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This article considers the reinscription of certain ideas of authorship in a digital age, when literary texts are produced through a medium that substantiates and elevates composite forms and procedures over distinct original versions. Digital media technologies reconfigure the way in which we apply such techniques as collage, quotation, and plagiarism, comprising as they do procedural code that is itself a mix, a mash-up, a version of a version of a version. In the contemporary moment, the predominance of a medium that effaces its own means of production (behind interfaces, 'pages,' or 'sticky notes') suggests that we may no longer fetishize the master-copy, or the originary script, and that we once again need to re-theorize the term 'author,' asking for example how we can instantiate such a notion through a medium that abstracts the indelible and rewrites it as infinitely reproducible and malleable.[1] If the majority of texts written today—be they literary, academic, or journalistic—are first produced on a computer, it is increasingly necessary to think about how the 'author' in that instance may be not a rigid point of origin, but instead a relay for alternative modes of production, particularly composite modes of production, assuming such positions as 'scripter,' 'producer,' or even 'DJ.'

By embarking on this path of enquiry, this article attempts to produce a

theoretical framework though which we can consider how literary textual practices themselves elevate the composite forms of new media, perhaps remediating earlier composite practices such as allusion, quotation, and plagiarism. Bringing these ideas together in relation to a 2007 essay titled "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism Mosaic" by the United States author Jonathan Lethem, it will argue that Lethem's essay can be read as a practice of textual remixing and Lethem himself as an 'author' who has (re)produced, rather than unequivocally authored, a particular kind of composite work, one connected to and engaged with the discursive particularities of digital media.

Remix Culture

In various theories, surveys, and critical readings of new media objects, the predominant focus tends to be the visual: digital film, net art, digital photography, video games.[2] These are formed around multiple theories of the information age, including those that position digital objects as open processes rather than closed works.[3] Discussions of digital texts specifically mostly concentrate on textual forms that are explicitly new media (such as electronic literature, hypertexts, and other forms of hyperlinked narratives) or on the materiality of both print and digital text objects in light of new media theory.[4] This article in contrast will highlight works in the digital era from a more opaque vantage point, considering a text that is not necessarily a digital object but that uses modes of representation associated with new media.

Due to the sheer reach of digital technology, and the omnipresence of personal computing around the world, artistic processes of the remix proliferate beyond avant-garde communities. They are a structural contingency to much of the software typically found on home computers, such as Photoshop or iPod shuffle, as well as to the sometimes uncanny new applications that arise from re-tweeting or re-posting. Remix culture is consequently an integral component of how we apply new media and, as such, an integral cultural form of the contemporary moment as well. The influential intellectual property lawyer and founder of Creative Commons, Lawrence Lessig, has quoted Greg Gillis, the Mash-up DJ 'Girl Talk,' on this exact proliferation: "We're living in this remix culture. This appropriation time where any grade-school kid has a copy of Photoshop and can

download a picture of George Bush and manipulate his face how they want and send it to their friends. The software is going to become more and more easy to use" (qtd. in Lessig 14). Lethem's essay "Ecstasy of Influence" conforms to the broad cultural dispensation toward the remix, for he manipulates others' material and reframes it in an alternative form. Moreover, as I will go on to discuss, he does so in a way that emphasizes the degree to which digital technology simplifies these processes; Lethem's success (his seamless reappropriations) are a kind of metaphor for how any text is produced through a medium where all information is, at base, abstract and equal (digitized data).

When considering such a work, it is important to balance whatever is new—the seamlessness, the structural compositing of the medium—against what is continuous: the literary practice of forming texts from others' words through such tropes as allusion, plagiarism, or quotation. As Darren Tofts and Christian McCrea note, "It is in the very logic of textuality to remake something from permutations of lexical items within specific generic paradigms." They argue that the software enabling "any grade school kid" to (re)produce a remix, or mash up, is "governed by the same linguistic laws of metaphor and metonymy, substitution and combination, paradigm and syntagm as novels, films, operas and computer games." What Tofts and McCrea suggest is that digital practices of the remix are just one in many recent manifestations of a more general set of rules for creative production and that any work of art is composite in the sense of always being another interpretation of the textuality of its medium. While not over-generalizing this proposition to claim that all artwork is remix, I do want to emphasize the structural resonance of reappropriation practices, the way in which they draw from an inherently familiar form. Something similar can be said for the "art" of plagiarism, which has a long yet dubious history within literature and literary studies and ultimately informs much of Lethem's essay.

Although there is insufficient space to engage with that history in this essay, contextualizing the lineage of Lethem's position (as he himself does in "Ecstasy") is important.[5] A February 1910 article from the *New York Times* shows traces of a customary approach to issues surrounding literary plagiarism, namely, plagiarism as a possibly playful or creative act, occupying a liminal role betwixt and between traditions of authorship and intellectual commons:

> We may laugh at that arch rogue Laurence Sterne, when he
> pilfers some of his best passages verbatim from older au-
> thors, and then denounces plagiarism in words plagiarized
> from Burton, who himself plagiarized from the Latin of J.
> V. Andrea—viz., the phrase "shall we forever make new
> books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring out
> of one vessel into another?"

Lethem's acts of reappropriation, whether acknowledged or not, are not necessarily in themselves radical or new. His method of pulling texts together in bits and pieces has, itself, an equally long lineage—particularly in the avant-garde (think of Burroughs' experiments with cut-ups) as well as in the very kind of essay that I am currently writing, at least to an extent. Earlier forms of plagiarism or reappropriation differ as markedly from Lethem's composition as what I now am writing (by cutting and pasting sections of this text from other texts of my own) differs from what Burroughs once wrote through his assemblage of slips of paper. In the digital age, we are less likely to handle the texts that we (mis)use; moreover, the texts that we do handle, whether as sources or samples, are already digitized—that is, abstract. This abstraction has been a factor before (for example, consider the unwritten commons of the 'generic paradigms' and 'linguistic laws' that Tofts and McCrea discuss), but because of digitization, texts are increasingly, as data, substantiated manifestations of the commons of information.[6]

Acts of remixing explode in this digital era through technology that remediates the possibility of avant-garde experiments of reappropriation. Of remix culture, Lessig has suggested that mixed-media works (enabled by digitization) diverge markedly from previous textual modes of quotation:

> Unlike text, where the quotes follow in a single line—such
> as here, where the sentence explains, "and then a quote gets
> added"—remixed media may quote sounds over images, or
> video over text, or text over sounds. The quotes thus get
> mixed together. The mix produces the new creative work—
> the "remix." (69)

Lethem's "The Ecstasy of Influence" does not simply represent a textual practice that "quotes in single lines," but instead one that reappropriates

texts in such a way as to fundamentally alter and reframe their "original" systems of signification—so much so that the reappropriation produces a new (composite) work, a remix. Other pieces by Lethem explicitly engaging in remix, or creative plagiarist practice, include his 2007 story "Always Crashing in the Same Car (a mash-up)," which appeared in the journal Conjunctions, and the short-story collection Kafka Americana, jointly written with Carter Scholz. Lethem so carefully constructs these works that despite the give-away of their titles or prefaces, he leaves readers unsure of the extent to which he has used others' words.

Back from the Dead: A Kind of Authorial Presence

The nuanced act of the remix that Lethem undertakes in these works is most fully explored and discursively drawn out in "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism Mosaic." This work engages with the notion of 'influence' and discourses of plagiarism occurring throughout literary history, including how plagiarism is cast in Lethem's current moment marked by digital culture. "The Ecstasy of Influence" is really a composition: a sampled mash-up of other writers' texts that truly exemplifies Roland Barthes' concept of the text as a "tissue of quotations" ("Death" 147). Lethem borrows the words of Barthes himself to say so explicitly:

> Any text is woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony. The citations that go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*; they are quotations without inverted commas. (43, emphasis original)

Lethem presents the whole piece without inverted commas; all quotes, direct or implied, are unmarked in the mix. Printed at the end of the piece is a 'key' that comprises Lethem's notes and citations. It is thus possible to frame Lethem's writing in theoretical discourses that read the author as a composer, or even, as Mark Amerika has proposed in his work on remixology, as a "compostproducer": a shadowy "rival to traditional literature" who composites or recycles (composts) to produce an after-effect.[7]

  The figure of the composer echoes Barthes' 'scripter' who "born simultaneously with the text" replaces the 'dead' author as its producer

("Death" 145). These alternative configurations of 'author' are necessary because Lethem has not *authored* "The Ecstasy of Influence," which has a myriad of other authors. He has instead *composed* the text and in that process of composition brought 'Jonathan Lethem' the 'author' of "The Ecstasy of Influence" (whose name appends the text) into being. Although he is, as Barthes says, "born simultaneously with the text," the term composer, or producer, is preferable to Barthes' term scripter in this instance because that term still gestures to some indelible fact of identity; even if authors can never write words truly their own, they can put their hand to paper, to their script, and mark those words as their own.[8] Lethem, as an author who eschews the personal trace of hand writing and in effect the honor accorded to having his name printed on the spine of a book, is in contrast a mediated author more fluidly distanced from the act of writing than would be a scripter (moving from hand to type to code to interface, without an authoritative manuscript).

The critical theory of Barthes and his contemporaries enables a contemporary notion of authorship in the digital era. Mark Poster has called this kind of author a 'digital author,' but I would not go as far as to make that distinction since as I have shown above, more continuity exists between the author as composer or scripter than such a term allows. That said Poster's book *Mode of Information* does enable us to consider what has changed for authors working in digital media, which, unless they are still producing handwritten manuscripts, is arguably most authors. As Poster writes,

> The digital author connotes a greater alterity between the text and the author, due in part to the digital nature of the writing. I claim that digital writing is both a technological inscription of the author and a term to designate a new historical constellation of authorship, one that is emergent, but seemingly more and more predominant. (490)

Poster moves away from the established problematic of authorship, noting that the author is a figure already produced by the process of digitization, a figure in which prior texts meet rather than originate. He suggests that the levels of abstraction operating in digital text induce a performance of writing not seen as authorial in and of itself, and that the already contested

validity of the 'author' undergoes a kind of substantiation in the digital era whereby the technology proliferates more ambiguous conceptions of authorship. The conventions of physical space—gallery walls, or the printed page—do not apply to digital media as it constantly renegotiates how to represent disparate forms and sources. Because of this flexibility, new media continues to inscribe the functions of 'author' and 'artist' in new ways whilst offering an ongoing remediation of prior authorial positions.

Literary authors working through digital means can potentially embrace wide-ranging modes of production and "writing" that come with using digital objects. Lev Manovich's metaphor for the producer/author in a digital age is the DJ, which he uses to highlight how authors working with digital objects in digital media always in turn work within composite structures (134–35). Their level of skill and artistry may be judged solely on the quality of their mix rather than on the evidence that they can show for the point of origin for their work. A successful DJ produces a seamless mix: blending discrete objects without friction and merging samples together to create a distinct entity whilst retaining the inherent individual properties of each. Like Manovich's DJ, Lethem contends with the reconfiguration of authorship in a digital age and mirrors his aesthetic on his central thesis. For even though readers might encounter his text as a closed entity (the printed page, a PDF file), Lethem's process in writing that text is clearly discursive and difficult to delineate: the author created the mix in his version of the essay—itself a digital object—and the literary work that he undertakes and produces is the mastery of his mix.

Open/Closed

"The Ecstasy of Influence" resoundingly engages with established theory of literary production in the twentieth century, but it also engages with much more contemporary versions of this discourse, most notably those of the remix, remediation, and cultural commons. The system that Lethem deploys emphasizes the leveling, smoothing ability of digital media to present all information evenly. Others' words are mixed and mashed while the tone and authorial voice *seem* consistent. Readers who have not already come across the texts that Lethem samples may not fully comprehend the "vast stereophony" of the piece.

Lethem uses a remix of other texts in a way that links traditional liter-

ary tropes of allusion and influence to those of sampling and borrowing usually associated with avant-garde artistic practice in the mid- to late-twentieth century. He manipulates these techniques to foreground a genealogy of current concerns about the mediation of copyright law and artistic license in the digital age. Despite its hypertextuality, the piece is coherent: slippages, differences, cracks have all been paved over. To achieve this coherence, Lethem mediates his source material to varying extents, not the least so that the piece reads with a single, consistent authorial voice. This voice glosses the multivocality of its sources to represent instead a univocal narrative. On the page is a seamless narrative that readers can instantly recognize and make accessible: the essay has a strong authorial voice with a strong cultural position. Moreover, rather than flaunting the hypertextual properties in this work, Lethem hides them, embedding them in its referential depth. Part of the way he does so is by retaining an old-media material property: the text as fixed entity. The essay has been published once online on the *Harper's* website (in both HTML and PDF versions) and four times in print: in the February 2007 issue of *Harper's Magazine* and the 2008 collection on remix culture titled *Sound Unbound*, as well as in the 2011 collection of essays *Cutting Across Media* and another collection of Lethem's non-fiction writing called *The Ecstasy of Influence*.[9] All of these versions are fixed entities, even the online version which is not hyperlinked (searching phrases in a search engine could easily open outward trajectories, but the article itself does not directly enable this intertextuality). Despite its hypertextuality, then, Lethem presents his essay to the reader as a closed object, proffering the illusion that it is self-contained.

At the end of the essay, in the "Key to the Key," Lethem acknowledges a debt to the writer David Shields, whose work embraces an art of plagiarism and influence within essayistic forms that remix genre and destabilize concepts of 'fiction.' Shields' book *Reality Hunger* is a manifesto in defense of reappropriation in literature, a history of reappropriation within literature, and an act of reappropriation itself, as well as a call to writers to embrace the form of the essay as a more transparent textual space than the novel in openly permitting influence and reappropriation. In a *New York Times* article on another controversial case of plagiarism (that of the young German author Helene Hegemann), Randy Kennedy has written that Shields' book "relies on thinkers from Wittgenstein to DJ Spooky,

melding them into a voice that can sound at times eerily consistent." Kennedy's description of the "eerily consistent" voice in Shields' multivocal work applies equally well, if not more so, to Lethem's piece. Where Shields represents distinct fragments of others' words, Lethem fully reconfigures others' words within his own framework.

The consistency or seamlessness Lethem achieves in a work of fragments may in part be due to the continued cycle of literary acts of reappropriation: the sentiment and expression "borrowed" for Shields' and Lethem's works are themselves borrowed from a whole history of writing. Literature is a feedback loop of other literatures. When literature is openly ransacked and made to operate without a distinct authorial 'I,' the text assumes a surprising *consistency* from our normal reading practice—a consistency at the level of written language or, at the very least, from the frameworks of perception that we, as readers, bring to the language. Within the text and the reader, remediation already (re)produces some kind of common tone wherein the registers of different texts resonate across each other and through each other despite apparent contextual disparities.

Lethem's knowledge of reappropriation as a creative history and his demonstration of the remix as cultural practice enable mastery over his material, as evidenced by the seamless tone that he creates as well as through the mix of texts that he uses. Lethem's early fiction is often considered a successful experiment in genre mixing, and his oeuvre throughout strongly evinces his interest in and commitment to sampling other pop cultural forms—music, comics, film.[10] That Lethem creates a text like "Ecstasy," where he as an author is lost in the voices of other authors yet still manages to maintain control as producer, points to his particular skills as a writer, skills that he manifests elsewhere in his work. Lethem's style is symptomatic of the broader media ecology that I have described. As Lethem has himself said during the question-and-answer session of a symposium on his work called Occasional Music,

> My sense [is] that you're born in to a world of referents in progress. . . . For me, for instance, as deep as my relationship to an actor like Humphrey Bogart and Edward G. Robinson . . . the first way I knew those voices and those styles and those stances was Bugs Bunny pretending to be

those guys. . . . [You] have to build your way back to the
source. This is universal, and not a mistake but actually a
part of cultural experience that is to me, very enthralling.

It is perhaps to this end that Lethem remixes literature with the traceable
marker of his own presence. In the broad analysis, Lethem is an exem-
plary practitioner of a certain form rather than purely a product of that
form as found elsewhere in culture. As Amerika writes,

> Taking on the stylistic writing gestures of
> other artists and then remixologically inhabiting them
> in some ancient form of "realtime" manipulation
> requires practice . . .
> Moving in and out of these ghost tendencies that
> mark the outlines of a body language once performed
> by another artist of the past also necessitates
> a certain amount of lived experience.[11]

Both as a fan of certain cultural forms and as a producer of cultural forms
that remediate his interests, Lethem likewise complicates any easy as-
sumptions about authors in the digital era. That certain kinds of remix cul-
ture are easier to reproduce than other cultural forms via home computers
(as Gillis' comment about grade-school kids using Photoshop may testify)
should not undermine the value of the work that Lethem undertakes in
"Ecstasy."

   As an author, Lethem is most present at the end of the piece in the key,
which also functions as a "reveal." Here he unveils his challenge to the as-
sumption that without inverted commas or footnotes, the phrasing, if not
the ideas, of a text belong to the author by citing references anecdotally
without bibliographic detail. The casual address of the key does reintro-
duce *an* author; the anecdote functions as trace of the personal as does his
choice of texts, serving to further support his presence as only one voice
among many. The reader can range over the precursor texts with the key as
a guide, but the key is literally elliptical since Lethem uses ellipses and
also omits information. Readers may experience uncanny familiarity or
posit their own recognition into these gaps. The key as a text, as well as
the key as a map or guide to the 'main' text, is simultaneously pregnant
with textuality and empty of definite reference. Inherent in the structure of

"The Ecstasy of Influence" is the pervasive tension between the lateral surface and the hidden depth. To borrow the words of Barthes, "The text, in its mass, is comparable to a sky, at once flat and smooth, deep, without edges and without landmarks" (*S/Z* 14).

To Give and To Get

Lethem's 'ecstasy' is most clearly stated (and politicized) in the subsections of the essay titled "You Can't Steal a Gift," "The Commons," and "Give All.'" In deference to the notion of an anxiety of influence, Lethem prioritizes the concept of influence as 'gift.' The principal argument that Lethem puts forward is that art—a force that has the power to affect people in non-commodifiable ways—traverses the gift and market economy at once: "The cardinal difference between gift and commodity exchange is that a gift establishes a feeling-bond between two people, whereas the sale of a commodity leaves no necessary connection" (38). Lethem's disconnection of the 'gift' of art from its market value enables a culture wherein the use and influence of artwork might proffer art itself as its main operating principle in a space outside of commodity culture and without recourse to market notions of ownership and purchase. This is not to say that the producer of the work of art has no claims on it, but that the worlds of free influence and market control can exist simultaneously. Lethem depicts the space of free influence as an expansive one:

> Art that matters to us—which moves the heart, or revives the soul, or delights the senses, or offers courage for living, however we choose to describe the experience—is received as a gift is received. . . . The daily commerce of our lives proceeds at its own constant level, but a gift conveys an uncommodifiable surplus of inspiration. (38)

In this section, Lethem makes much use of Lewis Hyde's 1983 book *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, itself a reworking and reappropriation of Marcel Mauss' 1950 book *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. (Re)turning to Hyde's text, from Lethem's, elucidates an alternative way of considering the "uncommodifiable surplus of inspiration" that forms its own cultural space, one comprising a barely tangible web of shared knowledge and understanding:

> Works of art are drawn from, and their bestowal nourishes,
> those parts of our being that are not entirely personal, parts
> that derive from nature, from the group and the race, from
> history and tradition, from the spiritual world. . . . In the re-
> alized gifts of the gifted we may taste the *zoë*-life which
> shall not perish even though each of us, and each genera-
> tion, shall perish. (152)

Hyde's "*zoë*-life" conjures a historical, religious notion of an extra-life—
common to all man and animal—that is shared apart from the earthly ma-
terial of the day-to-day. This shared extra-life is always-already apart from
the material—and, by extension, from the capital—economy. Here I elide
the differences between economies and worlds, the spiritual commons and
an artistic one, so as to emphasize the prevalent and slippery 'doubleness'
that marks Lethem/Hyde/Mauss' attempts to represent the 'gift' as it func-
tions in anthropological and cultural contexts. Lethem implicitly locates
Hyde's *zoë*-life in a contemporary reading of the 'commons' in "The Ec-
stasy of Influence":

> A commons, of course, is anything like the streets over
> which we drive, the skies through which we pilot airplanes,
> or the public parks or beaches on which we dally. . . . The
> silence in a movie theater is a transitory commons, impos-
> sibly fragile, treasured by those who crave it, and con-
> structed as a mutual gift by those who compose it. (39)

This section moves from the words of Lawrence Lessig to (I think)
Lethem's own words—or at least a phrase scripted by Lethem of which
the origin remains unacknowledged. That Lethem's writing on 'gift econ-
omy' and 'the commons' brings together Hyde and Lessig is notable.
Lessig as a lawyer, author, and Professor at Harvard has been hugely in-
fluential in highlighting how law and technology affect copyright; he is,
perhaps more famously, a founding board member of the non-profit licens-
ing organization "Creative Commons." Lessig's own writing, as well as
his work as part of the Creative Commons group, implements a legal
ethics and terminology drawn from a 'gift economy': "We provide free li-
censes and other legal tools to mark creative work with the freedom the
creator wants it to carry, so others can share, remix, use commercially, or

any combination thereof." Some critics of the Creative Commons claim that it reduces the potential expanse of a true "gift economy" (of open creative influence). Whilst formalizing such esoteric concepts undoubtedly is reductive, it also enables many artists and producers of cultural matter who would otherwise have no recourse to influence the trajectory of their work. The Creative Commons then recalls less Hyde's *zoë*-life than the earlier gift economy of Mauss, a balanced economy formed in response to the problem. As Mary Douglas describes Mauss' argument, "A gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction" (x).

The complex interplay between these texts—those of Hyde, Lessig, and by extension Mauss—allows Lethem to employ a later version of a text (Lessig's "Commons") to intervene in a precursor or antecedent text (Hyde's "Gift") with an implied multiplicity of other texts (Mauss' "Gift"). The two reappropriated texts remediate each other's form and concerns through that intervention—and through the interventions to which they inherently refer—and yet also retain the impression of a historical logic of earlier texts 'influencing' the later ones. This praxis is implicitly one of the remix and resembles what Amerika calls remixology, through which writers expose the space in which they channel or use other writers' gestures: "An embodied praxis where the vocal intonations of/the artist are used as source material to discover/new aesthetic facts." Lethem uses remediation to demonstrate his own prioritization of 'the gift' and 'the commons'—his practice reverberating (literally, through so many voices) with the sense of his argument. This section of "Ecstasy" becomes its own "new aesthetic fact," and although focused on writing is also reminiscent of the remixes of other media (visual and audio) that Lessig discusses, which at times make more emphatic statements than an elusive original work. In remixings of already known cultural matter, "meaning comes not from the content of what [the works] say; it comes from the reference, which is expressible only if it is the original that gets used" (Lessig 74-75). The skill of the mixer is to construct a space in which cultural reference can resound beyond its earlier contexts.

You/Me/They

Practices of borrowing and remixing comprise the entire material object that is "The Ecstasy of Influence." In a section that most acutely realizes

this technique, Lethem *re*-presents, and alters, a story regarding the search for a few lines of text randomly heard out of context. This particular section epitomizes the work that Lethem undertakes and curates in "The Ecstasy of Influence" as a whole, for here Lethem's 'I' that "approaches the text' is 'already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost)" (Bathes, *S/Z* 10).

The precursor text in question is Jonathan Rosen's *The Talmud and the Internet*. The story is about hearing an allusion to a poem in the film version of *84 Charing Cross Road* and the subsequent attempt to find the original lines. The challenge led Rosen/Lethem/the-'I'-of-the-essay back to the book *84 Charing Cross Road* (where the lines do not actually appear); then to the internet (for a search proving difficult because the lines from the film were in fact abridged); onto the Yale Library online catalogue (which proves not as extensive as assumed); and eventually (after an alteration of the search terms) to a personal website where someone posted those particular lines just because he or she liked them. In turn, Rosen/Lethem/'I' discovers that they belonged to one of the most well known of John Donne's passages: "containing as it does the line 'never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.' My search had led me from a movie to a book to a play to a website and back to a book. Then again, those words may be as famous as they are only because Hemingway lifted them for his book title" (Lethem 26–27).

This passage alludes to many authors and many texts, as well as many representations, all fragmented, reappropriated, and in many cases altered. It is emphatically a "galaxy of signifiers [with] several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one" (Barthes *S/Z* 5–6). It includes Rosen, Lethem, Donne, the website owner, the scriptwriter of the film *84 Charing Cross Road*, and the actor who spoke the lines in the film (in this case Antony Hopkins), as well as all of the texts that these 'authors' produced. Once again the actual story is seamlessly integrated into Lethem's essay, but in this case, this story traverses print, electronic, and digital material. And so another level of remediation takes place: Donne's text is repeatedly converted into forms of data that can be reproduced via ever-newer technologies. The final discovery of the quote is due entirely to a digitized version of the Donne text and Rosen's ability to formulate his search digitally. Treating Donne's words as digital data enables the figure "I" to search for fragments of text and achieve a near-

instantaneous result, an ease which effaces the hyper-mediacy of the technology and the conversion of Donne's text into digital data. Inherent in this section of "The Ecstasy of Influence" is a structural fluidity, a movement across multiple temporal and spatial instances. The text exists in myriad versions over time, as a result of figures in different historical periods who enable its preservation and interpretation, and at numerous sites across space: through the subdivision and storage of various versions of the text as data, as well as its distribution in places in which readers can experience and encounter it.

Mix Down

In this work, Lethem creates a seamless coherent whole from a wealth of disparate fragments. He (re)mixes integral samples, and looser tones and registers, in order to create a distinct text that hides its intertextuality even as it exploits the multiple voices that chime in harmony and dissonance within it. Lethem implicitly and explicitly reiterates, and develops, complex arguments about the role of the author and authorial integrity in this digital age. As I have argued, this opacity is particularly redolent of digital media. Lethem does not necessarily create new media art (disseminating the essay most widely in print), but he does tap into the leveling capacity of digital media to present all information evenly. "Ecstasy" foregrounds the way that one all encompassing binary code quantizes and then signifies multiple media—a code that we can afterwards manipulate to reproduce a simulation of the original data. Lethem's practice stifles the differences between the discrete materials and the texts that he samples by converting them into one single fluid piece, but the sense of seamlessness does not completely silence the reverberations of other texts and media within the work or entirely sublimate Lethem's presence as the producer, the composer, of the text. Fluidity structures the "Ecstasy," a fluidity integral to the materiality and the mode of production—and reproduction—in a digital age.

Notes

1. In this article, I use the term 'author' in the sense particularly associated with the 'literary author,' a figure traditionally seen as the point of origin for literary works. Ref-

erences to what Roland Barthes calls the "death of the author," amongst others, will clarify the complexities of this concept. Clearly new media texts always already have multiple authors and shadows of multiple authors' work in the very code that runs the software in which a 'literary author' may compose.

2. Texts that deal with new media as a predominantly visual form, in many respects a re-mediation of a cinematic reality effect, include Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's *Remediation: Understanding New Media*; Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media*; and Mark J. P. Wolf's *Abstracting Reality: Art, Communication, and Cognition in the Digital Age*.

3. For further information on contemporary culture as an information age, see Friedrich Kittler's "Gramophone, Film, Typewriter"; Mark Poster's *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*; and N. Katherine Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman*.

4. For some notes on hypertext and literary media in the digital age, see Hayles' *Writing Machines*; Bolter's *Writing Space*; and Joseph Tabbi's "A Review of Books in the Age of Their Technological Obsolescence."

5. In discussing plagiarism, I mean to invoke the full complexity of term as used in rela-tion to literature and music. As Judy Anderson notes in her annotated bibliography of the term, "It seems so simple. Plagiarism is the act of using the words of another with-out giving the originator credit. But . . . defining plagiarism becomes murky and foggy if one tries to put exact boundaries on it. Instead, it seems to fall under the same cate-gory as defining art. 'I don't know what it is, but I know it when I see it'" (1).

6. It is also worth noting that whilst digitization may support an easier mode of *creative* plagiarism, it increasingly polices "illegal" acts of plagiarism within academic institu-tions. In the United States and United Kingdom, perhaps the most common program that universities use to check for academic theft is *Turnitin*®, an online plagiarism de-tection facility.

7. Amerika does not explicitly discuss Lethem (or many other authors specifically) in his essay; instead, he offers a broad terminology for the particular kind of composition in which Lethem partakes.

8. In "Gramophone, Film, Typewriter," Friedrich Kittler perhaps most memorably dis-cusses this phenomenon of the mechanization of writing (typing) bringing about the loss of the indelible marker of script. Jacques Derrida also remarks on this phenome-non when thinking about how he writes on paper, and for paper, in *Paper Machine*.

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9. The references to Lethem's essay in this article are to the version that appears in *Sound Unbound*.

10. For a description of this work as genre mixing, see Roger Luckhurst's *Science Fiction*, in which he describes Lethem as writing about genre "metafictionally" and Lethem's work as, in part, "generic disjunction" (240). For Lethem's writing on non-literary media, see his recent publication *They Live* for the Deep Focus books series on forgotten classics, his non-fictional anthology *Disappointment Artist*, his edition of the *Da Capo: Best New Music Writing*, and his magazine articles for *Rolling Stone*—particularly that on Bob Dylan.

11. Since Amerika's essay is represented in graphic form, looking and reading like poetry, I have faithfully reproduced its line breaks according to the conventions used for quoting poetry.

12. For further reading, see the Creative Commons site online <http:/ / creativecommons.org/>.

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