

# Footsteps in the Dark

The Hidden Histories  
of Popular Music

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## Contents

Introduction: The Long Fetch of History; or, Why Music Matters	vii
1. Pop Stars: The Hidden History of Digital Capitalism	1
2. Crossing Over: The Hidden History of Diaspora	26
3. Banda: The Hidden History of Greater Mexico	54
4. Jazz: The Hidden History of Nationalist Multiculturalism	79
5. Weeds in a Vacant Lot: The Hidden History of Urban Renewal	107
6. Merengue: The Hidden History of Dominican Migration	133
7. The Hip Hop Hearings: The Hidden History of Deindustrialization	154
8. Masquerades and Mixtures: The Hidden History of Passing	184
9. Salsa: The Hidden History of Colonialism	211
10. Techno: The Hidden History of Automation	238
Epilogue: Long Waves after 9/11	263
Acknowledgments	279
Notes	281
Index	319

## 1. Pop Stars

### The Hidden History of Digital Capitalism

One of the illusions created by modern social science is that the commodity relations which exist among us today constitute the normal, natural, primordial, way in which society was always organized.

—Walter Rodney

**A container ship known as the *Hansa Carrier*** encountered a severe storm in the North Pacific one day in 1990. Rough seas and strong winds shook up the vessel, causing twenty-one intermodal containers to fall overboard. Four broke open, releasing sixty-one thousand pairs of Nike running shoes to float in the currents of the Pacific Ocean. Months later, beachcombers on the west coast of North America, from Oregon to Alaska, started coming across individual shoes washing ashore. They set up swap meets to match right and left shoes of the same size so that they could be worn or sold.<sup>1</sup>

A similar episode in 1992 dispersed some thirty thousand plastic bath toys onto the waters of the Pacific between Hong Kong and Tacoma. Thousands of plastic green frogs, yellow ducks, red beavers, and blue turtles “escaped” from a container washed overboard from another ship during a storm. Fortunately, as oceanographer Curtis Ebbesmeyer notes wryly, these animals were all good swimmers. Ten months after the spill, most of these bath toys “landed” on the beaches near Sitka, Alaska. Prevailing winds propelled the high-floating bath toys on a course different from the low-floating

shoes, whose movements had been determined more by the gyre of ocean currents than by the winds. Some of the bath toys that did not reach shore spent the winter of 1992–93 frozen in the ice of the Bering Sea, only to be released in the spring. Some of them floated back into the North Pacific, while others drifted around the Arctic Ocean until they made their way to the North Atlantic.<sup>2</sup> Although they once sailed on the same waves, the running shoes and the plastic bath toys reached different destinations because of wind and water currents and differential depths and weights.

The unexpected trajectories of running shoes and plastic bath toys through ocean waters produced unanticipated evidence for oceanographers. These spills enabled them to learn things about ocean currents that had previously been occluded from their purview. Yet, when ships do not sink and containers do not crack open, the routine commercial patterns of worldwide distribution and circulation of products such as shoes and bath toys are hidden from view for most of us. The linked and integrated production and distribution system that containerization entails is not just a way of shipping goods from one place to another; it also structures an entire way of life with profound ramifications for how we experience identities, places, and races.

The use of automated cranes and interchangeable containers for shipping creates a totally integrated freight transport system based on transfers from ships to trucks and trains. Metal boxes that are forty feet long, eight feet high, and eight feet wide serve as the universal mechanism for cargo shipments. The interchangeability and flexibility that containerization facilitates ensure high profits for manufacturers and shipping lines alike, but they also dramatically transform the practices and processes of production, distribution, and consumption for people all over the globe.

Like most forms of automation, containerization in theory could serve vital human needs. Used in the right way, it could eliminate dangerous and difficult jobs, increase productivity, and bring people from far-flung corners of the earth closer together. Under current conditions, however, containerization is controlled by an oligopoly of predatory transnational corporations and financial institutions. In our world, containerization conditions humans to serve the machines instead of the other way around. Patterns of consumption, production, and popular culture come into being not

as a result of human desires but because they fit the mold created for the convenience of profit-making commercial interests. The mechanisms of containerized production and distribution produce patterns of containerized consumption.

Very few consumers recognize the ways in which containerization influences their lives, but music listeners and television viewers in the late 1990s and early 2000s could not help but notice one of containerization's logical outcomes: the growth of prefabricated musical acts. Containerization exerted a powerful, albeit secret, influence on the production, distribution, and reception of popular music ranging from new "boy bands" and the "girl bands" that emerged in response to them to the growth of reality television shows like *Making the Band* and *American Idol*.

Boy bands generally get very little respect, but they make a lot of money. From the era of New Edition to the emergence of New Kids on the Block to the popularity of 'N Sync, Menudo, and Backstreet Boys, succeeding cohorts of preteen girls have shared generational experiences built around identification with all-male pop-singing groups. The boy bands sell out arenas around the world, create records that reach the top of the best-seller charts, and become important markers in the experiences of their generation. Their youthful exuberance, coordinated choreography, tight harmonies, skilled studio production, and carefully crafted public images play an important role in introducing young girls to popular music and its related practices of fandom and consumption.

Yet the boy bands generally draw derision from authors of books about music, from journalists, and from fans of other musical genres. In the eyes of their detractors, the success of the boy bands proves only the gullibility and poor taste of that part of the public that likes them. Boy bands are generally marketed more as objects of romantic desire than as admired singers or musicians. Their commercial viability often owes less to the sales of their recordings than to the marketing of magazines, fan club memberships, school notebooks, clothing, and accessories bearing their names and images. Boy bands do not build a loyal following through extensive apprenticeships in music, playing in small clubs for years, and gradually developing their musical skills. Instead, they appear on the scene rapidly, attract enormous attention for a few years, and then fade from view. Part of their popularity stems from their

function as the fad of the moment, from their ability to mark a particular moment in time. Their celebrity status constitutes an event in itself: to ignore them is to be out of the loop.

The pubescent middle-class and wealthy girls who make up the core target market for boy bands constitute a desired market segment for advertisers. Because they have disposable income and have not yet established fixed patterns of consumption, they serve as a logical target for novelty marketing initiatives. Yet while marketers respect young girls for their purchasing power, their tastes, identifications, and interests are relentlessly subjected to scorn. The favorite bands of adolescent girls are often derided as silly, sentimental, and unserious. Girls' romantic attraction to teen idols is ridiculed as inappropriate, excessive, and even dangerous. Young women grow up in a society that allocates enormous amounts of money, energy, and media time enticing them to become consumers but then condemning them for their gullibility when they do.

Of course there are plenty of reasons to dislike the boy bands. Every aspect of their identities—from the physical features of group members to the songs they sing to the answers they give in interviews—is scripted and carefully coordinated on the basis of market research. They are never original, innovative, or unpredictable. In their stage personas and song lyrics, the boy bands succeed because they hint at the provocation of erotic desire only to contain it by presenting themselves ultimately as adolescent, innocent, wholesome, and cute, simply longing for longing rather than for love or lust. Their celebrity status seems to reduce the dignity of their fans, enlisting them as spectators and admirers of boys they do not know, apparently for the simple reason that other girls have focused on the band members as objects of desire.

Boy bands prey on the contradictions endemic to sexism and consumption in this society. On the one hand, an endless barrage of media messages pressures women to make themselves attractive to men, to seek security and status in romantic heterosexual love. Nearly every motion picture, television program, book, song, and advertisement endorses this scenario, punishing female characters who fail to conform to it. On the other hand, the women at whom these messages are directed find themselves dismissed as frivolous, foolish, vain, and shallow for consuming the images and ideas that have been thrust at them. The boy bands add to the insecurities of

young girls by having them focus on young men as objects of admiration, by encouraging them to inhabit a state of romantic longing as an end in itself, and by suggesting that erotic and romantic desire can be fulfilled by purchasing the appropriate commodity.

Becoming fans of boy bands, however, can also enable young women to negotiate these contradictions. The practices of fandom permit them to develop intimacies with other girls, which may well be more important to them than their identification with the boys in the band. The bonding with other girls that takes place through fandom enacts relationships that are exuberantly homosocial, that depend on intimacy, excitement, and enthusiasm shared with others of the same gender. At a time when young girls might be most insecure about their own changing bodies, focusing on boy bands turns their gaze away from themselves and onto males. Perhaps most important, the shy vulnerability and dreamy romanticism exuded by the boy bands can offer a welcome respite from the aggressive vulgarity and calculated cruelty promoted in popular culture products marketed mainly to boys, such as professional wrestling, action-adventure movies, and violent video games.

The innovative cultural criticism of Gayle Wald and Judith Halberstam enables us to see how and why the boy bands might loom so large in the lives of young girls.<sup>3</sup> These scholars do not portray the popularity of the boy bands as socially progressive, nor do they make claims for the value of the music these bands play. Wald and Halberstam do, however, read the popularity of the boy bands symptomatically and critically as important evidence about the complexities of gender and sexuality in this society.

Halberstam explains that the dominant reigning model of "youth" presumes a normative life course rooted in gradual progression from a presexual childhood to an adulthood defined by heterosexual marriage, procreation, and parenting. Each life stage is designated by age- and status-appropriate commodities and consumption practices. Properly managed pubescent fandom can be permitted as a temporary step along this path, but it cannot be allowed to become so appealing that it serves as an end in itself. A moment of pleasure with other women unrelated to the goal of marriage, procreation, and parenting might undermine the logic of the heterosexual gender system. The emphasis that boy bands place on the singers as "boys" fixes them in youth, establishing

their identity as a stage to be transcended as the fan grows up. The boy bands thus provoke, but then manage, homosocial and homosexual possibilities by rendering them “only” temporary.

Wald points out that boy bands themselves perform a “girlish masculinity” that speaks to the anxieties and interests of young women discovering their sexualities. The archetypes that appeal to young girls are often androgynous. Boy bands usually feature lean young men who do not yet shave, whose voices sometimes have not yet changed, whose choreographed movements and close relations to one another encode queer desires and looks as much as heterosexual ones. Contempt for boy bands can be a covert form of homophobia, as well as a punishment meted out to young women and men for not yet mastering the codes of heterosexism.

The emphatic ridicule directed at the “stage” of pubescent fandom betrays fears that the stage may not be temporary. It also originates in the things that distinguish girl culture from boy culture. Halberstam notes that motion pictures and television programs aimed at teenage males also offer the promise of an extended adolescence, which in turn raises fears about homosociality and homosexuality. The motion pictures and television programs targeted to teenage males manage these anxieties through recurrent and even obsessive displays of misogyny and homophobia. By encouraging hatred of women and queers, these forms of commercial culture enable putatively heterosexual men to repress the homosociality of their own extended adolescence. In this society, men are not punished for maintaining an extended adolescence. On the contrary, both popular culture and politics do much to promote it. Much of talk radio depends on it. Yet the investment in extended adolescence that heterosexual men manifest through misogyny and homophobia forces women and queers to come up with their own versions of extended adolescence that sometimes challenge the hegemony of the dominant chronology: the life course that women are supposed to follow from presexual adolescence to marriage and parenting. Cultural forms that appeal to girls and women sometimes challenge the ideal of masculinity as only paternal, protective, and patriarchal.

What Halberstam calls “queer time” threatens the normative life-cycle chronology that permeates popular culture. Sustained participation in “adolescent” subcultures interrupts the progression to adulthood. For queers this may mean voluntary immersion

in subcultures as a way of living outside the temporality of family time. Queer fandom, in Halberstam’s account, may mimic but nonetheless reformulates adolescent fandom. It offers the possibility of a temporality of “not yet,” of roles for women that “are not absolutely predictive of either heterosexual or lesbian adulthoods; rather, the desires, the play, and the anguish they access allow us to theorize other relations to identity.”<sup>4</sup> Halberstam’s analysis enables us to see that the boy bands may not permanently manage the anxieties they provoke, that the investment in condemning boy bands stems as much from defensive heterosexism as it does from aesthetic conviction. Her work also enables us to see the logic of the girl bands that started to appear in popular music as a result of staged competitions in reality shows at the start of the twenty-first century.

In the wake of *Making the Band*, a reality show that created and marketed a new boy band, market logic combined with the affective power of female fandom to bring into being a new reality show built around the construction of a girl band. In 2001, *Pop Stars*, an unscripted “reality” television show staging a competition among young women to be part of a new band, appeared on the WB network. Although it enjoyed only modest success in the ratings—attracting an average audience of 4.1 million viewers, far below the network’s most popular program, *Seventh Heaven*, which attracted 7.5 million viewers per episode—the preponderance of females between the ages of twelve and thirty-four among the viewers of *Pop Stars* constituted a ready-made niche market coveted by advertisers.

Time Warner executives signed the members of Eden’s Crush, the band created on the show, to an exclusive recording contract, enabling the conglomerate to market the band’s music through the company’s subsidiary Warner Music Group. At the same time, computer server America Online, also owned by Warner, promoted the television show and the group’s forthcoming compact disc extensively to its customers through an exclusive window, allowing (and encouraging) fans to download the first single of Eden’s Crush. The continuing episodes of the television program also promoted the group’s first concert at the Palace Theatre in Hollywood, which was taped for showing on the WB network. In addition, members of Eden’s Crush, both a real band and a fictional entity from a television show, appeared on the WB-owned talk show *Live with Regis*

and Kelly and in an episode of the network's prime-time situation comedy *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*, both slated for airing during the week the group's album was to be released. Members of Eden's Crush also appeared on additional news and variety programs on the network, and they conducted a "chat" with fans on the company's AOL server.

Viewers were encouraged to develop identifications with the various members of the featured group, making all of their appearances part of an extended commercial for their subsequent recorded compact discs, tours, T-shirts, and other licensed material. The value added to the group's first recording by all this cross-promotion is impossible to calculate. Rather than advertising a single product, these efforts colonized entertainment content (the television program's plot, the group's music) as part of an exercise in corporate synergy, all in order to generate mutually reinforcing profits for different divisions of a single conglomerate. WB chairman Jamie Kellner explained that *Pop Stars* was an effort to get producers to stop thinking solely about the products they marketed in their own divisions and to start thinking about how they could work together to give AOL Time Warner shareholders higher returns on their investments.<sup>5</sup>

Eden's Crush Web sites and links constituted a particularly important venue for the program. They enabled AOL Time Warner to reach affluent consumers, to compile information about them, and to lead them through a series of opportunities to translate their interest in Eden's Crush into commercial purchases of concert tickets, photographs, fan club memberships, downloaded music, and other commodities. AOL Time Warner owned both EMI and Warner Music, making the company the world's largest merchandiser of music, a corporation accounting for one of every four units of recorded music purchased in the United States. As more and more music sales came from recordings downloaded from the Internet, the company's ownership of AOL placed it in a privileged position to profit from what might seem like a competitor medium under other circumstances. Yet even this synergy formed just the tip of an iceberg.

In addition to surveilling and shaping the buying habits of teenage music consumers, AOL Time Warner's *Pop Stars* Web site provided the company with access to information about the show's fans' tastes in clothes, makeup, books, and even pornography.<sup>6</sup>

This information could be used to shape "personalized" advertising appeals, sold to other e-marketers, or stored for future AOL Time Warner promotional activities. *Pop Stars* was such a fully linked and integrated system of marketing that it is possible to think of it as devoid of content, an empty container. Music connoisseurs especially might wonder what happens to musical quality once this kind of marketing and publicity power can be generated on behalf of a group that did not even exist before the show aired.<sup>7</sup> Fans of television drama might be concerned about a program that is, in effect, simply one long commercial. Parents and teachers interested in helping young people to locate themselves within the world might be horrified by the reach and scope of commercial mass media, by its ability to stimulate such intense empathy, investment, and engagement from children who may appear routinely bored, alienated, and disinterested in school, family, or community activities.

Yet the content of the program was neither random nor arbitrary. It was shaped in every detail by the logic of the historical moment in which it was created. At a time when sophisticated marketing strategies permeated every aspect of social life in the United States—education and evangelism and politics as well as popular culture—*Pop Stars* emerged as part of a well-coordinated social pedagogy training viewers to become the kinds of consumers that marketers desire them to become. In the manner that rodeos served as the favored form of recreation for western cowhands in the agrarian era or the way romance novels and soap operas provided a fictional focus for the real-life family and relationship issues confronting housewives in the industrial era, *Pop Stars* provided viewers with an "escape" that perfectly reflected the "work" they do as shoppers in the era of postindustrial digital capitalism.

The core dynamics of *Pop Stars* promoted the "violent competition and impersonal appetite" that Raymond Williams identifies as popular culture's key dynamic in a capitalist society.<sup>8</sup> The show staged a competition among dozens of female aspirants to stardom. Yet only five of them could be chosen to become members of the group. To the camera, contestants confided their desires to become successful entertainers through a seemingly endless series of statements that almost always began with some variant of "I want . . .," "I wish . . .," "I've always wanted . . .," or "I dream of . . ." Emotional expressions of fear, anxiety, and self-doubt took center stage when viewers were encouraged to strategize along with

the aspirants, to speculate along with them about which forms of self-presentation would prove most effective with the judges.

Although beauty and talent clearly mattered in this competition, success ultimately emanated from candidates' mastery over the discourses of liberal individualism and self-making. *Pop Stars* demonstrated that one must seem to be virtuous as well as fortunate in order to win, but that virtue can be best demonstrated by both yearning for success and then muting that very ambition by acting in a "sisterly" fashion toward one's rivals. The competition required contestants to display mastery of the self-help apparatuses (exercise, makeup, clothing, and choreography) that might provide the crucial edge in the competition. Much like the beauty pageant contestants analyzed so brilliantly in Sarah Banet-Weiser's wonderfully perceptive book, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*, the participants on *Pop Stars* faced the dilemma of proving that they were special, different, unique, completely individual by proving their mastery of exactly the same shared social codes that construct each of them as interchangeable parts of a mass market.<sup>9</sup>

Fans logging on to the Eden's Crush official Web site could have questions answered by members of the families of band members. The answers revealed a distinct social pedagogy at work in respect to liberal individualism, a pedagogy that echoes the discourse of beauty pageants. For example, a fan asked "Ivette's Dad" if Ivette is rich. He answered, "It all depends on what you mean by 'rich.' She has a family that loves her unconditionally, and supports her completely. She is talented, intelligent, beautiful, and a very caring person. She has a strong belief in God, and has had the courage to follow her dreams no matter where they may take her. I would certainly call that rich."<sup>10</sup>

Ivette's dad switched the question from the material to the moral sphere, enabling himself and his daughter to disavow any interest in money, to portray participation in the group as a courageous way of pursuing one's dreams wherever they may lead, if even to the WB network. The possibility of gaining sudden wealth, however, played an indispensable part in the lure of *Pop Stars*. The inclusion of this question on the Web site even contributed to the construction of that expectation. Yet the required performative social pedagogy is to "misunderstand" the question, to be so worthy of wealth that you pretend not even to notice it when it appears. Fans could still root for Ivette as she climbed from respectability to

riches (her father is a drama teacher in a suburban New Jersey high school), without ever getting to the point of resenting her when she became one of the haves.

A similar tension is arbitrated in the answer that Ivette's dad offered when asked, "Don't you think it's a little odd that all the girls in Eden's Crush are skinny, dark-haired, and tan? It seems sad that this is the group they picked, and there's no hope for other girls." Like the obligatory question about feminism in beauty pageants that is always answered by defining feminism as following one's dreams, this question speaks directly to an issue that might have become a problem for the program. It is raised in order to be knocked down, to contain and co-opt any possible oppositional reading.

Ivette's dad had the right answer. "In all honesty," he wrote, "I really do not understand this question. I believe that these girls were picked based on their talent and professionalism. I'm sure that the people in charge had an image in mind as they entered this selection process (*Pop Stars*). I also believe that the people in charge of the process, being well-known figures in the music industry, were looking for the best combination of individuals to ensure the success of this group. There is always hope for people—just because someone was not selected for *PopStars* [*sic*] does NOT mean they cannot go on to fulfill their dreams through other venues. I guess I have a question—why is it that some people feel the need to try to always find something negative about other people's success?"

Evidently Ivette's dad never suspected that women might be judged on their looks anywhere in U.S. society, even in the entertainment industry. He apparently had no inkling that his daughter might have been selected for the group because satisfying the male gaze and fulfilling the standards of the beauty system are an important part of contemporary marketing. In fact, he purported to be so surprised by the question that he could only conclude that the questioner was belittling his own daughter's talent and professionalism out of laziness ("just because someone was not selected for *PopStars* does NOT mean they cannot go on to fulfill their dreams through other venues") or out of a perverse desire simply to find something negative in another person's success. Of course, this too was all a performance. The show's innate contradiction—that anyone can be a star and be special, even though viewers are constantly encouraged to judge themselves as inadequate, not special,



not stars, and not ever likely to become stars, because that is the best way to keep them hungry for more products and more images of successful beauties—was both named and contained by this exchange.

The insouciance that Ivette's dad displayed about her appearance notwithstanding, the appearance of the women in Eden's Crush was a tremendously important part of their market value. Donald Lowe describes the "technologies of the look" and the "relay of juxtaposed images and signs" as the center of sexualization of commodities in our society. Part of the purpose of this is to increase the areas of the body accessible to marketability, to produce new sites to be accessorized, salted, soaped, shaved, and sculpted. "We currently present ourselves, and see ourselves and others, as sexual persons who exude the allure and power of the sexualized commodities we consume," Lowe explains.<sup>11</sup> The practices Lowe describes serve not so much to make bodies sexier by applying commodities to them as to sexualize the commodities by associating them with the human bodies presented to us as desirable and beautiful.

Sexuality in the mass media is almost never about intimacy, love, caressing, pleasure, or trust, but rather about attraction, power, domination, and possession. Media representations of sexuality rarely focus on private intimacy but frequently revolve around public performance and display. They depict very few actual sex acts but direct our gaze again and again to commercial transactions with purported "sexual" content as exemplified in the seemingly endless succession of good-hearted hookers, strippers, and super-models in television programs and motion pictures.

Lowe connects the sexualization of commodities to the socio-pathology of anorexia nervosa, the obsessive desire for thinness. Seen in this light, the fan's question to Ivette's dad on the Eden's Crush Web site raises issues more profound than petty jealousy about the success of someone else. Archetypes of beauty vary across societies and time periods, but emphasis on thin women in the "technologies of the look and the relay of juxtaposed images and signs" that condition our reception of *Pop Stars* does not express an aesthetic preference so much as it performs a disciplinary practice.<sup>12</sup> The driving force behind the contemporary culture of consumption is the stimulation of appetites, not just the impersonal kind identified by Raymond Williams as the core of commercial

culture evident in most forms of advertising and entertainment, which promote desire for more power, more recognition, and more products, but also the very personal appetite and body issues the people face, such as bulimia, anorexia nervosa, and crash diets on the one hand and pumping iron and taking steroids on the other.

It should be no surprise in a society permeated with so many messages to eat *and* to lose weight, to spend *and* to save, to accumulate goods *and* to invest, that so much entertainment, advertising, and even news programming revolve around the incitement and containment of appetites.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the body itself changes under these circumstances, as Lowe points out. Cyclical regimes of dieting and exercise often leave individuals with memories of the many different bodily sizes and shapes "their" body has experienced.<sup>14</sup>

The slender bodies of the members of Eden's Crush conformed to the standards mandated by the technologies of the look and the relay of juxtaposed images and signs at the center of contemporary commodity culture. As a media creation and a simulation as well as an actual pop group, Eden's Crush became more credible, or at least more bankable, because its members looked like the other images circulated within commodity culture.

Their thoughts had to conform to this system as well. On their Web site, messages from each member of Eden's Crush unintentionally highlighted the group's similarities, the homogeneous character of their individual differences. "I find inspiration from my family," claimed Maile Misajon, age twenty-four. Nicole Scherzinger, age twenty-two, confided, "Every day I get support from my family members. I talk to my mom and family every day or every other day." Twenty-four-year-old Ivette Sosa declared, "My family inspires me," while Rosanna Tavaréz, also twenty-four, told her fans, "My family always encouraged me to dance and sing." Twenty-two-year-old Ana Marie Lombo was described as someone who "has spent her whole life traveling the world and performing music with her parents and two sisters."<sup>15</sup>

Yet complete sameness would not have worked as a marketing tool. Capitalism requires change, or at least the appearance of change, in order to promote product differentiation. Consequently, Eden's Crush did display differences. The members of the group were all "tan," in part because three of them were Latinas, and the other two claimed part Asian, Pacific island, or indigenous

ancestry. Rosanna Tavez was born in New York and raised in Miami, but her parents came to the United States from the Dominican Republic. Ana Maria Lombo was born in Medellín, Colombia. Ivette Sosa hailed from New Jersey but was of Puerto Rican descent. Nicole Scherzinger was born in Hawai'i, where her mother was "the lead hula dancer in a big Hawai'ian family." Maile Misajon, from Long Beach, California, claimed Irish, Filipino, and Hawai'ian ancestry.

As "mixed race" but not Black (at least by generally understood U.S. norms), the members of Eden's Crush brought a safe degree of "difference" to the fore, yet not so much that they might have raised the issues of racialization, oppression, and exclusion associated with the history of race within U.S. culture. No doubt the ascendant popularity of Jennifer Lopez and perhaps even Christina Aguilera positioned the members of the group as potentially marketable to a broad range of audiences, including the huge hemispheric market that now links North American rock to *roq en español*.

Like Lopez and Aguilera, the members of Eden's Crush made music that sounds very much like the music made by whites imitating Blacks, especially the boy bands 'N Sync, the Backstreet Boys, and 98 Degrees. "Latinas" like Lopez, Aguilera, and 60 percent of Eden's Crush can take center stage with this kind of music, as long as they have the appropriate faces, bodies, and hair. This was not a space, however, open to Celia Cruz, a Latina generally acknowledged as one of the greatest singers ever, because Cruz's monolingual Spanish lyrics, musical grounding in Afro-Cuban styles, dark skin, and husky body disqualified her from becoming one of the interchangeable parts in the linked chain of production and distribution of the music-television-Internet industry.

The Latina, Asian, and indigenous elements in the backgrounds of the members of Eden's Crush served simply as differences that do not make a difference, as elements of identity that are not really bounded in space or time, as interchangeable parts in a larger system characterized by the logic of containerization. Group members affirmed their allegiance to their heritage as a personal matter. "It just means so much to me to sing Spanish lyrics in a song," one maintained but brought no broader history to the fore. The group's Puerto Rican grew up in New Jersey, the Dominican in Miami, and the two who were part Hawai'ian grew up in Louisville, Kentucky,

and Long Beach, California. The group's racial differences served market ends, but their connections to racial histories had to be muted for commercial purposes, because too much particularity might have inhibited their suitability as role models for their target audience of affluent, young, white teenage girls.

*Pop Stars* was a pure product of a particular moment in the history of marketing and technological change. In part, it emanated from the 1996 Telecommunications Act, passed by a Republican Congress and signed by a Democratic president. This law encouraged consolidation of the ownership of media outlets into fewer and fewer hands. Giant conglomerates used the bill to acquire control over hundreds of radio and television stations. By 2003, ten firms controlled two-thirds of radio revenues and listeners. The two largest companies, Clear Channel and Viacom, received 45 percent of industry revenues from programs heard by 42 percent of the medium's listeners.<sup>16</sup> The economies of scale that made sense with this kind of consolidation favored mass distribution of the same safe sounds to the largest possible audience. The music of the Backstreet Boys and 'N Sync fit this format perfectly. Both groups came out of Orlando, Florida, and, like their counterpart Britney Spears, had histories with predictable corporate commercial culture, thanks to their work at Disney World and on the Disney Channel's *Mickey Mouse Club*. Yet by the end of the 1990s, these economies of scale needed to accommodate themselves to economies of scope as well.<sup>17</sup>

In the emerging era of digital capitalism, integrated computer networks make it possible to rationalize and maximize the profitability of consumption in much the same way that containerization transformed the social relations of production, distribution, and reception in the industrial era. New technologies loom large in these transformations, but they do not cause them. As Raymond Williams explains, "Virtually all technical study and experiment are undertaken within already existing social relations and cultural forms, typically for purposes that are already in general foreseen."<sup>18</sup> The technologies of radio and television could have been adapted for many different kinds of educational and entertainment uses, but the commercial model of selling audiences to advertisers won out because business and government leaders used their influence to secure favored treatment for the development of the technologies most suited for business uses. Similarly, containerization and the

digital technologies that flow from it could have been developed for many different kinds of social uses. In this society, however, the adaptation of new technologies for the expansion of market sites and the generation of new sources of profit has received favored treatment (and funding) from the government agencies whose research and development resources have brought the new technologies into existence in the first place.<sup>19</sup>

The commercial culture of containerization and digital capitalism follows the well-worn pattern produced in previous periods of capitalist growth and technological transformation. Confronted with declining rates of profit and working-class resistance at the point of production, business leaders seek access to new markets and new ways of reducing labor costs. They pressure governments to develop new technologies that can be appropriated for private purposes. Containerization and digital capitalism enable entrepreneurs to transcend political, cultural, and commercial boundaries, to secure new markets, to create new points of sale, to turn previously noncommercial social activities into for-profit transactions, and to force others to pay the social costs and suffer the social consequences of the disruptions caused by the new economy.<sup>20</sup>

Culture itself changes under these conditions. Production becomes more homogeneous, because products need to become more interchangeable to be marketed effectively. Corporate interests so dominate cultural production that previously independent sites of cultural creation become dependent on the patronage and favors of big business for their survival.<sup>21</sup> The state no longer serves as a site of countervailing power against business. Instead, it functions as an agent of capitalist transformation and change. The most widely circulated cultural creations under these circumstances reflect the ideas and values of the capitalists who sponsor them. They emphasize the emotions and ideas most valuable to marketers, privileging the needy narcissistic self of consumer desire over the intersubjective and interactive social subject. The resulting culture of “capitalist realism” relies on a limited repertoire of themes over and over again, themes that Williams eloquently characterizes as *alienation* and *dislocation*, the former fueled by “a violent competition and impersonal appetite” and the latter by “arbitrariness and human disability.”<sup>22</sup>

Violent competition and impersonal appetite provide the rai-

son d'être for low-budget “reality” television programs like *Pop Stars*, *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, *The Real World*, and *American Idol*. Arbitrariness and human disability constitute the core of the voyeuristic pleasures offered by *Cops*, *America's Most Wanted*, *The Jerry Springer Show*, and *The Howard Stern Show*. The transformation of television news into a series of sensational scandals and soap opera-like serial narratives and the linked systems of hyper-commercialism that transform teenage infatuation and attraction to pop music stars into fully integrated marketing opportunities testify vividly to the character of the culture of containerization. Under this system, alienation and dislocation are not obstacles to be overcome but rather opportunities for titillation, transgression, and sadomasochistic cathexis.<sup>23</sup>

These dynamics produce new cultural forms that make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between programming and advertising. A music video, for example, sells cable television audiences to advertisers, but it also functions as advertising for the purchase of recorded compact discs and tapes, for music to be downloaded from the Internet, for forthcoming concerts starring the featured artist, and for the T-shirts and other paraphernalia marketed in support of tours, which then serve also as ads for music channels on cable television! Of course, products in previous eras sometimes blurred the line between art and advertisement too. Martin Denny's album *Exotica* in 1959 reached the top of the best-seller charts in part because its innovative use of stereophonic separation, reverberation, and acoustic delay were so well-suited for showing off the capacities of new kinds of stereo equipment.<sup>24</sup> In the early days of stereo, percussion recordings were particularly popular, because they showed off the properties of the new medium advantageously. In that era, Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, Art Blakey, and Max Roach recorded albums on which they played drums without accompaniment.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Les Baxter's *Perfume Set to Music* album was both a commercial recording and a promotional device for the Corday perfume company.<sup>26</sup> In the early 1980s, the CBS television series *Fame* secured only modest ratings and advertising dollars, but “soundtrack” record albums and tapes of music by the program's featured stars more than made up for the meager returns on investment from the show itself.<sup>27</sup> The congruence between advertising and art in contemporary culture has progressed

to the extent that, as Raymond Williams's deft phrase explains, "the tail wags the dog so vigorously that the tail is rapidly becoming the definition of any useful dog."<sup>28</sup>

Donald Lowe argues that the triumph of cybernetic systems generates "a new currency of power." The cognitive mapping of the spaces of the globe that characterized the age of discovery from the sixteenth century through the eighteenth and the sense of temporal development and succession that dominated the historical thinking of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been superseded by what Lowe describes as a new synchronic order "unbounded by absolute space or time, since space and time have themselves become elements of a system." Individual components of this system are interchangeable, and none has intrinsic value by itself outside the system.<sup>29</sup> Understanding this epistemic shift can help us theorize how the new economy is generating new social subjects in the process of generating new spaces for the consumption of commodities as well as new spaces for their production.

During the industrial era producers of commodities sought to broaden their markets by expanding absolute space. They wanted to sell more commodities to more people, and consequently they encouraged domestic consumers to spend more money. They sought augmented access to overseas markets.<sup>30</sup> Precisely for the purpose of expanding markets for U.S. goods, the U.S. Department of Defense collaborated with labor leaders and executives from the shipping industry to develop and implement containerization technologies during the 1950s. These taxpayer-subsidized collaborations shaped new technologies for maximum corporate profit and maximum expansion of private consumer spending rather than designs to reduce arduous labor or involve workers in making production decisions. Similarly, the Department of Defense supervised the development of Internet technologies in ways that privileged the commercial applications of the new medium over its educational or social possibilities.<sup>31</sup>

During the present postindustrial era of flexible accumulation and containerization, however, commodity producers aim not so much at expanding the market as at deepening it, replacing mass economies of scale with targeted economies of scope. Deepening the market requires the expansion of relative space by selling more specialized products to targeted audiences to secure higher profits. Under this regime, MCI directs its advertising toward "the

top third of the consumer market," while AT&T focuses on "the 20 percent of people who account for 80 percent of the company's \$6 billion in annual profit."<sup>32</sup>

Massive government subsidies shaped the technology of containerization and influenced government efforts to develop "standards" for digital high definition and Web access to television-computer links. These subsidies have been crafted to channel the most advanced technologies toward the generation of new spaces for profit, most notably in building a digital marketplace geared toward private profits. Although celebrated as a "free market" approach, the development of compatible systems among different manufacturers actually required incessant orchestration and intervention by government agencies, financed by taxpayers.

Containerization came into being by breaking the skill monopolies and control over working conditions by dockworkers in the shipping industry. Today's digital capitalism depends on relegating production to low-wage countries, such as Mexico (where some ten million color television sets adaptable to high-capacity computer networks are produced every year), in order to create a fully integrated global system of marketing, merchandising, and sales that will cause the boundaries of the shopping mall to become fluid and flexible, to extend into the home via the personal computer. High-capacity computer networks will stimulate new levels of consumption by the affluent while completely bypassing low-income neighborhoods, and perhaps even low-wage countries, entirely.<sup>33</sup> "Public" spaces for consumption can be allowed to decay into shopping sites of last resort for the parts of the population without access to the digital market.

The biggest problem facing marketers during the age when radio and television reigned supreme was that these electronic media created no direct points of sale. Unlike books, newspapers, theatrical performances, and motion pictures, radio and television depended on future purchases, on spending by audiences whose time and attention had been "sold" to advertisers.<sup>34</sup> Consumers paid directly for television sets and radio receivers. Indirectly, they financed the advertising industry, because product prices included the costs of advertising and because corporations deducted advertising expenses from tax liabilities as business expenses. The profits made from radio and television, however, remained dependent on consumer purchases to be made in the future dispersed sites.

The age of digital capitalism establishes the home computer as a privileged new site for direct sales. Corporate marketers can use computers to gain access to information about each of their customers, to keep track of individual financial transactions, spending habits, tastes, interests, and desires. Marketers armed with this information can target individual buyers, anticipate what they will buy and how much they will spend. In turn, these companies can then sell the record of their transactions to bankers, stockbrokers, and insurance agents in search of customers who fit very specific profiles. People whose incomes (or thrifty habits) mark them as less active consumers can be marginalized altogether by these systems. Affluent consumers who make plenty of purchases will receive inside information about bargains and specialized services. Low-income and low-volume shoppers will pay higher prices and receive inferior services. Company personnel will know that complaints and inquiries coming from poor people need not be answered.<sup>35</sup>

Digital television and radio receivers will layer consumer opportunities on top of one another. They will turn the physical space of the home into a shopping mall while bringing entertainment and consumption ever closer together as centers of the social world. Broadcast outlets are likely to give way to narrow-casting and Internet downloading, television sales will eclipse telemarketing or "live" shopping, and public performance and recreation spaces will dwindle as affluent consumers inside gated and locked communities carry on collective transactions in atomized fashion, sitting in front of separate computer monitors at the same moment.

The technologies of digital capitalism have the potential to expand consumer access to a broad range of cultural expressions, but powerful oligopolies in every major entertainment field will make every effort to create the lingua franca of global commercial culture out of only a very small number of blockbuster action/adventure films, a very small number of songs with Anglo-American melodies and chord progressions, and a very small number of television programs owned by an even smaller group of producers.

Digital capitalism also threatens to transform the meaning of the subcultural spaces that emerged among consumers during the era of Fordist production and consumption. In the age of mass production and mass marketing, small subgroups resisted the tyranny of the market in creative ways. They developed "subversive" uses for standardized products by customizing cars or wearing "work"

clothes such as denim jeans as leisure wear. They embraced artists not validated by the market system, according great prestige to folk singers and craft practitioners who seemed to do their work independently of market considerations. These rebellions went against the logic of the market and carved out oppositional sub-cultural spaces within market relations.

In an age of flexible accumulation, economies of scope, and increasingly differentiated markets, however, the creation of new spaces simply allows more opportunities for niche marketing while training consumers to desire difference and distance from the tastes of others. Part of this entails a proliferation of products that can be marketed as new. The Gillette Company seeks to secure 40 percent of its sales every five years from entirely new products, and more than 30 percent of Toshiba's products in 1987 had reached the market within the previous three years.<sup>36</sup> Thus, even subcultural spaces may become a de facto part of the research and development apparatuses of niche marketers.

Commercial culture is not without its own contradictions, however. Its very hegemonic force sometimes puts people in situations that encourage them to try to produce new cultural forms with very different presuppositions and purposes. In the 1920s, the comfortably middle-class parents of Leon "Bix" Beiderbecke in Davenport, Iowa, fretted about what they thought of as their son's unhealthy interest in the jazz music played on riverboats in their town. So they sent him away to prep school in a Chicago suburb. He soon discovered he had even better access to the jazz played in the slums and vice districts of the metropolis there than he had back home in Iowa. In the 1950s, Los Angeles city authorities disapproved of the racially mixed Black and white crowds attending band leader Johnny Otis's rock 'n' roll shows, so they devised a series of ordinances that made it too risky for social halls and nightclubs in the city to host these performances. Closing off the city to rock 'n' roll shows, however, drove them to the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, where Otis and other impresarios discovered a large number of local Chicano and Asian American teens eager to dance and socialize with the whites and Blacks who ventured out from the city. British censors banned Peter Ford's "Chikki Chikki Ahh Ahh" in 1988, because they interpreted the words "disco me to ecstasy" as an invitation to use the drug known as ecstasy. Ford had no such intention, but by banning the song the censors made

it more interesting to people who actually were interested in drugs, making the recording a huge hit. The same revolutionary transformations of culture and space that have given capitalist culture a new hegemony in the age of containerization are also generating what Raymond Williams calls “a long march to alternative institutions, which have to be raised from the resources of surviving and potential in-place communities.”<sup>37</sup>

*Pop Stars* did not invent the intersection of pubescent sexuality and sophisticated marketing. In Boston in the early 1980s, African American producer Maurice Starr discovered and molded the boy band New Edition and guided them to stardom. Starr took four Black teenagers who had begun singing together, doing covers of Jackson 5 songs in elementary school, and shaped them into teen idols with three major hits by 1983. When their success attracted the attention of a major label, New Edition left Starr’s Streetwise label and went on to even greater success under the guidance of legendary producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis.

Embittered by his experience with New Edition, Maurice Starr assembled a new boy band, New Kids on the Block, a group made up of five young suburban white males. Following the formula of romantic ballads, bouncy rhythm and blues, and mild funk that worked with New Edition, Starr guided the New Kids on the Block to superstar status, selling millions of records, tapes, and compact discs between 1986 and 1990. As had happened so many times before in the history of U.S. popular music, the blend of white phenotypes with Black musical styles proved especially lucrative.

In the mid-1990s, white producer Louis Pearlman imitated Starr’s successful New Kids on the Block with the Backstreet Boys. Blending a modicum of hip hop into the New Kids on the Block/New Edition format of rhythm and blues, ballads, and funk, the Orlando, Florida–based Backstreet Boys became the dominant boy band of their era. Their success paved the way for ’N Sync, a band also based in Orlando, also composed of five young white males, also featuring a singing style in the tradition of New Kids on the Block, New Edition, and the Jackson 5. It was these successes that paved the way for *Pop Stars*.

The formation of Eden’s Crush differed significantly from the pattern established by the boy bands. As the pure product of corporate synergy, Eden’s Crush was created so that the group could not do to Time Warner what New Edition had done to Maurice Starr

(leave for another label) or what the Backstreet Boys had done to their management team (sue them over royalties). As a corporate creation, Eden’s Crush resembled the boy bands less than it did previous so-called groups based in studios—the Cuff Links, the Archies, and the Monkees.

The Cuff Links had a top ten hit with “Tracy” in 1969, even though the group did not actually exist. Session musician Ron Dante recorded himself singing “Tracy” in different voices and put the dubs together as a recording by a group called the Cuff Links.<sup>38</sup> The Archies did not exist either, even though they had six songs among the top one hundred in 1968 and 1969, including the best-selling “Sugar Sugar.” Their lead vocalist, too, was the seemingly ubiquitous Ron Dante, this time providing his voice to accompany television cartoon characters.<sup>39</sup> The link between the cartoon show and the recordings served as an early exercise in the kind of cross-marketing that came to fruition in *Pop Stars*. The producer of the Archies music and television show was Don Kirshner, who turned to cartoon characters because of his experience with a real-life group that actually existed, or at least sort of existed—the Monkees.

Kirshner created the Monkees for a fictional television program about a pop music group like the Beatles. For the lead roles, he hired four actors who could sing, but he prohibited the group from playing their own instruments or selecting their own songs. Dr. John played piano on several recordings by the Monkees, but he never met any of them.<sup>40</sup> As producer, Kirshner assigned himself 15 percent of the royalties on each recording the Monkees sold while limiting the four members of the group to 1.5 percent apiece. Group member Michael Nesmith, an accomplished songwriter and guitarist, protested against these arrangements, becoming particularly vociferous when the producer asked the group to sing “Sugar Sugar.” When the Monkees fired Kirshner to gain control of the production of their songs, Kirshner “took” “Sugar Sugar” to the Archies, a made-up group that could not rebel against his direction, since they were cartoon characters.<sup>41</sup>

The producers of *Pop Stars* designed Eden’s Crush also to be the kind of group that could not rebel against its creators. As the brilliant work of Matthew Stahl reminds us, control over the costs of labor remains a central goal of all capitalists, especially those in the music industry.<sup>42</sup> Labor costs rather than aesthetic preferences



explain the heavily produced standardized sounds of Eden's Crush, their own version of the kinds of arrangements that had been successful for New Edition, New Kids on the Block, the Backstreet Boys, and 'N Sync, their vocal timbre and pitch signifying adolescent longing that the boy bands had borrowed from Michael Jackson and the Jackson 5, who had taken it from Diana Ross, who got it from Frankie Lymon. The women in Eden's Crush might well have been distinctive vocalists, innovative writers, or even competent instrumentalists, but the format in which they performed made any display of those talents impossible. Their interchangeability and personal anonymity made them fit into the fully integrated system of production, distribution, and consumption that the age of containerization and economies of scope required.

Eden's Crush did not survive as a group. *Pop Stars* did not survive as a television program. The kinds of corporate synergy that Time Warner sought from this project did not quite come to fruition for that conglomerate. Yet none of that matters in this kind of market. Time-specific products such as Eden's Crush and the popularity of the Spice Girls, Pokemon cards, and Beanie Babies do not have to last. They turn products into events, manufacture an intense and artificially inflated demand that marks a particular time, but senesce before they become too expensive for their owners to maintain and before their popularity inhibits the development of similar new products.

The rise of the boy bands and the girl bands created to answer them, however, cannot be confined to a marketing event. For the young women who followed the group avidly, the social pedagogy of marketing taught by *Pop Stars* might ultimately be less significant than their exposure to images of women having fun working together, receiving the kinds of attention generally given to the other gender, and displaying more ethnic and racial diversity (however tame and limited) than any of their predecessor boy bands had ever been able to represent. From the perspective of Halberstam's queer temporality, viewers of all sexual preferences and affiliations might have benefited from the band's interruption (however timid) of life trajectories focused exclusively on marriage, procreation, and family. The eclipse of economies of scale by economies of scope is a significant historical event, one with terribly detrimental implications in a society in which things are more highly valued than people. Nonetheless, every act of cultural creation, distribution,

and consumption depends on unpredictable interactions between and among thinking subjects who (unlike the Archies) always hold the capacity to step out of character and exceed the roles allotted to them. The ability of contemporary marketing to raise and to contain deep personal and collective contradictions simultaneously helps account for the prominence and power of consumer purchases in this society. The dynamics of this system, however, always runs the risk of opening up the very wounds it aims to salve, of producing the very nonnormativity it seeks to prevent.

*Ritual Performance in the Peruvian Andes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 213.

9. Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

10. Bill Dahl, "The Soulful Saxophone Sound of Gene 'Daddy G' Barge," *Living Blues* 31, no. 151, May–June 2000, 3, 27; John Soelder, "Bobby Womack Returns to His Gospel Roots?" *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 23, 1999.

11. Bob Shannon and John Javna, *Behind the Hits: Inside Stories of Classic Pop and Rock and Roll* (New York: Warner Books, 1988), 66; Fred Bronson, *The Billboard Book of Number One Hits* (New York: Billboard, 1988), 99.

12. Tony Mitchell, "Fightin' da Faida: The Italian Posses and Hip-Hop in Italy," in Tony Mitchell, ed., *Global Noise* (Middletown, Vt.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 207, 209.

13. Vernon Reid, "Brother from Another Planet," *Vibe* 1, no. 3, November 1993, 47.

14. Bronson, *The Billboard Book of Number One Hits*, 414.

15. Robert Farris Thompson, "Preface," in Raul Fernandez, *Latin Jazz: The Perfect Combination* (Washington, D.C.: Chronicle Books, 2002), 11.

16. See my discussion of 2 Live Crew and censorship in chapter 7, "The Hip Hop Hearings."

17. Dr. John, *Under a Hoodoo Moon*, 110.

18. David Ake, *Jazz Cultures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 77–78.

19. Dr. John, *Under a Hoodoo Moon*, 187.

20. *Ibid.*, 250.

## 1. Pop Stars

The epigraph to this chapter is quoted from Rupert Charles Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 79; originally from Walter Rodney, *A Tribute to Walter Rodney: One Hundred Years of Development in Africa*, lectures given at the University of Hamburg, summer 1978 (Hamburg: Institut für Politische Wissenschaft der Universität Hamburg).

1. Steven Flusty, *De-Coca-Colonization: Making the Globe from the Inside Out* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 156; C. C. Ebbesmeyer and W. J. Ingraham, "Shoe Spill in the North Pacific East," *Eos* 73 (1992): 361.

2. C. C. Ebbesmeyer and W. J. Ingraham, "Pacific Toy Spill Fuels Ocean Current Pathways Research," *Eos* 75 (1994): 425.

3. Gayle Wald, "'I Want It That Way': Teenybopper Music and the Girling of Boy Bands," *Genders* 35 (2002): 1–39; Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 174–79.

4. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 177.

5. Sallie Hofmeister, "Company Town," *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 2001, C6; Jim Rutenber, "AOL Combines TV Networks under a Chief," *New York Times*, March 7, 2001, C1; Kevin Downey, "Of Eden's Crush and Cross Media Synergies," *Medialife*, August 10, 2001, 1.

6. William K. Tabb, *The Amoral Elephant: Globalization and the Struggle for Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 47, 169–70.

7. This is not to conclude that Eden's Crush did not present good music, that the producers, backup musicians, and group members were untalented. But it is to allege that such a heavy dependence on production values and promotion made it more difficult to discern in this music the virtuosity that appears in other genres of music.

8. Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1999), 132–33.

9. Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

10. "Ask Ivette's Dad," [www.edenscrush.com/questions060601.html](http://www.edenscrush.com/questions060601.html), accessed November 18, 2003.

11. Donald M. Lowe, *The Body in Late Capitalist USA* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 135.

12. *Ibid.*, 166.

13. See George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 108–13; Lowe, *The Body in Late Capitalist USA*, 165.

14. Lowe, *The Body in Late Capitalist USA*, 166.

15. Shari Waters, "Music for Teens," <http://teenmusic.about.com/library/weekly/aa050801b.htm>, accessed November 18, 2003.

16. Jenny Toomey, "Empire of the Air," in David Brackett, ed., *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 478.

17. David Brackett, "Public Policy and Pop Music History Collide," in Brackett, ed., *The Pop, Rock and Soul Reader*, 476.

18. Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1999), 120.

19. Dan Schiller, *Digital Capitalism: Networking the Global Market System* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 1–2; Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Studies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).

20. Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, 122.

21. Néstor García Canclini, "Cultural Reconversion," in George Ydice, Jean Franco, and Juan Flores, eds., *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 33.



22. Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, 132–33.
23. In a singularly important but unfortunately largely overlooked article, Joel Kovel explains how the constitution of the family as a privileged market site helps fuel this kind of cultural spectacle. “The point is not that people desire the administrative mode, it is rather that administration protects them against the desires they can not stand, while it serves out, in the form of diluted rationalization, a hint of the desire and power lost to them.” Joel Kovel, “Rationalization and the Family,” *Telos* 37 (1978): 19.
24. John Szwed, *Space Is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra* (New York: Da Capo, 1997), 151.
25. *Ibid.*, 177.
26. *Ibid.*, 155.
27. Brian Lowery, “New Faces of Synergy 2001,” *Los Angeles Times*, Calendar section, March 11, 2001, 73.
28. Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, 127.
29. Lowe, *The Body in Late Capitalist USA*, 11–12.
30. See George Lipsitz, “Consumer Spending as State Project: Yesterday’s Solutions and Today’s Problems,” in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt, eds., *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 127–47.
31. Schiller, *Digital Capitalism*, 8.
32. *Ibid.*, 54.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, 126.
35. Tabb, *The Amoral Elephant*, 167.
36. Schiller, *Digital Capitalism*, 123–24.
37. Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, 134.
38. Bob Shannon and John Javna, *Behind the Hits: Inside Stories of Classic Pop and Rock and Roll* (New York: Warner Books, 1986), 113.
39. Joel Whitburn, *Joel Whitburn’s Top Pop Singles, 1955–1986* (Menomonee Falls, Wisc.: Record Research, 1987), 23.
40. Dr. John (Mac Rebennack), *Under a Hoodoo Moon: The Life of the Night Tripper*, with Jack Rummel (New York: St. Martin’s, 1994), 126.
41. Shannon and Javna, *Behind the Hits*, 76, 207.
42. Matthew Wheelock Stahl, “Reinventing Certainties: American Popular Music and Social Reproduction,” Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Communication, University of California, San Diego, 2006.

## 2. Crossing Over

1. The Fugees’ covers of 1970s songs “Killing Me Softly with His Song” and “No Woman, No Cry” conform to the pattern described in the

introduction in relation to hip hop references to the Isley Brothers’ “Footsteps in the Dark” and Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway’s “Where Is the Love?”

2. Chris Wong Won of 2 Live Crew is a Chinese Trinidadian, Foxy Brown is Trinidadian and Asian, the families of Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa came from Barbados, and Kool DJ Herc was born in Jamaica, as was Bushwick Bill (originally Richard Shaw) of the Geto Boys. See George Lipsitz, “The Lion and the Spider,” *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
3. Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 191.
4. Sue Steward, “Compas, Carnival, and Voodoo,” in Simon Broughton, Mark Ellingham, David Muddyman, and Richard Trillo, eds., *World Music: The Rough Guide* (London: Penguin, 1994), 498–502.
5. Gage Averill, *A Day for the Hunter, a Day for the Prey: Popular Music and Power in Haiti* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 133.
6. McAlister, *Rara!* 9. *Babylon and the Babylon System* are the Rastafarian terms for the site of their exile and captivity in Jamaica, for the Anglo-American–Creole capitalism, and for the police powers used to oppress Rastafarians.
7. *Ibid.*, 192.
8. *Ibid.*, 3–9.
9. Paula Ioanide’s forthcoming work on the Louima beating brilliantly contextualizes this event within the broader psychosexual racist categories from which it emerged.
10. See chapter 9 as well as my discussion of Latin bugalu in *Dangerous Crossroads* (London: Verso, 1994).
11. Jim McCarthy and Ron Sansoe, *Voices of Latin Rock: The People and Events That Created This Sound* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2004), 72–73.
12. Douglas Henry Daniels, “Vodun and Jazz: ‘Jelly Roll’ Morton and Lester ‘Pres’ Young: Substance and Shadow,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 116, 118.
13. McAlister, *Rara!* 194.
14. *Haiti Progress*, English ed., March 22, 2000, 1–3.
15. *Ibid.*, 3.
16. Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1994), 89–93.
17. David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Color, and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 5.