S. A. WILDER
Georgia State University

An aesthetic of (re)appropriation: Remediating practices as history and identity in LA Rebellion film and hip hop sampling

ABSTRACT

This article examines remediation practices as forms of Black creativity in films associated with the 'LA Rebellion' and in hip hop from its first two decades. As used here, remediation has two meanings. It stands for the use of prior media in subsequent works, be it the file footage incorporated by the UCLA-based filmmakers of the 'LA Rebellion' (the name given to Black filmmakers who studied and produced films between the late 1960s and 1980s), or the use of sampling and turntable-manipulated breakbeats that defines early hip hop. However, remediation is also used here for its potential as a corrective. Although postmodernity's pastiche is discernible in the remediated elements of texts associated with these separate but contemporaneous movements, there is something specifically Black in the freely appropriated and repurposed prior creative work towards transformative ends. Beyond any postmodern effect, these practices reflect specific ideas related

KEYWORDS

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cultural memory
counter-history

to politics, revolution and counter-ideological impulses opposed to the dominant white culture that surrounded these artists, and to which their texts respond. This transformative reuse – visual or aural – expresses what Foucault termed 'counter-history' and 'counter-memory' – revealing subversive texts that complicate and challenge white cultural and historical hegemony.

INTRODUCTION

In 1966, artists of the Watts Towers Arts Center in Los Angeles, including its then-director, Noah Purifoy, unveiled *66 Signs of Neon*, a collective work containing 66 individual art assemblages comprising wreckage from the Watts rebellion a year earlier (Jones 2017: 79–82, 84–86). In 1973, a young, Jamaican born, Bronx-based DJ named Clive Campbell helped pioneer a new form of turntable-based music built primarily from the 'breakbeats' of records, which he manipulated and extended using two turntables (Chang 2005: 67–69). Also, in 1973, UCLA student filmmaker Ben Caldwell produced a short, 'Project One' film, *Medea*, composed in part of rapidly edited historical stills of Africans and African Americans (Field et al. 2015: 99–102). What do these otherwise disparate Black artists have in common? Put succinctly, each of them offers a variation of art built on a remediating practice. This is interesting enough as a matter of historical observation, particularly given their relative closeness in time to one another. However, rather than merely recounting or describing remediation as a historical creative practice utilized by Black artists in different mediums around the same period, this article examines remediation as a specifically Black creative expression, demonstrating how remediating strategies are used in distinct media to reclaim or even construct a specifically Black history. By concentrating primarily on the use of photographic, televisual and cinematic remediating practices in films produced by the UCLA-based student filmmakers who comprise the so-called 'LA Rebellion', and also the use of phonographic remediation by the pioneers of hip hop in New York City, it will examine remediation practices as forms of Black memory and by extension history, as well as expressions of Black identity. It begins with a section defining remediation and briefly considering influences on its use in LA Rebellion films. This is followed by a section on the use of remediation as counter-memory and as 'memory machine', utilizing specific examples in some of the LA Rebellion films. Finally, there is a separate section considering remediation in early hip hop music and its relationship to Black history and identity.

REMEDIATION: DEFINITION AND ANTECEDENTS

Since 'remediation' has several definitions, it is worthwhile at the outset to suggest how the term is employed here. In their now two-decade-old book on 'new media', Jay David Bolter and Rich Grusin (1998) define remediation in terms of taking elements from one medium and using them in a distinct, typically newer one – for example, how cinema remediates elements of theatre and photography, or television remediates those of radio and cinema. Occasionally, as in Ben Caldwell's use of still images in his film *Medea*, that definition could apply, but the term as employed here is intended both more broadly and more particularly. As used here, one part of the definition of remediation is as an umbrella term to apply to various forms of the re-appropriation and repurposing of existing materials, here more typically visual or aural media, in texts that in effect re-contextualize these elements. So, for example, Larry Clark's use

of newsreel footage in his film *Passing Through* (1977) is an example of reme-
diation, as is Kool Herc's live extension and manipulation of the bridge from
the Incredible Bongo Band's recording of the song 'Apache' (Forner 2012).[1]
Still, those uses could just as easily be termed 're-appropriation' or something
equally descriptive. In addition to the definition offered above, remediation
is chosen for its more common dictionary definition as the act of remedying
something, with remedy in this context intended to mean a transformative
use. Since the metaphor of school and the idea of knowledge are essential
to hip hop, it is worthwhile to consider the definition of the concept as used
in relation to the notion of remedial education. That is, here, as remediation,
the act of re-appropriating media elements is combined with some corrective
purpose or effect.

Of course, these Black filmmakers and DJs did not invent the concept of
remediation. It has creative antecedents in the 'junk art' of Watts, Jamaican
dub, avant-garde filmmaking and film practices associated with the Third
Cinema movement. How several of these inform the subsequent filmmaking
practices of the 'LA Rebellion' are examined briefly below.

Although a comprehensive overview of assemblage art, art made from the
assembly of found objects, is beyond the scope of this article, a brief return to
Noah Purifoy and other contemporaneous, Los Angeles-based Black assem-
blage artists working in the aftermath of the Watts rebellion of 1965 is not
only warranted but even critical. Venturing out from the Watts Towers into
the broader community mere months after the devastating events of 1965,
Purifoy and his compatriots collected tons of charred wood and twisted metal,
damaged debris, building materials and other detritus ('melted neon signs,
medicine bottles embedded in the colorful remains of plastic raincoats, pieces
of smashed automobiles') remaining in the streets after the fires (Jones 2017:
81). They assembled some of these materials into what would ultimately be
the evolving, travelling 'junk art' exhibition called *66 Signs of Neon*, which
comprised 66, separate found-art pieces (Jones 2017: 81). For Purifoy, the
exhibition was a profound expression of Black agency, of Black artists taking
these existing, arguably 'failed' objects and making art. Objects first trans-
formed through the acts of rebellion were transformed again through the
processes of art-making, revealing to Purifoy that 'commodity [was simply]
one moment in the "life history" or career of an object' (Jones 2017: 81). These
objects were remediated, turned into expressions of the Watts community. No
longer damaged goods, they came to embody the spirit of the rebellion and
the community – the discontent, resistance, energy, vision, agency and creativ-
ity of Watts' residents (Jones 2017: 81). The exhibition and the artwork offered
an alternate history in opposition to an official version that cast the events,
and, by extension, the neighbourhood purely in terms of riot and destruction.

A cinematic cousin to assemblage art, films made from 'found footage',
whether taken from ephemeral films, stock footage or narrative features,
occupy a historical place of prominence in avant-garde film practice. Found
footage is the source material of collage films. These are films that combine
footage from previously unrelated sources to novel effect, such as Bruce
Conner's *A MOVIE!* (1958), which playfully and ironically replicates the
movement, excitement, development, climax and denouement of conven-
tional feature films symbolically and in miniature through the clever cutting
and assembly of stock footage; or *Rose Hobart* (Joseph Cornell 1936), which
takes elements from the pre-Code film *East of Borneo* (George Melford 1931),
combines them with stock footage of an eclipse, and refashions them into

2. Teshome Gabriel, a graduate student in film studies who then joined the faculty in the mid-1970s and whose dissertation concerned Third Cinema practices, was by all accounts a significant influence on and source of exposure to African cinema in particular for these LA Rebellion filmmakers.

3. The establishment of the Ethno-communications track, due to agitation on the part of students and some faculty, greatly expanded the pool of film students from historically underrepresented groups including Chicano, Asian American and Black populations, with the mission that these filmmakers would create texts that reflected their respective communities.

an abstract examination of the female lead of that earlier film. These collage films are re-appropriative and transformative. Building on earlier theories of montage associated with Soviet filmmakers in the silent era, these experimental uses of found footage reveal the potential for the same cinematic materials to yield profoundly distinct meanings depending on the context of this usage. Given UCLA's tradition of experimental filmmaking, the students who comprise the 'LA Rebellion' were exposed to this kind of film.

Third Cinema practices, including remediation, likewise exerted a conscious influence on the Black film students of UCLA.[2] Taking its name from the manifesto 'Towards a Third Cinema' by Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas (2010), Third Cinema was a global cinematic movement associated primarily with the cinema of the developing world from the late 1960s into the 1970s. Freely appropriating Cold War terminology, the Argentine filmmakers who co-authored the treatise, members of the revolutionary filmmaking group Grupo Cine Liberacion, called for a radical cinema in opposition to what they decried as the passive, commercial escapism of Hollywood cinema (First Cinema), as well as to the more subjective, auteur-based art cinema associated with European film (Second Cinema) (Getino and Solanas 2010). Instead, they expressed the need for a revolutionary, alternative (Third) cinema in terms of conception, production, distribution and exhibition, a non-commercial cinema that appealed to the masses and prompted them to direct action to spur what the authors termed the 'decolonization of culture' (Getino and Solanas 2010: 59). The filmmakers melded theory with praxis in their documentary *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968). This film makes extensive use of remediated footage from newsreels and other documentaries to underscore its thesis of the pernicious American and European influence, hegemony and outright oppression in South and Central America, as well as to spotlight the Indigenous cultures as potential sources of opposition and cultural reclamation. In Third Cinema, the students at UCLA experienced the revolutionary potential of cinematic expression.

That these strands of local artistic expression, avant-garde film practice and the political discourse of Third Cinema should meet and find expression in films produced by the Black student filmmakers subsequently associated with the 'LA Rebellion' is hardly surprising. Sometimes referred to as the 'Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers', the filmmakers included amongst the 'LA Rebellion' are a loose assemblage of Black artists from UCLA[3] enrolled between the late 1960s and the 1980s who represent a movement to create a Black cinematic alternative to Hollywood film. The presence of these students in the environment in and around UCLA's film school, particularly in the late 1960s and early 1970s, meant that these student filmmakers were exposed to avant-garde filmmaking practices, including the use of found footage. They were also familiar with and enthusiastic about the films, film practices and theoretical writings from Latin America, particularly Cuba and Argentina, that broadly defined the Third Cinema aesthetic (Field et al. 2015: 3). Additionally, as residents of Los Angeles – some even residing in Watts – they were exposed to and a part of the larger Los Angeles art scene, which included the Watts Towers Art Center projects and local 'junk art'. Perhaps even more importantly, these African and African American filmmakers were steeped in the revolutionary upheavals of the era and saw the potential for filmic discourse to create a cinema in opposition to the hegemonic Hollywood cinema and its cinematic and cultural representations. Remediation would play a key role in their cinematic expressions of an alternative, Black history, as well as their ideas concerning Black culture and identity.

REMEMBERING: REMEDIATION USES IN LA REBELLION FILMS

Using examples of remediating practice from four films associated with the LA Rebellion – the aforementioned *Medea*, the thesis films of both Larry Clark, *Passing Through* (1977), and Julie Dash, *Illusions* (1982), as well as Haile Gerima's feature film *Ashes and Embers* (1982) – this section will demonstrate how varied the uses of remediation can be while exhibiting Akira Mizuna Lippit's idea of cinema as memory machine –as both reflective of the systemic repression and representations inherent in the official historical uses of the material, as well as exhibiting the traces of its 'future anteriority'. It will also show how the uses of remediated images drawn from the Foucauldian 'archive' can function as counter-memory and, in so doing, constitute examples of an alternative, Black history and also an expression of Black identity. In other words, it will detail how these films demonstrate cinematic remediation used as corrective to white ignorance.

The concepts of counter-memory and counter-history are central to remediation as used here. In his broader examinations of power and how it functions in the modern world, French philosopher Michel Foucault (1977) uses the terms counter-memory and counter-history to refer to expressions of memory and history, respectively, that oppose their dominant versions, which he refers to as 'collective memory' and 'official history'. He further describes counter-memory and counter-history as fissured with gaps (Foucault 1977). For Foucault, while they can never offer complete records, these counterexamples offer invaluable sites of potential opposition and resistance to challenge the otherwise unchecked hegemony of the official versions, and these fissures are essential (Foucault 1977). That is, the gaps reveal information in its absences. As Shannon Sullivan describes it, 'rather than oppose knowledge, ignorance often is formed by it, and vice versa' (Sullivan 2007: 155). Sullivan suggests a model of 'ignorance/knowledge', rather than treating the ideas separately, in order to undo the epistemic illusion of 'the purported self-mastery and self-transparency of knowledge, as if nothing properly escaped its grasp' (Medina 2011: 31).

With his article 'White ignorance', Charles Mills,

> emphasizes the role that official histories and hegemonic forms of collective memory play in sustaining white ignorance, and also the crucial role that counter-memory needs to play to resist and subvert the epistemic oppression that condemns the lives of marginalized people to silence or oblivion.
>
> (2007: 29)

Mills sees 'the management of memory' as critical to white ignorance (Mills 2007: 29). He further describes the management of memory as comprising the socially orchestrated, exclusionary processes of both remembering and forgetting (Mills 2007: 29). According to him, 'if we need to understand collective memory, we also need to understand collective amnesia' (Mills 2007: 30). Mills stresses the 'intimate relationship between white identity, white memory, and white amnesia, especially about non-white victims' (Mills 2007: 34). However, he goes on to suggest that there exists 'both official and counter-memory, with conflicting judgments about what is important in the past and what is unimportant, what happened and does matter, what happened and does not matter, and what did not happen at all' (Mills 2007: 32). He argues that postbellum national (white) reconciliation was made possible and has been subsequently sustained by 'the repudiation of an alternative Black memory' (Mills 2007: 30).

These ideas find expression in part in Foucault and Jacques Derrida's thoughts concerning the concept of the archive. Before the intervention of poststructuralist thought, the idea of the archive was that it represented an objective repository of historical documents of all sorts, including the photographic, cinematic and televisual, that could be marshalled towards the constitution or exposition of history. These more recent theorists problematize this notion, redefining the archive as less about physical archives, libraries, collections and other institutions, conceiving of it instead as a system that governs what and how the past is discussed. Foucault describes the archive as 'the first law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events' (Foucault 2006: 28). For Foucault, the archive is another power structure that delimits the discourse of history. Derrida takes these thoughts even further, referring to an archive that is febrile and describing it as an expression of power that, in deciding what is included and excluded, creates the past more so than it preserves it (Derrida 1996: 16–17).

Another productive concept to use in analysing remediation in relation to Black cinematic practice is the idea of cinema as memory machine. Examining the work of Swiss experimental filmmaker Martin Arnold, film theorist Akira Mizuta Lippit posits the possibility of cinema operating as what he terms a 'memory machine' (Lippit 2012: 56). He characterizes this machine as 'an apparatus for collecting and redistributing memories in particular – a memory machine that preserves interiority outside, *ex machina*' (Lippit 2012: 56, original emphasis). Using an optical printer to manipulate short passages from Hollywood films, Arnold produced a series of short films that reveal interiorities not evident in their original form. In Arnold's films, Lippit observes texts that 'effect a hypertension between the impulses of the original material and the rescriptive forces of the new edits' (Lippit 2012: 59). He further describes the effect as on one level representing the 'history of […] classical Hollywood cinema […] and its *systems of representation and systemic repression*' (Lippit 2012: 59, emphasis added) and, observed on an even deeper level, as surfaces 'inscribed already with the marks of an enunciation yet to come, with the traces of a future anterior' (Lippit 2012: 59). According to Lippit, rather than being a smooth machine of faithful reproduction, this cinematic memory machine is stuttering, jerky, fragmentary, even neurotic (Lippit 2012: 59). This 'memory machine' is consistent with a broader conception of memory as re-creation and re-constitution, as virtual in the Deleuzian sense, meaning it is freighted with potentialities, rather than the faithful, fixed re-presentation of past events.

Medea (1973), Caldwell's 'Project One' at UCLA, represents a formally radical usage of remediated images as memory machine of counter-memory. Like the subsequent works of Arnold, Caldwell's film is consistent with experimental film practice, rather than with more conventional narrative cinema. As the phrase 'Project One' suggests, this was his first completed film assignment in the programme. 'Project One' films were shot on 8 mm film, of short running time (although Caldwell's was a bit more than twice the length of the assigned three minutes), and created without synchronous sound, but with the option of the addition of a separately recorded soundtrack. For his roughly six-and-a-half-minute-long film, Caldwell used an animation crane and cut primarily in-camera to connect scores of remediated photographic images and create a visual montage that serves multiple, reinforcing purposes (Field et al. 2015: 100–02). This montage is based in part on movement and stasis; as Caldwell puts it, '[w]ithin each picture

is also an innate movement even though it is a static picture' (Field et al. 2015: 101).

Relatedly, the montage offers movement in the historical sense, or even more so a form of counter-memory – as a kind of chronology of a specifically Black history. The film makes use of a range of photos, including everything from clearly ethnographic images to modern photojournalism, with the images representing a collection of shots drawn from African and African American culture 'chronicling early cultural encounters through the history of segregation and civil rights struggles' (Field et al. 2015: 101). While these still images progress, a woman's voice is heard reciting Amiri Baraka's polemical poem 'Part of the Doctrine', in effect linking the images as a visual variant of the spoken word and vice versa. For Caldwell, the images represent an evolutionary and cultural legacy, or as he put it, 'all of the information that comes into a child before it's born' (Field et al. 2015: 100). The filmmaker works from a variation on the myth of Medea, not as the vengeful, infanticidal barbarian Other counter-posed to the Greeks by Euripides, but rather as a more ambivalent, Margaret Garner[4]-inspired figure, represented visually in the film by live-action footage of a visibly pregnant Black woman intercut with the still images. In so doing, Caldwell creates a visual collage of remediated photographic images that function as a memory machine, releasing in their new combinations their previously concealed enunciations. This assemblage also functions as historiography, as counter-memory reframing and re-producing the origins and legacy of the Black subject, as well as the traumas and struggles that define Black subjectivity in America.

Remediated black and white file footage taken from the then-recent Attica prison revolts was so crucial to Larry Clark's thesis film, *Passing Through*, that it was the first budgeted item of the film's production, and the first footage sought and obtained by the filmmaker.[5] According to film scholar Alessandra Raengo, this footage, then in the possession of Paul Robeson's daughter, was otherwise virtually unused at the time. Clark's use of it functions like the Watts Towers artists' use of 'junk art', locating a compelling, artistic purpose for an object otherwise ignored. In the film, footage of this recently occurred uprising is included alongside other black and white documentary and newsreel footage of Black resistance and oppression culled from the civil rights movement era. For Clark, whose scrupulously colour-conscious film (Restivo 2015) was conceived as a cinematic analogue to free jazz, the inclusion of this remediated footage enhances and expands the analogy.

Clark conceives of free jazz as more than musical, characterizing it as instead a form of broader expression that incorporates both continuities stretching back to African traditions and forward to the potential of Black revolution and opposition within the dominant American culture of the time. He envisions it as music refusing to conform or adhere to the structures and strictures of American commercial conventions, the difficulty of which resists easy assimilation and insists on attention. Framed differently, Clark uses free jazz as 'didactic allegory of the cultural crisis of its historical moment' (James 2005: 325). For Clark, this crisis is embodied in 'the search for the terms of an authentic Black film language and of an independent Black cinema, within which film would assist in the creation of the community instead of exploiting it in the interests of capital' (James 2005: 325). *Passing Through* is a film intended to reflect those ideas cinematically.

The footage of struggle and resistance represents one cinematic form of what the music offers aurally. It displays predominately Black figures in

6. '"Each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it". Some generations are just ashes, some are embers' (Gerima 1991: 344).

opposition and struggle. Furthermore, by including the recent footage, it resists reading the inclusion of the earlier images of civil rights resistance as an accomplishment located in the past, as something overcome, or remote history. Instead, it situates all the struggles as a continuity of Black experience in America, as an ongoing site of opposition and resistance, and as a history being made and remade. Even more so, since the Attica prison revolt was largely covered in the mainstream press negatively, most often with the use of the term 'riot', its presence here alongside footage of non-violent civil rights protest and the wider suffering inflicted upon Black Americans during the earlier civil rights struggles fosters a more complex picture of what Black struggle and civil rights represent. This re-contextualization offers a counter-history of opposition that both underscores and is underscored by the free jazz that dominates the film's soundtrack.

As if this remediated newsreel footage was not forceful enough, the film also includes a sequence of remediated photographs of revolutionary African leaders, including several who replaced colonial governments within the decade or so before the production of the film. By including these stills, the film links the struggles and resistance in America to the postcolonial spaces of Africa – both situating the American struggle within the broader context of calls for global revolution common to the era, and also implicating the Black American experience as that of the colonized. Thus, in a revolutionary work displaying the analogous potential of free jazz and cinema as liberating, non-conforming and expressing the practice of specifically Black resistance, remediated elements (both cinematographic and photographic) are key.

Although formally and narratively different from Clark's film, Haile Gerima's use of remediated imagery in his film *Ashes and Embers*, in this case, largely consisting of file footage from the Vietnam War, shares with it the notion of Black Americans as colonized within their country. With a title derived from the works of revolutionary philosopher Frantz Fanon (Gerima 1991),[6] the filmmaker presents another version of the memory machine, as well as of Foucauldian counter-memory. A film concerned with the possibilities of Black identity in the present and the future, *Ashes and Embers* features an antihero at its centre, a traumatized Vietnam War veteran who finds an inability to embrace or connect with either proponents of the radical politics of Black liberation who advocate for societal transformation or bourgeoisie Black folks who have accommodated themselves to the institutional racism in American society. Cast adrift, his political awakening is painfully slow, even retarded, interrupted in part by his reluctance to come to terms with his experiences in Vietnam.

Since the protagonist of this film is a returned Vietnam vet, on one level, including file footage of the American military presence in Vietnam serves as a reminder of trauma. Presented in the form of cinematic flashbacks, it is a reminder of his trauma, and an explanation for some of his anger, frustrations and sense of disconnectedness. It also represents the generational trauma inflicted by service on young Black men in that war, a group drafted at rates disproportional to their demographic numbers. Perhaps more importantly, the footage shows the transformation of the character throughout his military service, as he grows from a disciplined soldier faithfully carrying out the tasks of oppression asked of him by the US government, to a disaffected and disoriented, reluctant participant in carrying out those orders, to finally seeing the Vietnamese as himself through the clever use of analogous shots of an older, crouching Vietnamese woman cut with footage of his grandmother in a similar posture.

By creating a parallel between the protagonist's grandmother and reme-diated footage of this older Vietnamese woman in one of the flashback sequences, Gerima links Black American trauma to that suffered by the Vietnamese. The filmmaker fosters a linkage of African Americans as a population colonized within their own country to the colonial experience of the Indigenous peoples of Indochina. Gerima has repeatedly articulated the necessity of relating the struggles of contemporary Black Americans with both the struggles and revolutionary liberations of the developing nations (James 2005: 328). As with *Passing Through*, this has profound implications of a global community of the oppressed, in this case, not coincidentally two groups oppressed by the same government in the same historical moment. This perspective offers a Foucauldian counter-memory of Black experience concerning Vietnam. Produced at a time when America was still wrestling with the recent loss in that war and only beginning steps to come to terms with it, Gerima's film presents the Black trauma and loss as distinct from America's military defeat in that conflict and more closely linked with the traumas inflicted on the Vietnamese. Equally, by rendering the Vietnam footage in interspersed, disconnected fragments, the usage of the remediated imagery displays the fractured, neurotic quality of the cinema as memory machine described by Lippit.

Julie Dash's employment of remediated footage in her short, narrative thesis film *Illusions* is, in some stylistic respects, more conventional, more classically rendered as straightforward narrative than the other texts presented here. It concerns a light-skinned Black woman passing as white to work as a film studio production executive in the era of open discrimination. She oversees the dubbing of a white movie star by a Black chanteuse. Included in the film is naval file footage taken from the Second World War newsreels. On the one hand, this brief, intercut footage serves an establishing function – situating this period narrative in the era of the early 1940s. Still, given the narrative's preoccupation with history, more specifically, with the idea of cinema as establishing and redefining American history and the public discourse of America, which is articulated in voice-over spoken by the film's protagonist Mignon, who goes so far as to suggest that cinema and feature films are how Americans get their history, the inclusion of the imagery takes on other dimensions.

As history, the remediated footage can be seen as representative of the marginalized role of Black Americans in the official record of the war, as a tacit reminder of how their contributions are often minimized, overlooked or forgotten in its official histories. More abstractly, it can be read as a meta-phorical stand-in for the civil rights struggle itself, embodied in the film in a protagonist passing as white to work as a Hollywood production executive and also in the disembodiment of the Black voice of another. Given that the film's narrative concerns the cinematic apparatus and the film industry's sublimation and even erasure of Black presence, metonymically (dis)embodied in the film by both the post-sync dubbing of a white movie star by a Black woman because the former's original vocal is 'out of sync' with the image as well as in the inclusion of a protagonist who is 'passing', the remediated footage takes on a poignant, reinforcing dimension. It is historical footage that reminds the viewer of the historical stakes of cinematic representation itself, of the medium's capacity for elision and annihilation, historically wielded against minorities, particularly Black Americans.

As distinct as each resulting film is, as well as the material circumstances of its creation, in these uses of remediated footage, they reveal a common purpose.

These Black artists are dipping into 'the archive' to create new texts that use the images they recover so that they might reframe them, revealing the 'future anteriority' they contain. In so doing, they produce a specifically Black expression of identity as a corrective to the hegemony embodied in Hollywood film and by extension to white America's systematic ignorance towards, suppression and even erasure of Black American representation, trauma, history and memory from the official, white-constructed history and cultural memory. Hip hop, examined in the next section, both complicates and underscores these ideas, offering new forms of remediated practice, which further the idea of the corrective embodied within its specific forms of expression.

REMIXING: SONIC REMEDIATION IN EARLY HIP HOP

Since a history of hip hop is likewise beyond the scope of this article, some background and explanation at the outset concerning what falls within this examination are necessary. For one thing, hip hop is more than music. At one point, it was a subculture, a lifestyle that incorporated various expressive elements in music, art, dance and fashion. While elements still exist as subculture, over time, hip hop has been in some respects folded into the mainstream of American culture. This article is concerned with the musical aspects of hip hop that involve remediation – turntablism and sampling – and, even more than this, is predominately focused on the earlier decades of these musical aspects of hip hop. The implication here is not of a causal link between remediation as practised by those Los Angeles-based artists and filmmakers and the DJ progenitors of what will subsequently be termed hip hop. If they are linked in the historical sense, this link is correlative, constitutive of a broader form of Black creative practice in remediation. There are no indications that these young DJs in New York boroughs like The Bronx and Queens were even exposed to, let alone familiar with, the 'junk art' of Watts from a few years earlier, and they were most certainly not familiar with the student films made roughly contemporaneously by Black filmmakers working in Southern California. Still, as is the case with the LA Rebellion films, hip hop's use of remediation, first in the form of turntablism, soon supplemented with the addition of more technologically sophisticated sampling using machines like samplers and sequencers, has antecedent roots in pre-existing remedial practices, in this case with practices associated with music. Equally importantly, turntablism and sampling as used in hip hop develop as a form of Black expression. This form conveys and represents issues of Black history and identity – and does so in a manner subversive to more extensive, mainstream culture, as an audio analogue to the previously examined filmmaking practices. If political economist Jacques Attali is correct that it is sound that fashions societal arrangement, and that 'with music is born power and its opposite: subversion' (Attali 1985: 6), then, in remediation, these Black artists find a vehicle to present a postmodern version of the latter – a subversive sonic equivalent to what those contemporaneous LA-based filmmakers were creating.

Whereas the more avant-garde *musique concrete*, a musical form of remediation that made use of tape loops and other pre-recordings and environmental sounds to create new soundscapes, was largely outside the purview of these young Black artists, other prior forms of remediating musical expression, notably Jamaican dub, were crucial to the development of 'breakbeat' turntablism and sampling, which in turn form the musical spine for hip hop. While its

precise origins are up for debate, dub, also sometimes known as 'B-sides' after reggae singles practice, arose from the musical culture in Kingston, Jamaica and its surrounding environs. Dub got its name in the days when studio engineers produced acetate test plates to use in later mastering of recordings. These test plates existed so engineers could check the levels on instrumental tracks before their final mixing and mastering. Selectors, the Jamaican equivalent of club DJs, gained access to some of these test plates and realized they could manipulate the individual tracks, in effect often producing dramatically different sounding songs by boosting specific instruments (particularly bass) and modifying the levels of other instruments, while decentring by partially, although not entirely, eliminating the vocals. Occasionally, they even added instrumentation to their new version. They thought of these as 'B-sides' because they considered their results versions of existing works. As would be the case with hip hop's subsequent use of turntablism and sampling, 'dub compositions privilege(d) the pre-recorded tracks as the starting point of creativity' (Navas 2012: 41).

Not coincidentally, one of the pioneering hip hop DJs, the aforementioned Clive 'Kool Herc' Campbell, had Jamaican roots, having immigrated to the United States after exposure to that country's dance hall culture with its toasting MCs. Unlike the Jamaican selectors and producers, Campbell did not have access to test plates or studio equipment when he embarked on his DJ career in the early 1970s. However, he observed fairly early in his performances that the audience responded most enthusiastically to the 'breakbeats' in the records he spun – those short, typically instrumental bridges included in popular music. As pioneering hip hop DJ Grandmaster Flash described them, these were those sections of the recording where 'the band breaks down, the rhythm section is isolated, basically where the bass guitar and drummer take solos' (Rose 1994: 73). These breakbeats represent 'points of rupture in their former contexts' (Rose 1994: 73).

Using his two-turntable set-up, Campbell developed what he called the 'Merry-Go-Round', which was a technique where, depending on the records on each turntable, he could cut back and forth between the tables to extend this break section, or cut from one break straight to another, using the fader between the two tables (Chang 2005: 67–69). He and contemporaries like Flash added scratching to this, manually manipulating the vinyl record on the turntable, reversing, stopping and stuttering the record to produce rhythmic, 'scratchy' sounds, as well as other manipulations of the records and turntable. In so doing, they created a live-action remediation practice that would subsequently be considered the cornerstone of turntablism, a practice defined as playing the record player as one would a musical instrument rather than using it as a mere playback device. Herc was joined by other contemporary DJs in The Bronx, Queens and Harlem, such as the Grandmasters Flash and Caz, who similarly developed live performance styles predicated on the remediation of previously existing recorded music via turntablism in order to create transformed expressions in urban club spaces, street corners, apartment rec rooms and the like.

For the first several years, what these DJs were doing existed almost exclusively[7] as a live phenomenon in the boroughs of New York, most often in block parties and apartment building rec rooms. Although funk recordings were prominent, the DJs exhibited decidedly catholic tastes in the records they manipulated and remediated. As Grandmaster Flash put it, he combined 'white boy music like the Steve Miller Band and Spooky Tooth, Jeff Beck and

7. A tape trade did develop in those early years once cassette recorders proliferated, with aficionados in those environs taping parts of sets and trading them amongst themselves. Commercial recording and release did not enter the picture until Sugar Hill Gang's single 'Rapper's Delight' was released in 1979.

Steely Dan […] [and] crazy beats from the Philippines and India with sounds I didn't know a human being could make' (McLeod and DiCola 2011: 55). The decision to use prior recordings as the basis for new art was, in some respects, pragmatic. The legend of hip hop tends to characterize the foundation as youngsters, not having money to access musical instruments in their urban environment, who instead turned to tools they had at hand like turntables, records and speakers and related stereo equipment in order to express themselves. This is a compelling myth, albeit at best half true. These DJs invested in PAs, mixers, microphones and more expensive dual turntables. This equipment is explainable in the context of their work as DJs, in as much as DJs spin records and need systems to do so. Used records were indeed cheap and plentiful, but they offset those savings by going through needles and cartridges with the scratching and turntablist repurposing of their record players. As the era of recorded hip hop arrived and its producers introduced the technology developed around sampling, which meant the addition of electronic devices that could store, isolate, replay and manipulate the recorded sounds, producers working on hip hop tracks incorporated these into their arsenal, as well as drum machines and other sequencing technologies, to use alongside turntablism.

In the discussion of hip hop and remediating practices, if turntablism is important, sampling is vital. As stated above, samplers are electronic devices, computers, that allow users to duplicate a sound source, pitch shift it, re-sequence it and loop it. Before the intervention of hip hop producers, sampling was typically employed in a manner that concealed its use (Rose 1994: 73). It was a time-saving device employed in a recording studio that allowed producers and engineers to fill out tracks inconspicuously, to reinforce instruments or singers (Rose 1994: 73). As Tricia Rose describes it, hip hop producers 'inverted this logic, using samples as a point of reference, as a means by which the process of repetition and recontextualization can be highlighted and privileged' (1994: 73). In hip hop, the sampler facilitates an extension of the breakbeat indefinitely through looping, while also affording potentials of manipulating the recorded sound using techniques like detuning, lowering the pitch of the reproduced sounds, which were unavailable with turntables alone. This detuning effect is often explicitly employed to emphasize low end frequencies: to make the bass boom. In pursuing the limits of the technology, these hip hop creators are echoing 'Afrodiasporic musical priorities' (Rose 1994: 75). The intervention of these technologies facilitates creative expression rooted in the excavation and articulation of historical, Black musical tradition as well as present concerns. With a nod to Walter Benjamin, this music represents 'Black cultural priorities in the age of digital reproduction' (Rose 1994: 75).

Whereas the early investment in turntables, mics and mixers can be explained as necessary for the DJ, the addition of the other technology and techniques, particularly that of sampling combined with the manual manipulation of the records themselves, is more consistent with deliberate practice, with the desire to employ pre-existing music and refashion it – an intent towards remediation not by necessity, but by choice. This intent towards remediation is one way that turntablism and sampling are linked to the 'junk art' practices of Watts artists and the films of the Black student filmmakers from UCLA. Remediation, in this case in the form of the sampling remix, is joined to those other expressions on a more profound level, as a sonic equivalent to those visual artistic practices. Linked as a vehicle for expressing Black

experience, this sonic remediation acts as reminder of the aspirations, complications and traumas of Black experience. Specifically, it is a vehicle for the aural excavation of Black history.

Theorist Alexander Weheliye describes phonography as an ideal site for Black historiography, as 'a way to make Black people appear in history that erases them otherwise' (Marks 2015: 120). More so, as later hip hop artist DJ Shadow puts it, '[hip hop i]s about drawing from what's around you and subverting it and decontextualizing it' (Rule 1997: 51). In all of this, it should never be forgotten that this is a form of *musical* expression, one relying heavily on the beat, pace and movement, and on rhythm and repetition. The last of these, rhythm and repetition, are especially significant. In her brief discussion on historical African and Afrodiasporic musical practices, Tricia Rose describes rhythm and polyrhythmic layering as the African or African-derived musical equivalent to what harmony and harmonic triads mean to western music (1994: 66). As she also emphasizes, in African music traditions, melodic phrases tend to be short and repetitive; repetition is itself an essential element of African musical expression (Rose 1994: 66). However, within this repetition are often subtle variations that create a cross-rhythmic relationship to the underlying rhythmic accompaniment, be it drums or clapping (Rose 1994: 66). This combination of complex rhythms and repetitions with subtle variation carries over into hip hop. Sampling, in particular, affords hip hop creators a productive technology for exploiting these elements of rhythm and repetition: the means to 'illustrate a heightened attention to rhythmic patterns and movement between such patterns via breaks and points of musical rupture' (Rose 1994: 67).

James A. Snead casts repetition and rupture in cultural terms. He describes repetition as a defining and telling feature of Black cultures specifically, as a means of maintaining a sense of continuity, security and identification (Snead 1981). When repetition is viewed in cultural forms, it is not the same thing repeated, but instead its transformations that are observed (Snead 1981). What Snead sees as distinct in African-derived forms of music is that, unlike their western counterparts that employ rhythm as an underlying vehicle to support harmonic resolution, these forms spotlight the repetitions and rhythms as expressions of circulation and equilibrium (Snead 1981). Christopher Small describes these practices as dissolving 'the past and the future into one eternal present, in which the passing of time is no longer noticed' (Small 1977: 54–55). In other words, this musical expression rooted in repetition and ruptures captures a specifically African and Afrodiasporic cultural frame. When the perspectives of Rose, Snead and Small are combined with Attali's casting of music as a defining societal force, a complex and subversive relationship is revealed between sampling's technological reframing of Black cultural forms of expression with their emphasis on repetition, rhythm and rupture, and a dominant culture with musical traditions largely built on the sublimation or suppression of these aspects in the service of harmonic resolution. That sampling allows for music elements often drawn from this dominant western tradition to be cut out and morphed into a distinct expression only emphasizes this act of subversion.

Without framing it in either/or terms, hip hop is both a musical form designed to trigger movement and aural pleasure in the listener, and also an expression of subversive Black identity – a means of accessing materials from Foucault's site of the archive. Hip hop redeploys these materials in

a new form that unfolds, revealing something akin to Lippit's ideas of the original objects'' future anteriority'. In modifying the position of the original, and altering its placement, pace, pitch and other elements, hip hop sampling practice affords the potential to reveal readings otherwise contained, even concealed, within those elements. More specifically, this new expression can invoke Black culture and history, embodying the disconnected sense of the diasporic experience, the 'rootless roots' forced on Black Americans through the legacy of the Middle Passage, slavery, segregation, Jim Crow and mass incarceration.

Considered in this way, the legal battles of the late 1980s and early 1990s that, to an extent, hobbled sampling as a creative practice in hip hop in the commercial sphere take on a more sinister character (*Grand Upright Music, Ltd v. Warner Bros. Records Inc.* 1991). Under US law, recorded music is covered by two separate copyrights. As its name suggests, the music composition copyright primarily covers the compositional elements – the melody as well as the lyrics, if any – of a piece of music. The sound recording copyright applies to the embodiment of the specific record of the musical elements. For the better part of the first decade of sampling practice in recorded hip hop – from the late 1970s through the end of the 1980s – producers and labels made fewer efforts to secure licences for the recordings they sampled, particularly regarding sound recording rights (Challis 2009; Gaither 2001). Overwhelmingly, these sound recording rights were and are controlled by corporations such as record labels and their parent companies. As hip hop rose to commercial prominence in that decade, these corporate interests became more aware of the potential value of the sampled elements. Hip hop was not like 'junk art' or even like non-commercial cinematic practice. Rather, it had readily observed commodity value. This observation led to a handful of key lawsuits where courts held that the unlicensed uses were infringing, costing hip hop artists and record labels not inconsiderable money (*Grand Upright Music, Ltd v. Warner Bros. Records Inc.* 1991; Challis 2009; *Bridgeport Music Inc. v. Dimension Films* 2005). These lawsuits made it impractical to produce commercially viable albums utilizing the dense clusters of samples that arguably characterized the apex of the baroque age of hip hop sampling towards the end of the 1980s, with albums such as Public Enemy's 1988 release *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, which featured scores of samples often rendered individually unrecognizable within the resulting dense soundscapes. That the uses were often literally transformative was of no moment (Ponte 2006). Instead, the conventions of the legal system ostensibly in place to protect creators' rights from unauthorized copying had the practical effect of stifling Black creativity. In the process, these rulings also underscored the core subversive, countercultural aspects of hip hop sampling as remediating practice.

Movement, mentioned in passing above, is an essential component, as well. Ever the wordsmith, in the 2007 song 'Hip Hop Lives', MC KRS-One defines hip hop in this way:

> Hip is to know, it's a form of intelligence. To be hip is to be update and relevant. Hop is a form of movement. You can't just observe a hop, you gotta hop up and do it. Hip and hop is more than music. Hip is the Knowledge, Hop is the Movement. Hip and Hop is intelligent movement.
>
> (KRS-One and Marley Marl 2007, 'Hip Hop Lives', n.pag.)

As an MC, meaning a rapper who speaks rhyming verses on top of the often-sampled musical beds that define hip hop music, it is unsurprising that he would be invested in hip hop as being about knowledge or intelligence, and about being 'update and relevant', but his quote goes further. Notice the attention to the imperative of movement in his definition, on the need to physically embody the music. Not coincidentally, in its nascent days in those boroughs, hip hop spawned an entirely new form of dance, often called 'breakdancing' after the music's use of breakbeats.

Breakdancing is a form of expression wherein the dancer sometimes isolates muscles and muscle groups in robotic movements (a practice sometimes more specifically referred to as 'popping' or 'pop-locking'), or spins on the knee, or the head, or employs any number of other often intricate and exacting moves. It is assertive, sometimes playfully aggressive, designed as physical adjunct to the typically rhythm-heavy, sampled music it accompanies (or vice versa). It is an embodiment of a new musical form calling for new forms of movement that theorist Laura Marks discusses in the context of Techno (a subsequent musical form that has roots in hip hop); as Marks describes it, '[the contagious rhythms and overwhelming bass sounds] demand that [the] body discover new feelings to go with the unnatural new sounds' (2015: 113). She quotes Kodwo Eshun describing the effect of breakbeat music on the body as figural in the Deleuzian sense, as impacting it 'at levels barely explicable in the normal languages of sensation', and as received by the nervous system rather than the mind, and 'distributed across the entire surface of the body' (Marks 2015: 113). This embodied response marks this form of musical expression as potentially transformative to the listener. However, KRS-One's quote can also be read as intending 'intelligent' and 'movement' to be taken together in the sense of cultural movement or enlightenment, as reflecting hip hop music as, at its core, a remedial practice in the sense of learning again from the origin, of a corrective, with sampling a form of audio montage integral to expression that reclaims or excavates a specifically Black counter-history and counter-memory in opposition to the hegemonic (white) counterparts that pervade public discourse.

CONCLUSION

Although this article concentrates on the usage of remediation in art produced by Black artists within a comparatively narrow time frame, that should not be perceived as delimiting the usage of remediation in Black expression, cinematically or musically. Subsequent examples of remediating practices in Black cinema, including in the work of John Akomfrah with the now-defunct Black Audio Film Collective as well in the work of Arthur Jafa, reveal that it has continued to be a vital cinematic element of the expression of Black identity and a specifically Black counter-history and counter-memory. This trend is observable in films such as the experimental documentary *The Last Angel of History* (Akomfrah 1996) and the recent collage film *Love Is the Message, The Message Is Death* (Jafa 2016). Jafa has even conceived of a grand archive, a massive, post-cinematic expression that makes use of a vast number of remediated photographs, demonstrating the potential for remediation to unfold new embodiments and distinct perspectives.

Love Is the Message… takes as its score the gospel-inspired Kanye West track 'Ultralight Beam', demonstrating the continuing vitality and relevance of hip hop as a musical form, one that remains heavily reliant on samples

(this track samples elements of at least five prior recordings), hence a form still based on remediation. In terms of hip hop, although it is now well past those subcultural days predominated by DJs spinning records to live audiences in New York boroughs, and even mainly past the free appropriations of early sampling and the dense production soundscapes produced within the first decade of its commercially recorded releases, remediation remains a cornerstone of the form, with remediating practices occupying the central role they have held from its humble beginnings in Bronx rec rooms. The continuity embodied in the persistence of that creative practice, even in the wake of legal decisions that have often made sampling expensive, if not outright cost-prohibitive, eloquently testifies to the imperative of its inclusion in creative forms of Black expression into the early decades of the twenty-first century. Hip hop music, and its remediating practice more specifically, continues to enunciate Black history and identity to this day.

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

S. A. Wilder is a doctoral student in moving image studies in the School of Film, Media, and Theatre at Georgia State University, where his research focuses principally on cinematic late style and its relationship to the auteur concept. His work has appeared in *Porn Studies*, *Asian Cinema Journal, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, Film & History* and *Slayage: The International Journal of* Buffy+ and is scheduled to appear in the edited volumes *Screening Controversy* (Taylor & Francis, 2023) and *Serial Killers and Serial Spectators* (Brill, 2022).

Contact: School of Film, Media and Theatre, 25 Park Place, 11th Floor, Atlanta, GA, 30303, USA.
E-mail: seth.wilder@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0724-1256