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## Riffs, Repetition, and Theories of Globalization

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**R**iffs—short repeated segments of sound, deployed singly, in call and response, in layers, as melody, accompaniment, and bass line—pervade African-American musics and various world popular musics, especially those of the African diaspora. They are but one aspect of a multilayered set of musical and cultural practices contributing to an African American musical sensibility, and they interact freely with the entire musical complex that Samuel Floyd (1995) has termed ring shout elements:

Calls, cries, and hollers; call-and-response devices; additive rhythms and poly-rhythms, heterophony, pendular thirds, blue notes, bent notes, and elisions, hums, moans, grunts, vocables, and other rhythmic-oral declamations, interjections and punctuations; off-beat melodic phrasings and parallel intervals and chords; constant repetition of rhythmic and melodic figures and phrases (from which riffs and vamps would be derived); timbral distortions of various kinds; musical individuality within collectivity; game rivalry, hand clapping, foot patting, and approximations thereof; apart playing; and the metronomic pulse that underlies all African-American music (Floyd 1995:6).

In jazz, the alleged monotony and repetitiveness of riff patterns, as well as their supposed non-developmental quality in a large-scale structural sense, have been grounds for the ambivalent admittance of musicians such as Count Basie into the modernist critical canon. Gunther Schuller finds inherent flaws (including harmonic stasis and lack of melodic interest) in the “riff cum blues” format of many Basie compositions, and André Hodeir, while praising Basie’s rhythmic sensibility, finds his recordings characterized by “extreme melodic monotony” (Schuller 1989:253; Hodeir 1962:97). A more pessimistic view of repetition in modernist critical theory can be found in the work of Theodor Adorno, who, through a chain of metaphorical associations, equates the repetition in popular music with industrial standardization, loss of individuality, military marching, and hence fascism (Adorno 1941; 1990:61).

My interest in riffs and repetition is not simply to refute Eurocentric criticism with a perspective more cognizant of African diasporic aesthetics, but to look also at the way repetitive musical devices contribute to an understanding of global musical circulation.<sup>1</sup> I am interested in the way riffs, repetition, and their composite grooves circulate within and between genres and what they can tell us about what Mark Slobin would call diasporic interculturalures (1992:44). At stake here is the dialectical relationship between the global and the local and various theories of that interrelationship. I have been stimulated by several recent works broaching the issue of the global and the local in music including Veit Erlmann's (1996) "The Aesthetics of the Global Imagination," Mark Slobin's "Micromusics of the West" (1992), Jocelyne Guilbault's *Zouk* (1993) and George Lipsitz's *Dangerous Crossroads* (1994). All of them offer important insights into the problem of talking about musical culture in a global context, but, with the exception of Guilbault, not much emphasis has been placed on musical sound itself. This is not surprising since theoretical perspectives on the global and the local have been dominated by social scientists, philosophers, and literary theorists. Ethnomusicologists have attempted to squeeze their concerns into the vocabularies of these interdisciplinary discussions, but have not often made a case for what musical processes themselves might have to offer these larger theories of social and cultural interpretation. This article argues, with the help of examples from various regions of the African diaspora, that riffs, repetition, and grooves—as multilayered, stratified, interactive, frames of musical, social, and symbolic action—might be helpful in thinking through some of the more challenging issues in contemporary critical thinking, including cultural hybridity, economic domination, agency, and the specific cultural complexities of the African diaspora. I share Erlmann's (1996) interest in the global commodification of popular musics, as well as Slobin's (1992) concern with finding ways to conceptualize the interaction among subculture, interculturalure, and superculturalure. Riffs and repetition also provide an opportunity to revisit the ethnomusicological theme of "sound structure as social structure" (Feld 1984) and consider how its classic articulation in the discussion of a small egalitarian society might be of use in thinking about intercultural interaction and global musical circulation in highly asymmetrical contexts.

I raise the familiar theme of music as a metaphor for social processes, not to revisit the well-established ground of ethnotheories and their importance for ethnomusicology, but to critically examine the cultural metaphors embedded in recent trends of theorizing the global and ask whether our collective experience as scholars of music can contribute to expanding this discussion. I have in mind recent literature that examines the interpretive themes of culture as text and culture as commodity—poststructuralism and

Frankfurt school Marxism respectively. It seems to me that our ethnographic and historical expertise in musics of the world must function as something more than raw data to be plugged into Western philosophical modes of understanding and conceptualization. My most general presumptions are that conceptual processes are analogical, constantly interpreting one mode of social experience in terms of another, and that the deep systemic and continually reproduced asymmetries of the global economy must be addressed in our thinking.

I am less concerned with musical categories as metaphors for social analysis than with arguing that whatever interpretive ideas are used for broaching the problem of globalization in music must be able to move successfully among several levels of analysis (from the individual to the global) and that detailed knowledge of musical processes is crucial in situating music within larger ideological and political contexts. Paul Gilroy has observed in his discussion of essentialist and anti-essentialist positions on black identity: "It is ironic, given the importance accorded to music in the habitus of diaspora blacks, that neither pole in this tense conversation takes the music very seriously" (Gilroy 1993:101). In this article I take the music very seriously (perhaps to a fault) by moving from a detailed musical example to social theories and back in an attempt to articulate Gilroy's unimplemented suggestion that "music and its rituals can be used to create a model whereby identity can be understood neither as a fixed essence nor as a vague and utterly contingent construction to be reinvented by the will and whim of aesthetes, symbolists, and language gamers" (ibid.:102). In the layered overlapping combination of riffs and repetitions<sup>2</sup> into grooves I see a field of action, symbols, and interrelationship that offers possibilities for reclaiming agency in postfoundationalist<sup>3</sup> discussions of culture and for moving beyond a strictly binary conception of dialectics or, as Homi Bhabha has recently put it, getting "beyond the relation of the two" (1997: 441).

## Music

Repetition is the key factor which focuses the organization of the rhythms in an ensemble. The repetition of a well-chosen rhythm continually reaffirms the power of the music by locking that rhythm, and the people listening or dancing to it, into a dynamic and open structure. The rhythms in African music may relate by cutting across each other or by calling and responding to each other, but in either case, because of the conflict of African cross-rhythms, the power of the music is not only captured by repetition, it is magnified (Chernoff 1979:111-112).

John Miller Chernoff's remarkable *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* (1979) remains the most detailed experiential exploration of musical repetition and its implications for understanding social, moral, ethical,

and aesthetic dimensions of the Dagomba and southern Ewe peoples of Ghana. The familiar musical organization of many West and Central African traditional musics—time-keeping (bell) patterns, and supporting, calling (leading) and responding parts—has been thoroughly explored by many scholars including David Locke (1987),<sup>4</sup> Simha Arom (1991), Kofi Agawu (1994), Akin Euba (1990) John Miller Chernoff (1979), and Gerhard Kubik (1994). I begin with Count Basie to emphasize the continuities existing at a processual level among African American musical genres and various musics of what has come to be known as the African diaspora. I focus additionally on riffs to draw attention to the fact that interlocking call and response relationships extend beyond the jazz rhythm section, a center of attention in much recent work, including my own (Monson 1996; Prögler 1995; Berliner 1994; Keil 1966).

"Sent for You Yesterday," (Basie 1938), a twelve-bar blues in E-flat arranged by Eddie Durham, and recorded for Decca in 1938, is one of Count Basie's most well-known recordings and illustrates four principal ways in which riffs were used in swing era arrangements: (1) as melodies, (2) in call and response, (3) as continuous ostinatos, and (4) in layers. Figure 1 provides a chorus by chorus overview of the arrangement: 8 blues choruses with an introduction, interlude, and coda. The first three choruses (transcribed in Musical Example 1) illustrate several different ways to alternate a fixed riff and improvised solo passage in call and response. In chorus 1 the ensemble calls with a two-bar fixed riff (functioning as a melody) and two-bar improvised responses played by Earl Warren on alto sax (mm. 9–20). In chorus 2 the order of the improvisation and the fixed riff are reversed: Count Basie improvises two-bar calls on piano and the trombones respond with a two-bar fixed answering riff (mm. 21–32). Herschel Evans takes a tenor sax solo in chorus 3, which is accompanied by a one-bar fixed riff played as a continuous ostinato by the trombones. Here the call and response organization of the previous two choruses is abandoned and the riff in the trombones functions as a comping rhythm (and harmony) underneath the soloist.

Chorus 5 (a climactic vocal chorus sung by Jimmy Rushing) illustrates a fourth aspect of riffs in Basie's style as the first three usages of riffs (melody, call and response, and continuous ostinato) are combined into layers and in the process produce a multileveled larger texture. Rushing's riff melody is simultaneously in call and response with an answering figure in the reeds (Musical Example 2) and accompanied by a continuous two bar riff in the trumpets (that seems to quote "Yes Sir, That's My Baby").<sup>5</sup> Basie's offbeat "hits" in the piano illustrate another type of continuous riff—a single eighth note figure that is repeated twice per bar. This figure is characterized more by space than figure, but it provides an additional comping

Figure 1. "Sent for You Yesterday" (Count Basie-Eddie Durham-Jimmy Rushing) New York: 2/16/38 Smithsonian RD 030-2. Personnel: Buck Clayton, Ed Lewis, Harry "Sweets" Edison, tps; Dan Minor, Benny Morton, Eddie Durham, tbs; Earl Warren, as; Jack Washington, as, bs; Herschel Evans, Lester Young, cl, ts; Count Basie, p; Freddie Green, gt; Walter Page, b; Jo Jones, d; Jimmy Rushing, vcl.

| A                      |                                                  | B                                                            |                                  |                     |                                                                       | A                                                                                          |                     |                                     |                                   |                                                                    |                      |  |  |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--|--|
|                        | Chorus 1<br>12 bars                              | Ch. 2<br>12 bars                                             | Ch. 3<br>12 bars                 | Interlude<br>4 bars | Ch. 4<br>12 bars                                                      | Ch. 5<br>12 bars                                                                           | Interlude<br>4 bars | Ch. 6<br>12                         | Ch. 7<br>12                       | Ch. 8<br>12                                                        | Coda<br>8            |  |  |
| Intro.<br>8 bars       | Ensemble                                         | Piano solo                                                   | Tenor solo                       | Reeds               | Vocal                                                                 | Vocal                                                                                      | Trumpet             | Trumpet                             | Ensemble                          | Ensemble                                                           | Reeds 4 &<br>Piano 4 |  |  |
| Piano 4 &<br>Reeds 4   | C&R brass<br>and reed<br>riff & solo<br>alto sax | C&R piano<br>solo &<br>trombone<br>with<br>plungers<br>muted | over<br>continuous<br>brass riff |                     | C&R voice<br>& trumpet<br>solo, piano<br>improv in<br>back-<br>ground | C&R voice<br>& reeds,<br>piano over<br>continuous<br>brass riff,<br>piano off<br>beat hits |                     | solo<br>continuous<br>riff in reeds | shout<br>C&R brass<br>& reeds     | shout<br>C&R brass<br>and drums<br>over<br>continuous<br>wind riff |                      |  |  |
| unit of<br>periodicity | 2+2                                              | 2+2                                                          | 1                                |                     | 2+2                                                                   | 2+2 (voice<br>+reeds)<br>2 brass<br>1 piano                                                | 1                   | 1+1                                 | 1+1 (brass<br>+drums)<br>1 (reed) |                                                                    |                      |  |  |

layer that proceeds at a faster rate of periodicity than the brass riff. The accents of the line also coincide at various points with all three of the remaining riff parts and thus serve to knit them together.

The two climactic shout choruses of the arrangement (Musical Example 3) provide further examples of layering and also illustrate the importance of combining different periodicities. Here riffs are exchanged at a faster rate than elsewhere in the arrangement. In chorus seven the brass and the reeds trade 1s in call and response. In the climactic chorus of the arrangement (chorus 8), Jo Jones joins the texture trading improvised 1s with the ongoing brass riff. The reed riff from the previous chorus continues, but increases its rate of repetition, becoming a continuous accompanimental layer. All of the riffs mentioned so far take place over the groove defining rhythm section parts played by the drums, bass, and guitar, which are themselves continuous ostinatos repeating at the interval of one bar.

"Sent for You Yesterday," thus illustrates four ways in which riffs are frequently interwoven and the importance of repetition in generating the overall texture in the horn and vocal layers as well as rhythm section parts. Call and response (at varying rates of periodicity), continuous riffs, groove defining rhythmic patterns, and dense layering and overlap of rhythmic (and simultaneously harmonic and melodic) figures all contribute to a musical texture in which repetition is both fundamental and a source of variety. In Durham's arrangement the riffs are composed, but like many Kansas City style arrangements the riffs are similar to many that were heard first as improvised accompaniments to solos during lengthy jam sessions. In addition, they are used throughout to set up spaces for improvisational exchange. Like other musics similarly structured throughout the African diaspora, the relationships among parts that we see here in transcription are simultaneously human interactions that take place through the performance of sound and are musically, culturally, and economically more complex than any notation can render. The sociability of these musical relationships has been widely observed as condensing social and cultural relationships both in time and over time through invention and musical allusion (Chernoff 1979; Waterman 1990; Guilbault 1993; Berliner 1994; Keil 1995; Monson 1996).

What interests me about the riffs in "Sent for You Yesterday" are the simultaneous periodicities operating throughout the arrangement and their continuities with Caribbean, and West and Central African musics. Although musics such as jazz, Afro-Cuban, zouk, Haitian vodou drumming, batá drumming, and the traditional musics of the Ewe, Dagomba, and Banda-Linda peoples are extremely divergent in terms of musical surface, the continuities at the level of collective musical process and use of repetition are striking.<sup>6</sup> Repeating parts of varying periodicities are layered together to gen-

Musical Example 1: Sent for You Yesterday, Intro. and Choruses 1-3

Introduction

Piano

Bass and piano l.h.

Bass and piano l.h.

Chorus 1

Walking bass

alto sax

10

Transcribed by I. Monson



14

System 14: Four staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains a melody starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, Bb4, and C5, then a half note D5. The second staff (treble clef) has a whole rest, followed by a half note D5, a quarter note C5, and a triplet of eighth notes Bb4, A4, and G4. The third staff (piano) has a whole rest, followed by a half note D5, a quarter note C5, and a triplet of eighth notes Bb4, A4, and G4. The fourth staff (bass clef) has a continuous eighth-note pattern: G2, A2, Bb2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3.

18

Chorus 2  
Piano

System 18: Four staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains a melody starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, Bb4, and C5, then a half note D5. The second staff (treble clef) has a whole rest, followed by a half note D5, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note Bb4. The third staff (piano) has a whole rest, followed by a half note D5, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note Bb4. The fourth staff (bass clef) has a continuous eighth-note pattern: G2, A2, Bb2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3.

22

Brass + o + o + o  
growl

System 22: Four staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains a melody starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, Bb4, and C5, then a half note D5. The second staff (treble clef) has a whole rest, followed by a half note D5, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note Bb4. The third staff (piano) has a whole rest, followed by a half note D5, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note Bb4. The fourth staff (bass clef) has a continuous eighth-note pattern: G2, A2, Bb2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3.

27

growl

growl

32

tenor sax

Chorus 3

3

3

36

3

3

40

Measures 40-42 of a musical score. The score is written for four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Piano, and Bass. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). Measure 40: Treble 1 has a quarter rest, an eighth rest, and a quarter note G4. Treble 2 has a quarter note F4 with an accent, a quarter note G4 with a circle, and a quarter note A4 with an accent. Piano has a whole rest. Bass has a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 41: Treble 1 has a quarter note F4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. Treble 2 has a quarter note F4 with an accent, a quarter note G4 with a circle, and a quarter note A4 with an accent. Piano has a whole rest. Bass has a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 42: Treble 1 has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Treble 2 has a quarter note G4 with an accent, a quarter note A4 with a circle, and a quarter note B4 with an accent. Piano has a whole rest. Bass has a continuous eighth-note pattern. A triplet bracket is placed over the last three notes of measure 42.

43

Measures 43-44 of a musical score. The score is written for four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Piano, and Bass. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). Measure 43: Treble 1 has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Treble 2 has a quarter note F4 with an accent, a quarter note G4 with a circle, and a quarter note A4 with an accent. Piano has a whole rest. Bass has a continuous eighth-note pattern. A triplet bracket is placed over the last three notes of measure 43. Measure 44: Treble 1 has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Treble 2 has a quarter note G4 with an accent, a quarter note A4 with a circle, and a quarter note B4 with an accent. Piano has a whole rest. Bass has a continuous eighth-note pattern.

Musical Example 2: "Sent for You Yesterday", Chorus 5

Vocal

Sent for you yes - ter - day and here you come to - day

Reeds

Brass h.h.

walking bass

Piano

Sent for you yes - ter - day and here you come to - day

8

You can't love me ba - by and treat me that a - way

Transcribed by I. Monson

Musical Example 3: Sent For You Yesterday, Choruses 7-8

Chorus 7

The musical score is arranged in three systems, each with four staves. The top staff is for Brass, the second for Reeds, the third for Drums, and the bottom for Bass. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system is labeled 'Chorus 7'. The second system begins with a measure number '4' above the first staff. The third system begins with a measure number '8' above the first staff. The Drums staff uses 'x' marks for snare and 'Z' marks for bass drum. The Bass staff features a continuous eighth-note pattern.

Brass

Reeds

Drums

Bass

Transcribed by I. Monson

Chorus 8

12

closed h.h.

12

3 3

This system contains measures 12 through 15. The vocal line (top staff) begins at measure 12 with a melodic phrase. The guitar line (middle staff) features a repeating eighth-note pattern. The drum line (bottom staff) has a consistent bass drum and snare pattern. Measure 15 includes the annotation 'closed h.h.' above the snare line.

16

closed h.h.

16

3 3 3 3

This system contains measures 16 through 19. The vocal line continues its melodic phrase. The guitar line maintains the eighth-note pattern. The drum line includes a 'closed h.h.' (closed hi-hat) annotation in measure 16 and continues the rhythmic pattern. Measure 19 has a '3' annotation below the snare line.

20

crash

h.h.

20

3 3 3

This system contains measures 20 through 23. The vocal line continues. The guitar line continues the eighth-note pattern. The drum line features a 'crash' annotation in measure 22 and a 'h.h.' (hi-hat) annotation in measure 23. Measure 20 has '3 3' annotations below the snare line, and measure 22 has a '3' annotation.



erate an interlocking texture (continuous groove-defining elements, or Locke's "time" [1987: 16-36]) which then serves as a stage over which various kinds of interplay (call and response) and improvisational inspiration take place.<sup>7</sup> If the layered combination generates a good flow (hits a groove) a compelling processual whole emerges that sustains the combination through time and also the people interrelated through playing it, dancing to it, or listening to it (live or on recordings). That these combinations often carry named identities (swing, guaguancó, gahu, etc.) illustrates the symbolic and affective dimensions of the synthesizing cultural flow that emerge simultaneously from these processes. The similarity in the principles by which repetitions are combined from this perspective provide a material basis for the free flow of particular rhythms and riffs across cultural and national boundaries (and also among genres within local cultural contexts) that is so widely observed in musics of the African diaspora and may, indeed, be crucial to its process of emergence.

Jocelyne Guilbault's (1993) work on zouk has been exemplary in describing exactly this kind of cultural interplay. By mapping the musical interrelationships across the several musical genres contributing to zouk music, she has described the emergence of a diasporic musical interculture. Guilbault's detailed descriptions of the interlocking repetitive parts in the Antillean genres of biguine, compas direct, and cadence-lypso make several points germane to the discussion here. She identifies a core rhythm in zouk that can be found in various elaborations in six other Caribbean genres (132) and demonstrates how additional instrumental layers must be added to establish the musical genre as zouk (133). She talks about the symbolic associations and culturally "evocative powers" of particular rhythmic patterns for Creole speakers (136)—illustrating the cultural as well as musical interconnections among several genres—and comments on the implications of these interrelationships (48) for an emerging Antillean identity constructed in relationship to the world music market (200-210). Guilbault does not suggest reducing the interrelationships in zouk to a common denominator, but instead argues for Wittgenstein's idea of "family resemblance." "Wittgen-

stein's point is that games—or musics in our case—do not need to have a common denominator to exhibit family resemblance; and even when they do exist, common denominators among, say, musics such as zouk, biguine, compas direct, cadence-lypso still do not fully explain the family resemblance that binds these genres together" (48).

The identity of an idea, concept, or musical genre in Wittgenstein's view is to be found in the interweaving and criss-crossing of the various strands of a network of interrelationships, associations, and similarities—not in any one element. Indeed the elements which are found in several genres may help the listener least in distinguishing which particular rhythmic style is being played, as Afro-Cuban music (as well as zouk) can illustrate. The tumbao pattern played on conga, for example:



is played in several Afro-Cuban rhythmic feels including son, son-montuno, cha-cha-chá, and mambo (Maleón 1993: 69).<sup>8</sup> Knowing the clave direction of these particular styles does not help distinguish between them since they are all in 2-3 son clave (*ibid.*:200-206). Clarifying the identity of the style requires adding several layers to the mix, only some of which are rhythmic patterns: cascará patterns, güiro parts, piano montunos, bell patterns, bass tumbao, the presence or absence of tres, guitar, violin, and tempo are all germane. In general, one bar patterns are the least specific since they cannot indicate clave direction, while cascará rhythms, bell patterns, and piano montunos are more specific as they play a stronger role in defining clave direction and in providing the signature sound of each style. The main point I would like to make is that while the full range of patterns combine to form the dynamic whole of the rhythmic feel, some layers play a more significant role in defining that sound.

Like Count Basie, Afro Cuban arrangements use repetitions in call and response and layers. The scintillating *coro/prégon* exchanges in the montuno sections, such as that between *coro* and Celia Cruz on "Soy Antillana" (Cruz 1979) are central to the Afro-Cuban sound. Likewise the combination of horns into layered interlocking figures called *moñas* have continuities with the shout choruses in the "Sent for You Yesterday." In *moñas* horn entrances are staggered from the bottom up (often trombones and trumpet) and not usually deployed in call and response.<sup>9</sup> Rather, the superimposition of horn parts adds an interlocking configuration on top of the already repeating rhythmic patterns in a climactic position in the arrangement.



The examples of Count Basie, zouk music, and Afro-Cuban music illustrate a variety of ways in which repetition is central to shaping African and African diasporic musics including: (1) how repeating patterns such as riffs are layered and combined, (2) how repetition supports improvisational call and response exchanges, and (3) how both shared and individualized patterns define overlapping stylistic areas. The processes of combination that we see at work in riffs, repetitions (of varying periodicities), and grooves, which are shared widely despite the great variety in styles within African diasporic musics (funk, blues, soukous, zouk, reggae, mbalax, rumba, plena, and soca to name only a few), contribute to how freely segments of these styles are borrowed and circulated in contemporary popular world music genres. If these layered musical processes are conceived as analogies for overlapping social and cultural processes the possibilities of applying them to theories of cultural globalization and the problem of hybridity begin to emerge.<sup>10</sup>

### Theories of Globalization

Recent social theories addressing globalization and multiplicity are deeply concerned with the issue of relationality. If the world is multiply-determined by a full range of social factors—from ethnicity to economics to gender—how is it possible to keep the condition of their interrelatedness fully in view and avoid reducing a complex social fabric to a simplistic set of autonomous decontextualized factors? There have been two principal metaphors social theorists and philosophers have deployed in providing answers to this question. The first views culture as text, with language functioning as a model of interrelatedness. Here language is a social discourse through which other social activities are mediated and articulated, and the metaphorical frame through which the problem of signification and subjectivity has been theorized. This metaphor (with its Saussurian underpinning of the arbitrariness of linguistic signs) has undergirded the critique of essentialism and the theoretical space of postfoundationalist philosophy and critical theory including the work of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Judith Butler.<sup>11</sup> The second metaphor takes commodity exchange as the model of relationality, and grows out of Marxist analyses of commodification including those of Theodor Adorno and Frederic Jameson. Both theoretical positions tend to de-emphasize human agency in favor of looking at social forces beyond the control of the human subject, but the former emphasizes fragmentation, while the latter emphasizes system. Frederic Jameson's (1991) post-modern Marxism has added considerable complexity to the notion of a global capitalist system and Veit Erlmann's (1996) recent article on world

beat has productively used some of Jameson's ideas to raise several key issues relevant to the problem of globalization, systematicity, and music. Mark Slobin's (1992) vision of global musical circulation, in contrast, tends to emphasize the indeterminate way in which the multiple levels of global musical culture interact. If there is utility in thinking about repetitions and their combination as metaphors of relationality I believe it lies in articulating an intercultural level of analysis that takes hybridity as a given but does not take its combination of elements as unsystematic. What I am looking for is a way to think about socially produced fields of action and multiplicity that lie somewhere between Slobin's fragmentary "micromusics" and Erlmann's "panoramic specter of a global ecumene" (1996:468).

I am also intrigued by the possibility of an expanded sense of dialectics—one that goes beyond conceiving the interrelated whole as a binary opposition (the thesis, antithesis, synthesis of the classic Hegelian dialectic) and moves towards a multivariate sense of coherence through the combination of widely variable forces. It would be too simple-minded to suggest that the functional differentiations of the musical ensemble can be mapped directly onto the social world—by suggesting, for example, that race, class, and gender are the bass, drums, and piano of the social world. What I am hoping for is a framework in which various kinds of oppositions from binary (art/commerce, black/white, female/male) to ternary (race, class, gender as an interactive subset) and beyond can be conceived as operating within an ensemble of globalizing forces and at many levels of analysis. Said in another way, I am looking for a "structure of conjuncture" (Sahlins 1985: xiv) to describe how performers, audiences, and musical sounds are linked to processes of global circulation and commodification and how people negotiate their way through social forces that are both fragmenting and totalizing.

To locate my argument I would like to briefly review Slobin's (1992) and Erlmann's (1996) recent contributions to the discussion of globalization. "Micromusics of the West" (Slobin 1992) presents a multi-dimensional vision of the interrelationships among what he calls superculture, interculture, and subculture (2). Each level of his framework, which he prefers not to think of as a model (3), considers how an interlocking set of "scapes" (ethno-, media-, techno-, finan-, and ideo-) combine in particular musical contexts to provide insight into the workings of the global cultural economy.<sup>12</sup> Slobin is most interested in the interplay between superculture and subculture, particularly the interplay of individual choice, group activity, and hegemony in defining shifts in the shape and meaning of various local or micromusics. Slobin argues that each individual lives at the intersection of the subculture, interculture, and superculture (2) and sees a complicated "cultural counterpoint" (4) and mastery of code-switching (61–63) taking place between micromusic-makers and each level of his framework.

The virtue of Slobin's framework is the comprehensive manner in which he has identified a full range of social issues posed by thinking about music in a global context. He is, however, reluctant to assign unequal levels of significance to any of the social variables he defines. "Seeing things globally is helpful, as is avoiding monolithic answers: there is no overall sense to the system, no hidden agency which controls the flow of culture. No one parameter is paramount—not populations, money, ideology, media or technology—and each factor is only partly dependent on the other. Things are highly kinetic and extremely volatile, not only because of economics, but also because the 'imagined community' . . . of an individual or group is itself an actor on the world stage" (Slobin 1992:5).

Veit Erlmann's (1996) vision of the global musical economy is more pessimistic. He questions Slobin's use of the "familiar characters of post-modern dramaturgy: [where] the villains are associated with the system, blueprint, or model, and predictably, the heroes with multiple viewpoints, disjuncture, and multivalence." (471). Erlmann proposes instead a systematic idea of "global cultural totality" that is grounded in Jameson's idea that "the production of difference is inherent in the logic of capitalism itself" (472). Erlmann is particularly critical of the tendency of analysts to interpret the world musics as expressions of resistance to Western hegemony, simply by virtue of their assertion of cultural difference. Since differentiation and homogenization are interrelated aspects of a totalizing global economy, subsystems of difference cannot claim to stand outside the system. Employing Niklas Luhmann's image of ceaseless internal replications where each subsystem contains the larger autopoietic system in special form, Erlmann suggests that "a complex system such as the global economy (or world music). . . gains its integration not only on the basis of common values, norms, or power relations, but simply by providing an ordered environment to its subsystems" (473).<sup>13</sup> Although Erlmann recognizes that this account leaves little room for human agency, he argues that we are facing the most "all encompassing environment ever in the history of artistic production, independent of the continued creativity of individual artists" (473).

My suggestion that an image of musical repetitions and their combination have possibilities for thinking about (1) intercultural dimensions of cultural analysis and (2) the problem of locating individuals and subgroups within a global field of cultural and social forces (how do we describe the "cultural counterpoint" of which Slobin speaks?) builds upon Bourdieu's idea of *habitus*, which is itself indebted to a musical metaphor—culture (*habitus*) as a "generative principle of regulated improvisations" (Bourdieu 1977:78). Bourdieu developed the idea of *habitus* to describe the interaction between structures, embodied dispositions, and actions in the production and reproduction of culture. Although his concept of *habitus* was

conceived to describe the taken for granted aspects of homogeneous cultural contexts (ibid.:80), his larger framework, which puts forth the idea that individual agents seek the accumulation of symbolic, economic, and cultural capital within various fields of endeavour, has much to recommend it for extension to more heterogeneous contexts. I am suggesting that the vision of “regulated improvisations” needs fleshing out with the musical logic of layered periodic repetitions that structure processes of improvisation observable in the African diaspora: call and response over layers of repetition and departure. This is another way of saying that locally defined *habitus* are already shot through with elements from other cultures and that elements which bind local interactions are always shaped by larger global and historical forces.<sup>14</sup>

To situate Bourdieu (and musical processes) between fragmenting and totalizing theories of the global is an attempt to reclaim practical action and agency over ontologies of identity—what people do rather than what they are, a position recently taken by Homi Bhabha (1997: 434). Bhabha is interested in the “interstitial space” or zone of proximity between oppositions such as black/white (438), progressive/regressive (437), from which he argues a “multiple universal” is negotiated among competing forces that is “postontological” and performative. As perceptive as his argument is, the inbetween space of proximity is still fundamentally binary in conception. And here emerges my reason for belabouring the musical analogy: the image of multilayered musical riffs and repetitions which synthesize in combination (to named feels and cultural flows) offers an interstitial space which can more iconically represent a process of synthesis emerging from multiply determined social forces than the usual habit of describing complex totalities by lining up a series of binary oppositions. This expanded sense of dialectics (polylectics? multilectics?) does not preclude the continued relevance of binaries in particular contexts, but demands asking the question of whether a particular constellation emerges from a duet, trio, quartet, or quintet, etc. of evenly or unevenly weighted forces and whether those combinations arise from idiosyncratic or systematic conjunctures. The invocation of a field of social action (the “in the groove” synthesis of multiplicity) in mediating between the global and the local is also intended to suggest that practice theory is not limited to describing the microsociology of local contexts, but can be used to situate detailed ethnographic descriptions within macrosociological concerns as well.

Beyond this, I would like to reclaim repetition from, on the one hand, the negative connotations that have been imposed upon it by Theodor Adorno’s work on popular music, and, on the other, the overly utopian notions that have sometimes been placed upon it by the equation of participatory musical frameworks with egalitarian social structures. Despite

many thoughtful critiques of Adorno's aesthetic position on popular music few have problematized his view of repetition.<sup>15</sup> I would like to state at the outset that I do not mean to suggest that there is nothing of value in Adorno's broader framework (especially since his attention to the commodification of culture and its role in social domination remains extremely important in the understanding of popular music). I would, however, like to draw attention to how his Eurocentric aesthetic bias against periodic repetition shaped both his evaluation of popular music and the broader analogies in which he conducted his social theoretical argument.

For Adorno, the one word that encapsulates the evils of the culture industry is repetition: "the totality of the culture industry. It consists of repetition" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1996:136). Repetition bears this load in Adorno's thinking because he views it as the defining characteristic of industrial standardization (Adorno 1941:17-19) which, in turn, he views as the enemy of individual autonomy and freedom. According to Bernard Gendron, Adorno mapped two qualities of industrial production onto popular music structures: part interchangeability and "pseudo-individuality"—those variations in cosmetic details (fins on 1957 Cadillacs, to borrow Gendron's example) that cause consumers to prefer one model over another for superficial reasons of style (Gendron 1986: 20-21).<sup>16</sup> To Adorno, a regularly repeating cyclical musical form, such as an AABA form or a blues chorus, was, by analogy, *prima facie* evidence of musical standardization. Any improvisation over that form was mere pseudo-individuality (Adorno 1941: 25).

Adorno's analogy between standardization and repetition was, of course, strongly supported by the bias against unvaried repetition in the aesthetic values of early twentieth century classical music. Arnold Schoenberg, whose aesthetic values deeply influenced Adorno, placed developing variation far above literal repetition and regarded asymmetrical and irregular musical phrasing as far superior in the construction of dramatic musical prose than proceeding "two-by-two" (Schoenberg 1975:414-15).<sup>17</sup> These aesthetic values certainly inform Adorno's position that periodic repetition such as that found in popular song amounts to "musical automatism" because the whole is "pre-given" and "pre-digested" (Adorno 1941:18-22). "The beginning of the chorus is replaceable by the beginning of innumerable other choruses. The interrelationship among the elements or the relationship of the elements to the whole would be unaffected. In Beethoven, position is important only in a living relation between a concrete totality and its concrete parts. In popular music, position is absolute. Every detail is substitutable; it serves its function only as a cog in a machine" (*ibid.*:19). Adorno articulates two very common Eurocentric criticisms directed against jazz (especially riff-based works like Basie's): it is merely theme and variations from a formal point of view, and that the formulaic quality of impro-

visational ideas gives them no coherent logic or melodic direction.<sup>18</sup> The historical context of German fascism, in addition, shaped Adorno's association of repetitive rhythms with marching and hence militarism and fascism (Adorno 1990:61).

Adorno's aesthetic system simply could not embrace the combined periodicities in the shout choruses of Count Basie (or recognize them in the Benny Goodman arrangements he actually heard),<sup>19</sup> or understand how layered repetitions construct a context in which musical creativity can take place over successive periodic units. In addition, Adorno found the participatory qualities of repetition to be problematic (a position also shaped by an historical context where immersion in a collectivity meant fascism): "continuing and continuing to join in are given as justification for the blind persistence of the system" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1996:148), and the net result is the "abolition of the individual" (ibid.:154).

Adorno's position on individuality and repetition is nearly the inverse of John Miller Chernoff's (1979) findings about repetition in the context of West African music-making, where individuality emerges through participation in a densely overlapping framework of repeating rhythmic patterns, and where the mastery of social conventions provides a context in which personalized expressions can take place (1979:158, 160). Chernoff's articulation of West African musical and social aesthetics focuses on the utopian rather than totalitarian possibilities of communal participation, a position shared by Charles Keil (1995) who sees participatory discrepancies as foundational to participation in an egalitarian groove. For Keil, participatory discrepancies, with their reassuring idea that one can be out of tune and out of time and still be in the groove, are what lead to "the possibility of participation, sensuous immersion in sound, taking pleasure in life (rather than asserting power over it), felicity, grace, surrender of self to save co-cultural others and to a benign primary reality" (Keil 1995:13).

In general where the analogy between sound and social structure has been made in ethnomusicology (Feld 1984; Keil and Feld 1994; Keil 1995; Slobin 1992:4) the focus has been on relatively egalitarian societies and the achievement of communal cultural cohesion through musical participation. In "Sound Structure as Social Structure" (1984) Steven Feld asked in what ways the classless and egalitarian features were revealed in the way the Kaluli structure music and performance. Feld sought to establish coherences between sound structures and social structures, rather than statistical correlations as Alan Lomax's cantometrics project had done, but he also had the foresight to analyze those aspects of Kaluli society which are not egalitarian as well as those which are—specifically the inequalities existing between Kaluli men and women in the symbolic and pragmatic cultural capital that they are able to achieve through musical participation, despite

the nonhierarchical and noncompetitive organization of Kaluli performance in general (ibid.:398–99). In “Aesthetics as an Iconicity of Style” (Keil and Feld 1994:109–50), he further developed his conception of coherences between sound and social structure through analysing the Kaluli aesthetic groove of *dulugu ganalan* (lift-up-over sounding) which he characterized as being “in synchrony while out of phase” (ibid.:120). Here groove is an analogy for culture as process in much the same way as Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is.

In suggesting that riffs and repetition offer an image for a structure of conjunction, I share with Feld and Keil the conviction that there is something generalizable about grooves as interactive musical and social processes, but my perspective differs in two ways. First, I see the layered combination of repetitions and differentiated musical roles of the ensemble as key to thinking about musical grooves, not only participatory discrepancies (Keil 1995). Second, I do not see grooves as necessarily egalitarian, but as often stratified musical textures in which people expect each other to fulfill particular roles—such as keeping time, walking, soloing—so that the greater good (a swinging, grooving whole) can emerge. However mobile and complementary these roles may be (as in jazz where time players become soloists become time players all in the course of one tune), the fact remains that the processual whole, more often than not, requires at least a temporary division of labor that may or may not be accompanied by differences in power, money, and prestige. In jazz everyone is supposed to be able to both keep time and be a virtuosic soloist, and ideally the differences between the players are complimentary rather than hierarchical. In practice there is usually a band leader who gets paid more and has more say in what the band will play. James Brown may be the master of the most hard-hitting vernacular funk grooves, but any musician who has lived through his pre-performance band inspections (for shined shoes and presentability) will likely testify to the fact that utopian grooves are not necessarily created through democracy. There is a difference between the feeling that getting into a groove can create (which can be, as Keil 1995 suggests, an incredible communal and experiential high) and the social organization of its production and circulation. However good various types of grooves may make us feel, in other words, they cannot be presumed to be innocent of power.

## Synthesis

My interest in the social theoretical implications of riffs, repetition, and grooves derives from a very practical need. How is it possible to talk about musics of the African diaspora in a manner that recognizes (1) the complex ways in which ideologies of race and culture structure intercultural ex-

change in popular musics in music, (2) how sound itself maps a musical interculture whose multiple audiences may differ greatly as to their understanding of those very ideologies of color and culture, (3) the unequal distributions of power and prestige existing within musical interculturalities that are not structured by color, and (4) a sense of “multiplicity all the way down” when moving from subculture, to interculture, to superculture, to global culture, and from music to people to social forces?<sup>20</sup>

To illustrate some of these interconnections I’d like to consider the international careers of Senegal’s Baaba Maal, Mali’s Oumou Sangare, and Cameroon’s Manu Dibango. The album *Firin’ in Fouta* (Maal 1994), features Baaba Maal, singing over a wide variety of grooves from the African diaspora including funk (“Swing Yela,” “Sidiki”), hip hop (“Salimoun (Funky Kora)”), reggae (“Mbaye,” “Swing Yela”), techno (“Gorel”) and salsa (“African Woman”). This album is more heavily produced than many of Maal’s previous recordings and includes African and non-African musicians as well as drum machines, programmed synthesizers, and Western acoustic instruments (trumpet, tenor sax, piccolo, baritone sax, and strings). Many selections also include samples from Northern Senegalese village sounds including the pounding of millet (“Sidiki”) and a children’s game song (“Gorel”).<sup>21</sup> From a musical point of view Maal’s sound is framed by predominantly African American rhythmic styles, especially those featuring electric bass. The vocal sound, however, remains in the florid style of griot praise singing. An excerpt from “Swing Yela” illustrates Maal’s use of a funk bass line with a backbeat which serves as the foundation for the repeated vocal line that functions as a chorus for the arrangement (Musical Example 4) and for Maal’s vocal improvisations. The same bass line serves as the foundation for a dancehall reggae inflected rap that occurs later in the arrangement. The rapid exchange of rhythmic styles from one location to another in

Musical Example 4: “Swing Yela”

The musical score for "Swing Yela" is presented in three systems. The first system includes parts for Snare, Gourd, and Bass. The Snare part is in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature, featuring a simple backbeat pattern. The Gourd part is in the treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The Bass part is in the bass clef, playing a funk-style line with a backbeat. The second system continues the Snare and Gourd parts, with the Snare part ending with a double bar line. The third system shows the continuation of the Bass part, which concludes with a double bar line.



African diasporic music is predicted, at least in part, by the fact that although the constituting rhythms, harmonies, and timbres differ greatly from area to area, the principles of combination are similar throughout.

Western listeners familiar with Maal's more "traditional" music, however, tend to be disappointed in his apparent accommodation to western popular musical aesthetics in evidence on this album. Familiar electric grooves of the African diaspora function for these listeners as a sign of inauthenticity and of "selling out" to the global capitalist music industry. The subtext to this argument, as Timothy Taylor has trenchantly argued, is that Westerners continue to expect Africans (and other non-Westerners) to provide "real," uncontaminated aesthetic experiences for them rather than embodying the complicated subject positions that the international popular music industry has constructed and imposed (Taylor 1997: 22–23, 90). As Angelique Kidjo has commented: "There is a kind of cultural racism going on where people think that African musicians have to make a certain kind of music" (ibid.:140).

It is sometimes forgotten that local traditions may or may not be experienced as liberating from the perspective of the people born within them. We must acknowledge that for many African diasporic artists the incorporation of Western instruments and the stylistic accoutrements of the Western popular music performer function in a similar manner as the adoption of "ethnic" styles, food, and dress on the part of North American fans of non-Western music; that is, as an escape from the obligations, responsibilities, restrictions, and the perceived parochialness of one's own everyday cultural background, and a sign of one's cosmopolitan consciousness. Manu Dibango's (1994) autobiography, which chronicles his frustrations working in Kinshasa, Douala, and Abidjan before finally returning to Paris, illustrates how many international artists can be caught between the economic infrastructural advantages of the West, the cultural capital of modernity, and the desire to be loyal to Africa. Dibango's bitter reply to those who would criticize his aesthetic decisions is important to keep in mind:

It's crazy the way the Afro-Parisian rumor mill finds "traitors" of all kinds. It gives Mory Kanté and Touré Kunda a beating when their stars rise into the Top 50 saying, "They've betrayed Africa." Their compatriots think badly of them. What *don't* people reproach them for in the name of their roots? Their past sticks to the soles of their shoes. Weight comes from tradition, but you need rhythm to move forward (Dibango 1994:125).

From this vantage point *Ftrín' in Fouta*'s eclectic musical combinations condense a web of musical, social, and historical interrelationships common not only to Baaba Maal, but many emergent "world music" popular artists: development of a local audience through a local recording industry, musical education in Dakar and France, emergence onto the interna-

tional stage with a modern "traditional" sound,<sup>22</sup> elevation to international stardom through a recording contract with a label under a multinational umbrella (Mango, a division of Island, which is owned by Polygram), increased electrification, mixing of grooves, and interaction with western audiences through international touring. The ascendancy through the layers of the world recording market place the artist in interaction with a whole new range of social actors including A&R executives, lawyers, recording engineers, publicists, western popular music stars (who often wish to hire their services), critics, and concert promoters. Maal's rise in the international market has resulted in more tours through Europe and the United States and fewer on the African continent (Maal 1995). Maal, in other words, has been exported to more profitable locations. As the social network and geographic base of a musician's everyday life expands it can hardly be surprising that new elements and ideologies become incorporated into a musician's transformed reality. Maal explains his own incorporation of diverse musical elements:

But now when you play music you play not just for only your own society, you play for the whole world. The world is one planet, it's like one big village. You must show what you learn from your house and combine it with what is your experience in life. People travel, they go off to school and know what's happening in the other part of the world, they look at the television, they read the newspaper, and everyone is very involved in what's happening on the other side of the world. You must be an African talking to the rest of the world, or an American talking to the rest of the world (Maal 1995).

Oumou Sangare, whose Wassoulou music is less electrified than Maal's *Firin' in Fouta* (and thus sounds more traditional to Western ears), sings lyrics critical of Mali's traditional gender relations. She is popular in Mali among youths, who have responded strongly to her (very untraditional) critique of polygamy and arranged marriage and to her advocacy of love marriages (Smith 1997: 43). She has become the most internationally prominent singer of Wassoulou music through her three successful albums *Moussolou* (1991),<sup>23</sup> *Ko Sira* (1993), and *Worotan* (1996). The basis of her international appeal seems to be her acoustic sound, extraordinary vocal power, and strongly feminist lyrics:

For we have suffered enough women of the world, rise up  
Let us fight for our freedom  
Women of Mali, women of Africa  
Let us fight for women's literacy  
Women, let us fight together for our freedom  
So that we can put an end to this social injustice  
(Sangare 1996)

Although Sangare's sound has been acoustic (including bass, guitar, vio-

lin, *kamelngoni*, and *djembe*) and without overt reference to non-Malian grooves, her new album contains a horn section led by Pee Wee Ellis (from James Brown's band). Like Baaba Maal she expresses the desire to communicate with her whole audience, employing the participatory aesthetic of traditional music to explain her desire to incorporate new elements:

When you do music, you do it for everyone—you have to invite everyone. I welcome all ideas, all instruments. I want to mix everything, because I want everyone to participate, so everyone can listen to the traditional music from my country. We can use the Western instruments to get the attention of the whites to my traditional music (quoted in Smith 1997:47).

The irony that a horn section borrowed from a member of the Godfather of Soul's band becomes, from Sangare's perspective, a sonic means of reaching not just a Western audience but a white one, illustrates the considerable complexities of thinking through the African diaspora. That tropes from James Brown can reach white audiences through a Malian singer builds upon an already hybrid North American popular music culture that is itself stratified by color and economics. Sangare's decision is also indicative of the considerable economic and aesthetic clout of African American music in the musical economy of the African diaspora. There is further irony in the fact that the contemporary sound of African American popular music, with its heavy backbeat and electric bass, has in some ways become a symbol of Western economic and aesthetic dominance. From this perspective, Maal's heavily electric grooves and backbeat might reasonably be viewed simultaneously as (1) capitulation to the Western popular market and the hegemony of global capital, a strategic move to acquire some of the economic strength and aesthetic legitimacy of his African American musical brothers and sisters, and/or (2) the deliberate appropriation of international musical tropes of blackness to aid in the emergence of a contemporary self-conscious African diasporic identity.

At this point it would be traditional in popular music studies to ask whether musicians such as Maal and Sangare are using or being used by the international commodity market. George Lipsitz argues that musicians can and have used the market for their own purposes to make their struggles internationally visible and to use "the conduits of commodity exchange within commercial culture to build coalitions capable of circumventing the political and cultural constraints of any one nation state" (Lipsitz 1994:153). Erlmann disagrees, stating: "I dispute the notion that certain forms of world music are to be seen as an antidote to the venom of Western consumer culture and cultural imperialism" (Erlmann 1996:469). From this perspective, "world music represents an attempt by the West to remold its image by localizing and diversifying itself through an association with otherness"

(ibid.:470). Images of political resistance, then, become commodities for sale to Western consumers who find relief from their own alienation through identification with exoticized others. Charles Keil also finds no redemption possible in the commodification of participatory music-making. He opposes copyright and the mediation of recording because, in his view, it generates the illusion among musicians that they can enhance their economic power through participating in commodity markets when in fact "most of the money winds up going to white people" (Keil and Feld 1994:317).

Timothy Taylor, on the other hand, questions how well the binary opposition between complicity and resistance can describe the multiply-determined experiences of groups such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo (Taylor 1997: 80–81), or, I might add, the complicated forces operating upon Baaba Maal and Oumou Sangaré. What we see is an increasing interpenetration of them and us whereby the standard oppositions that have been used to describe cross-cultural differentiation—Western/non-Western, co-optation/resistance, modern/traditional, electric/acoustic, bad/good—lose their analytic utility. Youssou N'Dour's explanation of why he uses Western sounds in his music illustrates such interpenetration: "In Dakar we hear many different recordings. We are open to these sounds. When people say my music is too Western, they must remember that we, too, hear this music over here. We hear the African music with the modern" (quoted in Taylor 1997:135).

Despite such multiple interdependencies, however, binaries continually reemerge in the process of multi-layered intercultural synthesis. The growing popularity of intra-African diasporic musical projects, such as the *Africando* (1993) recordings featuring collaborations among Senegalese singers and New York salsa all-stars (building upon the longstanding popularity of Afro-Cuban music in West and Central Africa), and more esoteric collaborations, such as that between jazz musician Steve Coleman (1996) and Cuban Santería musicians, illustrate the continuing salience of race in any discussion of the African diaspora. Although much discussion has focused upon whether various kinds of pan-African sentiment are essentialist or not (Appiah 1992; Gilroy 1993; Hall 1992), I would like to suggest that what is taking place is an extremely layered intercultural exchange which is structured by the way that the category and ideology of race condenses aspects of class, gender, nationalism, color, and ethnicity within what, in particular contexts, appears to be a singular variable (race) or foundational binary opposition (white vs. color). People of color (not only people of African descent as Lipsitz's 1994:62–63 example of Maori identification with blackness illustrates) seem to be very interested in trying on the musical, cultural, and spiritual tropes from diverse regions of the African

diaspora (and other regions of the postcolonial world too) and finding themselves through intersections with others with whom they believe they have an entwined destiny. The qualities of Africa most frequently idealized in these diasporic discourses are spirituality, respect for ancestors (and the history they represent), and a participatory communalism—a synthesis of divergent similarities which, however romantic, orientalizing, or nostalgic, is nevertheless given great symbolic weight in the ideological construction of a fantasized international solidarity that might be capable of *doing* something about continuing racial oppression.

It is, of course, not only people of color who have imagined themselves as part of this alignment. The question of just who is a person of color in societies with various degrees of racial intermixture further complicates any discussion of who can claim membership in the African diaspora. Twentieth century Western popular musics emerging from rock and roll also share the riff, groove, repetition musical structure, and the kaleidoscope of musical cross-fertilizations it makes possible, but the reception of borrowings across color lines and the social meanings produced by them are inevitably structured by the continuous riff of race. African diasporists have recently begun responding to white anxiety over whether appeals to idealized African values exclude Caucasians by reminding mixed audiences that all people ultimately originated in Africa.<sup>24</sup> There have been various projects emphasizing this idealized vision, including the Afro Celt Sound System which has explicitly explored the parallels between “the griot and the druid”: “Both were the oral historians of the people in the pre-writing societies, both are linked to old “magic,” both have strong musical traditions and many of the instruments of both traditions are similar” (Afro Celt Sound System 1997).<sup>25</sup>

Simon Emmerson, founder of the band, is also the producer of Baaba Maal’s *Firin’ in Fouta* album and two members Maal’s band (Kauwding Cissokho [kora] and Massamba Diop [talking drums]) have appeared with Afro Celt. The triangulation among internationally mobile black African musicians, white champions of world music, and the international capital are quite apparent. The power relationships involved in this exchange were critiqued by one reviewer:

The press kit for Afro Celt Sound System makes lofty claims about recreating the mystically historical connection between African and Celtic folk musics. They imply that the musicians assembled to share ideas and create fresh new music. The truth is a couple of dance music producers (keyboard and drum programmers to be more specific) used the folk musicians . . . over an extended period of recording to add to the atmospherics created by their machines (and vice versa) (McMillan 1997).

As various analyses of Paul Simon's *Graceland* have shown (Meintjes 1990; Lipsitz 1994:56-60) appeals to cross-cultural communion must be situated within the stratified economics and history of race in the international recording industry. However genuine the idealized intercultural groove may be among the immediate participants in these projects, as long as the vast majority of the international music market remains concentrated in European and North American hands (Feld 1994:262), color will continue to function as an approximate sign of economic position and control in a larger analysis, anti-essentialist arguments notwithstanding.<sup>26</sup> If white executives continue to make most of the decisions about who and what is marketed worldwide is it any wonder that musical collaborations and borrowings across color lines will be presumed to be exploitative until proven otherwise (often by both whites and nonwhites), while those within a diaspora of color will be presumed to be somehow resistant? In this circumstance, appeals to solidarity based on color are likely to be a continuous feature of the diasporic landscape. Within more localized contexts this symbolism can mask very real class, gender, and power asymmetries within diasporas of color, as well as genuine counterhegemonic moves on the part of those of privileged color, without in any way altering the larger picture.

In hybridities across color lines, the sheer force of resonance between economics and race in effect reduces something multiply produced—race as an interplay of color, class, gender, nationalism, and ethnicity—to something binary, that is, black versus white. In the effort to move from local to global through interculture and superculture, we may find that what is obviously multiple at one level of analysis becomes condensed to a binary or singularity (through the very synthesizing flow it generates) when considered in relationship to a family of forces operating at another. What seems to be essential in navigating this perplexing landscape is sustaining the sense that whatever variable is invoked to explain something observed at one level of analysis is probably itself a synthesis of several factors at another.

This distinction may prove helpful in revising the postmodern idea of pastiche. Pastiche, for Jameson, is the defining aesthetic of the postmodern capitalism and something that produces a social experience characterized by "heaps of fragments," (1991:25) and a waning sense of historicity. My problem with pastiche is that there is no distinction between amalgams of incongruous elements, and the network of social interactions which they may or may not set off; nor is there any distinction between unsynthesized collections of borrowed elements which lose their historical referentiality, and those which do synthesize, develop a social base, and become themselves models for borrowing and reinterpretation. What I am suggesting is

that postmodern concepts of multiplicity and hybridity need a distinction analogous to that between groove as a noun (the constellation of interlocking parts defining a style or the elements comprising the pastiche) and groove as a verb (hitting a groove, the synergistic combination of those parts into a flow, or how the pastiche gets used and acquires meaning). Repeating social variables, ideologies, and binaries, continue to form layers in the very complex constellations of multiplicity that we observe in our ethnomusicological work. They shape, but do not fully determine, what can be improvised and synthesized above them, but remind us, with their insistent repetition, that hybridities are not random and that analyses of the global cannot evade systematicity and asymmetrical access to power, money, and cultural capital.

It remains to be seen whether Baaba Maal's particular engagement with funk, reggae, and rap will generate a flow as far reaching as, for example, the incorporation of rumba elements in the popular musics of Zaire and Senegal in the 1950s and 1960s, or whether Oumou Sangaré's music becomes the soundtrack for an emerging social movement to transform gender relations in Mali. Genuine resonance between popular musics and political movements—such as that which occurred between gospel, folk-song and the Civil Rights Movement, between rock and roll and the Anti-Vietnam war movement, or between Fela and Nigerian politics—seems rare. Popular musics have nevertheless provided musicians and audiences with powerful means to imagine alternative identities for themselves whether or not they are able to actualize them. Making the distinction between the fact of hybridity and to what ends it is deployed, might offer an alternative for thinking about the overwhelming international traffic in popular musics that neither finds resistance in every passing commodified style, as Lipsitz's analysis sometimes does, nor dissolves all agency in a totalizing global capitalist nightmare, as Adorno's perspective might do. Despite the overwhelming complexity of the global market and its interculturalities, people can and do continue to use music to construct local meanings in their lives. Our task as ethnographers will be to find ways to collect information that can speak to the full range of interlocking cultural levels.

## Conclusions

My exploration of riffs, repetition, and grooves has highlighted the gap between fragmenting and totalizing approaches in thinking about globalization and musics of the African diaspora. Locating that gap and the need for a means of mediating it with a practiced based framework is far more important than the actual metaphor through which the argument has been conducted. Nevertheless the choice of this conceptual framework has its

distinct purpose: if the problem of relationality can be articulated through the metaphors of language and commodification, so too can it be conceptualized in terms of music. Indeed social theories, whether implicitly or explicitly, embed various kinds of analogical reasoning (and the cultural presumptions which accompany them) as Adorno's use of repetition illustrates. By taking the layered musical organization common to vast numbers of African diasporic musics and using it to explore some of the intercultural relationships operating among them, I hope to have demonstrated that a discussion of musical surface need not be external to the logic of these larger interpretive questions but rather has a social and cultural logic of its own that can be used as a critical resource. I also hope to have taken something internal to the African diasporic interculture and used it to critique and extend social theories that are argued almost exclusively in terms of Western philosophy. I do not mean to offer this discussion as a replacement for the analytical vocabularies of language and commodification in which questions of globalization have been discussed, but only as an additional image that may be useful in sharpening our thinking around questions of multilayered intercultural syntheses, human agency, and the role of repetition in musical and social emergence. In our continuing attempts to make sense of what culture can possibly mean in a thoroughly globalized system of musical production and distribution, perhaps we can use all the help we can get.

## Notes

1. For an insightful discussion of repetition and Eurocentrism see Snead 1984.
2. Repetition is a topic that seems to be "in the air" in today's intellectual climate. In the midst of writing this article Veit Erlmann sent me a recently completed chapter of his forthcoming book on the Global Imagination that highlights repetition in several versions of Solomon Linda's "Mbube."
3. By this I mean the family of "posts": including poststructuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, postnationalism, etc.
4. I base my description of the functional parts from Locke's (1987) time, response, and call.
5. This figure is also in call and response within itself, since its first bar is answered by its second bar.
6. I do not mean to suggest that there are not considerable differences among musics of the African diaspora or problems in applying musical analysis of one genre to another. For specific details of the genres mentioned here see Berliner 1994, Guilbault 1993, Maleón 1993, Arom 1991, Fleurant 1996, Wilcken 1992, Amira and Cornelius 1992, Kubik 1994, Locke 1987, Chernoff 1979, and Agawu 1994.
7. See Monson (1996) for a detailed discussion of this process in jazz.
8. Illustrated here is the most basic tumbao pattern, which lacks clave direction. There are, of course, many alternative tumbao patterns that do articulate a clave direction.
9. Maleón (1993:156-57) uses the term *moña*. When I played in a salsa band in Boston from 1980-81, these parts were always labeled "mambo." Maleón (ibid.) explains that such layered horn parts can occur in either montuno or mambo sections.



10. I do not mean to imply that the African diaspora is limited to music which shares these principles of organization. The structure of the musical process emphasized here, however, has been central to musics that have gained success on the international market, something in part determined by the strength (hegemony) of African-American popular music aesthetics marketed by multinational recording companies. The adaptation of many village musics to this aesthetic in urban areas should be noted.

11. A critical perspective on poststructuralism, language, and music is more fully developed in Monson (1996:chapter 6).

12. Slobin borrows these terms from Appadurai 1990.

13. Luhmann models his systems theory on the biological process of autopoiesis. Quoting Humberto Maturana, autopoietic systems are defined as "unities as networks of productions of components that recursively, through their interactions, generate and realize the network that produces them and constitute, in the space in which they exist, the boundaries of the network as components that participate in the realization of the network" (Luhmann 1990:3). Luhmann suggests that communication is the mode of autopoietic reproduction for social systems.

14. A note on the importance of repetition for Derrida. Iterability (repeatability) is for Derrida a necessary and defining characteristic of writing. By iterability he means that a sign can be taken out of its immediate context, repeated, and still be intelligible. By virtue of this characteristic the "original" contextually defined sign is less important than its continuing citation (Derrida 1982:315-327). This is something like a notion of intertextuality, which this analysis assumes to be operative at all analytical levels including local, intercultural, supercultural, and global.

15. For a thoughtful overview of Adorno's theories of popular music and their critical reception see Middleton (1990: 34-63).

16. Bernard Gendron (1986), presents a more sympathetic evaluation of Adorno's work on popular music, but, nevertheless, is quite critical of Adorno's excessive dismissal of all forms of popular music (*ibid.*:25-28) and the overemphasis on the negative qualities of standardization (*ibid.*:29). The conceptual importance of repetition in Adorno's critical thinking, and its Eurocentric aesthetic underpinnings, are what I wish to make explicit here.

17. For further elaboration of Schoenberg's views on repetition see Schoenberg 1975: 409-415; 128-131; 102-104.

18. In reaction to presumptions such as these, jazz criticism in the late 1950s and early 1960s went to great lengths to legitimize jazz by praising jazz improvisations that proved that jazz musicians could improvise coherent improvisations with large scale structural continuities. See Schuller's discussion of Sonny Rollins (1986:86-97) originally published in 1958.

19. Adorno does make a distinction between the sweet (Guy Lombardo) and swing (Benny Goodman) sounds, but the differences between them are dismissed as pseudo-individuality (Adorno 1941: 26). Defenders of Adorno's work on popular music have often argued that the "jazz" Adorno heard was so inferior as to explain his extreme position (Daniel 1990:41; Gendron 1986:8, 24).

20. Slobin's (1992:16) concept of superculture is analogous to the nation state.

21. Maal apparently is angry with producer Simon Emmerson over the rhythmic misalignment of the samples on the recording which were added without Maal's supervision. (Lucy Duran, personal communication, August 1997).

22. By this I mean an urban rather than a village sound.

23. "Moussoulou" means "women."

24. Pianist Randy Weston emphasized this line of thinking during discussions which emerged at the "Jazz and the Civil Rights Movement" conference held at Washington University in St. Louis, May 3-4, 1997.

25. Timothy Taylor (1997:6-7) offers an important perspective on the emergence of Celtic music in the world music market.

26. The success of Japan in the international market is too recent to have eroded the

presumption that international capital is predominantly white capital. If noncaucasians are ultimately able to ascend into positions of real power and change the complexion of international economic power perhaps the symbolic associations will change too.

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