



GENRE IN POPULAR MUSIC

FABIAN HOLT

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FABIAN HOLT is associate professor of music and performance at the University of Roskilde.

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F O R

Anja, Dante, and Victor



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We're all under construction, trying to rebuild, you know, ourselves. Hip-hop that gained respect from, you know, not even respect from, but just like rock and roll . . . and it took us a lot of hard work to get here. So all that hatin' and animosity between folks, you need to kill it, with a skiller! You don't see Bill Gates and Donald Trump arguing with each other 'cuz both of them got paper, and they got better shit to do. Git more paper! So all I'm sayin' is let's take hip-hop back to the rope. Follow me.

—Missy Elliott, *Under Construction* (2002)

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This is a book about the work of genre categories in American popular music. I explore the diversity of musics subsumed under the category of popular music and deal with its boundary areas with folk music, art jazz, and world music. Popular music is a powerful cultural and economical force in modern capitalist societies. Individual genres and artists have been strong symbols of social groups, places, and time periods. In recent decades, rock/pop has become a cultural mainstream and increasingly functions as a discourse for articulating public memory of peoples and nations at major official events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, Princess Diana’s funeral, the Soccer World Cups, and the media spectacle ahead of the G8 summit in 2005.¹ The growing acceptance of popular music in the twentieth century and its power as a marker of a new era in music history generate tremendous optimism (think of the jazz boom in the 1930s or the rock boom in the 1960s), but there are also reasons for ambivalence. Some forms of popular music accompany racism, sexism, and political disengagement, while others have had unparalleled power in struggles against these social problems and succeeded in overthrowing cultural hierarchies. Popular culture is really one of the major domains of social life for which academia has a responsibility to act as a humane and critical voice (as opposed to merely embracing or ignoring popular taste). This was a central concern when the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) was founded in 1981, and it is still pertinent today even though the field has become more established institutionally.²

The field is not very organized, however. It has developed from such diverse traditions as British cultural studies, German musicology, East Asian media studies, and American folklore studies, and that partially explains the absence of a common methodological ground. Although this ensures some

diversity, stronger integration of the field could above all reduce some of the discursive and institutional gaps between music-centered and culture-centered approaches. The concept of genre is taking on a new centrality, as we shall see, and it has precisely this potential to strengthen our common ground without sacrificing diversity. Popular music studies may indeed turn to genre for ontological reasons, to lay claim to a musical and cultural *raison d'être*.

The very term *genre* emerged in the mid nineteenth century when the processes of modernity were accelerating and new forms of popular culture were beginning to emerge, including what became known as *genre fiction* and *genre painting* ("Genre" 2006; Neale 1995, 176). Bourgeois aesthetics valued the notion of the unique and organic art work with a life of its own (Solie 1980), and that mind-set informed images of popular culture as trivial mass culture derived from mechanical formulae. Genre has since become part and parcel of the vocabularies for many musics, and it should be clear that generic categories underpin all forms of culture.³ Human agency is never formless, and even the simplest cognitive functions depend on categories and typologies. At a basic level, genre is a type of category that refers to a particular kind of music within a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation, and signification. That is to say, genre is not only "in the music," but also in the minds and bodies of particular groups of people who share certain conventions. These conventions are created in relation to particular musical texts and artists and the contexts in which they are performed and experienced.

Genre is a fundamental structuring force in musical life. It has implications for how, where, and with whom people make and experience music. Without paying attention to genre, we would be poorly prepared to discuss a number of important questions: How is rhythmic and melodic variation regulated? What do we listen for in music? How do musicians communicate? What are the functions of rituals in a musical tradition? What do various people understand music to be and how do they use it? How can we think comparatively about music?

Genre is also fundamental in the sense that the concept of music is bound up with categorical difference. There is no such thing as "general music," only particular musics. Music comes into being when individuals make it happen, and their concepts of music are deeply social. Humans are enculturated into particular musics and ways of thinking about musical difference. For me, and probably many others, this began in childhood, when I was introduced to the musics of my family and encountered a distinction

between music for children and music for adults. My immediate surroundings taught me that age and gender are determinants of musical preferences, and these are also articulated on the level of genre. As teenagers, my peers and I got spending money and became consumers, conscious of the role of musical taste in defining identities. The music I heard then now evokes memories of particular people and places. Genre thus continues to create cultural and historical horizons over the course of life. It is also a tool with which culture industries and national governments regulate the circulation of vast fields of music. It is a major force in canons of educational institutions, cultural hierarchies, and decisions about censorship and funding. The apparatus of the corporate music industry is thoroughly organized in generic and market categories. From the moment an artist starts negotiating with a major label, he or she is communicating with a division specializing in a particular kind of music, and the production then follows procedures of that division before finally the music is marketed and sold as a product with a label and registered with a generic code in the database of retail stores. These various agents can use the same term and be interested in the same music for different reasons. Sociability and musical passion may be important factors in private life, whereas professional music makers also have to think about the business side, and governments are concerned with institutions and politics.

Genre not only appears in many areas of musical life; it also has the capacity to connect them. A piece of music is created and heard in the context of others, but the contextual dimension is much broader than that. Genre is always collective, musically and socially (a person can have his or her own style, but not genre). Conventions and expectations are established through acts of repetition performed by a group of people, and the process of genre formation is in turn often accompanied by the formation of new social collectivities. A typical example is how music scenes are organized around particular musics.

Discourse plays a major role in genre making. A genre category can only be established if the music has a name. Naming a music is a way of recognizing its existence and distinguishing it from other musics. The name becomes a point of reference and enables certain forms of communication, control, and specialization into markets, canons, and discourses. This process also involves exclusionary mechanisms, and it is often met with resistance. Alternatives to dominant names and definitions are proposed, and some people are skeptical of categories and refuse to deal with them. "There are only two kinds of music, good and bad," goes an old saying that evokes a general skepticism toward categorization. Some cultures of categorization are excessive

and narrow-minded, and many people feel that genre boundaries create artificial divisions between things they love. But it is problematic to replace genre with taste and suggest that there are universal standards. Nor does it help to counter one rigid distinction with another or to discard all labels and leave an undifferentiated mass. Struggles about names and definitions are often an integral part of the histories of individual musics and their cultural dynamics. Why do people have different names for the same music? What happened when “hillbilly music” became “country music,” when jazz was defined as art music, and when zydeco was presented as world music? Did such changes in nomenclature create or reflect musical changes? Why have people debated whether salsa is a distinct genre or nothing more than Cuban music in new clothes? Who fought the battles, where, and what were the stakes?

Framing the Project

If genre is fundamental to understanding musical culture, one might ask why there is relatively little scholarly writing about it and why it has been relatively marginal despite the growth of interest in issues of identity and culture in music studies over the past couple of decades. Hamm has also noted that genre has been ignored (2000, 298). Several explanations can be offered for this.

One reason genre has been ignored is that although genre is important, it is more difficult to establish useful genre theories for music than for other art forms. Genre theory is most firmly established in film studies, and a comparison with music studies can begin with differences in production and signification. When film studies arrived at the conclusion in the late 1960s that genre is a necessary conceptual tool, it was argued that popular American cinema required a different approach than the traditional arts because it is more standardized, in part as a result of the enormous investments in real estate, personnel, technology, and marketing (Ryall 1998, 328 and 337). The forms of production in music are more diverse. In popular music, major labels do enforce a high degree of standardization, but there are also many specialized independent labels, and many different live music venues, not to mention amateur music making. “Nowhere,” says Walser, “are genre boundaries more fluid than in popular music. . . . musicians are ceaselessly creating new fusions and extensions of popular genres” (1993, 27). In much popular music, a great deal of creativity and genre negotiation occur on the level of the individual performing artist. Many artists perform “their own music” in the sense that songs and arrangements are frequently made

specifically for them or by themselves. Performers can, moreover, make the material their own by performing it in their own style and negotiate or even challenge generic boundaries in the course of a performance. Individuality is also valued in many genre discourses. Fans praise their favorite artists for having a unique style, and artists applaud their colleagues for this and encourage young aspiring artists to “find their own voice.”

One could also argue that music genres are more difficult to theorize because of the nature of musical signification. Music is not referential like literature or film, for instance. From a Peircean perspective, musical sound is a symbolic form of representation. Music does not have the precision of iconic or indexical representation even when it accompanies words. Born has argued that because music’s representational meanings lack denotative “back-up” they need to be established through other sociocultural dynamics (2000, 32 and 46). As a result, the connotations attached to music are potentially more labile and unfixd. This means that musical meaning is highly contingent, and that the ontologies of the semantic codes that form the musical basis of generic categories are fragile. The argument is supported by the fact that a mimetic relation to reality is less central to music genres than to film genres. In a process unique to the photographic arts, the film image is in a sense produced by means of reality itself, and that affects how the film “text” is evaluated. Incidentally, the specificity of musical signification is one of the reasons for the strikingly limited success of semiotics in musicology compared with film and literary studies.

A more direct explanation for the limited interest in genre in contemporary cultural theory of music is that the strong interest in hybridity has drawn attention away from categories.⁴ The erosion of cultural hierarchies and the massive increase in the circulation of cultural products have created new forms of categorical complexity and given rise to critical reactions against the large philosophical systems of Western modernity. The paradigms that emerged in the Age of Discovery and evolved in the greater Enlightenment movement were characterized by detailed universal systems of classification and by imperialism. The narratives of modernity dominated the first hundred years of the social and human sciences (ca. 1850–1950), as evidenced by the paradigms of evolutionism, positivism, and structuralism that also had a great impact on music studies.⁵ Influential postmodern thinkers have criticized these paradigms and claimed that the world has arrived at a new condition. Much writing about “late modernity” and “post-modernism” has been preoccupied with diagnosing a general social condition and has in effect created new forms of reductionism. Moreover, the antifoundational stance of postmodernism and the fetishization of hybridity

do not get us very far. In popular music studies, Hesmondhalgh has recently stated: “We need to know how boundaries are constituted, not simply that they are fuzzier than various writers have assumed” (2005, 24).

Popular music categories have gained some attention among scholars, and interest in genre has grown since the mid 1990s. In 1982 Fabbri proposed a general scheme for popular music genres, but it was never really followed up, and the concept of scene stole the show in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the mid 1990s, Fornäs (1995) presented a general discussion of genre formation in rock, applying perspectives of contemporary cultural studies and focusing on discursive mechanisms. Frith included a chapter on genre in his book *Performing Rites* (1996), a work that represents a move away from the somewhat distanced theoretical gaze of early popular music studies toward a more textured insidership. Informed by Fabbri, he discusses how collectivities are organized around individual genres and adopts the term genre world to indicate that a popular music genre constitutes a distinct sphere with a “complex interplay of musicians, listeners, and mediating ideologues” (1996, 88). That genres are rooted in their own distinct social spheres is perhaps not particular to popular music, but it is an important feature and one that is less prominent in, say, Western art music. For one thing, popular musics have a more direct relation with everyday life and emerge from a wide array of contemporary lifestyles and social formations. One might get the sense from reading Frith that genre worlds are somewhat self-contained entities and freestanding ontologies. The boundaries between genres and the broader field of popular musics, however, are fluid, and there is much interaction between them. It should also be mentioned that popular music cannot be portrayed merely as a series of genre-specific cultures. Other specialized cultures, occasionally crossing genre boundaries, are organized according to musics of a particular culture area (such as heritage music) or an instrument (such as choirs and fiddle societies, and even deejay competitions). A highly visible form of specialized collectivity is celebrity fan culture. Louis Armstrong, Dolly Parton, and Flaco Jiménez are examples of artists who crossed over from genre-specific cultures to a broader mainstream characterized by less generic and cultural specialization.

Negus, in *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (1999)—so far the only advanced-level book on genre in popular music—draws on Neale and Frith in his development of the term genre culture. It includes not only the aesthetic debates on which Frith concentrates, but also the organizational structures of the music industry, and Negus’s focus is on the latter. His book is an excellent account of how categories of major musical formations and markets structure corporate agency. *Popular Music Genres* (Borthwick and Moy

2004), another British book, provides rudimentary introductions to eleven popular categories, some of them genres, others sub-genres. The book has little theory and can be viewed as a somewhat conventional genre history of popular music since the mid-1960s. A few briefer studies of more recent date also deserve mention: Toynbee has suggested in *Making Popular Music* (2000) that genre is central to popular music studies, and the chapter he devotes to the concept indicates that the agenda in the emerging discussion centers on the relation between music and collectivity.⁶ Brackett (2002) has examined the relation between various types of categories in mass-media contexts, and Hesmondhalgh (2005) has discussed musical collectivities, rejecting the concepts of tribe, scene, and subculture, claiming that genre is a more useful concept. Finally, genre has been assigned a significant place in the canon of critical concepts, as defined by a monumental handbook from Routledge (Frith 2004).

The present book broadens the field of inquiry and refigures the critical toolbox in a number of ways. Above all, I wish to bring genre scholarship closer to musical practice and experience. Several of the above-mentioned scholars have noted that the relation between music and the social is important, but they have focused heavily on the social. This is understandable: they all have a background in the social sciences or in media studies (except Brackett, who is a musicologist but has published little on the subject). Writing about the musical dimension of music requires a serious engagement with particular musical performances, but it is possible to communicate nuanced listening in a meaningful way without using very technical language. Furthermore, although I present analytical observations on performances or recordings thereof in every chapter, readers are not expected to have extensive knowledge of music theory.

Secondly, this book aims at understanding music genres in the totality of social space, and the field of inquiry thus encompasses a wider area than just the corporate world. Other spheres of production are taken into account, including independent record labels and avenues for live music in rural and urban areas. As the field of inquiry is broadened, the need for more differentiated analytical perspectives increases. Genre draws attention to the collective and the general, and a great deal of genre research forgets that culture cannot be adequately understood without paying attention to the individual and the particular. This critique can also be raised against studies of genre worlds and cultures because thinking about the general and systemic dimensions has dominated. We need to examine the dynamics of genre formation at many different levels and sites. The best way to do this is not to develop an all-encompassing master theory. I employ multiple critical

models, explore plural narratives, and develop “small theories” in relation to particular musical and social realities in a series of individually designed case studies. This allows for a more direct confrontation of theory and the empirical.

My methodological approach is deeply influenced by the unique community of ethnomusicologists that has grown up around Philip Bohlman since the late 1980s at the University of Chicago. Bohlman’s sophisticated thinking about boundaries has been a remarkable source of inspiration for this project. Like his colleague Martin Stokes, he has developed rich approaches to understanding music as a complex phenomenon with many dimensions—esthetic, ethical, historical, performative, social, and so on—approaches that are important in genre studies, too. The discussions I had with Bohlman and Stokes during my stays at Chicago have influenced the entire project, and the only reason they are not cited more often in this book is that their publications concentrate on other topics and musics. A special case is the final chapter, which is a direct response to some of the arguments Bohlman made in a course I co-taught with him in 2004. My ethnographic informants, moreover, have also had a much broader impact than the number of pages on which they are explicitly represented might suggest. From elder country music people to young urban hipsters, archivists, business executives, and musicians, I have been fortunate to draw on rich vernacular knowledges of music outside academia.

One of the basic principles of ethnography is to ground theory in fieldwork, and this has not really been done yet in the study of popular music genres. All except Negus and Brackett have theorized genre without grounding it in empirical research in any substantial way, and the general schemes outlined by Fabbri, Frith, and Toynbee suffer from typical problems of arm-chair research. Negus’s empirical research is strong, but, again, he focuses on the corporate world and says little about individuals and local microcosms. The field research I conducted in the United States in 2003 and 2004 informs my entire project. Not all the case studies are based on ethnographic research in a rigorous sense, but they all look comparatively at how music and musical difference are socially situated by particular individuals in particular places. My base of operation was Chicago, and other field sites included Nashville, New York, and San Francisco, as well as rural areas of southern Illinois and western Kentucky.

It should be clear by now that this book is about *understanding* rather than *defining* genres. Definitions and categories serve practical purposes and tell us something about how people understand music. But we should be suspicious because they create boundaries, because they have a static nature,

and because they have political ramifications and draw attention away from more important matters. Traditional genre theory has tended to shift scholars’ focus from practice and experience to structure and object.⁷ Moreover, short definitions of hundreds of popular music categories are already available in handbooks and on Web sites, which also feature systematic lists of styles and substyles.⁸ What journalism does not provide is detailed accounts of how music categories operate in cultural processes and how people make sense of them. If you picked up this book to learn the difference between hard rock and heavy metal or how many subgenres there are in rock music, you may find other sources more useful. I hope, however, that you will find tools to deal with these questions and pick up on other issues.

Organization of the Book

To add more detail to the picture, in this introductory chapter I continue with a discussion of terminological issues and outline a general framework for understanding genre formation in popular music. The framework is an account of important mechanisms in a number of existing popular music genres in the United States. It is an open-ended model, not an all-encompassing theory. By starting from my own ideas about the histories of individual genres, I have developed a framework that differs in some respects from existing genre theory, but I also synthesize elements of existing theory. The framework is necessarily raw because genres are too diverse and fluid to be captured in a detailed, exhaustive theory. The nature of the framework is such that it can form a background for studies of particular genres, but it is not suited as a model that can be applied in its entirety. Individual components and terms must be adjusted to the particulars of each genre.

The introductory chapter is followed by a series of case studies that examine musical and cultural issues of genre making at various sites and moments. Together, the case studies explore a range of popular musics and share a commitment to understanding musical genre differences in relation to cultural difference and cultural diversity. The overall site of inquiry is restricted to one country because the case studies can then build a context for understanding genres and how they are embedded in the histories and cultures of a society. The United States has a complex history of nation building, from early encounters between European empires and Native Americans to multinational migration. I am Danish, and my experiences of living in the United States made me more aware of the social and political dimensions of musical boundaries. My attention to social inequality and racial segregation in the United States was amplified by the outbreak of the Second Gulf War,

which began right around the time I started working on this book. It was further amplified when Denmark joined the coalition and became one of the “masters of war.” Living in the United States, however, also made me attentive to the one-sidedness of much European anti-Americanism.

Chapter 2, “Roots and Reconfigurations,” examines the role of genre in a contemporary revival culture. The chapter evolves from a case study of the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou!* (2000) and its representation of the American South in the 1930s. The film appeals to the fantasy of authentic history, and yet that history is redefined and adjusted to the needs of the present. I look at the soundtrack of the film and its connections with the culture of American roots music. Based on ethnographic encounters with various people in rural and urban areas around the country, I conclude that the different responses to the film reflect tensions between established genre discourses and new revivalist discourses.

It is known that the rock and roll revolution caused major changes in American musical life, but it is surprising that no one has studied these changes in terms of genre. By comparing how various genres reacted to rock, we can locate broad connections and open up new perspectives. I have designed the double session “Reactions to Rock” to examine this problematic. The “prelude” gives a broad introduction to reactions to rock and roll and outlines a theoretical model. This is followed by case studies of transformations in two different genres, jazz and country music. Chapter 3, “Country Music and the Nashville Sound,” argues that country music lost its market share and that the Nashville industry’s efforts at moving country closer to mainstream pop led to the hegemony of the Nashville Sound. In the early 1960s, country was more popular than ever before, but fans of traditional country felt that the genre had lost its soul, and alternatives to the Nashville scene emerged in other parts of the United States. Rock and roll and the corporate industry’s growing engagement in country music played a significant role in the genre’s move away from its folk basis in southern working-class consciousness and toward urban middle-class pop.

Chapter 4, “Jazz and Jazz-Rock Fusion,” begins by locating different dimensions of the jazz network in the mid 1950s. Jazz had splintered into different fractions, with art-oriented modernism as the dominant genre discourse. There was less centralization and standardization than in country music because jazz had become marginal to the general public and hence to corporate media. Jazz was not affected very much by rock until the mid 1960s. The British invasion contributed to a genre transformation that has structural similarities with that in country music a decade earlier. Rock music became a big issue in jazz after the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, but

rock was only one of the components of the new musical territory of jazz-rock fusion. In contrast to country music, jazz moved toward rock and black popular music, not mainstream pop, and jazz-rock fusion did not achieve hegemony like the Nashville Sound did in country. Miles Davis gave direction to this style, and his role as a genre subject is critical to understanding the transformation of jazz.

The relation between art jazz and popular musics is also a theme in the double session “Urban Boundaries,” whose primary aim is to analyze genre boundaries within the space of a city. To this end, I present an ethnography of connections between the jazz scene and other music scenes in contemporary Chicago, focusing on a community of younger musicians who are based in jazz but engage in particular forms of genre mixing and play different genres of music. This indie jazz community, as I call it, emerged in the mid 1990s as part of a vibrant neighborhood scene that forms an interstitial space between larger, more genre-specific scenes. I begin chapter 5, “Jeff Parker and the Chicago Jazz Scene,” by exploring tensions and contradictions in local discourses on jazz in Chicago. Narratives cluster around distinctions between mainstream and non-mainstream music and comparisons with New York, both of which issues create divisions within and alliances between various genre scenes. I chose the guitarist Jeff Parker as my main subject because his activities cross many boundaries and because he is an excellent focal point for understanding the structure of the jazz scene. He is part of the indie jazz community which is concentrated in city zones shaped by the processes of gentrification and economic globalization. Chapter 6, “A Closer Look at Jeff Parker and His Music,” continues the discussion by examining Parker’s subjectivity and musical practice in greater detail. Parker is ambivalent about defining himself in terms of genre but primarily thinks of himself as a jazz musician, even though his main job for extended periods of time has been playing in the rock band Tortoise. The chapter concludes with four case studies of his different areas of activity from the perspective of the role of musical grooves. The groove concept has important genre functions in popular music, and it provides a useful perspective for comparative thinking about genre and the collaborative ethos in some of the indie music communities in Chicago.

The final chapter, “Music at American Borders,” takes a somewhat oblique approach to the concept of genre and shows how it can be used as a tool in the study of cultural history. The basic question is why some of America’s native popular musics are considered American while others are considered to some extent foreign. I begin by looking at the work of genre in canons of “American music” and their discursive contexts. Discourses on American

musical identity have privileged particular genres and created fixed notions of genre, place, race, and ethnicity. In popular music, the engagement with nationalism became pivotal after 1970 in attempts to situate this music at the center of national history. Also noted is how the continuing hegemony of Anglo-American identity governs the boundaries of American popular music and obscures our understanding of cultural diversity and cross-cultural genre formations. To counter these problems, I propose a poetics of music in between genres. My poetics is built around a decentered concept of genre and draws on metaphors of transgression and heterogeneity. It employs plural narratives and embraces polymorphous semantic textures. I illustrate how this poetics may be applied by conducting three case studies of musics that have taken root in a core region in American mythology, the South, and at the same time complicate conventional boundaries of "American music" and southern musical geography. The first case study involves a Ricky Martin song and its performances at major public events that illustrate some of the complexity of the national and transnational boundaries of Latin pop. The second is a 1934 ethnographic recording of *juré* music in southern Louisiana, seen in relation to the recent popularization of zydeco as world music, with an excursus on Paul Simon's *Graceland*. The third case study is a 1976 Flaco Jiménez recording of music that is rooted in the conjunto tradition but also embedded in processes of hybridization in the Mexican American border region.

The case studies in this book are intended to do more than explore an array of examples. I try to chart a path that at once recognizes and defamiliarizes the role of genre in canon formation by reconsidering major and minor figures as well as introducing some new and unknown. I make efforts to identify a new set of milestones along the peripheries of popular music and propose new ideas for how it might be understood. The case studies also serve to illustrate the general point that popular music is an unstable and contingent category. These perspectives are strategically emphasized in the final chapter, in which I foreground the idea of case studies as juxtapositions of difference and argue that categorical transgression is a fundamental condition of musical life.

Terminology in a Wild World

In everyday discourse, terms such as genre, style, and idiom are often used interchangeably, as if they represented an undifferentiated generic category. In common usage, they usually have the unspecific meaning "type of": "The festival presents many styles of music from all over the world"; "There are

various musical idioms in this culture"; "What's your favorite genre of music?" Sometimes the choice of words is accidental, but these words can also have different meanings. A group of young rock fans with antiauthoritarian attitudes might be more inclined to say "idiom," whereas their high school teacher is likely to use "genre" for the same category because this term is common in the professional language of the institution. Many people make systematic distinctions between genre and other generic categories, and although there is no universal agreement on how this is done, there can be no doubt that there are situations when it is useful. It allows us to create more nuanced representations of musical culture.

The origins of "genre" and "generic" in the Greek word *genós*, Latin *genus* (kind and lineage), point to the role of biological metaphors in genre discourse. One of the most influential paradigms of thinking about categories in modern Western societies was Darwinian evolutionism, which developed after the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859. Darwin showed that the evolution of animals and plants could be tracked with the tools of biology and mapped in diagrams of family relations. He also argued that changes could be explained by the principle of natural selection, and his theory implied that the laws of nature are not dictated by God but follow their own logic. This set of ideas about the lives of organisms was not detached from ideology, and its ideological dimensions were amplified in social and cultural theory. Darwin's refiguration of race as a typological and essentialist concept sustained scientific racism across the board and consolidated the notion that race is a biological determinant of culture. In addition, discursive modes of thinking about classification and genealogy were adopted and used to legitimize distinctions between "primitive" and "modern" societies. The principle of natural selection was used to legitimize ideology as nature, although Darwin had actually been inspired in this by Malthus, who in 1798 had claimed that poverty was an unavoidable product of population dynamics, implicitly arguing against the poverty reforms in contemporary Britain (Malthus 1798/1989; cf. Emmeche 1995, 305). Malthus's theory was rooted in Christian moral philosophy and had become a classic in the literature on political economy by the time Darwin read it.

Cultural evolutionism was refuted a long time ago, but it serves as a lesson in the political ramifications of categorization and the fallacies of using nature as a model for understanding culture. It may be that the laws of nature are universal and that many organisms can be distinguished genetically as relatively fixed types that evolve with a high degree of predictability. But culture is constituted and evaluated differently. Certainly, there are no

standards that allow us to create universal distinctions and or taxonomies of expressive culture. Genealogies of cultural traditions are difficult to document and map, and multisensory experiences are difficult to categorize. They are embedded in particulars, and discursive mediation has many limitations.

Metaphor extends the range of language and works productively across many phenomenological domains through select comparisons. Cognitive semantics has pointed out that much of our language and understanding is grounded in everyday bodily activities such as eating, seeing, and moving in and out of buildings (see, e.g., Johnson 1987). Musical terminologies contain rich examples of how mental spaces for physical and spatial conditions are mapped onto culture. Expressions such as “a heavy beat” and “a dry sound” and the terms “cool jazz” and “heavy metal” refer to the physical, whereas the spatial is present in “a high note,” “outside-playing,” “a hybrid between salsa and rap,” “crossover,” and “beyond blues.” Discourse on the temporal dimension of categories is saturated with organicist metaphors, as in discussions of how genres are *born*, how they *grow*, *mature*, *branch off*, *explode*, and *die*. These metaphors have great explanatory power, but they often create a false sense of unity and support general claims about the state of a genre. As a rule, general claims about a genre are reductive, and this is especially true when someone sounds the death knell. In short, nature can be a useful source of inspiration on a figurative level, but not as a model for constructing large generic systems, as has happened in foundational moments of various fields of study.⁹

Using such a model would also be difficult because music categories are context specific and have different kinds of markers. Dancing is a defining aspect of disco and salsa, but not of symphonic rock or country gospel, and one artist may be categorized differently at a festival, at an “80s night” among friends, or on MTV. Dancing creates interesting forms of genre mixing in a variety of contexts, from multilayered grooves to eclectic practices of deejays in dance clubs (Lawrence 2003; see also chapter 6). Genre boundaries are contingent upon the social spaces in which they emerge and upon cultural practice, not just musical practice.

Categories of popular musics are particularly messy because they are rooted in vernacular discourse, in diverse social groups, because they depend greatly on oral transmission, and because they are destabilized by shifting fashions and the logic of modern capitalism. The music industry daily invents and redesigns labels to market musical products as new and/or authentic. Most of today’s consumers of R & B are also too young to have experienced how the term was used in the 1950s. Yet another factor is that

some of the main sites of popular culture are still “the street” and other social spaces where many value their relative independence from or even resistance to social authorities, educational institutions, and the music business. These oppositions play a role in defining creativity, freedom, and pleasure for many fans. Moreover, no single group of agents or institutions has the power to sanction its typology as the standard for everyone. Typologies of European American art music have enjoyed a higher degree of stability and monopoly because of the music’s position in education and because of stable support from social elites. Notions of stability have also become standard in popular narratives of classical music as a body of timeless masterpieces.

All is not chaos, though. Many terms for Western popular musics are in global circulation, and there are more specific conventions in local and national traditions. Although some of these conventions are not systematic, we cannot afford to ignore them. Theoretical distinctions such as the taxonomic levels suggested by Middleton can help scholars work more systematically (Middleton 1990, chapter 6; Brackett 1995, 9f.). But problems arise if scholarly definitions become the rule and not the tool, because that creates barriers for understanding how categories work in culture. It also forces scholars into a corner where agency is eliminated and categories are perceived to be a property of the music itself.

I have arrived at my concept of genre by studying common perceptions of genre and how it is used in comparison with other types of categories. Because I have not had the means to conduct extensive interviews with large numbers of people and do not find questionnaire surveys meaningful in these matters, I follow broad conventions among the informants in my case studies and in popular and academic writing about American popular music.¹⁰ For practical reasons, I have narrowed the perspective to categories that many perceive to be genre categories and that belong to a group of genres common within American popular music with some certainty. The resulting list of nine genres is intended to give a rough idea of my general concept of genre and of the body of material for my theorizations in this chapter. The categories do not fit into a system, but I have used, with some flexibility, chronology as an organizing principle. This also applies to the examples of subcategories listed in parentheses.

Blues (country blues, urban blues, Chicago West Side blues)
 Jazz (traditional, swing, bebop, cool jazz)
 Country music (old-time/traditional, bluegrass, honky-tonk,
 Nashville Sound)
 Rock (rock and roll, classic rock, glam rock, punk)

Soul/R & B (R & B, Memphis soul, Motown, soul-funk, contemporary R & B)
 Salsa (salsa dura, salsa romántica, soul salsa, dance club salsa)
 Heavy metal (black metal, death metal, doom metal, speed metal, trash metal)
 Dance (disco, techno, house, trance, ambient)
 Hip-hop (old school, East Coast, West Coast, gangsta rap)

Such a list can only be tentative. It serves a rudimentary purpose and should not limit the agenda for our thinking about genre. Nor is it a representative overview of the musics featured in this book. Any discussion of such lists must deal with their nature and not only their individual choices. My list represents a retrospective overview of musical formations that have evolved over time. They are what Todorov (1976) called historical genres, as opposed to theoretical or abstract genres, which could include ensemble genres such as piano music and acoustic music or social genres such as wedding music, religious music, and background music. In the early 1950s, for instance, there were only about three major genres in American popular music (jazz, blues/R & B, and country). A music such as mambo might have momentarily attracted a great deal of attention, but it was imported from another country and did not become as established as the others. The positions of subcategories have also changed, and more recent ones may evolve into new genres, as when hard rock evolved into heavy metal in the 1970s. Another historical problem is that although older, canonical genre categories are more stable than newer ones, some of them are not important to everyone everywhere and do not show up in typologies based on sales figures (see, e.g., Recording Industry Association of America [RIAA] 2003). Obviously, few people operate with such a long and organized list, but groupings of fewer genres are common. This is reflected in magazines and festivals that feature a broad range of music, but not all musics, and in statements such as "I am really into blues and jazz" or "I grew up on rock and soul." Genres are often grouped according to ethnic and racial boundaries (see chapter 7 in particular).

Numerous questions could be raised about how these nine categories relate to the larger world of popular music. What about formations structured primarily by celebrity fandom, instrument appreciation, or cultural taste? These forms of appreciation are not primarily structured by the principles of music genre, but they do not eliminate genre; rather, they provide complementary perspectives. Genre should also be studied in the context of marketing categories, as illustrated by Brackett (2002), and in relation to

other types of music categories more generally. In later chapters, I go into detail about relations between genre and categories such as roots music, mainstream, indie rock, Latin pop, and "American music."

What about less specialized domains such as mainstream popular music and Muzak?¹¹ The relation between mainstream and genre is complex and must be understood in particular contexts. It often involves a relation between a smaller culture with a distinct identity and a larger market or a dominant culture. The term mainstream is associated with hits, stars, and corporate production. It is a keyword in discourses of high art and underground authenticity, in which it denotes conformity, predictability, and superficiality. Within the broad spectrum of mainstream popular music there is "pop music," a category that I am reluctant to define as a genre in a strict sense. George Michael, Madonna, Céline Dion, Sugababes, Backstreet Boys, Justin Timberlake, Britney Spears, and other contemporary pop stars specialize in similar forms of production, with professional teams of producers and managers, and their music shares certain conventions and forms a component of certain kinds of collectivity. But the culture has a different social structure, with its heavy focus on mass-media texts and the individual celebrity. It also stands out from genre cultures, if sometimes only in an imagined sense, by reason of its high-volume sales and massive public exposure, which is a source of tension in genre cultures and underground scenes (see chapter 5). Many artists are attracted to mainstream success, but also to smaller music spheres and categories that embody a different kind of authenticity and prestige. Artists move back and forth and create fusions, so the boundaries with mainstream pop are fluid in many genres, and especially in contemporary popular genres such as country music (see chapter 3), dance, soul/R & B, and rock. We should also remember that for minority populations, the notion of "crossing over" to mainstream pop is sometimes less a musical than a social issue (see chapter 7). Segregated labels such as soul, urban, and R & B are routinely imposed on African American artists, even when their music is based on much the same conventions as that of white colleagues whose music is sold as pop or rock (see also Garofalo 1993).

Muzak confirms the rule that genre ascribes meaning and value to music—that genre formation is also canon formation. There are no strong discourses asserting the musical values of, say, elevator music and music in pornographic films. Musics identified as "hybrid" usually reside at the other end of the spectrum because of their perceived power to transcend genre. They are attached to genre cultures as more sophisticated formations. The flip side of this logic is when hybridity is viewed as a dilution, a loss. I confront these problems of genre centrality most directly in chapter 7.

A few remarks on some of the many musics that might have been included: I have suggested that contemporary pop music can be understood as a category with a special position as a mainstream formation, but it also has genre functions and could be defined as a genre or style in a loose sense. The same could have been said about Tin Pan Alley up until its decline in the 1950s, and there is a sense in which new forms of pop music have taken its place. Genres such as reggae and flamenco are not included because they do not have the same type of cultural network in the United States as the examples on my list. Many reggae and flamenco recordings are imported, and much of the genre making happens abroad. Mexican American musics such as *conjunto*, *banda*, and *orquesta* are American, too, but whether any of them is a genre or whether they are a series of coexisting styles in Mexican American culture remains an open question.¹² In some cases it is hard to decide whether genre or style is the most appropriate term, not so much because the musical formations are complex, but because they are rather similar. Much of my genre theory also applies to major styles such as conjunto, disco, and techno, which some readers may consider small genres.

Following the principles outlined above, we can identify a few criteria of the concept of popular music genres around which I develop a framework for the inquiries in this book, a framework that is reflexive rather than normative because it is designed to have explanatory power for multiple, even contradictory, concepts of genre. The genres on my list are defined in relation to generic boundaries of musical texts and practices within musical traditions. Each category has a social basis in music scenes and magazines devoted to this particular kind of music. The social basis lies in the power that the categories have in cultural practice and their embodiment in objects, places, and people, and it is constituted through communication in what I call networks. The network of a genre can be understood from the perspective that the genre is a constellation of styles connected by a sense of tradition. These aspects distinguish genre from marketing categories and labels because it has a more stable existence in cultures of musical specialization among musicians, listeners, critics, pedagogues, and others. Categories such as "race records," "Top 40," and "chill-out music" are primarily used to present and market recorded music to unspecialized consumers and do not coincide with some of the categorizations preferred by musicians and fans (cf. chapter 2). Like Muzak, lounge, and easy listening, chill-out music is a category that is frequently used to repackage music of different genres for consumption as background music, typically as discreet accompaniment and stimuli in shopping, transportation, and leisure activities. Yet such categories are sometimes located in genre contexts. For instance, in May 2006

the lower level of the Virgin Megastore in downtown Chicago was partitioned into two main sections, hip-hop and dance music. Within the dance section was a row of bins respectively labeled chill-out, lounge, house, trance, and trip hop. Many of the CDs in those bins were anthologies produced by the same record companies, with similar styles of visual design and much overlap in the musical content. The chill-out bin was particularly eclectic. It mainly contained smooth contemporary rock and dance music with meditative grooves, but also nineteenth-century German art music, Zimbabwean mbira music, and Indonesian gamelan. This practice of categorization reflects how consumer cultures and culture industries are finding new ways of using recorded music as a consumer-directed product in everyday consumption, from the CD anthologies for specific private occasions to Apple's iTunes software for the private library and the Muzak made specifically for the Ann Taylor, Armani Exchange, or Starbucks customer.¹³

Following Frith and Negus, I adopt the term *genre culture* as a concept for the overall identity of the cultural formations in which a genre is constituted. It makes sense to view popular music genres as small cultures because they are defined in relation to many of the same aspects as general culture. Genres are identified not only with music, but also with certain cultural values, rituals, practices, territories, traditions, and groups of people. The music is embedded in all these things, and the culture concept can help us grasp the complex whole because of its capacity to represent a large entity of connections and sharing among many people. Culture also stresses the social and historical dimensions that are ignored when categories are defined only in relation to the music itself. Although genre cultures are embedded in general culture, they are concentrated in a smaller domain of social space and do not have a fixed position in the social order. In chapter 3, I develop a model of genre transformation inspired by large-scale processes of cultural modernization, but the similarities between the different concepts of culture are limited, and comparisons should not be carried too far.

Frith and Negus do not say much about the dimensions of their concept of genre world or genre culture. Studying the local formations of genre cultures known as *scenes* allows a bit more specificity. All genres on my list have crystallized in local scenes in a few cities in the United States, and some have taken shape in other countries as well. Genre scenes are translocal because they share ideas and representations of the same genre with scenes in other cities and often position themselves in relation to each other, with competing localized conceptions or branches of the genre. Genre cultures have a transnational network, but like culture in general they are structured on various territorial levels. Among the fundamental structuring principles

are core-boundary structures and the interconnected processes of musical and social specialization. Bottom-up perspectives and other ontologies are also important, so I do not use the concept of genre culture as a master frame but as a tool for analyzing and contextualizing various notions of genre among different groups of people. Genre is in a sense always cultural, but the relation between the two varies greatly.

A General Framework of Genre

To understand the complex work of genre we need more than a systematic account of individual dimensions. We need explanations of fundamental connections and moments in the trajectory of a genre. The nine genres on my list above have evolved differently, but they have all gone through two basic processes: They have been *founded* (and *codified*) in what I call "center collectivities," and they have changed through *further negotiations*. It is reasonable to distinguish between formative and subsequent stages in a genre's history.

Emergence and Basic Operations

It is difficult to say exactly when individual genres were created, because they have emerged out of various existing musical formations. The formative process has been characterized by intense work on defining an emerging canon or tradition in relation to a number of core artists and "texts." Early negotiations have resulted in a set of shared ideas about the music and its values and origins, and in the hegemony of a single term. Dominant genre discourse thus conceals genre's immanent complexity, especially the musical and social heterogeneity of the genre. It is useful to explore this heterogeneity and differentiate between various aspects of the genre category. To this end, we can distinguish between "networks" and "conventions."

NETWORKS (SOCIAL AND DISCURSIVE) I adopt a broad and inclusive concept of *network* for the communicative relations between the many different agents that create and sustain a genre's identity. The network of an individual genre remains broad and fluid, interwoven in complex cultural textures. Its connections have been established in social and historical moments through the articulation of both strong and weak affiliations between different groups of people across vast territories. Not all parts of the network are in direct communication with one another, and some parts are remote and may not feel as though they are part of a larger whole. But if they

identify with the genre, they share some ideas about this particular kind of music and are familiar with some of the same recordings and artists. Each network is different in size, structure, and power. The role of discourse is also different from one genre to another. Criticism has had a limited role in country music, for instance, in comparison with jazz and rock, where groups of core writers have formed discursive networks with specialized fan readerships.

The interconnected processes of musical and social specialization have crystallized in various kinds of group affiliations for which we have the general concept of *collectivities*. The term comprises everything from the intimate relation between a couple of fans or a band to communities and scenes. Some collectivities have positioned themselves as core subjects and insiders of the genre. These *center collectivities*, as I call them, are clusters of specialized subjects that have given direction to the larger network. Recognized as authorities and experts, they have distinguished themselves from outsiders and the general public. They include influential fan communities, critics, record producers, and above all artists whose iconic status marks them as "leading" figures. The largest groups of influential insiders live in cities, where resources are concentrated. Center collectivities deserve attention because of their influence, but it is also important to look beyond them and not blindly accept their hegemonic discourses. Nor are they completely self-contained entities. Mass mediation plays an enormous role in genre formation, and corporate companies form a major part of the institutional network.

To illustrate briefly, let us take the cases of jazz and salsa: In the 1920s, jazz was more or less synonymous with popular music for many people, but dedicated fans and musicians who identified themselves as insiders were more discriminating. They began creating a canon of recordings by Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, and others. Although jazz grew out of many musical formations, including ragtime, blues, and the white dance band tradition, critics primarily framed it in opposition to Tin Pan Alley. The term jazz was destabilized by the swing boom and the bebop movement, and it was not until the 1950s that jazz was consolidated as a genre with a narrative that connected various styles of the past and present in a canon. The center collectivities were first located in New Orleans and Chicago and then expanded to Harlem. New York City has remained the symbolic capital in the global network of jazz.

Similarly, salsa drew on many musics, but the formative moment occurred in fairly specific settings. Salsa was founded in the late 1960s and early 1970s in center collectivities of the Cuban and Puerto Rican diasporas

to New York City, with the roster of artists on Fania Records forming the core. Unlike jazz, salsa was rooted more directly in recent foreign musical developments, especially the modern Cuban *son*. The salsa network became more complex and less centered on scenes and communities as the corporate industry moved in on the market in the 1980s.

CONVENTIONS (CODES, VALUES, AND PRACTICES) The processes of communication and signification in the network require several conceptual approaches. Music can be performance, practice, recorded sound, and text at the same time or in different situations, and we should explore how these ontologies operate in relation to genre. Adding to the complexity is the role of surrounding visual and verbal representations. It is impossible to distill this totality into a single theory and model of analysis, so I shall instead point to three central concepts for understanding the conventions of a genre, for a genre is not only defined by its boundaries—by what it is not—but also by its interior.

The aim of this outline is not to create catalogs of conventions in various genres, because such catalogs would be banal and highly reductive. Elaborate definitions may work in specific contexts and for some subcategories, but even there a catalog has limited explanatory power. Exclusive definitions are problematic because it is hard to find something in one genre that does not appear in other genres.

In structural linguistics, the concept of *code* implies a relatively strong and fixed convention that can be identified in concrete correlations between discrete entities in the communication process. A cultural code exists in the socially sanctioned correlation between a linguistic, visual, or aural sign, for instance, and a concept thereof. In many societies traffic law presumes a fixed correlation between a red stop sign and a concept and word for understanding and representing it (“stop,” “arrêt,” “alto,” “светофор,” “dur,” “فوق,” etc.). Musical signification is far more complex than this, of course. Many aspects of music are hard to describe even in native language, and music terminologies are very language and culture specific. Music involves polymorphous semantic textures and multisensory experiences that highlight limitations of language in general and concepts such as structure and sign in particular. Another problem is the unspecific and nonreferential character of musical signification (see p. 5).

Structuralist and semiotic approaches can be useful in exploring conventions on the level of discrete musical elements. For instance, certain twelve-bar chord schemes are strongly identified with the blues, certain vocal techniques with soul, certain distorted guitar sounds with rock, and steel

guitars with country. Some of these elements appear in many genres and are regular fixtures in only some of the music of the genre with which they are associated (typically in some of its core styles) but have nonetheless assumed the status of genre signifiers. Such conventions are often the first we register when we try to locate music generically, and their roles can be explored in detail through textual analysis. This approach must be supplemented by hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches in order to understand generic categories in the totality of musical experience.¹⁴

On a higher level of generality, structuralist thinking helps us understand the systemic aspects of genre. A genre can be viewed as a culture with the characteristics of a system or systemic functions. Individual elements of signification do not gain meaning as isolated events but through their connection and organization in symbolic contexts with certain regulatory procedures and overarching mechanisms. Musical sounds are created and perceived in environments defined by music of the past, of what has already happened. This can be seen in the way performances or recordings are measured against past events and against broader horizons in music criticism. It also surfaces in spatial-perspectival metaphors, as when we describe something as “well received *in* the rock world” or as having “changed the *direction* of the hip-hop scene.” In contrast to core structuralism and system theory, I prefer the modest view that genres have system functions but are not systems in a strict sense and certainly not mechanical or bounded entities.

Another way of approaching the conventions of a genre is to identify shared *values*. Formative moments have often evolved around the formation or transformation of a social group and the articulation of its values. Important values in jazz were defined in the context of African American modernism in the wake of the Great Migration, the movement of large numbers of African Americans from the South to the North in the first third of the twentieth century. Country music was associated with the white southern working-class experience, rock music with youth rebellion. As these genres have evolved, they have been associated with a wider range of values and social types. Mainstream country music, for instance, moved toward urban middle-class culture in the late 1950s, but has always experienced tensions between folk and pop aesthetics. Similarly, jazz has moved closer to the sphere of high art, but tensions between its conflicting identities as pop music and art music persist. Conventions also include ideological values invested in or articulated by core subjects. For instance, African Americans have frequently been defined as “authentic” subjects in African American genres, and among those genres the hip-hop canon remains rather exclusively identified with African American artists. In contrast, African

Americans have generally not been welcome in country music. In many genres, the primary roles of women have been singing and dancing, and instrumental virtuosity has been a distinctly male domain.

The concept of *practice* opens up a different understanding of genre conventions because it shifts focus away from objectified ontologies (sign, category, recording, etc.) and toward agency and process. Music and genre cannot be perceived only in terms of "content," of what is played, but also of how music is created, performed, and perceived. Ritual and performance aesthetics are part of the regulatory matrix of a genre. They inform interpretations of aural and visual materials and negotiations of boundaries. Some of the heterogeneity and apparent disorder found on the level of musical material may be explained in terms of the form of structured agency that we call practice (cf. Bourdieu 1977). Studying musical practice allows us to see how genre elements are in play and how the dialectic between repetition and change is negotiated at particular moments.

Important genre differences in musical practice can be located in the relation between composition and improvisation. Solo improvisation is minimal in disco, common in rock, and central in much jazz. Moreover, rock artists typically perform their own compositions or songs, whereas it is far more common in blues and jazz to play pieces from a common repertoire. This perspective can be extended to the ways in which musicians organize groups: rock musicians usually work as band members in groups with a band identity, and jazz musicians usually freelance as individuals with ad hoc groups. There are also genre-specific practices of audience appreciation and participation.

Further Negotiations and the Work of Media

MAINSTREAM DIALECTICS After genres are established as specialized fields, distinct from the mainstream, their boundaries continue to be negotiated in relation to broader cultural formations. Changes in the popular music market have caused major changes in individual genre cultures. A case in point is how the field of popular music changed when rock music ate into the markets of other genres until it finally lost some of its genre identity and became part of the mainstream, a process that resulted in the label "rock/pop." There have often been contrasting directions in genre cultures, however. Some rock cultures are emphatically youth oriented, while others are not. The popularization of genres has broadened their cultural space, but their existing core collectivities have often been strengthened in

their fight for survival—their fight against "pop" versions and "sellouts" and their defense of "the real thing" or insistence on "keeping it country."

The relation with mainstream pop is also pertinent for understanding how genres negotiate the steady stream of new sound technologies, shifting clothing fashions, and musical innovations. This is illustrated by the process of *modernization*, in which divisions in a genre culture are exacerbated by the pressures of new fashions. Usually, elders have felt challenged and younger people energized by the new. The swing boom in the 1930s, rock in the late 1960s, and later disco, techno, and hip-hop were powerful signifiers of contemporary youth pop culture. The power of those musics to draw large numbers of youth has increased the intensity of reactions against and borrowings from them in other areas of musical life.

In addition to such general mechanisms, the trajectory of a genre has been determined by the social status of the people with which it is primarily identified. Unspecialized mainstream tastes have had a strong position in popular culture, and the elites have preferred high art. The center collectivities of genre cultures have rarely represented dominant social groups. Musical specialization, racial segregation, and social marginalization have been interlocking processes in American society. Musics of minority populations have suffered from the general conditions of these social groups. African American genres, for instance, have gone through more or less the same process of appropriation and exploitation. The classic story is that they were initially ridiculed and subjected to suppression, and as resistance gradually eroded they became absorbed and redefined in ways that reduced their association with blackness (Hall 1997, 32). Similar processes have occurred in white youth subcultures, although they were not doomed a priori by racism. One example is heavy metal, which emerged in small subcultures of primarily young, white working-class males in the early 1970s, received virtually no airplay, and entered the mainstream in the 1980s when it became popular among a more gender-balanced, middle-class audience (Walser 1993, 3).

GENRE AND THE CORPORATE MUSIC INDUSTRY I have noted that in the corporate industry musics are organized according to generic and market categories on more than one level and that corporate interests do not always coincide with those outside the organization. The corporate industry has been a major force in standardizing and popularizing genres. A classic strategy of popularization has been to adjust genres to the mainstream and create crossovers, so that artists sell in a broad market. This is one reason

why celebrity promotion often lifts artists out of genre contexts. Although the corporate industry has sustained rising genres, it has also compromised them. Rather than being exclusively committed to genre cultures, the industry has oriented itself toward major market segments and adopted categories that are not genre categories in a strict sense. "Race records" and "world music" are but two examples of categories that have been used for targeting various musics to specific markets. When Negus (1999) identifies genre as an organizing principle in corporate practice, he is using the term in a general sense, because the industry uses whatever categories do the job, not just genre, although genre and style are central ones.

In some cases, the corporate industry has changed the dominant course of genres and styles. The shared interests of a trade organization, commercial radio, and major labels pushed country music toward mainstream pop in the late 1950s to a point where traditional country was marginalized, leading to a sense of great loss among core insiders (see chapter 3). Similar situations have occurred in rock in the early 1970s and hip-hop in the mid 1990s. Indie labels and underground magazines have offered alternatives to the corporate world, but many of them have had limited access to the main media channels, though a growing number of indies collaborate with major labels. Major labels have also challenged the continuity of genres by cutting down on production when sales decrease. Market changes are registered through portfolio management according to music categories, and production can be regulated directly because it is organized in discrete departments for particular musics (Negus 1999).

Executives, artists, and other agents in the corporate industry work within rather than outside of a larger musical culture. The Frankfurt School and early cultural studies approached the culture industry as a somewhat bounded world in which owners exercised control over workers and produced capitalist culture. Negus and du Gay have critiqued this "production of culture" approach and moved toward a more textured and situated understanding of corporate practices. According to Negus, "Production does not take place simply 'within' a corporate environment structured according to the requirements of capitalist production and organizational formulae" (1999, 19). Yet agents on all levels are required to maximize profits, and institutional capitalism creates an environment that is different from that of other domains of musical life. Music Row in Nashville is a good example of a distinct corporate industry sphere. It is an area of several square blocks inhabited by recording studios, labels, publishers, business agencies, and so on, and many country music artists have felt alienated there and complained about its power to regulate the genre.

Genre cultures are divided in relation to corporate production. Some artists and fans are happy with it, while others repudiate it or have a peripheral position because their music does not sell enough to be of corporate interest. It is important to represent both sides and to counter prejudice, but it is also important to recognize the ideological dimension of cultural production. The industry does not merely serve the needs of society as a whole, although this is often suggested by the claim that the industry is only giving people what they want. Massive sales of a product do not necessarily mean that the industry produces music of high cultural value and advances social health. Obviously, the space for musical diversity is limited when more than 80 percent of the global trade of recorded popular music is in the hands of about four major record labels.¹⁵

MEDIA AND CULTURAL PRACTICE Mass mediation brings music into wider circulation and complicates the spatial boundaries of social collectivities. The mass media have been necessary for establishing broad genre networks. Sustained production of particular musics has depended on the circulation of music, words, and images across great distances, and translocal histories have evolved in the process. The commercial phonogram, a core object in popular music since the 1920s, has essential features for genre formation: it is regulated, fixed, repeatable, and sold by category. Recordings have constituted the musical "texts" of translocal canons. In addition, the musical production of genre has occurred in close relation with the professional production of recordings. The formative moments in jazz, blues, and country music were all shaped by the recordings that major labels produced to capitalize on the so-called ethnic markets. Cities have been recording centers for individual genres—Nashville for country music, Memphis and Detroit for soul, New York and later Miami for salsa, and Detroit for techno—although major labels have tended to centralize their production in New York and Los Angeles. As more of the creative process moved into the studio in rock and other genres in the 1960s, individual record producers became more important to shaping generic boundaries. A few examples include Chet Atkins in country music, Phil Spector and Brian Eno in rock, Teo Macero in jazz, and DJ Premier and Dr. Dre in hip-hop. Artists who have presented, mixed, and sampled recordings have also shaped boundaries. Deejay pioneers include David Mancuso in disco, Grandmaster Flash in hip-hop, and Kevin Saunderson in techno (Brewster and Broughton 2000; Lawrence 2003).

The circulation of recordings is regulated by genre specific business structures, but the recording is a disembodied object, separate from its context of production, and it can gain meaning only when it is actively brought

into being in a signifying context in various other locales. This translocal work of contextualization involves fans and cultural brokers such as writers who have looked to the genre canon and its mythologies in center collectivities. Country fans and artists from all over the world make pilgrimages to Nashville or Texas and have clear ideas about the clothing styles and attitudes associated with this genre. There are heavy metal fans in Finland who display tastes in fashion and standards of behavior very similar to those of their counterparts in Japan, and they have most likely read some of the same magazines and invested in the same American rock canon.

We can understand the ways in which genre categories are connected to recorded sound by looking at rituals of consumption and forms of mediation. Conventional music stores are designed for types of consumers and present music in product categories in discrete physical spaces. Mainstream music and genres with big sales are placed in the foreground, so store interiors reflect the market shares of different musics. Stores are designed so that individuals can find a particular item or browse spaces of interest with minimal help from store personnel. To this day, the standard organizing principles for popular music are first music categories and then artist names. One may meet other fans there, but most shoppers go into the store just to buy the recording and then share it with family and friends elsewhere. Personal and portable technologies of reproduction multiply the possibilities for individualized consumption. Affluent people have all sorts of opportunities for customizing their music consumption according to their individual tastes and lifestyles, somewhat independently of music collectivities.

Much the same can be said about the Internet. Online music stores such as Amazon.com, CDNow, and the Internet arms of Tower and Virgin are pushing into the market of traditional music stores because they serve the same basic functions, in some respects more effectively, with database utilities and accompanying reviews by critics and consumers. Online stores are modeled on traditional stores and allow for further separation of the music from spheres of specialized music making because more focus is on mass audiences and individualized consumption, which eventually weakens the community basis of genre. At online stores, music is a database object without physical presence, a hypermobile commodity. The downloading of digital music via online stores such as iTunes and Music Now or illegal file sharing represents a further step in this direction: the purchased product itself is no longer a physical object. In 2005, digital music sales only constituted about 6 percent of the total market, but the market was growing fast.¹⁶ The growth continued in 2006, especially in the market of digital subscription services offered by media conglomerates such as AOL Time

Warner (via Music Now), Virgin (Virgin Digital), Napster Inc. (Napster), RealNetworks (Rhapsody), and Trans World Entertainment (FYE). MTV Networks launched Urge, which was integrated with MTV and embedded in Microsoft's Windows Media Player 11 (Garrity 2006).

Online reviews and music writing in general have so far displayed fairly conventional forms of musical discourse, including genre discourse. Nor has the Internet eliminated traditional forms of social interaction in genre collectivities. Even in cyber-oriented techno music, insiders have congregated in live music venues and adopted the traditional ritual form in which artists perform on a stage before an audience. Music categories and artist's names play a key role when fans communicate on Listservs and engage in downloading. Listservs and message boards enable fans of a genre from all over the world to connect: in 2006, MySpace.com had over 200,000 music groups and Yahoo! over 100,000 genre-specific music groups.¹⁷ Online discourse can be viewed as an extension of offline discourse, and it is often complementary to the professional mass media. However, electronic communication is not only empowered but also limited by its relative independence from face-to-face interaction. For one thing, one cannot see and feel how categories are used in various social contexts. For another, e-forums of people living in many different places lack the forms of knowledge and sociability that exist among insiders of the same scene. Verbal as well as musical genre discourse can become disoriented if its social basis is reduced. In the early years of Napster and Kazaa, for instance, when everyone could upload song files to the same database, the database would sometimes list the same song in five different genre categories. The explanation for this confusing situation is that different cultures of categorization operated in the same database but somewhat displaced and removed from their social basis. In sum, categories have little value in themselves. What matters is how they are used and embodied in communicative relations to become structuring forces in musical life.

The framework outlined above presents general ideas for further exploration, and I do not consider it final in an absolute sense. In concluding this chapter, I wish to stress that small theories and frameworks serve the need for ongoing revision and integration of methodical approaches in close relation with the empirical. To understand the changing horizons of popular music, we need to engage critically in musical life and conduct case studies from which new theories can emerge, and this is what the following chapters are about.



NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. I am referring to Pink Floyd's 1990 show in Berlin at the occasion of the fall of the Wall, Elton John's performance of "Candle in the Wind" at Diana's funeral in 1997, and the Live Aid concerts ahead of the G8 summit in July 2005. Music at Soccer World Cups is discussed in chapter 7.

2. On the legitimization of popular culture in academia, see Mukerji and Schudson 1991, 3. The canonization of popular music studies can be registered in journals and books on the subject. Among the main journals are *Popular Music*, *Popular Music and Society*, *Chapter & Verse*, and *Journal of Popular Music Studies*. A list of popular music books with a foundational role or ethos should include Brackett 1995; Frith 1996; Gendron 2002; Middleton 1990; Middleton 2000; Moore 1993/2001; and Toynbee 2000.

3. Ryall has made a similar claim (1998, esp. 337). I say more about different types of categories later in this chapter. The term generic refers to general concepts, to kinds, types, or classes (*Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, rev. and updated, deluxe ed. [New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1996], s.v. "generic"; Precht and Burkard 1996, 184).

4. Notions of transgression and hybridity took on positive values in "postmodern classics" by such writers as Lyotard (1979) and Clifford (1986). Some of this was echoed in Western art musicology, with Kramer, for instance, who claimed to represent a "postmodern musicology" that works from an "ethos" rather than a "system" (1995, 5).

5. I am thinking of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and Kant's and Hegel's multivolume treatises. For a further discussion of cultural representation and categorization in this era, see Foucault 1966. Musicological pioneers such as Guido Adler were influenced by Darwinian evolutionism. In the 1960s, Walter Wiora reacted against evolutionism, and Carl Dahlhaus drew attention to the historicity of generic systems. For further details on German musicology, see Danuser 1995, 1055–59. Evolutionism was also under attack in the early years of modern American ethnomusicology (cf. Bohlman 1992, 124). It should be mentioned that musical scholarship is still deeply structured

by genre boundaries. The entries on genre in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG) (Danuser 1995) and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Samson 2001) do not deal with either popular or non-Western music.

6. Toynbee's discussion is hardly groundbreaking, and his use of the term genre culture is idiosyncratic. His list of genre cultures includes "race music," which is better understood as a marketing category; "crossover," which is better understood as a market mechanism; and "mainstream," which is better understood as a contrast to genre cultures, as argued above. None of those categories can be meaningfully described as a genre culture.

7. Todorov has offered a critique of the notion of genres as classes of texts and called attention to practice (1976, 165 and 169).

8. Some useful reference works are Frith et al. 2001; Shuker 1998; White 1998; Wicke et al. 1997; *All Music Guide*; and *Grove Music Online*.

9. Ambitious attempts at mapping large systems occurred in early musicology (see note 5 above) and in the formative years of genre research in film studies (Ryall 1998, 328–29, 331).

10. See note 8 for popular and academic reference works. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) has conducted surveys based on categories used by the industry. DeVeaux has studied data obtained from a 1992 questionnaire survey of "participation in the arts" for the National Endowment for the Arts (DeVeaux 1995, 58–64). Item 37a in the questionnaire listed twenty different "types of music," and respondents were asked, "Which of these types of music do you like to listen to?" The ten most popular were country/western, rock, blues/R & B, big band, jazz, classical/chamber, bluegrass, show tunes/opereettas, soul, and folk (DeVeaux 1995, 36 and 62). The choice of terms was not particularly systematic, and I wonder how people would have responded had they been asked to use their own terms.

11. By Muzak I mean music produced for background listening in elevators, shopping malls, and pornographic film, for instance. Music produced for this purpose is often based on simple and standardized schemes and has a smooth, subdued character in order not to disturb or distract listeners from the main action. The boundaries of Muzak have expanded considerably, though (Owen 2006).

12. There is some confusion among scholars about the distinction between genre and style. See, for instance, Moore 1993/2001, 1–3; Shuker 1998, 145, 158, 237 et passim. Shuker dodges the question by writing that "punk rock" is a musical "style/genre" (1998, 237). The overlap between genre and style is demonstrated in the empirical analyses by Fabbri (1999, 10).

13. On contemporary practice in the Muzak industry, see Owen 2006.

14. Middleton has noted that structuralist listening has imprisoned the body (2000, 24).

15. I say "about" because the number has continually decreased over the past fifteen years or so. Currently, there are EMI (includes Virgin), Sony/BMG (includes CBS, Columbia, RCA, and Arista), Warner Music Group, and Universal Music Group (includes PolyGram, Geffen, MCA, Motown, and Verve). Cf. Negus 1999, 35–45.

16. Based on record company estimates, the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry estimated in October 2005 that sales of digital music files had tripled since 2004 and that this was one of the reasons for the decline in sales of "CDs and other physical formats" ("Digital Music Market More than Triples" 2005.).

17. MySpace.com, <http://groups.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=groups.ListGroups&categoryID=21&Mytoken=D748B376-FB11-B635-8CB2FFDE03B981D45859337> [accessed 28 August 2006]. Yahoo!, <http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/dir/> [accessed 28 August 2006].

CHAPTER TWO

1. The modern invention of folk music in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reflected tensions within modernity. To people who were experiencing industrialization and urbanization, folk music represented idealized images of community, tradition, and nature in a simple, rural world. From early on, folk music discourses were marked by nostalgia and enjoyed a close relationship with nationalism and philosophies of nature and civilization. For an analysis of theories of folk music and its place in modernity, see Bohlman 1988.

2. An influential approach was pioneered by Tagg, who stated that popular music is "all music which is neither folk or art music" and outlined a combinational definition (1979, chapter 2). There was much discussion of definitions of popular music in the early years of IASPM, as reflected by its annual publication *Popular Music Perspectives*. Relevant articles include Charles Hamm's historical study in the first volume and the more theoretical articles by Chris Cutler, Umberto Fiori, and John Shepherd in the second. The articles indicate that there was a broad impulse toward recognizing popular music as a complex category without a clear definition, but they also included defining gestures and crude discriminatory generalizations. Middleton, Frith, and others have since refined the discussion, but the field has not settled on a single definition or theory as the standard. For references and more context, see chapter 1, which draws on a number of seminal works in popular music studies.

3. The first part of Foster's life was spent in what has been called the White Cottage, which seems to have been substantial enough to require a servant, and he spent most of his life in the urban areas of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and New York City. Mariana Whitmer, e-mail to author, 17 January 2004; Kathy Haines, e-mail to author, 17 January 2004. The song has been recorded many times since. For instance, it appears on Bob Dylan's *Good as I Been to You* (Sony, 1992) and Emmylou Harris's *At the Ryman* (Warner Bros., 1992). Harris left out the word cabin, though.

4. The Carter Family, "Little Log Cabin by the Sea" (Victor, 1927); Hank Williams, "A Mansion on the Hill" (MGM, 1947); Dolly Parton: "My Tennessee Mountain Home," "Wrong Direction Home," and other songs on *My Tennessee Mountain Home* (RCA, 1974).

5. Everett's urban attitude is reflected in the early scene (selection 4 on the DVD) where he wants to buy hair pomade in a very small grocery. He is the only customer