Chapter 12

Audio Books: The Literary Origins
of Grooves, Labels and Sleeves

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This chapter addresses the relationship between literature, popular music and classical music by examining the packaging of the printed word and recorded sound, with a particular focus on the novel and the vinyl record. When it comes to packaging, music is indebted to literature. The vinyl record has three main components – the groove, the label and the sleeve – and each has links with the written word. The groove is sound in script form, a text written with the 'pencil of nature'.[1] In 1877 Thomas Edison constructed the first machine to successfully play back these tracings. He christened it the 'phonograph', a term arrived at by combining the Greek words for 'sound' and 'writing'.[2] Eldridge R. Johnson, the head of Victor Records, developed the paper record label at the beginning of the twentieth century. Colin Symes has argued that the label 'fulfils many of the same functions as a [book's] title page'.[3] When it comes to sleeve art, the person generally credited with inventing the record cover is Alex Steinweiss.[4] His packaging for the LP record was modelled on the dust jackets for hardback novels.

In this chapter I examine the bookish reification of music, looking in turn at these grooves, labels and sleeves. I will explore the ways in which this packaging encouraged people to think of the correspondences between sound recording and the printed word. However, although the record kept on spinning back to literary models, this influence also highlighted differences between the two forms. Literary formatting also helped to encourage differences within music, most notably the 'great schism' that widened between its classical and popular forms.[5] In the section

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[1]   'Pencil of Nature' is a term coined by William Henry Fox Talbot to describe his photographic process; see H. Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (London, 1844). The naming of the phonograph was clearly indebted to the naming of the 'photograph', which is derived from the Greek for light writing.

[2]   See Richard Osborne, *Vinyl: A History of the Analogue Record* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 9–11.

[3]   Colin Symes, *Setting the Record Straight: A Material History of Classical Recording* (Hanover, 2004), p. 96.

[4]   Jennifer McKnight-Trontz and Alex Steinweiss, *For the Record: The Life and Work of Alex Steinweiss* (New York, 2000), p. 1.

[5]   Symes, p. 247.

on the groove I will address the implications of turning sound into script, a process that underlined the differing statuses of literature, classical music and popular song. In the sections on labels and sleeves I will draw upon the work of Gerard Genette to examine whether or not these devices serve the same function as the title pages of books and their dust jackets. Genette has coined the term 'paratext' to describe the supplementary materials that operate as 'thresholds' to a book's core literary text.[6] It is my belief that although literature has regularly cast music as its 'other', recorded music has relied heavily on literary supplements to help produce its meanings.[7]

The Groove

One regular feature of contemporary reactions to Edison's phonograph is a focus on the sight, rather than the sound, of its grooves. On 7 December 1877 the phonograph was displayed to the staff of the *Scientific American*, the first people outside of Edison's immediate circle of employees to encounter the machine. In their report on the invention they state that 'there is no doubt that by practice, and the aid of a magnifier, it would be possible to read phonetically Mr. Edison's records of dots and dashes'.[8] The *English Mechanic* of 4 January 1878 contains one of the earliest reports on the phonograph in the British press; here Edison's assistant Charles Batchelor writes: 'Some of these sheets of tinfoil, after having a sentence recorded on them, have been straightened by Mr. Edison and plaster casts taken of them. In this state the indents made on the foil of the diaphragm form an interesting study'.[9]

The groove fascinated because it was felt that the translation of its language was within reach. Edison, for one, believed that he was on the path to achieving this goal. He tested the quality of records by looking at them rather than hearing them.[10] Emile Berliner, the inventor of the disc-playing gramophone, also had faith that the translation of the groove's language was within reach. A pamphlet given away with one of his early machines boasted that: 'Printed sound-records adapted for the purpose of studying sound-curves, and catalogues of plates will be published from time to time'.[11] His discs were easier to study than cylinders by virtue of the fact that they were already flat, like an open book. This flatness was

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[6]   Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997).

[7]   For an extended discussion of some of the issues covered in this chapter see Osborne, *Vinyl*.

[8]   'The Talking Phonograph', *Scientific American*, 32:25 (1877): 384–5.

[9]   Asor [Charles Batchelor], 'Phonograph', *English Mechanic*, 667 (1878): 404.

[10]   Paul Israel, *Edison: A Life of Invention* (New York, 1998), pp. 436–7.

[11]   Emile Berliner, 'Pamphlet with Directions for Use of 7" Machine' (undated) <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/berlhtml/berlhome.html>; accessed 22 May 2013.

a vital factor in the disc's success over the cylinder in the marketplace: it was a format that could be duplicated more easily. Here Berliner had learned from the printing press; by using a reverse matrix he could manufacture multiple copies of his discs, in the same manner that reverse typesetting had been used to print multiple copies of texts.

The tracings on discs and cylinders also inspired poets and artists. Writing in 1919 Rainer Maria Rilke recalled that 'what impressed itself' on his memory following his first encounter with the phonograph 'was not the sound from the funnel but the markings traced on the cylinder'.[12] Làszlò Moholy-Nagy was so excited by this automatic writing that he wished to replicate it manually:

> An extension of this apparatus for productive purposes could be achieved as follows: the grooves are incised by human agency into the wax plate, without any external mechanical means, which then produce sound effects which would signify – without new instruments and without an orchestra – a fundamental innovation in sound production (of new, hitherto unknown sounds and tonal relations) both in composition and in musical performance.[13]

The groove's status as writing affected the ways in which the phonograph was utilised. In Edison's original lists of proposed uses it is ideas relating to the written word that are dominant: 'letter-writing', 'dictation', 'reader', 'books'.[14] Moreover, the first recording companies wished to fill records with words rather than music. The most important of these, the North American Phonograph Company, was formed in 1888 with the aim of licensing Edison's machine as a dictation device. It was only when this venture failed that the company's regional affiliates began to explore the possibilities of recording popular music. Louis Glass of the Pacific Coast Phonograph Co. developed the 'nickel-in-the-slot' machine, a precursor to the jukebox, which offered customers a selection of songs and instrumentals. As the other affiliates adopted this device their profits soared. In 1891 the Louisiana Phonograph Co. reported that one of its machines had taken $1,000 in two months, while the Missouri Phonograph Co. operated over 50 machines, one of which had taken $100 in a week.[15]

Why had the companies not thought of using popular music in the first place? The status of phonograph recording – and, by extension, its literary quality – can

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[12]   Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Primal Sound', in *Selected Works: Volume I Prose*, trans. C. Craig Houston (1919; London, 1954), pp. 51–2.

[13]   Làszlò Moholy-Nagy, 'Production-Reproduction', in Krisztina Passuth (ed.), *Moholy-Nagy* (New York, 1985), p. 289. [Original: 'Produktion-Reproduktion', *De Stijl*, 7 (1922): 97–101.]

[14]   Thomas Alva Edison, 'The Phonograph and Its Future', *North American Review*, 126: 262 (May-June 1878), p. 531.

[15]   Oliver Read and Walter L. Welch, *From Tin Foil to Stereo: The Evolution of the Phonograph*, 2nd edition (Indianapolis, 1976), p. 110.

shoulder some of the blame. There was a desire to establish the phonograph as a quality device. An association with 'lower' forms of music would not help this to be achieved. In a disputed but telling statement, Edison is claimed to have said 'I don't want the phonograph sold for amusement purposes. It is not a toy. I want it sold for business purposes only'.[16] In the ranking systems that formed an important part of nineteenth-century society, popular music was placed below business enterprises.

Conversely, it could be argued that the earthly and literary qualities of the phonograph prevented classical musicians and composers from embracing it. 1877, the year of the phonograph's invention, was also the year of Walter Pater's declaration that 'all art constantly aspires to the condition of music'.[17] Pater's argument rested on the idea that out of all of the branches of art it was within classical music that form and function were most successfully reconciled. He was also building on over a century of Romantic thinking in which music was elevated amongst the arts because of its non-representational quality. Literature, for example, was a weaker discipline because the written word was not capable of conveying the extremities of human emotion.[18] However, with the phonograph, music was being transformed into literature. By rendering sound as a groove, music's form and function were also being affected in peculiar ways.

If this process helped to discourage classical performers from embracing the phonograph, its subsequent use as a business machine would only have made matters worse. In addition, early records could not properly capture classical music, both temporally (they had a duration of less than two minutes) and tonally (they were unable to produce the timbre or full range of many of the orchestra's instruments). Consequently, prior to the early 1900s there was little desire amongst renowned musicians and singers to record for this mechanical device.

And yet all types of composer and musician were to benefit from music's transmutation into text. The groove's status as writing lay at the heart of copyright debates about sound recording. A 1905 French court ruling determined that literary copyright rules should be applied to records on the basis that they contain what is, ultimately, a legible script. It determined that they contain 'a special writing, which in the future will undoubtedly be legible to the eyes' and that therefore 'the rules of plagiarism are applicable'.[19] These questions of status, legibility and economics were to remain in place as the record moved on to the next stage of its evolution: the label.

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[16]   Alfred O. Tate, *Edison's Open Door: The Life Story of Thomas E. Edison Great Individualist* (New York, 1938), p. 253.

[17]   Walter Pater, 'The School of Giorgione', *Fortnightly Review* (October 1877), p. 140.

[18]   See Gerry Smyth, *Music in Contemporary British Fiction: Listening to the Novel* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 20.

[19]   Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis and London, 1985), p. 98.

The Label

Colin Symes is correct in noting the correspondences between a record's label and a book's title page. The two devices carry similar sets of information: they detail authors and titles, the names of manufacturers and copyright details. Moreover, in both fields these devices were the most important sites for this information prior to the development of printed covers: books were first bound with printed sleeves in the early nineteenth century; for records this development occurred over a century later. Symes's work draws on the ideas of the French Literary theorist Gerard Genette, who coined the term 'paratext' to describe the devices that surround the main text of a book – prefaces, introductions, illustrative material, and so on – all of which serve as a 'threshold' before the reader embarks upon the main text.[20] Genette has suggested that the notion of paratext could be expanded into other areas, including the materials that accompany an analogue record.[21] Doing so, however, reveals several differences between the 'thresholds' of records and books.

The first of these differences lies at the level of function. For Genette a paratext is merely 'an assistant, only an accessory of the text'.[22] It could be argued that this is true of a title page of a book: the main body of text could be successfully read without it. This is not the case with a record. Despite the best endeavours of Edison, Moholy-Nagy and the French legislative system, no one has managed to decipher the language of a record's grooves. The label, in addition to summarising the contents of a record, has had to fulfil the function of translating its textual information. Moreover, while a record's label usually offers a reasonably faithful description of the grooves, it also serves functions beyond the task of transcription. In the first half of the twentieth century, the label was of great importance in establishing the status of recordings. It also helped in their marketing. Indeed, it was as a sales aid that Eldridge R. Johnson originally developed the label. He outlined his plans to a colleague, stating that he wished to 'mark' records 'properly, as if we were making them to sell'.[23] Consequently, his first paper labels featured eye-catching colours – usually gold or silver – that were printed against a black background.

This leads us to the second difference between title pages and labels: authorship. For both books and records one of the main selling points has been the author's name.[24] While it is usually easy to determine the author of a book (apart from cases

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[20]   Genette, p. 2.

[21]   Ibid., p. 407.

[22]   Ibid., p. 407.

[23]   Ruth Edge and Leonard Petts, 'The First Ten-Inch Records, Part 1', *Hillandale News*, 156 (June 1987), p. 201.

[24]   The prioritization of a book's author was something that evolved, however. Genette notes that many books were credited anonymously until the mid-nineteenth century (p. 45). Michel Foucault argues that it was during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, coinciding with the establishment of copyright laws, that authorial 'ownership' of literary works began to be proclaimed: see Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *Language, Counter-*

where there is a ghost writer), it is usually the person who is identified as being the principal writer of the main text – this is not the case with a record. Writers, performers and producers all have a stake in claiming authorship of recorded music. More importantly, so does the record company. In fact, in the early days of the industry it was the record company that was considered to be the main author of the disc or cylinder. The companies used different materials to make their recordings, and they used different recording techniques in their studios. As a consequence records were sold on the basis of these differing manufacturing methods as much as they were on the audible contents of each disc.

The prioritisation of the record company can be witnessed in the design that Johnson developed for the first record labels. While a book's title page commonly features the publisher's name and colophon, these are not usually dominant. Johnson's design, which provided the standard template throughout the life of the analogue record, gave the record company name and its symbol precedence: they occupied the whole of the upper half of the label. The implications of this layout can only be fully considered when we take into account just how prominent the record label used to be. Shellac records were commonly sold in brown paper bags with cut-away centres, which allowed the record label to show through. An indication of the importance of this design lies in the fact that in the record business 'label' was quickly adopted a synonym for 'company'. Another indication lies in the fact that some label names became generic terms – witness Motown or Stax. To my knowledge there has been no parallel within book publishing.

Genre is the third main area of difference between title pages and labels. In book publishing it is the cover or dust jacket that has been the most common indicator of genre, usually via different tropes of pictorial design. Colour-coding has nevertheless also been employed. In the early twentieth century, yellow covers were sometimes used to indicate that a book was licentious.[25] Penguin books expanded upon this idea: since the company's inception in 1935 it has used different coloured sleeves and/or spines as a means of identifying different genres. In this instance, it appears that book publishing learnt from the record industry: the idea of colour coding genres was developed in the record industry in the first decade of the twentieth century. Here, it was the label that performed the task.

Once again Eldridge R. Johnson's Victor company was the pioneer. Johnson realised that for the gramophone disc to gain cultural acceptance more attention needed to be given to performers and composers. He argued that 'only great musical talent could transform the phonograph record from a toy into the greatest medium of home entertainment'.[26] During the early 1900s 'celebrities' from the world of classical music were enticed to record for the gramophone. Johnson

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Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews (ed.) Donald F. Bouchard, trans. by Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Oxford, 1977), pp. 113–38.

[25]   Genette, p. 27.

[26]   Eldridge R. Johnson, cited in *The 50-year Story of RCA Victor Records* (New York, 1953), p. 33.

began to sign the most renowned musical artists to exclusive, long-term contracts. In May 1905 the British journal *Talking Machine News* reported on the success of this policy:

> Much has been done to enhance the reputation of the talking machine by inducing artistes of celebrity to sing and play into it. There is not the slightest doubt that many persons who were once apt to scoff and sneer changed their opinions and feelings when they learned that Melba, Caruso, de Reszke, Suzanne Adams, Ben Davies, Kubelik, Kocian and others had made records.[27]

With these names featured on the labels, the cultural reputation of these artists would devolve to the record company's name, which continued to be featured prominently on the top half of the label designs. Furthermore, with this label name emblazoned on future releases it would then lend prestige and credibility to the rest of the record company's output.

There was a flaw in this scheme. Although classical music provided the means for establishing the status of sound recording, it was not where the greatest profits lay. Reporting in 1907 to the board of Victor's British affiliate, the Gramophone Company, Theodore Birnbaum stated, 'This class of business is difficult to handle, and it is questionable whether it can be regarded on any other basis than high-class advertising'.[28] In his history of EMI, the label into which the Gramophone Company would evolve, Peter Martland discloses that 'less than one per cent of the Company's unit sales in 1913 were Celebrity records'.[29] The bulk of sales were made up of their popular music releases.

The Victor and Gramophone companies had qualms about proclaiming their authorship of popular music. They were concerned that if their names became associated with these 'lower' forms it might affect the reputation of their classical recordings. Consequently, the companies developed a set of coloured labels, each of which would represent a particular type of music. This policy was inaugurated with Red Seal record labels, which were used exclusively for recordings made by celebrity artists. These were introduced by the Gramophone Company's Russian division in 1901 and extended to the rest of Europe in 1902. The Victor Company followed suit in the US in 1903.

A hierarchy of label colours and prices followed. Victor issued purple-label records for recordings by Broadway stars as well as those by less celebrated classical performers, and blue-label records for double-sided couplings of purple-label releases. The original black label now signified the bottom of the range, artistically and economically. It was reserved for 'Vaudeville, actors, popular singers . . . anything which appealed to what might have been considered the mass

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[27]   Our Expert, *Talking Machine News*, 3:1 (May 1905): 9.
[28]   Peter Martland, *Since Records Began: EMI The First 100 Years* (London, 1997), p. 63.
[29]   Ibid.

taste'.[30] In response, Columbia issued a multicoloured label for its classical and operatic releases and a blue label for 'personality' recordings and lesser classical recordings. They also reserved their black label for 'mass taste' recordings. These record company labels were further subdivided by the allocation of different batches of catalogue numbers to different musical genres. Roland Gelatt remarked that 'A collection of Red Seal Records established one as a person of both taste and property'.[31] At the opposite end of the scale Victor dismissed their black-label recordings as being 'Coney Island Stuff'.[32]

There were consequences of demarcating music in this way. Notably the audiences for classical and popular music became increasingly divided. Symes believes that 'The advent of the phonograph … began to consolidate the "great musical schism"'.[33] Andre Millard concurs, stating that record companies 'did their part in the polarisation of American society by publicising the differences between "good music" and "popular music"'.[34] There would be further divisions within popular music itself: labelling practices prompted the separation of the American market into 'popular', 'country' and 'race records' streams. It would appear that just as a record's label and a book's title page differ when it comes to both form and function, they also differ when it comes to their interaction with the final layer of musical and literary packaging: the sleeve.

The Sleeve

The major record companies' preoccupation with classical music was in evidence again when it came to the development of the LP. Introduced by Columbia in 1948, the LP was created to house the longer pieces of classical repertoire. Its sleeve was also designed with classical music in mind. Alex Steinweiss, Columbia's art director, was commissioned to make the design. He came up with a package that featured a printed cover pasted onto 24-point chipboard, which opened on the right hand side (like most books published in the West). This design was manufactured by the Imperial Paper Box Company, who came up with the idea of printing sleevenotes on the back of a record's cover.[35]

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[30]   B.L. Coleman and D.G. Cotter, 'A Numerical Listing of the Victor Single-Faced 6000 and 7000 Purple Label Series (Part 1)', *Hillandale News*, 51 (October 1969), p. 17.

[31]   Roland Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph 1877–1977*, 2nd revised edn. (London, 1977), p. 149.

[32]   William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890–1945* (New York and Oxford, 1999), pp. 31–2.

[33]   Symes, p. 247.

[34]   Andre Millard, *America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 93.

[35]   Lewis Garlick, 'The Graphic Artist and the Record Industry', *Journal of the Audio Engineering Society*, 25:10–11 (October/November 1977), p. 781.

In the nineteenth century, classical music had been elevated above literature in terms of the hierarchies of the arts, but Columbia was now borrowing from the conventions of hardback publishing in order to establish the LP's cultural credentials. The LP sleeve was clearly indebted to the design of the dust covers for books. It shared the same protective, informative and promotional duties. It also borrowed their layout: author/artist and manufacturing company were outlined on the front sleeve, accompanied by an appropriate pictorial representation of the contents; on the rear there was a descriptive text and maybe a photo of the author/artist; on the spine there were details of the author/artist in addition to the manufacturer's details. Book publishing and classical music subsequently pursued similar trends in sleeve design. During the 1950s, designers working in both fields would often employ bold, illustrative designs. By the 1970s, classical recordings and canonical literary works would be packaged using paintings from the periods of their composition, thus tying together three art forms and furthering the 'classical' connotations of each.

There are differences between dust jackets and record sleeves, however. This is particularly the case when it comes to the descriptive text housed on their back covers. Herbert C. Ridout of the British branch of Columbia Records claimed the invention of sleevenotes: in 1925 he employed the musician and writer Harry Wild to pen descriptive notes for a series of classical recordings, which were to be written with 'the object of interesting and endeavouring to educate the listener who wished to improve his musical taste'.[36] The sleevenote thus pre-dates the LP. Furthermore, it has served functions beyond those of the notes on the rear of a book's dust jacket. It is more detailed, in effect providing both an introduction to and a synopsis of the work. It also performs a different task: it is a literary interpretation of a musical work, rather than a literary meditation upon a literary work. Importantly, it is not a threshold: the sleeve can be read while the record is being played (here I am referring to the images on the front cover as well as the text on the rear). This is not the case with the introduction or synopsis of a book, which cannot be read at the same time as the main text.

There are further differences between a book's dust jacket and an LP sleeve. The earliest LP covers placed an emphasis on the company name and logo which, as with labels, dominated the upper half of the design. Although subsequently reduced on the sleeves of most other forms of music, the record company masthead continued to occupy the top third of many classical record covers (Deutsche Grammophon's sleeves provide a notable example). Also reflective of record company interests was the rear of the sleeves. In addition to the descriptive sleevenotes, there would be adverts for other products manufactured by the record companies, including cleaning products for the care of the LPs, record guides, and albums available by similar artists or composers. There were also texts providing details about how to best protect your LPs.

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[36]   Herbert C. Ridout, 'Behind the Needle XX: Looking Back Over the Gramophone', *Gramophone*, 19:209 (February 1942), p. 145.

When popular music first turned to the LP it adopted the conventions of classical music sleeve design. This was a means by which aspirant genres, such as jazz, folk and rock, could indicate a burgeoning seriousness: by following the original design standards they gained some of the rich cultural associations of literature and classical music. Nevertheless, these conventions did not always sit comfortably with the content of popular music LPs. Sleevenotes, for example, were employed somewhat awkwardly for all releases until the mid-1960s.

As popular music began to develop its own conventions of LP packaging, another element in the 'great musical schism' emerged. While classical music tended to downplay the importance of its album artwork, many working within popular music would come to regard the sleeve as an integral part of a musical project. In fact, some designers deliberately constructed sleeves so that they would keep the consumer occupied while they listened to an LP. The sleeve designers Ian Anderson and Nick Phillips stated: 'If you've got an album that's 40 minutes long, you've got 40 minutes of attention for the sleeve'.[37]

A continuing development in popular music LP sleeve design has been the reduction of text on the covers. Here the cover art of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones is illustrative. The design for the Beatles' first LP *Please Please Me* (1963) is typical of its period. It is dominated by a colour portrait of the Beatles and is headed by large typography blazing their name. Hit singles are central to both the LP and the sleeve's construction: the record took its name from the Beatles' biggest hit to date and this title is highlighted on its cover; there is also a subtitle declaring 'with Love Me Do and 12 other songs'. The back cover is dominated by a long text, educating the purchaser about the album's songs. The success of *Please Please Me* gave the group greater control over their next album, *With the Beatles* (1963). They determined its content (no singles were issued off this LP) and its design (Robert Freeman's stark, half-lit black and white photography was immediately arresting). With no hit singles to declare, the only texts that remain on the front sleeve are the downsized LP title, the record company's name, and an indication of whether the record is mono or stereo. By the close of the Beatles' career the company logo had been removed: the sleeve of *The Beatles* (1968) features the group's name only; the front cover of *Abbey Road* (1969) has the famous group photo but no text at all.

The Rolling Stones had reached this point before them. Andrew Loog Oldham, the group's manager, conceived the sleeve of their first LP, *The Rolling Stones* (1964). A photographic group portrait dominates its front cover; group name and title are absent (the first time this had occurred within pop music); the only writing on the sleeve is the record company logo. One consequence of this design is that it is the image of the group that is promoted; they are elevated at the expense of all other contributors to the release, including the record company.

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[37] Cited in Andrew Collins, 'Design O' The Times', *New Musical Express* (11 February 1989): 44–5.

Oldham was also an innovator when it came to sleevenotes. The words that he penned for *The Rolling Stones No. 2* (1965) became infamous. They pastiche the critical imperative of sleevenotes ('compare them to Wagner, Stravinsky and [Norrie] Paramour'); they ape their literary pretensions (the text is written in the style of Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*); and they encourage the reader to commit a crime in order to purchase the LP ('If you don't have bread, see that blind man knock him on the head, steal his wallet').[38] Adverts for record cleaning cloths and other artists' records sat uneasily alongside such cynicism. In time the sleevenote began to disappear: the Beatles' 1965 LP *Help!* was their first to do away with this convention; the Rolling Stones waited until 1967's *Between the Buttons* before doing the same.

There are two main reasons why record companies permitted this reduction in text and consequently the reduction of their own presence on popular music sleeves. The first is commerce. As early as the mid-1950s it was discovered that sleeves dominated by record company mastheads held little appeal for those browsing in record shops. Instead, the customer was attracted by the pictorial elements of the sleeve: a strong visual statement was more likely to lead to 'impulse buying'.[39] Record companies therefore began to place greater emphasis on sleeve art. Writing in *Record Mirror* in 1955, Jack Bentley noted that it was through design that 'each firm strives to outdo the other', adding that 'a pointer in this state of rivalry is how even HMV have demoted their traditional dog listening to the gramophone trademark to just a weak corner of the cover'.[40]

The second reason is art. The sleeve has been used to signify artistic differences between popular music genres. For example, cool jazz signalled its difference from hot jazz when it espoused the longer-playing format over the shellac 78. Similarly, rock musicians claimed superiority to pop stars by turning to the LP format rather than 45rpm single. The longer temporal duration of the LP allowed these musicians to vaunt their expanded musical horizons, while the broader visual canvas of the LP sleeve enabled them to stamp their projects with sophisticated cover art. These authors aimed to create unified musical works; like the chapters in a book, the tracks on an LP would form part of a complete artistic statement. The sleeve was a factor in this process; for example, witness recordings as diverse as Frank Sinatra's *In The Wee Small Hours* (1955), Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), or Joy Division's *Closer* (1979). In each case the sleeve was essential in establishing the mood of the music and the intentions of the performers: the drawing of Sinatra beneath a lamplight on *In the Wee Small Hours* helped to transform his image from bobby-soxer idol to lone male troubadour; the mysterious prism on *Dark Side of the Moon* helped to establish the cool enigma of Pink Floyd; *Closer*'s tombstone cover cemented Joy Division's funereal appeal. This is, of course, also the art

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[38]   Rolling Stones, *The Rolling Stones No. 2* (Decca LK4661, 1964).

[39]   Dominy Hamilton, 'Introduction', in Storm Thorgerson and Roger Dean (eds.), *Album Cover Album* (Limpsfield, 1977), p. 14.

[40]   Jack Bentley, 'Fascinating L.P. Cover "War"', *Record Mirror* (1 October 1955): 16.

of commerce: carefully considered packaging helped to transform these LPs into highly desirable products.

Genette has described a paratext as being an 'assistant' or an 'accessory', a device that performs a subsidiary role to the principal text. When it comes to the popular music LP this was not necessarily the case. At its best it achieved parity between its two principal texts: music and pictorial representation. The hierarchy of the arts did come into play, however: in reducing the amount of text on its sleeves popular music aligned itself with images rather than words. Here the affective arts stood together against overt representation.

The situation within classical music was different. Few composers used the LP format as a means of shaping new musical pieces; instead the medium was primarily used to capture pre-existing compositions. Correspondingly, the sleeve was not regarded as an integral part of the project.[41] Classical music aesthetics demanded a concentration on the music itself; it would therefore be incorrect to look at the sleeve while the music unfolded. In his appreciation of the LP record, Theodor Adorno praised the format because it reduced the visual element in music. He particularly welcomed opera in record form, as the music would now be 'shorn of phoney hoopla'.[42] For some classical listeners, however, the sleeve was a manifestation of hoopla. Evidencing a continued belief in classical music as the supreme non-representational art, some argued that classical records should come with neither pictorial sleeves nor sleevenotes.[43]

There has been no great attachment to the classical music sleeve. When classical recordings are reissued or reformatted they are often given new sleeve art. The same is true of book covers and jackets, but is not the case with popular music sleeves. It is rare for the cover of a popular music LP to be updated or changed, even when the music itself is repackaged in digital form. Here, the sleeve has not only remained integral, it has often been the most valued aspect of the LP record. In a separate manifestation of its importance, the beloved artwork of popular music LPs has helped vinyl to remain in production long after its expected decline.

Conclusion

It was only with the introduction of the LP sleeve that the overall form of the analogue record began to mirror the overall look of the book: cover (jacket); label (title page); groove (text). Each of these elements drew inspiration from literary

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[41]   As with the authors of books, classical musicians and conductors rarely have a contractual say when it comes to sleeve design. See David Pearson, 'On Designing Book Covers', *The Word*, 114 (August 2012): 48–9.

[42]   Theodor Adorno, 'Opera and the Long-Playing Record', *October*, 55 (1990 [original 1969]), p. 64.

[43]   Symes, p. 110.

publishing. The groove was stamped out on presses similar to those used in literary printing. The label and the sleeve, meanwhile, were indebted to paratextual models that had been developed for books.

And yet at each of these levels, records operated differently to books. For Genette a book's paratexts form 'a discourse that bears on a discourse'; they are texts that serve as thresholds to a principal text.[44] At a record's core there is a text that nobody can read.[45] Consequently its paratexts have served a different function. They are not so much a metadiscourse as a transformative discourse; they translate the text of sound into other forms: the written word (the label and the sleevenote), and images (the pictorial elements of the sleeve). The record's paratexts have clothed a 'non-representational' art in representational forms. These paratexts can be both exterior (as we have seen, a sleeve can be read while a record is being listened to) and integral (without its paratexts an inert record cannot be understood).

Genette has argued that 'the main issue for the paratext is not to "look nice" around the text but rather to ensure for the text a destiny consistent with the author's purpose'.[46] The analogue record throws both elements of this formulation into doubt. First, it has been important that the record's labels and sleeves look good (even classical music sleeves): they are marketing devices above anything else. Second, a number of different purposes have been served by a record's paratexts. While some elements of music are lost in the act of translation, other things are found. The record's paratexts have helped to establish claims to authorship; they have promoted some authors at the expense of others; and they have promoted some forms of music at the expense of others. They have also helped to reveal the fact that music has never been idealistically non-representational. At a cultural level, music has always helped to signify difference. In its bookish recorded form some of those differences have been brought to the fore.

Do these conditions still apply? The majority of records are now distributed digitally and the same will soon be true of books. Colin Symes has hailed this development. He believes that the paratexts that developed around analogue recordings were distracting discourses; it was the purpose of his work to 'set the record straight'.[47] The same could be said of books: some would argue that their paratexts are inconsistent with an author's purpose. In both cases a move towards digital could increase the focus on the main body of the work. But there is perhaps another way of looking at things. Rendered digitally, music and literature are more alike than ever: they are both texts and they are both composed of zeroes and ones. The more disturbing aspect of following this line of thinking is that everything that

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[44]   Genette, p. 407.

[45]   This is not to say that all of the texts that are inscribed onto vinyl are illegible. For example, the cutting engineer George 'Porky Prime Cut' Peckham would inscribe secret messages in between a record's run-out grooves.

[46]   Genette, p. 407.

[47]   Symes, p. 253.

sits on top of these zeroes and ones is now paratext, including music and literature themselves.

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