University of Alberta

Music, Media, and Subjectivity: On The Limits of Determinism

by

Mickey Vallee

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Music
Department of Sociology

©Mickey Vallee
Spring 2010
Edmonton, Alberta

Examining Committee

Henry Klumpenhouwer, Primary Co-Supervsior, Music

Rob Shields, Secondary Co-Supervisor, Sociology

Leo Mos, Psychology

Doug Aoki, Sociology

Jan Jagodzinzky, Education

Will Straw, Art History and Communication Studies, McGill University

DEDICATION

For Oma and Opa.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the limitations of determinism in regards to music, media, and the constitution of subjectivity. Its methodological resource is derived from a synthesis between media ecology, social psychoanalysis, and music semiotics. The case studies describe the incorporation of nostalgia into popular music ballads, the domestication of the phonograph, the contemporary trend of mashups, and the studio technique of backmasking. The conclusion asks that we readjust our approach to music, media, and subjectivity to account for the possibility of creative acts that are bound within a network of determinants. I use, finally, the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to explore the body as a primary site of indeterminate mediation, which renders possible for the subject a potential of creative embodied expression.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

Not Out, But Through It!

A patient of Carl Jung's once dreamt she was overlooking a circle of lions, in the middle of which a pit was filled with a hot burning substance. Knowing she had to go in, she dove from a very high place, submerging herself in the pit's heat. With only her shoulder jutting out, Jung appeared in the dream and pushed her down, declaring: "Not out, but through it!" When she recounted what he'd said to her in the dream, Jung agreed that the only way out of a problem is by facing it directly (Jung 2007, 15).

In this thesis I explore the determinism of psychoanalytic semiotics to selected intersections between music, media, and the constitution of the subject. While I do not rebuke such determinism I do not condone it in isolation. I actively resist the predominant trend in cultural studies to celebrate the empowerment of subjectivity, but I do not leave the subject suspended in disempowerment; I simply move through determinism as a dialectical step towards empowerment. The methodological resource is drawn from media determinism (McLuhan 1994; Ong 1967), the Lacanian constitution of the subject (Bowie 1991; Chiesa 2007; Hansen 2000; Lacan 1998, 2002), music semiotics (Shepherd and Wicke 1997; Schwarz 1999), and finally from a phenomenology of the body according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968, 2002); though the latter makes an appearance only in the methods section and in the conclusion. I introduce Merleau-Ponty to suggest that the determinist perspective places severe limitations on the subject,

for as much as objects are themselves determinate of perception to a fixed proportion, the manner in which they are perceived through experience is essentially indeterminate.

Indeed, although I have been swayed over the years by cultural populism to place culture ahead of its determinants, it is a sway that has conflicted with my own practices as a musician. I presume determinism and indeterminism as exposing a necessary and mysterious dialectic of creative expression. In my musical experience, restrictions constitute a predominant factor in the creative process; from the manufacture of musical instruments to the limited transductive capabilities of the studio, from the finite career options in the industry to the limited song structures and arrangements available, determinants are an everyday ubiquity for any practicing musician. In creating music one must persistently locate interminable means of constructing curvatures out of boundaries. This thesis thus succeeds as a historical exercise in its examination of such boundaries, but ultimately fails when called upon to answer the question of creative freedom. Such a failure is addressed at length in the conclusion.

As much as determinants fail the creative freedom of the subject, I am resisting the urge to censure determinism entirely. I am resisting, in other words, the urge to place culture ahead of determinants, to propagate the usual polemic of the former in isolation of the latter. The aim of the thesis is, first, to understand the technological and conceptual restraints that bind music and its media to subject

formation. Things might get a little dark, and shadows are deliberately cast.. The chapters which follow address the following question: how can we possibly espouse the virtues of empowerment without first encountering the conditions of enslavement?

The desired path towards empowerment can only be pursued once we have accepted, however reluctantly, its determinants. Perhaps an all too crude analogy that I draw to mind here, just as O'Neil (1991) and Taylor and Harris (2007) do in their critical surveys of mass media, is that of Plato's cave, if only because Plato's "shadows on the wall" are commensurate with the flickering analogical and digital contours of media projections. I am even persuaded by way of a Jungian flirtation to see these shadows as would a stubborn analysand, as dreadful and unwelcome components of the psyche. To run further with Plato's allegory, a turn from the shadows towards the source of their projection would cause sharp pain, but it would reveal that shadows are symptomatic of a larger complex; shadows, as I see them, are coordinated by a fantasy that is intended to conceal the trauma that produces them. I thus turn from Jung towards Lacan to argue that the fantasy produces the very *projection* of the shadows and not the shadows themselves: for fantasy is not the elaborate mask which conceals a horrific and traumatic truth but a projection of precisely the shadows it is intended to conceal (Žižek 1997, 6; Glynos & Stavrakakis 2008, 257-63; Newman 2004, 161-5). The empowerment that is usually celebrated within the intersections of music, media, and subjectivity is an empowerment that simply sustains the projection of shadows.

In other words, fantasy is not an alternate reality, but a central reality coordinated

through the very constitution of subjectivity. Freud (1987) had placed fantasy as a

primary concern in his early studies. In recognizing that some of his patients

suffered from traumatic memories of events that had not happened, he posited that

their memories were, although fantasy, no less severe than if the events had

literally taken place. In this strictly Freudian sense, a fantasy stands in opposition

to reality. But this offers us our first insight into the relations between fantasy and

reality: reality is a discursive construct not an objective given. Fantasy plays a role

in how one remembers the past and how memory is woven through unconscious

patterns of desire, a protective force imposed upon the subject as a navigational

tool for their current experiences. It is the central determinant woven throughout

this thesis: the nostalgia fantasy of sentimental ballads, the event fantasy of

phonographs, the intersubjective fantasy of mashups, the music fantasy of

recording studios, and many others.

Media, in my conception, facilitate the fantasies we play out as fictions scripted

into our daily lives. A deterministic disposition such as this has been, as a result of

the rise in media and cultural apologists, denounced in favor of one where media

are simply our instruments of empowerment. As Taylor put it so plainly, "we

make machines for our own ends" (2001, 14). Does this position not leave a series

of unanswered questions behind? *What do we mean by agency? What do we mean

by empowerment? What do we mean by freedom?* Empowerment is a complex

process through which the subject perceives an indeterminate command over the constellation of things in their context, though cultural and media optimists tend to celebrate it all too readily without an adequate interrogation. Hodgson has provided, in the context of recording studio mediation, the most succinct and insightful of responses to media optimism: "This [agency and freedom] would be fine if it remained a metaphysical/spiritual assumption about what specifically constitutes humanity and its place in the world" (2006, 253). Further,

> this line of reasoning is *often* deployed by analysts of Recording Practice as a countermeasure against any claim that sound reproduction technology influences how people think and act while using sound reproduction technology, especially if that influence is thought to constitute stricture. By this logic, though, music recordings can have nothing whatever to do with how people think and act while they make or hear music recordings. Neither can the material properties of stereo systems limit record reception, nor can storage media, mixing boards, potentiometers or anything else which is *required* for Recording Practice to happen to have efficacy in those communications which, when combined, they enable. While this seems patently absurd, it is indeed a typical interpretive tack. There seems to be something which is simply intolerable to commentators about the notion that media, and each of their object-forms, constitute stricture, which leads to an almost pathological refusal to acknowledge even the possibility of limitations in Recording Practice (2006, 254).

In other words, the media through which music is created and disseminated bears constitutive features on our relationships with that music. To simply negate those structuring aspects of music media removes any possibility for a dialectic between form and our active transgressions. Because music in the 20th and 21st centuries has been demonstrably mediated through highly sophisticated technologies, denying a determinist role for music media simultaneously denies that musicians are in certain capacities restricted by their mediated networks to create music. Technology is taken as incidental, its limitations denied by media optimists.

Contemporary media scholarship has been dominated, with certain exceptions, by those more intent on exposing the empowering act of consumption than the habits of self deception, denouncing the founders of the latter perspective as outdated for today's virtual democracy (i.e. the Internet, digital sampling, etc.). Indeed, those who uphold the media ideals of postmodernity have foretold the quietus of the culture industry. Alper (2000) argues, for instance, that postmodern media circulate decontextualized code at the expenditure of top-heavy modernist essence, facilitating a political deconstruction of ironic distantiation between the subject and historical certitude. Hutson (1999), in her well known study of raves, perceives sound technology as a totemic healing apparatus for the Shamanistic trans(dan)cendence of raver consciousness. Dickinson (2001) argues that vocoders (vocal-manipulating technologies) challenge the traditional categories of fixed subjectivity by rendering the "human" voice unrecognizable. And so on (see

Young 1991; Johansson 1992; Hall 1994; Walser 1994; Fish 1995; Faller 1996; Sloop 1999).

Such celebratory accounts are derived from Fiske's work on the pleasures of reception. Indeed, Fiske's landmark cases for audience empowerment spearheaded the empowerment thesis (1988; 1993; 2003). While he did not deny the culture industry's role in the commodification of cultural artifacts for the purposes of mass consumption, Fiske urged media scholars to interrogate the creative polysemic spaces as the nexus of empowerment. "Popular culture," Fiske explains, "is made by the people, not produced by the culture industry" (1989, 24). The pleasure of consumption, in other words, curtails the dominant codes of the culture industry. Drawing from de Certeau (1988), Fiske proclaimed that the production of popular culture is located in the performances that social actors inflict upon cultural texts, texts which are not inherently capable of producing their own meaning (despite any attributable commodity fetish). In other words, while the culture industry is responsible for establishing the spaces of consumption, the activities within those spaces are left to those consumers who transgress instrumental constraints to reassemble culture as the domain of empowerment and creativity.

Fiske perceived so-called "top-heavy" theory (i.e. the culture industry) as the "power bloc" of authoritative knowledge and tradition, an institution which increasingly crumbles under the unbearable lightness of postmodern

fragmentation. In a comparable spirit, De Certeau argues that we will signal our own emancipation from the culture industry through anti-intellectualist inclinations:

> Just as the aeroplane makes possible a growing independence with respect to the constraints imposed by geographical organisation, the techniques of speed reading obtain, through the rarefaction of the eye's stopping points, an acceleration of its movements across the page, an autonomy in relation to the determinants of the text and a multiplication of the spaces covered. Emancipated from places, the reading body is freer in its movements (1988, 176).

A cultural populist sees no trivial gesture in skimming the surface of culture at the renunciation of essence. Speed reading, for example, is taken as emancipatory because it curtails the power-bloc of authorship. However, do such deeds of anti-intellectualism champion cultural empowerment? For example, Radway's (1984) much lauded study of housewives who read Harlequin romance novels in between their daily chores suggests that women who indulge their own pleasures in lieu of obeying the patriarchal pressure to clean are empowered through the act of consumption. There is little sense in how such an activity directly challenges patriarchy since the system is being actively avoided instead of directly questioned (see Taylor and Harris 2007, 7-13).

An empowering gesture, in the cultural/media optimist's conception, is the microcosmic rationalization of the culture industry within the act of consumption,

a creative sculpt made of determining matter. Take mashups, for instance, the

subject of my fourth chapter. A recent intertextual phenomenon that entwines two

(or more) otherwise unrelated digital texts, the practice is held as the ideal model

of digital democracy. Taken as a symptom of postmodern collage culture, the

mashup is said to place historical certitude at an ironic distance through the

parodic intertwining of unrelated texts. The most successful instance of the

mashup is DJ Danger Mouse's cut-and-paste between The Beatles and Jay-Z,

taken as a politically progressive move because of its crossover between white

and black cultures. It sparked a landslide of challenges to copyright law in cultural

practice and especially in music media scholarship. Cultural products seek out the

approval of an audience, in other words, are blank slates and auraless without the

audience's interpretation, thus empowering the reader more than the author -- a

mashup artist enables his own empowerment through his active interpretation of

determinants. As Stevenson says, "The central paradox of modernity identified by

Fiske and de Certeau is that the more information that is produced by the power

bloc, the less it is able to govern the various interpretations made of it by socially

situated subjects" (2002, 91-2). The "power bloc," or culture industry, is unable to

monitor and regulate the flow of information as it once could when media were

less participatory than in the recent digital turn.

Fiske's empowerment thesis is not alone. For instance, Morley (1986) studied a

working-class male who was routinely addicted to television shows, built his life

around the schedule of his favorite programs, and made certain to videotape

anything he missed. Inglis took the study of this man as a "fascinating folk-figure" in his claim that "His unstoppable soliloquy must do here to suggest just how various are the needs and purposes working themselves out in audiences" (1990, 154). As Taylor & Harris say in direct response to such an argument:

> In such misguidedly optimistic evaluations, we can see clear illustrations of a widespread risk that theorists bend over backwards not to see personifications of the culture industry thesis in their own subjects of enquiry. Indeed, ironically, it is likely that if material of the same tone was found in the work of culture industry theorists it would in all likelihood be rejected for its overly selective, exaggeratedly patronizing, and generally unrealistic depiction of alienated consumption […]. Emblematic of cultural populism's lack of critical edge, borderline agoraphobia is represented as personal empowerment (2007, 8).

The audience's non-passivity is its greatest virtue, the remedy for determinism being the creative and spontaneous act of consumption. Old critical theorists (Horkheimer, Adorno, Althusser, etc.) were simply too heady in their attempts to reveal the absence of agency in modern social subjects, literally heady perhaps. As Gauntlett has it, for instance, Adorno & Horkheimer's infamous attacks against the culture industry "alternates between sharp, lucid points about media power, and rather more rambling prose about the nature of mass culture — as if Adorno and Horkheimer were fighting for control of the typewriter, and one of them was drunk. It's well worth reading" (2008, 20).

Fiske's optimism has been paralleled in the contemporary philosophical migration away from structural determination and phenomenological universality, dancing in the hybridity of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) multiple shadows. Old wooly Marxists are best left as a symptom of modernity, perpetrators of ideology, of univocal moral authority, ideologues of false consciousness, precursors to the complex and multiple digitally layered voices of postmodernity. Audiences have had enough of being interpellated, signified, misrecognized, spoken for, and misrepresented. Postmodern deconstruction declawed critical theory by rendering unnatural what was never natural, by blurring the critical theorist's binary Cartesianism, their forceful attacks against culture industries for the commodification of what were human rights of exchange and existence. The digital gilded age finds the human subject divided, split, and multiplied between conflicting selves that are taken as points of celebration, to crudely paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1).

Such a disposition leaves lingering questions: why should any critical theoretical disposition (such as critical theory, psychoanalytic theory, technological determinism, etc.) be considered insufficient simply if it predates postmodernism by a few decades? Critical theories began in the industrial and modern age, which gives the postmodern age the power to denounce its outdatedness. And why shouldn't critical theory inform our postmodern understanding of media culture and society if contemporary digital media have furthered along alienation in certain regards rather than bridging gaps between our experiences and the world

we live in? Is not the saying itself outdated, that the more time one spends in online communities the more time they spend in physical isolation?

I am not looking to resuscitate determinism. I am rather suggesting a different route towards empowerment, one that does not naively dispossess experience of its determinants. Through studies of nostalgia and the sentimental ballad, idealized repetition and the phonograph, arbitrary contingencies and the mashup, and trauma and backmasking, this thesis argues that the essence expressed in contemporary musical experience is a void that we use mediation to draw a veil over. For instance, the sentimental ballad was decidedly nostalgic for events that were unknown to the listener, while the phonograph could only transmit sounds that were forever lost. Mashups are an idealistic plea for connectivity between binaries, and backmasking reveals the indifferent innards of recording mechanisms. However, I will not leave the reader dangling in despair. The crux of the final chapter on backmasking is to rework the notion of empowerment using as a resource the notion of intertwining as given by Merleau-Ponty (1969), to say that creative expressions are inevitable components of transmitting music through media, but that we must first face up to our restrictions before we stand witness to any semblance of freedom.

Merleau-Ponty's appearance might seem like a reverse step for those intent on the critical theoretical disposition. Indeed, my route of access to empowerment is through determinants towards a subject who enacts indeterminate expressions in a

pre-objective manner. Empowering indeterminacy doesn't surpass determinacy but precedes it. If the destination of every Lacanian, for instance, is towards the symbolic cut from the unity of the imaginary, Merleau-Ponty's system is far more forgiving to the experiences of the pre-objective world, locating empowerment in the open spaces the body creates for consciousness to inhabit.

I will expand upon Merleau-Ponty's critique of objectivist and intellectualist studies of the body-subject in the methods chapter, but for now this simple synopsis should suffice: Merleau-Ponty does not offer us a change of attitude towards objects, because he takes objects as determinant along with the perception that sustains them as a constant. However, he takes *experience* as a decidedly indeterminate process. Experience is mediated through a body-consciousness that is pre-objective, a lived and unreflected mode of consciousness wherein which the subject/object divide is not clearly defined. For Merleau-Ponty, rather, the world-as-perceived fuses the pre-Cartesian division between subject/object. His central argument is that consciousness is determined by the body's opening onto the world. The body within which consciousness is encased determines its experience of the world and determines the way in which it opens onto the world. But the body cannot be handled through objectivist thought because it cannot observe without being caught up itself in that very observation. Thus creative freedom is always-already caught up in its own perception and evades historicist or determinist attempts to situate it. A more detailed discussion of his critique in *The*

Phenomenology of Perception will follow in the methods chapter, and will be

revisited at the end of this thesis with a synopsis of his idea of the *chiasm*.

My chapters analyze relatively autonomous (but certainly related) phenomena

regarding music, media, and the constitution of the subject. Ultimately, however,

each chapter is objectified in such a historicist manner that Merleau-Ponty would

find displeasing. Only a determinate number of objects are held as causing subject

constitution. The main problem which arises from these chapters, as I see, is the

way we describe and define media, as though there were a difference between

mediated and unmediated experiences; it is a dualism which implies authenticity

and inauthenticity, and it catches us playing out the fiction that there is a reality on

the other side of our experiences. I suggest that the more faithful route to an

empowerment thesis is by first determining the limits of objective determinism

(linguistic, media, symbolic, etc.) in order to arrive at the living and experiential

body as the mediated sack of everyday existence. This is shown most clearly in

my last chapter on backmasking.

My first chapter examines the historical incorporation of nostalgia into the

sentimental ballad. While contemporary approaches to nostalgia predominantly

expound it as a bittersweet affect which has politically empowering effects by

keeping historical certitude at an ironic distance, I revisit nostalgia's original

diagnosis as a crippling disease of displacement. I then turn towards its

imaginative amalgamation into musical processes from Haydn to Schumann to the sentimental ballads of early music industry.

I then turn my attention towards the phonograph and its placement into the domestic sphere. The central feature of the phonograph was that it could repeat whatever sounds were spoken through it, but through legal and technological changes this feature was eventually displaced by a phonograph which could only disseminate professional performances.

I turn to contemporary trend of mashups, a most recent phenomenon of media convergence. The reason for this is that mashups have been unconditionally celebrated as an empowering instance of a digital age. While a postmodern perspective would count this act as politically empowering because it places history at a distance, thereby draining it of its metanarrative weight, I argue that the very lightheartedness of the mashup is what gives it its ideological shock. Mainly, the mashup maintains what "mainstream" media do: a unilinear stream of information for mass consumption.

As desperate as these three chapters become, the final chapter offers a portal for appreciating creative acts by approaching the recording practice of backmasking, which is embedding events backwards on recordings. Backmasking invites the listener to participate with the medium in a way that conventional recording (or the mashup, for that case) does not. I ultimately argue that the backmasked event

represents a point of sonic discovery and rediscovery within which the perceiving subject is actively caught up in the recording mechanism.

In all, this project is my own process of returning to music, and although I anticipate criticism for seeming so bleak for the majority of these pages, I must reiterate a more humble position: instead of taking disparate phenomena's potential for empowerment, which many people in many walks of life celebrate enough already, I am compelled to adopt an opposite position. I simply take to task the very notions upon which empowerment is based in favor of its definition from within a more critical theoretical edifice. But it is my hope that from within the ultimate despair emerges a necessary dialectic for a step in the creative direction.

CHAPTER 1

The Medium is the Method

This chapter examines the relevancy of media determinism to the Lacanian

intersection between symbolic and imaginary. As much as we should approach

music in the context of the media through which it is produced and disseminated,

we should moreover approach music *itself* as a sonic medium that contributes

towards the constitution of subjectivity. However, because the body is our final

destination of subject constitution, we confront a methodological impasse when

we think of the body as a determinate site. I thus conclude with an introduction to

Merleau-Ponty's critique of determinacy and his theory of the body as activating a

creative dialectic between self and world.

The Medium is the Message

The disposition I adopt is sympathetic with media determinism, which summons

to mind McLuhan's (1994) aphorism: the medium is the message. McLuhan

insisted that in the study of media, we should abandon its content and go directly

towards the determining aspects of its forms. He argued that we should focus on

the media themselves as determinant objects whose only content is the human

perceptual faculties they mold, suggesting that states of awareness and knowledge

of the world are formed by the media through which the subject navigates his

world. We need not recall McLuhan's famous examples of light bulbs

determining the activities of night, nor that the printed text is an outgrowth of the

eye, the radio an outgrowth of the ear, the wheel an outgrowth of the foot, etc.

Simply, in *Understanding Media*, McLuhan argues that the "effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance. The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense perception" (1994, 15). Thus, one critical point of media analysis is located where the human faculty has experienced a determined effect, not where the human being acts as a free agent in a world through which they experience their media.

McLuhan isolated media without pursuing their interrelationships with other media and social patterns of interaction within which they were situated. *Understanding Media*, for instance, isolates virtually all media of his time as having individuating effects, related to other media sequentially instead of synchronically (i.e. the content of television was its predecessor, the radio, etc.). However, those who built upon McLuhan's so-called prophecy, such as Ong (1967), complicated his diachronic myopia by conceptually embedding media in spatial relationships and conceiving their interdependence as the sustaining network of perception. Ong moved the medium out of isolation into a network of other media which facilitated changes in the "sensorium," the space within which media balance and privilege particular senses over others. Ong writes, "What we are faced with today is a sensorium not merely extended by the various media but also so reflected and refracted inside and outside itself in so many directions as to be thus far utterly bewildering" (1967, 89). In Ong's notion, perception is

selective, does not engage with chaos but with things designated to a sensory

destiny in the sensorium:

> Man's sensory perceptions are abundant and overwhelming. He cannot
>
> attend to them all at once. In great part a given culture teaches him one or
>
> another way of productive specialization. It brings him to organize his
>
> sensorium by attending to some types of perception more than others, by
>
> making an issue of certain ones while relatively neglecting other ones. The
>
> sensorium is a fascinating focus for cultural studies. Given sufficient
>
> knowledge of the sensorium exploited within a specific culture, one could
>
> probably define the culture as a whole in virtually all its aspects (1967, 6).

The sensorium, in other words, is an organ that acts as the connective tissue

between internal and external processes; it is bound by a constellation of sources

which are all at once technological, institutional, social, perceptual, and so on. A

crucial component in this emerging determinism, known as the *media ecology*

movement, is that knowledge systems determine the very activity of media. For

instance, take Katz's depiction of the "phonograph effect," that is, "any change in

musical behavior or activity that is in some way a response to the distinctive

characteristics of sound recording technology" (2004, 225). He argues that

solitary listening is an instantiation of the phonograph effect, the result of social

institutions and the musical technologies which encourage the practice:

> It is a change in behavior (before the invention of the phonograph music
>
> was almost always experienced with others) linked to certain aspects of
>
> the technology (the distinctive portability and repeatability of recorded

sound that allow listeners to experience music in solitude so readily). The three-minute pop song is also, in part, a phonograph effect, for it arose (again, in part) as a response to the severe time limitations imposed by early recording media (2004, 225).

Media interrelate in an ecological balance. To approach a phenomenon ecologically is to consider the interdependent and dynamic effects things have on the space which sustains them. The introduction of a foreign object would upset their balance and cause all proximate objects to adjust accordingly, some dying out as a result, some escalating in strength. A *media* ecology requires us to adjust our conception of what that space is. I argue that the environment in media ecology is perception. A media ecology is the examination of humanly constructed spaces that are built to facilitate particular flows and obstructions in perception, epistemologically complete only by our embodiment within them. And so the "environment" is the territory of the perceiving subject, and as an extension of the McLuhan approach, the pattern of change in human faculty is the content of a media ecology.

This is certainly a determinist disposition, taken as if we are spoken through and moved by institutions, our actions determined, our possibilities for creativity based solely upon the shifting and cracking media in such spaces that determine our continual readjustment to their autonomous dynamics. For instance, whereas the piano was made for consumers in a higher income bracket in the 19th century,

it found its way increasingly into middle class and eventually working class

homes by way of cheaper manufacturing and the simplification of otherwise

bourgeois romantic piano pieces (Vallee 2005); the pieces conformed with the

middle-class home in order to sustain musical enjoyment as people became

further and further engaged with cultural texts that were previously perceived as

being out of reach. The environment, the perceiving subject, is structured as a

complex system that changes according to the balance of media.

Media ecology is an appealing approach for several reasons: it considers media

not in isolation but part of a dynamic ecological system within which human

subjectivity is constituted, it allows us to think about media with human

perception as its content, and it allows us to approach music as a technology of

everyday life. But it has its limitations: it marks a simple distinction between self

and world, suggesting that media are somehow made outside instead of through

society. It also accounts for introductions and teleologies of one technology

becoming the content of its successors, but says little regarding the reintroduction

of media into spaces or their synchronic relations. But the way in which they

overlap is subordinate to their *telos*. If perception is the environment of media

ecology, in other words, the ecology cannot be conceived apart from that

perception. Taken objectively, media would be seen from nowhere, to use Nagel's

(1989) timeworn maxim. It is for this reason that we turn to Lacan and the

constitution of the subject, to respect the role of the environment that is sustained

through the media ecology.

The Medium is the Mirror

The determinist position asks us to approach music as a social institution which limits our experience of it. It asks us to adopt a materialist perspective. So what might be the material of music? The most basic answer to the question of music's materiality is arguably: *its sounds*. We articulate musically through the symbolic structuring of sound. It is, curiously, Lacan who informs us of how sound is mapped onto the constitution of subjectivity, but his route of access into this material mapping is by route of language, a system whose formal structure is demonstrably opposed to that of music. However, Lacan's psychoanalytic work has influenced a number of musicological interrogations properly belonging to "new musicology" (which is not so new anymore). I will therefore introduce the Lacanian constitution of the subject by route of linguistics and arrive at a musical constitution in the section which follows.

In general, how is it that we are moved through and spoken by the navigational coordinates of social institutions? This is what structuralists ask. More specifically, and to turn to the most bare and rudimentary of questions pertinent to the route of access Lacan incised, how is it that we become the spoken subjects of the institution of language? Saussure (1986), from whom Lacan adopted his linguistic method, said that language is not a naturally designative system to otherwise mute objects, but rather that language upholds a *social convention*, is an agreed upon symbolic system, virtual as a structure of interrelated sounds whose processes are revealed through the diachronic chain of speech. The sounds uttered

through speech are comprised of discernible phonemic units that comprise morphemes; by extension, morphemes signify specific connotations and mental images that are tied only indirectly to their material references. This moves our conception of language away from that of a transcendent medium of reality into a more socially conventionalized role, because the mental concepts that signifiers summon do not necessarily have a bearing on their material references. They have a bearing instead on social conventions. In Saussure's conception, then, language is a signifying process that retains autonomy from the world of the material by any seemingly organic connection. But as language constitutes our understanding of the social world its utterances can only be understood as arising through social institutions such as conversation, the legal system, government, education, journalism, criticism, and so on.

The subject is thus spoken through social institutions, is using a system at his disposal which is habituated through convention, bearing little relationship on supposedly objective reality. The subject is hailed into socially determined positions rather than actively engaging in a world of their making. In Althusser (1971) we are provided with a Marxist rendition of this concept in his interpellation of the subject, where individuals are summoned into subject-positions by social institutions in separate yet mutually dependent ways that conceal their own constitutive relationships to socially structured totality. Althusser contested, in ways later challenged by the postulates of cultural studies in defense of the empowerment thesis, that we are interpellated as subjects of

social institutions, each of us having absorbed the patterns of these institutions through their material manifestations and taken as natural, allowing the individual to 'willingly' choose their subject positions, to make choices amidst the binary oppositions we unconsciously learned. As Althusser says,

> ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: *individuals are always-already subjects*. Hence individuals are 'abstract' with respect to the subjects which they always already are (1971, 119).

In something as simple as a conversation, individuals enter into a predetermined script within which each summons the other according to their imaginary relations to one another. The legal system interpellates individuals as subjects of the court as a custodian interpellates an object as the subject of historical artifact. Indeed, interpellation takes society as a closed system of infinite interpellations.

Althusser reduced ideological phenomena to an imaginary relation between a social subject and the material manifestation of a social institution. The problem, however, is that Althusser's model stopped short of explicating how exactly ideological processes were internalized through material relations as imaginary. The imaginary for Althusser is the domain of the *always-already*, though it is not any fault of his that it remained untheorized. It is simply that his analytic rubric did not contain the appropriate language that would properly situate the

manifestation of the imaginary within the domain of subjectivity. The imaginary, I take in this thesis, is a materially constituted domain. If the material manifestations of social institutions summon various subjectivities that contribute to the networks of social totality then spoken utterances (parole) are the material manifestation of the institution of language (langue). By extension, if people enter into relationships with the material, the material they enter into a relationship with in language is in an imaginary relation with its sounds.

But we are left with a problem of how the material manifestation of a social institution constitute inner life and ideological processes of subjectivity. If Althusser argued that ideology is less an institution in the external world than one's "imaginary relations" to its material manifestation, how the imaginary is constituted remains beyond our grasp. For Althusser, the imaginary simply exists through its own (mis)recognition of individuality. It is for this reason that we are compelled to turn to the work of Lacan, because he provides us with insight into the social construction of the imaginary through his synthesis of Freudian psychoanalysis and Saussurean semiotics. For Lacan, the imaginary is fundamental to the constitution of the subject; it is a site made through language, a realm of consciousness that is tied to the trauma the subject suffers when he is split from his own idealized (mirror) image of himself.

The mirror is central to Lacanian psychoanalysis and can be read in its initial discussion quite literally. In fact, Merleau-Ponty and Lacan had both referred to

the same study of children with mirrors in their respective theories of language and the formation of subjectivity (Amin 2003, 181). In Lacan's initial work, the mirror stage refers to the event when a child between 6-18 months of age discovers his own image looking back at him from a mirror. The child discovers that he exists at once in the external world (the *imago*) while the image he sees is sustained by his own inner self. Playfully, he may move a limb to make the child in the mirror move a limb, or laugh to see the child laugh, and so is motivated by his desire to see his specular image move; but he misrecognizes his own movement as his command over the specular image, when it is the latter who summons desire to move the former.

Unity and wholeness are thus misconceptions of the cogito for Lacan. They are based on a false pretense, since the mirror stage, a stage wherein the perceiving subject misrecognizes himself, is the foundational experience of human consciousness. For Lacan, the Cogito is not unified, hence his reworking of Descartes's "I think therefore I am," replacing it with: "I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking" (1957, 157). To revisit Plato's allegory of the cave, we are reminded of the great confusion that occurs in the freed slave who finds solace in the world's reflections: "At first he most easily makes out the shadows; and after that the phantoms of the human beings and the other things in water; and later, the things themselves" (Plato 1968, 516). Indeed, Plato's prescribed process of enlightenment was an explicitly painful one of negating assumptions and political opinions and of facing the very coordinate of

their projection. Facing truth was painful. When patterns of self deception are revealed as coordinates that bar us from knowing the trauma of the cut from our own imago, we learn to see things as the effects of such projections. For Lacan, the subject's unavoidable route towards alienation is facilitated by the symbolic cut that interrupts the specular image of wholeness. Through the symbolic order, the unity of the specular imago suffers a traumatic rupture under the disunity and differential system of language — this is instantiated by the first signifier of difference: the phallus, although it remains relatively unclear why this is so (1959, 190).

Although they seem to occur in succession, the imaginary and symbolic are engaged in an ongoing dialectic within the subject, constituting two folds of the same self, each making up two parts of the same "I" (1949, 7). So while the specular image mirror at once constitutes an "I" which is permanent, in Lacan's words, "it prefigures its alienating destination" (1949, 5). But just how does this alienation become prefigured? It is precisely within the promises of unity, coherence, and perfection given by the mirror image. But its harmony is misleading, because the one who perceives it is encased in a weak, fragile, and dependent body. This summons for Lacan,

> the striking spectacle of a nursling in front of a mirror who has not yet
> mastered walking, or even standing, but who — though held tightly by
> some prop, human or artificial […] — overcomes, in a flutter of jubilant
> activity, the constraints of his prop in order to adopt a slightly leaning-

forward position and take in an instantaneous view of the image in order to

fix it in his mind (1949, 4).

Through its projection of the imago, the mirror exhibits a laminate coating of the

subject's ideal self. At this point, the mirror begins to manifest itself beyond the

confines of a literal reflection: the approving gaze of parents and family, the flow

of breastmilk, love and affection, etc. Although the child depends on these for his

survival, he misrecognizes his dependence as an ability to summon praise and

nourishment at his command. This formative stage of the "I" stands the inevitable

danger of suffering alienation through the promise of his unified self. But this

imago is incompatible with the eventual destination of the subject towards the

symbolic order, which is constituted by difference, fragmentation, and

arbitrariness; such a symbolic is Saussure's intellectual milieu of signification,

where the connections between signifier and signified appear natural and

ingrained yet are arbitrarily fastened.

Although Lacan made explicit use of Saussure's terminology, there remained

significant differences between their deployment of the signifier/signified binary.

Recall that in Saussure's linguistics, the signifier is the phonological property of

the sign. It is not the sound itself, but rather the mental image of the sound, the

"acoustic image" that signifies a signified. But whereas Saussure argued that

signifier and signified are interdependent, Lacan insisted that the signifier holds

supremacy over the signified, that the former is the determinant of the latter

(1957, 141-5). Because signifiers are initially meaningless on their own, the

subject is unaware of their presence until they encroach gradually upon his imaginary space and inaugurate difference, which hails the subject away from his specular image and into the differential system of language (1957, 155).

For Lacan, signifiers are subject to the law of a closed system of difference. This is where he agrees with Saussure, that signifiers are based upon the fundamental basis of difference and that there is no positive term in signification (only negation). Since signifiers cannot signify the subject except in the skewed referrals to "I" or "Mine" or "My" (etc.), signifiers can only signify each other in an inexhaustible metonymic chain. A signifier can represent the subject for all other signifiers but cannot signify the subject, rendering the subject as the void at the center of language. In other words, the subject who is constituted through signifiers cannot be of them (1957, 148).

The condition of unity for Lacan is founded upon the primordial recognition of one's self as manifest in the external world through a specular image that is at once a part of and apart from the perception which holds it. But this recognition of unity simultaneously prefigures alienation, because the recognized self is untranslatable through language into the symbolic order; the symbolic law of difference within language is simply incompatible with the coherence and unity of the mirror. As Bowie summarizes: "on the one hand, the Symbolic restlessly pre-ordains and organizes human experience, but on the other hand it cancels experience. It creates meaning, yet also withdraws it. It vivifies, yet also

mortifies" (1991, 87). The appearance of the subject is generated by language in its arbitrary social convention, at least in terms of its connection between signifier and signified. It remains impossible for one to situate himself socially unless he has in language a signifier which serves his own interpellation: i.e., his name.

Lacan's underlying principle is that the subject is conflicted between the social conventions of signification and the misrecognized control through the mirror stage. So while the symbolic might release us from the deceptive falsity of the imaginary's unity, it is only a partial emancipation because the imaginary impregnates our experience when the symbolic is unable to make any rational sense of the world we inhabit. The overlap is necessary, because the symbolic cannot always differentiate the world, and so the imaginary creeps into the symbolic by way of metaphor when the latter cannot make sense of the world through difference. Metaphor, then, is the mirror within the symbolic order, ideal and unified specular images of other signifiers. This leads us to Lacan's most overquoted and misunderstood maxim: *The unconscious is structured like a language*. As Bowie writes, Lacan is saying that "the structure of the unconscious can be understood only in terms of its temporality, and that language, which is the sole vehicle of this temporality, cannot itself complete the task" (1991, 193). Specifically, note how Lacan never says the unconscious is structured *as* a language or *through* a language. In his *Seminar XX*, he clarifies:

> You see that by still preserving this 'like' (*comme*), I am staying within the
> bounds of what I put forward when I say that the unconscious is structured

like a language. I say like so as not to say — and I come back to this all

the time — that the unconscious is structured by a language (1998, 48).

Situated between language and the unconscious is precisely this "like". Language

does not pre-exist the formation of the unconscious. Because language cannot

afford the origin of things by its free association in a closed yet infinite system,

the search for origin is a hollow endeavor. And we should also note that Lacan's

intention might have been lost in translation: as Olivier notes, Lacan likely meant

the French *langage* (as a structural system with rules which determine statements)

as opposed to *lange* (which would imply the actual utterance of verbal

articulation) (2004, 5-6). Lacan writes that through metaphor, the image is the

form which "situates the agency of the ego before its social determination, in a

fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone,

or rather, which will only rejoin the coming-into-being … of the subject

asymptomatically" (1949, 4). The healthy subject lives out a fictional truth in

lack of its essence.

That is to say, the law of language shows us how truth is a fiction we actively play

out. After all, language can neither signify the subject who speaks it nor can it

signify objective reality; it can only signify other signifiers. There is no essential

human core for Lacan except a subject split from its image of perfection it once

perceived. For Lacan, the split occupies two domains of the self: a specular "I"

which registers in the imaginary and a social "I" which registers in the symbolic.

And although the two approximate one another as they are encased within one

body they cannot coincide. The lack of contact between the two is what

constitutes the subject as "lacking" and, paradoxically, what diagnoses the subject

as "healthy." Since the crossover of the symbolic into the imaginary is a promise

held by the latter, yet is repeatedly cut by the former, this is a curious state of

affairs for those of us who possess high-minded ideals for ourselves, yet are

inevitably disappointed when we repeatedly fail to meet those ideals in our

everyday worlds.

Yet the mirror holds the promise of transcendence. It reveals to us our *potential* to

move beyond ourselves and to become something else. Lacan calls it a quasi-

transcendental effect of the mirror; he suggests that the mirror's promise is at once

encroached by the windfall of possibility yet plagued by its inevitable

implausibility. Certainly, the self is recognized in an initial moment of Gestalt, but

it is also a fictional coordinate by virtue of the fact that the self is subject to a

limited number of representations; there is only room in the imaginary for so

many selves. Thus, according to Lacan,

> The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from
>
> insufficiency to anticipation — and which manufactures for the subject,
>
> caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies
>
> that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I
>
> shall call orthopaedic — and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an
>
> alienating identity (1949, 4).

The drama we play out in daily life is one of eternally regressive return towards the promises of perfection and unity first contained in the mirror. This promise befalls the subject as he becomes closer to his ideal self through elaborate and impenetrable fantasies that protect him from the trauma of the cut. This is what alienates the subject, this shelter he builds around his fragmented self to purport the fiction of his unity.

The alienated subject thus arises from within the promise of unity held by the specular image. It is an innerly constructed mirror-image, quite apart from any objectivist reality, yet entirely constitutive of the fictional truth through which we live out our lives. The self is not autonomous, then, but subjected to and arising from within a process, and Lacan insists that through it we are ultimately disempowered. As Bowie explains:

> The mirror-image is a mirage of the 'I' and promises that the individual's latent powers of coordination will eventually be realized; indeed it has a role in triggering the development of these. So far so good. But the 'alienating destination' of the 'I' is such that the individual is permanently in discord with himself: the 'I' is tirelessly intent upon freezing a subjective process that cannot be frozen, introducing stagnation into the mobile field of human desire (1991, 25).

The promise of the mirror never fades as long as there is consciousness which is deceived into misrecognizing it. It gives hope that powers lay dormant within the subject that will at last be realized, ("if only this time, at least next, or the next.")

Because the unity of the imaginary suffers a rupture when it is interpellated into the symbolic, the "I" of the imaginary is on a course of alienation that causes an individual to be in combat with himself over the impossible fusion between the two. Copjec summarizes: "Lacan insists on the constitution of a 'desire not to know'; and thus of a subject at odds with itself. There is even more evidence to shake the commonly held belief that 'rational human beings' are 'in control'" (1990, 52).

The imaginary and the symbolic cross over and veil an unrepresentable territory, which Lacan calls the Real, a concept separate from the everyday notion of reality. The Real's phenomena are irreducible to either imaginary or symbolic representation, a permanent scar between the two whose appearance is the point of rupture itself. And so the subject is stretched across the domain of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real in such a way that makes any sort of assimilation amongst them impossible. According to Lee, the Lacanian subject is the uneasy coexistence of three distinct moments:

> There is, first of all, the real 'presence that is speaking to you,' the speaking body, the subject of the actual act of enunciation. Secondly, there is the symbolic subject indicated by the *je* of the speaking body's discourse, the subject of the statement actually uttered. The third moment of the subject, distinct from both the speaking body and the *je*, is the imaginary *moi* constructed […] early in childhood to give the subject an identity that it really lacks (1990, 82).

The Lacanian Real is responsible for the emergence of desire. But because it is a product of that which is unrepresentable, desire is equally unknowable. The route of access Freud discovered to desire was through parapraxes: slips of the tongue, forgotten words, substituted words, etc. In the analytic context, slips offer the analyst means of filling in the gaps in a patient's story, of giving the narrative a coherent structure according to those facts which are unknown to the analysand. Desire is unknown to the subject, but is determined by the point of deceit within the mirror stage, emerging through the symbolic order. But there must be points when the imaginary and the symbolic appear to be at their closest, and music has been idealized as facilitating the possibility of just such a point.

The Medium is the Music

Lacanian psychoanalysis has only served an incidental value for the study of music. Aside from references to the "technophallic" guitar performance of Jimi Hendrix (Waksman 1999, 188), or the differences between phallic and post-phallic trumpet performances (Gabbard 1996, 139-58), the role of the phallus or the reason for its appearance is lacking. Others claim that "Lacan's theorisation of desire and the metonymic chain along which it proceeds can provide a basis for understanding the social construction of the possible positions from which a musician or a fan may speak, may sing, may dance, may desire" (Shank 1994, 129). Lastly, Sullivan's (1995) analysis of the Beatles amounts to little more than a basic sketch of Lacan's primacy of the signifier along with even more

rudimentary character sketches of John, Paul, George, and Ringo to elucidate their

individual relationships to the (m)other in their music. Generally, these

approaches stop short of myopic speculation. And there remains skepticism about

whether Lacanian thought can contribute to a meta-discourse on music.

In the psychoanalytic trope, music is privileged as a signifying system for its non-

representational status. This is an attitude held for music since aesthetics emerged

as a central concern in modern philosophy. From Kierkegaard's analysis of the

absolutely musical as a plea for the unmediated erotic life to Schopenhauer's

"will," music has been held in the highest regard (Bowie 2003, 150-63).

Psychoanalysis has taken where philosophical aesthetics of music have left off by

considering music a pre-linguistic non-representational system that circumvents

the external world and is attached directly to the unconscious — whether it is

responsible for the constitution of the unconscious or for its revelation has been

largely unresolved (Shepherd and Wicke 1996, 57-64). Simply, the philosophic

disposition towards music has taken the latter as the negation of the objective

world in favor of the absolute, and poststructuralist accounts have not strayed

much further. Barthes (1977), for instance, famously conceived of the terrain of

the voice as signifying beyond (or before) the symbolic through the quality of its

"grain." Kristeva claimed that music signifies a non-representational drive

embedded in our communication, an energy she called the "chora" (Clarke 2001,

262). Meanwhile, Žižek purports the most theoretically provocative yet under-

researched speculation on the subject of music:

What is music at its most elementary? An act of *supplication*: a call to a figure of the big Other (beloved lady, King, God …) to *respond*, not as the symbolic big Other, but in the real of his or her being (breaking his own rules by showing mercy; conferring her contingent love on us …). Music is thus an attempt to provoke the 'answer of the Real': to give rise in the Other to the 'miracle' of which Lacan speaks apropos of love, the miracle of the Other stretching his or her hand out to me (1997, 245).

The only systematic approach amongst late 20th century philosophers with any modest tenability appears to be Deleuze and Guattari's chapter on the refrain from *A Thousand Plateaus*, where they depict music as exhibiting a tripartite characteristic at once of territorializing, deterritorializing, and reterritorializing refrains (1987, 310-50). Circumventing the linguistic semiological model, their conceptualization of "the refrain" situates music in terms of its spatio-temporal functioning over and above the mechanics of its meaning. Jagodzinski (2005) has bridged Lacanian psychoanalysis with Deleuze and Guattari, resisting the expected presumption that the latter were reactionary and entirely counter to the psychoanalytic turn in cultural theory. Jagodzinski quite convincingly places mainstream music (boy bands, pop music) as obeying the supremacy of the Symbolic, while alternative underground music such as Gangsta, Punk, Goth, Heavy Metal, "have attempted forms of transgressions to introduce a dissonance for youth rebellion and resistance against the Symbolic Order" (2005, 33). However, since Jagodzinski emphasizes the "post-Oedipalization" of contemporary pop music for the youth market, the specificity of his project would

lead this project astray. In addition, Deleuze's insistence on pure immanence and transcendental empiricism runs counter to the aim of this thesis: to place the body in its corporeality as the site of an indeterminate opening onto a world. This is why I consider, for the time being, Merleau-Ponty significantly more useful than Deleuze.

The value of Lacanian psychoanalysis for the study of music is only recently being recognized (Jagodzinski 2005; Middleton 2006; Schwarz 1999, 2006; Žižek and Dolar 2001). A more systematic musicological-psychoanalytic approach to music is offered by Schwarz (1999, 2006), who uses Lacanian psychoanalytic philosophy to inform music analysis. While in his latest work we witness a sophisticated case study of German cultural national expression through the psychoanalytic trope, his promise to break the boundary between high and popular culture is not fulfilled, and is in addition not necessarily relevant to understanding the interpellating power of music as a medium. It is in his earlier work that we witness a more explicit and generous serving of psychoanalysis to the study of music in a variety of contexts. However, even here, we find in Schwarz (1999) as misguided a conception of Lacanian psychoanalysis as we find in Žižek vacuous references to the mechanics of music. For Schwarz, a musical experience represents a structure of unknown and unconscious processes. For instance, he takes musical processes as representations of the destination from the imaginary to the symbolic order. His primary example is John Adams's *Nixon in China.* The simplicity with which the piece begins, for Schwarz, represents a direct access to

mother. However, as the tonal centers begin to shift and the interjection of quotations saturates its development, the music tells the listener that there is a disconnect between mother and child, a blockage, a cut, or a castration. He calls this the inevitability of the acoustic mirror stage where "the subject experiences a series of splits away from phenomenal experience, from the sonorous envelope, through the binaries of the Imaginary Order, and into the plural, dispersing signifiers of the Symbolic Order" (1999, 16). Whereas Lacan's mirror stage occurs at 6-18 months, Schwarz purports that the mirror stage begins as the acoustic mirror not long after birth (1999, 16).

Schwarz curiously argues for music's non-representational status from within the representational system of notation. In fact, most of his examples are text-based and make scant reference to the experiential, taking shelter in notated scores. When he does turn his attention to popular music (i.e. technologically mediated for mass consumption), he loses himself in the representation of the non-representational. For example, white noise in "She's So Heavy" by The Beatles is a "nightmarish nothingness within male desire" (1999, 35). And with this token recognition of pop music, he moves ungrudgingly towards serious music, such as that of Schubert (a common topic in psychoanalytically informed musicology) to employ Lacan's "gaze."

The sonic properties of music remain a mystery, whereas Lacanian psychoanalysis very clearly elucidates the signifying mechanics of language.

What are the sonic properties that constitute music as a signifying process that proceeds "like a language," yet displays properties which are obviously different from spoken language? If language constitutes the unconscious through the imprinted sounds of signifiers onto the bodily recognition of signifieds, then what role can music be afforded in terms of its contribution to the constitution of the subject? Primarily, if language is a medium in sound that signifies through utterances whose constituents are a system of differences enunciated through their opposing repulsion (phonemes, morphemes, and free associations), then music must work in an opposed yet complementary manner — it must be itself a language. Shepherd and Wicke (1997) argue that while language signifies through utterances which are structurally based on a system of difference through repulsion, music is based on differences in sounds which relate through their attraction to one another; the two, language and music, are not articulated separately, however, but bound up within one another. Language, in other words, is not uttered without an affective substratum of emotion. After all, it is not just 'what is said' that determines a certain degree of meaning construction, but the context of its articulation and the gestures that accompanies it. Sound stands as a metaphor of bodily gestures (the excitement around a statement, the emptiness behind a sentiment). Let us recall Aristotle's postulate that sound is, first, the energetic manifestation of a body which is alive, but further the sound of two bodies making contact with one another (Barker 2004, 79); the sounds produced through music are directly tied to the bodies responsible for their production. Music must lie beyond the horizon of the symbolic, since it is so difficult to

articulate its sometimes overwhelmingly experiential effects symbolically. But we must not become too festive with music: while music certainly engages the emotions and the body, it engages them within structured contexts of articulation where the Lacanian symbolic world is responsible for framing the musical experience.

While sounds in language signify according to the sonic differences exposed in a linear chain of signification, music signifies according to stacks of sonic attraction exposed cyclically throughout diachronic time. As much as sound in music lifts off of its source it remains tied directly to the thing which sounds (as opposed to the arbitrariness language affords its reference points), which Shepherd & Wicke (1997) argue is evidence that musical meaning speaks directly from the external world and penetrates directly into the impulses, that it lets a person internally symbolize the internal sounds of the external world. This is perhaps why music speaks to emotions associated with experiences as opposed to the circumstances of those experiences themselves.

Music and language proceed co-jointly to constitute social structures and states of awareness: music and language have been discursively set at opposite ends as ideals in the universe of sound, the former signifying through attraction and inward states of being, the latter signifying through repulsion and outward ordering of the world. Of course, because there is no 'pure' music and no 'pure' language in this idealistic scheme, but a flow of subjectivity as constituted

through a fluid universe of sound moving back and forth between the two

polarities while never entirely settling on one or the other, they are interdependent

elements. The categorical dimensions of the music people articulate their values

through are merely discursive according to taste, class, gender, race, culture, and

so on. Shepherd & Wicke explain,

> There is, in fact, nothing given in the relations possible between
>
> 'language' and 'music', the 'conscious' and the 'unconscious'. Within
>
> the constraints evident in each instant of human life, constraints which
>
> facilitate its continuation, everything remains possible. We would
>
> argue that 'consciousness' can be articulated 'linguistically' or
>
> 'musically'. Awareness does not have to be capable of verbal
>
> explication in order to be assigned the status of 'consciousness' (1997,
>
> 217).

It is challenging to conceive of music apart from its social ecology because sound

in music is not as arbitrarily tied to its referent as is sound in language. Music is

not primarily denotative. In other words, music is repetitious, but it is so within a

system revealed through a *difference in attraction* between elements rather than

through *difference in repulsion*. Albeit, this is a conception of music that has been

contested in both the avant-garde jazz and high-art schools of composition. But, as

Althusser said, if one has a relationship to an institution (such as accepted

conventions of music) it is the relationship that is ideological and adheres to

institutional norms even when disobeying them. Those who counter these forms of musical utterance adhere to structure by negating structure.

Instead of a signifier Shepherd & Wicke are more convinced by the thought of music as signifying through a *medium in sound*: the groundwork from which signification arises but is not necessarily bound to the syntagmatic chain privileged in language. Any such phonemes and morphemes, or what Tagg called musemes (a minimal unit of musical meaning: 1979, 71), can't be deciphered in musical signification because the units which call forth states of awareness cannot be isolated from their context of articulation and must considered in their ecology. As Shepherd & Wicke argue:

> As each affective moment passes in music it is not therefore easy, cognitively and conceptually, to separate sounds from the experiential moment of sound-images, or sounds and sound-images from the same experiential moment constituted through the calling forth of socially and culturally mediated subjective states of awareness as elements of signification. This one experiential moment is articulated through a material binding underwriting a technology or instrumentality of signification. It is thus not possible to access easily the role played by the characteristic of 'extension' or 'dimension' in sounds acting as a medium independently of an analysis of sonic media (mediums) acting within particular musical traditions as socially and culturally constituted (1997, 171).

Elements of signification as they are experienced through language are conveyed more succinctly through discourse because language is afforded a direct connection with the external world; we can, simply, use language to connote linguistic meaning. But elements of signification as they are experienced through music do not afford the same cut; a musical sound is *always-already* referring to its source of articulation (i.e. the sound of a guitar rises from the object of a guitar, the sound of a phonograph emerges through a phonograph, etc.). Convention is not cut from the external world in music as it is in language, and so music has a direct symbolic power over the constitution of the subject and its metaphoric movements.

The Medium is the Marrow

I turn finally to Merleau-Ponty for the following reason: he offers a theory of the body as itself the medium of consciousness but emphasizes the role of an opening indeterminacy and connectivity over that of determinacy and alienation. And it is a route to empowerment that is simply less evasive than dominant empowerment theses that cultural populism propose. For Merleau-Ponty, the subject remains bound to symbolic determinants (as is Lacan's subject), but it is from within such restraints, or before them, that such human faculties as creativity and openness emerge. Therefore, the use of Merleau-Ponty is not a means of moving *beyond* determinism. Instead, Merleau-Ponty sees the body as a medium that does determine consciousness, but it is a consciousness which is itself indeterminate because of the multi-sensory and navigational limitlessness of the body in which it

is encased. Consciousness and the body are as adhered to one another as marrow is to bone.

Merleau-Ponty's criticisms are leveled against those objectivist and intellectualist approaches that abstract the body as an assemblage of components rather than a total system. For Merleau-Ponty, objectivist knowledge purports that impartial data can be gathered regarding subjective experience, while intellectualist knowledge professes that experience taps the essence of a pre-existing concept. If media and psychoanalytic determinists establish for us the determinant preconditions of experience, what can Merleau-Ponty teach us about phenomenological exploration and the creative process? More specifically, what differentiates Merleau-Ponty's theory of the body, sensation, and perception as opposed to his contemporary empiricists and intellectualists of the body and sensation? A route of access to Merleau-Ponty's theory of the body is long but necessary, for he was coming about this topic from a different direction than in the preceding pages here. Whereas Lacan accessed the terrain of the subject as a determined site through linguistic structure, Merleau-Ponty held steadfast to his conviction that consciousness opened onto the world through the body in which it is encased, and that, most simply perhaps, perception is *always-already* expression.

Merleau-Ponty first of all approaches the body as a total system and critiques empiricism for isolating "the sensation" as "the unit of experience" (2002, 2;

Marshall 2008, 79), as though the sensation were isolatable from the others to which it is connected. Such an approach atomizes experience, and does not do justice to the living body. It reads sensation as purely qualitative, and thus the subject is a coincidence with what is sensed. This atomization reaches its peak when empiricism alienates sensation from thought, whereas Merleau-Ponty sees body and thought as necessarily intertwined, which leads to his tripartite critique of empiricism: First, he maintains that the body experiences sensation through its lived experience (2002, 5). We cannot access perception by exploring the qualitative act because we cannot access the quality of an object without the sensation of it. The sensation of the object is, in the meantime, the indeterminate fiction that belongs to the subject in experience. Perception is not simply qualitative. Perception is an engaged and living relationship with a thing, and it is as much attributable to the thing's inherent truth as it is attributable to the fiction played out within the coordinates of sensation.

Second, the structure of perception is based upon the relations between figure and ground, and in a gesture akin to Gestalt, Merleau-Ponty argued that every object held through perception is held against a ground to which it owes its visible essence (2002, 18). An object discloses its existence in relative autonomy to its context, but not in isolation from it, for in its discretion an object confesses the secrets of its surroundings; a thing only has the capacity to display itself if it has the capacity to hide itself behind other things. A so-called "unit" of experience is not impossible, but reflects a fantasy of autonomy written out by empiricists.

Third, an empiricist perspective cannot account for how one recognizes an object as that object (how a square is a square, how a sound is a sound, how music is music). As much as determinists could argue for cause and effect in the case of objects resembling themselves, each argument is based upon a perceptual recognition that it appears unable to recognize. Perhaps this is because of the incessancy of the signifying chain, but for Merleau-Ponty this would be an insufficient account because it places a determinacy on a phenomenon which is admittedly and paradoxically indeterminate (2002, 54; 95). It is within the space of indeterminacy that Merleau-Ponty finds freedom for the body, as opposed to Lacan's conception which finds only a predestination towards alienation. Empiricists are incapable of explaining the perceptual recognition theory is built upon. We are, in Merleau-Ponty's vision, always-already capable of explaining what we see. To use one of his later terms, we are embedded within the flesh of the world.

For empiricists, sensation is an accident of the body, only incidentally connected to thought or to consciousness. Intellectualism, meanwhile, takes a different approach to objects. While it does not propose that sensation is an accident which cannot be measured, it mistakenly purports that objects are a product of thought; for intellectualism such categories as attention and judgment are its central categories (2002, 30). For intellectualism, the intelligible structures that objects are afforded are projected through the attentive recognition we direct at them. For

instance, we recognize the shape of a circle in the object of a vinyl record because intellect has already placed a circle there (the logic extending from a circle's ability to rotate, the wheel, the record, the continuous flow, etc.). Intellectualism places a determinism on consciousness: In attention and judgment the object which appears to consciousness is a result not an opening.

According to Merleau-Ponty, empiricism and intellectualism take the world as an explicit system in itself with determinants and limits to their own expression, and perception is what follows along to pick up this determined set of units, incapable on its own of perceiving them in relation to one another (which is a matter for cognition). The assumption here is twofold: First, our perception mediates a pre-existing reality that exists for itself. Second, the world exists because we think it into existence, and perception lassoes what was already placed there by intellect. Merleau-Ponty maintains against both of these assumptions that perception is fused to a primordially presupposed world, whereas empiricism and intellectualism elevate such a world to a status where it is cut from its central constituent: perception. The connection between self and world is as close as "the sea and the strand" (1968, 131), even if the two only border on one another. Interconnectivity is thus crucial for Merleau-Ponty, as he objects to objects being taken as apart from one another, belonging to their own self-referential symbolic systems (2002, 264). Merleau-Ponty takes boundaries between things as connected internally with one another, their connections not inherently logical but rather expressive. Merleau-Ponty writes,

The object, psychologists would assert, is never ambiguous, but becomes so only through our inattention. The bounds of the visual field are not themselves variable, and there is a moment when the approaching object begins absolutely to be seen, but we do not 'notice' it. But the notion of attention […] is supported by no evidence provided by consciousness. It is no more than an auxiliary hypothesis, evolved to save the prejudice in favour of an objective world. We must recognize the indeterminate as a positive phenomenon. It is in this atmosphere that quality arises. Its meaning is an equivocal meaning; we are concerned with an expressive value rather than with logical signification. The determinate quality by which empiricism tried to define sensation is an object, not an element, of consciousness, indeed it is the very lately developed object of scientific consciousness. For these two reasons, it conceals rather than reveals subjectivity (2002, 7).

There is little room for a positive account of indeterminacy within a closed system, unless that room would be for a drastically determining emptiness such as that of the symbolic order that can never refer to anything outside of its metonymic chain, such as the case with Lacanian psychoanalysis. An example of object indeterminacy is the cover art of a recent release by psychedelic folk group, Animal Collective, whose cover for *Merriweather Post Pavillion* (a name which is supposed to connote an "amazing outdoor listening experience") is an optical illusion based on the wave illusions by Kitaoka (2007). In Merleau-Ponty's

phenomenology, boundaries around objects are never stable or fixed under our gaze, the determined world cannot account for the experience of ambiguity, and by setting up determinants upon ambiguity, they remove ambiguous essence and thereby remove perception from the world within which it is embedded. As Merleau-Ponty says, the world taken in itself is not determined, and perceptual experience has been "buried under its own results" (2002, 73).

This offers an indeterminate view of the body as the central and primary site of mediation over and above the objects of its surroundings. Recall my argument that the environment of a media ecology is the human body. Thus, as much as we like to think of media as mirrors of the self which determine its consciousness, consciousness cannot be held separate from the body within which it is encased. It is within the body that consciousness first resides, taking its cues from the body regarding its own nature, its own proximity to the world of objects. Merleau-Ponty's principles of the body are twofold: first, the body precedes objectivity. Second, the body is the primary subject of perception. So, whereas language cannot signify its subject, perception signifies its subject. The body, as the pre-objective origin of perception, is what makes things possible as "the origin of the object at the very centre of our experience" (2002, 82). In an extensive elaboration on freedom, Merleau-Ponty states:

> It is indeed true that perceptual structures do not always force themselves upon the observer; there are some which are ambiguous. But these reveal even more effectively the presence within us of spontaneous evaluation:

for they are elusive shapes which suggest constantly changing meanings to us. Now a pure consciousness is capable of anything except being ignorant of its intentions, and an absolute freedom cannot choose itself as hesitant, since that amounts to allowing itself to be drawn in several directions, and since, the possibilities being *ex hypothesi* indebted to freedom for all the strength they have, the weight that freedom gives to one is thereby withdrawn from the rest. We *can* break up a shape by looking at it awry, but this too is because freedom uses the gaze along with its spontaneous evaluations. Without the latter, we would not have a world, that is, a collection of things which emerge from a background of formlessness by presenting themselves to our body as 'to be touched', 'to be taken', 'to be climbed over'. We should never be aware of adjusting ourselves to things and reaching them where they are, beyond us, but would be conscious only of restricting our thoughts to the immanent objects of our intentions, and we should not be in the world, ourselves implicated in the spectacle and, so to speak, intermingled with things, we should simply enjoy the spectacle of a universe. It is, therefore, true that there are no obstacles in themselves, but the self which qualifies them as such is not some acosmic subject; it runs ahead of itself in relation to things in order to confer upon them the form of things (2002, 512).

In other words, the body does not determine consciousness as if the two were caught up in a game of cause and effect. Merleau-Ponty does not replace one determinism (the assemblage of relatively autonomous and overdetermined

objects) with another (the mediated site of the body as a determining site of consciousness); rather, the role of the body is to act as an encasement of consciousness. The body-as-subject *is* consciousness, and the body-as-object (the objectivist and intellectualist disposition) is only summoned through the presence of the Other. Thus, if consciousness is freedom, then the body-in-itself cannot restrict freedom.

To illustrate this freedom, Merleau-Ponty uses a case study of Schneider (2002, 130-6; 148-55). Schneider is able to complete certain "concrete" tasks without watching his own body such as lighting a lamp, but is unable to perform "abstract" movements without watching his own limbs (such as holding his arm parallel to the floor) (2002, 180). He also cannot describe where his limbs are when he is stationary, as though the sensation of his body switches off. He cannot tell where he is being touched on his body, and he can grasp an object when asked but cannot point to it. He also suffers from psychological blindness (whereby an object can appear to his consciousness but bear no mental associations).

Merleau-Ponty writes that an empiricist, because he would perceive the body as a causal mechanism based on the stimulus/response operandi, would diagnoseSchneider with a damaged ability to respond to variables, or with a visual disturbance interrupting his vision, or with an inability in his tactile sensation that would lend him knowledge of his spatial inhabitance (2002, 180). Merleau-Ponty's response to these anticipated diagnostics is that Schneider exhibits no

difference from other subjects regarding the discretion of objects. In his very

primacy of perception, Schneider suffers no limits. His hold on the world (or lack

thereof) informs him of his place in the world. The world contains a meaning,

even if that meaning is occupied by gaps and incoherence. But even if it is

incoherent, it still belongs to him. He is not in lack of the world he inhabits, in

whatever capacity. Merleau-Ponty expands,

> in so far as I have a body, I may be reduced to the status of an object
>
> beneath the gaze of another person, and no longer count as a person for
>
> him, or else I may become his master and, in my turn, look at *him*. But this
>
> mastery is self-defeating, since, precisely when my value is recognized
>
> through the other's desire, he is no longer the person by whom I wished to
>
> be recognized, but a being fascinated, deprived of his freedom, and who
>
> therefore no longer counts in my eyes (2002, 193).

Merleau-Ponty argues that the body plays host to consciousness as a permanent

fixture in experience. While I type these words, I am aware of my own fatigue

through the sticky traces my incessant blinking leaves to ease my burning eyes,

and after every blink the computer screen gradually floats from two overlapping

floating objects into one fixed object until I blink again. Yet, I am awake. This

coincides with Merleau-Ponty's first principle: that my body is always with me, it

is a fold of me, always present, "an object which does not leave me" (2002, 103).

Merleau-Ponty further says that the body cannot be taken objectively, although it

may occupy an objective space. The body moves through space without knowing

objectively how it is a body in that space. I inhabit my own body, always-already aware of the position of my body in a flux of pre-possessive knowing, and I know about it best when I am not thinking of it as though it were objective. Thus, Merleau-Ponty's final point, that my body is not an object, that there is no perspective that I can hold on it. To have a hold on anything else my body has to be that thing's condition. I can only see distortions of my body, such as in the mirror or listening to it on a recording. It is, finally, only an object as much as it is the location of feeling. It registers itself feeling, but it is double entwined, encased in a mobile encasement of experience.

Thus, the world my body inhabits cannot be known apart from the body to which it is attached. The phenomena through which my body navigates cannot be known apart from the body, nor can my body be understood apart from the phenomena it navigates through. The body is thus the *body-in-the-world*, allowing me to open onto the world, restricting me in certain cases, but opening me indeterminately nonetheless. Body, in Merleau-Ponty's words, is "the third term, always tacitly understood, in the figure-background structure" of perception (2002, 115). An object perceived is necessarily related to the body's own potential to act upon it.

Consciousness is not "I Think" in Merleau-Ponty's system. Consciousness is occupied with an always-already "I Can" (2002, 159). The potential for action is inscribed upon the body, and it is objective thought which will mistake the body

as an object, that which reads perception as a consequence of it living in a world instead of inhabiting a world in which it is one of two sides of a fold.

The Medium is the Milieu

McLuhan, we will recall, argued that the medium constitutes our knowledge of the world, but his study lacked in terms of a synchronic analysis between media objects as they interrelate with one another, as well as their eventual contribution towards the constitution of subjectivity. Ong extended on the persistence of the medium by embedding it in a sensorium, wherein which multiple intersecting media contributed towards the heightening of particular senses. The sensorium accounts for the social institutions that contribute to the ecology by establishing rules of conduct for media, prescriptions that could be either followed or countered; technological restrictions are important, as much as the social rules that are embedded in those restrictions along with the parameters of of their use.

A media ecology grows from media determinism. An ecology is an edifice of social institutions and media objects that determine the state of their environment, and in this case the environment is the perceiving subject. This is useful for considering media as part of a dynamic and flowing system, as extensions of human perception. We want to avoid looking at media and music as though they are separate from one another, as though the media of musical dissemination are the exclusive objects standing in our way of experiencing music's presence. Instead we invite the perspective of hearing music *as a medium* in itself; but it is

one which is intertwined with a variety of social institutions, conventions, philosophic dispositions, legalities, etc. Media ecology as an approach does not work because it marks a very simplistic distinction between the self and the world, and it understands technologies and media to be made somehow beyond society and then later introduced (as though an external to society could exist).

Music is a medium of the habituated gestures and codes of the human body, the site within which music is produced, because its sounds are generated from within bodies and between them. But these bodies are never pre-symbolic, instead enframed consciously within the symbolic order as instituted through language. We now turn our attention towards several examples which show the potentials and limitations of this determinist perspective. Merleau-Ponty will be revisited later.

The content of music, as it is read here, is the content of loss. If the mirror stage presents the perceiving subject with an idealization of control between his movements and the metaphorical gestures perceived in the mirror (taken in the broadest sense), then music through symbolically fusing movement with the gesture is taken to act out the very cut that the symbolic order instantiates in the subject. The 'content' of music is not a cover up for loss, a material manifestation that takes the place of an object which is lost, but imaginatively replays the very process of this loss. Sustaining music in life is a prolongation of the moment before the traumatic cut, which is why we find music so therapeutic, and which is

why several psychoanalytic theorists have taken music as the *exemplar sensible* of

fantasy: an imaginative display that bars us from the trauma of the cut. We can

guarantee a wholeness or a oneness, if only for a brief time, expressed in a

nostalgic ballad or a whistle in the dark.

CHAPTER 2

The Afflicted Amalgamation of Music and Nostalgia

This chapter accounts for the historical incorporation of nostalgia into musical composition. While contemporary cultural populist accounts of nostalgia celebrate it as a bittersweet narrative that contributes towards the triumph of the self, I trace its history to its original diagnosis as a crippling disease caused by the loss of certainty and wholeness. This marks our first determinant: the emotional determinant of nostalgia in popular songwriting. Nostalgia was actively negated through Haydn's *Farewell Symphony*, but it was increasingly incorporated into the aesthetics of romanticism as melancholy and eventually centralized in the Tin Pan Alley sentimental ballad, the latter of which was consumed in an environment which marked the synecdoche of nostalgia under modernity: the home.

It Isn't What It Was

Contemporary conjectures about nostalgia describe the emotion as an empowering state of self awareness which dissociates the past from the pain of its historical consequences. But the current definition for nostalgia isn't what it used to be. Where once nostalgia was diagnosed as an "afflicted imagination" (Hofer 1688, 381) associated with displacement and depression, it has recently been portrayed as a technology which weaves disparate historical moments within a singular narrative.

Because nostalgic yearning is so wholly subjective, it remains tactless to venture into objectivist descriptions -- indeed, we have all suffered from nostalgia, yet there is an elongated difficulty in saying precisely what it is. An affective state entwined somewhere between emotion, memory, and identity, nostalgia is less a direct psychological referent to the totality of a past experience than a series of faded snapshots that project fulsome features of one's self within the bygone event's imaginary space. Such a space, in turn, reassembles the image of the self in the present. According to Davis's pioneering sociological study, while nostalgia resembles the optimistic fantasy of a better time,

> it is a time we have already known. It reassures us of past happiness and accomplishment and, since these still remain on deposit, as it were, in the bank of our memory, it simultaneously bestows upon us a certain current worth, however much present circumstances may obscure it or make it suspect (1979, 34).

Nostalgia, as Davis has it, alienates us from the present by way of an intensified extraction of affects from our past, but such an alienation contributes towards identity preservation. Nostalgia doesn't cause us to suffer, Davis says, but enables us to overcome our current social discontinuities with an adherence to the self's superior ability at surviving past experiences; nostalgia, in other words, weaves an optimistic thread of continuity throughout the experiential disruptions of identity. It allows us to interrogate the past, not as a repository of veridical events, but as a certainty that affect transcended the concrete world: an assurance that I was

"thereness" on the "beachness." Davis justifies his sanguine approach to alienation with the triumph of the self, which (1) guarantees the protraction of identity, and (2), as a corollary of protraction, prepares identity to overcome prospective disruptions in peaceful harmony between the self and world. By armoring the self with a vision of its own history without consequence, nostalgia is the cognitive technology that empowers the self as the triumphant autonomous figure unaffected by its social ground.

Davis designates the autonomous figure as the "secret self," which "gives testimony to one's prescience, to a heightened sensitivity and oneness with the deepest impulses of an age" (1979, 34). And since this "secret self" is also a social being (if we agree that keeping a secret anticipates the social art of confession), it will inevitably encounter other secret selves and share with them their secret spaces in present time. The exposition to another person of the secret self occurs within what Davis calls a "nostalgic memory exchange," which exposes the "wonderment of the revelation of how much more alike than different our 'secret' pasts are" so that we experience multiple shared memories "ad infinitum in paradoxical regress" (1979, 134). Nostalgia, according to Davis, exhibits a constructive social function. It allows us to regress into the fantasy of our past, yet it is a regression which causes us to resurface and share our memory with other people. Simply, as much as nostalgia is an always-already of the human condition, as much as we are interpellated as the subject of our own past, we find points of articulation in these subjective regressions to connect with others based on the

mutual affects we share. We can, as perhaps a cultural apologist would argue, model a community through the ostensible alienation.

According to Davis, nostalgia has a social and psychological function that is imperative to modern life, a necessary constituent to our existence as modern human beings. No longer does it appear that nostalgia is a poetic device of Romantic distantiation, a symptom of longing or depression—again, it is not the disease it used to be, and contemporary nostalgia studies testify to that. Nostalgia was originally diagnosed as a disease of dislocation rather than a symptom of age. However, although nostalgia was once the symptom of spatial dislocation, in the modern age it became as much associated with temporal dislocation: a lost youth. Nostalgia was described as a perverse fixation upon the idea of homeland, which would plague students and servants frightened by foreign customs while traveling abroad. Indeed, nostalgia was revered in such a way that it called for the swift cure of hope. But it became increasingly acceptable to suffer from nostalgia, as it was symptomatic of the loss of the "unity" that constituted the modern subject.

Because music can relay the historical instance without the burden of its consequence, and because music circumvents the world of objects through its technology of signification, it has been generally taken as pure memory and an expressive tool for the becoming of pastness. It seems appropriate, if we are to talk about pastness (or regression for that matter) and music, to turn our attention briefly to Adorno. Adorno, in a generous donation to the cultural apologist

artillery, argued that music (through the unvarying modern edifice that constitutes the nostalgic subject) manipulates consciousness through its evocation of the past, employing formulae that follow the listener's first experiences with music in early childhood. Popular music and neo-classicism in particular confine listeners to the inescapable bassinet of regression. Adorno writes,

> popular music is the sum total of all the conventions and material
>
> formulas in music to which he [the listener] is accustomed and which
>
> he regards as the inherent, simple language of music itself, no matter
>
> how late the development might be which produced this natural
>
> language (1941, 444).

Adorno declares that popular music fails the progressive mobility of consciousness on account of the fact that its minimum compositional convention serves fantastic regression. The regressive listener embodies an optimistic mirage of awareness that lifts consciousness away from the here and now, evidenced by the fact that popular music's communicative function is (yes) "baby talk," or the "unabating repetition of some particular musical formula comparable to the attitude of a child incessantly uttering the same demand," accompanied by "the limitation of many melodies to very few tones, comparable to the way in which a small child speaks before he has the full alphabet at his disposal" (1941, 450). So the regression facilitated by popular music is a regression into a world wherein which events are no longer subject to their consequences; the listener is "stupefied" through infant listening habits.

Certain cultural populists have had adverse reactions to such modernist condemnations of mass culture. Maurey (2009), for instance, takes nostalgia as a necessary tool for navigating the historical instances of popular music and for assembling a tonal palette of past performances; nostalgia is an essential thread for the postmodern flow between styles in its ironic distantiation from historical certitude. Further, if music signifies nostalgia in place of modernity's interrogation of universal truth, then it does so at the benefit of multivocality, multiplicity, and as a powerful deconstructive tool a "device to unsettle and question received truths" (2009, 100). Likewise, Plastino takes nostalgia, even in its most nationalist contexts, as a personal and reflective nostalgia, a "continual interrogation of time and becoming" in musical affect (2007, 439). Because music can play out the sounds of history, or rather can mimic the affect associated with events in one's history, it can relay the affects of those events with its own certitude. Music allows the nostalgic a powerful route of access into the most certifiable mien of the self as coalesced into a temporal-experiential continuum.

Nostalgia scholarship proposes that the affect is personally and/or politically empowering, discerning a difference between reflective nostalgia, which empowers the self by placing dominant historical narratives at a distance for ironic appropriation, and restorative nostalgia, a nationalist attempt to reconstruct the lost past through national monuments and icons. And it is precisely this kind of split which affords the currency of empowerment theses when the topic of nostalgia arises. The distinction comes from Boym's lauded cultural history:

> For restorative nostalgia, the past is a value for the present; the past is not
> duration, but instantaneous perfection. The past, furthermore, shows no
> sign of decadence: it must be freshly depicted in its original image and
> remain eternally young. Reflective nostalgia is centered on historical and
> individual time, on the irrevocability of the past and on human finiteness
> [...] Restorative nostalgia evokes a national past and future. Reflective
> nostalgia contemplates rather individual and cultural memory. [...] It
> reveals that fervent desire and critical thought are not opposed, and that
> memory and emotion don't preclude reason, critical judgment, and
> compassion. Reflective nostalgia does not seek to restore that mythical
> place called home (Boym 2002, 59-60).

Restorative nostalgia removes an object from its pastness and represent it in the
present to elevate the greatness of a nation. By contrast, reflective nostalgia
interrogates the certitude of the past in an optimistic imaginary; it is the
individualist inward fold of nostalgia, the suffering nostalgic, the sentimental
nostalgic. A reflective nostalgic accepts the loss and makes no attempt to
reconnect except through memory. Restorative nostalgia operates at the level of
the nation while reflective nostalgia functions at the level of the individual.

Music festivals, for instance, make elaborate attempts to repeat history in this
fashion. In outdoor classical music festivals, the preservation of classical music
history is a result of conflicting simulations of traditional life contemporaneous in
a socially impossible context which works desperately towards preserving

authenticity and tradition. Brennan (1999) argues that a "nostalgic frame of tourism" is responsible for the success of trendy music festivals who choose rustic outdoor settings as their concert venue. At the Chamber Music Festival at Washington's Olympic Peninsula, where the success of chamber music is dependent on the nostalgia for pre-industrial quaintness of life, conflicting narratives guide attendees through a manufactured authenticity of pastness. According to Brennan, "nostalgia and narrative work together with idealized visions of farm life to distinguish people" and "to put some in their places while asserting the superiority of others" (1999, 12), thereby constructing a dichotomy between the people who live off the rural land where the festival occurs and the urban people who use the environment as an escape to idealized life. Indeed, the attendees, the consumers, are exposed to authentic aspects of rural life, except to the labour that remains alienated from them. Brennan states:

> Farming labor is not completely ignored at the festival, for the nostalgic idealization of a farm necessarily includes plowing, milking, and weeding. The audience never actually sees any of this activity occur on the grounds, nor does it ever occur to the extent necessary to maintain an actual 'working' farm. However, the festival's barn, pigs, donkeys, and vegetable garden all suggest that some sort of farming takes place. But the labor required to maintain this ideal farm is left out of the nostalgic frame of tourism (1999, 19).

Chamber music was historically performed outdoors in such environments as the 17th century London Pleasure Gardens. But on the farm the chamber music appears to conflict with the realities of farm life. As Brennan argues, the "tourist's nostalgic frame, which excludes the actual toil and dirt involved in farming, regards the farm setting as 'right' for classical music because that setting enhances the conceived timeless nature of such music, providing an escape from the noise and work of the city" (1999, 21). The alienated nature of this context is further exemplified when local rural residents who curiously invest interest are pitied and scrutinized for lacking the "proper social etiquette" required for the event. Brennan provides an example which exposes the class issues underlying such an event, where some locals

> walk towards the back of the barn, where a door left unguarded by ushers allows surreptitious access to the concert. I often use it to sneak in and out during the concert. I think, "Aha! They must have done this before!" I wonder if they like chamber music. The executive director of the festival, who also owns the farm and usually is onstage with his viola, stops them before they can enter. I observe as he talks to them quietly and as they turn around and walk off the property. The festival director strides towards me, shaking his head and tells me that they had no tickets and couldn't pay for them even if they had wanted to. "They're like donkeys," he says to me, looking from the animals in the pasture to the people walking out of the grounds, "Human donkeys" (1999, 14).

That nostalgia through music is a medium to the ideology of authenticity becomes

clearer upon the examination of how folklorists preserve historical traditions of

pre-literate cultures who are feared to be on the brink of "extinction." The

traditional folklorist's approach has often preserved not a history in the

reconstruction of authentic music, but an interpretation of "tradition," something

that has always been but cannot be identified by written historical record. Sant

Cassia (2000) argues that, as tradition is represented through the selection of texts

for preservation, these texts technologize the listener to experience tradition that

is, in fact, mediated by the folklorist's interpretations (interpretations, pace

criticism, with best intentions). Such is the case with folklorists preserving the

Mediterranean singing practice of Ghana, traditionally a form of teasing song

performed by men in duel with one another, later replaced with more Westernized

and passive versions on the topic of cultural history, which was inscribed by the

folklorists who wanted to "save" their tradition from industrialization. Today, this

calmer culturally preserved musical expression is perceived as authentic exchange

of Maltese culture.

Because folklorists considered the teaching songs of Ghana as offensive against

their mission to preserve cultural continuation and the harmonious survival of

identity, they organized festivals in rural areas that depicted the pre-industrial

farm life of Maltese culture, and asked performers to pick musical themes out of a

hat instead of improvising the usual vulgarities at one another. As Sant Cassia

says, "[t]he subjects of the songs were influenced by images the elite themselves

had of the poplu (e.g., spendthrifts, henpecked husbands) according to an agenda unconsciously influenced by their perception of what would amuse the *poplu* as public spectacle" (2000, 290). Indeed, the decision to eliminate the vulgarities from the cultural practices of a people is the decision to provide a history without consequence, guaranteeing cultural survival under superstructural supervision. Tradition is, according to Sant Cassia, "neither self-evident nor transparent. It needs to be identified, packaged, and made the subject of discretion and taste" (2000, 291).

But these studies, as cautious as they are of celebrating the nostalgic affect as a triumph of the self, are focused less on musical processes than the socio-historical framework within which musical processes unfold. Restorative nostalgia, in other words, requires an elaborate display of cultural artifacts that reconstruct pastness. Restorative nostalgia is a historical repetition, which can mean one of many things. If we take such a restorative approach, for instance, we might think of Marx's famous parody of Hegel from the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, that everything happens twice, the first time tragic, the second time farce (2008, 1). It is built into modern history to repeat what was once revolutionary in hopes of sustaining the spirit of an age. Restorative nostalgia, it could be argued, is but a component in this farcical repetition.

Reflective musical nostalgia, on the other hand, refers to the ostensible constitution of and complications within the self. Jankélevitc provides a more

refined understanding of the nostalgic listener as afflicted by the irremediable::

"To say that nostalgia consists wholly of the bitterness of what has been is

equivalent to saying [...] that the object of nostalgia is the pain of the irreversible"

(1992, 140). The nostalgic journey preludes an impossible reunion between the

subject and the lost object because the latter fills the former with the enjoyment of

loss. Music, as Jankélevitc has it, is the equally irreversible art of iteration, but its

linear processes can be re-experienced at any point, and so has a central role in

nostalgic affect as the guarantee that the past unfolded in just such a manner.

Music, simply, allows access to the affects associated with the bygone.

Through his examination of "old-timey" music such as hillbilly and blues,

Middleton undertakes a musico-psychoanalytic approach to nostalgia as a

"romanticized memory" (2006, 54), designating the moment as one of compulsive

repetition:

> Densely layered, without clear origin, or else with an origin repressed
>
> from view, the nostalgic moment in its typical obsessive repetition may be
>
> identified, using Freudian-Lacanian terminology, as a species of fantasy,
>
> its object located within the 'acting out' of a fantasy scene. In this sense,
>
> nostalgia is actually emblematic of modernity, for it is the fracturing of
>
> tradition that brings forth this particular figuring of loss -- even though, as
>
> we have seen, the effect when it emerges, as part of the psychoanalytic
>
> excavation of the modern subject, is to reveal what was always already

there: a structure built around a lost object, which is in one form or another

a human constant (2006, 57).

For Middleton, nostalgia is built directly into old-timey music as the

interpenetrative dialectic of tradition and modernity, constituting an object that is

feared yet desired. In an idiosyncratic Lacanian formula that fundamentally favors

nostalgic empowerment, Middleton describes modern musical nostalgia as that

which bars the subject from encountering the traumas of personal or collective

historical consequence. Nostalgia extends into the mirror of the bygone to

reconnect with the whole complete self; for Middleton, nostalgia marks an attempt

to sustain the imago of the mirror stage before it was breached by the symbolic

order (2006, 60). Blues nostalgia does not simply sing of loss, but does so with a

resilient character, "a particular inscription of absence in a present that will, at all

costs, be survived" (2006, 61), lending listeners their existential consistency. And

so we return full circle to the paradox of nostalgia: it is a deceptive but necessary

component of modern subjectivity. The self must be continually interrogated as

units of experience in order to remain whole. My question now turns to the

original diagnosis of the disease in order to historicize select discourses that

accommodated music and nostalgia's aesthetic amalgamation.

The "Afflicted Imagination"

In his 1688 dissertation, Johannes Hofer described nostalgia as an "afflicted

imagination," a peculiar form of homesickness that plagued the minds of students

and servants who studied or worked abroad but who had not properly adjusted to the foreign customs of their current surroundings. According to Hofer, who fused the Greek *nosos* ("return to Native Land") with *algos* ("suffering or grief"), nostalgia was the cause of panic attacks, shortness of breath, anxiety, anorexia, suicide, despair, heart palpation, and in its final stages, fever and death. Such existing terms as the German *Heimweh* (homesick) or the French *maladie du pays* (sickness for/in the country), did not indicate the idiosyncrasy of the disease's despair.

Despite the proclivity to classify nostalgia as longing for lost time, Hofer specified that it wasted away the consciousness of youth who in their travels abroad were either "abandoned by the pleasant breeze of their Native Land" or imagined "themselves enjoying this more." Nostalgia invaded consciousness with a singular idea, facilitated by a constellation of cathectic objects: a cool breeze, a familiar taste, a recognizable melody, any phenomena with the slightest reminiscence of home which cast the Native Land in new lights of fantastic regression. Not age, but place, yet more properly displacement, incited the afflicted imagination (1688, 380).

Hofer's primary case study, a student from Berne, had moved to study in Basel, "who suffering from sadness for a considerable time, finally fell victim to this disease; (saying) that he was attended by a continual […] fever, that he had concocted these desires of the heart himself, and that worse symptoms had

developed daily" (1688, 380). The student's housemates expected death at his door and prayed for his soul after a doctor had given him an enema and had taken several other measures to purify the body otherwise invaded by "animal spirits." Hofer, faced with what he considered to be the student's inevitable demise, prescribed to him nostalgia's cure: hope. According to Hofer, the student's breathing became more regular and he returned to his "whole sane self" when promised that he would return home, long before he even embarked on his journey.

The painstaking list of explicit diagnostics that a victim of nostalgia suffered is a far more monstrous account than most contemporary descriptions. According to Hofer, a victim of nostalgia could be identified by their "wandering about sad," a tendency to "scorn foreign manners," a "distaste of strange conversations," an inclination "by nature to melancholy," to "bear jokes or the slightest injuries to other petty inconveniences in the most unhealthy frame of mind" while they "frequently make a show of the delights of the Fatherland and prefer them to all foreign things." Finally, nostalgics would find one another: "if they get together to endure their injuries, if they are afflicted by some disease or another and thence sad and thoughtful and breathe out in the atmosphere of the Fatherland" (1688, 386). Patients who exceeded these rather preliminary diagnostics were fully consumed by the disease in its late stages. Hofer wrote that if someone meditates unusually upon the Fatherland, if they portray unrecoverable sadness, cannot sleep (or sleep too much), exhibit a physical weakening, are chronically hungry and

thirsty, experience sensory deprivation, worry about their heart condition, actually

suffer from heart palpitations, if they chronically sigh, become "stupid" by not

entertaining anything but the object of their loss, and finally if their body

succumbs to fever ... then they are likely suffering the full effects of nostalgia.

And if the fever was not treated in a timely manner, nostalgia would devour the

body in death.

In order for the patient to amass their own willpower to return home, their body

had to be purged of animal spirits by way of administering cephalicum, mercury,

powder, and medicated wine directly into their brachial vein. Purging the body of

blocked substances allowed consciousness to remain in the current environment.

No matter the developmental stage of nostalgia, recovery would occur at the

mention of returning home. Only at the end of his dissertation does Hofer witness

the miracle of hope occurring before his very eyes in the body language of a

servant:

[N]ot long since it was told me by a Parisian that he himself had an Helvetian

bound servant who was sad and melancholy at all times so that he began to work

with lessened desire; finally, he came to him and sought dismissal with insistent

entreaties, of which he could have no hope beyond him. When the merchant

granted this immediately, the servant changed from sudden joy, excused from his

mind these phantasma for several days, and after while remained in Paris, broken

up no longer by this disease (1688, 390).

The first reprint of the dissertation appeared in 1710, part of Zwinger's "Fasciculus Dissertatiunum Medicarum Selectorium," which included a relatively insolent rephrasing, as well as a replacement of the term "nostalgia" with "pothopatriadalgia," some other case histories, as well as an introduction to what he considered a culprit facilitator for the disease, a "sweet melody of Switzerland" which produced homesickness in those who heard it -- he called it a "pathological air," or a "Kuhe-Reyen." This air was also known as a Ranz des vaches, a Swiss Mountain song, something which Rousseau describes as an example of that which is not music but rather a "memorative sign" (1779, 267). While music was described as the "art of combining […] sounds in a manner pleasing to the ear," a profound "art of the beautiful," the Ranz des vaches was a style of music "so generally beloved among the Swiss, that it was forbidden to be played in their troops under pain of death, because it made them burst into tears, desert, or die, whoever heard it; too great a desire did it excite in them of returning to their country" (1779, 266-7). But it did not produce a longing in people who were not Swiss.

The remaining discussion pivots on nostalgia's incorporation into classical, romantic, and popular music as an aesthetic nexus for the subject to experience the loss of an object of which they were never in possession.

Questions linger: why would we celebrate so boldly in the modern turn what was diagnosed as a crippling disease? Why is nostalgia such an essential component of

modern music? Kramer (2008) has argued recently that Charles Ives' "New England Symphony" created a critical nostalgia nationalist music that actively *resisted* commodification and industrial development. Taylor (2008) claims that Samuel Barber's "Knoxville: Summer of 1915" expresses a rich aesthetic of national flavor by constructing nostalgia at both personal and broader social levels. And in the context of popular music, Baxter-Moore (2006) claims that The Kinks gave way to a style of songwriting in the 1970s that deliberately confronted modernism and suburbanization by using nostalgic resistance. I do not share the same optimism. And in general I do not ascribe to music the same amount of cultural empowerment often claimed in contemporary cultural scholarship. The remaining discussion pivots on nostalgia's incorporation into music by the end of the 19th century, particularly in the popular music style of the sentimental ballad, as a coordinate for the subject to experience the loss of an object of which they were never in possession, in contrast to nostalgia's initial diagnosis on patients who had suffered the loss of an object that was once theirs.

I am addressing nostalgia's migration from a disease of the 17th century to its incorporation into sentimental ballads in Tin Pan Alley as a crucial compositional component of popular music. Indeed, the sentimental ballad provoked a yearning for lost objects (lost loves, lost time, lost chance). But we can trace the eventual incorporation of nostalgia into classical musics as well, especially middle romantic music, as evoking a sense of loss for objects that were never in

possession. This loss, a technique of classical aesthetics, became the central compositional method in the sentimental ballad.

Haydn's Farewell: A Case of Expunging Nostalgia

Students, servants, and the military longed for home especially when returning home appeared impossible. As they faced harrowing battles, unhealthy living conditions, foreign customs, and imminent injury, victims would understandably imagine and idealize the comforts of home. Indeed musicians stood on equal footing to other servants under their employers and suffered similar ailments of displacement. We will recall Hofer's closing remarks on the state of the servant, because they bear a relevance to the story of a group of classical musicians serving under Joseph Haydn (1732-1809).

As court composer, Haydn was required to write numerous compositions weekly ranging from string quartets to operas, concerti, symphonies, and keyboard sonatas all for the court's entertainment. Prince Nicholas Esterhazy himself was devoted to music, having designated a concert hall and two opera houses on his property solely to the performances of Haydn's compositions. Haydn's popularity resulted from both his talents and the providence of working for an appreciative employer. One autumn, while under the strict regimen of entertaining those at the Esterhaza estate, Haydn's musicians, on the brink of suffering from nostalgia, had requested that Haydn expedite their return home.

Their schedule was so exhaustive that musicians employed by Esterhazy were required to live on their distant estate properties during summer months in barracks, adopting a regimen of intense rehearsals and flawless performances; when they could return to their families was a decision entirely left to the Prince (Green 1997, 158-9). In 1772 Esterhazy hadn't given word to his musicians regarding their anticipated and due return home, and so the musicians became restless. Haydn and Esterhazy had a healthy working relationship, but Haydn recognized his role as servant and could see that his musicians were anxiously awaiting the official cue to return home.

Haydn composed a solution that conveyed the longing musicians were suffering in their desperate situation. His composition became known as the Farewell Symphony in F-sharp minor (no. 45), a typical symphony for his *Sturm und Drang* period but one with an unusual ending. The final movement, which was generally expected to be an exciting Allegro Assai or Vivace, took a delicately lyrical detour before its conclusion. At its performance Esterhazy was subjected to a simple soft theme across the entire orchestra, which each musician gradually ceased performing, extinguishing his candle, to leave the stage, each carrying with him his instrument and leaving his place empty and dark behind. The gesture was repeated sequentially until Haydn, as conductor and first violinist, was left only with the second violinist playing in the centre of a vacant hole once comprised of musicians whose spirits were slowly dissipating, letting sounds swell in the augmentation of pleasurable emptiness. Once they concluded, they too left the

stage in complete darkness. Esterhazy let them return home immediately. As Haydn's biographer confirms:

> One year, against his usual custom, the prince determined to extend his
> stay in Esterhaza for several weeks. The ardent married men, thrown into
> utter consternation, turned to Haydn and asked him to help. Haydn hit
> upon the idea of writing a symphony in which, one after the other, the
> instruments fall silent. At the first opportunity, this symphony was
> performed in the prince's presence. Each of the musicians was instructed
> that, as soon as his part had come to an end, he should extinguish his light,
> pack up his music, and leave with his instrument under his arm. The prince
> and the audience at once understood the point of this pantomime; the next
> day came the order for the departure from Esterhaza. Thus Haydn related
> the occasion for the Farewell Symphony to me; the other version, that
> Haydn thereby dissuaded the prince from his intention to dissolve the
> entire Kapelle […] is to be sure more poetic, but not historically correct
> (quoted in Webster 1991, 1).

According to Webster, the Farewell is not only unusual for its program but for its tonality, standing as the only F-Sharp minor symphony in the 18th century. In typical symphonic form of this pre-Classical period, the piece should end in the key in which it began, in this case in F-Sharp minor. But the Farewell section of the final movement deviates from the tonal center of the work by way of a deceptive cadence to (its relative) A Major. The Farewell Theme, which unfolds as a minuet in a binary sonata form, modulates to its own recapitulation in F-

Sharp Major. In other words, it fantasizes its own home key into a modulated return to its parallel major. It does not long for home as a lost object and hold it at an idealized distance. It uplifts the hollowed sound of F-Sharp minor into its parallel home key, as if home was found through the straightforward solution of hope, which was in the previous century the prescribed medical cure for nostalgia.

The central governing principle of the work is the hope to return home, represented by the symphony's program as well as its tonality. F-Sharp minor was a relatively unheard of key to perform in (minus the rare exceptions by Haydn), and an especially difficult one to tune brass instruments in. As Webster interprets it, "F-sharp minor thus represents a remote and inhospitable part of the musical universe -- just as Esterhaza lay in a remote and inhospitable district" (1991, 116). When home is finally reached in the resolved parallel F-sharp major, the instruments are performing in an even more distant domain. Indeed, in orchestral music of the 18th century we see little that goes well into the sharp keys, and horns could only be played in keys sharper than E-major with significant difficulty, which would prove to be especially laborious given the final movement's move towards F# major. As Webster concludes:

> The Farewell Symphony, then, deals with the idea […] of the musicians' journey home from the wilderness of F-sharp minor to their safe and comfortable F-sharp major. If this is 'home,' they can hardly even recall it; it will be reachable (if at all) only at the end of a long and arduous journey (during which their difficulties of intonation will only increase!). To

appreciate Haydn's tonal point, one need only consider how different is

the effect of transforming tonic minor into tonic major in, say, the key of

C -- as when he employed this radiant, "purest" of all keys to symbolize

the creation of Light out of Chaos (1991, 117).

Rather than idealizing its lost object, the Farewell facilitates a symbolic return towards it; it illustrates an arising consciousness concerning nostalgia and its negotiability through creative forms such as musical composition. Indeed, nostalgia a grave enough illness for a group of performers to unite and execute an act of symbolic resistance (since Haydn had responded directly to his musicians' requests for a solution to their problem), employing the technical language of tonality to annex the possibility of nostalgia -- the musicians were longing for their homes, their wives, their families. They were not yet fixated on home enough to communicate a melancholic yearning for what was lost (that was up to the Romantics). Thus, I am not suggesting that the Farewell is an example of "musical nostalgia," but is rather the cure for it (at least according to Hofer's dissertation): hope.

If the potential for an afflicted imagination facilitated an act of resistance, little wonder nostalgia in the military was forcefully discouraged! Military forces in various European nations, specifically France and Russia, reported that their soldiers suffered an equally intense homesickness abroad. Meanwhile, however, military personnel in the United States boasted that they had found the cure for

nostalgia. According to Boym, American physician Theodore Calhoun "proposed as treatment public ridicule and bullying by fellow soldiers, an increased number of manly marches and battles and improvement in personal hygiene that would make soldiers' living conditions more modern" (2002, 6). In other words, nostalgia translated into weakness which was properly cured through discipline. In these cases, however, the nostalgic was not encouraged to return home, but instead to remain broken through self-discipline.

Romantic Distance and the Loss of Loss

By the early 19th century, composers had exhausted "absolute music" (i.e. symphonies and concerti containing autonomous relations of motifs bearing little extramusical association), seeking instead as sources their own vernacular traditions, ones with which members of the nation could have a rapport. Operas were consummate vehicles to express music of the people because the people were easily translated into characters on stage. For instance, as Dahlhaus argues,

> folk melodies resist symphonic manipulation (it is rarely possible to break
> down the lines of a song into motivic particles capable of undergoing a
> Beethovenian process of development without seeming willful and heavy-
> handed), whereas they can easily be incorporated into an opera, where the
> resultant unavoidable fractures in style can be justified as fulfilling
> dramaturgical functions in the plot (1991, 218).

Such an example reflects a *restorative* nostalgia: the active reconstitution of an object purporting the ideal image of the nation. But a reflective nostalgia was expressed through the melancholy of Romanticism, and in social philosophic terms, this translated into the rise of the subject at the expense of humanism. According to Rosen, both the Classical and the Romantic styles worked according to the logic of memory. Classical memory would reminisce about bygone happiness (such as the innocence of youth), while the Romantic memory recalled a period within which hope was still a possibility, memories "of absence, of that which never was" (1998, 175). Yet Romanticism expresses more of a melancholy than it does a nostalgia. Romanticism suffers loss without attempts at unification. Simply, the Classical style longs for that which one may repossess, such as the homes of those musicians in Esterhazy's court, while Romanticism longs for that which was never possessed. Romanticism expresses less by its fixation on the lost object than on its loss for something that it never possessed. In general, the Romantic aesthetic was marked by a contemplative and poetic distance facilitated by the very embrace of loss. For instance, take Robert Schumann's letter to his mother as he left home for his studies in Leipzig at 18 years old:

> I left on the 21st. With a melancholy heart, I took leave of the whole precious home with a long, silent look down from Mosler mountain; the autumnal morning was shining like a mild day in spring, and the illuminated world was tenderly and cheerfully smiling on my beautiful, lonely wandering. The moment of separation from loved ones, and of farewell, gives our soul the gentle melancholic minor chord, which is

seldom heard. All the bells of past childhood, the present, and the future

flow into one chord-the shining future would like to drive out the past, and

so tender, undefined feelings are gently fighting in our breast.... The

evening was wonderful, and the soul was as it is on a still Friday; before

Altenburg I sat down for a few hours and rested peacefully, and followed

the setting sun with my eyes, and the image of the *sie Heimath* [sweet

home] appeared shy and tender before my eyes and sank like the parting

and reddening sun, like its last ray, still and stiller into the graves of the

past. Therese stood before me and sang softly: sweet home. And while I

was dozing off in the evening, every minute of the day and of the past was

darkly wafting by again, and like the gentle echo of the soul, I heard the

sounds melting and dying away and the last one trembling softly: sweet

home (quoted in Hoeckner 2002, 72).

According to Hoeckner, the literary descriptions here distance Schumann from his

directly inhabited world and turn towards an embrace of loss itself as the catalyst

for creativity; and this distance summons the distant sounds of music. This notion

of distance was particularly influential on Schumann's early work, Papillons (Op.

2), based on his own reading of Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre*, where Walt and Vult, the

novel's two protagonists, attend a ball with a woman who they are both in love

with -- when the woman settles with Walt (a poet), Vult (a musician) wanders off

into a void, and as the brother walks away, the final sentences of the novel ring

out into romantic distance: "Enchanted, Walt heard the vanishing sounds still

speaking from afar: for he did not notice his brother vanishing with them" (quoted in Hoeckner 2002, 57) Indeed, loss itself was extolled within Romantic aesthetics.

Nostalgia is the irrevocable symptom of the subject. Rather than expressing the loss of something in the concrete world, nostalgia is the psyche's means of coping with the trauma of a primordial loss by imagining a utopian historical certitude of total union. In short, nostalgia in music was a connotative form of signification that signified not the loss of a particular object, but the inherent affect of loss embedded in an object its listener may never have been in possession of; or if they had suffered a real loss, at least the musical connotations were a shadowy manifestation of the object's absence. Romanticism marks a transition from the humanist age of the whole self to the modern age of the split subject. Žižek (1992, 1997), for instance, argues that three configurations around this loss are central to subject/object relations in the post-humanist age of subjectivity: (1) the object-cause of desire creates the inability to attain it; (2) the object is immovable unless its exchange can be expunged from its motion in contemporary reality; (3) the object emerges as a means for us to return to the quest to attain it; and (4) the more horrifying the libidinal impact the object has once its material property is diminished from our grasp, the more increasingly it facilitates an enjoyable pursuit. As he argues, these are perfectly valid paradoxes, as "the domain of the subject's impossible relation to the object-cause of its desire, the domain of the drive that circulates endlessly around it" (1992, 6). Nostalgia denies the subject the nostalgic object, which is what precisely constitutes its enjoyment factor. And,

indeed, the enjoyment of loss is what leads us to our final example: the sentimental ballad.

After the Fall: Nostalgia and the Sentimental Ballad

If music under the Romantic aesthetic portrayed loss as a creative force, the popular music industry doubled over on loss as the foremost component of music's commodified condition; Tin Pan Alley songwriters explicitly evoked nostalgia as a requisite to selling songs to a newly emerging mass market (Shepherd 1982). Under a rising modern edifice, the nostalgic subject experienced home as a personal concept continuously staggering on the cusp of oblivion. The popular music industry engendered a parallax shift in the attitude towards nostalgia by turning the listener's experience directly towards it in the most paradoxical of consumption spaces: the home.

Stephen Foster was the first songwriter to incorporate nostalgia as a central compositional device in his sentimental ballads. His songs communicated in simple and effective folk-like melodies representing the heterogenous nationalities of 19th century American heritage (his use of step-wise and pentatonic melodies were characteristic of Scottish and English folk music, for example). According to Key, alluding to the past in the context of the present has further implications in Foster's use of the chorus: "the chorus brings the past into the present and achieves a nostalgic, rather than dramatic, goal. One might look at this structure as

an 'interrupted narrative' where progress is inevitably interrupted by backward

glances" (1995, 160).

If Foster established the techniques of popular music composition, then Tin Pan

Alley made it accessible to the mass public. Tin Pan Alley refers to a New York

neighborhood of music publishers that employed songwriting teams in the late

19th century producing popular songs on sheet music for vocal and simple

instrumental accompaniment. Charles K. Harris in 1892 published the first hit of

the music industry, a ballad entitled "After the Ball," the first mass consumed hit

as it sold a prodigious 10 million copies generating $25,000 per week

(approximately $600,000 per week by today's standard). Following the song's

initial success, Harris moved to New York and published compositional methods

in his instruction booklet, How to Write a Popular Song (1906). The proven

success of the sentimental ballad, according to Harris, rested on the criteria that it

was written in a "fashionable musical style" while either (a) appearing topical or

(b) appealing to mass emotion, using such a sentiment as nostalgia for its

emotional basis. The lyrics to "After the Ball" describe a conversation between

youth and age in order to prescribe the preventative measures for avoiding a life

of regret:

> Verse*:* A little maiden climbed an old man's knee
>
> Begged for a story, "Do, uncle, please!"
>
> Why are you single? Why live alone?
>
> Have you no babies? Have you no home?"

"I had a sweetheart, years, years ago

Where she is now, pet, you will soon know.

List to the story, I'll tell it all

I believ'd her faithless, after the ball."

Chorus: After the ball is over,

After the break of morn,

After the dancers' leaving

After the stars are gone;

Many a heart is aching

If you could read them all

Many the hopes that have vanished

After the ball.

Verse: Bright lights were flashing in the grand ballroom

Softly the music playing sweet tunes;

There came my sweetheart, my love, my own,

"I wish some water, leave me alone."

When I returned, dear, there stood a man

Kissing my sweetheart, as lovers can.

Down fell the glass, pet, broken, that's all

Just as my heart was, after the ball.

Verse: Long years have passed, child, I've never wed

True to my lost love, though she is dead.

She tried to tell me, tried to explain

I would not listen, pleadings were vain.

One day a letter came from that man,

He was her brother, the letter ran;

That's why I'm lonely, no home at all

I broke her heart, pet, after the ball.

Consumers embodied the synecdoche of modern nostalgia by yearning for the ideals of a lost home from within the domestic space; the compositional method for ballads was designed, as Key writes, to "offer fertile ground on which to express feelings of loss and alienation" while living in the experience of the present, allowing the listener, performer, and (however at a distance) the author to experience contemporaneous "throes of nostalgia" (1995, 149). The transformation should be evident at this point: where once the nostalgic suffered for home in its absence, the modern nostalgic enjoyably suffered for home in its presence.

"After the Ball" is a calculated fantasy that concomitantly mourns and celebrates loss through the optimistic momentum of a waltz (a mid- to late-19th century dance that was especially popular with youth). While we hear the waltz at a distance, it is not a Romantic distance; we are not inclined to dance a waltz so much as experience its sounds that cradle the impossible dialogue between age and youth. "After the Ball" does not seek to recover from loss by summoning hope, as was the case with Haydn's symphony, nor does it luxuriate in Romantic melancholy. In the sentimental ballad, we are witness to a nostalgic confrontation

with a lost object on the grounds of unobtainable reconciliation. The sentimental ballad succeeded by tickling the subject with an emotion common to all subjects under the edifice of modernity. The sentimental ballad thus represents the fall from grace every listening subject suffers on their interpellation into the listening experience -- it assumes that every listener has somewhere within them a broken heart that can sympathize with the characters in "After the Ball," a scenario that nullifies the moment after the fall. While the sentimental ballad implies the very framework within which the loss eventuated, we are hidden from it. In the case of "After the Ball" nostalgia pleads to an Other who cannot fathom the depth of regret, a child.

Towards Phonography

I do not intend for this chapter to conclude with the usual devices of nostalgic scholarship, to either prescribe a political empowerment or denounce its alienating consequences. I merely suggest that further analytic work is required if we are to unravel the properties of an emotion that is so intimately entwined with music and the culture industry more broadly. Indeed, if nostalgia is "a feeling of sadness and longing that is not akin to pain, and resembles sorrow only as the mist resembles the rain" (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow), then paying heed to its historical appearances rather than succumbing to its seductive affect is a more sensible than sentimental form of interrogation.

But loss is not evoked through music because of the compositional methods which came to dominate it alone. It is also evoked by the media through which music has been disseminated in the 20th century. The popular music industry was not responsible alone for the solicitation of loss to a mass public, in other words. The phonograph industry was, in equal yet only partially related ways, merging loss with affect.

CHAPTER 3

The Second Master and The Domestication of Mechanical Phonographs

This chapter traces the migration of the mechanical phonograph from its invention as a business aid to its eventual incorporation into the domestic space. To be properly placed into the home it needed to be technologically capable of convincing its listener of its own autonomy and to speak for itself. One strategy was to gradually remove the phonograph's recording device, removing along with it the consumer's ability to engage with it as an interactive object.

Eternal Speech

Patented by Thomas Edison (but attributed to a vast network of scientists and inventors), the mechanical phonograph was a simple technology of sonic storage and dissemination, onto which two diaphragm and needle units were installed to cut into and read the fine spiral groove of a metallic cylinder. The visually off-putting gunmetal grey unit was clumsily titled a "talking machine," requiring one to holler rather than talk into a small cone while rotating a protracted handle. In 1878 Edison formed the *Edison Speaking Phonograph Company*, and shortly after his first demonstration of the machine, he wrote in his notebook his "phonograph principle," a list of potential applications:

    - to make Dolls speak, sing, cry and make various sounds

    - & also apply it to all kinds of Toys such as Dogs, animals, fowls,

    reptiles, human figures; to cause them to make various sounds

    - to Steam Toy Engines exhausts and whistles

- to reproduce from sheet music both orchestral instrumental & vocal,

the idea being to use a plate machine with perfect registration & stamp

the music out in a press from a die or punch previously prepared by

cutting it in steel or from an electrotype or cast from the original or tin

foil

- a family may have one machine & 1000 sheets of music thus giving

endless amusement

- I also propose to make toy music boxes & toy talking boxes playing

several tunes

- also to clocks and watches for calling out the time of day or waking

a person

- for advertisements rotated continually by clockwork ... (Conot 1979,

107).

Although we tend to associate devices of sonic storage and dissemination with

musical events, Edison had not designated the talking machine as a necessarily

musical medium nor did he envisage it embodying a musical aesthetic particular

to modern life. In 1878 he listed music as fourth in his publication of uses for the

talking machine, an almost irreverent mention amongst a dozen or so detailed

descriptions of its potentials for business and pedagogy printed in *The North

American Review* in 1877. The phonograph was a storage system for speech that

transcended the limitations of the living body, and indeed the discourse of death

was plentiful regarding the talking machine. As Edison's own editorial

introduction in *Scientific American* celebrated:

> Whoever has spoken into the mouthpiece of the phonograph, and whose
>
> words are recorded by it, has the assurance that his speech may be
>
> reproduced audibly in his own tones long after he himself has turned to
>
> dust. The possibility is simply startling ... Speech has become, as it were,
>
> immortal (1877, 304).

It appears as though the metaphysical spectacle of technology rested on its

capacity to lift and sustain the surface of the voice.

As much as the phonograph transmitted the sounds of the speaker, in whatever

guise it assumed, it spoke for itself. Such depictions of speaking dolls, for

instance, suggest that the phonograph was praised for its ability to mimic the

relative autonomy of a speaking subject. Indeed, on April 18 of 1888 the National

Academy of Sciences in Washington witnessed the speaking machine say: "The

Speaking Phonograph has the honor of presenting *itself* to the Academy of

Sciences!" (quoted in Mitchell 1991, 50, emphasis added). According to Laing,

throughout this presentation people fainted at its sound, one witness claiming: "It

sounds more like the devil every time" (quoted in Laing 1991, 7). The

phonograph, more than speaking for others, spoke for itself.

* * *

The Old Master's Voice: "I Am The Edison Phonograph!"

A surviving 1906 Edison wax cylinder boldly proclaims in a three-minute advertisement that the phonograph can complete a number of tasks for you, its potential buyer. Len Spencer, a famous vaudevillian entertainer of the early 20th century whose voice would have been instantly recognizable to the ear, bellows:

> I am the Edison phonograph, created by the great wizard of the New World to delight those who would have melody or be amused. I can sing you tender songs of love. I can give you merry tales and joyous laughter. I can transport you to the realms of music. I can cause you to join in the rhythmic dance. I can lull the babe to sweet repose, or waken in the aged heart soft memories of youthful days. No matter what may be your mood, I am always ready to entertain you. When your day's work is done, I can bring the theater or the opera to your home. I can give you grand opera, comic opera or vaudeville. I can give you sacred or popular music, dance, orchestra or instrumental music. I can render solos, duets, trios, quartets. I can aid in entertaining your guests. When your wife is worried after the cares of the day, and the children are boisterous, I can rest the one and quiet the other. I never get tired and you will never tire of me, for I will always have something new to offer. I give pleasure to all, young and old. I will go wherever you want me, in the parlor, in the sickroom, on the porch, in the camp or to your summer home. If you sing or talk to me, I will retain your songs or words, and repeat them to you at your pleasure. I can enable you to always hear the voices of your loved ones, even though

they are far away. I talk in every language. I can help you to learn other

languages. I am made with the highest degree of mechanical skill. My

voice is the clearest, smoothest and most natural of any talking machine.

The name of my famous master is on my body, and tells you that I am a

genuine Edison phonograph. The more you become acquainted with me,

the better you will like me. Ask the dealer! (quoted in Wurtzler 2009, 77)

The listener is interpellated into the realm of music, vaudeville, dance, comedy,

pleasure, and discipline, into the proximate grip of the phonograph's cone; he is

only a listener once he has submitted to the routine that the phonograph recites.

He is taken to his own soft memories of youthful days, into the comfort of his

own domestic parlour, which can be instantly transformed into a concert hall,

summon the presence of a quartet, evoke movement and dance. The benefits are

thus countless for he who invests his perception in it, and he is made well aware

of his changes -- his wife is cared for, his children are less boisterous. Note the

role of repetition in this advertisement. The phonograph makes a special case that

it can repeat whatever is spoken into it, but it is already at a distance of this

primordial feature, removed for decades from the scientific exhibitions at which

spectators had fainted and proclaimed that the devil lived inside the machine. The

phonograph here repeats for the consumer's pleasure: it can repeat the owner's

songs and words, it can transmit the sounds of loved ones who are lost, and it can

recite pedagogical lessons in other languages. This is a feature unique to the

Edison phonograph, for the cylinder phonograph would be sold with blank

cylinders onto which the consumer could record events from their own lives. The cylinder, however, fell out of favor to the rise of the flat disc phonograph, adopted by Columbia and by RCA Victor, which was not possible to record onto; the winning phonograph disseminated professional performances, disallowing the participation of its owner, thus barring him from engaging in a dialogue with his preserved self in the outside world, and discontinuing the tropes of fascination with death and repetition that the phonograph originally articulated.

By relentlessly interpellating its own autonomy as a self-sufficient object of value, its own capacity for repeating the event of elsewhere along with the historical certitude of its having happened, the Edison machine does not proclaim anything noteworthy regarding its ability to repeat other than an aside: "If you sing or talk to me, I will retain your songs or words, and repeat them to you at your pleasure." But this precise illustration of repetition, drowned amongst dozens of other entertainment purposes, was the central constituent of mechanical phonography in its inception. In persuading that it is autonomously capable of performing such tasks from repeating the songs of the music industry to the sounds of the voice, from teaching another language to repeating the words of distant loved ones, from restoring order to the domestic space while accompanying families on various other locations (the beach, cottage, and outdoors, for instance), this particular advertisement allows us access into the phonograph at the dawn of its domestication and the dusk of its fascination.

When the phonograph speaks on its own behalf, when it speaks for us, it primordially substitutes our own experience by hearing events before we do -- not only does it screen professional performances and distribute them without interference, it screens our very enjoyment of them. In this sense, the phonograph is an extension of the *plant* in Tin Pan Alley, a music publishing company employee whose task was to shout along enthusiastically with public performances of his company's latest songs to seduce the crowd into his "spontaneous" frenzy, just as Irving Berlin did for Harry Von Tilzer's songs after working as a singing waiter and before becoming the most prolific songwriter of the 20th century. The plant's hype is precisely the music industry's example of primordial substitution, as a member of the crowd informs us of how we are supposed to feel about an event, offering permission to enjoy in excess what he naturally feels. It is precisely this kind of primordial substitution which we find in the phonograph advertisement because it has already listened to the performances and has approved of them.

This is what Žižek so astutely observes as the radical externalization of one's innermost feelings, the Lacanian decentering f the subject. Primordial substitution is precisely the essential matter of the symbolic, the "object-thing which substitutes for me, acts in my place" (1997, 141). Rather than misrecognition, primordial substitution is an externalized site in which the listening subject directs their enjoyment. And in its transition from a device with which its owner interacts, the phonograph's move towards flat disc phonographs is a move

towards an experience free from the responsibility to participate, that which

decenters the subject and requires him to ethically give duty to a "Big Other" to

make the decisions for him. The "symbolic order *qua* 'big Other'," as Žižek

describes it, is "never simply a tool or means of communication, since it

'decentres' the subject from within, in the sense of accomplishing his act for him"

(1997, 142).

But primordial substitution is not the hidden agenda of the advertisement in

question here. It is much more obvious than that, and it comes as a confession in

its last breath; despite you being its owner, you are not its master. There is

someone else who is responsible for the experience: "The name of my master

[Edison] is on my body! Ask the dealer!" At this moment the owner is thrust back

into the situation the advertisement unfolded in, is cut from the primordial

substitution wherein which the phonograph serves the desires of the potential

owner, and are repelled from it back to the department store display floor. Truly,

the kernel of democracy is that we each are allowed a share at being the master,

but with momentary reminders that there is really something else coordinating the

experience for all of us.

From the Office to the Arcades

In its original inception, the phonograph was concurrently a recording and

playback technology occupying the same object. As playback-only machines were

making their first appearances as early as 1893, Columbia boasted in that year that

the recording/playback-enabled Graphophone reigned superior because it "does much more [than playback-only devices]; it repeats your voice; your friend's voice; songs sung to it or stories told to it" (Laing 1991, 8). Simply, the recording/playback phonograph was embedded in and recorded the life experience of its potential user. The early mechanical phonograph was practical yet "marvelous" all at once. And it was especially heralded for its potential to accommodate businesses.

But the talking machine was relatively unsuccessful in the office due largely to the resistance enacted by stenographers concerned about their employment. The reintroduction of the phonograph into consumer society was by way of its potential use as an entertainment device, and later through the advent of the flat disc and the preference for professional performances over and above blank cylinders. Although Edison had written elsewhere that a selling feature of the phonograph would be to sell music to "the family" for domestic enjoyment, the domestic environment was where the Edison phonograph ultimately failed, as pre-recorded discs would finally win the monopoly. And so the transition from public to private marked a migration from the ability to store one's voice towards the unidirectional flow of professional performances, away from the cylinder and towards the disc.

Although Jesse Lippincott had invested $1 million in 1881 in Edison's company, certainly enough to produce talking machines across the country, businesses

simply weren't interested in replacing stenography with phonography. Lippincott

had "imagined a national industry and a national communication network" (Sterne

2003, 200), but even though he had the initiative to purchase Edison's patent and

create 33 subsidiaries in various regions across the country, the stenographers

sabotaged any phonograph that made its way into the workplace. Further,

according to Garofalo, not only were the phonographs unwelcome by

stenographers but when "Lippincott fell victim to infantile paralysis in the early

1890s, the struggling company was thrown into further disarray" (2008, 17).

Thus, according to Kenney, when "the office dictaphone business proved a major

disappointment, those working in the regional affiliates cast about for some other

profit-making venture and began to transform the phonograph into a vehicle of

entertainment and diversion" (1999, 24). Fallen into despair over its failure,

Edison renounced the phonograph business and turned his attention towards the

other projects which would contribute to his legacy.

An associate of Edison's who had managed his Pacific Phonograph Company

found himself looking over a warehouse of obsolete machines and put them to a

different use. He encased them into glass boxes with extended listening tubes and

placed them in public spaces such as arcades and train stations for people to pay a

nickel and hear a novelty song, comic monologue, or marching band. Chanan

insists that inserting the phonograph into the public space for entertainment is

what saved the business (1995, 25-6), which Kenney confirms by the fact that the

machines made industry beyond $1000 in nickels by 1890: Any "man who put a

nickel in one machine was highly likely to try the other one and to repeat the

pattern night after night" (1999, 25). According to Garofalo, they were so popular

within a year that the machines were placed in 18 other locations, which "not only

pointed the way for the North American Phonograph Company but also won

Glass the title of 'Father of the Jukebox'" (2008, 17).

By 1889, Edison's talking machine offered an exciting diversion to people in their

travels or at the carnival, and increasingly the wax cylinders were durable enough

to sustain regular wear, so phonography became a profitable business for both

entertainers and phonograph manufacturers alike. By the 1890s virtually every

North American city boasted its own phonograph parlour. According to Kenney,

for instance, these nickel-in-the-slot machines could be found "in train stations,

ferry boats, landings, trolley waiting rooms, shopping districts, carnivals, circuses,

amusement parks, hotels, lunch rooms, cafes, and saloons -- semipublic places

that did not collect on admission charge." Phonographs in the public sphere

became so popular that they were eventually designated to their very own

'phonograph parlours'; the appeal of the room of machines lay in the variety of

entertainment they offered, as "people tended to move from machine to machine

enjoying a variety of short musical distractions" (1999, 25).

Before long, competing phonograph companies took notice of its public usage,

and so the Columbia Phonograph Company stepped up to begin its climb to

domination; in 1890 the Columbia catalogue held John Phillip Sousa marches but

in the following year they'd expanded their catalogue to include more novelty and "whistling" tunes that were in public demand. The phonograph as a novelty machine or entertainment device had entered such common public usage in 1891 that *The Phonogram* was published, devoted entirely to the phonograph and the recording industry. Two others followed: *The Phonoscope* (1896-1900), which focused exclusively on the public use of phonographs, and a subsequent *Phonogram* (1900-1902) which traced the entry of the phonograph into the domestic space. In the public space the phonograph offered listeners a private experience in the public sphere with the development of stethoscopic listening tubes.

The uses of the phonograph did not proceed as the science and business communities had predicted. Another revolutionary act of phonographic repetition did occur, but this time in a network that was not under the approving gaze of the industry. Obscene phonograph recordings found their way behind trade show curtains, private rooms at the phonograph arcades, and in saloons. Because it was considered unlawful firstly to produce obscene material under the obscenity act, performers were forced to record under pseudonyms (at the time an illegal practice), but because part of what made obscene recordings so appealing was mimicking a public figure, many of the performers *illegally* enacted impersonations and were eventually brought to trial. Impersonation was, as discovered after the trials, so common place that the law was adjusted so that performers were not obliged to stay locked into themselves on recordings -- the

rise in coon songs as sung by white performers is attributed precisely to this legal adjustment. Obscenity laws were also readjusted to cover phonograph recordings, and so it was unassailable to hear a recording because according to this form of censorship the recordings have already been heard for the listener, predigested and sanitized; but because it had been sanitized to benefit the ruling class (domestic consumers of the expensive devices were certainly not members of the working class), it had been sanctioned by those who owned the ideas of material production.

From Obscenity to Testimony

Although Edison sang "Mary had a little lamb" into the phonograph as a demonstration of its playback potentials, Feaster & Giovannoni suggest that the object was just as likely to be a swearing as a talking machine: "Reliable earwitness accounts tell of Edison and his men repeatedly shouting 'mad dog' into the machine and then gleefully running it backwards to hear from the tinfoil one resounding 'God damn' after another" (2007, 5). Practical jokes, obscene songs, even simulated sexual activity were recorded on the machines, which offered a shock to those who bestowed the phonograph's potentially disciplining virtues of delivering church sermons and preserving tasteful speeches. The phonograph was thus able to play anything and to record anything, to play the most discretely told joke and to record the most intimate moments of someone's domestic life. According to Feaster & Giovannoni,

In its ability to capture what had previously been transitory, the

phonograph was what we understand today as a 'disruptive technology' --

one that prompted a mind-bending shift in the paradigms of what's

fleeting and what's fast, what's private and what's public. Pictures, words,

and musical notations had been inscribed for millennia. But unaided by

any human scribe, the phonograph could miraculously 'bottle' actual

sounds -- conversations, performances, and inflections that neither

dissipated into thin air nor stayed where they were made (2007, 5).

Just as the photograph and the film seized gestures and facial expressions that

were before fleeting, attributes Benjamin had designated as the "optical

unconscious" (2006, 19), the phonograph lifted sounds that were otherwise

external to the domain of critical reflection and isolate them in the infinite

potential to repeat.

The phonograph generated the most profit in spaces where people in an ironic

public privacy could drop a nickel into a machine for the latest discretion in sonic

entertainment. The anonymity of recordings was central, and while consumers

were eager to hear the sounds of celebrities and politicians bellow through the

stethoscopic listening tubes, it encouraged professional performers to hone their

skills in on mimicry. Indeed, many recordings at the time said to be of famous

politicians were of comedians and performers impersonating politicians -- the

listening audience simply trusted that what they heard was a faithful reenactment.

This is what made obscene recordings so shocking. The sound of a couple

engaged in the sex act was a somatic and corporeal proximity to a real sex act. If

the industry could provide it and stay out of jail, they were sure to profit off of

obscenity. But on June 26, 1896, the *New York Times* reported two arrests in

connection with these recordings:

> The arrests are the result, Comstock says, of a hunt for over two years.
>
> During all that time Comstock and [one of his detectives] Oram have been
>
> arresting various people for exhibiting phonographs that had cylinders
>
> containing vile songs and stories, but they had never been able to catch the
>
> person from whom these cylinders were purchased. They noticed that all
>
> of the cylinders gave forth exactly the same voice, and finally they
>
> learned, it is alleged, that it was from the voice of an actor traveling with
>
> Frohman's 'Shenandoah' company. They were told that this actor's name
>
> was Hunting, and that he was on the road with the show.

This initial crackdown sparked a series of mass arrests, the first of which occurred

in 1897 in New York after the first legislative attacks against the exhibition of

boxing films on the kinetoscope -- this followed other minor charges against an

18-year old who ran a phonograph booth for his father, having recorded songs "of

the most vulgar description." According to *The New York Times*:

> It is alleged that Comstock, while here on Sept. 25, discovered that
>
> improper songs were being produced in the phonograph gallery. The
>
> phonograph was seized and the two prisoners taken before Justice of the
>
> Peace Suter. The son admitted the charge, while the father denied it. Both

were held in $1,000 bail to await the action of the Grand Jury." Further, "It is alleged that the man who sung into the phonographs the words composing the songs is in prison serving a term for doing so (*New York Times*, October 14, 1897, 3).

Anthony Comstock, in his crusade against obscenity, indicted a man in 1895 for charging patrons of a saloon to listen to recordings "containing most obscene and filthy blasphemous matter." In 1896 a saloon owner faced charges of a similar variety. The voice on the recordings belonged to a famous comedian of the day, Russell Hunting, known more for his Irish-American character Michael Jeremiah Casey. In a sting operation, one of Comstock's detectives, George Oram, on a visit to Casey asked him for some obscene recordings, and eventually Casey upon earning his trust demonstrated his skills in his own laboratory. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle reported:

> He [Oram] told them [Hunting and his assistant Charles Carson] he wanted a certain cylinder containing a particularly obscene song. He claims in his affidavit, on which the warrant was issued, that Hunting sold this cylinder to him and then in his presence made him another equally objectionable record, and offered to provide still worse productions. The cylinders were sold for $1.50 each, and Hunting, it is declared, informed Oram that he had just sent fifty of them to Coney Island to be distributed among the saloons and other resorts there (quoted in Smith 2008, 166).

The Edison Phonographic News, while not naming the accused, still reprimanded their behavior in the following statement:

> All phonograph users will unite in the verdict that this is one of the best things that could possibly have happened for the phonograph. To take a noble instrument like the phonograph and prostitute it to such base uses is indeed a sacrilege, and it is hoped that such an example will be made of these parties as will forever prevent the use of the phonograph again for any such purpose (quoted in Feaster & Giovannoni 2007, 9).

Obscene cylinders constituted a new target of the Comstock Law, which rendered illegal any act to send "obscene, lewd, and/or lascivious" material through the mail. Obscene cylinders were not found in Coney Island again. They knew where to look, and anyone recording or submitting obscene recordings were swiftly found and prosecuted under Comstock's crack team of detectives. The problem was acknowledged and a policy set forward by *The Phonoscope*, which proclaimed in 1899 that:

> Whoever in connection with any show or entertainment, whether public or private, either as owner, manager or director, or in any other capacity, uses or causes or permits to be used, a Phonograph or other contrivance, instrument or device, which utters or gives forth any profane, obscene or impure language, shall be punished by a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars, or by imprisonment not exceeding one year, or by both such fine and imprisonment (reprinted in Morrill 1902, 901).

The phonograph itself was being used in court to report hearings and to testify. In 1898, the phonograph was brought into a court when a stenographer, Miss Leno Joyce, was unable to provide typed transcripts because of her upcoming marriage:

> It was at this juncture that the phonograph was brought into use. The lawyers hurriedly bought one, and Miss Joyce read off the report of the trial into a tube. The wax cylinders were completed, and the work was found to be perfect. Miss Joyce's voice made one of the best records imaginable, and if any witness attempts to go back on his former evidence at the forthcoming trial, all that will be necessary will be to put on the phonograph one of the fifty or more wax records the lawyers have obtained and start it going (*New York Times*, January 26, 1898, 3).

The scientific community and the law upheld the virtuous components of mechanical phonography, and did not condone lewd behavior. In phonographic repetition, the playful aspects of it, we see the slightest emergence of difference, but it is quickly snuffed about by the law. Under the rule of law, the recording industry could produce recordings which were regulated and protected under the guise of its first revolution. Part of the strategy in regulating mechanical phonography was to subject it to elaborate laws that ensured the voice which arose from it would not disturb the listener. People were thus protected from the potentially neurotic and erotic aspects of mechanical phonography. It had become rationalized.

"Metaphysical Melancholy" and Mechanical Phonography

The culture around the phonograph was obsessed with death and rituals of death and dying, reflected in poetry and Symbolist painting, and in particular a growing theme was that of the communication between the dead and the living, not only in religious or sentimental discourses but alongside a growing interest in psychic phenomena (Christie 2001, 8-9). Photography provided a technological metaphor for exploring existence after death, harkening to the 'spirit' that the photograph was capable of capturing. Likewise, McLuhan wrote that the "undercurrent of mechanical music" was "strangely sad," associated with "the metaphysical melancholy latent in the great industrial world of the metropolis" (1994, 87). Speech, more than music, without bodily presence reflected a culture which was already capable of imagining life after death, and, according to Christie, "the denial of death's finality in many of its most highly acclaimed imaginative works" (2001, 9).

The phonograph, according to Gunning, called "on auditors to imagine a human being, or perhaps to notice with wonder the lack of a human body" (2001, 21). As playful as phonographic instances were, they revealed a fundamental ontological shift towards the objective externalization of the subject, a shift that explains the fascination phonography generated despite its impracticalities. The phonograph spoke, but it spoke an exteriority of the human subject without the authority of presence. As much as it was an entertaining object, then, the phonograph

manifested for the general public the split of sensory perception from the presence of another person to the hollowed exteriorization of their presence. The very devils detected in phonographic demonstrations were the markings of the machine's madness. According to Gunning, this explains "why for many occultists the phonograph seemed further proof of a new scientific revelation in which the material and the spirit world would be revealed as one," because phonographic recordings reflected a modern turn towards the storage and retrieval of lived human events in an archival format that was "the outcome of the separation of the senses and the disciplining of the modern body" (2001, 22). The phonograph thus contributed to the split senses (splitting event from source, splitting sound from vision, etc.)

Indeed, preserving the body after death was itself a scientific practice in a stage of infancy. According to Sterne the phonograph displayed a certain dialectic between the preservation of an event and its eventual mass reproduction. The product is a product of exteriority: "The voices of the dead," according to Sterne, "is a striking feature of exteriority." He continues:

> Because it comes from within the body and extends out into the world, speech is traditionally considered as both interior and exterior, both 'inside' and 'outside the limits of subjectivity. In contrast, the voices of the dead no longer emanate from bodies that serve as containers for self-awareness. The recording is, therefore, a resonant tomb, offering the

exteriority of the voice with none of its interior self-awareness (2003, 290).

The signification of the mechanical phonograph was approaching the status of a language, in the Lacanian sense. It was becoming a closed circuit of professional recordings whose points of origin were unclear, the uses of which in the domestic space were relatively limited. They were idealized repetitions, promises that its uttered events had occurred in phenomenal life. But they were a far cry from a perceiving subject who engaged specifically with the tools of the machine in order to experiment with the dialectic of interiority/exteriority.

Idealized repetitions were related directly to beautifying the products of renunciation and preserving the voices of the dead. As Sterne writes: "The methods of preservation described and prescribed the cultural and technical possibilities of sound recording" (Sterne 2003, 292). Preserving the voices of the dead reflected broader concerns and practices concerning the preservation of food, which was being handled on a large scale for mass production. The canning industry grew from 5 million output in 1860 to 30 million output in 1870, and in general canned food was especially useful for feeding large military personnel. Alongside this, "taking care of oneself" was becoming a central disciplinary routine in everyday life in order to preserve one's health. The emerging modern subject in turn was one who engaged in the emerging practices of embalming and preservation (2003, 293-8).

Phonography represents an attitude towards the body of the dead, entwined in fantasies that rest between speaking to the not-yet-born and hearing the no-longer-with-us. Embalming was, so to speak, making sense of the no-longer-living body which could be presentable for a time being for a viewing by the grieving family. Embalming slowed the process of decay, beautified the face, made the exterior sustainable and presentable for open casket funerals. And so, as Sterne tells us, the body was not allowed to decompose until it was out of sight of the bereaved: "while competing methods were concerned with interiority, with preserving the body in its original form, chemical embalming was concerned only with exteriority, with the appearance of the body and its potential to perform its social function" (2003, 296-7). The body could be the commodified object of the person who could make that one final appearance at their own funeral.

Beautifying the product to preserve its social function found its way into recording industry practices, extracting the inner life of environment to reproduce their voice in detailed exteriority. So reactions to the phonograph were prescriptive and prognosticative instead of descriptive. According to Sterne, an 1877 article which praises the phonograph

> speaks to the fascination with death as a receding limit -- to hear the voices of the dead and to send messages to the future. This is why we cannot accurately claim that sound recording radically altered the cultural status of speech. It would, therefore, be more accurate to effect an inversion of

the usual wisdom on the voice and the phonograph: the cultural status of

the voice transformed sound recording (2003, 299).

Why was the music industry reluctant to merge with recording in the 1890s?

Sterne notes that music sounded canned, and there was an emergence of a

discourse on embalming and preservation which set apart music that simply

sounded artificial versus music that sounded authentic. Laing argues as many have

that the 20th century shift in music aesthetics removed vision from being

grounded in the actions of performers, or "the replacement of an audio-visual

event with a primarily audio one, sound without vision" (1991, 11). Accordingly,

Edison had made very early attempts to ground the sounds of the voice with a

human representation, an introduction of the subject in the form of dolls, animals,

and at least manifesting some form of human presence. Laing argues in reference

to Freud that the split between invocatory (listening) and scopic (looking) was the

necessity to somehow animate sound. Phonographic practices, according to

Gunning, rehearses the desire "to preserve the human personality after death, to

create a technological double possessed of an ersatz immortality through

mechanical recording and reproduction." He expands: "As an objective form of

memory, these recording techniques represented man's triumph over death, the

ultimate goal of reproduction. Yet [...] technological immortality is always a

fetish, an acknowledgment of the lack through a never fully successful attempt to

deny it" (2001, 27).

To revisit the 1906 advertisement, "I am the Edison Phonograph!": the machine on which the advertisement is spun is a cylinder phonograph, capable of recording and disseminating the voice of its owner. The phonograph persuaded consumers that it could bestow the virtues of modern independence by teaching listening subjects how to listen to music, how to learn languages, and how to preserve their own voices. What had not faded was the dominance of the brand. By the turn of the century, the phonograph was fully capable of transmitting into the domestic environment the sounds of the public world by repeating an event with which the listener was not familiar, and so the phonograph screened the listening experience for the listener. The phonograph thus allowed listeners to enjoy according to strict parameters of enjoyment, it displaced the listening experience into the external world as the listener was privy to their own first experience of an event, while simultaneously experiencing that event's potential for repetition. This offers a sense of accomplishment to the listener, that the object must possess some authority -- its master, after all, *is* Thomas Edison, and who knows more than the master inventor of the modern age about being properly modern?

The New Master's Voice

The phonograph was not intended as a domestic instrument, though that was certainly its destination, and so it had to take flight from the discourses of science and medicine in order to find its way into lofty aesthetics, where the very *sound* of the phonograph would metamorphose as the cradle of its music. Thus, phonographic history is accounted for as the materialization of an idea about and

towards the modern world, its context the gilded age, an exciting stage in industrial development which heralded the accomplishments of technology just as vigorously as cyberspace has been since the mid-1990s. The phonograph was heralded for splitting sound from its source, something which Schafer described as *scizhophonia*, tearing sound from its cradle and affording it a sovereignty. It is as if the phonograph was ideal for transmitting music precisely because of this disconnection of sound from phenomenal life, which was a Romantic aesthetic of music already in discussion from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche. To revisit some earlier arguments, Rosen claims that we disconnect music from sound conceptually in order to leave the banal world of phenomena behind, while Shepherd and Wicke say that music is one universe of meaning we extract through sound in order to structure the embodied aspects of social reality. So we must be cautious when we say that the phonograph instantiated the initial split between sound and source, if the sound of music transcended the phenomenal world to begin with. Repetition was central to phonography, and especially the ideals of precise and exact repetition -- the concept of repetition was the kernel of the recording industry, and it arose through the patent of Thomas Edison's phonograph, for it was the first phonograph which could repeat the sounds uttered into it. Edison had given the phonograph several destinations, mainly in the scientific community. It was hailed optimistically as the voice of the new age.

Originally the phonograph enabled both recording and playback, which was a common point of sale for cylinders years before the flat disc was widely available.

But the phonograph was not accepted by the business community because stenographers considered the phonograph a threat to its already well-established business. Those who invested in the phonograph as a business machine were first-hand witnesses to its failure. With the business phonographs in demise, Louis Glass, looking over a warehouse of defunct machines, decided that they would make ideal novelty devices, installed in public spaces such as train stations and arcades. By the 1890s the arcade devoted specifically to phonography was an especially popular social space. Phonograph companies climbed to dominate the entertainment industry, especially with novelty songs and marching band music. But with these popular songs there also arose an underground network of obscene recordings. The phonograph was indifferent to the sounds bellowed into it, and it was perhaps this detached indifference which made it so humorous to listen to. This drew attention to the anonymity of the recording and accentuated the autonomy of the mechanism. Anthony Comstock, the Gilded Age's henchman of moral authority, sought out the perpetrators of anonymous obscene recordings and imprisoned them.

People were obsessed with the notion that their words would be repeated by something else in their own voice, but that equally listeners could hear jokes and songs whose points of origin were obscured. This type of repetition, the repetition of an event whose original articulation is unknown in its repeated experience, is similar to Freud's (2006) discussion of repetition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in which he described the Fort-Da game his grandson played as a

symbolic mastery over the anxiety produced by abandonment. Moreover, repetition was the active reproduction of an unpleasant experience in order to gain mastery over it, and in his conception repetition was not a productive process, but an indication that something was terribly wrong, not yet worked out, yet too traumatic for the analysand to consciously work through their own memories -- repetition was the unconscious somatic rupture of the repressed, tied more closely with the death drive than with the pleasure principle.

The coinciding phenomena of death, preservation, and the impossibility of repetition are encapsulated finally in *His Master's Voice*. Little Nipper's curious gaze into the cone of an RCA Victor gramophone became the pervasive emblem of sound recording in the 20th century, but it is curious that the image has very little to do with music. In actuality, Nipper isn't peering into a gramophone in the original painting, but into the horn of a Thomas Edison Talking Machine. In the image we are more familiar with today, Nipper is looking into a gramophone from which the recording device is removed, a machine from which a unidirectional stream of information disseminated, on which it was impossible for the consumer to record their own voice.

Emile Berliner, one of the "big three" along with with Bell and Edison, consolidated with Elridge R. Johnson to patent a gramophone that employed flat wax discs in place of the standard cylinders. Previously, cylinders could only duplicate a maximum of about 60 recordings, and so studios were equipped at

times with over a dozen phonographs, each recording onto its maximum number of cylinders, in a pre-mass manufacturing attempt to distribute one performance nationally and internationally. Cylinders eventually fell out of favor, and the flat disc, which promised the precise repetition of a professional performance, eventually rose in popularity. The "master" stamp, as it came to be known, was for the flat disc what the negative already was for the photograph. Berliner, along with Elridge R. Johnson, formed the Victor Talking Machine Company and would use for its logo what is famously known today as *His Master's Voice* by Francis Barraud in 1899. Barraud inherited both the dog and the phonograph from his recently deceased brother, who had recorded his own voice on cylinders. Whenever Barraud later placed one of these cylinders containing his brother's voice in his machine Little Nipper became transfixed by the sounds of the recordings and peered into its cone, frozen by the sounds of his master's voice no longer attached to the body of its source. It was a sound that summoned an imaginary presence. The voice with a new body, a technological assemblage of vibrations analogous to the grain of his master's voice.

Barraud experienced difficulty in selling the painting to galleries or magazines, let alone the Edison company, because it was difficult to tell exactly what the dog was doing. But Berliner bought it on the condition that Barraud paint it again, this time with one of his machines in place of Edison's. When Berliner bought the rights, RCA's marketing campaign became: "Look for the Dog." Embedded in a post-Gilded Age, a time that reflected on the previous decades of fervent

technological fetishes, *His Master's Voice* presents us with an impossible

situation: the gramophone that captivates Nipper by is not a recordable device,

and could not have possibly contained his master's voice unless his master was an

employee of RCA, which he was not. In short, the early phonograph rested on its

ability to intertwine the original event and its repetition, which by virtue of fragile

cylinders would eventually dissipate and disappear, much like the organic body it

mimicked.

The enunciation of the phonograph implies a life between two deaths, then, a life

stuck on the exteriority of its repetition — indeed, it is the word which lives on

that guarantees the death of the thing which speaks it. As Lacan said, the

enunciation of a word is a form of death because it "murders" the thing it signifies

by affording it a disconnection from the world, its essence taking occupancy less

in the world and more in the word. In the Lacanian schematic the word summons

the absence of the that which it signifies. Even those things to which words refer

must have a word in order to be designated symbolically, so even the very

absence of named things implies the very absence of their essence. At this level,

according to Žižek, the Lacanian cure of death anxiety was to approach the

patient's symptoms as otherwise not-yet symbolized histories in the their

experience, the goal being to integrate them into the symbolic order. Thus a

symptom has no initial meaning, it is perceived as the problem, containing the

trace of meaning, and the analyst works to symbolize this meaningless gesture:

"So the final moment of the analysis is reached when the subject is able to narrate

to the Other his own history in its continuity; when his desire is integrated, recognized in 'full speech'" (2009, 147).

Lacan later distanced himself from the above formulation wherein which the signifier killed the thing it signified to develop an approach to language as a system of differential elements with the death drive being "nothing but a mask of the symbolic order" (Žižek 2009, 132). The tension he was referring to was that between the harmony of the imaginary against its continuous interruption by and into the symbolic. At this point, Lacan envisioned the cure for death anxiety as the subject's acceptance of the very loss which constitutes his subjectivity, the core of his essence which is in actuality a void, an incompleteness. To access desire, the subject must come to terms with the symbolic cut which constituted the existence of the object he chases. The imaginary is, for Lacan, the realm of the pleasure principle while the symbolic rests "beyond the pleasure principle."

The later Lacan said that the symbolic order rests beyond the pleasure principle as a system of metaphoric displacement, and what lies beyond the pleasure principle (beyond the symbolic order) is something too terrifying to come face to face with, the Thing (*das ding*, in Freudian terminology). So while the symbolic order strives for a sort of cosmic balance, there is something terribly wrong which cannot be symbolized itself, preventing the harmony of the imaginary from ever co-existing with the symbolic. The death drive here is that which ruptures the symbolic, but conceiving it is virtually impossible: "The very existence of the

symbolic order implies a possibility of its radical effacement, of 'symbolic death'
— not the death of the so-called 'real object in its symbol, but the obliteration of
the signifying network itself" (Žižek 2009, 147).

Lacan moves towards the Real here as that which acts according to its own laws
and logic, indifferent to our perception of it, a terrifying acceptance that we have
to reckon with. The Real contains its own knowledge. Recording, according to
Lacanian logic, could not sustain its own recording devices because the speaking
subject in the symbolic order who is both he who speaks and he who hears at once
decenters him excessively to expose the fact that he is part of a world which is
indifferent to his own subjectivity. To hear the sound of one's own voice cut from
one's own throat exposes subjectivity to the indifferent law of the Real. Early
phonographs, pre-domestic ones, would have reminded their owners to die,
reminded them that they are subject to the laws of the Real which are beyond
symbolic reach, and as a result would have more therapeutically contributed to the
humility of the ego. And so, really, the final line of the Thomas Edison
phonograph advertisement should not have been reference to the master Edison,
but should have been: "Remember! You are going to die!"

Recordings live on after the organic death of the event, and by doing so are
awaiting their fully complete second death. Žižek reminds us that it is Marquis de
Sade who provides insight into the second death, and the distinction between the
two deaths is this: "natural death, which is a part of the natural cycle of generation

and corruption, of nature's continual transformation, and absolute death — the destruction, the eradication, of the cycle itself, which then liberates nature from its own laws and opens the way for the creation of new forms of lie *ex nihilo*" (2009, 149). The modern body sustains multiple punishments in order to retain its beauty, as a forever-preserved recording, and through routine punishment becomes even more beautiful to the victimizer. The symbolic is sustained through the routine punishment of the body, and it is out of the continuous death of the first body that the second sublime body attains its status, as if, although we are aware of the body which is decomposed at each encounter, another body takes its place. The difference the subject must make in order to overcome death anxieties must be some kind of reconciliation with the biological and the symbolic deaths … but what lies between the two is an uncertainty that requires historicization and symbolization.

As Žižek (2009) argues, we also find between the biological and symbolic death the personification and eternal presence of the Master. If in the classical sense the Master occupied two bodies, one biological and one which symbolically personified the state, the master was only so because he would be treated like one, and not because he possessed any innate value that would render his subjects as subordinate. But this service must remain hidden, making us the victims of the illusion that the master is already the ruler, which the Master reinforces with reference to an objective and perhaps omniscient reason for his power: i.e. Eternal

law, God's law. Remove the performative mechanism, and his power is

unmasked.

The classical Master does apply to the Edison advertisement, but not to *His

Master's Voice*, because the Master in this latter case has admitted his dependence

on us, just as the sound of *His Master's Voice* (which is not there in the RCA

Victor painting) depends on the recognition of its pet to be hailed into

significance. So the new Master is not dependent on us, but on history, since the

nation, the people, and the state do not exist. His cloak is gone. It only exists in its

fetishistic manifestation such as the party or, in this case, the image: "the classical

Master is Master only in so far as his subjects treat him as Master, but here, the

People are the 'real people' only in so far as they are embodied in their

representative, the Party and its Leader" (Žižek 2009, 164).

The kind of power that espouses from *His Master's Voice* is a power that Lacan

locates as an empty seat of power, a power of democracy. Here we do not have a

"People" represented under a totalitarian leader (such as the Master Edison). The

place of power in democracy is empty by its basic design, impossible to represent

in a complete body, yet is a place within which any subject can enter into at any

point and exercise an authority that is available to all. But in democracy there is a

kernel of malfunction. The manipulation and corruption that democracy

continually unearths is actually its necessary component to be a democracy. In an

election, as Žižek (2009, 165-7) notes finally, the whole of society crumbles into a

collection of determinate and abstract numbers which suffer miscalculation and confusion, yet there is a kind of acceptance and submission to this irrational reification of the State into its representation of the rules of its own game. And we submit to it. Democracy is by its makeup a corrupted form, because its power is empty of will. For instance, screening candidates beforehand to ensure their ethics are consistent is not democratic, and so any true democracy is impossible. It is up to the people to detect problems in the Master themselves, to construct the fiction, whatever is embedded within the listening experience, themselves.

CHAPTER 4

Convergence or Contingency? Mashups and Ventriloquist H.I.T.L.E.R.

In the case of the ballad, nostalgia signified the loss of hope to the consequences of age. In the case of the phonograph, the domestic phonograph signified the assurance of an event from which the listener was partially removed. It is with this foundation in mind that I turn towards a contemporary musical practice, the mashup, if only to curtail the pervasive optimism which has surrounded the latest digital vogue. Media theorists, following Fiske's model of popular culture empowerment, have been celebrated mashups as emancipating because they elude the ownership system by pasting unlikely historical texts to one another to distribute for free online. However, I hesitate to celebrate the mashup in the same tone, if, for one reason, the mashup has very quickly become a tool for the products of music industry. For another reason, I resist celebrating the mashup because they perpetuate the very philosophy of professional dissemination that the popular music and recording industries were founded upon. I ultimately suggest that mashups, in their ironic displacement from history, reinforce the terrifying weight of history.

The Grey Album

A mashup is an aesthetic convergence between otherwise unlikely digital texts, a recent example of which is *The Grey Album* by DJ Danger Mouse, an intertextual amalgamation between *The White Album* by the Beatles and *The Black Album* by Jay-Z. Danger Mouse's grey synthesis, which was initially distributed amongst

some online friends but thereafter spread exponentially through multiple online

sharing sites (McLeod 2006, 8), was acclaimed by numerous critics as nothing

short of revolutionary. Media theorists more sympathetic to postmodern utopias

have, since the appearance of *The Grey Album*, devoted special attention to the

mashup in praise of its politically challenging format, heralding it as the *exemplar*

sensible of shifting cultural patterns in the digital revolution, facilitating a

necessary change in copyright law because it blurs the boundaries between

producer and consumer while challenging the traditional notion of ownership.

Some have taken the mashup as a virtual utopia, devoid of traditional authorship,

an ironic pastiche that deflates narrative in favor of ironic distantiation (Serazio

2008; Shiga 2007; Gunkel 2008). In the hands of the everyday consumer (as Fiske

would say, in the empowering domain beyond mass culture), the consumer is at

once consumer and producer, and in the case of the mashup he distributes his craft

online without expectation of monetary compensation. Thus, the mashup has

served cultural populist scholarship as an example of building democracy while

dismantling capitalism. Danger Mouse himself used the politically empowering

language of deconstruction in his own reflection on the project:

> A lot of people just assume I took some Beatles and, you know, threw
>
> some Jay-Z on top of it or mixed it up or looped it around, but it's really a
>
> deconstruction. It's not an easy thing to do. I was obsessed with the whole
>
> project, that's all I was trying to do, see if I could do this. Once I got into
>
> it, I didn't think about anything but finish it. I stuck to those two because I
>
> thought it would be more challenging and more fun and more of a

statement to what you could do with sample alone. It is an art form. It is

music. You can do different things, it doesn't have to be just what some

people call stealing. It can be a lot more than that (quoted in Rimmer 2007,

132-3).

In a certain regard, the mashup is nothing new, especially in the case of Danger

Mouse, who (in this case) we can approach as a hip hop producer -- it is an

extension of sampling and hip hop. The genre to which he belongs has, after all,

been cutting and pasting together prerecorded historical fragments for over three

decades. But what makes the mashup unique is its persistent infiltration of a

binary opposition into one flowing convergence, unfolding from within the

creative space of the consumer as he at once assumes the role of

musician/producer/engineer/listener. *The Grey Album*, unlike other hip hop

recordings, very deliberately pushes historical texts into the listening space by

relentlessly stacking the vocals of Jay-Z overtop of fragmented bed tracks of *The

White Album* -- it is indeed the latter which suffers the most cuts while the former

maintains its narrative flow. The following table isolates the album's sources:

Table 1: Isolated Sources From *The Grey Album*

Grey Album ('04, 12 Tracks)	Black Album ('03, 14 Tracks)	White Album ('68, 30 Tracks)
1. Public Service Announcement	10. Public Service Announcement (Interlude)	24. Long, Long, Long

Grey Album ('04, 12 Tracks)	Black Album ('03, 14 Tracks)	White Album ('68, 30 Tracks)
2. What More Can I Say	3. What More Can I Say	7. While My Guitar Gently Weeps -- [Also samples "Top Billin" by Audio Two]
3. Encore	4. Encore	3. Glass Onion 27. Savoy Truffle
4. December 4th	2. December 4th	20. Mother Nature's Son
5. 99 Problems	10. 99 Problems	23. Helter Skelter
6. Dirt Off Your Shoulder	6. Dirt Off Your Shoulder	17. Julia
7. Moment of Clarity	8. Moment of Clarity	8. Happiness is a Warm Gun
8. Change Clothes	5. Change Clothes (Feat. Pharrell Williams)	12. Piggies 2. Dear Prudence
9. Allure	13. Allure	2. Dear Prudence
10. Justify My Thug	11. Justify My Thug	13. Rocky Raccoon
11. Lucifer 9 (Interlude)	12. Lucifer	29. Revolution 9 10. I'm So Tired [Also samples "Ave, Lucifer" by Os Mutantes]
12. My 1st Song	14. My 1st Song	28. Cry Baby Cry Savoy Truffle Helter Skelter

And the following table demonstrates the manner in which the cuts from The

White Album are the repetitive bedrock of the narrative flow of The Black

Album. From the track, see Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of DJ Danger Mouse's Remix of "Encore"

Grey Album ('04)	Black Album ('03, 14 Tr.)	White Album ('68,
0:00-0:07		Glass Onion: 1:00 - 1:07

Grey Album ('04)	Black Album ('03, 14 Tr.)	White Album ('68,
0:07	Vocals enter: "Thank you, thank you, thank you, you're far too kind."	ibid.
0:15 Refrain	"Now can I get an encore, do you want more / Cookin raw with the Brooklyn boy / So for one last time I need y'all to roar," repeated.	ibid.
0:34 A Section	"Who you know fresher than Hov'? Riddle me that / The rest of y'all know where I'm lyrically at / Can't none of y'all mirror me back / Yeah hearin me rap is like hearin G. Rap in his prime / I'm, young H.O., rap's Grateful Dead / Back to take over the globe, now break bread / I'm in, Boeing jets, Global Express / Out the country but the blueberry still connect / On the low but the yacht got a triple deck / But when you Young, what the fuck you expect? Yep, yep / Grand openin, grand closin / God damn your man Hov' cracked the can open again / Who you gon' find doper than him with no pen / just draw off inspiration / Soon you gon' see you can't replace him / with cheap imitations for THESE GENERATIONS	ibid.
1:06 Refrain	Refrain repeated.	
1:21 Transition	Utterances, staccato, "uh, uh, uh"	Silence
1:24 B Section	Look what you made me do, look what I made for you / Knew if I paid my dues, how will they pay you / When you first come in the game, they try to play you / Then you drop a couple of hits, look how they wave to you / From Marcy to Madison Square / To the only thing that matters in just a matter of years (yea) / As fate would have it, Jay's status appears / to be at an all-time high, perfect time to say goodbye / When I come back like Jordan, wearin the 4-5 / It ain't to play games witchu / It's to aim at you, probably maim you / If I owe you I'm blowin you to smithereeens / Cocksucker take one for your team And I need you to remember one thing (one thing) / I came, I saw, I conquered / From record sales, to sold out concerts / So muh'fucker if you want this encore / I need you to scream, 'til your lungs get sore	Savoy Truffles, 0:28-0:36, repeated five times
2:05 Announcements	It's star time / This man is MADE! / He's KILLIN all y'all jive turkeys Do y'all want more of the Jigga man? / Well if y'all want more of the Jigga man / Then I need y'all to help me, bring him back to stage / Say Hova, c'mon say it! / HO-VA! HO-VA! / Are y'all out there? / [crowd chants: "HO-VA! HO-VA!"] / Are y'all out there? C'mon, louder! / Yeah, now see that's what I'm talkin bout / They love you Jigga - they love you Jigga!	ibid., repeated four times.

Grey Album ('04)	Black Album ('03, 14 Tr.)	White Album ('68,
2:31 Fadeout	Jay Z: "I like the way this one feel / It's so muh'fuckin soulful man!"	ibid.

The producer/DJ assumes a full control of his universe, just as James Brown assumed control of his own live ensemble as their rhythmic conductor, an individual controlling his world by articulating an organization of the impulses (dance) that were strictly controlled by the overt rationalism of Western society. Danielsen, in a discussion of James Brown, informs us that "funk was almost irresistible as a way of identifying with anti-Western values and detaching oneself from the rationality and order of the official culture of the core territories of Western popular music, the Anglo-American world" (2006, 107). The DJ extended his principle by recontextualizing pre-recorded historical events into new unlikely utterances, with such pioneering DJs as Grand Theodor Wizard isolating the "sweet spots" from such James Brown recordings, isolating in perpetual repetition their breakbeats, draining the historical weight that burdens technologies of sonic dissemination and enabling its metamorphosis into a musical instrument. Indeed, such a creative activity invites analysis from postmodern theory. The mashup, an intertextual collage that unearths new repetitions at a historical distance from the texts that it signifies, is celebrated from within the media discourses as the next revolutionary spectacle that challenges the property system that has been symbolically locked into such technologies of storage and dissemination.

The Empowerment of Postmodern Pastiche

The empowerment thesis rolls most readily when the topic of a mashup arises, and *The Grey Album* was received with open arms by the academic community when it was released in 2004, presented as a point of tension between open minded liberals who use the Internet as a tool for digital democracy, and evil EMI lawyers who issued a Cease & Desist order to sharers when Danger Mouse's work first appeared online. Vaidhyanathan (2007), for instance, appears in the documentary *Good Copy Bad Copy* to argue that *The Grey Album* "was probably the most successful album of 2005 [sic]" and "might have been the biggest hit of the year" had it been distributed through a legal framework, while Gunderson (2004) takes the mashup as a direct hegemonic negotiation against the mainstream industry by introducing a direct challenge to the traditional hierarchy of recording. Shiga celebrates the mashup's move towards "illegal art" as a binary habitus between legality and illegality, by appropriating pop charts from an ironic distance (what he calls "cool listening"), creating a communal infrastructure that "provides a relatively durable record of artifacts, interactions, and events, as well as a source of tools and materials for making mashups" between participants who "do not want to sever the ties among bodies, works, and words" where "a new kind of author is emerging -- in the persistence of a name across message boards and the reorganized components of popular music" (2007, 114). McLeod adopts a deconstructionist perspective on the mashup, tracing its ancestry to the experimental works of John Cage and established university-driven methods of composition, designating the mashup artist as one composer in a long line of

revolutionary deconstructionists by "waging a civil war of words that pits differing philosophies against each other until ink is spilled" (2005, 84).

The Grey Album is taken as politically empowering because it offers insight into the site of polysemic cultural production/consumption as the reworking of "top-down" history. Serazio, for instance, proclaims that *The Grey Album* empowers its consumers because it demonstrates a "disdain or apathy toward music's legal, material dimension" (2008, 86). Beginning with a much lauded Benjaminist approach, he argues in the footsteps of Andrew Goodwin (1988) that the tools with which mashups are made are the tools "by which audience-creators fend off and produce contentious counterpoints to the corporate and institutional power of today's culture factories" (2008, 81). As the most recent example of a DIY aesthetic, mashup culture is one where "consumer becomes producer and formerly rigid lines demarcating more strict roles along the traditional culture continuum blur as reader re-authors digital music text" as an "exercise in irreverence." Just as Benjamin had predicted the decline of the aura in his own age of mechanical reproduction, the mashup, it appears, is here to finally lay to rest the aura of permanence typical of modernist cultural production, where, as Serazio maintains, the "original source is stripped of its sacredness and the music text goes from being etched in stone to being written on a dry-erase board," and where an "Infinite collage work is possible because infinitely available (and disposable) source material makes that experimentation possible" as (again) an "illegal art product," a resonance of Duchamp's moustache on the *Mona Lisa* (2008, 82-6).

This purports the usual postmodern messages of cultural empowerment, of online users saturated in media and making sense of it, law being broken inadvertently because of the technology which is allowing it to be done in the first place: The mashup is, Serazio concludes,

> *bricolage* for its own sake; as a definitive generational statement, it hesitates to espouse anything more than detached, wry commentary, which actually may be apropos. The mashup can be considered the audio mashupcomplement to reading *The Onion's* farcical news stories sporting a pseudo-thrift-store T-shirt slogan a la Urban Outfitters' "Jesus is my homeboy" (2008, 91).

So at its most elementary, the mashup appears a worthy candidate of postmodern analysis: as a self-reflexive and digitally generated parody of the text(s) that it signifies, it reorganizes and recodifies otherwise unrelated historical epochs with jocular and sardonic results, breaking through established modernist narratives to (re)place them in novel (anti)narrative contexts that launch political critiques against high culture's claims for autonomy. This much is obvious. They are disorienting, they challenge the traditional categories of material property and ownership, and they're central in recent debates over copyright, ownership, and authorship.

Is not the mashup the best possible example of a parody? A mashup deconstructs the texts it signifies through the respective parodies of each, one intertwined in the

other. Hutcheon's conception of parody has been celebrated in postmodern circles

as the necessary diversion from modernist aesthetics because it "takes the form of

self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement" rather than

purporting universal principles of artistic value (2002, 1). A parody cites

convention with the sole intention of caricaturing it in order to drain it of its

embedded essence and deconstruct its authority over us, an effective gesture of

political criticism. According to Hutcheon, "through a double process of installing

and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones

and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference"

(2002, 93). The ironic position regarding representation and ideology thus

elucidates the very arbitrary fusion of signifiers to their signifieds. As is

celebrated in the mashup, postmodern theory celebrates parody as offering a

panacea for social imbalances by continuously dismantling otherwise

unquestioned truth values. Parody is thus "doubly coded in political terms: it both

legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies" (2002, 101). The inverted comma

which "penetrates" postmodern theory is effective in that it summons meaning at

an ironic distance if only a discomfort with the freely associated polysemic

significations that could potentially arise from it -- the inverted comma reveals the

doubleness of the term in order to denaturalize its otherwise natural associations

and allows the free interrogation of its political associations. Each parodied text

bookends the mashup as an event drained of its respective historical significance.

Parody questions the social contradictions embedded in aesthetic objects, mainly

that the aesthetic object contains an aura that is placed by the artistic genius of its

creator and its surrounding cult of personality, but also the sense that subjectivity

is secured around an essence, such that capitalism is inherently progressive,

identity is natural, history moves through spirit, objective truth is the pinnacle of

reason, and that art is autonomous to the social institutions in which it is

embedded. Postmodern parody is far more likely to disintegrate any boundaries

between the real world and fictions.

But let us exercise caution before we celebrate the mashup. The impression that

we are given is that mashups repeat Hebdige's famous analysis of punks, in which

hegemonic symbols of everyday life are transcoded into stylistic identifiers of a

culture in service of "shocking" a parent culture, without taking into consideration

the larger purpose of his work: to offer an exhaustive analysis of the role media

plays in the commodification of style. Hebdige examined how the 1970s London

punk subculture inverted dominant ideological codes in order to forge a politically

resistant social group. However, through the increasing coverage of punk

subcultures as being deviant, disgusting, and despicable, the media contributed to

the mainstreaming of their resistance by categorizing it as such. The result was

polyphonous. The United States punk culture arose through media representations

of the UK subculture, and the middle class began wearing ripped clothing drained

of their political associations. Also, a neo-nazi party started that thought punks

using swastikas meant that there was a punk nazi uprising in England (Quinn

1994, 12). Eventually, punk was mainstreamed into an image factory which was called new wave, and it was no longer seen as disgusting or fantastic. The disgusting element was a necessary component for the media to report on, if anything to stabilize the dominant social order (to reinforce cleanliness, self-discipline, hygiene, etc.) (Hebdige 1981).

The mashup is univocally celebrated as a cultural process which puts to rest the dominant ideologies of modernist aesthetics and ownership. There is, perhaps surprisingly or not, very little said regarding the potentially disempowering aspects of the mashup or its political consequences. What is especially interesting is the apparent imbalance between the mashup's reception in academic circles and its reception in more colloquial ones. *The Grey Album* received a lukewarm reception by the music community at large, though academic studies give the impression that it was received as, again, "the best album of the year." *Spin*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *New Musical Express*, *The Wire*, *Delusions of Adequacy*, and *Q Magazine* gave the album an excellent rating for being a "shockingly wonderful piece of pop art," "one of the year's best releases," and accredited for making "two known quantities thrillingly new." But *Dusted Magazine*, *Stylus Magazine*, *ShakingThroug.net*, *Village Voice*, and *Dot Music* had the following to say: "Of course it's a gimmick, but about half of it works anyway," "The Grey Album isn't much more than a well-executed novelty, nor does it illuminate some genius hidden deep within The Black Album," "There are certainly more fun moments than not, at the very least rendering The Grey Album enjoyable, but it's

hard to argue for any reason than its novelty." *Pitchfork.com* stated: "While The

Grey Album is truly one of the more interesting pirate mashups ever done, it

ultimately fails at the hands of perfectionism with several pieces sounding rushed

to beat some other knucklehead to his clever idea." While a number of reviews

favored Mouse's original contribution, there are considerable receptions which

oppose it as anything novel or of musical interest. Perhaps it is appropriate then to

balance the scale for the academic reception of the mashup, to question the ways

in which it disempowers, before another voice speaks from within the crowd that

we are witnessing yet another example of the ensuing revolution. I will therefore

turn to Žižek's critique of postmodernism as support for the continuing relevancy

of pessimism.

Knee Deep in the Postmodern Shitter

One of Žižek's most enduring and accurate critiques of postmodern celebration is

with the example he uses of toilets, articulated most extensively in *The Plague of*

Fantasies (1997). In the so-called post-ideological age, with global conferences

brandishing empowering themes of digital emancipation of the fluid ease with

which binaries are traversed, it is still not uncommon to see in our everyday life

that we are knee deep in ideology. For instance, Žižek draws a distinction between

the toilet systems of disparate nations as structurally homologous to the ideology

of its State:

> In a traditional German lavatory, the hole in which shit disappears after we
>
> flush water is way in front, so that the shit is first laid out for us to sniff at

and inspect for traces of some illness; in the typical French lavatory, on the

contrary, the hole is in the back -- that is, the shit is supposed to disappear

as soon as possible; finally, the Anglo-Saxon (English or American)

lavatory presents a kind of synthesis, a mediation between these two

opposed poles -- the basin is full of water, so that the shit floats in it --

visible, but not to be inspected (1997, 3).

This vulgar example is employed to argue that we are deeper in ideology than

what we are accustomed to claiming, and that the gaps revealed in postmodern

techniques of ironic distancing do more to reinforce the certitude that ideology is

deeply embedded within the externalized ritual. So what is the ideological habit in

The Grey Album? Is it not another elaborate example along a history of cross-

cultural misrepresentations of multicultural openness on which the music industry

has profited most? Minstrelsy, for instance, was taken through such characters as

the urban dandy Zip Coon and the freed slave Jim Crow as the first internationally

recognized form of American cultural expression: a white man, his face corked as

a black man, dancing and singing in a pattern according to a black dance he

witnessed which in actuality was a mimetic caricature of the black impersonation

of white slave owners dancing (Shepherd 1982). Is not, perhaps, *The Grey Album*

an extension of this minstrelsy? Is it not celebrated for its cross-cultural negation

of the differences between unrelated texts, made to relate on a common ground in

an intersubjective fantasy? Lest we forget the cakewalk was a white imitation of

blacks who were themselves imitating whites, the music video for Danger

Mouse's *Encore* features a mashup of the final scene from *A Hard Day's Night*

with Jay-Z entering the stage, Ringo Starr operating a turn table, and Paul

McCartney breakdancing. This mashup is taken as revolutionary because of its

intertextuality and its intersubjectivity. But is intersubjectivity not part of the

groundwork upon which a large part of the popular music industry was based?

So what kind of intersubjectivity is being exposed through the mashup? How

exactly does the mashup provide us with an example of intersubjectivity? Is

intersubjectivity a concept as simple as the "combination of disparate texts"? As

much as the mashup would serve as an obvious example of intersubjectivity, what

are the mechanics of such an ideological concept as the intersubjective?

According to Žižek, intersubjectivity is not simply the space of interrogation

between two unknowns, nor is it the notion that somehow the desire belonging to

the Other of the subject can be uncovered or understood at any distance facilitated

by the merging of subjects. While intersubjectivity relates partially, in a

phenomenological status, to that which gives the subject its struggle for

recognition (remember the Lacanian mirror phase, where the object becomes a

site which gives the subject its legitimate means of struggle), it is, in a much more

sophisticated sense, that the object *is* the subject itself, the precious object

embedded in the psyche — the *agalma*, that which sustains a fantasy in the

subject's very being. In other words, what Lacan later called the *objet petit a* is

that which I perceive in myself that is something more than myself, that which

deserves the desire of the Other as manifest in the object whose materialization

might lay outside of me but whose impression determines my attitude towards it

(Žižek 1997, 8-10).

What is the object being chased in this example but that of an idealized object of a

racial harmony? The object being chased in the mashup is obviously the

democratic utopia. But this is not necessarily the world of the mashup artist who

locates cultural texts and reassembles them for the sake of deconstruction. Rather,

this aspect of the mashup is the postmodern theorist's fantasy. For the postmodern

theorist this example rests as the prime example of a virtual democracy, because

anonymity rules over singularity, multiplicity over metanarrative, etc. When the

subject is gratified through recognition, it is the Other's desire realized from

within the subject's constitution. Thus, a complex network of Othered recognition

is at work within subjectivity. As Žižek explains,

> A small child is embedded in a complex network of relations; he serves as
>
> a kind of catalyst and battlefield for the desires of those around him: his
>
> father, mother, brothers and sisters, and so on, fight their battles around
>
> him, the mother sending a message to the father through her care for the
>
> son (1997, 9).

In other words, the mashup is used to prove a point that is predisposed to

postmodern theory. We might think of the mashup result like a small child, its

intertextual references battling out a cry for recognition to be both texts at once;

both are explicitly in a power struggle. Even if the binaries are arbitrary

substitutions, they are still binaries, and they still imply a system of dominance

and subordination; recall the subordination of the Beatles whose tracks lay in musemetic fragments to the otherwise preserved consistency of Jay-Z in *Encore*. Intersubjectivity is the fantasy which informs me of my subject position according to what I perceive of the expectations placed on me by others. What we see in the fulfillment of our desires is the approving gaze of the Other upon us; that which fulfills, transforms us into the object of its desire, constructed internally and resonated internally, but manifest externally. The mashup gazes upon us as the promise of unity and coherence that lacks within the symbolic order. It testifies to the promise of the digital age.

To return to the fantasy, the mashup is its principal digital exemplar. We liken the fantasy to the mirage, and because a fantasy is a mirage it is not hiding something, it is free standing, self sufficient, and certain in its presence. What it masks is nothing, like the mirage of a swimming pool behind which lies an empty dry desert. Fantasy is that which bridges a subject and the lost object which the subject is constituted by, his primordial cut. The subject, as a linguistically produced subject, is entirely "phantasmatic." This notion of intersubjectivity then is useful in understanding, because of the approval sought through the music industry for multicultural hybridity. Thus, the fantasy of multicultural hybridity is played out again in DJ Danger Mouse, as it was for the entire fantasy of popular music scholarship and its political preoccupations with race, class, and gender identity constructions. Danger Mouse's work is coordinated by the fantasies of postmodern hybridity.

And indeed, *The Grey Album* has become the idealized object that has disappeared from view, by virtue of the fact that Danger Mouse's subsequent career move was as producer for some of the most commercially successful and most copyright protected albums of recent times, for groups that are anything if profit-generating spectacles: Gorillaz, Gnarls Barkley, The Black Keys, Danger Doom, Beck, The Good, The Bad & The Queen, Underground Animals, Jemini, Sparklehorse, The Shortwave Set, Jokers Daughter, and (again) Jay-Z. Overall, while *The Grey Album* did very well, it did not sustain the revolutionary copyright-free breakthrough that was predicted, especially since PirateBay.org (whose owners wrote and directed *Good Copy Bad Copy*) were recently reprimanded for "sharing" (on April 17, 2009, each was sentenced to a year in jail for making 33 copyright protected files available for online file-sharing). Further, since Danger Mouse's appearance, major industry has found the mashup especially useful not only for selling new products, but for regenerating interest in historical artifacts and profiting off of an extensive back catalogue. This is most recently evidenced in the mashup of Bob Dylan's "Forever Young" as seen in the 2009 Superbowl for Pepsi Co., a duet he "sings" with Will I. Am.

Before harkening back with wistful eyes to the days of Newport to boo Dylan for selling out once again, as he did with M-Banx and "The Times They Are A' Changin'" years later, I prefer a move towards a more general question: what are the limitations inherent in celebrating privileged cultural texts as empowering

when we are selective of the texts which only empower our own argument?

Perhaps I will do the same. While it is tempting, then, to turn this chapter into a

regurgitation of Hebdige's *Subcultures* text, accounting for the ensuing

commodification process the mashup launched, I will turn my attention instead

towards a peripheral and perhaps less empowering example, a mashup between

Adolf Hitler and Notorious B.I.G.

Ventriloquist H.I.T.L.E.R.

I remain more skeptical than to proclaim that any symbolic revolution is underfoot

with the mashup. I certainly do not purport that online communities and digital

mashups are going to give the aural world its proper democracy simply because

some middle class users who can afford computer software are mixing Dolly

Parton with Britney Spears. The technique can, in other words, be useful for

critiquing the very spectacle and simulacra character of late capitalism, as the

more critically attuned Frederic Jameson would approach it. But what are the

drawbacks in celebrating it in the same capacity that, say, Walter Benjamin

celebrated film and photography in the early 20th century?

While preparing for a lecture on the 1934 Nurhemburg Rally and

Riefenstahl's *The Triumph of the Will*, I happened across a most unusual video on

YouTube.com: a random mashup between the images of Adolf Hitler in the midst

of his final speech and Notorious B.I.G. toasting West Coast rival Tupac at an MC

Battle, readily available for view on Youtube and other video sites. The film

opens with the original soundtrack, the announcement to Hitler's final speech:

"*Ich spreche den Führer!*" followed by resounding applause. Hitler appears, but

his lips are synced almost precisely, through editing software, to the following

words:

WHERE BROOKLYN AT, WHERE BROOKLYN AT

WHERE BROOKLYN AT, WHERE BROOKLYN AT

We gonna do it like this

Anytime you're ready, check it

I got seven Mack 11's, about eight 38's

Nine 9's, ten mack tens, the shits never ends

You cant touch my riches

Even if you had MC Hammer and them 357 bitches

Biggie Smalls; the millionare, the mansion, the yacht

The two weed spots, the two hot glocks

Thats how I got the weed spot

I shot dread in the head, took the bread and the lamb spread

Little Gotti got the shotty to your body

So don't resist, or you might miss Christmas

I tote guns, I make number runs

I give mc's the runs drippin

when I throw my clip in the AK, I slay from far away

Everybody hit the D-E-C-K

My slow flow's remarkable, peace to Matteo

Now we smoke weed like Tony Montana sniffed the yeyo

That's crazy blunts, mad L's

My voice excels from the avenue to jail cells

Oh my God, I'm droppin shit like a pigeon

I hope you're listenin, smackin babies at they christening

It is peculiar to witness two unlikely sources conjoined with one another in such a diametrically opposed code of violence, and in certain ways the weight of fascist history is relieved in favor of Notorious B.I.G.'s dominance. The visual details are well known in media circles, standing as the most famous piece of propaganda in film history, cited by the likes of Kracauer and Adorno as the pinnacle of historical errors, of what can go terribly wrong when the forces of media production uphold a dominant political ideology. Indeed, the rally had been organized as a spectacle to demonstrate that the entire nation supported Hitler when in actuality he was facing a significant challenge from the National Socialist Party (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 162). Of course, in this recording his voice is absent as he is cast as the dummy to Notorious B.I.G.'s toast. By removing Hitler's voice the mashup removes Hitler's somatic power. To paraphrase Morris, the sound of Hitler's voice was more terrifying than what he said because its distinctive cadences disrupted the most remote possibility for open dialogue -- the sound of his voice infiltrated the private spheres of German culture through mass media as a force not to be reckoned with, the sonic bedrock of national solidarity (2001, 368-78).

But not anymore! Not only do we have a response, but an outright negation of Hitler's power through his own recontextualized gestures, and by none other than Notorious B.I.G., who refers to his own militaristic dominance (a common gangsta affect), to shooting Dread (a Jamaican rapper who in the character of a judge would sentence rappers to 40,000 year sentences) in the head and taking the lamb spread (a type of sticky marijuana laced with PCP, found mainly in Manhattan). Indeed, rap, especially the freestyle rap as recited in MC Battles, contains a violent imagery that has pervaded African American forms of urban exchange since men gathered on urban street corners in the early 20th century to "play the dozens," to hurl out insulting rhymes at one another as a means of transgressing physical violence and rectifying conflict in a respectful contained environment. To break down hip hop in this instance, Notorious B.I.G. is from the Gangsta category, characterized by its noisiness and its persistent reference to street crime. In a freestyle MC Battle such as this one, contenders are expected to spontaneously fight for domination through language in beats and rhymes. As Potter reminds us,

> [if] there is a field in which hip-hop's revolution will be fought, it will be first and foremost that of language, a fact which is underlined by the recurrent metaphoric mixture of rappers' own technologies (microphones, pencils and tongues) with those of armed struggle (guns, hand grenades, artillery)... Can linguistics provide a kind of model for the tactics and effectivity of the kind of cultural resistance staged by hip-hop? (1995, 64).

Tupac and Notorious B.I.G. were the two infamous victims of the East/West

Coast hip hop rivalry that began in the 1990s. The verbal attacks are vicious,

quick-witted, and many of the references would be lost without being immersed in

the scene or if you were not a serious student of the subject. In this case the

mashup challenges authority: Hitler is "owned" by Notorious, his authority and

his virtual paternal presence are challenged by the voice which explodes out of

him, like the Alien that makes a cocoon in his chest, and we are delighted to

witness the real violence and horror of what lurks inside of Hitler's cavity:

blackface.

We might think of this challenge to authority in terms of challenging the father, as

Gunkel draws out in his cross-references between mashups and Greek philosophy.

Socrates first taught Phaedreus that an author must be present for his own words

in order for those words to bear any truth. As they walk in the countryside,

Phaedrus agrees to recite for Socrates the speech of Lysias. Socrates, however,

strongly suspects that Phaedrus has a copy of the speech on him. Socrates senses

that the speech he is rehearsing belongs to someone else, and demands that he

produce the speech as written by someone else. He in fact denies the speech to be

read aloud, because without Lysias present, he cannot explicate or expand on the

ideas he laboured on page. Such a speech rehearsed verbatim requires the author's

presence in order to elucidate the concepts properly instead of being distorted

through another's voice. Copyright law, according to Gunkel, "whether explicitly

acknowledged or not, is informed by Platonic metaphysics and the Socratic assessment of writing. Because a recording, like a written document, cannot protect itself, there needs to be some way to ensure the rights of paternity and to recognize the authority of the author to protect his/her progeny from misuse and abuse" (2008, 495).

To say that such an authority is displaced here by parody is obvious. Phaedreus speaks for Lysias as Hitler speaks for Notorious. Certainly, this is what invites our postmodern perspective, especially Baudrillard's simulacrum, which is "no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1994, 166). As that which stands in for reality instead of representing reality, such a simulation determines consciousness of reality. Gunkel writes that the mashup's simulation throws the Platonic metaphysics of recording into a complete reversal: "Like the predominantly visual simulacra that are described by Baudrillard, the mashup participates in an overturning of the assumed causal and logical order that had been operative in the metaphysics of recording since the Phaedreus. The mashup, then, is nothing less than the sound of simulation" (2008, 496).

According to the post-ideological formulations of postmodern theory, such a phenomenon as the mashup challenges ideology through its distance, just as Hitler is removed from his own authority by Notorious, a removal which marks the humor of the piece. But it is this very distance, according to psychoanalytic

theory, that marks it as distinctly ideological. For instance, Youtube comments are rated poorly when they address Nazism, Hitler's rule, racism, anything with which the Nazi party was connected. The comments are placed on a virtual train to the black hole of irrelevance. That Hitler is reduced to an entertainer, himself removed deliberately through the mashup, no longer identical to the rally he orchestrated so perfectly, is enough for postmodernism's resonance to continue its triumphant echo.

Such a distance, as Žižek describes it, facilitates a belief that beneath all of fundamentalist violence is a real human being, a core who just "turned to the left in the wrong direction." Ideology, then, is the promise that beneath exteriority is an essence free of ideology. The notions of solidarity, brotherhood, common goals, are precisely the phantasmatic constructions of recognition that move ideology permissively towards destruction. As Žižek says, Nazism was precisely the inner link that was perceived as being beyond Nazism:

> In one of his speeches to the Nazi crowd in Nuremberg, Hitler made a self-referential remark about how this very reunion is to be perceived: an external observer, unable to experience the 'inner greatness' of the Nazi movement, will see only the display of external military and political strength; while for us, members of the movement who live and breathe it, it is infinitely more: the assertion of the inner link connecting us […] here again we encounter the reference to the extra-ideological kernel (1997, 28).

On the Youtube comment postings we witness statements ranging from jokes to angered jabs to delusional racism: "I knew Hitler was from Brooklyn LOL," "People think Obama had a good speech but no one has anything on Hitler! If Hitler lived there wouldn't have been a 9/11 nor an Iraq war! The middle East would be more peaceful without Israel...," "Adolf is my hero," to "Wonderful! I want to join the Nazi party too!"

We must pause before proclaiming these mashed up comments as belonging to a common democratic spectacle, however, and we must not be led to think that posting comments gives us ultimate insight into the consciousness of the populous, that we can somehow gather from collecting them the right to speak on their behalf. This is accredited to the Youtube ratings system. If a comment is rated low enough by other users, it will not show up on the selected video's page unless specifically requested (an option which is well hidden from the overall laminate of the screen). As a result, comments which are remotely addressing Nazism (whether in favor or against) are predominantly absent from view, and comments which praise the aesthetic quality of the mashup are rated high and featured prominently. Those comments that bear the weight of history are thrown into its trashbin, so to speak. Positive reviews are displayed favorably while historical references are ignored or negated, rendering Notorious BIG as a ventriloquist for his Hitler dummy as the sublime surplus; or, as one commenter described it, "Hahaha OMFL! I lol-ed so hard - Hitler's the man :)" Although it is

a comment which succeeds through its ironic distance, this comment is not unlike

the *Song of the Faithful*, containing poetry by unknown members of the Hitler

Youth in Austria (1933-1937). One goes:

> There are so many people who bless you,
>
> Even if their blessing is a silent one —
>
> There are so many who have never met you,
>
> And yet you are their Savior.
>
>
> When you speak to your German people,
>
> The words go across the land
>
> And sink into countless hearts,
>
> Hearts in which your image long has stood.
>
> Sometimes the vision of you brings life
>
> To those in the midst of hard labor and heavy obligation ...
>
> So many are devoted to you
>
> And seek in your spirit a clear light (German Propaganda Archive 2009)

The Contingencies of Media Ecology

The postmodern approach accounts for how mashups negate historical weight

through the ironic displacement and alignment of digital texts. But because the

mashup automatically refers to an historical event reinforces its historical

certitude — after all, to scope out the sources of samples is part of the fun. We

have read overwhelmingly that we are in the post-ideological age and that the

mashup would stand as a good example of post-ideological signifying. However, the irony is only effective when we have already absorbed the codes of modernist meta-narratives in order to understand their (dis)placement. Postmodern irony is always already weighed down by history. Indeed, irony, as Žižek (2000) understands it, becomes the imaginative and fantastic form of surplus that gives spectacle its very authoritative power. It is encouraged through Youtube communities to be post-ideological, to be deliberately set apart from fascism as an innocent community.

This relates to the problems inherent in celebrating new media in fear of upsetting the people who are building a community — and so mashups are celebrated because, as Fiske (1989) would like, the people produce popular culture from the products mass culture provides them with. But all media formats privilege a contingency effect, a degree of unlikelihood that is realized through the agency of the consumer, the mashup of unlikely phenomena; after all, the convergence of the music and recording industry was itself a contingency. As spaces of action that connect what is separated, media give rise to details that are unforeseen and incidental.

The celebration of these media contingencies can be found in the writings of Walter Benjamin, especially in his famous "Work of Art" essay, which accounted for the rise of the optical unconscious. Benjamin wrote, after all, that "[n]o matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the

beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of

contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the

subject" (1999, 510). That is to say, the photograph contains a certain presence for

the perceiving subject. And it is the perceiving subject who can saturate the

photographic mythology with his own narrative and meaning. The positive

perspectives adopted by current copyright regimes of cultural scholars suggest

that mashups exemplify the dissipation of the property system, but they must

reevaluate their own ideas regarding property. Becoming active with a media text,

according to Koch, is

> dubious because it excludes the possibility that the apparatus itself might
>
> be perceived to be a naturalized fetish with which the audience identifies --
>
> less on the level of an instrument with which to test the actor than on a
>
> narcissistic level of an enormous extension of the perceptual apparatus
>
> (2000, 207-8).

By negating the fascist discourse underlying the online Youtube comments

instead of engaging with it, the mashup here extends the senses for the sake of

spectacle, for what Taylor and Harris call "a culture of greedy eyes" (2007, 59).

In general, in the age of cyber-surfing and identity-posing, it is just such a

phenomenon that we find so emancipating, laying claim on the virtual and

negating the material, yet it is occurring at the same time that another discourse

pervades the digital age: as Žižek argues, never have we been so globally

concerned with the very destruction of our habitat at our own hand (2000, 8).

While physically we spend more and more time alone building virtual communities online which lack the contact that has traditionally defined social interaction, we protest the destruction of the very thing that we are leaving behind, the physical ecology of our tissue in the non-simulated world. What does the earth become in this case other than a metaphor for the squinted eyes and fat depositories that have arisen from interaction with an online social network? I am curious regarding the whereabouts of these levels of irony. As Žižek says, it is not a dissimilar situation to turning towards better technology to make the earth greener, when it is technology that is accused of taking this greenness away to begin with (2000, 9-11).

The problem with the mashup is similar. It allows us to be cultural producers, but it doesn't do anything to deconstruct the flow of cultural information. Involving consumers to produce actively creates multiple lines of flight, sure, but the multiple lines of flight point in one direction: towards the consuming space. In other words, if the problem is the historical weight of texts as they are given through the channels of mass media, the solution in the mashup is to continue the very principle of flow. The question remains, however: what are some potential solutions available to us to approach empowerment if such digital phenomena as the mashup only reinvent the wheel in such a crude fashion? To answer this question, and to go beyond the determinist model explored thus far, I now turn to backmasking and the anxiety of the recording studio in order to reintroduce Merleau-Ponty and the indeterminacy of the body.

CHAPTER 5 (Conclusion)

"Turn me on, dead man!": Backmasking and the (Un)Veiling of Truth

I now turn away from the bleak imagery of previous chapters. The point to them was to expose the depths of disempowerment in order to understand the very struggle against which empowerment becomes a possibility. There must be a way through, and to find its potential I now turn towards a simple studio technique, backmasking, the recording practice of placing a recorded event backwards on a track with the intention of the listener reversing it themselves. Here we witness a unilinear flow of information towards a listener who is explicitly invited to participate in the recording medium. The technique opens up the potential for dialogue among musicians and listeners in a way that has not yet been explored, and my intention is to provide both a synthesis and a critique of the previous chapters to highlight the limitations of misrecognition drawn out so far, in order to provide a means of finding space for creative invention from within those restrictions.

Pullhair Rubeye

On April 24, 2007, Avey Tare, member of the psychedelic experimental pop group Animal Collective, released a solo project with his wife, Kria Brekken, formerly of múm. Animal Collective began their career in 1987 as a quartet from Buffalo, and múm is an Icelandic experimental group not unlike Sigur Ros. The result, *Pullhair Rubeye*, was a toned down folk project featuring a prominent use

of guitar and piano with minimalist layers and textural processes, recorded on a simple 8-track throughout 2006 and mixed on a two-track mixer.

But the final result sounded little like the toned down folk project they'd promised. Instead, *Pullhair Rubeye* was released entirely in reverse as a seemingly last minute gesture that was anything but aesthetic -- there was no expressive purpose. No reason was given for their gesture aside from a brief mention on the Animal Collective *Myspace* site: "We just really like it that way. Hope that's cool. We're not bummed. I hope you're not." They explained further that if anyone was disappointed, there were likely enough computer literate users in the world who could install the tracks into their home audio editing programs, reverse the flow of information, and redistribute the "correct" version to share with online communities, who perhaps felt that the music deserved its proper direction. It wasn't, they argued, a concept piece, a noise record, but simply something that they perceived as containing high quality textures undeserving of critical scrutiny. Moreover, speculation suggests, in perhaps too simple terms, that it was an invitation to listeners to partake in the reversibility of recording.

Pullhair received lukewarm if not hostile reviews, and was taken as a cruel trick on the listening public. On *Metacritic.com*, which synthesizes record reviews into an overall score, the album was given a 47/100 (mixed or average reviews). *Pitchfork Media*, for instance, had judged that the backwards version was "remarkably dull," and *Almost Cool* described it as "seriously frustrating." And

while *Alternative Press* said that the "whole thing possesses the air of woozy reverie, a gentle disengagement from reality," the more sympathetic reviews explained that it only became tolerable once it became ambient, once one stopped listening to it and its sound could recede into the opacity of minimalist boredom.

The recording is in many respects appalling and disconcerting for a mainstream pop record; its series of repetitive blips suggest that something is seriously wrong. It is not quite minimalism (as in music-as-process) because they are deliberately constructed songs, i.e. expressive (expressive songs played backwards which are drained of process, presented as though they evolve through process). The gesture behind it is even more unsettling. They simply released their original recording backwards and tossed it into public discourse, which resounded with the expected responses: a few preferred the backwards version, while a few reversed it and redistributed the "corrected" version on the Internet. Most agreed that the forward version was really quite pleasant. But perhaps I can be so bold as to suggest a decidedly poststructuralist perspective: we can approach backmasking as a traumatic infliction upon conventional recording processes which ruptures the fantasy we are accustomed to hearing. Especially in light of a supposedly flawless recording (when played forward), this violation of the conventional recording process is precisely what gives *Pullhair* its measurable shock, an unusual accomplishment for a folk album.

* * *

Sound Interpellated: Last Call for Determinism

Let us revisit the Althusserian perspective once more to help understand what happens in a recording studio (even if he would have no authority in such a space). Althusser argued that individuals are hailed into subject positions by their being spoken through social institutions, summoned in disparate yet mutually dependent ways in order to conceal their own constitutive relationships to a socially structured totality. Individuals are hailed in the subject position of a set of ideological state apparatuses, absorbing the logic of institutions through their material manifestation, imprinted as habits upon the moving body, allowing only limited mobility between a limited variety of overdetermined subject positions. The human body physically traces ideology through habit. It becomes the containment unit of imaginary relations to real conditions. Ideology is operative where it is obvious, and where it is obvious is where the subject is engaged in an inescapable repetition of being "hailed." In Althusserian dogma, ideology is the imaginary relation to the material manifestation of social institutions, and the process of hailing catches individuals and places them into subject positions. In other words, Althusser argued that society as a closed system produces and is produced by overdetermined networks of ideological state apparatuses that move together in opposition to repressive state ideologies to constitute an individual consciousness that misrecognizes its own subjectivity as an individuality (1971, 142-7).

The justification for using such an approach is to remain faithful to sociologies of music and media which read music as a closed social institution. Because the meaning of music is accessed only through subjective interpretation, we asked in the beginning how it was possible to tap into the musical constitution of the subject. Althusser seemed like the best place to start because he theorized that subjective relations to material manifestation of social institutions were decidedly imaginary, and since in concrete reality the relation to music is through its sounds as they are inscribed upon the body, music was taken to be a closed system of sound constituted through the habituated gestures of the body. Ideology in Althusser's schematic is not the autonomous existence of a social institution but rather a subject's relationship with the material manifestation of any given institutions, the manifestation as it is imprinted on the habits of the human body. Music is not referential in the same way that other cultural processes are. Its language speaks directly to movements of the body. Sound is thus the sound of something alive, not something static, but a dynamic process.

We might think of conventional recording practices in the following way, according to the above trope: what is a recording studio other than a structured environment that determines only particular types of acts, acts in which sound is interpellated as music and acts through which musicians are interpellated as their own listeners? As Sterne says, recording implies a unilateral conversation with an imaginary audience residing in an imaginary distant future. For the semiotic code to be successfully instantiated (to permanently freeze a performance), musicians

in a studio must imagine a conversation wherein which the medium of its transmission recedes under its *own* opacity. The studio is at its most structuring when its structuring elements are invisible, when the structure encroaches on a performer's faith that what is uttered will be heard. According to Sterne, "[t]he message to the future requires two kinds of faith: that the audience is at the other end of the phonographic network and that the embalming of the voice promises sufficient durability to fulfill a social function indefinitely into the future" (2003, 309).

If we divert briefly into Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is interesting, if not obvious, to see that he held a certain disposition towards technology that was practically indistinguishable from his views on the human psyche, as lacking the unity and coherence it was perceived to uphold (Hansen 2000, 170-85). He envisioned technological networks and scientific accomplishments as means of coping with anxiety as much as advancing human knowledge. Technologies mirror, in the most Lacanian sense, the *imago* of human perfection, an ultimately deceptive unity. And indeed the more sophisticated the technology the more traumatic the rupture is in reality when it dissipates or malfunctions. Machines are maintained in order to maintain a human fantasy of control over destiny, to delay their inevitable self destruction, which appears all the more disruptive the more sophisticated their construction.

Recall the sinking of the *Titanic*. What was the *Titanic* but the end of the glorious

gilded age of the industrial revolution? A vessel made of the most advanced

technology of the day and praised as "unsinkable" was the *imago ideal* of an age

if there ever was one, and so perfectly was it built that it foretold its own

wreckage. As Žižek conceives it,

> The wreck of the *Titanic* made such a tremendous impact not because of
>
> the immediate material dimensions of the catastrophe but because of its
>
> symbolic overdetermination, because of the ideological meaning invested
>
> in it: it was read as a 'symbol', as a condensed, metaphorical
>
> representation of the approaching catastrophe of European civilization
>
> itself. The wreck of the *Titanic* was a form in which society lived the
>
> experience of its own death, and it is interesting to note how both the
>
> traditional rightist and leftist readings retain this same perspective, with
>
> only shifts of emphasis. From the traditional perspective, the *Titanic* is a
>
> nostalgic monument of a bygone era of gallantry lost in today's world of
>
> vulgarity; from the leftist viewpoint, it is a story about the impotence of an
>
> ossified society (2009, 76).

Our morbid fascination with the leftovers of the *Titanic* as the indestructible

object laying split at the bottom of the ocean is a means of perceiving the

traumatic event through a prism that we can rationally make sense of. While the

symbolism of the sinking Titanic was fetishized through the media, what Žižek

claims made its destruction resound was its "inert presence": "By looking at the

wreck we gain an insight into the forbidden domain, into a space that should be left unseen: visible fragments are a kind of coagulated remnant of the liquid flux of *jouissance*, a kind of petrified forest of enjoyment" (2009, 76).

The *Titanic* is in this sense an object which summons an overt rationalization. It needs to stand symbolization in order for its horrible elements to remain secret from us. As the *Thing* (the unknowable object which, in the context of *jouissance*, is lost and must be refound continually), it cannot be approached directly, but only through specular media images that reinsert into its symbolic logic the essence of the unsinkable ship that it always-already was, in a sense most faithful to Althusser:

> perhaps all the effort to articulate the metaphorical meaning of the *Titanic* is nothing but an attempt to escape this terrifying impact of the *Thing*, an attempt to domesticate the *Thing* by reducing it to its symbolic status, by providing it with a meaning. We usually say that the fascinating presence of a *Thing* obscures its meaning; here, the opposite is true: the meaning obscures the terrifying impact of its presence (Žižek 2009, 76).

Here we have the material process and the social necessity of interpellation. It is not dissimilar to the way in which the 9/11 attacks were framed through media coverage. Why was it necessary for the media to consistently frame the 9/11 attacks in terms of a movie: "This time it's real!" "It was just like a movie!" When a nation needed to face the reality of a situation most severely (the collision of airplanes and towers representing the collision or conflict between two of

modernity's greatest successes), that the media had to turn towards another of the great successes of modernity in order to make any sense of it whatsoever: the film industry. The film industry, the imaginative realm *sensible*, reigned supreme over the rubble on the ground. It was, as Žižek (2002) described it, as if the disaster movie had prepared us all along for the real thing, so that when the real thing happened, we could cloak it in a fantasy and not be exposed to it in all its brutality.

To return to the matter at hand, we might conceive backmasking as the exposition of a *Thing* that resists our approaching it directly but only by reinserting it into the symbolic order. It does not belong to the domains of music or language, but awaits its own interpellation into one of those subject positions (if not both simultaneously). Another example of backmasking as the unveiling of the traumatic effects of recording is provided by Radiohead, to which I will now turn with the following question: what is backmasking but an invitation to make sense of trauma and its insertion into the symbolic order and into a structurally coherent narrative?

I Will Like Spinning Plates

When Radiohead released their follow-up album to *Kid A* (2000), *Amnesiac* (2001), it included a track whose first four lines are sung in reverse, then themselves reversed through the studio to be placed back into the symbolic chain of signification (the rest of the lyrics are sung normally with added effects to

achieve the semblance of backmasking). "Like Spinning Plates" was built over a reversed backing track of a much later released, "I Will" (*Hail to the Thief*, 2005, EMI). According to singer Thom Yorke, he'd heard the electronic version of "I Will" backwards in studio and found it "miles better than the other way around, then spent the rest of the night trying to learn the melody." With the melody and words sung backwards, on the playback's reversal perceived as forwards, the syntagmatic chain of signification would become a shadow of itself.

It is not so much the recorded version which is worthy of note in this context, nor the YouTube communities (for lack of a better term) who post the song from their home computers to reveal the so-called truth or confession of the recording revealed at last. What is far more interesting to me is the song's reception in a live performance. Their live performance of "Like Spinning Plates" does not accommodate the backmasking effect (Radiohead, *Amnesiac*, EMI: Tr. 4).

In the case of the live recording, the song's title is not announced by Radiohead. While Yorke establishes its arpeggiated chord pattern on the piano (A - C#m - G#dim - F#m - E - F#m - E - G#m - F#m - A - G#m - F#dim - E - G#m - F#m - A - G#m), "Spinning Plates" is not revealed for two reasons in particular: first, the instrumentation has changed to solo piano, not the electric event any longer but reverted back into its acoustic mirror; second, we are taken out of the shadows of backmasking into a rationally ordered element, as the notes to not suck up and cut short but rather fade as they properly should in an acoustic setting. The song

reaches fully its point of symbolic interpellation at about 44 seconds into the performance, when a male voice in an almost desperate cry for attention as the first to notice, yells out the song title, at which point the crowd clues in, and in understanding the work presented applaud with the recognition of its structural dimensions (its harmonic and temporal resemblances) - whistles and cheers resound. So much uncertainly hangs in these pregnant 44 seconds, and the obvious point of recognition becomes the obvious point of interpellation, as the song is literally hailed as the subject of itself.

Backmasked Anxiety

Backmasking turns an acoustic event against itself by revealing the recording mechanism as a system of indifferent impulses. We generally read acoustic events as the kernel of essential truth as heard through the opaque prism of the recording. Indeed, the recording process *must* recede in order for the sounds to enter our imaginary structure *as* music. A recording calms the anxiety it is responsible for producing. Like the train that is built to prevent its own derailment (its essential truth as a *Thing* that is subject to its own laws), the recording is constituted as rational in our symbolic world, but stands the chance of being the impostor of its reference, as standing alone as a *Thing*. It is no surprise, then, that the otherwise simple trick of turning a recording back against itself generated some of the most notorious hoaxes and thoughtless moral panics in popular music history, because only the *Thing* could be so closely connected to something so evil. Backmasking was used in record production in the 1960s, although composers of the high art

tradition had been using the technique for some time in the noise music and

musique concrete circles. Frank Zappa had used backmasking in order to avoid

censorship. And the most mythical coordinate for this practice of doubt and

uncertainty is found in the "Paul is dead!" rumors of the Beatles.

The first notorious deception, aside from Edison's laborers yelling "Mad-Dog!"

into a phonograph to hear it repeat "God-Dam!" in reverse, was the rumor of Paul

McCartney's death. In 1969, Detroit DJ Russell Gibb revealed on air that the song

"Revolution 9" confirmed a rumour that Paul had died years before in a horrific

car crash. Over 300 clues are accounted for, especially backmasked messages

taken from a number of Beatles songs, which create the most anxious revelation in

some kind of embedded truth (see Table 3).

Table 3: Backmasked Beatles Messages

Album and Song	Lyrics Forwards	Lyrics Backwards (dominant interpretation)
"All together now," *Yellow Submarine* (1969)	"All together now"	"I buried Paul"
Title track, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967)	"Billy Shears" (end)	"Fish is Dead"
"Blue Jay Way," *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967)	"Please don't be long / Please don't be very long / Please don't be long / Or I may be asleep"	"He said 'Get me out' / Pauly is waiting / Pauly is Hare Krishna / Pauly is bloody"
"I am the Walrus," *Mystery Tour*	"Sitting in an English garden"	"Worst of all he's in the dark chills / Remember this please"

Album and Song	Lyrics Forwards	Lyrics Backwards (dominant interpretation)
"Get Back," *Let it Be* (1969)	"Get back, get back, get back to where you once belonged"	"I need some wheels / Help me, help me, help me"
"A Day in the Life," *Sgt. Pepper's*	"Never could be any other way," end of album	"Will Paul be back as superman" (or "We'll fuck you like you're superman")
"Revolution 9," *The White Album* (1968)	"Number nine ..." repeated	"Turn me on, dead man"
"I'm so tired," *The White Album*	Incoherent mumbling	John: "Paul is a dead man ... miss him, miss him ... Miss him!"
Title track, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967)	"Sgt. Pepper's lonely / Sgt. Pepper's lonely Hearts ..."	"Ah, it was a fake moustache, it was a fake moustache"
"Glass Onion," *The White Album*	"The walrus was Paul"	"Paul took the wrong road"

In the 1960s, studio musicians began to experiment with reversibility as an aesthetic technique and used the studio not so much as a musical instrument but as a beacon (Moorefield 2005, 1-42). Previous recording techniques used the studio as a mirror of performance, a space within which a live performance could be captured. But the 1960s represents a time when some producers, musicians, and engineers began to push the limits of the studio, using it as a canvas in itself, an expressive space capable of speaking on its own, disembodied from the voices articulated into its network and capable of generating a self-expression -- this is an extension of the phonograph "speaking for itself." But what should we make of this curious practice of backmasking? On a pragmatic level it is useful for

curtailing censorship, first by Frank Zappa but more in contemporary contexts

where swear words and drug references are momentarily reversed in their

commercial dissemination in order to obscure their more obvious reference points.

In creative terms, the studio isn't a space where abstractions are finally realized

for their posterity, where the artist sees the studio as a tool to capture his fleeting

inspiration. The studio is a space wherein which musicians, engineers, and

producers make a practice out of sculpting sound, to borrow a turn of phrase from

Hodgson (2006, 6), of rendering sound an interpellation of music. It is through

phenomenological interrogation, not reflective contemplation, that the sounds of

songs are realized. When John Lennon explained his use of backmasked lyrics

and guitar solos, he said it was because of the way they sounded, no further

explanation(Blecha 2004, 214). Discovering the backmasked sound is the active

and living *discovery* of meaningful units within the transmission of musical

media.

On the listener's end, backmasking is *rediscovering* an exercise in utterance, or

more accurately it is the rediscovery within utterance of its arbitrariness. It is a

discovery of truth that is specifically located within the moral and ethical world of

its perceiver, since it is largely indeterminate what is being spoken or performed.

And in the 1970s and 1980s this arbitrariness could not have been further

enforced than by the moral panic that backmasking lured children into the

clutches of Satan, such as when members of the New Right movement aired on

Christian radio the secret messages contained on Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven":

> *Oh here's to my sweet Satan.*
>
> *The one whose little path would make me sad, whose power is Satan.*
>
> *He will give those with him 666*
>
> *There was a little tool shed where he made us suffer, sad Satan.*

In 1985, musicologist Joe Stuessy testified in front of the Parents Music Resource Center (otherwise known as the Washington Wives Club) to support their decision to censor (at arm's length) certain forms of popular music, namely heavy metal and what ABC Nightline had famously termed "porn rock." Stuessy made unsubstantiated claims that music effects our behaviour, a cause-and-effect model which has yet to be determined as reliable. He argued further that through repetition, deviant messages could seep into the subconscious and that the perversion and hatred of heavy metal stands alone in a long history of rock misogyny, reinforced through an elaborately staged spectacle which reinforces its occult nature. Without reference to what the "subconscious" is, or what power it holds over us, he warns that the especially manipulative aspects of heavy metal lay in its subliminal codes, which seep into our subconscious through backmasking. Stuessy defined backmasking as follows:

> Backmasking (backwards messages). Some messages are presented to the
> listener backwards. While listening to a normal forward message (often
> somewhat nonsensical), one is simultaneously being treated to a

backwards message (in other words, the lyric sounds like one set of words

going forward, and a different set of words going backwards). Some

experts believe that while the conscious mind is absorbing the forward

lyric, the subconscious is working overtime to decipher the backwards

message. Of course by spinning the record backwards (or by tape

manipulation), the conscious mind gets a chance to hear the message too!

(1985, 125).

Deeming subliminals as an "invasion of privacy," Stuessy cited nations around the

globe which had banned subliminals, including Belgium, Great Britain, and said

that organizations from the National Association of Broadcasters to the FCC and

the United Nations have discouraged subliminals as unethical. Though, he admits

that, "Again, more research is needed to determine the actual extent to which

subliminals are used and the extent to which they influence the listener" (1985,

126). The form of music under attack here was explicitly heavy metal, shrouded

in darkness, loud and occult-like, the subject of moral panic.

It was around this brilliant post-countercultural world, the red dust particles of

Altamont hanging in the air, *The Last House on the Left* by Wes Craven soon to

be released, that backmasking became the emblem of a generation facing certain

moral decay. Backmasking, in its multifarious forms (whether intentionally

forward, intentionally backward, unintentionally discovered, unconsciously

directed), is at once sound articulated in a linear chain, but it is simultaneously

unknown and alien, as though the alien were about to explode from out of the speaker's chest unless it were to be controlled and reinserted into a rational symbolic order and "figured out."

Towards a Theory of Transition

What impregnates the pre-possessive silence that enframes a backmasked sound within the fantasy coordinates of its music? As much as it is embedded in the music, it couldn't be any further from it. And as much as we could tolerate it backwards, we must admit at least the slightest of curiosity at what the utterance was. It seems that certain determinist approaches do not have an answer for such a space of potential, but have recourse to designate such a space as destined towards the symbolic order.

Whether we accept backmasking or resist it by reversing its flow we are undeniably informed of its wrongness. Therefore, backmasking is an invitation into participation. I can, with my touch on a vinyl record or the clicks of a keyboard, invest myself in the binary act of recording/playback and become a participant to make the two merge more closely towards a point zero, although it is an intersection at which they will never meet. I can, in other words, explore, locate, contain sound, and I can hear it as much from within as from without. But no matter the degree to which I possess it, it is always presupposed by its possession of myself. Certainly backmasking hails me as a listening subject. But it requires an active degree of corporeal interrogation in order to render me a subject

of its process — as much as I act to remain passive, I still act to reach a passive

state. It is this paradox that Merleau-Ponty pursued when he asked: "How does it

happen that my look, enveloping things, does not hide them, and, finally, that,

veiling them, it unveils them?" (1968, 131).

The anxiety produced by backmasked events requires their reinsertion into the

symbolic order by suffering another reversal at our own hands, by making sense

through the very technology of dissemination that should, according to

conventional recording practices, become opaque through its sonic transmission.

But theorizing the transition and the space in between has been the precise

difficulty of this thesis. I have stated many times that sources are lost, elsewhere,

empty, dead, because the space between perception and the source creates a

fantasy wherein which origin, by revealing its location within fantasy, is

concealed even more.

Is movement such a banal gesture? Is our only contract with that of a closed social

system? Perhaps we could benefit from using Massumi's (2002) assessment on

movement to understand the movement *towards* interpellation that is motivated by

what is possible and potential within the Real. The signifier/signified model of

meaning, which purports that the latter is an image-concept summoned by the

sororal envelope of the former guaranteeing language its autonomous break from

the things it names, expresses little regarding the *transition towards* its symbolic

status. Massumi is instead interested in potential (and in Althusser's schematic,

potential is limited to various subject positions of ideology's genus). Massumi argues that the motion towards signifieds "coincides with its own transition: its own variation. In motion, a body is an immediate, unfolding relation to its own nonpresent potential to vary" (2002, 4). In other words, movement has not yet determined its course, and the possibilities of its direction render freezing it and extracting its meaning in stasis an exercise in rational control, one that is necessarily inevitable for the maintenance of the symbolic order.

We are constructing a binary here between intuition (in the backmasked case, that which is 'wrong' with the recording, that which requires a degree of action, if somatic or cerebral), and states of attentive recognition (the symbolic, the repeated index, the persistent reminder of subjectivity). It is a similar distinction as that which Merleau-Ponty makes between experience and attention/judgment in his *Phenomenology of Perception.* We have touched on many cases where the present has become a point in the past, such as the lost object in musically facilitated nostalgia or the lost event in domestic mechanical phonography, but *phenomenologically* how does an event become a point in the past if the present is always in motion? When "Like Spinning Plates" was interpellated as the subject of its own song, it became a point of memory reinforced through its own repetition. But discovering the repetition of its movement (an uncertain interrogation) was one wherein which intuition was rewarded with unanimous applause (the successful hailing). This type of intuition is precisely a Bergsonian trope, one that has yielded to the deterministic quality of this thesis.

According to Bergson (1911), daily consciousness is attended to in a manner opposed to critical reflection, just as Merleau-Ponty had drawn out between orientationalist and objectivist embodiments of the world. In Bergson, daily consciousness is attended to within a complex interconnected communication of intuitions, where he claims we experience a "memory of the present" (1911, 14), which Al-Saji says "emerges alongside the perception of which it is the memory, like a shadow which accompanies and outlines the body" (2004, 212). While attentive recognition constitutes a certain proportion of consciousness, we seldom make the distinction between self and world, present and past, subject and object, and so on, but are brought into these interpellations when we cannot make sense of the world intuitively. In this conception, a personal historical narrative is the inter-subjective residue of a memory-universe within a *cone of memory*. Extracting a subjective line or a plane of consistency merely exercises a form of rational control by the self, pushing an ideological iron over the wrinkles of experience, for which contradictions and paradoxes otherwise constitute a major part. Al-Saji summarizes intuition as follows:

> Because the memory of the present inscribes the whole, memory is recounted along with others and with the world and is thus inscribed at different rhythms, levels of tension, with varying affective tonalities and colorations, and in different styles -- it is recounted in multiple voices. These voices do not necessarily form a harmony, nor are they organized according to any overriding logic or order. Indeed, more often than not,

the polyphony of memory records dissonant, and dissenting, voices and inscribes discordant histories (2002, 237).

Such simple techniques as backmasking suggest that the recording studio needs to be handled according to normative conventions in order for certain creative fantasies to be sustained, and so people in the presence of backmasking are possessed with a curious need to "figure it out" through intuition if not recognize at least that something "doesn't sound right." Backmasking, in other words, turns what is otherwise thought of as a determining medium, what Hodgson (2006) calls the medium ecology of the studio, into a communicative and symbolic exchange, wherein which it is expected, even in the most remote shadow of possibility, that a listener might reciprocate and navigate the network themselves, however predetermined we might take their actions to be. It must be embedded in an elaborate network which acts as the cradle of music's fantasy. But it also must be worked over in the ecology of media and perception to discover and rediscover our own creative relationships to recorded sound.

The Ecology of Flesh

I have left little room for the creative act. Perhaps we are left questioning nostalgic memories, favorite songs, or digital inventiveness. But the question lingers: Is there a limit to such a social psychoanalytic determinism as outlined in the previous chapters? Or does this question by its own mechanism leave us frozen as the subject of social institutions?

Take backmasking: to invest oneself in the backmasked event is not a state of recollection but an explorative elucidation of sound through the active interrogation of experience. The divide between "subject" and "object" is not so clear here because the perceiving subject must literally invest himself *within* the recording ecology to discover its meaningful units. Such a (re)discovery returns us to a world which is ultimately enigmatic and untranslatable, yet it is a world we perpetually return to, consisting of experiences which are, according to Merleau-Ponty, "the repeated index, the insistent reminder of a mystery as familiar as it is unexplained, of a light which, illuminating the rest, remains at its source in obscurity" (1968, 130). How is it that each return to this index is itself a rediscovery of meaningful units? And to step outside of the confines of compulsive repetition, what within repetition is the difference which constitutes the new?

I have a contention with the difference between "mediated" versus "direct" experiences; when we assume a difference between the two we enter into a warren of narrow distinctions, complications, and inconsistencies. Where does mediation end and direct experience begin? In the Lacanian rubric, we are always-already mediated by our experiences between the imaginary and the symbolic. But Merleau-Ponty offers a far more amenable conception with the mediation of an indeterminate body-consciousness. For Merleau-Ponty, we live at the heart of things in the world, and there is no disjuncture between myself and what I hear,

because I hear from within as much as from without -- the nostalgic memory has certitude, the phonographic recording has presence, the mashup aligns unfamiliar texts, backmasking is embedded within the recording's world. Yet, there is still an impossibility, an impasse that disallows me from merging with it, an uncertainty that maintains its veil. It is clothed with what I perceive in it, and it is not it which inform me of its predetermined existence as a reified object. In its immediacy, it offers us the truth of its existence, but through its examination it evades its eminence.

The media through which we experience music have been taken, in these pages, as thin layers, behind which lurk invisible truths taking refuge in a black hole which cannot be directly encountered. But we are returned to our object of study by the sound which emerges as a *specific point of interest*, not a mediated imaginary, a sound that sounds apart from other sounds in the field of sound, such as that song which summons within me softer memories of emotional certitude, that disc which contains individualized scratches that could not be repeated elsewhere, the potential for a new digital joke, or the task to reverse the backmasked flow of information. We determine the sounds of music by fixing them with a select set of participations. Participation is thus a phenomenological key to resistance against any predetermined or predestined alienation, one which Merleau-Ponty writes about explicitly. According to Merleau-Ponty, we fix the world by way of our participation within it, and the objects with which we are aligned are pellicles, atmospheres bound in participations of textures, tones,

colors, patterns, memories, affect, waverings, uncertainty, doubt, etc.

Participations are all points of difference that contribute to the boundedness of the

thing itself. Merleau-Ponty writes:

> If we take all these participations into account, we would recognize that a
>
> naked color, and in general a visible, is not a chunk of absolutely hard,
>
> indivisible being, offered all naked to a vision which could be only total or
>
> null, but is rather a sort of straits between exterior horizons and interior
>
> horizons ever gaping open, something that comes to touch lightly and
>
> makes diverse regions of the colored or visible world resound at the
>
> distances, a certain differentiation, an ephemeral modulation of this world
>
> -- less a color or a thing, therefore, than a difference between things and
>
> colors, a momentary crystallization of colored being or of visibility (1968,
>
> 132).

Participations are crucial to indeterminacy. If we are seduced into the bearings of

determinism, we lose touch with what a creative event is (either in conversation,

in musical production, in our deployment of technologies, etc.). Participations are

decidedly open. As much as a child might be "spoken by" the social conventions

of language, he equally learns that the conventions are ultimately infinite and his

to manipulate.

What we hear is always-already soaked in our perception of it. It is cradled by our

hearing it. Even the most abrasive noise and experimentation produced through a

studio has the security of being embedded in our perception of it -- a constituent

of phonographic recordings, it will be remembered, was that a performer

performed as though his audience occupied the recording space with him, engaged

in a virtual exchange that was at one and the same time articulated in the past,

present, and potential. Because the act of recording implies our presence, it

always-already has knowledge of us before we encroach upon us, and because it

inhabits the same world as we do, it invites us to open upon it. The space between

what we hear and its original articulation is thus difficult to isolate because what

we hear is always-already here and there.

He who perceives is bestowed with manifold openings. And a central paradox of

perception belongs to the perceiver who can hear himself hearing, see himself

seeing, enmeshed in a network of multiple folds that do more than thought which

thinks itself, since thought is bound up within a body that opens onto a world of

real things. As Merleau-Ponty writes, the foundation of consciousness is

experienced as one's hand is accessible from both the external and internal

worlds, worlds of simultaneous touching and being touched. The body that locates

in a spiral groove the point at which to stop a record complies with the shape and

the movement of that record. It is the other half of the external which marks the

entire external, thus exploration and the information that exploration gathers

belong to the same sense. We touch the surface of the thing, which allows us to

touch the thing, and we all the while touch the touch of the touch as one hand

passes over the other's experience: It is here, in this thorny thicket of the touching

of the touching of the touched, where Merleau-Ponty introduces the notion of *flesh (chiasm)*:

> he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he *is of it*, unless, by principle, according to what is required by the articulation of the look with the things, he is one of the visibles, capable, by a singular reversal, of seeing them - he who is one of them (1968, 134-5).

Media is a much more elusive concept than I've allowed with the preceding determinist disposition; it is more than a thing which stands in the way of our perception and the original point of articulation. This is why I see Merleau-Ponty as providing such valuable insight, although he is rarely employed in the study of media and popular music, although his insights could be powerfully beneficial to those who purport the empowerment thesis. For Merleau-Ponty, things are where they are situated and not elsewhere, and they reside in the world according to where *we* are. The only distance they are afforded is according to the thickness of the body. The body is a mediating site with a thickness of its own, a communications medium between the visible and the corporeal, between the seen and the seer. If there is a body to the thing that I perceive, it is isolated as a bound entity by its body as a thickness between itself and its differential participations, just as my own thickness makes my experience of the bound entity solely mine. So things have to be made body and flesh in order for me to live in the heart of them.

The body interposed is how we think of mediation in this turn, and it is a much more creative disposition by its inescapable proximity to things, separated from the dogmatics of music and recording industries. The popular music industry was founded upon the solicitation of loss to the general public as was the recording industry, whereby the latter offered at once a participatory sonic event that placed the perceiving subject within proximity to his self as an externalized manifestation. It is the prime base of human relations which rests within the lived body, or what Merleau-Ponty calls the *corps propre* (1968, 222). We embody the world before we reflect upon it. The body is our opening upon the world. Being-in-the-world is an invisible for Merleau-Ponty, obscured from self as well as from others, such as the cardiac and respiratory systems (processes that are autonomous to our conscious recognition of them). Yet such processes are precisely those that sustain the physical medium of the "I" which is designated to myself, a viscerality which constitutes the line of the past, which has determined my very entry into the world and the gradual dissipation of the body throughout the life cycle -- the perceiving subject arises from within the conditions of flesh and blood that were not of his choosing, yet which offer to him the infinite potential to vary within those conditions.

Flesh therefore belongs neither to subject nor to object but is shared in mutual relation, neither mind nor material traversing between seer and world as a "coiling over of the visible upon the visible" (1968, 140), lending the body its constant

process of ontogenesis. If I am touching an object, I am touching a thing that exists apart from me, yet is bound by connective tissue. But if I touch my own hand, if I entwine my hands, my body becomes the ground upon which I understand myself as both perceiving and perceived, a body with two outlines. I am no longer simply "the one who touches" when I touch my other hand, while I never quite experience the sense of being touched either, and so "subject/object" does not merge in this simple self-experiment. This opens subjectivity to an otherwise indeterminate range of potentials. As Merleau-Ponty had argued in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the body is in-itself the freedom of consciousness.

As much as this intertwining body relates to itself it necessarily relates to the world. The flesh of the world is made of the same stuff as myself by the very evidence that the world is palpated by the fix of my vision. But the ultimate *chiasmatic* relation is that between myself and the others who I perceive as perceiving subjects and not as objects, and I have no certainty beyond that of my pre-thetic perceptual faith that you *are* a perceiving subject.

What finally lends the body its indeterminate potential is the participations of invisibles. Merleau-Ponty asks, ho does the invisible appear through visible things? Again, invisibles do not lay beyond the visible, as though the latter mediate or stand in for the former. Merleau-Ponty insists that invisibles are not hidden from perception but are rather installed directly within the visibles. The invisible is that which prevents the perceiving subject from fully merging with the

object body, always further behind than where my vision rests. The invisible is that which gives depth and meaning to the visible object, and without the invisible the object would lay mute and bare and so all objects are related to objects behind and between which are not revealed to the perceiving subject, and the *chiasm* is the existential metaphysical space within which we invest meaning in things. If the deterministic model of a closed social system is the invisible I am determined to interrogate, I am guaranteed to find it anywhere.

This is by no means meant to dismiss the Lacanian misrecognition or fantasy. But to understand the creative power of musical acts, we must exercise caution in media theory when we address not only empowerment, but disempowerment as well, as though things themselves are not in our presence. The tri-partite relationship between the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real is an ongoing dialectic that is external to ourselves, sure, but if we reduce subjectivity to that pre-destined moment of interpellation, that inescapable misrecognition, then we run the risk of living our lives as subjects of our compulsive repetitions without the search for differences *within* them. I am optimistic regarding the failure of this thesis, and so I offer a more humble rearticulation of its original concept: what does the project of creative freedom resemble when approached from within the most severe of restraints? I could continue, but I find it more appropriate to put a period at the end of one project before beginning another. Indeed, we may not have worked our way out of determinants, but we have certainly worked our way through.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor W. 1941. "On Popular Music [With the assistance of George
  Simpson]." In *Essays on Music / Theodor W. Adorno*, ed. by Richard
  Leppert, 437-69. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of
  California Press.

Al-Saji, Alia. 2005. "The memory of another past: Bergson, Deleuze and a new
  theory of time." *Continental Philosophy Review* 37: 203-239.

Alper, Garth. 2000. "Making sense out of postmodern music." *Popular Music and
  Society* 24(4): 1-14.

Althusser, Louis. 1971. *Lenin and Philosophy: And Other Essays*. London:
  Monthly Review Press.

Amin, Katrina. 2003. "The chiasm of rhythm: A Merleau-Pontian revision of
  Lacanian embodiment." *Chiasmi International* 5: 179-199.

Attali, Jacques. 1985. Noise: *The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis:
  University of Minnesota Press.

Barker, Andrew. 2004. *Greek Musical Writings: Harmonic and Acoustic Theory*.
  Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Barthes, Roland. 1977. "The Grain of the Voice." In *Roland Barthes, Image, Music, Text*, tr. Stephen Heath. Oxford: Blackwell.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor: Univesity of Michigan Press.

Baxter-Moore, Nick. 2006. "This Is Where I BelongIdentity, Social Class, and the Nostalgic Englishness of Ray Davies and the Kinks." *Popular Music and Society* 29: 145-165.

Benjamin, Walter. 1999. *Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927-1934*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

———. 2006. "The Work of Art In The Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks*, ed. by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 18-39. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Bergson, Henri. 1911. *Matter and Memory*. London: George Allen and Unwin

Bowie, Andrew. 2003. *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*. New York: Manchester University Press.

Bowie, Malcolm. 1991. *Lacan*. Hammersmith, London: Fontana Press.

Boym, Svetlana. 2002. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Brennan, V.L. 1999. "Chamber Music in the Barn: Tourism, Nostalgia, and the
Reproduction of Social Class." *World of Music* 41: 11-29.

Chanan, Michael. 1995. *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and Its
Effects on Music*. New York: Verso.

Chiesa, Lorenzo. 2007. *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of
Lacan*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Christie, Ian. 2001. "Early Phonograph Culture and Moving Pictures." In *The
Sounds of Early Cinema*, ed. by Richard Abel and Rick Altman, 3-12.
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Clarke, David. 2001. *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett: Modern Times
and Metaphysics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Conot, Robert. 1979. *Thomas A. Edison: A Streak of Luck*. New York and
Washington D.C.: Da Capo Press.

Copjec, Joan. 1990. *Jacques Lacan: Television / A Challenge to the
Psychoanalytic Establishment.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Dahlhaus, Carl. 1991. *Nineteenth-Century Music*. Berkeley: University of
California Press.

Davis, Fred. 1979. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York City: Free Press.

Danielsen, Anne. 2006. *Presence and Pleasure: The Funk Grooves of James Brown and Parliament*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Day, James, and Peter Le Huray. 1988. *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

De Certeau, Michel. 1988. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1995. *Difference and Repetition*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

Dill, Heiinz J. 1989. "Romantic Irony in the Works of Robert Schumann." *The Musical Quarterly* 73: 172-195.

Edison, Thomas. 1877. "A Wonderful Invention: Speech Capable of Indefinite Repetition from Automatic Records." *Scientific American* 17 (November): 304.

Fang, Irving E. 1997. *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolutions*. Burlington, MA: Focal Press.

Feaster, Patrick, and David Giovannoni. 2008. *Actionable Offenses: Phonograph Recordings from the 1890s* (Liner Notes). Archeophone Records, 2008.

Fish, Duane R. 1995. "Serving the servants: An analysis of the music of Kurt Cobain." *Popular Music and Society* 19(2): 87-102.

Fiske, John. 1988. *Television Culture*. New York: Routledge.

———. 1993. *Power Plays / Power Works*. London: Verso Books.

———. 2003. *Reading Television*. London: Prentice-Hall.

Freud, Sigmund. 1973. *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. London: Pelican.

———1987. *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

———. 2006. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* New York: Barnes & Nobles Publishing.

Fuller, Sophie, and Nicky Loseff. 2004. *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Gabbard, Krin. 1996. *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Garofalo, Reebee. 2008. *Rockin Out: Popular Music in The U.S.A.* (4th Edition). Alexandria, VA: Prentice Hall.

Gauntlett, David. 2008. *Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

German Propaganda Archive. *Poetry in Praise of Adolf Hitler*. http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/hitpoet.htm (Last Accessed: November 30, 2009).

Gitelman, Lisa. 2000. *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era*. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2000.

Glynos, Jason, and Yannis Stavrakakis. 2008. "Lacan and Political Subjectivity: Fantasy and Enjoyment in Psychoanalysis and Political Theory." *Subjectivity* 24: 256-74.

Goodwin, Andrew. 1988. "Sample and Hold: Pop Music in the Digital Age of Reproduction." In *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, 1990, 220-36. New York: Routledge.

Green, Rebecca. 1997. "Representing the Aristocracy: The Operatic Haydn and

    Le pescatrici." In *Haydn and His World*. Princeton: University Press:

    140-160.

Grobelny, Joseph. 2008. "Mashups, sampling, and authorship: A

    mashupsampliography." *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 11: 229-

    239.

Gunderson, Philip A. 2009. "Danger Mouse's Grey Album, Mashups, and the Age

    of Composition." Music Review. pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-

    only/issue.904/15.1gunderson.txt (accessed March 14, 2009).

Gunkel, David J. 2008. "Rethinking the Digital Remix: Mash-ups and the

    metaphysics of sound recording." *Popular Music & Society* 31(4): 489-

    510.

Gunning, Tom. 2001. "Doing for the Eye what the Phonograph Did For The Ear."

    In *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, edited by Richard Abel and Rick

    Altman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 13-31.

Hall, Dennis. 1994. "New age music: A voice of liminality in postmodern popular

    culture." *Popular Music and Society* 18(2): 13-21.

Hall, Stuart. 1980. *Representation Cultural Representations and Signifying

    Practices*. New York: NY.

Hansen, Mark. 2000. *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing*. Ann

    Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Hebdige, Dick. 1981. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge.

Hodgson, Jay Alan. 2006. *Navigating the Network of Recording Practice: Toward*

    an Ecology of the Record Medium. PhD diss., University of Alberta.

Hoeckner, Berthold. 2002. *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century*

    German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment. Princeton, NJ:

    Princeton University Press.

Hofer, Johannes. 1688. "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia." *Bulletin of the*

    Institute of the

    History of Medicine, Translated by Carolyn Kiser Anspach (Aug. 1934):

    376-391.

Hutcheon, Linda. 2002. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge.

Hutson, Scott R. 1999. "Technoshamanism: Spiritual healing in the rave

    subculture." *Popular Music and Society* 23(3): 53-77.

Inglis, Fred. 1990. *Media Theory: An Introduction*. Cambridge, Mass.: B.

    Blackwell.

Jagodzinski, Jan. 2005. *Music in Youth Culture: A Lacanian Perspective*. New

York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jankélevitc, V. 1992. "La nostalgia." In *Nostalgia. Storia di un sentimento*, ed. A.

Prete, 119-76. Milan, Raffaello Cortina Editore.

Johansson, Thomas. 1992. "Music videos, youth culture, and postmodernism."

Popular Music and Society 16(3): 9-22.

Jones, Steve. 1992. *Rock Formation: Music, Technology, and Mass

Communication.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Jung, Carl. 2007. *Children's Dreams: Notes from the Seminar Given in 1936-

1940*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kaplan, Harvey A. 1987. "The Psychopathology of Nostalgia." *The

Psychoanalytic Review* LXXIV: 465-480.

Katz, Mark. 2004. *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*.

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Kenney, William Howland. 1999. *Recorded Music in American Life: The

Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945*. New York: Oxford

University Press, USA.

Key, Susan. 1995. "Sound and Sentimentality: Nostalgia in the Songs of Stephen

    Foster." *American Music* Summer: 145-166.

Kitaoka, Akiyoshi. 2007. "A variant of the anomalous motion illusion based upon

    contrast and visual latency." *Perception* 36(7): 1019-35.

Kittler, Friedrich A. 1999. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter.* Stanford, Calif.:

    Stanford University Press.

Kramer, Lawrence. 1993. *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900.* Berkeley:

    University of California Press.

Kramer, Lawrence. 2008. "Music and the Politics of Memory: Charles Ives's 'A

    Symphony: New England Holidays'." *Journal of the Society for American*

    Music 2: 459-475.

Lacan, Jacques. 1949. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function, as

    Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." In *Écrits: A Selection*, tr. by

    Bruce Fink, Heloise Fink, and Russell Grigg, 3-9. New York: W.W.

    Norton.

Lacan, Jacques. 1957. "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason

    Since Freud." In *Écrits: A Selection*, 138-68.

Lacan, Jacques. 1959. "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of

    Psychosis." In *Écrits: A Selection*, 169-214.

Lacan, Jacques. 1998. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The

    Seminar of Jacques Lacan , Book 11). New York: W. W. Norton &

    Company.

Lacan, Jacques. 1998. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore, On*

    Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge 1972-1973, ed. by

    J.A. Millar, tr. by Bruce Fink. New York: Norton.

Laing, Dave. 1991. "A Voice Without a Face: Popular Music and the Phonograph

    in the 1890s." *Popular Music* 10(1): 1-9.

Lee, Scott. 1990. *Jacques Lacan*. New York: Twayne Publishing.

Leppert, Richard. 1995. *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the*

    History of the Body. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of

    California Press.

Marshall, George J. 2008. *A Guide to Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of*

    Perception. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press.

Marx, Karl. 2008. *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Charleston, SC:

    BiblioBazaar.

Massumi, Brian. 2002. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation.* London: Duke University Press.

Maurey, Yossi. 2009. "Dana International and the politics of nostalgia." *Popular Music* 28(1): 85-103.

Mcleod, Kembrew. 2005. "Confessions of an Intellectual (Property): Danger Mouse, Mickey Mouse, Sonny Bono, and My Long and Winding Path as a Copyright Activist-Academic." *Popular Music & Society* 28: 79-93.

Mcluhan, Marshall. 1994. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. London: The Mit Press.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1968. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2002. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London; New York: Routledge.

Middleton, Richard. 2006. *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music*. New York: Routledge.

Mitchell, Barbara. 1991. *The Wizard of Sound: A Story About Thomas Edison*. Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press.

Morley, David. 1986. *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*. London: Routledge.

Morrill, John Adams. 1902. *Report of the Commissioner on the Revision and Consolidation of the Public Laws of the State of Maine: Under Resolve as of March 21, 1901*. New York Public Library: Kennebec Journal Print.

Morris, Leslie. 2001. "The Sound of Memory." *The German Quarterly* 74(4): 368-78.

Nagel, Thomas. 1989. *The View From Nowhere*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Newman, Saul. 2004. "New Reflections on the Theory of Power: A Lacanian Perspective." *Contemporary Political Theory* 3/2 (August): 148-67.

O'Neill, John. 1991. *Plato's Cave: Desire, Power, and the Specular Functions of the Media*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing.

Olivier, Bert. 2004. "Lacan's Subject: The Imaginary, Language, the Real and Philosophy." *South African Journal of Philosophy* 23(1): 1-19.

Ong, Walter J. 1967. *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Plastino, Goffredo. 2007. "Lazzari felici: Neapolitan song and/as nostalgia."

    Popular Music 26(3): 429-440.

Plato. 1968. *The Republic of Plato*. New York: Basic Books.

Potter, Russell A. 1995. *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of*

    Postmodernism. Albany, New York: State University Of New York

    Press.

Quinn, Malcolm. 1994. *The Swastika: Constructing the Symbol*. New York:

    Routledge.

Radway, Janice A. 1984. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular*

    Literature. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Rimmer, Matthew. 2007. *Digital Copyright and the Consumer Revolution: Hands*

    Off My iPod. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Rosen, Charles. 1998. *The Romantic Generation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard

    University Press.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1779. *A complete dictionary of music; consisting of a*

    copious

    explanation of all words necessary to a true knowledge and

    understanding of music.

Translated from the original French of JJ Rousseau by William Waring.
New York:
AMS Press, (1975).

Sant Cassia, Paul. 2000. "Exoticising Discoveries and Extraordinary Experiences: 'Traditional' Music, Modernity and Nostalgia in Malta and other Mediterranean Societies." *Ethnomusicology* 44: 281-301.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1986. *Course in General Linguistics.* LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court.

Schafer, Murray. 1981. *Tuning of the World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Schwarz, David. 1997. *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Schwarz, David. 2006. *Listening Awry: Music and Alterity in German Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sedikides, Constantine, Tim Wildschut, Jamie Arndt, and Clay Routledge. 2008. "Nostalgia: Past, Present, and Future." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 17: 304-307.

Serazio, Michael. 2008. "The Apolitical Irony of Generation Mashup: A Cultural

    Case Study in Popular Music." *Popular Music and Society* 31: 79–94.

Shank, Barry. 1994. *Dissonant Identities: The Rock 'n' Roll Scene in Austin,*

    Texas. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Shepherd, John. 1982. *Tin Pan Alley*. New York: Routledge.

Shepherd, John, and Peter Wicke. 1997. *Music and Cultural Theory*. University

    Park, PA: Polity.

Shiga, John. 2007. "Copy-and-Persist: The Logic of Mashup Culture." *Critical*

    Studies in Media Communication 24: 93-114.

Sloop, John. 1999. "The emperor's new makeup: Cool cynicism and popular

    music criticism." *Popular Music and Society* 23(1): 51–73.

Smith, Jacob. 2008. *Vocal Tracks: Performance and Sound Media*. Berkeley:

    University of California Press.

Sterne, Jonathan. 2003. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound*

    Reproduction. London: Duke University Press.

Stevenson, Nicholas. 2002. *Understanding Media Cultures: Social Theory and*

    Mass Communication. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. 2001. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sullivan, Henry W. 1995. *The Beatles with Lacan: Rock 'n' Roll as Requiem for the Modern Age.* New York: Peter Lang.

Symes, Colin. 2004. *Setting the Record Straight: A Material History of Classical Recording.* Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan.

Tagg, Philip. 1979. *Kojak: 50 Seconds of Television Music*. Göteborg: Skrifter från Musikvetenskapliga institutionen.

Taylor, Benedict. 2008. "Nostalgia and Cultural Memory in Barber's Knoxville: Summer of 1915." *Journal of Musicology* 25: 211-229.

Taylor, Paul A., and Jan Ll Harris. 2007. *Critical Theories of Mass Media*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Taylor, Timothy. 2001. *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Vaidhyanathan, Siva. 2007. Interview, *Good Copy Bad Copy*, dir. by Andreas Johnsen, Ralf Christensen, and Henrik Moltke. Creative Commons: http://www.goodcopybadcopy.net/

Vallee, Mickey. 2005. "The Domestic Democracy of Home Entertainment: The Canadian Piano, 1880-1920." *Australasian-Canadian Studies* 22(2) & 23(1): 259-86.

Waksman, Steve. 1999. *Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Walser, Robert. 1994. "Prince as queer poststructuralist." *Popular Music and Society* 18(2): 79-89.

Warnock, May. 1967. *Existentialist Ethics*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Webster, James. 2004. *Haydn's 'Farewell' Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in his Instrumental Music* . New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wurtzler, Steve J. 2009. *Electric Sounds: Technological Change and the Rise of Corporate Mass Media*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Young, Stephen E. 1991. "Like a critique: A postmodern essay on Madonna's postmodern video Like a prayer." *Popular Music and Society* 15(1): 59-68.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1992. *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*. London: The Mit Press.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1997. *The Plague of Fantasies*. New York: Verso.

———. 2000. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. New York: Verso.

———. 2002. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. New York: Verso.

———. 2009. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Second Edition (The Essential Žižek). New York: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj, and Mladen Dolar. 2001. *Opera's Second Death*. New York: Routledge.

Zupancic, Alenka. 2007. "On Repetition." *SATS - Nordic Journal of Philosophy* 8: 27-44.