*Popular Music* (2022) Volume 41/1. © The Author(s), 2022. Published by Cambridge University Press, pp. 97–111
10.1017/S0261143021000659

# Playing with medium: Intertextuality and phonomatic transformation

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## Abstract

*In 'Intertextuality and hypertextuality in recorded popular music', S. Lacasse (in M. Talbot (ed.)* The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*, Liverpool University Press, 2000) proposes a model for understanding intertextuality in recorded popular music. His model provides different ways one text may reference another, while simultaneously transforming the style and/or subject of the original text. Style and subject are two of the integral elements that make up a work, yet what is missing from Lacasse's model is the medium through which these elements are presented. This article addresses that gap by introducing three phonomatic referential practices (*retronormativity, vinyl aesthetics and analogue allusion*) that transform the medium of a referenced work alongside transformations of style and/or subject. It further expands the model by discussing self-quotation as a referential practice. The applicability of the expanded model is demonstrated using the music of Portishead, one of the bands that pioneered the trip hop genre in the 1990s.*

## 1. Introduction

The underlying purpose of this article is to argue that Lacasse's model of transtextuality, fruitful as it may be, requires an expansion if it is to fully account for the different types of referential practices often found in recorded popular music.[1] Although Lacasse (2018) himself later offered a revised model, the revision does not take into account referential practices that specifically incorporate overt transformations of medium; therefore an expanded model that accounts for these practices is offered later in this article. Furthermore, by using Portishead as an analytical example, this article also serves to offer more richly detailed analysis of their music than current methods of intertextual analysis or mediation allow. The analysis presented below demonstrates that Portishead's use of intertextual references and transformation of medium are used in concert to heighten the multifaceted quality of their music, where references to other styles, eras and recording practices are combined into a unified mélange of musical ideas. By uniting theories of intertextuality and transformation of medium into a single analytical framework, one can not only see how these compositional and production approaches are used, but also how they are used in relation to each other.

[1] Lacasse's model is itself derived from Genette's theory of transtextuality in literary studies.

The article begins by offering an overview of Lacasse's model of transtextuality to familiarise the reader with the theoretical framework that serves as the underpinning of the expanded model. It then provides some brief background information on the band Portishead, and makes a case as to why they are suitable candidates for the expanded model. In Section 2, I introduce three types of referential practices that involve explicit transformation of medium – *retronormativity*, *vinyl aesthetics* and *analogue allusion*. I go on to define these terms and position them within Lacasse's model, before applying them to a number of Portishead's songs to demonstrate their applicability in Section 2.1. In Section 3, I broadly discuss quotation and its ability to comment on the cultural and historical associations often embedded within a musical gesture, which then sets up the discussion of self-quotation as a referential practice in Section 4.

Lacasse's model of transtextuality comprises both intertextual and hypertextual practices.[2] Intertextuality describes those practices where elements of one text are included in another, while hypertextuality describes the reworking of a previous text, such as a cover or remix, to create a new version of the original text. Although both practices are covered in detail in Lacasse's model, this article focuses on intertextual practices. Lacasse (2000, p. 38) describes intertextuality as a 'text in which one finds elements from a previous text'. Accordingly, intertextuality describes a composition that references a musical passage evident in another specific and identifiable work. Such passages may be as short as a single snare drum hit (or a fraction thereof, measured in milliseconds, in the case of John Oswald's *Plunderphonic* 1989), or as long as an entire section of a work. Lacasse's model places each referential practice within one of four quadrants, based on two pairs of distinctions (Table 1).

The first criterion is the distinction between syntagmatic and paradigmatic references. A syntagmatic reference transforms the subject of the initial work, such as 'Weird Al' Yankovich's 'Smells Like Nirvana' (1992). This parody of the Nirvana hit 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' (1991) retains the stylistic features of the original but transforms the lyrical content, or subject matter. Conversely, a paradigmatic reference transforms the style of a work; for example Jeff Buckley's version of 'Hallelujah' (1994) by Leonard Cohen retains the content of the original work but is transformed to reflect Buckley's personal style. The second criterion is the distinction between allosonic and autosonic. An allosonic reference recreates a musical passage from another musical work. For example, in jazz it is common for a soloist to quote a melody from a different tune, which can then be embellished, played in a different style or played on a different instrument. Here the quotation is of an abstract nature; there is no tangible connection between the two works. Conversely, an autosonic reference inserts an actual recording of a work into a new composition, thus referencing not only the musical passage but also the *recording* of that passage, a practice commonly understood today as sampling. Here the quotation is of a physical nature; it is the recording itself that is common to both works. Lacasse uses the term *syntagmatic* to group those practices that transform the subject of the initial text, while the term *paradigmatic* groups those practices that transform the style of the initial text. This article expands the subject/style dichotomy of Lacasse's model by including a third type of transformation – *phonomatic*.

[2] In 'Toward a model of transphonography' (2018) Lacasse adopts the term *transphonography* as opposed to transtextuality.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143021000659 Published online by Cambridge University Press

*Table 1. Lacasse's model of transtextuality.*

| | **Syntagmatic (subject/content)** | **Paradigmatic (style/system)** |
|---|---|---|
| Autosonic | Autosonic quotation<br>Autosonic parody<br>*Plunderphonics*<br>Cento<br>Instrumental remix | Remix |
| Allosonic | Allosonic quotation<br>Allusion<br>Allosonic parody | Transtylisation<br>*Copy*<br>*Cover*<br>*Travesty*<br>Translation<br>Pastiche |

Before continuing it is necessary to expand on the use of the term *text*. Lacasse refrains from offering an explicit definition of the term; however, in a later discussion of intertextuality in recorded music he suggests that the texts he is referring to are phonograms – not phonograms in any material sense, but rather 'the sound information itself, regardless of the way it was encoded or played back' (Lacasse 2018, p. 33). This understanding is similar to Moore's (2001, p. 1) use of the word, suggesting the primary text in music is 'that constituted by the sounds themselves' and that texts describe 'not only written objects, but objects heard' (2012, p. 271). The term is used in a similar way here and prioritises the sound information of a given performance that has been rendered in a fixed, irreversible state, regardless of whether that text is released to the public as a commercial product. This is an important point to make, as many of the texts that Portishead sampled were commercially available works released by other artists; however, a large number of them were not. In addition to sampling other artists, Portishead also built their own sample library comprising unused material from earlier recording sessions, as well as newly composed, unrelated musical gestures specifically intended for later sampling. These recordings were never released to the public; however, they became a vital component to later released works, in particular the band's second studio album *Portishead*.[3]

In addition to their experimental approach to sampling, Portishead often experimented with explicit and overt manipulations of mediation in the recording process. They were part of the 1990s counterculture that rebelled against digital technology's victory over low fidelity, often employing analogue recording equipment, instruments and playback media in the production process (Brøvig-Hanssen 2013a). Their music makes frequent reference to other cultures and eras and these references are often given further significance by the medium through which they are presented. For example, much of their music has an antiquated or vintage sound owing to its use of historical instruments, timbres and performing styles, and these historical associations are often reinforced by the presence of a crackling vinyl record or limited frequency response of a transistor radio. In this way, Portishead purposefully draw the listener's attention to the way the music has been mediated.

[3] This practice of self-quotation is discussed further in Section 4.

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Clearly, all music is mediated to some degree and there are innumerable factors that will influence a sound as it travels from the source to the listener, such as the nature of the sounding body, the shape and size of the room it was performed in, and the various hardware and software that was used to capture and manipulate the sound. As such, all recorded artists will mediate their music before it reaches a listener's ear. However, Portishead purposefully expose the mediation process rather than trying to conceal it. Of course, there are many examples of music that transforms or otherwise highlights a medium without making any reference to an outside work, such as 'Wish You Were Here' (1975) by Pink Floyd, which mimics the sound of a transistor radio during the song's intro. Examples such as these, where no intertextual references are present, could be discussed using Brøvig-Hanssen's (2013b) notion of opaque and transparent mediation, as the framework discussed in this article focuses on those works that specifically foreground the medium while simultaneously referencing another identifiable work.

Portishead are by no means the only group to which the expanded model applies; however, the myriad intertextual references in their music, their practice of self-quotation and their numerous explorations with different types of mediation make them well-suited candidates. Nevertheless, any artist that employs intertextual references while simultaneously experimenting with overt manipulations of mediation could also be discussed through the lens of the expanded model.

## 2. Phonomatic transformation

This article introduces three types of phonomatic transformation, although this is by no means a complete list. The first kind of practice is *retronormativity*, to borrow a term from Askerøi (2013, p. 42), who defines it as 'the mechanism of placing the past in the present'. Retronormativity can be understood as the coalescing of different carriers of meaning by referencing a combination of stylistic traits, instrumentation and/or media, all of which possess their own sonic markers that are emblematic of certain eras. The second type of phonematic transformation is *vinyl aesthetics*. Williams (2014, p. 194) discusses this term as a 'signifier of hip hop authenticity associated with the sounds of vinyl'. This can be extended to also include associations of warmth, authenticity and humanity, when compared with the perceived cold, disembodied character of digital recordings. Indeed, Biddinger and Yochim (2008, p. 183) write, 'throughout both their history and in the contemporary moment, vinyl records have been articulated with human characteristics, such as fallibility, warmth and mortality, which, for record enthusiasts, imbue vinyl with authenticity'. Vinyl aesthetics, therefore, describes the process where sonic references to an analogue medium (vinyl or otherwise) are added to imbue a track with a warm, authentic or 'retro' feel, in the absence of any other sonic markers to previous musical eras. Finally, *analogue allusion* describes brief sonic deviations that reference previous instrumental and/or recording technologies, highlighting the contrast between historical and contemporary, and exposing the inauthenticity of the historical reference (Auner 2000). The key distinction here is the juxtaposition of contradictory media and the brevity of the reference. Table 2 expands the syntagmatic/paradigmatic dichotomy of Lacasse's original model by including phonomatic transformations as well as self-quotation, which will be discussed later.

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*Table 2. Transtextuality and phonomatic transformations*

| | **Syntagmatic (subject/content)** | **Paradigmatic (style/system)** | **Phonomatic (medium/technology)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Autosonic | Autosonic quotation<br>Autosonic parody<br>*Plunderphonics*<br>Cento<br>Instrumental remix<br>Autosonic self-quotation | Remix | Autosonic retronormativity<br>Autosonic vinyl aesthetics<br>Autosonic analogue allusion |
| Allosonic | Allosonic quotation<br>Allusion<br>Allosonic parody<br>Allosonic self-quotation | Transtylisation<br>*Copy*<br>*Cover*<br>*Travesty*<br>Translation<br>Pastiche | Allosonic retronormativity<br>Allosonic vinyl aesthetics<br>Allosonic analogue allusion |

The model includes autosonic and allosonic iterations of phonomatic practices, as these transformations can be achieved in different ways. Take vinyl aesthetics as an example. Initially, an actual vinyl record was required in order to capture its distinctive crackling sound. The presence of a physical object that links two separate texts suggests that the reference should be categorised as autosonic. However, there are now many digital plug-ins, such as iZotope's Vinyl, that recreate the sound of a vinyl record. Therefore it is possible to reference an analogue medium despite working exclusively in a digital format. The abstract nature of this type of reference suggests that it should be categorised as allosonic. Additionally, referencing the sound of a transistor radio can be achieved by recording an actual transistor radio (autosonic) or by applying a specific type of equalisation to create the illusion of a transistor radio (allosonic). While these approaches have clear distinctions from the producer's point of view, particularly in terms of methodology, it should be noted that they are not always easy to identify from the listener's point of view.

Before examining phonomatic transformations in detail, it is worth discussing possible motivations that an artist may have in transforming medium. Numerous authors have discussed the transformation of medium by different artists, including Portishead, and have offered several possible reasons. Brøvig-Hanssen (2013a, p. 94) describes Portishead's approach as a kind of 'schizophonic experimentation', whereby the characteristic signature of earlier media is split from its source and inserted into a new, digital context to produce an aesthetic effect. This suggests that, in addition to transforming cultural and historical associations, Portishead also sampled out of their fascination with the characteristic *sound* of a particular era (Brøvig-Hanssen 2013a). In interviews given around the time of their second album, guitarist Adrian Utley noted: 'me and Geoff [Barrow], in the studio, will have an idea for the end kind of result and the whole basis of what we do is making it sound like old breaks, old records or whatever it is' (Curwen 1999, p. 75).[4] Barrow reinforced this affinity for the vintage, stating 'we're always inspired by old records, old vinyl. And so when we sample something or when we even make a sample

[4] Quoted in Brøvig-Hanssen (2013a).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143021000659 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ourselves, which we have done on this record, to incorporate the sound of vinyl is as important as the instruments playing'.[5] This interest in sounds from the past resonates with the wider retro movement and suggests an ambiguity about contemporary culture, in which neither the new nor the old are valued in their unmitigated form, rather new forms are created by reinventing the past from the position of the present (Brøvig-Hanssen 2013a, b). Askerøi (2013) argues that stylistic traits act as sonic markers and function not only as imitations of the past but also as representatives of the past's socio-cultural values. The characteristic signatures of different media also act as sonic markers, as through their history of use they have acquired both cultural and historical associations. Zak (2001), and Goodwin (1990) have pointed out that digitally recorded sounds are often criticised for sounding 'harsh' and 'cold' while analogue technologies are praised for their 'warmth' and 'human feel'. This suggests that some contemporary composers may attempt to add warmth to a track by presenting it in an analogue context. To further understand the motivations for referencing past media it is necessary to discuss in detail some of the ways in which phonematic transformations can occur.

The following section analyses a number of Portishead songs to demonstrate the applicability of the expanded model, discussing three examples of autosonic phonomatic references before concluding with an example of an allosonic phonomatic reference. To reiterate, phonomatic transformations occur when a new text references an existing text, and in addition to transforming the style or subject of the original text it also transforms the medium. Autosonic phonomatic transformations involve a physical object that links the two texts, such as a vinyl record, and are bound to other autosonic practices. This is to say, an autosonic phonomatic transformation cannot exist in a work unless some other kind of autosonic transformation, either syntagmatic or paradigmatic, also exists. Clearly, an actual recording of a previous musical text must be present within a new text before one can begin to discuss the mediation of that recording. Conversely, allosonic phonomatic transformations do not involve a physical object linking the two texts, and are bound to other allosonic practices.

All of the phonomatic transformations discussed in this article require the presence of either syntagmatic and/or paradigmatic transformations – not only so that they can be discussed within the general framework of transtextuality (or transphonography as it later became known), but also because it is in the way the phonomatic transformation either reinforces or undermines the syntagmatic/paradigmatic transformation that gives the phonomatic transformation its character.

### *2.1. Autosonic retronormativity*

*Autosonic retronormativity* can be found in the song 'Strangers' (1994). The song makes several references to previous texts, most of which are self-quotations, and the transformation of medium reinforces the historical and cultural associations of these references. The song begins with a brief autosonic quotation of 'Elegant People' (1976) by Weather Report; however, it is the later use of self-quotations that makes a greater impact on the character of the track.[6] Following the Weather Report sample, the

[5] See Goldberg (1997).
[6] Self-quotation is discussed in detail later in the article.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143021000659 Published online by Cambridge University Press

song continues with a distressed drum beat that displays several identifying markers of a typical sample: it comprises a repeating one-bar loop, the sound quality is generally poor and a continuous vinyl crackle is clearly evident. In actuality, the drums were first performed by regular Portishead drummer Clive Deamer and subsequently sampled, edited and manipulated in the manner typical of sampling.[7] The drums are heavily compressed, evidenced by the snare drum that appears to get louder after the initial attack, and the accompanying analogue synthesiser and fuzz guitar also have a distorted timbre. The combined timbre of the instruments, along with the obvious vinyl crackle, creates a harsh atmosphere yet also establishes the strong identifying character of the track. However, rather than continuing in this vein, the song makes a dramatic transition to another sound world entirely. At 0:27, a single trumpet note acts as a musical gateway and the harsh atmosphere of noisy drums, synth, guitar and vinyl is immediately replaced with a clean, hollow-body guitar and Beth Gibbons' vocals. There is a significant amount of background noise, suggesting that someone else is in the room with the band, which associates the music with a typical live recording setup (Brøvig-Hanssen 2013a, b), particularly that which was common before multi-tracking became available. Gibbons' vocals have also been prominently filtered to recreate the limited frequency response of earlier recording technology and we can hear a great deal of sibilance, which again references the low-fidelity recording techniques of the past. The phonematic reference can be categorised as an example of retronormativity, in that the historical reference is implied through instrumentation, performance techniques and also medium. These three elements work together to create a complete sonic picture that transports the listener to an entirely different sound world and a different (if imaginary) historical moment. At the end of this section, three synthesiser notes, separated by brief moments of digital silence, act as a second musical gateway as the drum loop returns, the vocal filter is removed and the listener is transported back to present day. The contrasting style of that section acts as a cultural and historical signifier, relocating the listener to another time and place, and the transformation of medium reinforces that relocation. Brøvig-Hanssen (2013a, p. 101) arrives at a similar conclusion and states 'the frequency-filter changes applied to the voice in "Strangers" also signify that the music shifts between medium eras, and, similarly, the crackling, gritty drum-and-alarm sequence seems to belong to a different era from the clean acoustic guitar'.

### *2.2. Autosonic vinyl aesthetics*

*Autosonic vinyl aesthetics* is found in the song 'Humming' (1997). The track opens with an orchestra and theremin and, while both instruments carry historical implications, there are no obvious sonic references to suggest a particular period. However, when the drums enter (1:34) they bring with them an obvious vinyl crackle that suggests the drums are sampled from an earlier performance.[8] The drumbeat is devoid of any obvious stylistic indicators but what is significant about the use of this sample is the clear reference to medium. The juxtaposition of the sonically degraded drums with the relatively noiseless sound of the orchestra transforms the analogue

[7] As per the album liner notes.
[8] The drums are another example of autosonic self-quotation.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143021000659 Published online by Cambridge University Press

medium into a new, digital, context. Perhaps the more intuitive way of handling this transformation would be to present the orchestra and theremin in an obviously analogue medium, given their historical association. However, Portishead go about this in the exact opposite way, presenting the more historic instruments through a relatively noiseless medium while bathing the drums in the historically loaded analogue medium. This has the effect of stripping each instrument of its historical grounding and assigning them new associations based on the medium in which they are presented. The direct contrast between the characteristic crackle of the analogue and quiet sheen of the digital intensifies the division between the past and the present, while the frequent embrace of earlier recording technologies suggests a 'privileging of old technology, and perhaps the absent, bygone worlds to which that alludes' (Chapman 2008, p. 160).

This juxtaposition of past and present, analogue and digital, is the key distinction that suggests that 'Humming' offers an example of vinyl aesthetics. Vinyl aesthetics is partly defined by the 'absence of any other sonic markers to previous musical eras' and yet one could argue that 'Humming', in particular its theremin and orchestra, does indeed reference a previous musical era. However, the vinyl crackle is not tied to this historical reference, as it is only evident when the drums are playing. There are several moments in the song when the drums are tacit (2:25, 3:17, 4:09) and the vinyl crackle is similarly absent, only returning when the drums re-enter the mix. Therefore, the reference to the analogue medium is firmly embedded within the drum track, which by itself does not carry any historical connotations. Had the vinyl crackle been tied to the orchestra and theremin, or run continuously throughout the entire length of the track, it would more appropriately be classified as retronormativity.

### *2.3. Autosonic analogue allusion*

An example of *autosonic analogue allusion* can be found in 'Only You' (1997), where a cut and paste technique highlights the stark contrast between the sound of the analogue medium and that of the digital. At 2:21 we hear brief snippets of a sample from 'She Said' (1995) by The Pharcyde that are punctuated with brief moments of digital silence. The clean sound of digital silence is in stark relief to the warm sound of crackling vinyl previously heard, as the silence is achieved not in the usual way of performers simply quieting their instruments, but by an abrupt clipping of the sound file. No effort has been made to clean up the audio or dirty up the silence in order to smooth out the transition. Instead, a conscious decision was made to highlight the contrast between the warmth of the analogue sample and the cold cleanness of the digital silence. This immediate juxtaposition reminds the listener that each medium not only carries its own signifier, but also reinforces the other: the emptiness of the digital ascribes greater meaning to the warm analogue, while the warm analogue renders the digital silence that much more barren. It is important to note that these juxtapositions should be heard as aesthetic choices rather than technological limitations, and the analogue sound aligns the music with an earlier era, while the brief moments of digital silence place the music firmly in the present (Brøvig-Hanssen 2013a, b). In 'The Revenge of the Intuitive', Brian Eno notes that the characteristic limitations of a medium, such as the scratching of a vinyl record, tell us something about the context of a work, about 'where it sits in time' (Eno 1999). The abrupt

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juxtaposition of analogue and digital in 'Only You' situates the track not in the past or the present, but in both simultaneously. By referencing the analogue medium, Portishead provide a way in which the present can not only view the past, but also view itself in relation to that past. Their embrace of multiple forms of medium, much like their stylistic multiplicity, heightens the instability of their music and calls to mind notions of nostalgia and authenticity. Auner (2000 {13}) describes Portishead's music as highly emotional, and attributes this 'to the way the band foregrounds recording media and musical technologies to engage tradition and to manipulate memory and time'.

### *2.4. Allosonic retronormativity*

Having discussed three different types of autosonic phonomatic transformations, 'Half Day Closing' (1997) offers an example of *allosonic retronormativity*. The song references 'The American Metaphysical Circus' (1968) by the 1960s psychedelic group The United States of America. Portishead's song does not directly quote from the original song, rather it alludes to it by incorporating certain musical passages and then transforming them. The passages in common can easily be heard when comparing the two songs (the bass line and recurring drum fill being the most prominent), and the liner notes of the Portishead album includes the phrase 'inspired by The United States of America' after the list of performers on 'Half Day Closing'. This reference is an example of allosonic allusion, one of Lacasse's original referential practices, and is just one of the elements that gives 'Half Day Closing' a strong psychedelic character. The focus of this discussion, however, is on the phonematic transformation, in this case an example of allosonic retronormativity. One of the most striking features of 'Half Day Closing' is the treatment of Gibbons' vocals. Her voice is tightly equalised to resemble the limited frequency response of earlier recording technology and is there is also a great deal of static in her performance, again a nod to the noisy recording mechanisms of the past. There is a significant amount of distortion added to her voice, which becomes increasingly severe as the track progresses, to the point that by the climax of the performance at 2:57, her voice is no longer recognisable as a human vocal sound. Further effect was added by recording the vocal track through a rotating Leslie speaker, and this effect also intensifies as the track progresses. Accordingly, the medium through which Gibbons' vocals are presented starts off distorted and of very poor sonic quality, but the voice is still easily recognisable. Throughout the track that medium is slowly transformed, drawing further attention to itself, until finally it completely obfuscates the voice and all sense of recognition is lost. A very similar technique is found in 'The American Metaphysical Circus'. One point of difference is that the vocal is relatively unmediated at the start of the song; it is thin but clear and free from distortion. At the beginning of the second verse, however, the voice is suddenly distorted, although like the Portishead song the vocal performance is still easily recognisable. As the track progresses the vocal becomes more and more distorted, peaking around 3:50, to the point that the lyrics are unintelligible. The degree of distortion is not as severe as that of 'Half Day Closing'. However the effect is the same: the voice is slowly transformed and degraded until it approaches the point of sounding non-human. Another element common to both works is the positioning of the drums, which is in stark relief to the rest of Portishead's music. In 'Half Day Closing' the

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drums are panned hard left so as to only emanate from the left speaker. This unusual positioning is not evident on any other track in Portishead's recorded output and was not common practice in recorded music at the time. However, it was relatively common in the experimental music of the 1960s, and can also be found in 'The American Metaphysical Circus', although in this case the drums are panned hard right. Accordingly, 'Half Day Closing' not only references 'The American Metaphysical Circus' in terms of style and subject, it also references the track by way of medium. This reference exemplifies allosonic retronormativity in that there is no use of sampling, the medium is transformed in addition to the subject and the two practices work in concert to invoke the psychedelic music of the 1960s.

## 3. Quotation

Having discussed phonomatic transformation, Lacasse's original model can be further expanded to include self-quotation. Lacasse divides quotation into allosonic and autosonic forms. The significance of quotation is that it references not only musical gestures but also the cultural and historical associations of that gesture. Such associations are often pointedly used by a composer to evoke a certain atmosphere or convey a message. For example, in order to bolster a sense of American patriotism, Charles Ives strategically quoted the patriotic tune 'Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean' (also known as 'The Red, White, and Blue') in his work 'They Are There', written to support the American efforts in World War II (Thurmaier 2014). Similarly, The Beatles referenced four different cultures by way of musical quotation in 'All You Need is Love' (1967) – 'La Marseillaise' (French), J.S. Bach's Two-Part Invention in F Major (German), 'In the Mood' (American) and 'Greensleeves' (English). The strong cultural associations of these well-known works, woven together without regard for borders or nationalities, helps to convey the universal message that 'all you need is love' (Spicer 2009).

Just as a quoted musical passage can be manipulated, perhaps by altering the rhythm or paraphrasing the melody, the cultural and historical associations of that passage can also be transformed (Metzer 2003). Such transformations have the power to recontextualise traditional relationships, such as those between black and white, east and west, and past and present. For example, when discussing Danger Mouse's *The Grey Album* (2004), created by mashing together unlicensed samples from The Beatles' *The Beatles* (1968) - known colloquially as the 'white album' - and a capella tracks from Jay-Z's *The Black Album* (2003), Gunderson (2004 {5}) argues that part of the album's vibrancy 'comes from the way it *highlights* the culture industry's specious opposition of white 1960s Brit-pop and twenty-first century black American hip hop'.[9] Similarly, Portishead's 'Sour Times' (1994) recontextualises such relationships by combining the *Mission: Impossible* (1966) television soundtrack, laden with Eastern European and Cold War imagery, with the 1970s funk of Smokey Brooks. The cultural mélange provided by these diverse references perhaps prompted Frith (1996, p. 278) to describe 'Sour Times' as being in 'the suspended space of the traveller, caught between West and East, past and future'.

Metzer (2003, p. 7) suggests that for transformations such as these to occur, the listener must be able to identify the original work in order to understand its cultural

[9] Italics in original.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143021000659 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and historical associations; stating 'if a borrowing is not detected then it and its cultural resonances go unheard'. However, composers often reference another text in order to borrow its cultural associations, rather than to comment on a specific work, person or event. The associations implied by a work's style, performance technique or timbre often carry cultural resonance, as listeners often associate certain musical gestures with specific cultures and eras, even if only subconsciously. Therefore, cultural resonances can still be heard without knowledge of the exact work being borrowed. For example, an unfamiliar listener is unlikely to listen to Portishead's 'Sour Times' and identify the sample from the soundtrack of the *Mission: Impossible* television series. However, they may well suggest 'it sounds like spy music'. Williams (2014) follows a similar line of thought in his discussion of Xzibit's 'Symphony in X Major' (2002), a track that samples Carlos' 'Switched on Bach' (1968) version of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3. Rather than focusing on the direct link to J.S Bach, Williams suggests the sample could be more appropriately interpreted as a generic association with classical music.

## 4. Self-quotation

Lacasse's notion of allosonic quotation and autosonic quotation is certainly useful, although with regard to Portishead it does not capture the full range of their compositional practices. For example, in addition to sampling other artists, Portishead developed a novel approach to composition by sampling themselves. This involved composing, performing and recording multiple musical gestures, often as a series of musical pastiches, and printing them onto tape or vinyl in order to build a library of musical ideas. This library then became a source for musical material that could be sampled and manipulated to form new compositions. By drawing from a library of unrelated musical passages, Portishead are able to create a musical bricolage, resulting in contrasting styles, timbres, and recording and performance techniques within a single track. These contrasting passages stand apart by virtue of being out of context and help create the unique character and stylistic multiplicity of their music. When discussing the making of the second album, Portishead's Geoff Barrow stated 'everything started with myself and Ade [Adrian Utley] in the studio playing instruments and really pushing ourselves to create a sound that at the beginning was not ours, and then had to be developed into our sound. We had to literally make ourselves our own huge record collection to sample from, which took about 14 months' (Anderson 1998, p. 2). This method of self-quotation meets Lacasse's definition of intertextuality, in that a recording of a musical gesture from a previous text makes an appearance in another. It is important to note that, although these initial recordings were never released to the public, they can still be classified as a 'text' following the usage of the word here.

Portishead's practice of sampling their own work does not neatly fit into the notion of autosonic quotation, which implies that the quotation is of another artist. Accordingly, autosonic self-quotation is a more appropriate term. Autosonic self-quotation can be heard in numerous Portishead songs and, like other types of quotation, carries cultural and historical associations. As previously mentioned, these associations can be understood by a listener without knowledge of the exact source of the borrowing– an important distinction to keep in mind as, in the case of Portishead, their original sources are unknown to everyone except the band

themselves. Sampling promotes the idea of author as editor, mediator and hybridiser (Toynbee 2000), and the notion of author as hybridiser is especially relevant to Portishead, where references to jazz and hip hop, analogue and digital, and past and present are often forcefully juxtaposed. These juxtapositions are occasionally the result of contrasting quotations of an outside work, such as 'Only You' (1997), which combines the film noir-infused *Inspector Clouseau* (1968) soundtrack with the hip hop track 'She Said' (1995) by The Pharcyde. However, they are more often directly informed by Portishead's practice of autosonic self-quotation – that is, the juxtaposition of previously recorded, unrelated musical pastiches that form a musical bricolage when brought together within a single track.

Consider, for example, the song 'Western Eyes' (1997). The track begins with a repeating string figure that is made into a two-bar loop. The strings have a grainy timbre and are very tightly equalised to occupy a well-defined bandwidth, reminiscent of the limited frequency response of earlier recording technology. As the loop repeats, one can hear a slight disruption as the string dynamics and resulting reverb are abruptly cut off before the passage begins again (0:07). The repetition, timbre and sonic disruption of the string passage bears all the hallmarks of a typical sample, potentially pointing to a suspenseful film soundtrack or classical recording as the source. In fact, the string passage was born out of Portishead's own aforementioned musical library – a brief snippet from some strings originally recorded for their debut album *Dummy*.[10] After four bars, a grand piano enters with a repeating minor chord, one of the few newly composed passages in the track and one that was in fact the genesis of the song.[11] After one and a half minutes of Beth Gibbons' delicate torch singing, a hip hop-flavoured drumbeat enters. The accompanying tape hiss and repeating four-bar loop similarly suggest an outside source, although it was in fact sampled from an earlier recording session with regular Portishead drummer Clive Deamer. While the practice of borrowing from outside sources is subtly hinted at via these sonic clues, it is in the closing section of the song (3:12) where the illusion of sampling is explicitly stated. Some vinyl scratching sets up the relocation of what appears to be a dated recording of an anonymous American crooner, accompanied by a clean, hollow-body guitar and some distant piano fills. The timbral quality of the voice suggests that the recording has been slowed down and pitched lower, a common feature of sampled music, and along with the continual tape hiss and introduction of new harmonic material, points to an outside source that has been transported into a new musical setting. The effect is very much of a 1940s-style ballad that has been somewhat haphazardly tacked on to the end of the song. The confluence of cinematic strings, hip hop drums, and 1940s-style crooning suggests the track has been assembled from outside sources, and is therefore partially in debt to other artists; however all of the material was composed by the band. The illusion is further supported by a credit in the album liner notes, which states that the song uses a sample of 'Hookers and Gin' by The Sean Atkins Experience from 1957. However, this is merely an inside joke on the part of Portishead. There is no such group The Sean Atkins Experience; Sean Atkins is in fact an acquaintance of the band and receives credit for additional vocals on the song.[12] This suggests that the fake sample credit

[10] See K. Micalleef (1997), 'Pioneer trip hop band Portishead survives a long night of the soul', retrieved 6 September 2016 from http://www.oocities.org/sunsetstrip/studio/8424/port19.html

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143021000659 Published online by Cambridge University Press

is a poke at the sub-culture that relishes the challenge of identifying and locating obscure samples. In this regard, Portishead are commenting on the culture of sampling without participating unreservedly in that culture.

While the practice of sampling supports notions of stylistic multiplicity, it also raises concerns regarding authorship, not only from a legal perspective but also from an aesthetic one. Portishead's use of autosonic self-quotation allows them to engage with sampling's more creative aspects, such as transformation of culture and history, while sidestepping the common charges of thievery and inauthenticity. Accordingly, autosonic self-quotation allows for the stylistic multiplicity that arises from the mélange of previously unrelated gestures, while still retaining the Romantic notion of composer as sole author. As a unique type of practice, autosonic self-quotation offers an additional type of reference not currently included in Lacasse's model.[13] Autosonic self-quotation parallels with what Leydon (2010, p. 196) calls a 'style topic', a 'newly composed, newly performed, stylistic allusion', that when juxtaposed with other style topics, is intended to foster a kind of stylistic plurality. Like style topics, autosonic self-quotation promotes notions of hybridisation and stylistic plurality while still allowing for compositional skill and authorial agency. Unlike style topics, however, the practice of autosonic self-quotation involves sampling, just not from another artist, and the quoted musical gestures are composed by the artist, but not newly composed.

Additionally, allosonic self-quotation is perfectly feasible, and while not evident in the music of Portishead, it can be found in the work of other artists grouped under the trip hop moniker. Tricky's vocal performance on 'Overcome' (1995) is an allosonic self-quotation of his earlier performance on Massive Attack's 'Karmacoma' (1994). Similarly, Massive Attack's collaboration with Horace Andy on 'Angel' (1998) reuses the lyrics from Andy's 1973 recording 'You Are My Angel', albeit with a new vocal melody.

## 5. Conclusion

The underlying intent of this article was to argue that Lacasse's model of transtextuality, while fruitful, needs to be expanded in order to address the different types of referential practices often found in recorded popular music. His model offers numerous ways to account for the ways one might transform the style or subject of another work but does not address ways in which one might also transform the medium through which that work is presented. As I have demonstrated with regards to Portishead, the medium of a quoted work is also susceptible to transformation, and such transformations can add another layer of meaning to a track by either reinforcing or undermining the transformations of style and/or subject already apparent in the work. Lacasse's model is useful when discussing the many artists that reference other artists in their music, and Brøvig-Hanssen's notion of opaque and transparent mediation is also useful when discussing artists that transform medium in their work. Yet what of artists that are doing both simultaneously? Each practice on its own offers layers of interpretation to the listener, yet further layers are created when the two practices combine. An expanded model that

[13] Portishead are by no means the first to quote from their earlier material. Robert Plant, Prince, James Brown, Strauss, Mahler and Beethoven also reused material from previous works.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143021000659 Published online by Cambridge University Press

encompasses all three elements of a work (style, subject, medium) is necessary in order to address the multiple layers of meaning and interpretation that are available to the listener.

Furthermore, self-quotation is a unique referential practice that should be addressed separately from quotations of other artists. As I have demonstrated with regards to Portishead, stylistic multiplicity and transformation of history, culture and medium can be achieved by composing and recording a series of musical pastiches and then sampling these recordings to create new musical works. Thus, self-quotation allows one to engage with sampling's more creative aspects while avoiding charges of legal and aesthetic thievery and retain the Romantic notion of composer as sole author. Given the controversy and legal implications of sampling that exist to this day, this is an important distinction. Although I have used Portishead as an example to demonstrate the applicability of the expanded model, the concepts discussed in this article could equally be applied to any popular music artist that employs intertextual references while simultaneously experimenting with overt manipulations of mediation. In this way, I hope to have offered both a rich reading of Portishead's music, as well as presenting further analytical tools that may be useful to both fans and scholars of popular music alike.

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