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IJIDI: Book Review

Schonfeld, Z. (2020). *Ghetto: Misfortune's wealth*. Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN 978-1-5013-5550-9 (paperback). 160 pp. $14.95 US.

Kobek, J. (2018). *Do every thing wrong! XXXTentacion against the world*. We Heard You Like Books. ISBN 978-0-692-03998-4 (paperback). 171 pp. $9.95 US.

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In Matt Seneca's 2013 essay, "Roses from Concrete," he made numerous comparisons between the world of underground comics and hip hop, writing, "any tour through either medium's masterworks includes at least as much knuckle-headed brutality as transcendent grace" (n.p.). As the expression "roses from concrete" suggests, this paradox of the soft interwoven with the hard comes from the adverse conditions under which both art forms, comics and hip hop, emerged and flourished. This book review essay highlights two recent works that ask us to hold space for similarly interwoven dichotomies, brutality and grace. Both works in this review can be read as examples of how hip hop has challenged popular conceptions of the ways in which information does circulate and *ought* to circulate. In the first book, *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth,* the text explores the life of a soul record of the same title that was forgotten by radio DJs and abandoned by record labels when released but recuperated by the hip hop generation to become an underground classic decades later. In the second book, "Do Every Thing Wrong! XXXTentacion Against the World," the narrative paints how "a sketchy dude from Florida end[s] up on the *Billboard Top 100*" and, in doing so, disrupts the notion that "success is morality" (Kobek, 2018, p. 165; p. 140). Both works are adept at showing how countercultures are themselves capable of reinforcing existing inequalities. The worlds in these works are not utopian, which makes them so valuable, especially for library and information science (LIS) professionals. From the LIS lens, these publications ask us to reckon with our troubled present not as it is represented, but rather as it is lived.

"Despair rendered irresistibly funky"

Since 2003, the 33 ⅓ series (a book series named after a vinyl record's revolutions per minute when played on a turntable) has published 159 volumes of writing about music by fans and critics[i]. In the series, each book examines and is named after a music album. From the latter half of the 20th century to the present second decade of the 21st century, many artists and genres have been covered, including J. Dilla's *Donuts* (instrumental hip hop), Gang of Four's *Entertainment!* (post-punk), DC Talk's *Jesus Freak* (contemporary Christian music), and James Brown's *Live at the Apollo* (rhythm and blues). Anglo-American popular music has dominated the main series, but dedicated subseries for Japanese, Brazilian, and continental European releases started within the past five years of this publication.

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"Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth"[ii] by music journalist Zach Schonfeld is the 152nd entry in the 33 ⅓ series. It is a stimulating work about the enigmatic debut album of the 1970s-era funk and soul band, 24-Carat Black. Schonfeld (2020) calls "Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth" the "album that nobody has heard of, but everybody has heard" because, though first released in 1973, it received little attention until 15 years later when it was used to build rap and hip hop's sample library (p. 5). *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth* is "the rap building block every rap fan had heard, even if few" could name the source (Schonfeld, 2020, p. 113).

From interviews with multiple 24-Carat Black band members, managers, and label executives from the 1970s, as well as witnesses and contributors to the album's revival in the 1990s and 2000s, Schonfeld weaves together a story previously scattered across liner notes, articles, passing mentions in books, and personal memories. *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth* is valuable because, as a case study, it reveals the often hidden or occluded spaces and practices through which artistic value is created, transferred, solidified, or destroyed in an information-driven capitalist society.

The book's first chapter is a comprehensive account of the many people and forces that created the 1973 music album *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth*. We are introduced to the band, 24-Carat Black, whose beginnings are rooted within a talented group of Black, middle-classed teenagers from the Cincinnati area known as 'The Ditalians'. Their story begins when a band member's elder sibling introduces the group to Dale Warren, who was a producer, arranger, and composer. Warren, who was then working with Stax Records, "for years … harbored dreams of a high-concept musical undertaking fusing his dual interests in classical composition and modern soul music" and saw in The Ditalians (soon renamed 24-Carat Black) the talent needed to pull it off (Schonfeld, 2020, p. 18). Stax released *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth* in 1973 but had trouble marketing the album to radio stations. Sales were low, and audiences did not always respond favorably to dramatic live performances (in one instance, the band arrives on stage carrying a coffin; apparently, the idea was that the performance was a symbolic funeral or burial for poverty). By 1975, following a tour of the American South and failed attempts to kickstart a follow-up record, the band broke up, and the album slipped into obscurity.

We are told numerous times that *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth* was like nothing before; its "high-concept" approach distanced it from many contemporary soul records. Schonfeld (2020) alludes to art-rock like Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973) or The Who's *Quadrophenia* (1973) as similar works, but Black action movie soundtracks like Curtis Mayfield's *Superfly* (1972) and Willie Hutch's *The Mack* (1973) might have been more apt points of comparison. These soundtracks often stood on their own, and, in the case of *Superfly*, proved capable of outselling the films they were intended to support. Extended musical treatments of "the ghetto" can be traced at least as far back as Donny Hathaway's 1970 song, "The Ghetto," which clocks in at around six minutes and 50 seconds (live recordings go over 12 minutes) and has also been sampled extensively. If 24-Carat Black's *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth*—a brooding musical forensic on the United States' crumbling urban centers—did not directly emerge from this previous tradition of testifying about the ghetto through music, which was more light-hearted and even festive, it could very possibly have been reacting to it. Schonfeld (2020) points out that while *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth* may be about the ghetto, it is by no means of it. Warren, who gets most of the songwriting credit, and the group members who made the recording were all from middle-class backgrounds and had no personal experience with the abject poverty described in their music.

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Like scholarship, or any other kind of knowledge system, music is shaped by the circumstances of its production, which Schonfeld (2020) attempts to account for in full, from the amount of time it took to record *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth*. To chronicle the album's creation, Schonfeld tracked down the studio where the album was recorded as well as the photographer who was hired to design the album's cover art. While there is a clear intent to set the story straight, Schonfeld (2020) also signposts where memories are unreliable, where varying versions of a single event exist, and where something is unknowable because the knowledge expired with the people who held it.

A strong legacy was built on this origin story, lacunae and all. Many forces shaped *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth*'s revival and re-appreciation by rap and hip-hop producers, artists, and aficionados of the 1990s. Thus, the second chapter summarizes each of the eight tracks, followed by a list of all known instances where the songs have been sampled. The earliest sampling is the 1990 single, "In the Ghetto," by Erik B. and Rakim. Schonfeld notes that Paul C, a producer collaborating with Erik B. and Rakim, who was murdered in 1989, left behind "a tape containing records he'd planned to sample … If Paul C had not prepared that tape before his untimely death, this book might not exist" (2020, pp. 80-81). The story of how this "first seed of a resurrection" (p. 81) was nearly lost underscores how precarious the transmission of knowledge can be, even as the practice of making and storing copies of a work for later manipulation is growing exponentially. 'Lots of copies keep stuff safe,' as the saying goes, but to copy a product is to make a critical judgement on top of previous judgements that make that product available to be copied in the first place. While music blogs in the early 21st century helped spread source material like *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth*, in the early 1990s, sample knowledge was spread primarily by word of mouth. This whisper network of sample knowledge fed the first generation of music blogs.

The politics of collecting and sampling are central to chapters three and four. Producers prized novelty and were reluctant to cite the albums from which they lifted their samples. "Cratedigging", the act of collecting source material from which to derive samples, emerges as a keyword. So does the term "copyright." Indeed, the latter half of the book dwells on the legal precedent that emerged after a judge ruled that Biz Markie's use of a sample without first obtaining permission (which often required paying a licensing fee) constituted copyright infringement. Just as sample-based music flourished, "rampant anti-rap sentiment, often rooted in racist assumptions," ossified in legal precedent (Schonfeld, 2020, p. 101). The cost and complexity of obtaining permission to sample a song grew exponentially. For reference, Schonfeld (2020) provides the example of the Beastie Boys' *Paul's Boutique* (1989), whose several hundred samples are estimated to cost almost $20 million to clear today. A cottage industry emerged of lawyers and other professionals who specialize in navigating a complex system of laws that, on the one hand, protects the labor of (some) creative workers, but just the same excludes other creative workers and the practices and traditions they work within. The solidification of copyright laws stanched the creative flow and limited the ability to sample without fear of litigation to only the wealthiest producers.

Sampling an obscure song served two purposes. The first is originality. Producers wanted a sound that would evoke the source record while simultaneously creating an original expression. The second is that, after 1991, for "those sampling without a license…it was less of a risk—and less easily identifiable," and thus less likely to trigger a lawsuit to sample something obscure (Schonfeld, 2020, p. 104). The more obscure the source, the less likely it was that the band behind the music had high-powered lawyers since they probably never amassed the prestige, reputation, and wealth to afford legal protection to secure their claim

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to the profits reaped from their intellectual property.

The book ends on a discordant dyad: while 24-Carat Black's surviving members owe their musical revival to sampling, they have been excluded from the material gains of this rebirth. While some band members are happy to know that people listen and create anew with their music, others are bitter. Of the many documented examples of 24-Carat Black samples, which Schonfeld (2020) dedicates an entire chapter to enumerating, only $1,560.47 in royalties have been distributed unevenly among the band's surviving members. It is an especially dismal sum when considering that these samples built the music of stars like Jay-Z, Kanye West, Nas, and Kendrick Lamar (whose track "FEAR" sampled 24-Carat Black and formed part of the 2017 bestselling, Pulitzer Prize-winning album *DAMN*). It is deeply ironic that a genre of music so closely tied to struggles of race and class has, through sampling—a practice—as hip hop artist Lord Jamar describes in Ice-T's 2012 documentary, *Something From Nothing: The Art of Rap,* that turns the record player "into an instrument, which it wasn't supposed to be"— become symbolic of growing inequality among recording artists (quoted in Seneca, 2013, n.p.). 24-Carat Black was of interest primarily because their music was salvaged from the rubbish bin of history. The resulting scarcity fueled more interest among those privileged with the knowledge of the group's existence, with some producers even using the *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth a*lbum as currency, like DJ Supreme La Rock, who "during the 1990s … would buy "Ghetto" every time he spotted it, and then trade extra copies with his friends" (Schonfeld, 2020, pp. 121-122). As the band's profile within the hip hop community grew, material conditions stagnated or worsened for 24-Carat Black's surviving members. For example, samples of C. Niambi Steele's voice, like those of 24-Carat Black's other female vocalists, are valued for their wailing emotion. But Niambi's present cry, that "being legendary don't feed you or pay bills," is less often sampled (Schonfeld, 2020, p. 138).

Schonfeld's (2020) text is a significant resource for librarians and archivists interested in understanding the historical nuances of hip hop. Analogies like sampling as a form of literacy, or cratediggers as memory workers, must be approached cautiously since counterhegemonic practices do not automatically produce unproblematic alternatives (Alim, 2011). Consider the bargain bins, record store basements, and family attics—spaces of abandonment where what was once unvalued becomes invaluable to the cratedigger. By sifting through the cultural remnants created by the record industry, the hip hop generation was creating new kinds of cultural and financial value, thus challenging and reinforcing capitalistic logic. Is not every obscure bargain-bin-find also possibly someone's dashed hopes and dreams? That certainly seems to be the case with 24-Carat Black, whose members were promised fame and fortune by Dale Warren; some lived long enough to see that promise realized but for a different group of people. Such recovery practices can be both homage and exploitation. These complex acts of collective inclusion and preservation will challenge archivists and librarians to think of all repositories as sites of struggle.

What Schonfeld (2020) calls "sample knowledge" was closely guarded (p. 81). Prior to the Grand Upright Music, Ltd v. Warner Bros. Records Inc. verdict in 1991, where sampling was deemed protected by US copyright law, producers intentionally decided to let samples go uncredited. Schonfeld (2020) cites many producers expressing worry that sharing this information would lead to base imitation. Early 1990s sample-based hip hop thus presents us with an interesting situation: producers, labels, and musicians are all anxious that sampling will get their compositions ripped off. However, they address their concerns in contradictory ways. For example, during the early years of hip hop, we see sample knowledge existing complementarily alongside a lack of documentation or preservation of that knowledge.

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Indeed, one can't know a commodity's exchange value until it is identified, cataloged, or classified. Post-1991, laws emerged that forced transparency, commodified the sample, and made a sample's place in the commodities market unquestionable. A creator's credit or citation for the sample is strongly tied to the now requisite licensing fee.

The saga of sampling's growth and enclosure reflects a theme present in various cultural histories. For example, in *Removable Type: Book Histories in Indian Country, 1663-1889*, Phillip H. Round (2018) explains that, as the American continent was settled, whenever literacy was deployed as a strategy by Indigenous Peoples, Europeans could only recognize these practices as illegitimate uses or "harangues" (p. 106). Similarly, according to Lord Jamar in *Something from Nothing: The Art of Rap* (Ice-T & Baybutt, 2012), sampling was seen as a misuse of technology, even among its practitioners. It is notable that the legal restrictions enforced around the reuse of recordings emerged during the 1990s, and not with earlier examples of sample-based music, like musique concrete or experimental tracks like Steve Reich's composition, *Come Out* (1966). At the moment of its ascension in the early 1990s, hip hop's creative process was treated as theft. Schonfeld (2020) understands the restrictions around sampling as the effects of a racist system. We can extend this critique to the concept of literacy in education and LIS, which seems to work similarly: educators often define what are acceptable reading and writing practices through reference to what are unacceptable modes and levels of literacy while policing the nexus that makes the paradigm a holistic framework.

"Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth" takes a less trodden path to how capitalism intersects with race, class, and creative expression. Readers will want to reflect carefully on how the language of capitalism is embedded in Schonfeld's (2020) text: the album, *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth,* is referred to as "treasure," sampling is characterized as pillaging, and even "cratedigging" as a description of record collecting, has strong connotations with resource extraction. Perhaps, the most robust call for a critique of capitalism comes, again, from C. Niambi Steele, who gets the final word: "Those samples don't mean nothing …The dead dinosaur made the fuel that runs the world … The dinosaur wasn't paying attention. He was too busy trying to live. He didn't know he was going to be fuel. And neither did I" (Schonfeld, 2020, p. 139).

"That dude was from the Internet"

About two-thirds through "Do Every Thing Wrong! XXXTentacion Against the World," Jarrett Kobek (2018) informs the reader of a "tasteless joke" he made upon hearing of Jahseh Onfroy's (known by his stage name XXXTentacion) murder in 2018. He commented that videos uploaded to social media displayed that he "died as he lived: in a shitty video on the Internet" (p. 150). "Do Every Thing Wrong!" is no ordinary biography. And Kobek's self-confessed callousness is not so much a judgement of hip hop artist XXXTentacion, as it is a condemnation of a racist American society whose tonal center is the violence and exploitation of non-white, and especially Black, people. Kobek does not shy away from difficult subjects presented by the brief and violent life of XXXTentacion. His narrative goes beyond the choice one might expect a biographer to make: to create a redeemable figure in XXXTentacion or destroy him. Instead, Kobek opts to tell the story of an apparent contradiction: how a person who so publicly and honestly broadcasted their immorality could become a celebrity in a world where "morality is indistinguishable from success" (p. 81).

Kobek is the author of several works of fiction and non-fiction. His 2011 work, *Atta*, is a

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fictionalized but deeply researched biography of 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta. The novella refutes the long-held image of Atta as a one-dimensional embodiment of evil and ignorance by linking Atta's destructive act to his academic interests in comparing Western and Islamic traditions of urban architecture. Kobek's 2016 novel, *I Hate the Internet*, critiques the tech industry's effects on the San Francisco Bay Area and the world and received appreciable acclaim.

Kobek's (2018) roasting of information technology's enclosures and skillful narration of complex figures are equally explored in "Do Every Thing Wrong!" The book's 12 short chapters, each comprised of brief, one-to-two-sentenced paragraphs (formatted like free-verse poetry), describe how XXXTentacion rose to fame while eschewing the traditional paths ordained by the mainstream music and entertainment industry. In fact, when they are mentioned, journalistic media is heavily criticized by Kobek for being unreliable or poorly researched. Kobek goes directly to the source, XXXTentacion's tweets, to build his story. "Do Every Thing Wrong!" can be thought of as an attempt to make the digital archive speak, opening space for XXXTentacion to tell his own story.

In Kobek's view, most of the media coverage of XXXTentacion thoughtlessly pathologizes his violent behavior. Kobek posits that "[w]henever a Righteous White writes about XXXTentacion, they will always include his year in jail [in 2013], $ki Mask [a fellow rapper], and XXXTentacion's beating of a gay kid" (p. 21). By consulting law enforcement records, investigative reports on Florida's juvenile detention system, and XXXTentacion's tweets, Kobek constructs an alternative timeline that reveals several factual errors and inconsistencies in the story where XXXTentacion gives "his greatest adversaries in public life … the backbone of their indignation" (p. 20). Kobek concedes that there is no hard evidence the assault didn't happen but interprets from XXXTentacion's tweets the previously unconsidered possibility that the story was hyperbole if not pure fiction. Kobek (2018) asserts that XXXTentacion used Twitter as "an unfiltered confessional," and his lies, when they do appear, are all consistent with "an adolescent boy who wants to be perceived as hard on social media" (p. 11; p. 29). Thus, from the outset, Kobek delivers a compelling example of what can be learned from XXXTentacion's tweets and argues that the demonization of XXXTentacion serves a particular function within a racist society: Onfroy is "the latest and greatest find in that perpetual quest. An African-American who can be criticized without anyone calling you racist" (p. 21).

The book's 171 pages are dedicated to describing the forces that shaped Onfroy's life and how he responded to them through his use of social media, particularly through the invented persona of XXXTentacion. Right away, we are asked to contend with the fact that the book is about more than the life of an individual. "It isn't the litany of suffering that is mandatory in every biography. It's the story of how systemic influences in a society shape and create the contours of an individual … and the hypocrisy of a society that tolerates unspeakable crimes from its highest elected officials but brooks no forgiveness for the sins of its poor" (Kobek, 2018, p. 9). Early on, one of Onfroy's earliest performances, where he performs a rap over the phone for his incarcerated father, is discussed. This scene introduces a concept of enclosure as Onfroy himself becomes trapped by both the carceral system and the techno-capitalist world into which he was born. "[Onfroy] and the Internet grew up together," Kobek (2018) writes (p. 108), "and every medium, the Internet included … makes a new kind of person" (p. 110). Kobek's (2018) appraisal is later formulated as a question: "What happens if your interaction with the world is dominated by an engine of human contempt, designed by the ultra-wealthy to inform you that you are less than garbage?" (p. 110).

ISSN 2574-3430, https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/ijidi/index
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Throughout the book, this conception of the Internet is invoked as one of the significant systemic influences that shaped Onfroy's life.

Chapter 5 delves into education as another systemic influence that shaped Onfroy. The chapter opens with "two of [Onfroy's] saddest tweets," both are requests for information about alternative high schools (Kobek, 2018, p.53). This unanswered request is accompanied by behavior that further casts Onfroy as an unredeemable character rather than a gifted but troubled person seeking help with no better place to turn.

Another systemic influence that "Do Every Thing Wrong!" explores in greater detail is the music industry. Here, we see some of the same racist dimensions of copyright at work, similar to the issues explored by Schonfeld (2020) in "Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth." While composed music and lyrics can be copyrighted, something that a specialist in clearing samples confirms with Schonfeld, Kobek (2018) argues that XXXTentacion's artistry, along with other hip hop artists, is defined primarily by subtle attributes of timbre and rhythm that cannot be copyrighted. Schonfeld (2020) points out the story of James Brown's drummer, who came up with the drum break in the song "Funky Drummer," one of the most sampled passages in hip hop: the drummer had no legal claim to his creation because rhythms on their own cannot be copyrighted. Similarly, Kobek argues that XXXTentacion's music makes little use of standard songwriting elements—verses, choruses, melodies, harmonies—but delivers something unique and distinctive. Just as sampling struggled to be recognized as an art form and was instead enclosed by antagonistic legal precedents and licensing fees, Kobek (2018) sees the inability of legal definitions to recognize timbre and rhythm as music as "a perfect example of what people mean when they talk about systemic racism" (p. 36).

XXXTentacion grew in popularity thanks to social media platforms. He is often credited as an initiator of the hip hop sub-genre, SoundCloud rap[iii]. In chapter 6, Kobek discusses XXXTentacion's artistic breakthrough when streaming services were incorporated into chart metrics. This development, according to Kobek, was Onfroy's ultimate entry into mainstream hip hop. Kobek notes that XXXTentacion's rise as "[a]n unfiltered independent recording artist climbing into mainstream life […] [w]ho had a very difficult and checkered history" was unacceptable (2018, p. 82). A few months after the unexpected chart success of XXXTentacion, the three largest music industry conglomerates announced a change in how the charts would be calculated, to the disadvantage of independent artists like XXXTentacion, whose success was a mistake that the industry hoped to prevent in the future. This misuse of a corporatized Internet resembles the kind of misuse of the record player that is at work in Schonfeld's (2020) account of the early days of sampling. The unexpected consequences of re-purposing technology were followed by an attempt to disable that feature. Once again, the practice of a group seen as sub-literate is viewed not as an expression of literacy but as an illegitimate "harangue" (Round, p. 106).

Kobek (2018) states that "[Onfroy's] upbringing was marked by a lack of formal education or any hope of economic advancement." He further posits that "before [Onfroy] started uploading music to SoundCloud, he had only one possible future. Serving the state with his body. The belief that he should have no reward in life contains its own unasked and unanswered question: what measurable social good could have come from XXXTentacion not having a successful career?" (p. 168). The book's theme of "doing things wrong" develops in this way, to show how Onfroy tried to exceed the forces that were shaping his life by pushing back as hard as he could in the ways available to him.

Chapter 10 is a difficult chapter in a difficult book. The chapter lays bare what is at stake

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for Onfroy, which Kobek (2018) earlier describes as:

> the challenge of [XXXTentacion's] work. You have to accept that a totally violent dude can also be defined by questions of self-worth … The way America works is the exact opposite. Our collective narrative is that you can be one or the other. You can't be both. A violent Black man is disallowed the legitimacy of his feelings. But that is not how people are. Or how people live. But it is how their albums are reviewed. And it's also underlying justification for the entire prison-industrial complex. (p. 105)

Kobek (2018) is not looking to make excuses but to describe the "pathology in the constructed behaviours of our society…This pathology can't excuse individual behaviors or choices. But, Jesus Christ, can it ever explain them" (p. 169). As inexcusable as Onfroy's actions are, Kobek concludes the book by challenging us to see the injustice in a system that condemns so many people—"particularly when, like XXXTentacion, they are people in need and people who ask, repeatedly, for help in experiencing personal change"—to death or prison (p. 169). "I don't see any good in prison," Kobek concludes, "and I don't see any good in [Onfroy's] death" (p. 169). Kobek's critique of the prison-industrial complex—as one of the means by which racialized bodies are sacrificed to the state and private capital—stands to offer much at this moment when prison divestment and abolition have gained much momentum, including among information workers (Abolitionist Library Association, "About," n.p.).

Kobek (2018) provides a unique view on hip hop's struggle for a place in a discriminatory information society. Kobekdescribes how he collected Onfroy's tweets and even provided a URL where the entire data set can be downloaded. While this transparency allows readers to "check his work" and draw their own conclusions, the method of collecting someone else's tweets and then constantly referencing them does raise some ethical concerns. The method underscores a point Kobek makes earlier by stating, "[our lives are] the property of others" (2018, p. 23). As ethically delicate as Kobek's stance may seem, much the same can be said of libraries, archives, and museums, which turn the earthly remains of people's lives into collections, artefacts, and property. Kobek (2018) was easily able to access Onfroy's unfiltered confessional with the help of a computer program hosted on GitHub and a tech-savvy friend, but anyone who has used a finding aid or catalog to access unpublished or published correspondence or journals has done the same. Later on, Kobek (2018) also announced he acquired "the barebones of [Onfroy's] juvie record" from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for $24. Kobek's (2018) methods are compromised, as is his work, which he describes as "a further victimization" for the way it scrutinizes the lives of people who ultimately didn't deserve the ruin that accompanied the attention (p. 134). Kobek's (2018) consideration of the ways his work is already recuperated against his will can serve as an example to library workers considering their own entanglements with oppressive systems even as they may seek to dismantle them.

Conclusion

The two books considered in this review essay are brief. Though by no means comprehensive or exhaustive, or even self-identified with information studies, these generative texts can help information professionals ask questions of the LIS field. How does circulating information promote the public good? Who benefits from this circulation? Why does information circulate at all? Can collecting information ever be ethical? How democratic or liberatory can literacy practices be if there are numerous examples of literacy used as a tool for a society's elite to disable what creative potential exists among the underclasses? The

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illuminating case studies from "Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth" and "Do Every Thing Wrong!" do not point to a utopia where all problems are resolved to everyone's satisfaction, but they do ask us to look and listen harder at our current world and attend to whatever life or art may be emerging like roses that grow in the concrete.

Endnotes

[1] For more information about the 33 ⅓ series, visit: https://333sound.com/33-13-series/

[2] IJIDI Editor note: APA style calls for a title mentioned in-text to be expressed as it is listed in the reference list. However, in this paper, the title, *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth,* is both the book title and the music album title. To differentiate between the two throughout the paper, we denote the album title *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth* in italics and the book's title with quote marks. All book titles are in quote marks, and all album titles are italicized to maintain consistency throughout the entire essay. We believe that this formatting allows for more effortless reading because more album titles are mentioned than book titles.

[3] SoundCloud Rap is also known as "Mumble Rap." See Grant Rindner's article, "Comfort in the Discomforting: The History of SoundCloud Rap, the Face-Tatted, Hair-Dyed Vision That Showed Hip-hop's Future." *The Ringer,* December 16, 2021. https://www.theringer.com/2021/12/16/22838951/juice-wrld-soundcloud-rap-history-retrospective

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