of the band's political employment of a rhetoric of rage while resisting impulses immediately to negate those successes by focusing on traditional conceptions of logic and pre-emptive arrangement. The message of the "Shelter" songtext in particular contains strong echoes of Umberto Eco's warning that democracy cannot thrive when images work only to induce paralysis rather than to trigger critical interrogation, but a key difference is that, in contrast to Eco's more detailed development in conveying that message, the form of Rage's discourse must by necessity substitute rhyme and highly compressed cultural references:

> Memories erased and promise scarred—trade history for a VCR.
> Cinema, simulated life, ill drama—forthright culture, Americana. . . .
> Fix the need to burn up the taste; buy the products or get laid to waste.
> Coca-Cola goes back in the veins of Saigon, and Rambo too—
> We got a dope paradise. . . .
> Just stare! Just stare! Just stare! Just stare!

This songtext appears on the soundtrack to the summer 1998 cinematic update of *Godzilla*, and Rage pulls off the neat trick of burying a reference—and a scathing critique—of that very film in plain sight in the line, "Godzilla, pure motherfuckin' filler:

Gets your mind off the real killer." Here one has to wonder whether the soundtrack arrangers simply missed the line due to De La Rocha's quick vocal delivery of the words, or whether having a "radical" band on the soundtrack ultimately took precedence over the possibility that listeners would catch the commentary. In either case, the band's political stance has long been established in such a way that there would have been no grounds for objection to the line's inclusion on the songtext. Rage's politics are not *part of* its practice—they *are* its practice as the band uses its concert venues as sites for distribution of free information about its various causes, its lyrics as a site for social criticism, its web site as host for links to numerous electronic forms of related materials and further readings as well as a continuing opportunity for direct dialog between guitarist Tom Morello and those who subscribe to his band's activism. For critics such as Greil Marcus, that activism has all but disappeared from rock's discourses:

> [Rock music's desire to change the world] begins with the demand to live not as an object but as a subject of history—to live as if something actually depended on one's actions—and that demand opens onto a free street. Damning God and the state, work and leisure, home and family, sex and play, the audience and itself, the music *briefly made it possible* to experience all those things as if they were not natural facts but ideological constructs: things that had been made and therefore could be altered, or done away with altogether. (*Traces* 5-6; italics added)

The "brief possibility" lamented here was, for Marcus, the punk movement of the late 70s, itself an outgrowth of the violence that had taken place at the 1969 Rolling Stones concert at Altamont in which Hell's Angels bodyguards killed a drug-addled spectator while Mick Jagger lamely inquired "Who's fighting, and why?" from the stage (see *Gimme Shelter* video) but did not stop the performance. In the years after Altamont, Marcus writes, the violence of that concert "took many forms," in punk venues especially becoming "stylized into slam dancing and pit diving" and eventually helping to

"shape a glossary in which the passive neologisms of 1970s human-potential and self-improvement therapies ('Thank you for sharing your anger with me') were translated back into active English ('Fuck off and die')" (89). Marcus's lament over the loss of such confrontational and socially-transforming discourse is taken up elsewhere when he writes of rock that its exact onset of ineffectiveness occurred when "the music and the audience lost their center in the late 1960s" and was due to the sad facts that "the Beatles disbanded and Bob Dylan eased up" (*Stranded* xx). As a result, "[r]ock and roll, as culture, lost much of its shape. The mass movements of the sixties, which for many brought a sense of common endeavor and shared fate to almost every aspect of life, fragmented. . . ." (This view is shared by Bennett et al. in their collection *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions*, for whom rock in the 1960s and 70s "was good because it was authentic to subcultural and countercultural values. . . in opposition to the dynamics of capitalism, and their expression through the actions of the music industry was to be welcomed. Rock was political." But when they look at rock in the 80s, "the question. . . was that of what the music was being authentic to. . . and where" [3].) Marcus, ignoring alternative paradigms such as Frith's argument that the 60s-era Stones practiced "rebellion [as] a grand gesture, an aesthetic style without a social core" ("Beggars" 37), instead connects his perception of "loss" to a change in *audience* dynamics: "[T]hough one may have found identity as a member of an audience, one also found it by staking a place in that audience, defining one's self against it." But current rock, he writes, has supplied no singularly central or major act like the Beatles or Dylan, and so while "[p]eople have staked out their territory in rock and roll. . .they don't feel

much like members of anything big enough to take over the world, which. . . is what rock and roll is supposed to do" (*Stranded* xx).

Surely there are more than a few layers of ideology behind Marcus's history, here as in the other places where I've cited him, but that same history is subscribed to by numerous current performers as well as their fans. Indeed, I would argue that this exact sort of "loss" nostalgia fuels much of Rage Against the Machine's rhetorical practice of political activism. What prevents me from leading from this argument to making a cynical rage-as-commercial appeal critique, however, is that the band has thus far stood utterly alone in its stance. The Beastie Boys' activism for a free Tibet has earned that group a label of new-age dabblers; Sinéad O'Connor's early-90s feud with the Vatican and its decrees against birth control—a quarrel enacted by her shredding a portrait of the Pope on *Saturday Night Live*—resulted in an immediate condemnation by *SNL* (again) and O'Connor's gradual disappearance from every sphere of musical discourse. Yet Rage, boycotted by the Fraternal Order of Police for its defense of Abu-Jamal (just as Ice-T endured a law enforcement boycott over "Cop Killer"), censored and scorned by a national television network (just as O'Connor suffered the same after defacing the Pope's image), and like any other group suspected of wearing its politics on its sleeve only to generate interest and thereby income, carries on unimitated and without strong alliances with other politically-aware musicians. And the key words here are that—unlike the case with Ice-T or O'Connor—the band has, in fact, *carried on* without altering or aborting its politics.

Figure 4: Rage Against the Machine.
(From left) Tom Morello, Zach De La Rocha, Brad Wilk, Tim Cummerford

One particularly revealing text in the Rage canon is the band's 1997 release of a CD-single covering Bruce Springsteen's acoustic songtext, "The Ghost of Tom Joad." The cover to Springsteen's album by the same name shows a man (presumably Steinbeck's character himself) with his back turned, blood staining his middle torso, his face in partial profile marked by weariness and grief. In contrast, the cover art for Rage's remake depicts a decidedly sinister-looking paramilitary cop on horseback (the steed is likewise clearly evil) beating a group of lowly commoners into submission; in the background shadows lurk a hundred more cops waiting to join in the melee as a solitary black woman stands with her fists in the air, refusing and resisting the beating. Beyond the cover illustrations, there is a marked difference between the two songtext versions musically as well. Springsteen's vocal rendition, performed to acoustic guitar without additional accompaniment, is mellow and melancholy, while De La Rocha's is furious and bitter. Springsteen, in both vocal style and album art, suggests a *self*-alienation due to a failure of the American Dream, the pain and isolation of a lonely *individual* who is the *subject* of oppression, while Rage presents the exact opposite with the *agent* of oppression—the State—foregrounded and the collective *group* bitter and enraged by the bogus tauntings of a non-existent American Dream kept, by force, forever out of reach.

Springsteen quietly hints at class difference; Rage screams about class warfare. Springsteen's text presents the Ideological State Apparatus as the backgrounded agent, with Tom Joad taking his alienation from hegemony's bait all inward (which is the ISA's function) and simply lamenting in the lyrics that he will never reach the ideal because times are hard but no one specifically is to blame for that. Rage, on the other hand, sets out the Repressive State Apparatus (the military, the police, ideology through force) as the active, clearly foregrounded agent of oppression, hatred, fear, loss, and social imbalance. And by all of this the band illustrates in an extreme fashion the much less radical role of musical discourse defined by Edward Said:

> [M]usic plays a role in civil society that is neither natural nor substitutive. Music is of course *itself*, even if its way of inhabiting the social landscape varies so much as to affect compositional and formal styles with a force as yet largely uninventoried in cultural studies. . . . [T]he transgressive element in music is its nomadic ability to attach itself to, and become a part of, social formations, to vary its articulations and rhetoric depending on the occasion as well as the audience, plus the power and gender situations in which it takes place. (70)

The extreme nature of Rage's radical stance lies in the fact that *variation* of style and delivery—for that matter, a varied conception of audience and purpose—is not part of the band's rhetorical skills, and any examination of the group's rhetoric thus requires both patience and paradigm adjustment in order to look beyond such an apparent "flaw" when dealing with a *rhetoric of rage*. Central to any such examination is an understanding of rage as the most intense degree of alienation, a state of consciousness so utterly frustrated and angered that it cannot, will not, be tempered by artful means. For Rage Against the Machine, the "transgression" addressed by Said is not so much a practice on the *band's* part as it is a practice taking place *outside* the band's sphere of influence, and these transgressions require correction by any discursive means necessary. And while

gender is not a factor for this group, "power situations" form the foundation for its entire existence as an agent of change at a time when, as Grossberg writes, "rock seems to have lost any power to resist, let alone threaten or change the existing relations of power. It seems rather obvious that rock, in the United States at least, has been 'colonized' by the economic interests of capitalism, patriarchal and racist relations" ("Conservatism" 195). Further, for Grossberg,

> [i]t is becoming difficult to see where and how rock is, or could be, articulated to progressive political commitments. The once generally shared assumption that the two intersected at [a] point that placed rock on the margins, in alliance, however tenuous, with various populist political struggles, seems to have disappeared.

While he is surely aware of the multitude of activist projects underwritten by rockers in past years—the Boomtown Rats' Bob Geldof organizing Live Aid for starving Ethiopians, Steven Van Zant's organization of the United Artists Against Apartheid to produce the awareness- and fund-raising single "Sun City," John Mellencamp's continuing role in Farm Aid, Queen's Brian May spearheading the Freddie Mercury benefit for AIDS-research funding, the *Very Special Christmas* albums benefiting Special Olympics, and the nonprofit compilations recently released by assorted rock figures to benefit Bosnian and Kosovar refugees—Grossberg correctly does not name these as "political commitments" because they are all *temporary* rather than full-time engagements. While Farm Aid may be the most consistent of the political causes listed, even it is only an annual concert, with the management and distribution of informational materials left to non-rock personnel, and the musicians performing at these concerts do not dedicate their work or themselves to the family-farm crisis after the stage is dismantled.

Such a part-time commitment to activism, as Grossberg notes, does not lend rock much weight to call itself a *force* for anything, and for Palmer, who like so many other critics mourns the loss of rock's former unified social message that allegedly posed a threat in the 1950s and 1960s by being "dangerous to racists, demagogues, and the self-appointed moral guardians of the status quo," there is not much left to admire. Writing that he would "*like* to think rock and roll is still a danger," Palmer argues that "after 40-odd years of commodification, the increasing concentration of the music business in the hands of a few giant corporations, and the video revolution's reduction of so much of rock to the electronic equivalent of wallpaper, I can't seriously imagine the music I love being really dangerous to anyone" (11). But for Theodore Roszak, revisiting in 1995 his 27 year-old *The Making of a Counter Culture*, the fault is not entirely placed on rock so much as it is shared with other agents of the 1960s' social upheaval:

> From the outset, the counter culture, so distrustful of authority and suspicious of leadership, suffered for its lack of long-term organization. . . . A movement that cannot find ways to revive and use the institutions it inherits. . . cannot expect to provide leadership. But the counter culture made a worse mistake. It grossly underestimated the stability and resourcefulness of the corporate establishment, the ultimate locus of power in industrial society. . . . [T]he corporate system outlasted its opposition and struck back with astonishing effectiveness. (xxix)

Thus the very things named by Palmer—corporate mergers to increase administrative power, mandates for endless promotional videotexts to "reduce" rock to imagery over content—along with rock's *aural* "wallpaper" status when its songtexts become backdrops for the marketing of endless non-rock consumer goods, become for Roszak the weapons deployed in a corporate backlash against rock's own anti-corporate stance

during the height of a "unified" countercultural activity. The counter-strike named by Roszak is described more fully by Peter Wicke, who notes that when musicians went on to form a view of their songtexts "as a medium for political conflict with the authority structures of state-monopoly capitalism," the industry responded by simply releasing performers from their contracts under the directive that politics was not poetry, and poetry was the "best possible plane" of expression, as the president of Elektra Records put it in 1969 (93). In all of these views rock becomes a sort of noble guerilla freedom fighter losing its life in the honorable pursuit of an admirable cause, but providing an alternative paradigm to all of the nostalgia-fueled rhetoric of this soldier's loss is journalist Brian McCollom's reminder that

> Woodstock '69, portrayed as the climax of a communal revolution, was actually a triumph of individualism. Conservatives in 1969 failed to see that—distracted, understandably by the long hair and dope. Sentimental liberals in 1999 still fail to see that, distracted by warm, fuzzy nostalgia and forgetting that the Who's Pete Townsend literally booted activist Abbie Hoffman off the Woodstock stage. Sure, hippies were intent on rejecting the provincialism of traditional America. But in their own deliberate freakiness, they embraced freedom and liberty like Granny at the 4th of July parade. The revolution, it turned out, was won not by the collective elite but by good old-fashioned individualists—who happened to be naked and on the lookout for brown acid. ("Nation" 4G)

The same charges of embracement of American values and a practice of individualism granted through those values could be leveled at Rage Against the Machine, since at a very basic level the band's rhetoric and pedagogy could not be practiced in their current forms in any other kind of social venue—as Bennett et al. have shown in *Rock and Popular Music*, the United States is unique in that its government does not have a

direct hand in rock's production, in contrast to the cases in Canada, Britain, Australia, and the former German DDR. But the complex issues inherent in practicing a rhetoric of rage against not only capitalism and consumerism, but also against an uncritical form of individualism (termed a film- and television-perpetuated "bullet in the head" by the band on its first album) when that concept becomes both symptom and cause of the larger problems, form the core of the group's pedagogy of liberation from ideology's unabated influence. Those who see public intellectuals such as Freire, Giroux, and Dewey as uncompromised advocates for the public's empowerment must not allow a cynical critique of rock's political activists—groups who stand against morally and ethically bankrupt systems from a position fully *within* those same systems—to create a failure to see the same type of advocacy being generated by a ferociously militant group of metal rappers. For Neil Nehring, whose *Popular Music, Gender, and Postmodernism* borrows its subtitle, "Anger is an Energy," from Rage's whispered "anger is a gift" on the Peltier-awareness track "Freedom," and whose book may be the worst example of kill-'em-all-and-tenure-me vitriole I have ever read, "resentment" is a laudable trait for angry rockers. Unfortunately, any inclination by readers to agree is systematically undermined as Nehring dedicates his work to what appears to be a personal war against postmodernism in general and Frederic Jameson in particular, everywhere presenting a sad kind of macho scholarship in which others are cited solely for the purpose of pointing out their gross misreadings, flawed understandings, and failures to comprehend issues and ideas which Nehring alone can grasp. Yet there is a brief moment of lucidity and calm when the author pauses to note that

> [c]ontemporary culture may actually work in large part the way postmodern theorists believe it does: to encourage a taste for strong emotions unburdened by reflection or commitment. But this is just another variation in the long history of efforts by mainstream culture to convince people that anger and resentment are inappropriate—or in this case, frivolous. . . . The condemnation of resentment is continually necessary because the anger of disenfranchised groups, including disaffected youths, always presents a threat to the status quo. (104)

While this is the only place where I can cast my lot with the writer, I have no misgivings in doing so, and for several reasons. First, the "part-time activist" "causes" I mentioned earlier here—the "Sun City" single (we made the song, now let the money it generates take care of apartheid), the Farm Aid concerts (we did the show, now let the T-shirts we sold there raise awareness the rest of the year), the Mercury tribute (let's save lives by having *Elizabeth Taylor* relate to young rock fans), and so on—are exactly the kind of "strong but unburdened emotions" named by the author. Second, when critics such as Eddy describe Rage as practicing merely an "easily digestible" but ultimately "impotent" "schtick," they are complicit with all of the hegemonic entities striving to render rage as a "frivolous" ornamentation empty of substance in order to cancel out any real power the rage might carry, and they do so by employing the communication model described by Hall in which encoding a message with pre-determining signs helps to ensure that decoding will take place in a manner acceptable to the encoder. And finally, I would find it extremely troubling to negate the danger of Rage Against the Machine's rhetorical practices and discursive systems when those represent the clearest and most consistent voice of active rock dissent in a democracy which claims not only to condone, but also to value, dissenting views—even when that same democratic system deploys a host of

ideological and rhetorical devices which instantly spring into action to contain the alternate discourse by reshaping it as a powerless sham.

Metal may be cool, as Straw has labeled it, but more than that, it is complex. And the complexity makes it possible to gain further insight from the genre about the nature of human struggles for power and resistance. Any transformation of an initial weak discourse of authenticity and inauthenticity into a meta-discourse of agency and purpose, control and consent, moves rock into territories where its conflicts begin to take on a clearer relevance to everyday life. If this were not the case, then—to borrow a line from Stuart Hall—I wouldn't give a damn about it at all.

6

MAKING ~~CENTS~~ SENSE:

Telling Stories at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

Clean; the cleanest I've been. An end to the tears, and the in-between years, and the troubles I've seen—now that I'm clean.
- Depeche Mode

They called it Paradise; I don't know why. You call someplace paradise, kiss it goodbye.
- The Eagles, "Last Resort"

[I]t had escaped even his reckoning, that from all the quantum tendencies of Opera a caricature might be cobbled up, which should be greeted not only by the Public, but also by the wiseacres of Art, as a new and substantial shape of Opera; for in the flower of his prime he never could have dreamt that it would some day occur to the Bankers, for whom he had always made their music, to make it for themselves.
- Richard Wagner, 1851[23]

I love rock and roll—so put another dime in the jukebox, baby.
- Joan Jett

Rock is not a pretty thing. In the studio, endlessly re-recorded and re-mixed tracks might provide the illusion of immaculate, perfectly-balanced songtexts springing fully-formed, on the first take, from their composers' heads (actually, that should be throats, hands, and feet), but in live performance, the story changes. Unaided by mixing boards and computer software, rock is a site where people sweat; guitar strings pop and drumsticks break; sound systems short out and go mute; amplifiers overheat and burst into flames; flashpots misfire and immolate musicians. A live recording of the Stooges' final concert, *Metallic K.O.*, contains the clear sounds of Iggy Pop and his bandmates dodging—and being pelted by—ice, then eggs, and finally glass during one of Iggy's notorious let's-stand-here-and-play-nothing-while-I-insult-the-audience extended pauses. Woodstock 1969: bad acid and fields of mud; Woodstock 1999: rapes, riots, arson, and

fields of sewage from overflowing Porta-Johns. Yet for all of this, there have been numerous examples in the last decades of the 20th century of rock's desire to scrub itself clean by legitimating and institutionalizing its discourses. Heavy metal has finally been recognized by no less than the Grammy Awards; rock's history has been told by a multi-part documentary aired by that pinnacle of good taste and high culture, Public Television; and every year seems to introduce another new award-giving mechanism designed to give the music ever more cultural weight and legitimacy. The rock image once conveyed by photographs of destroyed instruments, smashed arena chairs, or simply a line of sweat-drenched guitarists waving in gratitude from the front of a stage after a third encore is now just as likely to be a tuxedo-clad Eric Clapton with his arms full of gold-plated award statuettes.

But Grammies, PBS documentaries, and other self-congratulatory gestures all pale beside the establishment of a Rock Hall of Fame Foundation in 1983 and the grand opening of a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, in downtown Cleveland, in 1995. Nothing else functions to discipline a narrative as well as a museum (or, as David Bowie quickly defined the Rock Hall upon its opening, a "mausoleum") since the process of deciding who and what should be—*deserves* to be—included in the telling of rock's official narrative can't help but to create boundaries and fix meaning(s). Perhaps the most interesting thing taking place at Cleveland's riverfront, however, is that even as the Hall of Fame and Museum (HFM) clearly disciplines the *narrative* of rock, it also shouts at the same time that it's not possible to essentialize rock *music*. By presenting rock in highly contradictory ways—positioning it as both inside and outside the dominant culture, and seeming to want it, and have it, both ways simultaneously—the HFM illustrates all the more clearly that the discourses of rock have become one with the discourses of rock's

surrounding social and political practices, even when those practices have themselves been opposed to rock's preferred way of being. In other words, while the HFM may have been intended as a shrine to the energy and danger and just plain *enjoyment* that is "supposed to be" both the means and ends of rock, the shrine ultimately functions primarily as a mirror to the social and political spheres of influence from which each of the practitioners of its cherished discursive traditions have come, and by focusing squarely on those traditions and all that is right with them, the final product becomes a symbol of all that is wrong with the very *support* system—the same system that rock has constructed as the source of endless attempts to *constrain* it—that has made, is making, and will likely continue to make rock's viability as a discursive practice something that is allowed to remain influential in its own right.

A critical analysis of any material manifestation of culture, such as the rock HFM, is therefore important for keeping oppositional discourse vital in a hegemonic system which appropriates and incorporates resistance into dominant discourse, and a rhetorical analysis of the Rock Hall, through a cultural studies lens, is equally crucial for rupturing the codification and commodification of resistance and rendering the codes less powerful, thus preserving a possibility for resistance to work against—even though caught within—hegemonic desires. As a primary text, rock's HFM reads like most totalizing narratives, attempting to construct a coherent story of its music that allows for no contradictions or even subplots. Therefore an unpacking of the ideologies of the place can lead toward a better understanding of how a culture works to reproduce dominant discourse even within an allegedly *sub*culturally- or *counter*culturally-derived discursive practice, like rock, that situates itself (and is at the same time situated *by* the primary culture) as outside hegemonic values, and to see how clearly the discourse associated with a social

conscience, with speaking out against blind acquiescence to national values, with valuing and championing the misunderstood and oppressed in society, has actually been complicit in perpetuating the practices of colonization, appropriation, and blatant marginalization of others. Cleveland's monument to rock is a rich cultural text indeed, reflecting and perpetuating the values that dominate primary sociopolitical discourse by presenting its visitors with a celebration of individualism, the promotion of capitalism, and the construction of a narrative that works to flatten difference and reproduce the notion that we are all, in fact, the same.

In most ways, moves to universalize the values of rock are parallel with colonial desire to subsume the interests of marginalized groups under a rubric of assimiliation or "good citizenship." When rock claims to reflect the experiences of all of "its" people—regardless of their subject positions—the discourse immediately flattens out and negates all difference in the interest of gaining cultural capital. Here it becomes especially important to examine the roles played by race, class, and gender in the construction of a grand narrative claiming to represent universal truths and attempting to tell a coherent, linear story stemming from a specific point of origin—and to let that examination function to reveal the problematic ways in which "[t]he *making* of meaning in museum classification and display is mystified as adequate *representation*" when "[t]he time and order of the collection erase the concrete social labor of its making" (Clifford 54). While the rock HFM is careful to always establish tight links between contemporary practitioners and previous discursive genres, its insistence on clear boundaries between not only the genres themselves but also the temporal spaces they have inhabited prohibits an ability to see (or hear) clearly the presence of those who came before in that which is taking place now.

Since rock itself is both an array of discourses and a general rubric through which its various metadiscourses are shaped, its very nature as an aesthetic art, as Shumway suggests, ought to prevent the formation of any "definitive" labels, theories, or critical approaches. However, Wicke argues that the act of making aesthetic valuations for rock, by comparing it with dissimilar musical forms, is an inaccurate methodology since the values bring forward other models of understanding music forms that are "completely alien to [rock's] cultural origins" (2). But in the drive to make rock's respectability equal to its cultural capital, it has been rock's central figures—musicians, rock journalists, and industry executives—who have created a jumble of conflicting notions about rock by themselves applying "socially established views of [other] music" (3) to what is clearly a still-ongoing synthesis of many and diverse musical forms and concepts. Rock defies traditional aesthetic criteria while at the same time creating its own aestheticism, and this conflict in turn produces an intensely ideological discourse used both in its own self-analyses and in its employment as the topic of analysis by the consumer-theorists, critics, and other musicians who dwell and practice their particular discursive forms within its own community. As both Grossberg and Shumway have argued separately, everyone wants to claim ownership of rock, and as a result the music itself—the sound-and-lyric manifestation of the discourse—is less a *thing* than it is a *site* of struggle for control and possession.

That site came into material form with the idea to capture and contain rock—to authenticate its authenticity, if you will—in a $92 million Hall of Fame and Museum, to be built in Cleveland on the shores of Lake Erie. New York, Boston, and Los Angeles all vied for the honor of playing host to the facility, but after a competitive courtship, Cleveland (in part due to a successful campaign built around its native son, deejay Alan

Freed) emerged as the site of choice and construction finally got underway in 1993. Sponsored by the Hall of Fame Foundation, launched by Atlantic Records chairman Ahmet Ertegun, the building was designed by renowned architect I.M. Pei and largely financed by state and city bonds. After delays in construction and some requisite scrapping over artistic differences which resulted in the resignation of the HFM's first curator, the building opened on Labor Day weekend 1995 with what *Rolling Stone* called a "historic concert" put on by "Rock's Dream Team"—i.e. by some of the biggest names in rock, both legendary and new kids on the block: the Allman Brothers and Snoop Dogg; Jerry Lee Lewis and Natalie Merchant; Martha and the Vandellas and Bruce Springsteen; Al Green and Alice in Chains (Gardner 22). Such an impressive and carefully chosen opening-day lineup worked to suggest that the ideology of the HFM would, like rock itself, be inclusive and cross lines of generation, race, sex, class, and musical subgenre. What's more, by its own rhetoric and situational *ethos*, the promise of a place dedicated to *rock* would seem to possess an unlimited potential for excitement and rawness, for its ability to present the allegedly "wild" and "undisciplined" heart of youth and its urges for rebellion to the pilgrims who would make their journeys to the site—but contradictions between expectation and articulation were already underway with the birth of the idea. When the HFM finally opened its doors a decade after its initial conception, rock's designated Museum was a place in which the official narrative of the discourse's present, past, and future could be told definitively and precisely before taking visitors to the center of a known, unmoving rock universe—the Hall of Fame—where figures from rock's history would be enshrined in respectability and validity for all time.

The Rock Hall, at first glance, is a grand gesture by which rebellion and respectability can be rendered mutually inclusive. Through its tributes to rock's long,

noble fight against censorship, its roles in political protests and activism, its free "underground" press of the 1960s, and many other such displays, the HFM finds clear delight in remembering and celebrating the rebellious, anti-social aspects of rock, but these strike a dissonant chord against the ethereal, refined aura of the building itself. Even this fairly minor observation, however, is highly ideological—as one of rock's consumer-theorists, I approached the place with very definite ideas about what a museum dedicated to "my" music *should* look like. It *should* be loud, chaotic, rebellious—and so the reverential air of the HFM as a whole feels, for many of the visitors whose comments of surprise drift along the walkway, more than a little suspect when they first approach the building and gaze upon an exterior that suggests very little about the nature of the collection it holds. A stunning, angular, gleaming steel-and-glass building which instantly calls to mind an Egyptian pyramid, the Hall imposes a commanding presence on the Lake Erie waterfront; indeed, the first official program guide notes that the HFM Foundation wanted "to make the Hall of Fame a dignified and serious home commemorating the people who created this music" (2). Inside, that air of dignity is extended by the vast spaces of the main floor entrance, where a 114-foot glass "tent" seems to hang from the tower to the ground level, creating a lobby 200 feet long and prompting one critic to compare the HFM's initial sensory impression to the "worshipful modernism of [TV evangelist Robert Schuler's] Crystal Cathedral" (Willman 104).

Upon its opening, the HFM presented its visitors with clashing semiotics from the moment they entered the main lobby. There a vast expanse of gleaming emptiness engulfed them and, rather than overwhelm them with a sensorgasma of rock sounds and images, offered only a small sampling. From the ceiling hung some glitter-painted cars, replicas of stage props used by Irish rockers U2 on one of their tours, and up on the third

floor loomed the huge inflatable figure of The Teacher from Pink Floyd's touring presentation of *The Wall.* From speakers of remarkably poor sound quality came the sounds of an endless-loop soundtrack: early blues, Motown, Springsteen, Stones. What visitors got was not an immersion in rebellious rock noise and disorder, but a sanitized sampling of its memorabilia within a highly systematic space that, in Foucauldian terms, "guarantee[s] the *obedience* of individuals, [and] a better economy of time and gesture" (*Discipline* 148; italics added). Moreover, since the HFM is itself a hegemonic "instrument" charged with both representing and mastering the multiple discourses it seeks to distill into homogeneity, it is faced with what Foucault has seen as the "question of imposing upon [those discourses] an order." Visitors themselves constitute an important part of the multivocality of rock storytelling, so the lobby is rendered sterile to avoid a full immersion in rock semiotics that would prevent them from noting the far more important cultural signs of efficient order and correct procedure: *Information Desk; Check Cameras Here; No Photos Allowed.* They pick up a map brochure and glance at its cover: *Welcome to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. NOW GET LOST.* It is rabid punk anti-social snarling wrapped in commercial high-gloss tricolor. *Tickets Downstairs.* An escalator takes visitors in comfort to another expanse of antiseptic quiet, where most prominently displayed is a colorful montage of logos for the building's corporate sponsors: Radio Shack, AT&T, Levi's, Thrifty Car Rental, Pepsi-Cola, Continental Airlines, Ameritech, the Ohio Lottery. There is a coat room with smiling, uniformed attendants; next to it looms a giant ATM shaped like a jukebox that lets visitors "play" their Visa, Society Bank, Cirrus, or MasterCard. A few feet away is the ticket counter, where they part ways with their money, then trade the tickets for a wrist band only a few yards further down, outside the Ahmet Ertegun Exhibition Hall. The

wrist band will become useful if they need to exit the Hall at any time to use the lobby's restroom facilities, where a wholesome shoulders-up photograph of a decidedly angelic, clean-shaven and blue-eyed Kurt Cobain once hung nicely framed outside the women's restroom but two full-body shots—a nude Courtney Love (Cobain's widow) and a likewise nude Janis Joplin—hung outside the men's.[24]

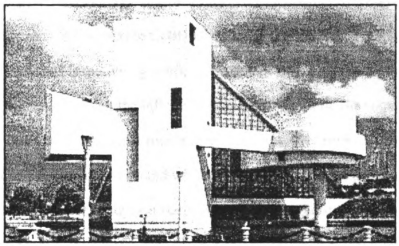

Figure 5: The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum

Visitors enter the Museum through a plain hallway clearly intended as a tribute to what are identified as rock's "early influences." Here, early performers such as the Ink Spots, Dinah Washington, Willie Dixon, Leadbelly, Professor Longhair, and Big Mama Thornton (without whose successful interpretation of a Lieber and Stoller songtext, "Hound Dog," the career of a certain Memphis guitar picker might have taken a markedly different course) are consigned to the plain frames of black and white photographs that hang from an equally plain gypsum wall. Not all of these "early influences" are musicians of color; Hank Williams and Woody Guthrie join Howlin' Wolf and Louis Armstrong as equally important, though equally marginalized, figures. All of the musicians represent a diversity of musical backgrounds, grounded as they are in country, folk, blues, and jazz;

what they share is an equal appropriation by rock to fit them into its all-encompassing narrative. Consignment to the gray-steel outer limit of rock's infinite Territory seems due primarily to race, but also to the degree of commercial success the artists once enjoyed by *rock* standards, the longevity of their careers by *rock* standards, and in some cases the brevity of the performer's life—again by rock standards. Thus a hard-living, hard-drinking martyr such as Hank Williams, wasted if simply left to "hillbilly" music, cuts a much finer *rock* figure next to Cobain, Morrison, Joplin, Hendrix, et al.—but only so long as that "next to" is merely figurative and rhetorical and not literal and spacial.

These photos appear on the left wall, painted white, while the right, painted black, is empty—as the narrative of rock's genesis begins, the "right" side of the story has not yet been filled in; it is void and without form. And in this austere entranceway, the working-class and often racialized status of rock's early "influences" is only reinforced by the material utilitarianism of the physical space itself: flat paint for the walls, battleship gray paint over diamond-plate steel flooring, unadorned overhead lighting to illuminate the photos. Official HFM text confirms the symbolism of austerity in words such as appear next to the photograph of Guthrie, "the original source of a now-familiar image: that of the working-class singer/songwriter rambling across the continent with a guitar on his back." Represented in this walkway is not rock *itself*—as culture, practice, or discursive artifact—but only the hard *work* and musical innovation that has taken place before rock's arrival. Nor is the walkway intended as a space to be dwelled in; rather, it is one to be *gotten through*, letting visitors make a quick token nod to the multiple "pioneers," "founders," and "fathers" of rock before they come to the much more important space where rock's history becomes more interesting, compelling—and told in full color and sound.

Exiting the initial hallway, visitors turn a corner to be confronted by confrontation in the form of an entire wall of TV screens, their volumes set high, playing an endless loop of news and archive videos focusing on historical attempts to censor and/or silence rock's discourses. Images flash by: angry citizens throw records into bonfires; preachers shout anti-rock vitriole from sidewalks and pulpits; George Herbert Walker Bush rattles a presidential saber over Ice T's cop-killing lyrics. Rock's core history is being told in these images, set within a context of opposition to the society surrounding it and threatening to control rock in response to rock's threat to society. It is more than a little surprising, then, to proceed to another video display titled "Rock Around the Clock," where an almost exactly opposite story is told: Here, twin banks of floor-to-ceiling video screens display how the multivalent discourses of rock and society, the dialectic between rock and its cultural home, have—in contrast to rock's stance of oppositionality to anything society may offer—also allowed the society to *shape* the same music which would claim to be free of any such influences. Cleverly, though, the story here resists totalizing by presenting a nicely postmodern series of rapid-fire sounds and images—there's General Westmoreland addressing the nation during the Vietnam era, assuring a victory; there's Jimi Hendrix during the same time, mauling the national anthem on his electric guitar, making the strings sound like bombs—war, anti-hippie; Woodstock, anti-war—who made whom?—that defy the construction of a single line of correspondence between the musical discourse and any specific, individual cultural events and practices. Instead, created here is a chaotic multiplicity for possibilities of influence, and a perpetual dialectic between rock and society. By one implication the video displays work as an admission that without the existence of mainstream opposition, rock's counterculture would have nothing to counter, and thus no influence at all—a separate discourse of

rebellion, after all, can only function after another, more established discursive system first provides the necessary subject matter. Yet the simultaneous implication, much louder and more preferred, presents a stronger and even Marxian rhetoric wherein rock is the clearly dominant base, and mainstream culture, finding itself helplessly molded and steered by rock's powerful, inescapable influence, is the superstructure. By this rhetoric, then, Hendrix's performance was not a response to Westmoreland's address or his control of the Vietnam conflict; rather, the general's address was a response to *Hendrix's* control of the *anti*-Vietnam *counter*conflict—which of course could not be counter at all, since the conflict being opposed would exist only as a manifestation of, rather than a contextual issue for, Hendrix's discursive act.

From this intriguing display, visitors are released to the main floor displays, where the color and sound barrage continues and so too does the HFM's contradictory narrative. In the center of the hall are numerous freestanding displays with mannequins representing well-known artists in their signature costumes: Madonna, appearing in both white bridal lace and black dominatrix leather, represents the severe limits of possibility placed upon female rockers, presented first as virgin, then as whore; Diana Ross and the Supremes represent not so much female rockers as black ones, and appear in full Motown regalia; Alice Cooper, with his S/M costume, death's-head makeup, and working guillotine from a 1973 tour, represents heavy metal; and Michael Jackson, spinning on a rotating platform beneath a mirrored disco ball in his trademark single sparkle-glove and sequined black jacket, represents rock's showmanship. These and other major full-body representations strongly suggest that the chosen artists have earned their status more by the degree of glitz and spectacle in their stage presentations than by their actual centrality to the grand narrative of rock. Evidence of this appears in the form of the three members of Texas

blues-rockers ZZ Top, for instance, clad in neon green-and-pink outfits and bearing fuzz-covered white guitars, enjoying a major display in the center of the room, while the Beatles were originally relegated to a side wall with Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison.[27] And when an exception to this rule appears through the Allman Brothers Band receiving a major display like ZZ Top's, that display consists only of the band's *instruments*—the musicians themselves, who wore only plain work shirts and denim jeans, are not represented at all.

Similarly, other displays present only a band's or solo artists's *costumes* without any mannequin representations for the individuals who wore them. A major display dedicated to blues and R&B artists, where a sequined evening gown worn by Etta James is deprived of a form to fill it, accompanies another display, for rap, featuring a huge black leather jacket worn by one of rap's Fat Boys, but the jacket hangs free of bodily shape. Likewise the Temptations, known for flashy choreographed live shows and matching sequined tuxedoes, have the clothing—but not themselves—consigned to a side display case. While any curator can argue that the content of museum displays is predicated on the artifacts s/he could gather, these choices and their presentations are clearly ideological when exhibits without bodily representation are primarily those of black performers, when centralized artist exhibits feature only those primarily white performers who achieved phenomenal commercial success, and when all of these exhibitions further conflate stage presence with discursive influence. And that conflation itself is rife with a primary, and troubling, contradiction: The Rolling Stones, one of the most commercially successful bands of all time, rates an entire floor section devoted to the group's various stage incarnations—but if this is the way stories are told, why has Michael Jackson not rated such a prominent display as well? And Madonna? Both of these individuals have

certainly experienced (and presented) a vast number of changing forms during their long careers, but what may be more significant in keeping them at lesser status than the Rolling Stones is the fact that neither of them is, in the words of a forgotten Foreigner songtext, a requisite "dirty *white boy*." Then again, the reason for their sub-Stone status also appears to go beyond the mere failings of, respectively, incorrect race and gender. Because of rock's long-established custom of identifying and naming separate musical *genres* as part of its desire for tidy housekeeping and the preservation of that all-important trope of *rock* authenticity, Jackson and Madonna are not really *rock* by the same stylistic definition, nor do they share the same cultural *ethos* of the Stones, whose legendary (and inaccurate) history holds that they came from dirty industrial towns, taught themselves to play instruments in order to escape that blight, made their names by whipping an assortment of black-composed blues songtexts into white-snarled rock shape which nonetheless managed to both preserve and honor its original roots, moved on to become "street-fighting men" whose call for "violent revolution" arrived at just the right time, and in all these ways conquered the rock world. By the magisterial power of this kind of history-*cum*-rhetoric of its own accord, how can Madonna and Michael Jackson hope to compare? The former, in her prime, represented dance-oriented top-forty *pop* discourse by and for young, white, college-educated, affluent women, later turned to slower, more introspective "power-pop" *ballads*, then switched to *electronica* to mark her 40th birthday, while the latter provided a hybrid of early Motown *soul* and later *R&B* smoothness with an occasional *metal* guitar solo, courtesy of Eddie Van Halen or Slash from Guns N' Roses, thrown into the mix. In these ways Madonna and Michael Jackson defy easy genre-tagging and thus *resist rock* by slipping out of its codifying grasp. Following my argument to its logical end, then, these two performers are included at the

HFM not because they *rock* by rock's self-definition, but rather because they fit rock's more important practice of *marketing* its tropes of rebellion and resistance—the desirable qualities most relevantly manifested by Jackson and Madonna—as commodities worth a great deal of capital, both cultural and economic. To at once refuse and lust after commerce, to praise and dismiss resistance simultaneously, are in themselves huge rhetorical contradictions, but contradictions befitting the dizzying ideology of the HFM's narrative which promotes rebellion against social norms while allowing only those practitioners of its discourse who have achieved exceptional commercial success to represent physically the story of social rebellion. As a result, resistance in the end becomes utterly normalized since economic success in American culture, as well as its normalizing ideology, is the strongest indication of an unfettered desire for, adherence to, and allegiance with the controlling hegemonic values of capitalism.

But perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the costume displays—when those costumes are given form—is the use of mannequins. An identical mannequin body type, bearing one of only three different facial expressions, is used throughout the displays, regardless of the gender, race or body size of the artist being represented. Thus the towering, dark bass player for Kiss, Gene Simmons, appears in the same form as petite, pale Madonna. Likewise, black faces bear white facial features; the only nod to racial difference appears in skin tone and—only sometimes—hair type. The official HFM souvenir book notes that costume curator Stephen Sprouse intentionally set out to develop mannequins that "don't look like fashion mannequins; they're more like rock-star poses—you know, holding guitars and lunging forward. . . [t]hese mannequins were created just for this museum, just for rock and roll" (14). Aesthetically, the net effect of

Sprouse's intent is an overwhelming oddity bordering on the surreal, but a more important rhetorical effect is that while the outrageous costumes of rock—the exterior masks—might proclaim an invented *ethos* of unique individualism, their bodies immediately work to negate any individual, interior difference. As a result, the homogeneity of the HFM's mannequins ultimately suggests nothing more than a pair of equally trivializing story threads: first, that the discourse of a musician (product) and its historical context (process) matters far less than what s/he has contributed to the grand narrative of rock, and second, that these are performers who, rather than having shaped or even influenced the sounds of and by the times, have merely pushed the limits of social dress codes.

As a whole, the physical presence of a rock artist at the HFM is accomplished by disciplining his or her representational body and thereby rendering it docile and open, in Foucault's observation, to subjection, use, transformation, and improvement (*Discipline* 136) in a quest to make the real authentic. While a mannequin body is of course *literally* docile, its use at the HFM renders it even more so through the additional use of an identical form for every musician. This generic shape in turn aids the primary project of disciplining the narrative of rock music, but in the attempt to make sense of the differing subject *positions* of the artists being represented, only their outer *costumes* are there to suggest the possibility of individual agency. Moreover, the trope of synecdoche appears everywhere through the musuem: T-Bone Walker, Jimi Hendrix, and countless others are embodied by their guitars; the Everly Brothers by their tap shoes; Jim Morrison by his elementary school report card; John Lennon by his trademark wire-rim glasses. The narrative unfolds through fragments of artifacts which function at once to celebrate the achievement of greatness by a limited number of artists, while at the same time suggesting

that these artists are interchangeable chapters who serve primarily to protect the overall integrity of rock's Story through concrete, verifiable indications of a present and vital self which has—beyond mere legend—a *real historical context* filling real, tangible space.

This history is further molded into linear, disciplined form in a prominent section of the Hall entitled " Rock Scenes." Here the display cases are devoted to individual major cities because, as the HFM book explains, "[r]ock and roll is city music" (24). While a possibility existed here to fashion displays that would reflect the diversity and continuing influences characterizing rock's discourses, each showcase is instead partitioned into discrete spatial and temporal units that place strict boundaries on each city's period of influential prominence. Memphis string-pickin' music was at its height from 1948-58; New Orleans mambo from 1950-63; San Francisco psychedelia from 1965-69; Detroit Motown from 1962-71; London and New York punk from 1975-80; Seattle grunge from 1985-95; and New York again enjoyed prominence with rap from 1979-91. (Apparently, when rappers began to arise from Los Angeles to coincide with their New York colleagues, rap left no forwarding address for the HFM curators.) While there is clearly some overlap in periods, the overall visual and sensory effect of this display is that rock unfolded in extremely tidy cause-and-effect fashion. As Foucault has noted, "[p]ower is articulated directly onto time; it assures its control and guarantees its use" (*Discipline* 160), and this is the dynamic at work in the "Rock Scenes" exhibit. The textual accompaniments to each display case, reproduced in the HFM book, continue the practices begun elsewhere in the Museum: Musical genres are personified ("The blues traveled up the Mississippi River until they reached Chicago"), "great" artists are deified ("If James Brown is the Godfather of Soul, then George Clinton is the Grandmaster of

Funk"), less commercially successful artists are marginalized (black rhythm and blues artists appear on the wall across from the Major Cities—literally separated from the more central narrative taking place on the other side of the aisle), and more than anything else, time and space are partitioned with meticulous care. Foucault argues that the act of partitioning involves designating a specific place for each individual in disciplinary institutions, its purpose being to "analyze confused, massive or transient pluratives. . . its aim to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals. . . . It [is] a procedure... aimed at knowing, mastering and using" (*Discipline* 143). The HFM partitions music by city and era in order to efficiently organize the analytical space of rock and to place each practitioner/genre into a specific designated space, thus neatly avoiding a messy plurality of voices. Furthermore, the resulting linearity of this official narrative works to eliminate confusion by serializing historical events, articulating each historical moment as if it had a specific origin and ending point within a fixed period of time. Each of these devices serves to fulfill the desire of the curators, if not the public at large, to tell a coherent linear narrative with maximum efficiency and minimum contradiction. And indeed, it almost works: Only one factor creates a spillover, undisciplined effect in this section of the HFM, and that effect takes place only because the display case for each city's musical narrative also features a television monitor playing video highlights of the music and times being depicted in the display. The sounds blaring out of these monitors follow visitors so insistently that it becomes impossible to avoid hearing Detroit's Four Tops singing their unmistakeable Motown harmonies at the same time that San Francisco's Grace Slick simultaneously pours her powerful vocals into the psychedelic Jefferson Airplane anthem, "White Rabbit." Rap blends with grunge,

which itself blends with punk, and each of these in turn melds with Motown and rockabilly. While it's difficult to concentrate on any single thing amid this sensory onslaught, the auditory collage does have the compelling effect of forging mental connections between musical genres that, visually and narratively, are kept in isolation from one another.

At the same time that this imbrication of styles and eras takes place, however, partitioning remains effective in another area. For while a great number of black artists are represented in this main narrative, there is a clear problematic at work in the display when one realizes that although black artists are part of the story, their musical difference in it is completely smoothed over. The official history told here works to mystify all differential genres and discourses—blues, gospel, soul and rap among them—into *parts of rock*, a process that instantly works to undercut competition and opposition. Co-opting these and other musical discourses by flattering them, naming them as germinal influences and thereby incorporating them into a master narrative over which they have no control and into whose construction they have had no voice, the HFM also transmutes any valid differences in the respective musical styles and thereby denies the existence of jazz, blues, gospel, et al. as discursive forms possessing their own voices and agencies. Other than the audio overlap within the hallway, there is no allowance for a dialectic of influences here; rather, one form of music simply replaces another in a never-ending cycle of rock progress. The move to subsume other styles of music into the hegemony of rock is blatant; it is a perfect method for neutralizing the cachet of rap, especially, as a viable competitor for rock's accumulated capital. If hip-hop culture and its songtexts are reified

as merely a logical discursive outgrowth of rock, they pose no potent threat to rock's dominance within music culture; instead, rock is allowed to congratulate its magnificent and very cool self for giving rise to yet another rebellious and extreme form of music—and for being at once that form's cause and its center. This marginalization through forced centering of hip-hop further serves to legitimate rock as a very serious and complex art form, one with a rich, full, and suitably sophisticated—but in no ways complicated—history. In turn, by constructing such a fine and noble history for rock, the HFM lends that much more authority and cultural weight to any discursive form whose story it controls, thus instantly diminishing the number and volume of protests which those affected forms might have at *being* so controlled. Beginning in November 1999 and running through most of 2000, a three-floor tribute entitled *Roots, Rhymes, and Rage* bestows HFM credibility and support to rap's history and artifacts, naming hip-hop as "the biggest *pop* music *innovation* since *rock and roll* in the 1950s" ("Roots"; italics added). To coincide with this, a September 1999 conference titled *Hip-Hop: A Cultural Expression,* featuring keynoters KRS-One and Chuck D and panelists whose names comprise the entire history of early hip-hop discourses, was a presentation of the Black Studies program at Cleveland State University—under the auspices of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. I would be a hopeless cynic indeed to name either of these events as examples to support the argument I have laid out, since the HFM clearly *enables* and *promotes* both hip-hop culture and Cleveland State by lending its own cultural reputation and heft to the projects. To borrow a phrase from Kenneth Burke, the rhetorical system at work here is literally rotten with perfection.

. . . The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin?
- T. S. Eliot

Within the Rock Hall, visitors are presented with a history of radio, another of television, and a highly prominent one of early rock magazines such as *Creem*, *Circus*, and especially *Rolling Stone*—whose founding publisher, Jann Wenner, is also a founding member of the Foundation along with Ertegun. Each of these rock publications has its history told in a visual display, but *Rolling Stone* more than any other here presents itself as an "underground" venture first and still. Utterly disregarding its gradual evolution into a mainstream corporate glossy whose table of contents appears only after numerous pages of advertisements for Ford, Hilfiger, IBM, et al., the magazine's wall caption proudly announces Wenner's status as a high school dropout while the display case itself holds letters from 1960s mass-murderer Charles Manson (demanding an editorial correction) and notoriously eccentric staff writer Hunter S. Thompson (demanding drugs so he can complete an article). The exhibit presents a basic chronology starting in the 60s, when *RS* was a pulp street-corner rag, to the present day, but the timeline is jarringly interrupted by an obviously centralized late-1980s cover photo of Janet Jackson, topless and with her hands barely covering her breasts. *Look,* says the display, *at the dirty rock star* (this time a black woman rather than a white boy) *who has rebelliously taken off her clothes in defiance of a mainstream desire for morality and modesty,* while a more careful rhetorical analysis says instead, *Look at how the exotic Other's female form has been fetishized yet again for delighted use by a predominantly white male readership in a predominantly white commercial venue's drive to sell more copies.* Unaware of its

function as one more indicator of rock's clearly primary economic interests and its ongoing entanglement in sexist practices, the centerpiece unknowingly shouts that *this* is what rock journalism, ultimately, is all about.

The HFM next takes visitors exiting the rock journalism display up another escalator to the dining floor, where grossly overpriced potato chips, sandwiches, and Cokes can be consumed at the spot where opening-year diners could once peruse a section of Pink Floyd's massive stage prop from the band's *The Wall* tour which loomed over the main lobby below, bassist Roger Waters' anti-stardom polemic neatly "scrawled" across the bricks:

> In the old days, pre-*Dark Side of the Moon*, Pink Floyd played to audiences which by virtue of their size allowed an intimacy of connection that was magical. However, success overtook us and by 1977 we were playing in football stadiums. The magic crushed beneath the weight of numbers, we were becoming addicted to the trappings of popularity. I found myself increasingly alienated in that atmosphere of avarice and ego. . . . I was faced with a choice. To deny my addiction and embrace that "comfortably numb" but "magicless" existence or accept the burden of insight, take the road less traveled and embark on the often painful journey to discover who I was and where I fit. *The Wall* was the picture I drew for myself to help me make that choice.

Having just been presented with this intriguing tale of an autonomous and aggressive "success" that by its own power can pursue and viciously attack those gentle *artistes* wanting nothing to do with it, this narrative describing a vehement opposition to rock stardom—i.e., *opposition to the exact thing that this building is dedicated to glorifying*—visitors would, in the years before a substantial interior redesign took place, quite ironically begin their ascent to the center of rock-star hegemony. No longer could they ride an escalator; the only way up was by climbing a winding, carpeted staircase, with the light gradually dimming as the steps ascended. And then, suddenly, there it was: The

Hall of Fame. There was no light in this place, save for the faint glow of immortalized signatures that appeared to be etched into glass on all four walls. Small LCD computer screens appeared next to most of the names, showing random digitized images of the person or group so immortalized. Overwhelmed by the sanctity of the place, visitors would instantly lower their voices to whispers, as if in a library—or a place of worship. Small purple lights set into the walls led the eye up, up, up into the heavens of an infinite dark space overhead.

But this, as my re-visit to the HFM in the summer of 1999 revealed, is no longer the case. In the view of former Sex Pistols vocalist John "Johnny Rotten" Lydon in 1995, the original space "should [have] be[en] titled the Hall of Shame," since it represented what was, for him, the tragic specter of "institutionalized rock" (qtd. in Willman 104). The opinion was shared by no less than *Business Week*, which chided that "the last thing the hall should be is a *shrine* to rock—an oxymoron. . . . [The hall should] be gaudy, even loud. Rock 'n' roll should never forget" (Wolff 26). Like the lobby of the building several floors below, the original Hall was sterile, muted, and antiseptic, and after a steady stream of feedback to this effect the HFM in April 1998 relocated the Hall of Fame component of the Museum—the etched signatures and LCD screens, along with new film, animation, and video segments to coincide with new still photography and personal artifacts of inductees—to a separate circular wing attached to the main building near the dining area. The opening of this wing, called The New Hall of Fame Presented by AT&T, surely helped to appease some of the original Hall's critics (not only rock practitioners and business journalists, but an infinite number of visitors to the site as well) by delivering what the building's Internet site now proudly describes as "a dynamic, interactive

experience" where the new sound and "hyperactive" film/video components have helped to make a "dramatic" and "aggressive" surrounding for the Immortalized Names and those who come to view their signatures on the wall ("New"). Clearly, the HFM's directors have responded in quick time to calls for aesthetic corrections in order to make rock seem more, well, *rock*like in its final resting place (corrections which, I must admit, do *feel* much better than the original version), but by moving the Hall into an atmosphere of bright movement and noise, they also took away the original space's contemplative nature which offered visitors a chance to wonder why there is, for instance, no place in the HFM narrative for alternative viewpoints to counter the site's clearly phallocentric focus beginning with the opening-year nude photos outside the restrooms. There have, after all, been many more women in rock than just the likes of Tina Turner, Madonna, and Diana Ross—women who, pardon yet another lapse into aesthetic judgment, have *rocked* much harder and more loudly—and as Sherman Lee has explained in a lengthy article titled "(The Guitarists Formerly Known as Chicks)," the histories some of those women could bring to the HFM would coincide quite well with rock's overall ideology of rebellion and originality:

> Women guitarists are no longer content to be ghettoized into 'acceptable' musical categories such as folk and country, and now can be heard playing everything from heavy metal to jazz, and especially alternative rock. They are a fresh voice on the pop music scene, and are inventing new modes of expression for the guitar that could only be the result of their unique perspective. . . . [T]oday's women guitarists had little in the way of female role models, so their outlook on the guitar has been influenced by both sexes, something that just can't be said for most male guitarists. Women were never allowed to play by the rules, so they are often better at breaking them. (28)

In a first-person account, guitarist Susan Stenger supports the statement about differing experience and fewer models, but she also moves musicianship away from a simple definition as *technique* and toward a larger definition as *discourse* in explaining that "[b]ecause a lot of women haven't grown up with guitars and amps, in a way it is a blessing because they can kind of reinvent how to play. They don't have to rely on a vocabulary that's handed down. They can invent their own language" (qtd. in Lee 57). And in regards to the site where such a differently-originated discourse is practiced, women such as former Catholic Girls member Lucy O'Brien can also offer more visceral accounts of rock life to counter the HFM's largely sanitized narrative. As O'Brien writes in recalling her band's beginning:

> No one told us that promoters would rip us off blind, that boy bands would try to fuck us under the guise of chivalrous respect, that skinheads would come to our gigs, shout abuse at us, overturn the tables, throw bricks through the windows and beat us up; no one told us that we would pay for our own studio time and be included on a compilation album, yet wouldn't see a penny of the profit; no one told us that if we'd hung on to the nugget we had—ourselves, our youth, our sex, our music, our untutored, naïve difference—we'd have one of the hottest properties in the business. (xii)

What the Hall of Fame component of the HFM is about, of course, is not the recognition of any "untutored difference" but instead a thoroughly disciplined homogeneity, a distillation of rock's past into rock's present and, unquestionably, its future. What takes place in this centerpiece of the building is therefore a simultaneous creation of the Hall as the centerpiece of rock itself. It is at once Alpha and Omega, both origin and destination for all of those inductees gazed upon with favor by the nominating committee. By borrowing here from Katherine Bergeron in her study of musicology with

Philip Bohlman, I will argue that what happens in the Hall of Fame transcends the mere disciplining of rock which occurs elsewhere in the Museum; in the Hall, selected portions of rock history and the individuals working within it are "scaled" and "tuned" until they form a *canon*—"a physical model that both embodies a standard of measure and makes possible its reproduction. The canon is. . . an ideal of order made physical, visible" (2). Moreover, the musical *canon* is built of *scales* which are in turn reduced to *ratios*, the latter of which function as controlling metaphors for the entire HFM enterprise:

> Tuned on a single string (a miniature universe), each ratio yields a precise section, a measurement that marks or rules the space, producing the divisions that are the canon's values. The operation thus reveals the essential link between canon and discipline: the tuned scale, or canon, is. . . a collection of discrete values produced out of a system that orders, segments, divides. (Bergeron and Bohlman 2)

The net result of this metarationalizing process is the defining of rock's past as being identical to its present—the past comes forward through, in Jameson's terms, contemporary images of what it represents. But not too far forward, one assumes, if the historian brings to the endeavor enough idealism and ideology about the work at hand. In the words of the HFM's chief curator (and former *Rolling Stone* editor), James Henke, "Early on, nobody probably thought that rock & roll would [still] be around [at the end of the century], but now we risk losing a lot of that history completely if something isn't built to keep it" (qtd. in Foege 23). In that "kept" model of history, rock can thrive and survive through a clean and seemingly logical narrative, one that strives to present itself as being free of contradictions or self-reflection. Accordingly, this $92 million tribute to rock, the music of resistance, makes no acknowledgement to movements that have resisted rock itself. Punk, which began as a movement of *opposition* to the rock

establishment, wanting nothing to do with its history or its trappings, is named by the HFM[25] as rock's grammarian, bringing the older music form "back in line" when, during the art-rock and disco era, it "strayed too far" from its rebellious origins. Likewise Bruce Springsteen, whose E Street Band came onto the musical scene around the same time as punk and *countered* art rock's pomposity with danceable, celebratory (or cautionary) barroom stomps, is thanked for having given rock a "fresh infusion of vitality" when the old dog got winded. And heavy metal, banished to a life in the far margins of rock culture since its inception, is simply allowed to remain there; the closest things to an acknowledgement of metal's existence at the HFM are a plaque beneath Alice Cooper's "*heavy metal* S/M costume" from the early 1970s and a brief flash of a Metallica video clip in the "Video Killed the Radio Star" display. Metal's progression into genres of its own—thrash, doom, grindcore, and others—is a story left untold and thus constructed as inconsequential.

One likely explanation for this clear dismissal of a genre offering bands with names like My Dying Bride, Napalm Death, and Cannibal Corpse is that the HFM is, first and foremost, not a *rock* enterprise but a *civic* and *commercial* one. Built not so much to represent rock as to revitalize Cleveland's flagging riverfront district, the building at One Key Plaza (an address named after the HFM's first corporate sponsor, KeyCorp) exists primarily and without apology to promote capitalism and make a profit. As yet another *Rolling Stone* staffer, Jon Parales, defines it, rock "is proud to be a commodity, one that brings in billions of dollars, with artistic success frequently measured in sales figures" (1), and visitors get this message most clearly upon exiting the top floor/final exhibit[26] of the building, when their only avenue of descent is a series of escalators that dumps them

directly into the center of the gift shop. There is no other way out; visitors leave the same way they came in, surrounded by evidence that the music whose narrative would like consumer-theorists to read it as political, subversive, dangerous, and artistic— is, at absolute bottom, a business venture. The gift shop, a mecca of HFM memorabilia, presumably sells every record by every artist represented in the building, along with T-shirts, books, coffee cups, coasters, and trinkets of all sorts—most prominently displayed of which are little plastic snow globes with miniature facsimiles of the HFM building itself inside them. This may be the final irony: that an art form with resistance to conformity and an endless struggle against cultural entropy as its rallying cry uses the quintessential *tchotchke* to commemorate one's visit to a place where a tour T-shirt and a mild case of tinnitus would, by the building's own account, make a far more fitting memory.

In the end, though, this reading of the rock HFM is not primarily a critique of commercialism or even capitalism. As Bennett et al.'s *Rock and Popular Music* makes clear, the bonds between rock and commerce are too inextricable, the specific points of suture too inseparable, the evidence of mutuality too overwhelming, for critiques based solely on perceptions (not theories) of economic "corruptions" of rock's purity as a discursive form and practice, and of commercially-induced "alienations" from its primary applications and intents, to continue to carry serious weight. And just as rock as a set of discursive practices—even in the neighborhood basements and garages where they most often originate—can never be completely free of commercial/economic influence, rock as an array of discourses cannot ever be completely free of ideology or contradiction. Resistance to these realities would, in itself, only constitute an ideologically-motivated

pursuit of futility. By remaining mired in the mere reading of a discourse and the mapping of its rhetorical systems, acts, and deployments, *nothing really happens* beyond the formation of more "uptown" *theory* without any useful "downtown" *praxis*. Parales, writing in 1985, proudly notes that

> [r]ock accepts everything its detractors say, only to laugh it off. Sure, its basics are stolen, and its ideas are often clichés. Yes, it tends to aim for the lowest common denominator and appeal to base, primal impulses.... It is a happy bastard style, claiming a pedigree from jazz, blues, Tin Pan Alley, country, classical music, movies, television, sex, art, literature, electronics, and out-and-out noise. It is rooted in real emotion; *it is also rooted in racism, cynicism, and greed.* (1; italics added)

A continuation of rock theory without lived *praxis*—a conscious, ever-alert awareness of not only *which* practices one is engaged in but also *why* one is engaged in them, and to what ends—only allows rock and its historians like Parales and the HFM to continue to "accept" the theory and simply "laugh it off" in response. That, after all, is the correct rock attitude, the required and expected stance. As Raymond Williams has written, "[n]ew social relations and the kinds of activity that are possible through them may be imagined, but cannot be achieved unless the determining limits of a particular mode of production are surpassed in practice, by actual social change" (86). The road toward achieving a "new social relation" between rock's dominant ideologies and those individuals who live by and uncritically perpetuate them can only be built through an active *praxis* in the form of creating a social sphere which encourages and invites those same individuals to study, discuss, write about, and then *change their customary modes of conception, promotion, and consumption of* rock's rhetorical systems and ideological subscriptions. To simply identify the problems is not enough. To *act* on them by

working against their continuation is the only way to cut rock off from the loathesome "roots" Parales lists—along with the others he does not—and in so doing, begin to cause those roots to wither while the discourses continue to thrive in new and better ways. And a prime site for this kind of active intervention is the college classroom.

7

SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK:

Radicalism, Resistance, and Reading in the Classroom Arena

They say I won't learn, they say they can't teach me. How can I learn when they just don't reach me?
- Coolio, "Gangsta's Paradise"

Really don't mind if you sit this one out. My word's but a whisper; your deafness, a shout.
- Jethro Tull, "Thick as a Brick"

When we were young and went to school
There were certain teachers who would hurt the children in any way they could
By pouring their derision upon anything we did
And exposing every weakness, however carefully hidden by the kids.
- Pink Floyd, "The Happiest Days of Our Lives"

Well we can't salute ya—can't find a flag. If that don't suit ya, that's a drag.
- Alice Cooper, "School's Out"

For Edward Said in his book *Musical Elaborations*, a particular feature "about cultural canons and their consequences in general (or specifically musicological) analyses of music is that they tend to set limits and priorities too rigidly and too hierarchically," and through this habit "the canon's eminence is associated with a sort of. . . inevitability, its laboriously constructed social authority either discounted or forgotten altogether" (60). This, at one time in my life, was exactly the case for me. Rock's discourses, through all of their various rhetoricities and ideologies, presented to me and my peers their canonical songtexts, performers, and acceptable/required forms as something that came wholly formed and ready for our admiration and subscription, but never our questioning analyses. This wasn't a case of our not *wanting* to interrogate rock so much as it was one of rock's not *needing* our interrogation. Yet it is precisely this analytical lack which, Said writes, creates "an unappealingly barren setting presided over by approved masterpieces and

venerated authorities." Rather than remain focused solely or primarily on textual utterances in rock, their author/practitioners, and their forms—on the *contents* of the discourse and its practices—teachers of rock can choose instead to follow Said's suggestion to look into the *contexts* that produce "masters" but ignore all others who are deemed lesser, and to examine the particular histories that allow "mastery" to happen in the first place. In my own field of composition, as if the making of meaning from student papers was not a difficult and sometimes frustrating endeavor for many teachers already, Deborah Brandt adds an examination of context to the task by arguing that "[n]o matter what the topic, texts are primarily about the writing and reading of them. What they refer to is not an explicit message but the implicit process by which intersubjective understanding is getting accomplished" (4), and to this George Steiner steps in from the field of linguistics to add that the "silences that punctuate discourse. . . are not empty. They have the echo of things unspoken. . . ." (15). Examinations of the contextual to coincide with a close look at the discursive become vitally important with a discursive practice such as rock, in which a 45-year history in some ways has provided no more than a loud and noisome soundtrack to accompany—indeed, at times to *provoke*—an ongoing legacy of harmful practices which the larger society has been struggling to change, if not end.

But two things immediately present a problem in this last statement. First, since the statement is itself situated within a chapter whose title and opening epigraphs clearly *invoke* (to borrow from Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford) an immediate audience of teachers as the primary readers, that same audience will likewise see itself as being directly *addressed* by it. Second, the very epigraphs serving to create the invocation are

connected, in thematic fashion, directly to the troubling fact that teachers do not occupy the same precise spaces within rock discourses that their students do. While teachers of rock at one point in their lives *have been* consumer-theorists in the same ways that their students *are now*, once the switch is made from consumer-theorist to theorist-consumer, many key similarities end. Differences in education levels, socioeconomic status, and especially age combine to create a power discrepancy that immediately springs forward to erect a wall of resistance between the performer and the audience in a rock "concert venue" shaped like a classroom, and this resistance becomes especially problematic if the teacher/performer is one who fits Grossberg's observation that "those who hold on to rock rarely renounce their youth" (*Gotta* 182). If rock becomes merely a facade to mask a teacher's fading youth, then that educator will, as Grossberg writes,

> transform the struggle over who 'owns' rock into a struggle over who 'owns' youth. . . . I have often heard teachers complain that their students are not young, that they can't be [young] because they are so straight and boring. Implicitly, the teachers are congratulating themselves for their continued loyalty to their own youthfulness. (182-3)

Therefore, in my statement naming the thorough interrogation of rock contexts as well as contents as a moral and ethical imperative, I do not exclusively address teachers at all. Rather, I include them as an equal part of the audience—by which I mean students—whose place in the culture renders them, more so than the teacher, most effective in enacting necessary changes in the discourse and its practices being examined. And since "[t]he idea of music as a rhetorical art rests on the metaphor of music as a language" (Bonds 61), it is that language which functions as the cornerstone for a dialectical pedagogy aimed at identifying the many "policies of truth," to paraphrase a Depeche Mode songtext, that exist in rock's discourses and its history. As Mark Bonds has

explained in *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration*, while many attempts were made during the eighteenth century to forge solid connections between a musical composer's processes in drafting an orchestral piece and a writer/ speaker's processes for drafting an oration—to include parallels within a similar "three-stage process: invention (or pre-writing), elaboration (ordering, varying, articulating), and elocution (putting it all together in final form)" (80)—the movement toward theories of musical language *as equal to* written and spoken language eventually faded due to an inability to separate such theories from their primarily aesthetic grounding point, as shown in Lorenz Mizler's claim that "[m]usic is an oration in notes and *seeks to move listeners* just as an orator does" (qtd. in Bonds 89; italics added). Yet remnants of the movement continue to thrive in classical music today, where Bonds notes that theoretical attention has been focused instead on connections between music and *story*, especially between the parts of an orchestral piece and the *plot* in written stories and novels. While the success of such endeavors remains to be seen, they nonetheless offer a valuable connecting point between the auditory nature of rock discourses and at least one way to frame both the verbal and non-verbal messages and the movements and influences—the contexts—of those messages through rock's history. Charles Keil and Steven Feld join in the call for contextual analyses beyond solely textual ones, writing that "whatever a historical change in language, music, dance, or culture is about, we can study it best, at its very point of creation, if we attend closely to the discrepancies that enhance participation and the contexts that generate these discrepancies" (107), but the primary point of resistance, for teachers and students alike, comes in the authors' statement following immediately after this: "We really have to get down to the recording studio or dance floor

to groove a while and to ask people about what has been happening." In one way, implied here is the suggestion that only "hands-on" practitioners—better yet, *producers*—of music or the celebratory dance that accompanies it are equipped with all of the necessary experiences and knowledges from which incisive theoretical articulations of a discursive practice's history can be formed. But in another way, Keil and Feld offer what may be the most practical observation for teachers to note: You gotta get "downtown" to where the action is if you wanna be able to "talk true" about the action itself. This, unfortunately, is much easier said than done. As Michael Bérubé writes in a discussion of the pitfalls of teaching popular textforms, "whereas the subject is often quite worthy of serious study, it's getting harder for an aging body to keep up with it every year and. . . Well, let me put it this way: I simply have no idea what *Dawson's Creek* is supposed to be about, all right?" (B5). Obviously, there are an infinite number of practical reasons in any teacher's life that will impede an ability truly to go "downtown" in the same way that students can and do, but knowledge sufficient to talk with those students about where *they* go can still be gathered by relatively minor lifestyle alterations less imposing than weekly rock-concert attendance or fortnightly dance jams at the local hip-hop club before crossing the street to the metal bar for a couple of Buds and a case of temporary hearing loss. A copy of *The Source* and another of *Rolling Stone* to coincide with *Lingua Franca* and *Z* is a start, with those two music magazines offset in turn by even more "downtown"-focused publications like *Vibe* and *Circus*. NPR can share equal time with not one but several local rock- and rap-format radio stations during drive (and perhaps even office) time; A&E's *Biography* and Ted Koppel's *Nightline* can cede screen time to top-request music-video countdowns on MTV and BET. And—this

may be the hardest part—dollars can part ways with paychecks as the music library of the teacher's youth expands to include the music of the student's.

A minor adjustment, indeed. Taken as a whole, these things more likely indicate a *major* change to many teacherly private-life practices and even preferences, but they are necessary for avoiding what Bérubé has very recently called the "Elvis Costello Problem," defined as "the difficulty of communicating to students by means of the touchstones of popular culture" when students either don't remember those touchstones or never knew about them at all (B5). Costello, a British musician labeled as an early "punk" in the late 1970s with his breakthrough songtext "Watching the Detectives," went on to perform less spare, more standard-rock pieces such as "What's So Funny (About Peace, Love, and Understanding)" before fading away during the 1980s and reappearing in the 90s to record an album of duets with Burt Bacharach. Bérubé's point in invoking Costello, as it relates to my focus here, is that the rock figures who have loomed large in a teacher's earlier life will often have zero significance for students. The breakneck pace of an average rock figure's rise to cultural celebrity and prominence and the typical slide into obscurity which often follows this rise makes "keeping up" a daunting enough prospect, and as any of Dennis Miller's televised "rant" performances will attest, the same is true about *any* type of referent in popular discourse. Miller, best known for both a cutting wit and an endless capacity for dropping pop-cult references drawn from anywhere between centuries past to just this afternoon, is typically met with puzzled silence during the majority of his "standup" banter. "My wife and I just had a son, and we named him Holden," Miller tells the audience, and then comes the punch line: "After the famous literary character in that great work from the 1950s—William Holden in *Route 66*." A handful of people in the audience laugh; hundreds of others wonder what he's talking

about. Miller moves on to the next reference, the next joke. And while teachers who encounter the "Elvis Costello Problem" when their rock references fail to connect with students can certainly follow Miller's lead by simply moving on to another example and hoping it fares better, an ongoing pattern of more misses than hits ultimately results in what can only be seen as a failed pedagogy. For this reason alone, whatever lifestyle alterations can be made to become "well read" not only in the discourse of the academy but also in the discourses of the academy's students will be well rewarded. Contexts cannot be viewed or examined completely if knowledge itself is incomplete, and since so much of that knowledge can be transmitted *by* students, rather than *to* them, this becomes my focus in the next section.

Join Together with the Band:
Radical Pedagogy and the Rock Teacher's Speaking Position

As Henry Giroux has argued, pedagogy should be "a configuration of textual, verbal, and visual practices that seek to engage the processes through which people understand themselves and the ways in which they engage others and their environment" (*Border* 3), and both songtexts and videotexts are surely within the scope of the "verbal and visual practices" he mentions. But a relatively difficult shift, away from claiming a superior ability to interpret them and toward recognizing instead the various distances that teachers may have from the students' own relationship with them, is important if both students and teachers are to believe that the point in studying these textual form is to locate the many possible meanings contained there and to gain some understanding of not only the texts, but also each other. I have often heard students say that they enjoy

working in peer-critique groups, for instance, because those groups offer an opportunity to "know where people are coming from" with their ideas and writing strategies. The colloquial phrase, *I know where you're coming from,* is shorthand to indicate one's knowledge of the history of another; to understand the other's origins and experiences, and thus the reasons for the other's attitudes and beliefs. To *know where others come from* is to have a full, rich context for the thoughts and desires conveyed when we share with one another what novelist Tom Spanbauer calls "our human-being stories." A concrete example of this knowledge exchange in practice appears in Herbert Kohl's *I Won't Learn From You,* in which Kohl recounts an African student named Akmir who sat in on his course in psychology where the other students had been asked to perform a psychoanalytical reading of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* Akmir, after reading the book, angrily accused (twenty years before Chinua Achebe would publish an identical charge) both Conrad and the story of overt racism. Kohl writes:

> *I learned from Akmir's analyses* how I too fell into sloppy, racist linguistic habits, and *I came to take his criticisms seriously.* I tried to *read texts from his point of view* and pick out the phrases and thoughts that he might find offensive. In some cases, *it made reading familiar material very uncomfortable. . .* on rereading [Conrad's story] with Akmir's sensitivities in mind, the explicit and offensive racism at the heart of the story appalled me. . . . [T]hough the quality of the writing wasn't diminished by my new reading, the story became repugnant to me. . . . *And I understood that I shouldn't teach* Heart of Darkness *unless I was ready to deal explicitly with the text's racism and condemn Conrad.* (18-19; italics added)

In Kohl's account, what constitutes a radical departure from his former pedagogy is the fact that Akmir, the student, has played the most significant teaching role, and that the bulk of learning took place on the teacher's part. As a result of Akmir's complete re-

visioning of what had been, for the teacher, a favored author and text, and a reconceptualization of *Heart of Darkness* as no longer a showcase of *belles lettres* but as a site for the continued reinforcement of a racist construction of Africans, the teacher finds the work first uncomfortable, then appalling, and finally, repugnant. In this way, the education that has taken place is truly the result of a *liberatory* practice for both of the principals involved.

For Giroux, pedagogy is "a form of cultural production. . . implicated in the construction and organization of knowledge, desires, values, and social practices" (*Border* 3), and Kohl's story reveals how the teacher and the student have, together, created Giroux's version of a "democratic public philosophy" through a mutual respect for "the notion of difference as part of a common struggle to extend the quality of life." But such a dynamic can only take place in a radicalized site where two crucial ingredients are present: first, the teacher's desire to listen and learn from students, and second, the student's clear understanding that the teacher *has* this desire and may therefore safely be challenged and questioned within the classroom arena. As Andrew Wiget writes, "To be is to be heard, to speak into the silence of ignorance or oblivion, or to anticipate, even interrupt the utterance of falsehood with a statement of personal truth that substitutes an act of self-naming for an act of other-labeling" (qtd. in Yancey xviii). And in order to be heard, "[i]n some classes, students' immediate needs may be to find the voice to counter [the teacher's] agenda" (Brunner 151), to which bell hooks adds that "'coming to voice' is not just the act of telling one's experience. It is using that telling strategically—to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects. What many professors are frightened of is precisely that" (*Transgress* 148). Teachers in a rock-centered classroom cannot share in that fear if they want to generate a truly mutual understanding

of a fully-contextualized discourse and its practices since teachers have their knowledges of songtexts from a particular point in history, students have theirs of another, more current point—and all of the less precisely-known and understood spaces between these two perspectives form an opportunity to reinforce and promote a kind of collaborative critical inquiry which is "always interpretive, critical, and partial," with the result being "the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position" (Haraway, "Knowledges" 589).

The word, *radical*, has a number of different connotations. For students and even younger children, it means excellent, awesome, great; one can even hear it, at times, being pronounced as "radi-*cool*." For others, it indicates a threat, a danger; there are terrorists, for instance, who will blow up buildings, but there are terrorist *radicals* who will blow up entire cities and nations. And for still others, *radical* indicates an opposition to *traditional*, as in liberal versus conservative, as in a position on the left and a counterposition on the right. But for teachers, to be truly "radical" by the word's primary denotative value is to practice the *root* of pedagogical practice, which is to provide an opportunity for learning—and for the critique and questioning of learning—by any and all means possible. As evidenced by both Giroux's and bell hooks's nearly complete turn in recent publications toward cultural analyses of popular music in addition to filmtexts and television shows, each of these mediums has become a major sphere of influence for radical teachers in the late 20th century. Students consume them not only as cultural artifacts, but also, as I have described earlier, as indispensable aids in forging their identities in the world. Every campus has at least a handful of Goth figures walking about in Marilyn Manson death's-head makeup and head-to-toe black garb; even more conspicuous are the thousands of cotton billboards in the form of T-shirts announcing

Godsmack, Nine Inch Nails, Snoop Dogg, and dozens of other bands or solo artists as the wearer's cultural/political affinity. With the classroom, by this phenomenon of artifactual omnipresence, always already made into a consumer mall for popular culture, teachers can—with all of the caution and care required when moving into the territory of material manifestations of a lived practice not entirely parallel to their own—introduce students to the joys and terrors of critically interrogating these primary and defining texts. But as Grossberg has only implied in his observation of "straight" students who earn the disdain of self-described "hip" teachers, the surprise and dismay in many teachers' negative experiences with rock songtexts in the classroom arena comes from the intense resistance which students will often show in response to the textform—and especially to any interrogations of the material. "When you analyze, you paralyze," is a favored defense/ attack I have heard uttered by many students who would prefer that their entertainment be left unexamined; after all, the protest continues, "it's *just* a song." But as Rage Against the Machine has pointed out in its own songtext "No Shelter Here," popular culture presents to its consumers a "thin line between entertainment and war"—a phrase which alone can function as the rationale required to justify the pedagogical value of the medium as a classroom textform, since rarely does any songtext prove to be "just" a simple thing.

For example, rapper Tón Lóc scored a major hit in the late 1980s with a songtext titled "Wild Thing." The lyrics were fairly basic, and the chorus, "She like to do the wild thing," spoken over a monster guitar riff sampled from Van Halen, was standard male-rapper reification of women's sexuality. But this songtext goes far beyond such an easy analysis since it was also a favorite of the so-called "gang of marauding black youths" who viciously attacked the anonymous Central Park Jogger in 1989. As recounted by Houston Baker, when asked by the police what their motives had been, the youths

replied in black "shtreet" vernacular that they, too, liked to do the "wild thing"—which to untrained white-detective ears was heard as "wilding." The press took up this term during the ensuing "moral panic" that Baker describes (*Studies*, var.), with both *Time* and *Newsweek* announcing on their covers the new and frightening "gang ritual" of *wilding* to a terrified and outraged nation. But no one—not the press, not the police, and not the offending youths themselves—knew what the word meant, exactly. Still, as Baker notes, the term somehow fit, since white America perceives its black youth as "wild" and the Central Park Jogger, an innocent, young, *white* career woman, was the hegemonic norm under attack by these savage "marauders." Just as would happen in the Columbine High School tragedy ten years later when the press could find no clear rationale for the slayings and so turned its attention to hardcore industrial rock and violent video games, the press in 1989 could neither determine a clear motive for the Central Park Jogger's attack nor contrive a way to make the puzzling term, *wilding*, carry the story any longer, so it turned its gaze to rap songtexts as the cause for the attack. For Baker, this shift revealed even more cluelessness on the part of the national media since rap, as he defines it, is at heart a form of "poetry. . .[a] disruptive performance," and important as an "audible or sounding space of opposition" which Homi Bhabha calls "articulation of the melancholia of the people's wounding by and before the emergence of the state line" (qtd. in Baker, *Studies* 97). In other words, just as Ice-T, Michael Eric Dyson, and so many others have tried to point out, rap does not in itself *create* violence; it *names* and *reflects* it. By all of this, then, it would be exceedingly difficult for any student to maintain the argument that Tón Lóc's rap is "*just* a song."

Since Lóc's songtext, at age eleven, suffers from an "Elvis Costello Problem" in its own right, the introduction of its history in the classroom is an even more delicate matter

as teachers must walk a fine line between using the songtext as the basis for an extended conversation set within a context of larger *rap* history and white receptions of the discursive genre—speaking *with* students—and simply presenting the songtext as an artifact they "need" to add to their knowledge of that history, and further, how to know it—i.e. speaking *for* them. Elisabeth Chiseri-Strater points out that education ideally takes place in a context where "students themselves have helped to construct the reading of [a text]; they have received their understanding not from or through teachers but *with* them and the peers that support the dialogue" (73). For instance, the use of Metallica's songtext "One" and its accompanying long-form videotext—each of them based in turn on Dalton Trumbo's censored antiwar classic *Johnny Got His Gun*—can function as aids in both extending and complementing students' understanding of warfare, resistance, and the sometimes moral obscenity of military paradoxes (the song/story's narrator, horribly maimed, would like to die, but the military doctors reply that "[killing soldiers is] against regulations"). That is, they can function as aids until a student along the far wall, who proudly served in the UN operations over Kosovo, raises a hand and offers a viewpoint to counter the teacherly reading of these texts, and is then joined by another who shares a story of a family member who has likewise found military service a noble profession and has often articulated, in convincing fashion, the moral *necessity* for armed conflict. It is at this point that dialectic, and thus a collaborative and socially-formed kind of reading—not of Metallica or even Trumbo, but of the historical, political, and psychological contexts surrounding the human capacity to wage war against itself—begins for all.

In *Outlaw Culture*, bell hooks demonstrates the need for alternative conceptions of literacy and reading as she explains the growing trend toward what she calls "eating the Other" in filmtexts such as *The Crying Game* and *The Bodyguard*, in which "white males

have not interrogated their location or standpoint" since "white supremacy allows those who exercise white privilege not to acknowledge the power of race, to behave as though race does not matter, even as they help put in place and maintain spheres of power where racial hierarchies are fixed and absolute" (55-6). To many consumers of these filmtexts, and to the principal actors (Stephen Rea and Kevin Costner, respectively), they appear as "just stories" in which race is not a factor even though, as hooks notes, each film sports a racial Other as the female lead to give the films their "radical edge" (56). (In the case of *The Crying Game*, the Other is also a transvestite, making her/him a sexual as well as racial Other which audiences nonetheless strive to "eat" uncritically and unreflectively.) The taking place of this "eating" of "just stories" is a pedagogical opportunity for students to receive from teachers the "critical professional readings [that] can provide a lens" for their own critical interrogations and ideological unpackings (Brunner 71), and Sut Jhally of the Media Education Foundation, in his extremely damning videotext *DreamWorlds II*, offers students a step-by-step methodology for reading MTV music-videotexts in such a critical way. After offering a long stream of similar clips in which the form's favored tropes (young, nubile women ready and willing to have sex any time, anywhere, in any way) become painfully clear, Jhally interposes excerpts from the late Sam Kinison's video for the songtext "Wild Thing" (a remake of the ancient 60s classic by the Troggs; no connection to Tón Lóc's rap) with a horrifying scene from the filmtext *The Accused* in which Jodie Foster's character is gang-raped in a bar full of drunken men. Thus viewers see members of Aerosmith, Ratt, and Guns 'n Roses, among other rock groups and solo performers, standing around a wrestling arena and cheering wildly as Kinison and a nearly-naked Jessica Hahn roll around in center ring—and likewise cheering as Jodie Foster's barmaid character is raped again and again. The response of many of my

own students to Jhally's videotext has been consistently twofold: initial silence when it ends, followed by a report, after a few days or a few weeks, that they are no longer able to view MTV's music-videotexts in the same way they once did—which is to say, uncritically. They have become empowered with a new kind of "social literacy" by having been trained in the interrogation of the visual stimuli they have for so long been asked (by MTV, which attempted in court to prevent Jhally from releasing the *DreamWorlds* video) to "eat" as "just a thing" to sell more musical product. But a colleague of mine tells a much more troubling story arising from his use of the same videotext: several women in one of his graduate seminars stood and left the room to protest what they perceived as the teacher condoning the sexual violence being portrayed on screen. To say that these women missed the point is *not* the approach required, and so the teacher correctly avoided it. Rather, he asked the women when they returned the next week to explain how Jhally might have made his point about videotextual misogyny without committing the same serious affront to members of his audience.

And this is where an emphasis on *praxis*, to go beyond simple practice, comes into play. Any teaching professional, in a variety of disciplines, can easily find dozens of compelling reasons to validate the use of Jhally's videotext as a pedagogical tool: Students might be asked to write a response to it, to create their own counter-narrative to it in similar videotext form, to emulate it by performing a critique of another cultural practice, and so forth. That is *what* justifies the videotext's inclusion in the course and its appearance in the classroom, and thus it answers questions of *practice*. But questions of *praxis* go on to ask *why* the justified material is being used—and to what intended *ends*, whether stated or not. Has the teacher taken into consideration any unintended harm that might befall the student(s) as a result of the material's presentation in class? If all goes

well, is the pedagogical bottom line that the students "need" to subscribe to Jhally's, and the teacher's, view of rock videotexts? Is it to work against the steady consumption of these texts as merely a pleasurable leisure activity, which the teacher finds aesthetically offensive and trivial? Is it to inform students, in a very subtle fashion, that their relationship with videotexts has been not only wrong, but harmful—and that they are therefore complicit in the same crimes against women which Jhally has explicated? Or is it simply to share with students the kind of critical professional reading and lens that Diane Brunner defines, a tool that will allow them to see for themselves all of the possible contexts surrounding both the production and consumption of videotexts—the good, the bad, and the unspeakably ugly—as and when *they* choose to employ it? As Shumway has cautioned, the goal behind teaching any text from popular culture should never be to *change* students' responses to the material, but rather to help them learn to support their own critical interpretations, and this kind of self-actuation of power and ability can manifest itself in all kinds of surprising ways. A student once wrote to me at the end of a semester in rock-centered writing: "I have never had a teacher before who dressed the same and listened to the same music as his students. It was good to have a teacher close to our level." But, as I have already argued and will continue to argue in this section, *close to* is not the same as *at*, and what I find most satisfying in the student's comment is the wonderfully ambiguous way in which the words, *close to*, can indicate an attempt to come *up* to the students' level just as easily as they can an attempt to come *down*. Another student in that same course wrote: "You were the sheriff in our rock community. You were part of what was going on, but we were ever conscious of your authority. Well, every community has its authorities, and you just happened to get paid for it." In other words, the student's perception was that every member of the class had shared power

equally, and the teacher's had carried no more capital than hers or her classmates' other than to generate an incidental bit of extra cash. And while the rock-attitude stance of rebellion in the last line (*well. . . you just happened)* is noteworthy, it pales beside an end-of-semester evaluation submitted by another student in the same course a year later: "We all had the same choices as you, and the same resources. You could *guide* us, but you could never *force* us. We weren't here to please *you;* you were here to keep up with *us.* Hmm. I wonder, who was really in power here?" Here the teacher stands, by the rhetoric of the whole message, *within* the group as an equal, but by the rhetoric of the message's smaller parts—its constant oppositional structures of *we* versus *you* and *you* in contrast to *us*—at the same time stands *outside* the group *as a lesser equal* since any authority is met with a fierce resistance that immediately works to cancel it out in a reading of the course which falls, ideologically, firmly in line with the course's content and verifies Shumway's observation that "[s]tudents will tend to resist all imposition by the teacher upon that part of their world they have not previously ceded to the school" (229). The readings and perceptions generated by this student resistance can help to bring to light all of the ethical issues which confront pedagogical *praxis,* and in turn they can assist teachers in identifying potentially harmful ideological agendas that may underlie their presentations and applications of rock in the classroom arena.

To return once again to the immediate issue of videotexts employed within praxis, while Jhally's indictment of many videotexts presenting misogynistic narratives is harsh and uncomfortable indeed, Bérubé sees a much more positive role for the many other video-format rock artifacts that do not share in misogyny. For him, the popularity of music videotexts contributes a vital aid in the battle against the historical and cultural "amnesia" which I've referred to in preceding pages, since video "mak[es], for example,

the 1977 divas of disco available to a whole new generation of dancing fools" (B5). More importantly, Bérubé writes,

> popular culture has actually begun to link generations more broadly than 'high' culture ever could. Thanks to contemporary culture's ravenous appetite for recycling, fans of music video not only can keep up with [current music and performers] but also get acquainted with 1990s' versions of 1970s' reggae and 1940s' swing. The same economic forces that drive popular culture's high rate of turnover also drive popular culture's high rate of revival.

With videotexts—of any kind, whether viciously malignant or relatively benign—thus seen as archival material to contribute to a fuller historical context for rock's discourse through the decades, it seems to me that there is reason for great optimism since such a deep well of resources—and student awareness of it—forces teachers to listen, to think, and to speak all the more carefully while positioning themselves to participate in one of the primary discursive practices with which their students are engaged. And while even very practical uses of these still-"nontraditional" textforms can, where necessary, easily be used for testing and certainly for any required writing as a display of the student's understanding of a vast range of subjects in which rock has served as a significant context for social and historical proceedings, Jay Mechling warns that "[too] often, instructors avoid risk-taking behavior, more often censoring themselves than facing the imagined consequences of experimenting and failing" (160).

Such avoidance is not without basis, since reading a songtext or videotext from an instructional or "scholarly" perspective and then lecturing the results of that reading to students who have dozens of valid reasons and ways to make the teacher's perspective appear at once desperate, groundless, and comical, is "risky" practice indeed. (I think here of a colleague who, in the late 1980s, tried to persuade her students that Walt

Whitman was "America's original rap artist" because he "invented new words and bragged of having a 'barbaric yawp.'" The teacher was a kind and gentle human being. And there were many overhead slides, made over the course of many months, to support her argument. But the lecture still bombed.) Because even an introduction of the most meticulously researched and cross-referenced contemporary-musical topic still has no guarantee of success, consolation may be found in recognizing that when teachers do fail in risk-taking classroom practices, great opportunities exist for "teachable moments" when students are invited to become full partners in an analysis of that failure. Such an invitation can lead, in a best-case scenario, to the collaborative making of new kinds of critical theory and a realization which proponents of radicalism like Giroux believe should live squarely in the center of education's heart:

> [I]f teachers are to move beyond the role of being agents of cultural reproduction to that of being agents of cultural mobilization, they will have to critically engage the nature of their own self-formation and participation in the dominant society, including their role as intellectuals and mediators of the dominant culture. (*Opposition* 68)

But from a student perspective, an invitation to join the teacher in identifying her/his role in mediating rock culture from the standpoint of *academic* culture runs severely contrary to the student's basic academic-survival skills. When teachers step into any classroom, they're automatically cloaked in a mantle of authority (conferred by students as much as themselves) and looked upon as both eminently superior interpreters of course materials and authoritative judges of student displays of comprehension and mastery of those materials. In teaching rock, this tacit assumption can be a damaging tool in the hands of instructors who "know better" than their students what the students' relationship with rock's discursive practices "means," since this knowledge has the effect

of silencing individual voices and shutting off the dialogue so indispensable in any liberatory and transformational pedagogy.[28]

> *Teacher*: What's wrong with Led Zeppelin, a group of British white men, becoming millionaires and rock icons by recycling the blues songtexts of black musicians?
> *Student*: Nothing. After I heard Zeppelin, I went and bought every blues album I could find by the songwriters listed on the Zep albums. Most of the originals are a lot better than Zeppelin's versions; that's all I listen to now. But, umm, not everything Led Zeppelin did was blues covers. They wrote a lot of their own stuff, too.
> *Teacher*: Nothing? Really? All of those blues artists have been dead for years, and many of them died broke. They won't see a nickel of the profits from your purchases. They won't know you bought their music. So Led Zeppelin still gets all the credit for 'updating' the blues. And, *ummm*, I'm well aware that the band wrote its own material, too. (Smiles.) I used to be a huge Zeppelin fan myself. But that's not really the point I'm trying to make here.
> *Student*: I see what you're saying. Will this be on the test?

This exchange is not fictional. The teacher was me, early in my career, seeing myself as Sir English Knight, Slayer of Weak Student Ideas. And I am heartily sorry for my words, and I sincerely repent of them. As Pink Floyd bassist Roger Waters has put into songtext, "we don't need no thought control" of this type, nor does any good come from its manifestation of "dark sarcasm in the classroom" which only results, as Waters sees it, in a massive wall of resistance—and protection—against education in general and teachers in particular. No one benefits, and so it becomes necessary to create a space in which no one is silenced and all voices are respected. A unilateral prohibition on the practice of

speaking about students' relationships with rock discourses at all would have the destructive effect of silencing the entire classroom, since teachers restricted to speaking only from and about their own experiences with the discourse would operate under clear and huge limits on what they may say—limits that in turn would severely constrain and warp what they could *teach*—but even a deferral to *student* experience as the final test of authority can effectively shut off student voices as well. In privileging lived experience and "downtown" forms of rock knowledge, teachers would grant authority to a number of metalheads, Goths, and gangsta-thumpers who traditionally have let their stereos do the talking while they themselves remain silent and removed observers and critics, but the problem of establishing experience as the principle foundation for any pedagogy—perhaps especially in my own field of composition, where "writing one's life" is often encouraged as the first-year student's initial step into the gradual movement from personal to "transactional" writing—is that postmodern theory has shown how the meaning of any specific experience is rarely if ever as stable or universal as it appears. Privileging lived experience as the last word on a valid rock perspective can, as easily and effectively as a position of teacher-superior, also shut down the dialogue that is the core requirement for a full classroom collaboration, since it leads to a practice of only the most knowledgeable voices being heard while others, less so, are necessarily silenced by their lack of experience.

Ultimately, teachers engaged with rock discourses in the classroom arena become at once historians and historical artifacts, storytellers and stories. Before students can put aside their prejudices and agree to work with these teachers in filling their respective knowledge gaps, the teachers must admit their own musical biases and preferences, deconstruct their personal readings of rock-cultural events in history, and invite students

to offer their own counter-readings in a dialectical quest for shared understanding. Since the "rebellion" of a radical teacher's own rock-oriented self-identity may, as Grossberg has indicated, generate a perception of "conformity" in the students', then the nature of the terms themselves, their definitions and their cultural weights, can become a way to find common ground amid a sea of difference. Building on Geertz's notion of shared experience as "local knowledge," Ann Hill Duin and Craig Hansen define such center-remaking as an "active collaborat[ion] with others to build culture out of agreements that are as complex as codified law and as simple as common sense" (91). This, I'll point out, is in many ways a useful definition for rock itself, and the still "experimental" and definitely risky setting of a rock-centered classroom provides a context for teachers to subvert their multiple strata of social and instructional authority when all within the community share a primary goal of collaborative learning.

Join Together with the Band, Part II:
The Rock-Classroom Arena and Conceptions of "Discourse Community"

For Chiseri-Strater, the term *community*, used in an academic sense, functions to indicate any site where efforts are made to initiate students into its institutions, disciplines, and classroom materials. At the same time, however, from the students' perspective, the literacy norms within most fields—the reading, writing, talking and thinking patterns of the given discipline—most often remain powerfully invisible, not offering ready access for them to earn full and competent membership in the *discourse community* contextualizing and controlling the initiations (144). And perhaps the most obvious connection to be made between the conflicts present in a rock-centered course, as I have been describing it here, and the term *community* lies in the more specific term

discourse community. Traditional definitions of *discourse communities* most often contain huge assumptions regarding ultimate ownership of not only the community itself, but also (or especially) the discourse being used and taught. Typically, the teacher owns it all and the student humbly seeks both entrance to the community and permission to use its discourse in a way deemed effective by the teacher. In the end, the student receives a grade and goes away—presumably to join yet another discourse community somewhere else, owned by someone else: another teacher, a review board, an employment supervisor. Meanwhile, back in the discourse community from which the student has now been jettisoned, the teacher prepares for a fresh group of supplicants. Joining this fairly disheartening view is Chiseri-Strater's argument that

> [t]here is. . . a paradox in positing college classrooms as a spiral or nest of neatly linked 'discourse communities' when the student's perspective is weighed. Community should imply a place where the norms of behaviors and rituals and routines of [its discourse] are implicit to *all* its members, not just to those in control. Unless the concept of community is consciously built into a course, the idea of discourse community refers mainly to professional scholars' circles. . . . (143; italics added)

Fortunately, definitions of academic *community* are, at a great number of post-secondary campuses, currently undergoing healthy revision to focus more directly on collaboration, cooperation, and a socially-constructed form of knowledge that includes the *why* of a discipline's discourse as well as the *how*. Higher-learning institutions may still be labeled as "communities of scholars," comprising a variety of smaller *discourse communities* within the larger academic host site, but the central trope of *community* is gradually coming around to mean its denotative value: a group of diverse individuals living, working, and speaking together toward a shared set of goals and rewards. In this view, a community's discourse "is a changing practice that [its members] have the chance

of influencing even as it influences them" (Bizzell, "Foundationalism" 45)—which is exactly the primary, most crucial aspect of a praxis dedicated to transforming both the perceptive and consumptive habits which an uncritical reception of the most harmful aspects of rock's discourses and their practices will otherwise promote. Further, Bizzell suggests that when a community's discourse is viewed through a rhetorical lens, it becomes a form of

> [k]nowledge [that] ensues when rhetoric is successful, when rhetoricians and audiences reach agreement. . . . [R]hetoricians cannot share a community's knowledge while remaining unchanged. [Their] own world views will be influenced to the extent that they assimilate the community's knowledge to their own discourse. (Bizzell, "Literacy" 149)

To apply such a rhetorical lens to the rock classroom arena as community, however, two key terms need to be explicated: Who is the rhetorician, and who is the audience? If the former is the teacher only, then the problematic/traditional definition of *discourse community* remains stuck in the authority to *know* belonging to the one (rhetorician) and permission to *learn* being in turn granted to the many (audience). Therefore, in a revised conception of both *community* and *discourse community*—which I'll mark hereafter as *discourse/community*—the students and the teacher fit both of the roles. Authority to know becomes authority to teach, and no permission to learn is required of anyone when all have joined together in what Brunner calls "the struggle to make sense" (227). When teachers present their material from a position of authority, she argues, and especially when they present the same material from the same textforms in the same way, year after year, there is precious little motivation for students to believe that they have any capacity to teach the teacher. On the other hand, Brunner writes, "when students see me struggle to make sense, it [suggests] to them that it's okay not to know every reading of a

text prior to teaching it, that student voices offer valid perspectives and readings, and that within the multiplicity of perspectives, we may carve meanings that make some sense to all of us" (227-8). Such a model of cooperative learning breeds "positive interdependence —a recognition by group members that they are linked together in a way that none can be successful unless all are" (Johnson 123). In this light, just as attendance and participation in a rock-arena performance will not take place without prior socially-provided knowledge of the performer's discourse and at least a leaning toward the values of the surrounding throng inside the arena, group equilibrium in a rock-centered classroom cannot exist without interactive and intersocial learning on the part of every individual; they are mutually dependent. I do not want to suggest, however, that community is synonymous with utopia—especially in a rock-centered space where the nature of the discourse itself so often appears to "require" contestation and resistance.

Indeed, for every problematic arising from theories of community, there can be just as many conflicts that may arise during (and even because of) the *practices* surrounding it. Gregory Clark, in his article "Rescuing the Discourse of Community," begins with the point that the same assumptions inherent in a rhetoric of community which appears to promote and reflect democracy can and do also subvert it, revealing how a rhetoric of *in*clusion can actually work to create a *de facto* practice of *ex*clusion when an assumed "equality" exists among individuals possessed of unequal abilities (61). In relation to Clark's observation, bell hooks has elsewhere shown how an attempt to work within a rhetoric of communal equality while also maintaining an awareness of its shortfalls can lead to an overly cautious, excessively uncertain, and ultimately awkward stance, as illustrated in her comment that when she enters the classroom,

> the weight is on me to establish that our purpose is to be. . . a community of learners *together*. It positions me as a learner. But I'm also not suggesting that I don't have more power. And I'm not trying to say that I don't have more power. And I'm not trying to say that we're all equal here. I'm trying to say that we are all equal here to the extent that we are equally committed to creating a learning context. (*Transgress* 153)

Clark, in performing the "rescue" of his title by outlining an "ethical discourse of community," further argues that such an ethic would have the primary function of "constitut[ing] and maintain[ing] a democratic collectivity. . . [by] direct[ing] people to value their *differences* because that is what enables their cooperation as *equals*" (62; italics added). Drawing on the work of ethicist Nel Noddings, Clark cites the argument that no communities are ever forged from a collective pursuit of common goals and desires (qtd. in 65); rather, they are made of people who are individually "moving toward something, trying to excel, intending to win"—and in this way community serves only as "an extention of the self." Yet after presenting such damning testimony, Clark's ultimate point falls in line with the other conceptions of community called upon here, with the difference lying primarily in his focus on *difference*. In an ethical discourse, he concludes,

> the progress of expertise in a community [would be] secondary to a. . . practice of confronting differences so that its participants can come to understand how the beliefs and purposes of others can call their own into question. . . . [P]eople cooperate on the ground of an agreement to meet their differences openly, and that requires them each to rethink continually their own intentions and actions in terms of those of differing others. This is the only agreement that supports a democratic discourse of community. ("Rescuing" 73)

At first glance, Clark's line of argument may appear to present a binaristic dilemma in the form of a forced choice between either an assumption-laden community of commonality or an ethical community of difference. Yet when I apply it to a rock-centered classroom arena, I see a site where students engage *both* in a common quest to

make meaning from the chaotic discourses of rock, *and* in which their progress in this quest is aided significantly by the recognition and articulation of the vastly differing views—that is, different from the teacher's as well as from each others'—they hold. Most importantly, they are equals precisely because of their inequality; not all students know much about folk or acid/psychedelic forms of rock discourses, for instance, and some may know nothing at all about metal or rap-influenced songtexts. But some do, and the knowledge becomes an opportunity for them to teach what they know to their classmates, for the known to receive a gloss by those who, seeing it for the first time, see it differently, for the knowledge of the few to become the socially-constructed knowledge of all—and for the previously-unquestioned consumption and continuation of rock's discursive practices to be gradually, steadily transformed in a new, critically-engaged manner. That is democracy, and it is equality, and it is community.

The value of Clark's call for an ethical discourse lies in his implicit warning that the guiding assumptions behind community formation must be themselves relentlessly questioned. A community founded solely on the assumption that "we are all here to learn the same thing," and no more than that, is in grave jeopardy of choosing for its primary discursive mode the same kind of hegemonically-imposed "cultural literacy" that got Allan Bloom and E. D. Hirsch into so much trouble (Peck et al. 203). While "cultural literacy" does fit under the larger rubric of community in its desire to form a common set of valued knowledge(s), in the case of Bloom and Hirsch the result is an imposition of no less than the same white/western/patriarchal canon of historical information and tradition which many educators would like to see considered in more careful, less oppressive ways. Translated to the discourse/community of the rock classroom arena, this kind of

demanded literacy would become the imposition of the *rock canon* itself—an officially-sanctioned body of knowledge and an officially-licensed way of knowing it, both of which have already been modeled and demonstrated by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum—and the most likely agent for such a canonical formation would be the teacher. Under this model, the majority of the discourse/community's citizens—the students—will become, as at the HFM itself, passive viewers and temporary visitors, excluded from any active role in the production of either exhibit or narrative—i.e. of the controlling signifiers for rock's consumption, i.e. of *primary knowledge.* And this is Clark's point. In the place of *cultural* literacy, then, teachers in rock-centered classroom arenas will do better to seek a model of what Peck et al. have defined as a *community* literacy, "a search for alternative discourse" (205) which "brings into conversation multiple and often unheard perspectives" but then also goes further by

> seek[ing] to restructure the conversation itself into a collaboration in which individuals share expertise and experience through the act of planning and writing about problems they jointly define. The goal is not to resolve the myriad of differences that arise in a mixed, working group, but to treat diversity as a resource for solving specific problems. . . . (205)

Yet it's not enough to merely acknowledge difference, these authors argue; one must also go on to "actively explore the logic of *how* you and I are using our literate practices to make meaning" (206; italics added). In a rock-centered classroom arena, this exploration can shift to examine the logic of *rock's* employment of its own particular "literate practices" in all of the ways that have historically forged its popularly-conceptualized "meaning." Moreover, since they represent a vastly diverse range of and advocacy for rock genres and periods, students who are thus labeled and identified by their musical affinities have an opportunity to both explain and question these ideological and even

theoretical groundings when they find their discourses diverging wildly from those of others. And from this experience, ideally, they have an increased potential to learn that the same critical introspection may be applied when they move out of the discourse/community into the countless others awaiting them.

Ain't Nuthin' but a G(iroux)-Thang, Baby: Rock, Radicalism, and the Corrupting Influences of Corporate Education

I suppose it shouldn't be too surprising that teachers of rock's discourses, who already face a multitude of critical issues in shaping their pedagogies and praxes, will find themselves, in one way or another, additionally enmeshed in slightly-amended versions of two of the most weighty and influential ideologies found within and around rock's discourses themselves: first, that the mere act of teaching rock is a rebellion against traditions that are, to the bulk of society, far more valuable and respected; and second, that this rebellion must be waged within a site that, although it was once pure and noble, is seen by many fellow radicals as gradually becoming corrupted by the insidious influence and increasing control of corporate/commercial interests. In one way, this enmeshment can be (and is) constructed by the right as evidence that former rockers who are now teachers have only brought their radical/leftist (to mean *bad)* histories along with them to a place that should not have to suffer such indignities. But in another way, it can be—well, kinda cool. Kind of like the best qualities of rock itself.

Let me explain.

The traditional binge-and-purge model of education—or what Sharon Crowley has called "full frontal teaching," a sad form of pedagogy under which lecture of some kind

takes place at one end of the room and passive note-taking takes place at the other for later regurgitation during exams—remains tightly locked in as part of both the institutional paradigm and, in my own field, the rhetoric of current-traditional practice with its grammar- and theme-bound prescriptiveness. As a result, when many students have a chance to speak at all, they encounter the first shocking glimpse of what a radical pedagogy might entail. At the height of rock's civil-protest era years ago, James Moffett contributed to the English field his book *Drama: What Is Happening,* in which he set out to "exploit for pedagogical purposes some similarities between theatrical and everyday drama" in order to "make art and actuality illuminate each other" (rep. in *Teaching* 61). A large part of this work, following the lengthy explication of Moffett's theories, included the description of specific teaching methods for incorporating theater into numerous classroom situations, and among these methods was Moffett's idea to encourage students to take part in theatrical improvisation—indeed, to take *total charge* in designing its methods, purposes, and applications. This was a radical practice, and theater, as described by Augusto Boal, is a site that in many ways runs parallel with education:

> Theater was the people singing freely in the open air; the performance was created by and for them, and could be called dithyrambic song. A celebration in which all could participate freely. Then came the aristocracy and established divisions: some persons will go to the stage and only they can act; the rest remain seated, receptive, passive—these will be the. . . 'people'. . . . (ix)

I'd like to paraphrase that citation liberally now to make my point. So altered, it reads: *School is the students speaking freely in an open learning climate; the curriculum, by their full participation in it, is created by and for them, and can be called liberatory. A practice in which all may participate freely. Then come the dominant groups with their rhetorics*

and traditions of order and efficiency and their established vision of what education should entail: teachers will go to the front of the room and only they can teach; the rest remain seated, receptive, passive—these will be the. . ."learners." As Mike Rose writes in *Lives on the Boundary*, "American meritocracy is validated and sustained by the deep-rooted belief in equal opportunity" (128), but the schools see themselves primarily as sites for the judging of students (and the appeasement of a buying public which continues to validate that perceived primary function by its constant calls for "tougher standards" and a "return to basics"). Students conform to the school's judgment because they are powerless to do otherwise. So pathetic and shoddy can the typical undergraduate experience be that many students are almost embarrassingly flattered when they encounter a teacher who knows them by name.

For all of these students, a positive experience in a radicalized rock-centered classroom can help them to gain an understanding of Giroux's concept of a "border pedagogy" seeking to promote "a democratic public philosophy that respects the notion of difference as part of a common struggle to extend the quality of life" ("Redefining" 51). These democratic principles in turn help to ground a classroom praxis that encourages the students to engage a number of reading, writing, and speaking positions within and against rock discourses to create precisely such a respect for difference out of discursive practices that so often attempts to foster, or at times even force, homogeneity. To nurture this respect and understanding from a position within rock's discursive attempts at solidarity and ideological unity—and in opposition to larger hegemonic institutional desires—requires what Brunner has called "a patience with uncertainty" (20) and the creation of what Carolyn Ericksen Hill describes as "permeable boundaries" (29) in the formation of new discourses, authorities, and forms of practice not only within some of the discourses

around rock consumption/coproduction, and not only within the classroom where those discourses are interrogated, but within the *school* as an institution both representing and answering to even more powerful hegemonic systems. As a result, radical teachers visibly engaged with rock discourses as a pedagogical focus must be willing to see themselves identified in the words of Audre Lorde, writing in *Sister Outsider* that "survival. . . is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish" (112). Like white rappers operating in a predominantly black medium, adherents to radical pedagogy and active praxis in general (not necessarily those engaged with rock) will also ideally see themselves as subjects constructed of the individual histories, races, genders, and social classes—along with participation or non-participation in harmful traditions—they bring to bear on classroom discourse (McLaren, "Schooling" 156). At the same time, they will strive to keep from shutting down "those voices which were and are marginalized and disempowered by already dominant discourses" (Porter 778). For teachers of rock, specifically, inviting students to work with the teacher in building a collaborative power base in the collective fight against the worst of rock's qualities is far different from continuing in the music culture's own tradition of simply valorizing the discursive form and its practices.

But such an invitation is not, in and of itself, necessarily radical. Moreover, if teachers make apologies for their authority in an attempt to prevent the re-marginalizing that Carolyn Porter mentions, they are likely to put students into a defensive stance since the teacher also then violates a whole litany of student expectations, not the least of which is the firmly-entrenched myth of teacherly omnipotence which I addressed in the previous section. And so, a fine line is drawn—"the swamp," as Peter Elbow has come

to recognize part of his theory on writerly voice—between productive and unproductive ways of doing radical practice. But as I see it, with a full recognition that I may be in danger of oversimplifying, the overarching "rule" for radicalism in pedagogy could simply be this: *Whenever possible, let the* students *do it.* Or, rephrased in John Lennon's songtextual terms: "Power to the people; right on."

The problem with this form of pedagogy, of course, is that it is the least *efficient* of all classroom models. When students run the program, schedules fall apart and lesson plans go to rot. The teacher plans to show part two of the filmtext; the students have lingering observations to share about part one. Chapter 14 might never be discussed before the midterm exam, which, having been written two years ago, is heavily based on Chapter 14. You get the picture. The ideology of the whole field of composition, for instance, has a long history of taking not just Taylorism's focus on efficiency but also Fordism's contribution of linearity as its models, with writing centers turned into long assembly lines of writers presenting their products to the inspectors/tutors at the head tables, and classrooms filled with worker/writers churning out a maximum amount of words in a set time. As Miriam Brody notes, composition textbooks have historically "taught writing as craft and enjoined students to adopt the virtues of the new heroic entrepreneur—patience, diligence, hard work, courage, and. . . originality, expending words like currency to create meanings as products in a process that used the factory as its model" (132). Under the weight of such models and the expectations that coincide with their efficient, unquestioned maintenance, any form of radical pedagogy will meet with resistance, and radicalism centered upon rock's discourses is, therefore, immediately placed in double jeopardy. Lester Faigley's account of the massive community backlash against a "Writing About Difference" course proposed by the English department at the

University of Texas at Austin in 1990 notes that "if the media represents teachers of writing doing anything other than teaching students the proper use of semicolons, then many people will believe that something is amiss." This, with a great deal of dignified understatement, Faigley calls a "limited view of what the teaching of writing should involve" (78).

The conflicts inherent in teaching rock in *any* discipline are firmly tied to the fact that the pedagogical site itself often presents a "dual curriculum" dichotomy in which the "overt" purpose of schooling, as Giroux has seen it, is the appeasement of industry and its job markets in order to attract its continued funding and interest, while the "hidden and informal" agenda of colleges and universities is their function as "political institutions, inextricably linked to issues of power and control in the dominant society" (*Opposition* 45-6). Bringing the latter agenda out of its "hidden and informal" status entails moving it into the light of primary focus under a rubric of sweeping, radical change as advocated by Foucault's recommendation that since "power and knowledge directly imply one another . . . these relations [should be] analyzed on the basis of. . .the subject who knows [and] the objects to be known" (*Discipline* 27-8)—in other words, a change to include not only the knower, but the *contexts for knowing*, as topics for study. This kind of critical interrogation presents teachers with a "postmodern emphasis on refusing forms of knowledge. . . wrapped in the legitimating claims of universal knowledge. . . and [an] opposition to analyses that treat culture as an artifact rather than a social and historical construction" (Freire and Giroux xii). Such an emphasis, in turn, "provide[s] the pedagogical grounds for radicalizing the emancipatory possibilities of teaching and learning." Teachers who use rock as a pedagogical tool in reaching these goals, however, are sure to hear from at least the more vocal of the "new McCarthyists" who, as Giroux

explains and Faigley illustrates, stand ever poised to wield "the intolerance mustered by those who in the centers of power can no longer legitimate their ideologies and practices so easily" (*Border* 4)—in this case, the ideology of the textbook as the most valid form of primary course material and the practice of canonizing some textforms at the price of ostracizing others. And the individuals reinforcing such continuances of tradition can often speak from surprising places, as my car radio indicated one morning during the winter of 1999:

> ***Caller***: I took a course in the history of rock 'n roll last winter, and—
> ***Howard Stern***: You took a *what?*
> ***Caller***: Yeah, really. And it was pretty interesting. But the reason I called was to tell you that the band you were talking about—
> ***Stern***: Get outta here. The *history of rock 'n roll?* You gotta be kidding. What were your *exams* like? Just sitting around and listening to a bunch of old records, I'll bet. . . .

And so an increasing number of schools who have no respect for the likes of Howard Stern, but who do have a great respect for the long-held ideology which he represents in this exchange—schools hoping to indicate clearly their recognition that teachers are indeed servants to the public—have begun to practice and foster a rhetoric of "customer service" by which students will be recognized as that most important of all American icons: The Buyer.

Giroux's is among the strongest voices calling out a warning over the insidious effects of this kind of corporate influence on education, writing that, in response to it, "schools of education have become disappointingly reactionary. They tend more and more to hire people in the business manager mode and there are very few critical voices to be heard" (*Border* 16). This worry is shared even by a few business managers

themselves, such as Apple Computer's interim CEO, Steven Jobs, who cautions that education has become too willing to emphasize "mechanistic and quantitative activities over humanistic, qualitative ones" (in the case of composition, this is shown by the number of writing centers moving toward a "curriculum" of computer monitors and CD-ROM tutorials offering grammar exercises as part of the drive to improve efficiency and reduce overhead in teacher/tutor salaries). Jobs further explains that he has been required to actively struggle against the textbook industry's desire to move "everything in computer-aided instruction toward the automation of the 'drill and skill' mechanistic side, which is wrong" (qtd. in LeBlanc 31). As Neil Young has warned in songtext, "they give you this—but you *pay* for that [gift]," and the growing popularity of such instructional software also helps to bear out the complaint by Chiseri-Strater's budding-marxist student, Nick, who critiques education as "just another capitalist consumption market. We're always asked to produce something that's a thing of value. There are never enough students producing something for themselves" (170).

And this is where the business model of education reveals the most serious rift between its philosophical goals and their practical applications in the corporatized hybrid of what I'll call the schoolmarket. As Giroux notes, radical teachers have little political influence for calling into question the co-opting of the public's educational needs by conservative administrators, and the current, steady transmogrification of higher education into this hybrid schoolmarket is one example of such a co-opting. As a result, teaching rock's own ideologies and histories of resistance becomes something akin to a surrealist activity when at the same time the teacher is shoving CDs and DVDs into computer drives that project images upon the wall through digital-projector hookups, and in this way is answering to the technology industry with its ideologically-packed rhetoric of the

"promise" and "wonder" of multimedia. The strangeness increases as the teacher stops constantly to find thematic connections between the musical discourse and more "important," more "valid," more "real world" (of course, there is a huge irony in this last) subjects and disciplines which constitute the students' academic majors. By these steps teachers answer to government's mandate for school-to-work programs and its creation of Workforce Transition Boards to oversee the distribution of educational funding, as well as to the public's demands for accountability, measurable assessment, and a "marketable degree" as the end product of the educational process. Such rifts between the *content* of a rock-centered course and the omnipresent public *conceptions* of it are no more than reflections of the larger rifts taking shape as higher education makes what is undoubtedly a heartfelt attempt to forge a rhetoric of "education for all who may profit," as W. K. Kellogg put it. But in doing so, at the same time higher education must contort itself into an increasingly corporate form in order to accomodate every potential learner in every potentially untapped market by offering every potentially usable form of knowledge transmission— Internet, remote Distance InterActive Learning (DIAL) classroom sites, telecourse/videocourse, open entry/open exit enrollment, and hypercompact "weekend university" scheduling, to name but a few—in the most blatant kind of "banking" (Freire) or "warehouse" (Giroux) models of education where credits are exchanged for dollars. As a result, accounts such as Karen Hodges' describe "instruction/training" taking place for the "student/customer" (175) at institutions offering "money back guarantees" (178) for their "products." At the schoolmarket of the near future, Hodges writes, "upper management will not tolerate high attrition—it will be the teacher's fault" (179), and "if. . . skills slip by graduation, the teacher and the department will be responsible." Further, as an addition to all of the forms of knowledge transmission which I named

above, Hodges predicts that "teachers will teach midnights, at factories, like the workers they teach," and that other classes "will be located at the chamber of commerce" (180-81) where local business leaders can send their employees for continued training in job skills, although most likely only on an as-needed basis. To which I say fine; great; many of my best teaching memories come from working with blue-collar students with whom, because I have shared the same social background, I could easily relate. And to be able to work with them *where they work* would make for even more such enjoyable and productive experiences and memories. Nor do I mind the Chamber of Commerce scenario too much, either, since equally fine people are sure to make up the student population—and besides, class size is likely to be *reasonable* for a change, making plenty of one-on-one interaction more possible. And so I am left with only one objection, in the form of a question: Does anyone really think that *rock* would be tolerated, by program administrators, as a topic for scholarly engagement in either of these contexts? I mean, *really?*

It is in response to all of the kinds of moves that I have just described, in addition to others like the indoctrination of elementary students into the "work world" cultures of corporations such as McDonald's and Coca-Cola who sponsor early curricula in marketing and economics, that Giroux has replied, on the pages of newstand-accessible *Z Magazine,* in the strongest of terms:

> Couched in the language of business competition and individual success, the current educational reform movement orchestrated by corporate capital in its now near-global expansion must be recognized as a full-fledged attack on both public education and democracy. . . . Educators at the public school levels are under massive assault in this country. Not only are they increasingly losing their autonomy for imaginative teaching, they also increasingly bear the burden. . . of overcrowded classes, limited resources, and hostile legislators. Progressives need to join with community people,

> social movements, and teachers in both public and higher education around a common platform that resists corporate power, the marketing of schools, the deskilling of teachers, and the reduction of learning to the dictates of selfishness and capital accumulation. ("Business" 17)

A focus on rock discourses in the classroom, of course, is a pedagogical endeavor that is beginning to fit, slowly but increasingly, into Giroux's term, "imaginative teaching." The problem is that, as a traditional *supplement* to more conventional analytical foci, rock cannot be transformed easily into an independent subject for classroom scholarship in its own right, and although rock has entered into mainstream academic conversations through a significant number of recent scholarly studies, those critiques—including my own—are largely *theoretical* in nature, not *practical;* they are uptown, not downtown; they are symbols of an unfortunate but very real dichotomy through which the validation of rock taking place at the highest academic levels is not necessarily also taking place down in the trenches, in the many classrooms filled by first- and second-year students whose parents and future employers would like to take the teacher's word for it that rock will help the student to think critically, write engagingly, and live responsibly, but since both time and money are of the essence here, what the hell, let's just skip it, okay? While any legitimate conception and definition of radical pedagogy, for Giroux, is one that will concern itself with an acknowledgement of these kinds of "spaces, tensions, and possibilities for struggle within the day-to-day workings of schools" (*Opposition* 121), at the same time he sees a dire need for "new modes of critical interrogation" along with "alternative strategies and modes of practice" which can only be carried out through the practical application of radicalism in teaching. This, essentially, leaves teachers of rock-centered curricula completely stuck. Accordingly, a truly radical pedagogy cannot be allowed to become synonymous with mere opposition for opposition's sake, since this kind of

resistance, as Althusser has demonstrated, only generates an increased awareness and verification of the presence of that which is being resisted. Indeed, in proposing a new "rhetorical authority" based on Erasmus's concept of Folly, Patricia Bizzell warns that "[i]t's as if the existence of authority automatically invokes rebellion against it, and therefore, the society that wishes to remain stable hastens to fill the role of rebel with someone who is, by definition, incapable of really rebelling— the fool" (34). Radical teachers—especially those engaged in the teaching of something as dubious and even amusing (as the Stern example indicates) as rock's discourses—must beware of falling into this ineffectual role in the service of their classroom praxis and their political ideals. What Bizzell suggests instead is a taking on of the fool's *persona*—hence, the "*rhetorical* authority" of her proposed term—in an endeavor to forge an "ethical authority. . . that does not repeat the oppressive foundational tactics of the ideologies that [current] skepticism has helped to call into question" (29). As Carolyn Ericksen Hill writes in a description of her former loathing for business and technical writing,

> I am turning to look the old enemy in the eye, entering his camp, listening and answering, and finding common ground between us so that the margins between us change as they could never do if I stayed on my side of the line throwing stones. When I do not model digging in my heels against the other's position, he tends not to dig in his heels against mine. (27)

Taking on a persona of Folly, within a radical, rock-centered praxis, is much more likely to generate the kind of mutual understanding that Hill describes here than would a continued stance of heated and often destructive total political opposition by two completely different sets of ideologies who refuse to hear the other. The key question forming the practice of any radical pedagogy, Giroux has argued, lies in examining the distinction made by John Dewey between *education as a function of society* and *society as*

a function of education. Do teachers have simply a *job* in education, with a primary obligation to follow the directives of a public which pays their salaries as classroom laborers? Or do they have a duty and a right to devote those labors primarily to a full and active participation in socially-transformative practice? The challenge for teachers of a rock-centered curriculum is to find, within the persona suggested here, an answer that fits *between* these two poles by crafting a pedagogy and a contextual praxis for it which ensures that every critical interrogation of rock's discourses will both outline possibilities for social change and answer the public's concerns over radicalism and rock in the classroom in a responsible and ultimately *respectable* manner. Convincing a skeptic like Stern (and more importantly, the audience prepared to follow his mocking lead), for instance, would require laughing right along with the joke being made at the teacher's own expense—yet that laughter would serve not as a confirmation of rock's non-validity but rather as only the *recognition of the perception* of such a status, thus leaving the perception completely open to a gradual refutation. By refuting the criticism gradually, rather than in cluster-bomb fashion, the message of a rock curriculum's validity is articulated and broadcast that much more thoroughly—not on the *teacher's* terms, but on the *critic's*. This is not the normal way of doing things in rock, which prefers to get all up in people's faces. But as Hill has described, it *is* an effective way. It gets the message out in a manner that subverts and negates the intentions of the critic—and isn't that one of the favorite activites of rock itself?

Finale: New Adventures in Hi-Fi

In the end, there are—as I promised in the introduction to this study—far more possibilities (and problems) for teaching rock than there are any prescriptions for it, just

as there is no single method for interrogating rock. For every pronouncement of authenticity as a mere trope in a larger rock-discourse rhetoric, there is another reading by which a desire for the authentic reflects a desperate plea for "something to grab for," as a songtext by former Cars vocalist Ric Ocasek has put it, from a position trapped within the fraudulent. For every warning of white rock hegemony's continuing colonialist moves to conquer territory founded and forged by black musicians, there is an alternate view by which two cultures long divided are at last moving toward a common ground in an effort to create a still-undefined "third space" that is neither white nor black, neither rock nor hip-hop, neither oppressive nor oppressed. For every band struggling to demonstrate—whether through a continually-shifting discursive style or a continually expanding political orientation—that reification at the hands of its consumer-theorists does not have to result in either abandonment or obscurity, there are numerous compelling arguments to be made which cast the same band as hopeless adherents to the most proven of sales gimmicks: free publicity through controversy. And on it goes in this same fashion for every specific topic I have addressed in all of the preceding pages here, so I think I will end with a very immodest proposal indeed.

At the end of the sixth decade of the 20th century, James Moffet concluded his book *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* with a proposal that "educators work toward a future reorganization of the total curriculum that would eliminate conventional subject divisions" (212-13). Since that time there have been moves toward interdisciplinarity, but these have been made in ways that preserve in *practice* the separation of the disciplines being integrated in *presentation*. Likewise, there have been moves toward the formation of integrative-curricula "learning communities," especially (but not exclusively) at the two-year college level, but these too have been made by bringing representatives of

separate disciplines together to lend their separate perspectives to a single set of classroom materials, a single course focus. Nonetheless, in each of these attempts to answer Moffet's call, *distinctions* between disciplines have eased in ways that their *divisions* have not. Historians find much in common with sociologists, who have much to share with linguists, who themselves have techniques to compare with psychologists. . . and so, after observing and commenting upon these overlaps, the various practitioners return to their separate offices in separate departments in separate buildings.

What does any of this have to do with *rock?* Simply this: While the use of rock songtexts as an ancillary literature to supplement more traditional classroom textforms in any given academic discipline and course through the past decades has been nothing new, what *would* be new is a conception and use of the songtexts and the larger discursive systems which they represent *as a form of traditional literature of and by themselves*—and in a way that transcends the constricting labels of "rock history," "rock rhetoric," "rock genres," "rock journalism," and endless other this-is-it-and-that's-how-we'll-understand-it institutional/departmental/pedagogical definitions. Frank Lentricchia, addressing in *Criticism and Social Change* Kenneth Burke's "conditions" of rhetoric, has written that "[w]hat characteristically invites rhetoric's activity is a social situation somewhere between pure identification [with the subject matter] and absolute separation [from it]" (162-3). In these words, I find a way to finally articulate what I have been arguing for less specifically all along: a complete immersion, through critical analysis, into all of rock, under any disciplinary rubric, in order to understand better its appeal and our identifications with it, while at the same time enabling a separation from all that—because we are able to understand its discursive practices more clearly—we no longer wish to be identified with. Through this partial and informed separation, we have an enhanced

potential to model for others how identification itself is never really *required* to be pure, and how we can still continue to dance to the best of rock's celebratory and even confrontational human practices without continuing to be complicit in the worst of what rock reflects about humanity.

Notes

Chapter 2

1 The suburban scene should not be conflated here with punk's presence in Detroit proper, although even in that much larger city—made up of Southern-import steel and auto workers, European-ethnic enclaves, and a primarily African-American population—British-produced punk, or even its American derivatives from groups like the Ramones, couldn't exactly catch on in a big way. As for radio, Detroit's rock stations did finally air a few songtexts by the Clash, but only the most infectious-hook, dance-oriented ones. The Sex Pistols, Black Flag, Fear, Misfits, Dead Kennedys, et al. never got air time, although I think I might remember a Ramones tune spun by a young Howard Stern during his brief tenure at WWWW before that fine station switched to a country-music format. (The format change plunged Detroit-area rockers into a prolonged period of mourning and promptly motivated Stern himself to leave for New York and his own eventual cult of celebrity.)

2 Or, better yet, *strands* of rock's discourses. While certain musical styles properly may be called discursive *genres* of rock, the varying arguments, conflicts, and rhetorical strategies taking place within a given discursive genre (and the discourses taking place within and around the genre)—the specific threads of meaning-formation—are the topics that I examine in this study. While I refer often to "rock discourses" in general, I am at other times more specifically engaged in the analysis of a particular strand of discursive practices within rock culture.

3 As I explain in the concluding chapter within a discussion of the "Elvis Costello Problem" defined by Michael Bérubé.

Chapter 3

4 Duff McKagan of Guns 'N Roses, Matt Sorum of The Cult, John Taylor of Duran Duran.

5 The first event in 1969, not the 1994 or 1999 versions by the same name.

6 *Newsweek*, April 28, 1997: 25.

7 While still popular, Seger also insisted that his record label continue to market a certain number of 8-track tapes of his music since he'd observed that many of his fans drove vehicles equipped with those antiquated sound systems, even though the 8-track format had long fallen into disuse by music (and auto) manufacturers.

8 As Vince Furnier—a.k.a. Alice Cooper—explained in the early days of his band's fame, the name had "a Baby Jane, Lizzie Borden, sweet-and-innocent-with-a-hatchet-behind-the-back kind of rhthm to it. . . . With a name like Alice Cooper, we could *really* make [people] suffer" (Morgan 15).

9 Independently owned and operated; not part of a corporate enterprise.

10 Credibility; credentials.

11 Lead singer of Queen.

12 Cobain suffered from a lingering stomach ailment causing him great physical pain.

13 The handwritten document is also widely displayed on the Internet.

Chapter 4

14 War casualty figures taken from Stanley Karnow's *Vietnam: A History.* New York: Viking, 1983.

15 All sales figures from the *Billboard* Internet site, available at http://billboard.com/charts/bb.200.asp.

16 Quote is edited for typographical uniformity. The ORIGINAL appears in a SPURIOUS mixture of CAPITALIZED words AND lower-case ONES (as shown here), which, to my mind, interferes with easy comprehension of the important message which Gibson sends to his audience.

17 Croal, much more briefly, outlines this argument as well.

Chapter 5

18 Examples of the latter appear in the chapter on hip-hop; as an example of the former, see for instance Leadbelly's 1930s blues "You Don't Know My Mind" using as its chorus lyrics from the secular field-hand work tune "Me and My Captain." The worksong, which describes the "mask" of African-American double consciousness as described in poetic form by Paul Lawrence Dunbar and in narrative form by W.E.B. Du Bois, is simply updated in such a way that the white "captain" in the earlier songtext who "don't know the mind" of the narrator, who in turn "laughs just to keep from cryin,'" becomes the woman in Leadbelly's addressed relationship.

19 The full history of the connection between blues musicians and Satan appears in Spencer's chapter titled "The Mythologies of the Blues," pp. 18-34.

20 General biographical information from these two texts goes undocumented since the same key anecdotes and histories appear in each of the works in addition to hundreds of articles by other writers.

21 Before Kirk Hammett's hiring, Metallica's lead guitarist was Dave Mustaine, who went on to form the band Megadeth after being fired by Hetfield and Ulrich for chronic substance abuse.

22 The character's name is Joe.

Chapter 6

23 *Opera and Drama.* Trans. W. Ashton Ellis, 1893. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1995: 47.

24 In the summer of 1999, these photos had been replaced by a loaned collection of original poster artworks advertising concerts staged by a number of the bands represented in the HFM's displays.

25 All phrases and terms appearing in quotation in this section are taken from the *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum Program.* New York: Marvel, 1995.

26 As for that newly-emptied space at the top of the pyramid: One can easily guess the first thing to go up there after the Hall moved out. Or more accurately, *who* went up there. Think postage stamps; think dreadful black-velvet paintings at corner gas stations on hot summer afternoons. Think *Blue Hawaii.* In the words of Jim Henke, the HFM's curator: "He stands as the single most important figure in the development of rock and roll." And so the choice makes sense. Where else would a deity like "king" Elvis sit but at the top of the world he created?

27 The Beatles had become a main-floor exhibit, with both instruments and costumes adorning HFM mannequins, in the summer of 1999.

Chapter 7

28 This is where it all falls apart, right? After all, how do educators committed to radical pedagogy reconcile their own expertise in a subject with the desire to promote the construction of meaning and knowledge by their students? Having donned the "hats" of historian, ethnographer, et al. described by Stephen North, and thus having by default played the role of "master/expert" in working through my numerous analyses and critiques, I am making a distinction between the kind of "non-expert" *pedagogy* which I describe here and the kind of *scholarship* which, by necessity, precludes an application of classroom methodology due to a vastly different audience and purpose.

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