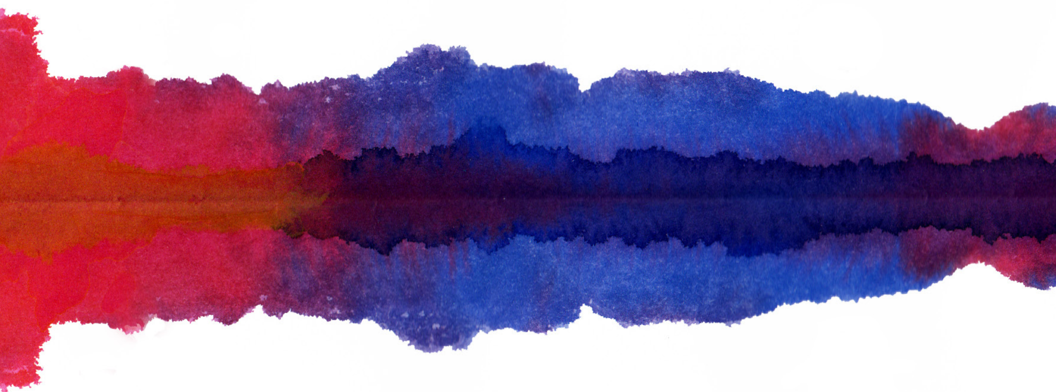
JULIUS GREVE & SASCHA PÖHLMANN (EDS.)

AMERICA
AND THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS



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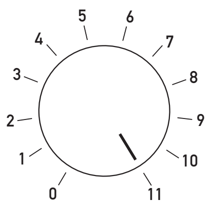
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AND THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS

JULIUS GREVE & SASCHA PÖHLMANN (EDS.)

America and the Musical Unconscious
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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS?

Julius Greve & Sascha Pöhlmann

1. THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS OF AMERICAN STUDIES

The project at hand, whose results you are about to read, is a labor of love, and that in itself tells you something about the position and recognition of music within American Studies today. When we first started thinking about bringing together scholars in American Studies to discuss music, we did so out of what was no more than a rather vague feeling at the time that our field has neglected, and continues to neglect, this particular form of cultural production. Once we began to embark on the project in earnest, we encountered ample evidence to make this, just to start off with a cheesy classic rock reference, *more than a feeling*. While American Studies is certainly one of the most interdisciplinary fields in the humanities, and while it has been very much at the forefront of exploring the many different forms that culture can take, it has still been a predominantly philological field that privileges texts over other media in its perspective on American culture. Only recently has the so-called visual turn presented a strong challenge to this dominant paradigm within American Studies, and visual culture studies has since established itself as a profound new way of looking at things, quite literally, that is here to stay. American Studies as a field is particularly eager to question what it is doing, and this strong undercurrent of self-reflection continually makes it a very fertile place for such new developments that co-exist with other theories and methods instead of really replacing them. This utter diversity has led scholars to question the concept of American Studies itself time and again, most recently for its evidently national focus, and yet no challenge has yet been successful enough to really do away with it, maybe because it

is simply more convenient to keep it. Instead of rejecting the notion for its diversity, American Studies scholars rather seem to embrace it, and they are quite happy to accept it as a space that allows them to do very different things in very different ways. This continually contested discourse has its fashions and its rules, and it speaks of its capacity for diversity that it can accommodate and even invite voices that present a challenge to its own dominant paradigms.

There always seem to be those who call for a paradigm shift in one way or another, often by satisfying publisher's demands for marketable originality by compiling a reader, and often apparently rather overestimating the more general relevance of their particular approach; yet this relevance is already judged from a normative perspective that considers certain things more important than others, and dismissing such new approaches says more about the position from which they are dismissed than about what is dismissed itself. Like all discourses, American Studies is subject to a distributed network of power with its own local hierarchies. The definition of what it is or does is continually renegotiated by a number of individual and institutional actors, and the recognition of this flexibility may well be what makes the field so openly political at times.

This, then, is how we understood (and do understand) American Studies when we wondered about the importance of music for it, and in conceiving the project that resulted first in a conference and then in the present volume, we rather quickly encountered some of the discursive rules that govern how music is represented in this particular field of study, at least in Europe. As we both identify with and have great sympathy for certain musical subcultures, we were all too aware of the pitfalls of complaining about a certain lack of recognition by the mainstream. Probably every scholar in American Studies feels that his or her particular interests are not central enough to the field, just like any fan of indie music might keep thinking the world would be a better place if only more people listened to [insert band name here], but both would probably be rather annoyed than satisfied if they got what they wished for. Similarly, you might tell all

your colleagues that they should be analyzing the Deep Web rather than short stories in their classes, but once they all did that you would not really be so proud of your cutting-edge approach to culture any longer. In this spirit, we knew that calling for more attention to music in American Studies would risk being either an empty gesture or an entirely symbolic one, and yet we believe that, as an academic field of inquiry into the complexities of cultures, American Studies has indeed turned a deaf ear to musical production and reception to such an extent as to merit a reminder of its importance and an attempt to at least grant it more critical attention, nothing more and nothing less. We do not want to join in with those who propose a paradigm shift every three months and describe everything that more than a few people do as a so-called 'turn.'

The project at hand is not as ambitious as that, but we believe it is important nevertheless, as music in American Studies occupies quite a peculiar role unlike any other form of cultural production. On the one hand, music is undoubtedly recognized as important in American culture; on the other hand, this importance is not reflected in the actual work that is being done in American Studies, and certainly not in the institutional practices that constitute the field. While it has acknowledged and followed the increasing importance of music in American cultural production in various ways, it continues to privilege textual and visual forms of art as its objects of examination. This volume seeks to adjust this imbalance by placing music center stage, while still acknowledging its connections to the fields of literary and visual studies that engage with the specifically American cultural landscape.

This is why we began by calling this project a labor of love: many American Studies scholars are interested in music, and many enjoy working on it and would like to work more on it, but it is not something on which they would build an academic career, nor is it something they could routinely offer to their students as part of their curricula. This is the striking ambiguity we encountered when looking into potential contributors to our project, and one we knew from our own academic environment: nobody would deny that music is

integral to American culture, but most scholars work on music on the side, and they seem to take a risk in concentrating on it too much. What is often assumed, it seems to us, is that music is deemed a distinctly musicological issue, while film and photography, for instance, are not off-limits to American Studies. In this way, what we have called the rules of the discourse, set up and renegotiated within a power structure that includes numerous actors in a variety of different capacities, might be simply called the rules of getting a job, or the rules of teaching what is canonical, and this is where the expectations and limitations of the field are often most evidently exposed. As it is, American Studies mostly means literary studies or cultural studies, and if the latter, it still mostly means text-based cultural studies, granted that there are exceptions to this rule. In other words, it is still safer to write a dissertation on Melville than on Morbid Angel if you ever want to apply anywhere with it.

It would be nice to think that research is not guided by such personal strategic decisions, just like it would be nice to think that grant money has nothing to do with such choices either, but this would be to ignore that research is almost exclusively done by people who prefer to eat. Thus studying music in American Studies is like eating in good restaurants now and then; it is something you do if you can afford it, but you know you had better learn how to cook for yourself. Again, there are certainly notable exceptions, and indeed scholars have built a career in American Studies on their work on music, yet exceptions is what they are, and the considerable body of work being done on music should not detract from the fact that it remains a neglected subject in our analyses of American culture—and this despite the fact that some of America's most outspoken and canonical literati of the past, including Edgar Allan Poe and Ezra Pound, have pointed out the importance of music for their own poetic practice and literary imagination.[1]

1 Consider Poe's affirmative remark that "[t]here can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development" (93); or Pound's naturally more drastic

Again, we are not calling for a full-blown paradigm shift in pointing this out, nor are we digging up a secret body of knowledge nobody was ever perceptive enough to locate. On the contrary, it is precisely this undeniable yet uncanny *presence* of music in American culture that motivates the project at hand, and we propose a way of approaching it exactly as such, as a phenomenon hidden in plain sight, a neglected and marginalized form of cultural production that everyone seems to agree is really central to American culture. Unsurprisingly, we are not even the first to use the term 'musical unconscious.' Yet whereas it has been used already in the discursive circles of psychology and musicology, in tandem with the proposition of a "psychopathology of music" (Walker, "Music" 1643), American Studies has not really taken up the notion of a musical undercurrent in the sense that cultural studies have taken up the psychoanalytical concept of the unconscious to describe the layers within culture that latently—and often manifestly—exist. Maybe focusing on this notion now is a bit like finally stopping to take a look at the massive statue you pass every day on your way to work. We therefore propose the notion of the musical unconscious as a viable way of considering music in American Studies, as the term to us seems to capture a variety of meanings that both allow for a recognition and understanding of the complexities of music in and for American culture while at the same time acknowledging and maintaining its peculiar dual status as a form of cultural production that is both marginalized and central. We are not interested in saving music from being marginalized because it is not, but neither are we satisfied with keeping it only safely stowed away in a clean, well-lighted place that we only tend to notice from the corner of our eye.

We will explore some of the meanings of the term 'musical unconscious' in the following, hoping to carve it into an analytical multi-purpose tool that may be of use to other scholars (and the essays collected

estimation that "[p]oets who are not interested in music are, or become, bad poets," and that "[p]oets who will not study music are defective" (437).

here all contribute to this in their own different ways). This is the first understanding of the term of which to take note, and what motivated the project as a whole: American Studies has a musical unconscious, an undercurrent it sometimes likes to tap into if it is in the mood, a realm that is both utterly removed from it and utterly important to it, and which affects its consciousness without ever becoming it.

2. FROM THE POLITICAL TO THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS

In theorizing the term 'musical unconscious,' we are carrying on a tradition within critical and cultural theory that has imagined different kinds of the unconscious, each of them provided with a defining adjective. We will not list all of these, yet some of them have to be mentioned that are vital to our understanding of what might be the musical unconscious, namely Carl Gustav Jung's 'collective unconscious' (1933), Walter Benjamin's 'optical unconscious' (1936), Félix Guattari's 'machinic unconscious' (1979), and Jacques Rancière's 'aesthetic unconscious' (2001).

Starting with Jung's concept, we could say that arguably there is a shared unconscious of a given society that is coextensive with, yet distinguished from, the unconscious of single human beings. This "collective unconscious," Jung argues, has more depth than that of individual persons and it points to a collective past that transcends yet includes these individuals (cf. 13); it always exceeds their lifetime and is therefore impersonal or ancestral. In many ways, Jung's conception is connected to other terms in cultural studies, such as 'collective consciousness,' 'cultural consciousness' or 'historical memory.' Conceived in a similar time period as Jung's, Benjamin's notion of an 'optical unconscious' is based on the influences of Freudian psychoanalysis and the then increasingly sophisticated technologies and new media of film and photography. Novel techniques of visual perception made possible by the respective camera apparatuses had an epistemological effect with respect to the nature of perception, *of what is simply not seen* in human perception, that

was comparable to the effect psychoanalytical techniques had in regard of the human psyche, as Benjamin argued (cf. 62).

Decades later, the French psychotherapist Guattari, who had previously collaborated with the philosopher Gilles Deleuze on *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), conceived of a 'machinic unconscious' that he saw as an alternative model to the authoritarian tendencies in understanding the unconscious within the discipline and discourse of psychoanalysis at the time; an alternative he termed "schizoanalysis" and which he did "not envision [...] as a technique or a science resting on laws and axioms, still less as a body of professions requiring initiatory training" (Guattari 190).[2] Put simply, this new form of analysis did not restrict itself to the human psyche as its object of inquiry but was open to and perceptive of all fields of human (and non-human) action. The following quote is thus representative of the rhetorical fervor and argumentative direction of Guattari's work *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis* (1979): "Here there is no question of 'cures' or anything like that. These reflections are the result of an experience, and they remain inseparable from a personal trajectory in the determined social, political, and cultural domains" (191).

Other than Guattari, Rancière's conception of an 'aesthetic unconscious' is less an extension or opening of the assumptions of psychoanalysis in terms of its object of analysis than simply a rival notion to the Freudian unconscious, historically speaking. In *The Aesthetic Unconscious* (2001), Rancière contends that Freud's concept of the unconscious rests on the development of the arts and the philosophical branch of aesthetics in the nineteenth century, and that it depends on what he henceforth calls 'the aesthetic unconscious' of human

2 It has to be noted, however, that already in chapter four of *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari develop the concept of schizoanalysis as opposed to Freudianism's representationalist tendencies (cf. 278) and its "reduction of sexuality to the pitiful familialist secret" (292). At this point, they write about a "Molecular Unconscious" that is not based on linguistic entities such as "metaphors, but [on] matter itself" (283).

communities (7). Because art and politics, in Rancière's sense, are inextricably linked, the unconscious of psychoanalysis—apart from its various interpretations of forms and works of art—presupposes the ways in which modes of seeing and perceiving have changed, due to the revolutionary innovations in artistic practice and its theorization that have taken place from the nineteenth century onwards. Aesthetics is the activity that "refers to a specific regime for identifying and reflecting on the arts: a mode of articulation between ways of doing and making, their corresponding forms of visibility, and possible ways of thinking about their relationships" (Rancière, *Politics* 10), and this activity is understood by Rancière as the general condition of possibility for the psychological tenets of thinking about the unconscious to take place. Freud's "primary goal," Rancière writes, "is not to establish a sexual etiology for artistic phenomena, but rather to intervene within the notion of unconscious thought that provides the productions of the aesthetic regime of art with their norm" (*Aesthetic* 53). And it is said regime that aesthetics denotes for Rancière in the first place: a space that is at once social and artistic, a certain arrangement in society that allows for emancipatory possibilities of life that are different from those that preceded that regime. It delineates a continuum of ways of living that includes theoretical reflection on par with practical action.

All four of these notions, as will become clear in this Introduction as well as the remainder of this volume, are indispensable to our own conception of the musical unconscious. Sometimes there will be explicit (read: *conscious*) references to collective formations of the musical unconscious in specific strata of society. At other times, perhaps, there will be implicit (read: *unconscious*) allusions to forms of the unconscious that contradict the logic of the strong ties between human individuals established by the heteronormative nuclear family, forms that we particularly find in subcultures whose musical taste defines their identity and self-conception as an alternative model of living within but also apart from social normativity. With respect to the world of

"musicking,"[3] that is, music-making and its reflection, musical performance and its reception, technological advances and cultural and historical regimes, will also play a major role in the elaboration of the musical unconscious, and thinkers like Benjamin and Rancière are kept in mind constantly when we express a certain distance to the predominantly psychological examination of unconscious processes that are mediated musically, i.e. technologically and aesthetically.

Yet, however important these versions of the unconscious seem to us, we are inspired in particular by Fredric Jameson's famous concept of the 'political unconscious,' which he proposed in 1981 in the book of that title. There, he famously argues "the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts," meaning that the political perspective is nothing less than "the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation" (1). This interpretation needs the foundation of a "genuine philosophy of history" (2), Marxism, in order to be integrated into "the unity of a single great collective story" and to acknowledge their historical specificities as well as their transhistorical relevance for our contemporary moment of reading without unduly modernizing them or detaching them from any real connection to our present. Jameson explores "the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" (5) by concentrating on realist and modernist literary texts of European descent in particular, and the full title of his work—*The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*—clearly states that it is narrative he is mainly concerned with, rather than other forms of cultural production. While recognizing the unique properties of narrative texts, one can still argue that Jameson's theory holds true for other such forms, and he is justified in speaking so generally of "cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" (5) even though his own focus lies on a particular subset of such artifacts. Clearly, music is

3 See Christopher Small's notion of 'musicking,' understood as a social practice that is constitutive of a co-participatory space of performance and reception, in his *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (1998).

another subset that is of considerable cultural importance, and it could be considered an even more social form of cultural production in that its very mediality invites a potentially more communal reception (and indeed production) than the literary text. Because of these differences in medium, its aural rather than textual or visual qualities, music constitutes a socially symbolic act in a very different way, and its specific and unique symbolic qualities have to be recognized as such, particularly when it comes to the question of meaningfulness.

Jameson himself recognizes the relevance of music in cultural analysis, stating that "[m]usic is clearly one of the most important components of American culture, and of postmodernity generally. People are listening to music all the time; it's a new spatial form they are surrounded with, and I wish I could write about that and music generally" (*Jameson on Jameson* 239).[4] Yet of course we do not simply want to replace one adjective with another here and argue for the priority of the *musical* interpretation of literary texts, and it is clear that 'the musical' and 'the political' work in very different ways, so that such a simple attempt at transference forbids itself for evident conceptual reasons, not to mention because it would hardly be original. Instead, we recognize Jameson's political unconscious as the fundamental undercurrent of the cultural artifacts of music as well, including the visual, textual, and corporeal aspects that are part of musical production and reception today. In speaking about the musical unconscious, we are not arguing that everything is, "'in the last analysis'" (Jameson, *Political* 5), musical, or that the musical perspective is some sort of absolute horizon of interpretation. Instead, we want to emphasize that music is one of the major sites of the political unconscious, and that its unique qualities as a form of cultural expression make it a particularly important but also contested site of the political.

4 While music is a form of artistic expression that is only marginally featured in Jameson's early career, it has to be noted that in chapters 2 and 3 of his latest book *The Ancients and the Postmoderns* (2015) he engages in analyses of Wagner's and Mahler's works.

Considering its function as one of the major affectively charged backdrops to cultural consciousness, it is precisely because music is non-narrative and even non-linguistic that its political qualities are often overlooked, as it is literally not as *readable* as a text. Other than reading a novel, for instance, the practice of reading music either implies the literal performance of music—as in reading aloud or performing a play on stage—or the erudite analysis of musical scores; in any case, reading music is not commonly associated with listening to it, and the reader is not the one who perceives it aurally—whereas in literature this is precisely the functional relation of perception and reception. The symbolic qualities of music may indeed be described as unconscious simply because it is often understood in terms of an immediacy whose experience is not as directly tied to the production of meaning as that of text. It would take considerable training to hear words for their sound only in your native language, and it would even be impossible to read a text in that language without considering it in terms of signification, if only because the very notion of reading (as opposed to seeing) implies finding meaning in something you see.

Yet we have no English word that would distinguish one mode of hearing from another, a more general one (the equivalent of 'seeing') and one referring to the perception of meaning (the equivalent of 'reading'), and although 'listening' might get close, it does not quite hit the nail on the head. Abstract art teaches us to see without reading, but with music it seems to be the other way round, and you need to learn to really hear what you are hearing. This aural immediacy, which seems to be a much more embodied experience than visual perception although they clearly both are, may be the reason why music is both privileged as a form of art and at the same time somewhat removed from cultural analysis, since its symbolic qualities are harder to access—one might say, they are more unconscious—than those of more explicitly and semiotically coded forms of art. Since the conscious perception of music is not necessarily tied to the conscious construction of meaning, it may be the form of art that can best assert its autonomy, *l'art pour l'art par excellence*—an art whose

'syntax' is not as directly tied to its 'semantics.' It is no accident that David Markson often singles out music in his late tetralogy when he explores the conflict between art and its social context and seeks to affirm the realm of the aesthetic as separate from the political, for example by quoting Toscanini's famous quip about Beethoven: "Bah! For me it is simply *allegro can brio*. / Said Toscanini about critics reading politics into the *Eroica*" (*VP* 175). Framing this positively, one might refer back to Walter Pater's famous statement that "[a]ll art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it" (106). In music, form and content are so indistinguishable because it is not as burdened with the semiotic as textual forms, yet of course this does not mean that it is not a socially symbolic act, only that it occurs on a different level, and that it must be read (or heard) in a particular way. Postmodernism's lasting accusation of narrative structure being generative of certain forms of teleology—keeping in mind the origins of hermeneutics as theological exegesis—plays itself out very differently when speaking about the story that is told in a particular song. Yet this does not warrant a denial of the social dimension in any forms of musical expression—neither in the blues tunes of Robert Johnson nor in the albums of Run-D.M.C. Of course, Toscanini's dismissal of the political for the sake of the aesthetic is based on a *recognition* of this symbolic content rather than an ignorance of it; it is precisely *because* the Eroica has been routinely framed in such political terms that he needed to draw attention to its musical qualities and its autonomy as a work of art again, just like Markson uses his example as a reminder that literature is not merely a particularly strange form of political pamphlet. At the same time, one should not forget that there is clearly a danger in dismissing or downplaying the symbolic qualities of music; people do not sing national anthems because they admire them aesthetically, nor do soldiers march to certain songs merely because they are convenient for their vocal range. It is precisely that

music is so good at distancing itself from signification that makes it relevant and effective as a socially symbolic act. Music is exactly the form of art that can deliver language itself from the burden of meaning, for example in vocal performances in classical opera and death metal that are notoriously hard to understand if you do not know what they are singing. Yet, at the same time, and indeed through this particular tendency towards the non-linguistic, music nevertheless retains and produces meanings. This, then, is another understanding of the musical unconscious: music is primarily a non-symbolic and non-linguistic form of art in terms of perception, yet it is invested with meaning, and it is clearly of sociopolitical relevance, even if this complexity of signification demands its own particular way of being accessed. In using the term of the 'musical unconscious,' we want to draw attention to this duality of resisting and producing signification at the same time.

3. CULTURE'S MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS

In another understanding of the *musical unconscious*, the term emphasizes the embeddedness of music within a particular sociopolitical and historical context. In this sense the musical unconscious refers to music *as* the unconscious of a culture rather than to the unconscious *of* music itself. In other words, music can be considered the site where certain ideologies manifest themselves that are otherwise denied, repressed, or simply not acknowledged by a culture, a 'dark' side to the 'light' one of an official and literally visible cultural mainstream. It is not by accident that music, an affective force to be reckoned with, is so instrumental in the constitution of subcultures, and arguably more effective than political agitation or other discursive means of group formation; the most notable example is certainly the rise of punk music in the 1970s, a scene that is still inextricably tied to leftist politics, and which can be seen as one of the most prominent and popular examples of a musical counterculture that reminds the mainstream

of what it ignores, neglects, and would rather not take note of.[5] It also shows that the notion of musical genre is important in providing frameworks in which certain norms and values find expression that are otherwise not acknowledged or voiced in other ways. While no musical form is in itself ideological, any such form can be inscribed as ideological, and can be reinscribed differently; while some forms seem relatively stable in the ideologies they espouse and present, others are highly contested in that respect. (Some musical forms may even present themselves as apolitical, which of course is just as political a perspective as any.) For example, hardcore music may be predominantly leftist in its politics, and yet it has not necessarily been so in its beginnings, and the music itself has also been adopted as a form by white power bands that inscribe it with meanings and ideologies that are diametrically opposed to the inscriptions the genre is nowadays known for. The music itself can sustain all such inscriptions, just like pop music or jazz, and while it is subject to certain genre conventions, these conventions are potentially subject to change, and one may describe them at a certain point in time but should be very careful to generalize beyond such historical particularities. The musical unconscious, then, is a way of referring to and concentrating on the assumptions, norms and values that are transported by music in a given culture in explicit and implicit statements as well as through its wider aesthetic context that includes lyrics, visual representations, and all other representations that are connected to the music itself.

Importantly, theorizing the musical unconscious is not a reiteration of the tiresome arguments about the psychological effects of music on individuals and groups, which since Aristotle (but much less elegantly nowadays) have tried to tie the 'wrong' kind of music to the 'wrong' kind of behavior and construct a one-dimensional causality that fails to recognize the complex interrelation between art and society but simply posits that, say, listening to rap music will

5 See Dick Hebdige's 1979 classic *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* for a groundbreaking recognition of the importance of music in the constitution of subcultures, and particularly his analysis of punk.

make you murder people, and classical music makes cows give more milk. Rather, the musical unconscious in its social sense seeks to draw attention to the ideologies, beliefs or norms of a culture that find expression in music either explicitly or implicitly, both as an affirmation of mainstream values and ideas and as their rejection or subversion. It is also a form of art that corresponds differently to the perceptive faculties of human beings than, say, literature or visual art, because it essentially conveys another kind of affectivity, one that is less coded by a particular syntax and semantics, or a specific visual regime, but more structured in sonic terms. Speaking in a different metaphor, music could be described as the form of art that haunts a society, a restless ghost that will not leave you alone, only that it haunts you in broad daylight when you are shopping at the mall rather than in a gloomy house you should not have entered in the first place.[6] This is particularly true where music has become 'just' entertainment and is apparently deprived of much of its meanings, or where it is employed to serve a particular purpose and traverses that fuzzy and indeed arbitrary boundary between music and sound.[7] One striking example of this is when music becomes Muzak, a term that is actually a particular trademark but has come to signify more generally any kind of so-called 'easy-listening' music. While one may think that the very definition and goal of Muzak is

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6 Cf. in connection to the idea of music as the artistic expression of society's ghosts and the concomitant notion of musical analysis as a well-nigh exorcism of sorts—compared to Jameson's narrative analyses as 'demystifications' of culture—Jacques Derrida's neologism "*hauntology*" (63), which he elaborates in his 1993 work *Specters of Marx*. For a contemporary recasting of Derrida's concept in the field of cultural studies, consider Mark Fisher's term "sonic hauntology" (48) in a recent article called "The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology."

7 This is not to present music and sound as a binary opposition, but to draw attention to the field of sound studies (or sonic studies) that has emerged in recent years and really opened up the consideration of acoustic phenomena far beyond the study of music, and which has quickly and very successfully emancipated itself from musicology to constitute a field in its own right (see Pinch and Bijsterveld; Sterne; as well as *The Journal of Sonic Studies*; *SoundEffects*; *Interference*; and *Sound Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*).

to provide an auditory background that is entirely devoid of 'content' and makes no demands whatsoever on its listeners (or rather hearers), it is precisely this attempted repression of meaning that makes it a particularly relevant site of the musical unconscious. In his groundbreaking study of easy-listening music, Joseph Lanza argues that

> mood music shifts music from *figure* to *ground*, to encourage peripheral hearing. Psychoanalysts might say that it displaces our attention from music's manifest content to its more surreal latent content. Hearing it, we are inspired to frame an otherwise disordered or boring existence into movie scenes whose accompanying soundtrack alternately follows and anticipates our thoughts and actions—but then shifts (or rather plays on) with a rhythm and logic indifferent to our own. Moodsong reinforces mounting suspicions that we live inside a dream. (3)

Especially this notion of peripheral hearing is highly relevant to a consideration of the musical unconscious, as it describes a certain acoustic perspective on a phenomenon that indicates but never quite fully reveals its "latent content."

4. THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS AS EXCESS OF MEANING

This conflict plays out in various ways, particularly where music is presented as an accompaniment to other phenomena that occupy the center of our attention, either because they have been emphatically placed there or because we have been trained to concentrate on them. One straightforward example of this is film music, which is integral to the construction of meaning in film but is often neglected in favor of the visual aspects of the medium and is rather seen as a secondary aspect that supports the primary one of moving images. This marginalization is even more evident in video games, which often allow players to mute the music in order to concentrate on what seem to be more important aspects of the cultural artifact at

hand, and only very few games explore the possibilities of music and sound as an actual ludic element (for example the iOS game *Papa Sangre*, or the once wildly popular *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* series). In these cases, the musical unconscious refers to the way music is perceived in settings that privilege other phenomena, the way music seems to be purposeful in the sense that it is *employed* for a particular goal, but also to the way music exceeds such limitations and adds its very own meanings and content to what is foregrounded and what it is supposed to support. In other words, music is an unruly art in these contexts, and its proliferation of meanings, associations and effects cannot be fully contained by the allegedly 'primary' medium it 'accompanies.'

Nor can its meanings be suppressed when music is used as sound and reduced in its signification to serve a particular purpose. For example, classical music has become part of the urban soundscape in various cities as it is played in subway stations in order to calm everyone down or scare away troublemakers. Furthermore, its function also consists in preventing people without tickets from getting too comfortable in the stations, certainly implying a certain high-cultural class bias in the sense that those who enjoy the music will be cultivated enough to behave, and those who do not have no business being there anyway. Yet the reduction of music to purposeful sound does not work entirely, and it retains its connotations despite being turned into a sonic weapon of policing public spaces. Jessica Duchen, writing about this practice in London in *The Independent*, poignantly observes the irony of the playlist being used, as she refuses to hear the music only as sound:

> Trundling through the packed ticket hall at Vauxhall Tube station, I and several hundred other travellers recently found our ears filled with the strains of Mahler—to be precise, the slow movement of his Symphony No 1, a spoof funeral march based on "Frère Jacques". Whoever chose to pipe this through the station loudspeakers at 8.30 on a Monday morning must have a slightly twisted sense of humour.

The music retains certain connotations even though it is played in a context that seeks to deprive them of any such meanings, and it assumes new meanings precisely because of this new contextualization, so that Mahler's piece seems a bitterly ironic comment on the tragic fate of a mass of workers starting yet another week with the usual commute. Thus the attempt to move music beyond consciousness to peripheral hearing results in the opening up of a very different realm of the musical unconscious, not making us unaware of music but rather drawing attention to aspects of which we had previously been unaware.[8]

Such a contextualization can be unconscious and undesired, as in the example above, or it can be part of a deliberate aesthetic strategy that uses the unique ability of music to 'accompany' other media to create new meanings. This is particularly effective in cases of intermediality, for example when film music presents an ironic contrast to the images on screen, reinscribing both or one of the elements with meanings that come about in their connection but potentially continue to exist independently afterwards. "What a Wonderful World" will never be the same song again after one has experienced it as the soundtrack to the napalm bombings in *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987), and one could say that this context—which certainly has nothing to do with the original song, its lyrics, or any other aspects—has inscribed itself into its musical unconscious, and that it is now part of its reception and interpretation. One might wager that hardly anyone thinks of the river when hearing "The Blue Danube" but rather of space travel, thanks to *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), so that it seems quite natural to the 1984 computer game *Elite* to use the same waltz to accompany its docking sequences; the same is true of "Thus spake

8 On sound and urban public space, see the first issue of *The Journal of Sonic Studies*, in particular the essays by Thibaud and Butera; more specifically, on the practice of using classical music in public transport hubs, see Klußmann. In this context, it is also worth considering the countermeasures to having music/sound forced upon you in public places, which means the creation of a "personal sound space" (Fluegge) by means of portable music players and earphones; see Bull; Fluegge.

Zarathustra," and of course Kubrick has permanently added an element of 'ultraviolence' to Beethoven through *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) that is very hard to repress afterwards.

This is not a one-way influence, though. For example, Rage Against the Machine have turned their contribution to the soundtrack to *Godzilla* (1998), "No Shelter," into a stinging critique of mainstream cinema in particular and the culture industry in general, using both to deliver a political message against them:

> Cinema, simulated life, ill drama
> Fourth Reich culture—Americana
> Chained to the dream they got you searching for
> The thin line between entertainment and war

Especially the line "Godzilla, pure motherfucking filler, get your eyes off the real killer" add a layer of meaning to the movie that was certainly not part of its blockbuster aesthetics, demanding a political interpretation of this very attempt to deliver 'pure entertainment' to the masses, and indeed indicating that the original meaning of the term 'blockbuster,' designating a bomb that could destroy a whole block of buildings in World War II, still retains a presence even in its destructive connotations in today's entertainment industry.[9]

5. THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS AS CONTEXTUALIZATION

Such contextualization not only refers to an intermedial framework, though. It also describes the privileging of certain aspects of music at the neglect of others, in which case the musical unconscious can be used to understand this rest or excess of signification. It is particularly a certain *de*contextualization and *re*contextualization that adds meaning to music, and both form part of the musical unconscious

9 For an interpretation of "No Shelter" with regard to the productive paradox of delivering a critique of the culture industry through its very products, see Hall.

as a resource of connotations that oscillate between presence and absence without ever fully being either. For example, this occurs when reading popular songs only for their lyrics instead of their vocal performance or the music of which it is part, or ignoring the lyrics while focusing only on the music, and so on. While there are often quite practical reasons for doing so, and every approach should be granted its right to have a focus, one should at least be aware of the neglect of other aspects that might even go against the grain of one's own reading, and which could be said to form part of the musical unconscious as a particular interpretation concentrates consciously on other aspects.

Especially the recognition of this dissonance taps into the connotations the musical unconscious holds in store. One striking example is the one included in Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11*, in which American tank crews talk about the soundtrack to their attacks, using heavy metal music to get them "real fired up, ready to do the job." One soldier holds a CD up to the camera and says "this is the one we listen to the most," the Ozzfest 2001 sampler. He highlights in particular Drowning Pool's song "Bodies" with its refrain "Let the bodies hit the floor," describing it as "just fitting for the job we were doing." This in itself is a recontextualization of the song, an interpretation of its lyrics that is not exactly sustained by textual evidence, but one that was quite readily embraced by the band later on, even as it was also revealed to be on the infamous 'Guantanamo playlist' of songs used to torture prisoners. Bass player Stevie Benton said he would "take it as an honor to think that perhaps our song be used to quell another 9/11 attack or something like that" (Peisner), and the song has accordingly transformed from "yet another chugging anti-authoritarian anthem into a theme song for American military macho" (Hepola). While its interpretations shifted in such a way, it still retains a connection to other contexts that potentially produce other readings and add different layers of meaning to the dominant understanding of the song and its use. For example, there are the various genre conventions of heavy metal that need to be considered in the process of how

a particular song is inscribed with meaning by listeners and the media. While the genre itself is utterly fascinated with militaristic imagery and drastic representations of violence, it often deploys them in anti-war songs (cf. classics such as Black Sabbath's "War Pigs," Megadeth's "Peace Sells," or Slayer's "Mandatory Suicide"), and the genre tends to favor such an anti-war stance due to its emphasis on individualism that is at odds with the mass mobilization of war. This is not the place to delve into the complexities of this topic, and several essays have addressed it in particular with regard to *Fahrenheit 9/11* and the filmic representation of war and heavy metal.[10] What is important here is that the music represented exceeds the meanings ascribed to it both by the soldiers in the movie as well as the movie itself, which uses "Bodies" as a bitterly ironic soundtrack to images of actual dead bodies who are, by virtue of how the film is cut, associated with the attacks described by the soldiers before, and the very energy of the song in which the soldiers' delight is placed in stark contrast with the gruesome stillness of those who have been killed. Considering the wider generic context and the tradition in heavy metal to describe the horrors of war rather than celebrate it adds another level of irony to both the representation and what is represented, as it introduces an element of critique that is not acknowledged by either.

Furthermore, the context is widened even more by the reference to the actual CD sampler instead of just the song, reportedly the favorite of this particular tank crew, since this collection includes other songs that undermine rather than support the meanings inscribed on "Bodies" by the soldiers. In "The Love Song" by Marilyn Manson, the questions of "Do you love your guns? [...] god? [...] your government?" are all answered with emphatic "yeahs" and a final "fuck yeah" shouted by groups, affirming the three Gs that Manson sees at the heart of the American way of life. The song offers an ironic critique of this ideology, and it exposes rather than joins in with the fraudulent narratives that underlie American war. Especially Hatebreed's "Last

10 See Waksman; Sumera.

Breath" provides an even darker commentary on the violence that is allegedly being committed with the song playing as its soundtrack, and while its raging mix of hardcore and heavy metal certainly is as aggressive as "Bodies," its lyrics are rather mournful, and they speak of loss, regret, meaninglessness, and injustice in brief but direct and effective words:

> All the prayers in the world can't bring you back.
> It's your last breath, this is our last breath.
> Taken from this earth without warning.
> Victim of the ultimate injustice.
> Nothing will ever make sense of this.
> Nothing could have prepared me.
> All that is left are memories, and the pieces of a shattered existence.
> I wish I could bring back.

If this is the soundtrack to war, it is that of the anti-war movie, offering a counterpoint to the violence that could be voiced by the survivor of an attack mourning a beloved victim rather than from the perspective of the attacker. One might say that making this connection between the songs on the CD is arbitrary and unduly expands the context of how "Bodies" is represented in the film, and yet the interpretations of the song both by the soldiers and the movie are just as arbitrary, as they also focus on particular aspects without considering the myriad of interconnections that constitute the meanings inscribed on it, and which may fundamentally change our reading of a particular cultural artefact.

The notion of the musical unconscious provides a metaphor that helps make such connections and actually invites us to do so. It neither describes a realm of Jungian archetypes that fill a collective unconscious we all somehow share in, nor does it designate a psychological state at all. Instead, it is a way of insisting on the embeddedness and interconnectedness of musical cultural artifacts and their irreducible proliferation of meanings. It evokes the ways in which

a musical expression and its semantic connotations are negotiated according to the social and (geo-)political contexts that define each and every expression, even if we concede a minimal part to these musical 'utterances' that does not depend on their proliferation, a remainder that is untouched by its context, its time and place, and that thereby stands for the utterances' uniqueness *as* musical expressions. The musical unconscious is both the generative condition for the appropriation and recuperation of meanings attached to any particular recording, song, or performance, and, by the same token, it testifies to the autonomy of music with respect to the semantic infiltration of the realms of literary and visual culture.

6. THE TRANSTEMPORAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS

It is important to note that this connectedness is not merely contemporary but rather transtemporal, and the concept of the musical unconscious (again, like Jameson's political unconscious) includes both the recognition of the particular historicity of any given cultural artifact and of its connection to other particular moments in history. In other words, it invites not only expansions of contexts in the present but also across time to recognize continuities that add new layers of meaning to what is being considered, regardless of whether these historical connections are explicitly part of an aesthetic strategy or rather implicitly present, although of course the latter fits the notion of the musical unconscious more precisely. Again, this is not to imply that musical artists might share in some psychological reservoir of archetypes and we might conclude of the transhistorical existence of such a realm, but rather to indicate certain commonalities that might add to our understanding of both items under consideration. One can draw historical parallels without falling into the extremes of positing either cultural universals or a dichotomy of 'original' and 'copy,' instead recognizing historical specificities and continuities alike. For example, one might explore the connections between the Harlem

Renaissance and Hip Hop[11] or between American Romanticism and Black Metal,[12] yet such explorations are not only limited to broader cultural phenomena.

In fact, a particular case in which the musical unconscious is at work can be most revealing: the cover version. Here, the performative element of music is foregrounded to blur the distinction of original and copy mentioned above, much more so than with text, and far beyond literary concepts such as allusion, reference, or indeed plagiarism. The cover version is both an original *and* a copy, a reinterpretation of a song only insofar as the 'original' recording is always already a reinterpretation. Again, much like in drama, in music the work of art only really comes about in performance, and all textual representations are at best preliminary and secondary to that performance—which is also why the musicians or band that have recorded a particular album are generally called the 'interpreters.' While of course classical music routinely embraces this notion of interpretation, considering certain recordings authoritative or groundbreaking but hardly 'original,' popular music usually retains a firm belief in originality that is tied to a particular recording (which may not be the 'original' at all). This certainly speaks of different modes of cultural production as well as commodification, and these different perceptions and constructions of originality are clearly tied to copyright law and monetary considerations. Be that as it may, the cover version both relates to a prior work but also asserts its aesthetic autonomy, and the influence of both versions is *mutual* and not one-dimensional. It is a case of what T. S. Eliot describes in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it." The cover version affects the 'original' in such a way that it is potentially reinscribed with a wholly different set of

11 Cf. Rabaka.
12 Cf. Pöhlmann.

meanings than it had previously evoked, which could be described as un-covering the song's musical unconscious.

At the same time, traces of the 'original' will always haunt the cover versions, and its meanings and contexts will not be repressed, regardless of how different the later version might be in its arrangements and emphases. As the cultural critic Mark Fisher puts it in a discussion of the R&B artist Little Axe (aka Skip McDonald) and his "immersion in old music": "It is difficult to disentangle sampling from songwriting, impossible to draw firm lines between a cover version and an original song. Songs are texturally dense palimpsests, accreted rather than authored" (52–53). This holds especially true for cover songs, as they are necessarily layered constructs of past recordings, originally reconstructed musical fragments instead of original compositions. The haunting of a present recording by its musical past, within and without its specific genre, is an important aspect of what we call the musical unconscious, and it is in many ways related to what Fisher, following Derrida, terms "sonic hauntology," which "is exercised by the problem of memory and its imperfect recovery; a familiar enough theme, but one given an extra piquancy in the context of electronic music, which was for so long treated as a herald and signifier of the future" (45).

One particularly striking example of this exploration of the musical unconscious is Tori Amos's 2001 album *Strange Little Girls*,[13] which features twelve covers of songs that were all written and originally performed by men, and Amos's cover versions shifts their perspective to represent the female aspect that has been neglected in the original performance. In doing so, she is notably not changing the lyrics themselves, but the change in perspective comes about exclusively through the arrangement. While having a female voice sing these lyrics makes a significant difference to their interpretation, it is also changing the music itself that adds new meaning to these songs,

13 On the album and its feminist rewritings, see Birrer/Schnackenberg and especially the more elaborate essay by Butler, which also contains a concise analysis of the cover version in general.

or rather teases out meanings that have already been present yet repressed in them. In psychoanalytical terms: Amos's versions transform the songs' latent femininity into their manifest content, which is strengthened further by the textual and visual representations in the album booklet. The most radical change in musical terms certainly occurs in "97 Bonnie & Clyde" and "Raining Blood," both of which are recognizable as such only by their lyrics but not musically. These songs are stripped of all their generic musical trademarks and are completely transposed from their rap and thrash metal contexts (and thus also from the quite heavily male-centered perspectives of these genres). The Eminem song about murdering his wife now shifts to her perspective in the trunk of his car as he is disposing her body, and it offers a counterperspective on the often-glorified violence that is a pervasive trope of rap and heavy metal alike.

This shift in perspective is most effective in "I Don't Like Mondays" by the Boomtown Rats, which even in its 'original' version is a great example of how the musical unconscious and its multiplicity of meanings and contexts can work. A mainstream radio favorite, its refrain "Tell me why / I don't like Mondays" seems to voice precisely the feelings of those listening to it on their way to work on the Monday mornings during which the song is preferably played, while of course most commercial radio stations usually would not so eagerly play other songs about high school shootings. While these levels of meaning are diminished and repressed by the modes in which the song is reproduced and received, they are not really extinguished, and the song retains its critical edge that addresses individual psychoses, social exclusion, violence, and ultimately human mortality: "the lesson today is how to die," which is not what you really want on your way to the office, but that is precisely what you are getting along with all the other meanings you might find, or not find, in that song.

Tori Amos's cover version of the song adds yet another layer to that in assuming the perspective of the female high school shooter, who is only talked *about* in the original version but does not get to represent herself. Again, Amos does not rewrite the lyrics, but the third-person

references to 'her' along with the first-person references in the chorus now invite an interpretation of a deeply split personality, making the song a mixture of confused introspection, deep sadness, and utter rage, a complexity that is also underscored by the musical arrangement that is more muted than the original, with the vocals close to whispering occasionally as they deliver the lines about murdering people with a calm and resigned intensity that exceeds that of many a song whose vocals try to duplicate it through their harshness. Much like in the case of film music mentioned above, these cover versions fundamentally affect the originals in such a way that they will never be quite the same to those who have heard both, and this interrelation—which is always open to revision and particularly to new meanings, as any new version might rewrite the old ones—is therefore a striking example of the transtemporal network that is the musical unconscious.

On a related note, one might ask what makes certain music seem relevant and indeed popular at a certain historical point but irrelevant and unpopular at another, which means an inquiry into the processes of the cultural industry as well as into the aesthetic value judgments and their connection to certain sociopolitical and economic contexts. Tom Lehrer is a great example of this in American music: while some of his songs nowadays seem dated due to references that may have been instantly understood in the 1960s but might require some research in the twenty-first century, others seem so contemporary (and still satisfyingly provocative) that a listener knowing nothing about Lehrer might be forgiven for thinking they were written a month ago. Concluding that "Lehrer's music is largely timeless," Matt Crowley quotes Lehrer's explanation of "his prescience with typical modesty, saying, 'always predict the worst and you'll be hailed as a prophet.'" Yet this timelessness—a term that should be understood to indicate no more than a certain relevance in and to the present, but neither a prediction nor an assertion of some aesthetic universality—is not merely due to the lyrics, their subversive countercultural spirit, their satirical black humor, and certainly also the fact that "Poisoning

Pidgeons in the Park" is something probably even more people can relate to now than in the 1960s.

For one, they seem contemporary because of the quality of their recording, and this is a good occasion to stress the more general relevance of (media) technology for the musical unconscious. In this case, it relates to the way music is recorded, stored, and reproduced; particularly Lehrer's 1965 live album *That Was the Year That Was* can hold its own among other live albums today, which may be due to the fact that recording just one voice, piano, and the audience poses less of a technological challenge than recording the fourth movement of Beethoven's ninth symphony. Nevertheless, it conforms to certain standards of recording we recognize as 'normal' today, and this transtemporal consideration of recorded music may offer insight into the normativity underlying such value judgments, just like a comparison of 'normal' live performances would. These standards change as music is performed and recorded differently, and particularly as it is *listened* to differently; this is summarized perfectly in the "Prom Night" episode of *Parks & Recreation* (season 6, episode 18, 2014), in which a high school student comments favorably on the classic rock played by DJ Ben, and then pompously declares with all the gravitas of the true connoisseur: "I only listen to CDs. It's the way music like this was meant to be heard." At which DJ Tom, whose very own idea of contemporary cool lets him down, is genuinely shocked: "But it's not even auto-tuned!" The comedy, of course, here lies in the clash of cultures of musical reception, most of all in replacing "CD" for "vinyl" in the reference to the 'proper' medium for music that is nostalgically romanticized after having been replaced by a new one.

These normative statements change along with technology, always producing an avant-garde along with a conservative consumer group, who may have been avant-garde only a bit earlier. The way we consume music—publicly and privately—affects the music itself, so that for example contemporary productions are geared towards the sound range of mobile devices rather than the costly setups audiophiles might have in their homes, or of course that music is designed for

marketability and thus songs might be kept under a certain length. This is yet another facet of the musical unconscious, the way in which music is affected by its media, and how technology influences aesthetics.[14] Recalling Jameson's differentiation of the complex web that is the political unconscious into individual text, social context, and technological mode of production,[15] the consumption of music arguably combines all three of these dimensions in an exemplary manner, as the sites of the reception and processing of music are also sites of intersection between the factors of aesthetic form, social performance, and formative manufacture. In fact, what is so powerful about these intersections is that it is precisely at these points that the transitions from latent to manifest content and between the realms of the social, the aesthetic, and the technological become possible.

Returning to Tom Lehrer, it is clear that his timeliness (rather than timelessness) is not just due to his lyrics or the standard of recording. Most importantly, his songs would not seem so contemporary if their musical form did not match certain aesthetic categories we recognize as 'ours' today. Their (parodic) references, for example that of his famous "The Elements" to Gilbert and Sullivan's "Major-General's Song" from *The Pirates of Penzance*, or "The Vatican Rag" to "The Spaghetti Rag," are probably lost on contemporary listeners, buried deeper in the musical unconscious as the originals have become historic artifacts rather than active parts of musical culture. Yet the very constellation of one singer playing the piano while performing humorous songs and chatting to the audience in between during live performances still remains a popular form of musical and comical entertainment today, which is in no small part due to Lehrer's groundbreaking success. In other words, Lehrer's music seems so contemporary to us because it has considerably helped establish a genre that is still very much alive. Yet the genre's roots can certainly be traced further across time to find other connections, for example

14 On music and technology, see for example Sinnreich; Taylor; and of course Kittler.

15 See chapter 1 of *The Political Unconscious*.

in Vaudeville, whose lasting effect on many other popular (comic) musical forms can hardly be overestimated. Such abstractions and contextualizations are certainly historic but always also transtemporal, in the sense that they not only consider a given cultural artifact, form, or aesthetics in its respective historical context, but also in relation to earlier and later artifacts, forms, or aesthetics. The musical unconscious is a way of describing, understanding, and analyzing the significance of these connections, not to construct simplistic flows of 'influence' or to locate 'originality,' but rather to fully explore the relations in this transtemporal network in order to work out how they produce, affect, and change the meanings and interpretations of its nodes, and how and why some may gain significance and relevance over time while others lose it.

7. THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS AND IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

While the psychological notion of a collective unconscious does not come without its problems, it is important to insist on the collective aspect of the musical unconscious, as music plays a major role in forming such collectives and constructing collective experiences and ideologies. This is the final aspect we would like to highlight, especially with regard to (the first part in) the title of the present volume, *America and the Musical Unconscious*. In using this phrase, we want to emphasize the importance of music for the individual and collective imagination of community. Notably, this is not necessarily the imagination of *nationality*, and we want to explicitly reject the still all too prevalent equation of community with nationality. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue in *Empire* (2000) in reference to Benedict Anderson's famous definition of the nation as "an imagined political community" (6), this imagination has become so dominant that in the modern world "*the nation becomes the only way to imagine community!* Every imagination of a community becomes overcoded as a nation, and hence our conception of community is

severely impoverished" (107). Thus we explicitly propose the musical unconscious as a postnationalist and postnational tool of inquiring into the relevance of music in imagining the community of the nation *as well as* in imagining community differently, beyond the national. The focus of this volume is on the imagination of U.S.-American nationality and its transcendence, and yet this pragmatic specialization should not be taken as an indication that one could not generalize beyond this framework, and the musical unconscious certainly plays a crucial role in the construction and critique of other imagined communities as well— one might go as far as saying that American music often seems to represent the musical unconscious of other nations as a result of an aesthetic globalization in which America's musical forms of expression, very much like in the visual arts, remain the cultural dominant.

Considering America and the musical unconscious, then, means inquiring into the role of music in the construction and subversion of American nationality, its potential to imagine community as American and beyond. The musical unconscious may be used as a conceptual tool to describe these processes and the conflicts that underlie them, particularly in terms of a dominant paradigm of unifying collectivity and various challenging paradigms that seek to replace, undermine, or at least change it. This first of all includes the basic recognition of the importance of music in an explicitly national context for nationalist purposes. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call the nation "a refrain" (456), and the musical metaphor is an apt and precise one because it highlights the necessity and power of repetition and recognition in nation-building.[16] Music has been instrumental to nationalism, and it is, above all, in national anthems that this use of

16 Yet consider Ronald Bogue's reminder that there is more than one kind of refrain in Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the term. As Bogue succinctly puts it: "The refrain is a territorializing force, in that it encodes milieus and organizes territorial assemblages, yet it is also a deterritorializing force" (75). The refrain *qua* nation, then, would be territorializing, that is, musically staking off a certain area for the respective imagined community, while its subversion would be a deterritorializing

music finds its most prominent examples, although other nationalist songs may be just as effective (in Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, Tyrone Slothrop refers to "God Bless America" and "This Is the Army, Mister Jones" as "his country's versions of the Horst Wessel Song" (*GR* 443), rightly implying that there is no difference between a good patriotism and a bad nationalism). Anderson singles out national anthems for the collective experience they offer: "there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity" when "people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance" (145). Importantly, he also insists that "such choruses are joinable in time" (145), so that belonging is not determined by any essential properties but rather performatively. Whereas the nationalist purpose of national anthems is hardly unconscious but as explicit as it gets, it is nevertheless useful to consider how they exploit the unconscious to that end. Their effectiveness in imagining community probably lies exactly in the fact that they are often sung in contexts that have not been framed as national until the very performance of the national anthem has inscribed them as such (think of *any* sports event in the U.S.), and that this practice is widely accepted.

While such explicit nationalist uses of music are definitely a rich field for analysis in terms of the musical unconscious, we are even more interested in those cases in which music is invested with national significance regardless of its more manifest content, or even in stark contrast to it. Myriad questions arise in this context and may serve as examples here with regard to American nationality. How did Charles Ives earn his reputation as an originally American composer, and why was his work interpreted in such a national context?[17] Similarly, why are blues, jazz, and hip hop considered to be genuinely American forms of music, and how does this contrast with the genres' *African*-American roots and the critique of America voiced from this perspective?[18] More generally,

force such as satire or musical caricature, which is simply another kind of refrain.

17 Cf. Rathert.

18 Cf. Ostendorf.

what makes for musical authenticity in relation to a particular imagined community? How does Americanness in music come about, and how does it relate to a global market on which this music is bought and sold? As we mentioned earlier, American music has indeed *become* the global musical unconscious, since the American culture industry has come to dominate the market and has thus had a considerable impact on the aesthetics of music worldwide. However, before complaining too much about cultural imperialism, one should also recognize that the global musical unconscious has had its effect on American music as well, and that the flows of information enabled by postmodern media technology have resulted in an exchange and mutual influence rather than in a one-way relation of overwriting one musical culture with a more dominant one. Here, the musical unconscious offers a way of recognizing both the specificity of the way music is used in the construction of a particular imagined community as well as its embeddedness in a larger context in which no music is ever contained by the limits drawn up by one particular imagined community, and it tends towards exchange, influence, and flexibility, perhaps in stark contrast to the stability sought in constructing the community in question. Music that utterly fails to have an effect or even meaning in one context may prove highly (and surprisingly) efficient in another with regard to imagining community—just remember David Hasselhoff's bizarre rendition of "Looking for Freedom" at the Berlin Wall in 1989 to a crowd of 500,000 people (and its 2014 revival on New Year's Eve); or the no less bizarre fact that Enya's "Only Time" has somehow become the official soundtrack to images of the attacks of September 11, 2001.

At the same time, the musical unconscious—like Deleuze and Guattari's 'refrain'— also includes the subversion of the national. Music may be potentially more communal as a form of art than others, but there is no reason why it should be associated with a particular form of community. While it can be used to great effect in constructing nationality, evoking national sentiment (whatever that is), and imagining the community of the nation, it can also be used to great effect to destabilize nationality and the particular affects that

seem strongly attached to it. Put simply, the musical unconscious can imagine community differently. Jimi Hendrix playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at Woodstock in 1969 certainly is a prime example of such a subversive use of music with regard to a dominant concept of nationality and national identity. Was this a parody, an attack, or an appropriation? Is this the equivalent of burning an American flag on stage, which is exactly what Rage Against the Machine did at Woodstock '99? Did Hendrix try to incorporate the sounds of the Vietnam War into the anthem through his guitar? Or is it a symbolic reinscription of national identity by and for a counterculture, a new national anthem for a new America that began in Woodstock? Here, music once more resists clear signification and dwells in a multiplicity of meanings, as none of them really seems to suggest that Hendrix played the anthem out of a deeply-felt patriotism or in the same spirit in which it precedes a baseball game.

A similar yet blunter example is the performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" by Sasha Baron Cohen as Borat in the movie of the same name, to an audience at a rodeo in Salem, Virginia that is visually staged as redneck. The nationalist environment of the event is highlighted by the shot of a massive American flag carried by a rider, which fills almost the entire frame. Cohen first addresses the audience by declaring that the Kazakhs support "your war of terror" (not 'against'), asking for a show of support for the troops, expressing his hope that the "U.S. and A. kill every single terrorist," that "George W. Bush [may] drink the blood of every man, woman and child of Iraq," and finally: "May you destroy their country so that for next thousand years not even a single lizard will survive in their desert!" While the applause gradually gets weaker after every statement, the audience is still affirmative, but this changes completely when its sense of nationalism is violated through song, and Cohen sings the lyrics of a fake Kazakh national anthem to the tune of the American one. His lyrics concisely expose the chauvinism that characterizes the genre: "Kazakhstan is the greatest country in the world / All other countries are run by little girls. / Kazakhstan is the number one exporter of

potassium. / Other Central Asian countries have inferior potassium." The audience, all standing of course, start booing him at around the time when potassium is mentioned, and the scene ends when he repeats the first line by singing "All other countries is the home of the gays" and, in the background, the horse with the rider and his flag falls over. Thus Cohen has symbolically brought down the nation by assaulting its musical foundation, using music's unruliness in terms of signification in order to undermine the attempt to inscribe it permanently with a single meaning. This is not a parody in which a dominant version of America is criticized for the sake of replacing it with a better version, not a call for change to America, but rather an all-out post-national assault on nationalism and the nation itself, ridiculing it on the same emotional level it exploits in its imagination of community.

This is anti-American and anti-national music, and it is an example of a musical unconscious that refuses to let music be nothing but a political tool, but which asserts and uses its very autonomy from such singular inscriptions. Music thus is part of the contested space of imagining communities, particularly with and against the national, and it operates and intervenes on all the manifold sides of this imagination, and to many different effects. This irreducible multiplicity is invoked by the notion of the musical unconscious, the fact that music—even more so than literature and the visual arts—cannot be fixed to serve one purpose only and convey one meaning only, but that it will always be able to also present a different perspective, to imply or even show what has been repressed in the process of limiting its meanings to one end or another, or to even be that repressed element itself in relation to a dominant discourse that refuses to acknowledge it. It is not as simple as saying that music does this or that; exploring the musical unconscious means acknowledging the very fact that music always does more.

8. EXPLORING THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS

Recognizing this literally *polyvocal* character of the musical unconscious, then, is precisely what the essays collected here have in common, as they all explore the different connotations invoked by the concept of the musical unconscious in one way or another. They will all remind you of what we have outlined above, and our own theorization is clearly inspired by the work done by these scholars, while we make no claims to represent their approaches in their entirety or to incorporate all their perspectives into a single, monolithic theory, which would not do justice to their diversity. They address the musical unconscious in its relation to different media, sociopolitical contexts, genres and styles, historical and local circumstances, and various other parameters that shed light on the complexities of the idea at the heart of this project, and in our opinion they all are examples of how a critical tool and a conceptual metaphor such as the musical unconscious can result in fresh perspectives and striking insights on a particular subject.

The collection opens with Martin Butler's "Timeless Tunes, Immortal Voices: On the 'Historical Fate' of the Protest Song and the Musical Unconscious of the 'Other' America." Butler outlines the current state of protest song culture and elaborates on the nomadic identities and subject positions projected by that culture. Defining the sonic dimension of protest culture as part and parcel of the musical unconscious in America, Butler criticizes the neglect of the protest song's importance in Simon Frith's *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (1998) and consequently argues that the figures of the 'amateur' and what Zygmunt Bauman has called the 'stranger' are emblematic of the current "process of 'folkification,' [of] a 'folk revival 2.0'" (61).

Christian Schmidt's essay "All Kinds of (Queer) Rednecks: The Sexual Politics of Contemporary Country Music" traces the reactionary and often homophobic tendencies of today's country music. The figure of the redneck is deployed as an "icon of alterity" (65) in the narratives and audiovisual practices of that particular music genre. Following Jameson's term of the 'political unconscious,'

Schmidt discerns the ideological entanglement of the redneck figure and contemporary country.

Engaging in similarly traditional subject matter—genre-wise, that is—Mario Dunkel's essay "Constructing the American Hugues Panassié" discusses the transatlantic dimension of the musical unconscious in terms of the cultural exchanges between jazz criticism of American and European descent. Taking the example of the French critic Hugues Panassié, Dunkel elaborates on these exchanges in a period that saw "African American improvised jazz" become "an American national art" (102). Ultimately, the practice of constructing particular images of jazz and its reception on both sides of the Atlantic indicates the particularly national but also transnational inscription of music within the field of culture.

In "Welcome to Atlanta where the Bluesman Plays: Touring the Dirty South with Blind Willie McTell," Jürgen E. Grandt traces the continuous line of Atlanta-based music from the blues singer Willie McTell to hip-hoppers Jermaine Dupri and Ludacris. Grandt analyzes the semiotic structure of the music video as a form of artistic expression—in this case Dupri and Ludacris's "Welcome to Atlanta"—and shows how the place depicted in it makes for a whole symbolic battleground whose issues are centered around the claim to authenticity and the distribution of cultural capital.

Christian Broecking also examines these issues, yet in terms of jazz culture rather than blues and hip-hop. His essay "Blackness and Identity in Jazz" includes many extracts from original interviews that he conducted with some of the greats of the genre, such as Anthony Braxton, Wynton Marsalis, or Jason Moran. These quotes offer a glimpse into the musicians' own standpoints on race and its cultural constructions, and in doing so go beyond mere iterations of the discursive dynamics of these constructions in terms of the music's reception.

Moving from the political to the ecological, Hanjo Berressem provides a new analysis of selected works by the American composer Alvin Lucier from the perspective of Guattarian schizoanalysis in "Vibes: Tape Recording the Acoustic Unconscious." Criticizing the

strictly psychoanalytical notions of the unconscious in Jameson and other theorists for their reductionism, Berressem emphasizes the importance of the generally acoustic dimension of unconscious processes that, according to him, are best discerned by turning to the physics of sound instead of its cultural metaphorics. "Lucier's [is an] 'acoustic unconscious,' whose currency is sine waves rather than waves of desire, whose pathologies are measured in 'hertz' and whose Freud and Lacan are Fourier and Helmholtz" (153). Far from excluding the political dimension from his analysis, Berressem also develops a 'politics of sound' against the backdrop of the work of Thomas Pynchon *vis-à-vis* Lucier's compositional practices.

Christof Decker explores intermediality, multimediality, and the construction of meaning in terms of film music in his essay "'It flows through me like rain': Minimal Music and Transcendence in *American Beauty* (1999)." Considering the historical specificities of minimalist film scores such as that by Thomas Newman for Sam Mendes's 1999 film, Decker shows how the lack of musical leitmotifs translates onto the actual content of the themes depicted in the movie itself, which are condensed in "the final metaphor of beauty flowing through the body like rain" (209)—a metaphor that elevates ordinary life onto a transcendent level.

Approaching the link between minimalism and film scores from a different perspective in "Music and Circular Narration in Jim Jarmusch's *Permanent Vacation*," Benedikt Feiten explores the ways in which aural and visual storytelling affect each other. More specifically, the essay shows how the repetitive structure of gamelan music in Jarmusch's movie reflects that of its protagonist and *vice versa*.

Touching upon similar issues to those raised in Schmidt's essay, Thoren Opitz analyzes the cultural matrix of sexual identity and its representation in the form of a music video in "'The White (Straight) Man's Burden'? Race, Hip Hop and Homophobia in Macklemore's 'Same Love.'" Criticizing the rapper Macklemore for assuming the role of being representative of a minority group tacitly revisits the anthropological question of whether the ethnographer (in this case,

the musician) really has the right to speak in the name of the (supposedly) voiceless people that are being interviewed and represented in text (or music).[19]

Katharina Wiedlack's "Punk Noise, Social Criticism, and Queer-feminist Decolonial Politics, Or 'The Promise of No Future'" engages with another minority group from a more radical standpoint. Merging the psychoanalytics of contemporary queer theory and hardcore music, Wiedlack argues "that punk rock is not only a form of queer theory but influenced queer theory, or in other words: that the musical unconscious of contemporary queer theory *is* punk" (248; emphasis added).

In her essay "U.S. Black Metal, Folk Music and Political Radicalism: Panopticon's *Kentucky*," Paola Ferrero discusses an equally radical music genre and subculture: Black Metal. Providing a history of the origins of this (literal!) amplification of heavy metal's anti-establishment sentiments, Ferrero shows how, in the case of the band Panopticon, the site-specificity of the Appalachian miners' struggles and the folk tradition that emerged out of them has transformed the genre's Scandinavian roots that were less concerned with political anarchism than with a cultural rebellion against a middle-class establishment that was voiced in the symbolic form of Satanism and Paganism.

Christian Hänggi focuses on usage and representation of musical instruments in the novels of Thomas Pynchon in "'Harmonica, kazoo—a friend.' Pynchon's Lessons in Organology." Taking his cue from the author's general affinity with all things musical in the notoriously multilayered narratives of *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Against the Day*, and other works, Hänggi demonstrates the political dimension of musical expression as depicted in literary fiction and how specific instruments, such as the harmonica and the kazoo, can signify both the subversion and the preservation of culture. He thereby recounts these instruments' "entanglement in social struggles, warfare, power games, and consumer culture" (290).

19 Cf. Clifford and Marcus.

Along these lines, "Mixing Pop and Politics: Campaign Songs and the Battle for America's Musical Unconscious" is Björn Sonnenberg-Schrank and Jan Niklas Jansen's contribution to a critique of the political (re)appropriation of pop music, in particular of the repeated reframing of Bruce Springsteen's songs "Born in the USA" and "We Take Care of Our Own" by the Reagan and Obama administrations. The authors show, among other things, how the textual semantics of song lyrics are susceptible to transformation via decontextualization and recontextualization like in no other form of artistic practice.

In "Cultures of Loudness: From Jim Crow to Guantanamo," Gunter Süß "sketch[es] out what the concept of loudness can stand for, both in a metaphorical as well as in a literal sense" (355). In a macroscopic survey of this concept, which ranges from antebellum musical culture centered on the Jim Crow stereotype all the way to the use of music as a sonic weapon in the form of the 'Gitmo playlist,' Süß outlines his project of determining America's 'cultures of loudness.'

Finally, Arthur J. Sabatini's essay on "Philadelphia's Musico-Sonic-Optical Unconscious: Or, From the Legacy of A Glass Harp to Parades, Paradoxical Sublimations and Refrains" offers an analysis of Philadelphia's carnival culture and its 135-year-old tradition of the Mummers. Making use of critical theories including those of Michail Bakhtin, Herbert Marcuse, Jameson, and Deleuze and Guattari, Sabatini's take on the performative semiotics of 'mummery' makes for a fine concluding piece in this collection.

What remains to be said, then, is that all of these essays resonate with each other (if the pun can be forgiven) on a thematic level, even though they have very different standpoints with regard to the meaning of the musical unconscious as a concept. Some of the contributors have forged their own specific terms, while others have gone back to the Jamesonian term that is rooted in the political; some of them locate the musical unconscious in human culture, while others focus on the media ecology which very much includes the non-human realm of the world. In any event, what all of these texts show is that American Studies does not only benefit from the analysis of

merely textual and visual forms of expression but also from a renewed emphasis on the musical undercurrents of American culture.

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TIMELESS TUNES, IMMORTAL VOICES

ON THE 'HISTORICAL FATE' OF THE PROTEST SONG AND THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS OF THE 'OTHER' AMERICA

Martin Butler

Perhaps more than ever before, protest music (as well as the public and academic discourse on it) has become a somewhat ambivalent enterprise: on the one hand, considering the recent wave of new so-called 'protest movements,' it seems as if we witness a renaissance of forms of political and cultural opposition (the most prominent of which can certainly be subsumed under the label of 'Occupy'), which, as one might argue, emphasize with a vengeance the timeliness of political protest and its diverse soundtracks and thus deserve public and scholarly attention. On the other hand, these movements (or, more specifically, their social and cultural practices of articulating dissent) are constantly under suspicion of being co-opted by what is commonly referred to as the 'mainstream.' Consequently, in order not to step into the alleged pitfall of nostalgic romanticization, writing about protest music more often than not turns into writing about the *im*possibility of protest due to its being embedded into a capitalist logic of marketing dissent to (re-)produce and sustain social cohesion. Both in public and scholarly discourse, then, protest music has been simultaneously featured as both highly necessary and highly ineffectual, as both potentially subversive and potentially complicit. Protest music is dead. Long live protest music.

Against the backdrop of these observations, my contribution sets out to read this ambivalence (both of the protest song and of its discourse) as a prerequisite for the survival of protest music, i.e. for the continuous revitalization of protest song cultures in different historical periods throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Being particularly concerned with the politically motivated folk song in the United States (and thus deliberately skipping the long debate on wide and/or narrow concepts of the protest song; cf. Butler,

"Protestlied"), it suggests that the precariousness of protest song cultures (as well as of its discourse) is the *conditio sine qua non* for the development of what I would like to call 'situational versatility,' i.e. the ability of protest music to constantly reposition and redefine itself in different historical contexts, thus escaping, at least momentarily, the seemingly inevitable death by containment again and again.

It is my contention, then, that these processes of repositioning and redefining are, in turn, enhanced and sustained primarily through references to an inventory of practices and forms of knowledge deeply embedded in the collective memory of protest music, which, until today, work as frames of reference in processes of revitalizing protest music and could therefore be considered part of America's musical unconscious.

Yet, before I will particularly concern myself with two of these 'frames of reference' that have been drawn upon in processes of revitalizing protest music throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I would like to elaborate in more detail on the ambivalent enterprise of (writing about) protest music hinted at above, referring to one—probably well-known and perhaps telling—example. In his incredibly rich study on the on the complex endeavor of the analysis of popular music, *Performing Rites*, Simon Frith unfolds both a multidimensional approach to analyzing the aesthetics and ethics of popular music as well as his broad expertise about the diverse branches of popular music and the popular music industry. Indeed, he eloquently discusses a wide range of artists, musical genres, and sites of performance to introduce and unfold his theoretical and conceptual ideas.

Among this variety of examples and case studies Frith includes in his book, the political protest song, however, is only mentioned in passing, and it is almost conspicuously absent from a study that is otherwise characterized by the rich diversity of materials. What is even more, if one searches the index of the book and looks up "protest song," one will be directed to one short passage in particular (cf. 165–66) that, almost like an elegy, declares the "historical fate of 'protest' songs" (165), with the word "protest" in single inverted commas—so

it seems to be clear from the very beginning that Frith is writing about something that he feels does not really exist anymore, and perhaps has never existed.

According to Frith's argument, then, the "historical fate of 'protest' songs" precisely lies in these songs' regular appropriation through what is commonly referred to as the 'mainstream.' He points out: "In pop terms, [protest songs] don't function to convey ideas or arguments but slogans. And the paradox here is that the political power of a pop song—as a slogan—need not bear any relationship to its intended message at all" (165). With this said, Frith enumerates a series of well-known examples of this "fate" of protest songs, which culminates in his illustration of "the Republican Party's attempt to hijack Bruce Springsteen's 'Born in the USA' in the 1984 presidential election" (165). Frith argues:

> This [...] example is particularly illuminating. 'Born in the USA' is, lyrically, clearly a protest song. It is about growing up working class, being shipped off to fight in Vietnam and coming back to nothing—a standard scenario in American popular film and song, a populist formula. [...] Formally, though, the song is organized around a chorus line—"Born in the USA!", a musical phrase which is [...] not bitter but triumphant. [...] And it was as such a patriotic boast that Ronald Reagan wanted to use it. Although Springsteen dismissed this reading, in performance his own trappings (the American flag, the celebration of American working-class masculinity) could also serve to confirm it. (165–66)

Whereas Frith, who suddenly (and strangely enough) seems to be so sure about "Born in the USA" being "clearly a protest song," uses these examples to illustrate that, in the examination of popular music, "the issue in lyrical analysis is not words, but words in performance" (166), especially the case of "Born in the USA" might also be taken as symptomatic of a distinctly U.S.-American logic of dissent and cohesion, according to which the articulation of protest and resistance is part and parcel of a pluralist, liberal society and should not be read as

subversive, but as straightforwardly conservative, in the literal sense of the word. In this vein, Sacvan Bercovitch and others have illustrated that the American ideology (assuming that there is something like an American ideology) indeed seems to have been particularly successful in incorporating dissent, arguing that the "immemorial response of ideology [to protest], what we might call its instinctive defense, has been to redefine protest in terms of the system, as a complaint about shortcomings from the ideal. Thus the very act of identifying malfunction becomes an appeal for cohesion" (644). Protest is thus rephrased as a mandatory exercise for those who feel that the very idea of America is under attack.

As worn-out and perhaps oversimplifying this well-known figure of thought may be, it seems to be at the very heart of Frith's argument about the "historical fate of the 'protest' song." Indeed, his argument implies that, through the redefinition of its subversive potential "in terms of the system," i.e. as an essentially patriotic enterprise, the protest song has been situated in a highly precarious position, meandering between radical opposition and conservative appropriation ever since its emergence at the turn of the twentieth century.

Somewhat at odds with Frith's (and others') diagnosis, I would like to argue that this precarious position of the protest song should not only be conceived of as problematic or deficient and, consequently, as the ultimate reason for its 'fate' or 'failure.' Quite on the contrary, it is precisely this precarious position that has been the *prerequisite* for the development of a set of strategies of positioning, which protest singers and songwriters have updated and modified over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and which allows for a regular critical engagement with political, social, and cultural discourses *vis-à-vis* the dominant ideology. In other words, the 'fate' can be turned into a 'feature' of protest song cultures, which have learned, so to speak, to walk the thin line between opposition and co-optation through a constant recalibration of their own self-positioning.

Within these processes of positioning, protest singers and songwriters predominantly resort to specific aesthetic and ethical frames

of reference that are deeply rooted in the memory of political folk music. In other words: time and again, they contribute to both reactivating and shaping what could be called the 'musical unconscious' of the 'Other America'—with the term 'musical unconscious' being particularly apt to describe the state of precariousness of protest song cultures and their traditions, as it allows to configure something as being there and being not there at the same time or at different times, something that cannot be grasped that easily, something that we are sure *does* play a role, without being able, however, to say what exactly this role might be.

In this sense, then, the 'musical unconscious' might be conceived of as something like a steady undercurrent of tunes, voices, images, types, or figures as well as notions and ideas, in other words: a body of rather less institutionalized, rather less explicit knowledge, the elements of which may form the aforesaid frames of reference or patterns of identification for singers and songwriters' acts of positioning. In protest-song cultures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, ranging from the street parlor ballads of the Industrial Workers of the World compiled in their Little Red Songbook to the voices from the Great Depression and the Second World War to the folk revival of the 1960s, this undercurrent has been made visible and audible again and again, e.g. through the (nostalgic or critical) emulation of traditional tunes and lyrics or the identification with or distinction from particular icons that these very cultures have brought forth (cf. e.g. Butler, "Please Play This Song"; "Woody Guthrie und Punk"; Butler and Sepp, "Punk's Not Dead").

Of course, referencing tradition is not at all an exclusive feature of protest-song cultures; yet it appears that within these very cultures, it becomes *the* essential strategy of identity formation and self-positioning. Thus, it is perhaps no coincidence that Bob Dylan, in an interview on his relationship to this undercurrent of seemingly timeless tunes and immortal voices, points out that they are "my genealogy—when I was singing (these songs), they seemed to have an ancient presence" (qtd. in Marshall 259). Greil Marcus, in his book *Invisible Republic*,

in which he discusses Bob Dylan's *Basement Tapes* (1975), also elaborates on this archival, almost archeological method of constituting oneself, pointing out that "Dylan and The Band explored new songs and old, digging deep in their own private mythologies and the collective unconscious of North America, to mine a fresh-minted folklore, simultaneously ancient and modern" (qtd. in Marshall 255). Whereas for Marcus, Dylan only *draws upon* the "collective unconscious" of the nation, one review of his 2006 album *Modern Times* even points out that, in fact, Dylan *is* "America's living, breathing musical unconscious" (qtd. in Marshall 260). Another critic, reviewing *Love and Theft* (2001) asserts along similar lines that Bob Dylan is "the only artist alive who can fully embody the living stream of American folk music in all its diverse currents and muddy depths" (qtd. in Marshall 260).

Being aware of the fact that Bob Dylan (for a number of reasons that might be discussed elsewhere) is perhaps not the best choice when it comes to discussing protest singers or cultures, the language of the reviews might still be taken as a hint at what I conceive to be a significant characteristic of protest song cultures in general: to a great extent, they are kept alive through what Diana Taylor has described as a "repertoire of embodied knowledge" (82) articulated through "performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge" (20). She argues that, in contrast to the "supposedly stable objects in the archive" (20), which "exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, cds, all those items supposedly resistant to change" (19), "the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same" (20).

Instead, the repertoire is highly flexible and adaptable to those historical and cultural environments in which it is reactivated through the "presence [of] people [who] participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge" (Taylor 20), thus bringing it back to consciousness in specific socio-historical settings. These people, or agents, turn the allegedly absent into something present through

the establishment of what could well be refered to as a "diachronic dialogue" in the sense of Aleida Assmann, i.e. a "form of interaction which takes places […] in virtual time," (14), establishing a mutual correspondence between the present and the past, or, as Greil Marcus put it, between the "ancient" and the "modern." Whereas for Assmann, this dialogue is "based on writing" (14), one could easily extend the notion this is a mode of communication across time to also include other (non-written) social and cultural practices—"embodied expression" in the sense of Taylor, which, as she argues, "has participated and will probably continue to participate in the transmission of social knowledge, memory, and identity pre- and postwriting" (16). It is in this dialogue, then, in which the "*repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge" (Taylor 19, original emphasis) is continuously activated, shared and appropriated and thus "both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning" (Taylor 20).

Singers and songwriters are probably among the most central agents when it comes to the activation, or reactivation, of the repertoire of protest-song cultures. And, to come back to my argument, it is my contention that these agents—in the shape of singers and songwriters—have been regularly contributing to drafting a specific subject position for themselves through sets of practices that contribute to the embodiment of (protest culture's) memory, a subject position that allows taking a somewhat fragile but equally flexible stand that, in turn, helps to escape the logic of containment and co-optation that is felt to constantly threaten the subversive potential of the protest song.

Running the risk of overgeneralizing to an unbearable degree, I think that this subject position, which, through the reactivation of the repertoire of protest song cultures, has been reproduced quite regularly by a number of singers and songwriters over the course of the twentieth century until today, can indeed be specified. In other words, in processes of aesthetic and ideological positioning, there have indeed been two central, frequently recurring frames of reference which, in the process of shaping this subject position, have been refered to again and again by a considerable number of singers and songwriters.

First, there is the figure of the itinerant man, of a mobile subject, whose marginalization is a deliberate choice rather than the result of processes of exclusion (cf. Butler, "Ramblin' Men"). Additionally—and second—the mobile and deliberately marginal subject is, at the very same time, a non-professional, an amateur, with both identity markers—mobility and amateurism—being charged with a particularly strong ethical momentum, the reference to which seems to offer an ideal way of negotiating precariousness. I will take a short detour to elaborate on this.

As a combination of the ancient *topos* of the *homo viator* (with its distinctly religious implications manifest in narratives such as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*) and of the outcast (especially in Romantic poetry such as Lord Byron's *Don Juan* or William Blake's *London*), the character of the marginal itinerant has long been turned into a literary commonplace, which bears strong ideological overtones (cf. Butler, "Ramblin' Men"). To be precise, for the itinerant man, as George H. Tucker argues, the margin, i.e. his regular dwelling place, turns into "an alternative, ever shifting, vantage point of critical freedom [...] enabling him continually to re-assess his own culture and to relativize the very perceptions of the world and habits of thought that he has inherited from it" (279). Moving, in other words, keeps the wandering man from being drawn and absorbed by the centrifugal powers of the system (whatever this system might be). He (and it is mostly a 'he') indeed "believes one must attempt the journey in order to assert autonomy, yet knows both that the struggle (of this very journey) leaves him equally uprooted and fragmented and that he will never achieve more than an illusion of such autonomy" (Kennedy 147). For the wandering man, "constant mobility is thus futile but necessary" (cf. Butler, "Ramblin' Men").

Against this backdrop, Joe Hill's overemphasis on his migrant biography, Woody Guthrie's self-fashioning as a hobo, or Bob Dylan's self-identification as a postmodern variation of the 'wandering Jew' can be understood as an appropriation of this topos of the itinerant man within the realm of protest song cultures (cf. Butler, "Ramblin'

Men"). These singers and songwriters have thus proliferated an image of themselves which comes close to what Zygmunt Bauman, in his study on *Modernity and Ambivalence*, has described as the figure of the stranger, "who remains 'outside' of society, thereby exemplifying 'a position of objectivity: an outside, detached, and autonomous,'" but at the same time highly precarious, position (Kennedy 148–9, partly quoting Bauman in his analysis of Bob Dylan's 'hobodom').

The recent reactivation of this very position in contemporary protest song cultures (e.g. by Tom Morello, who used to play the guitar for Rage Against the Machine and now calls himself 'The Nightwatchman') seems to speak in favor of the idea that the figure of the itinerant man still serves as a frame of reference stored in the repertoire of protest song cultures and brought back to consciousness through performances of 'embodied memories' time and again, as an option to deal with one's awareness of one's own precarious state. It even seems that one cannot escape taking this very position, as Morello sings in "The Road I Must Travel": "So tonight I walk in anger / With worn shoes on my feet / But the road I *must* travel / Its end I cannot see" (emphasis added; cf. Butler, "Ramblin' Men").

The amateur, then—as the second pattern reactivated to shape a subject position from which to negotiate the risk of ideological containment—might be read and imagined along similar lines, i.e. as a figure whose actions are not corrupted by capitalist principles of efficiency and competition, and who is able, somewhat paradoxically, to take an outsider's perspective on the system while being part of exactly this system at the same time. On the one hand, the amateur bears an overtly critical or subversive potential, as he or she is able to see things differently, i.e. in a way that is simply not available to, say, the professionalized part of society. On the other hand, the amateur, as Edward Said reminds us in his book *Representations of the Intellectual*, is someone who cares, "someone who considers that to be a thinking and concerned member of society one is entitled to raise moral issues at the heart of even the most technical and professionalized activity as it involves one's country, its power, its mode of

interacting with its citizens as well as with other societies" (qtd. in Boykoff and Sand n.pag).

The amateur, in this highly romanticized variation, is "not invested in institutionalized systems of knowledge production and policy construction" (Said qtd. in Boykoff and Sand n.pag), and, as Roland Barthes has argued, reflecting on the literal meaning of the term, the amateur is "someone who engages in painting, music, sport, science, without the spirit of mastery or competition, the Amateur renews his pleasure; [...] he is anything but a hero [...] he establishes himself *graciously* (for nothing) in the signifier: in the immediately definite substance of music, of painting [...] he is—he will be perhaps—the counter-bourgeois artist" (qtd. in Highmore 156–57; original emphasis; cf. Butler, "Ethics and Aesthetics").

Eventually, the itinerant amateur turns out to be an ideal subject position from which to articulate protest and resistance, as it, on the one hand, somehow epitomizes the precariousness of protest, while, on the other, enables protest singers and songwriters to stage themselves as escaping the dangers of co-optation. Of course, the subject position of the itinerant amateur itself (or at least its emulation) may well fall prey to the logic of containment; understood as a "cultural custodian" (M. 320), he or she is eventually concerned with the well-being of the very society he or she might be criticizing. Of course, in the end, there is no way out, but it seems that the regular resurrection of this subject position through performances of embodied memories (which are both based on and contribute to a diachronic dialogue with the past) at least provides a way to continuously articulate dissent.

I would like to conclude by going back to where I began, i.e. by observing that we indeed seem to witness such a resurrection right now, in the contexts of new forms of political protest in which amateurism is heavily politicized. To be more precise, what Sam Richards has called "a folk revival cult of amateurism" (qtd. in Dale) seems to gain ground again in times of Web 2.0 applications and social media, which allow, or at least suggest to allow, participation in the production and dissemination of forms of cultural expression to a perhaps

unprecedented degree. Henry Jenkins, in his seminal study on these new forms of cultural production, *Convergence Culture*, also observes the establishment of a diachronic dialogue with the past through what he calls “a revitalization of the old folk culture process in response to the content of mass culture” (21). Again, it seems, the undercurrent is made visible and audible.

Within this process of revitalization, amateurism indeed plays a central role, particularly due to its ideological underpinnings, which Ben Highmore highlights in his study of the works of Michel de Certeau, pointing out that “it is, momentarily, worth recognizing the promotion of amateurism in culture as part of radical democratic and anti-bourgeois practice” (156). Very much in line with Roland Barthes, then, and referring to Henri Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life*, Highmore points out that this promotion of amateurism comes about because amateurism “establishes a relationship with the world that suggests a very different passionate engagement […] that can often be missing from more passive involvements in cultural consumption” (156). In the end, then, one may indeed feel tempted to argue that social media contribute to a new process of ‘folkification,’ to a ‘folk revival 2.0’, so to speak, which might work as a framework for the proliferation of forms of digital protest, and which, I believe, is fully aware of the traditions it builds upon (cf. Butler, “Ethics and Aesthetics”).

Being fully aware myself of running the risk of both romanticizing the ‘golden olden days of yore’ and overestimating the participatory and political potential of new media, I would nevertheless like to argue that this ideologically charged ‘resurrection’ of amateurism, and with it the celebration of the “folk process,” seems to be particularly appealing for protest music cultures and their representatives. To be more precise, embracing the concept of amateurism allows to deal with these cultures’ precariousness, and to find a subject position from which to articulate dissent without being instantly ‘neutralized,’ a subject position which is in itself fragile, but turns fragility from a bug into a feature.

It is therefore perhaps no coincidence that the foreword of one recent anthology of folk music—*Discovering Folk Music* (2010)—is written by Evan and Gregg Spiridellis, the co-founders of the famous digital entertainment company JibJab, in other words: Web 2.0 pioneers, two 'amateurs gone professional.' Drawing an analogy to traditional folk music, they emphatically welcome this current process of 'folkification' attached to the rise of social media, arguing that

> Folk art is typically associated with being accessible—anybody with ambition can pick up the tools he or she has at his or her disposal and create it. There is little, if any, polish, just raw creativity [...]. Today, with computers, music creation software, and the Internet, production *and* distribution technology is accessible to everyone. The balance of power in media is shifting from the distributor to the creator. With that, there is no doubt that digital technology will lead to the creation and discovery of great folk art and folk music that might not otherwise have had a chance to find an audience [...]. Just imagine Woody Guthrie had had the Internet to share his message directly with his audience. (ix–x)

Nicely epitomizing the ongoing 'diachronic dialogue' with the past that protest song cultures seem to have been involved in to deal with their precariousness, the foreword thus constructs a genealogy of protest music, which ranges from the songs of Guthrie, Seeger, Dylan, and a range of other 'canonized' veterans and some rather unknown 'newcomers' presented in the anthology, to the amateur productions of Web 2.0 "produsers" (Axel Bruns), who, once again, take up and continue the legacy of articulating dissent through music. In this vein, and very much in line with the Spiridellis brothers' enunciation of tradition, the editor of the volume points out that the anthology "demonstrates the ongoing social relevance of folk music, that is, it wasn't just for sixties anti-war or civil rights protest marches, but always has and will have an integral place in our society" (n. pag)—an integral place that is not paradoxically, but, as I have tried to illustrate, necessarily located at the very margin of society.

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ALL KINDS OF (QUEER) REDNECKS

THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY MUSIC

Christian Schmidt

In 2013, Reality TV star Phil Robertson of *Duck Dynasty*-fame was (as it turned out, temporarily) suspended from A&E's hit show for homophobic comments made in an interview with *GQ* magazine. Perhaps better than any other, the success of this TV show is evidence of the growing fascination with and acceptance of the image of the Southern redneck—an uncouth, working-class social identity previously used as a slanderous insult by outsiders and rigorously avoided by those addressed by it. This incident also highlights the ways in which the redneck has come to be associated with homophobic sentiments and a strongly heteronormative understanding of sexual roles and identities.[1] Seeing the Robertsons' wide appeal as only the most visible and successful representative of a resurgence of the redneck across a variety of cultural media, this paper aims to cast light on the ways in which contemporary country music positions itself with respect to sexual identities. More particularly, I aim to analyze how country music mobilizes the trope of the redneck as a deliberately chosen icon of alterity in order to distance itself from urban ideas of popularity and normativity and how doing so also establishes a problematic and at times reactionary notion of heteronormativity at the center of the music's identity.

1 For a brief response to Robertson that includes some of his homophobic statements, cf. Murray. For a history of the redneck and the recent phenomenon of a "redneck craze," cf. Hubbs, *Rednecks* 113. Other indicators of the growing acceptance of the redneck and its close relationship to both country music and rural identities in a broader sense can be found in the popularity of TV shows such as *Party Down South, My Big Redneck Family*, or *Redneck Island* (tellingly, all airing on Country Music Television) or the success of the (self-described) Redneck-comedian Jeff Foxworthy. For a brief recap of the Robertsons' inroads into the country music community, cf. my "'Famous in a Small Town.'"

THE REDNECK AS COUNTRY MUSIC'S POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS

Ever since its inception, country music has established itself as popular music's other, as a true expression of a Southern identity, and as an attempt to formulate musically a proud expression of a rural, working-class identity. In order to do so, country music paints a deeply nostalgic picture of an idealized past of close-knit communities that has continued into the present and that finds expression in the music and its staging. This—at times self-consciously ironic—embrace of a backward identity is epitomized in the pervasive use of the trope of the redneck: a working-class identity of hard work out in the sun, with the red neck as a visible sign of one's brawny workmanship. This identity is celebrated in an often ironic way to counter the alleged artificiality of more mainstream forms of modern popular culture.[2] Despite its tongue-in-cheek nature, however, the pride in this identity is quite real and brings with it conservative, at times reactionary, sexual politics of heteronormativity.

As I will argue in this paper, the redneck visualizes country music's "political unconscious," to use Fredric Jameson's term, which also serves as an inspiration for the title of the present volume. In Jameson's words, *all* "cultural products" are "'in the last analysis' political" (5) to the degree that "no matter how weakly, [they] must be informed by what we have called a political unconscious, that all literature [and all music, I would add] must be read as a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community" (56).

2 Any one of Alan Jackson's numerous redneck songs could serve as examples of this tongue-in-cheek-nature, especially when not only listening to the music but also considering the music videos accompanying the songs. Particularly his collaboration with Jeff Foxworthy on "Redneck Games"—their joint take on the Atlanta Olympics in "Georgy"—and the introduction to his music video "Gone Country" are worth noting in this context. For a brief discussion of the latter and the way in which it ironically stages the authenticity of country music, cf. my "Nashville." Also cf. my "'Famous in a Small Town,'" in which I argue that country music thrives in its "subaltern space of unpopularity" and thus "*has* to be proud of being famous only in a small town."

Following Jameson's lead, this essay investigates the ways in which country music's posturing as redneck unveils its unconscious sexual politics and thus the argument contributes to what Jameson calls the "unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" (5).[3] In order to do so, I will first outline the degree to which the redneck has come to occupy a central position in country music and to inhabit its political unconscious. Using two contemporary examples—by neo-traditionalist artist Alan Jackson and neo-traditionalist/alt.country singer Gretchen Wilson—I then argue that the redneck is presented as a masculine and heterosexual character in both its male and female incarnations and that it serves as a figure of communal regeneration in the face of urban norms against which it rebels. Having established the redneck as a crucial figure of country music's response to its own alterity but also as a problematic figure of heteronormativity, I then turn to the recent phenomenon of so-called 'bro-country,' which has dominated the country charts in recent years and widened the music's appeal beyond its traditional clientele. As my brief overview of the genre will show, bro-country not only is steeped in male machismo and conservative gender roles but, equally important for my discussion, vanquishes the redneck as

3 Even though Jameson talks about *narrative* and the political unconscious, I feel justified extending his concept to include music, seeing that country music by and large has been characterized as a genre that relies heavily on storytelling and seeing that my own reading, for the most part, is a reading of the music in narrative terms. For an insightful discussion of the politics of country music, especially as it pertains to the intersection of class and sex/gender, cf. Hubbs, to whose work on the queer and the redneck this essay owes a great debt. Taking a somewhat different route, Peterson has argued that country music is political but, given its reticence to formulate explicit political messages, fails to be so *consciously*. For him, the political unconscious, thus, is a shortcoming. Following Jameson rather than Peterson, the unconscious sexual politics analyzed in this essay remain under the surface and do so *not* due to a failure to make them more clearly visible but because they subtend much of country music on a subliminal level (cf. "Class Unconsciousness"). For the party politics of country music, cf. Willman's important study *Rednecks and Bluenecks.*

the icon of such gendering. One important response to bro-country's rather sexist and simplistic celebration of redneck machismo is the 2014 surprise hit "Girl in a Country Song" by newcomers Maddie & Tae, in which they ironically play with and ridicule the conservative sexual politics of bro-country without, however, giving up on some of its equally problematic aspects. Finally, I turn my attention to two attempts by Miranda Lambert and Kacey Musgraves to consciously queer the sexual politics of country music. As my discussions of a variety of examples of country music's sexual politics will show, the music's political unconscious is clearly gendered as masculine—and usually male. Against this, female musicians in particular have started to present images that counter this sexual normativity of country music's redneck pride.

The 2012 CMA awards demonstrated the love of redneck in country music, when the co-hosts Carrie Underwood and Brad Paisley, two of country music's most beloved megastars, sang "We have 10,000 rednecks in this arena," and received a whooping response from the audience (cf. "Carrie Underwood and Brad Paisley"). This audience, mind you, dressed in fancy gowns and suits, included some of the highest-grossing artists in the business. Clearly, none of them are rednecks in the literal sense of the term. Yet still the united community in Nashville's Bridgestone Arena embraced the nostalgic notion of redneck-ness, providing living evidence for the community-building capacity of country's musical unconscious. Throughout the music's history, such celebrations of the redneck have gone hand in hand with a nostalgic Southern pride that establishes the music as a communal endeavor that can provide a respite from the pressures of modernization. Critical discussions of country music have addressed this nostalgic distortion of an idealized rural past that permeates even the most commercial forms of the music. William Hart, for example, has described the "sense of pride [that] is taken in the 'redneck' social identity label" (170) as crucial for the identity of country music as a whole. Aaron Fox has argued that country music's proud embrace of a white trash identity leads to

a re-valuation of the 'stain' of redneck identity into a badge of pride: "For many cosmopolitan Americans, especially, country is 'bad' music precisely because it is widely understood to signify an explicit claim to whiteness, not as an unmarked, neutral condition of lacking (or trying to shed) race, but as a marked, foregrounded claim of cultural identity—a bad whiteness" (44). This "bad whiteness," Fox argues, is proudly celebrated in the very redneck identity for which country music is ridiculed by those "cosmopolitan Americans," and thus marks the music's counter-hegemonic, counter-modern, and counter-urban identity as "sublimely bad," something that is good because it is bad—an abject notion of goodness. In short, country music constructs a nostalgic image of rural, Southern lives that finds a fitting symbolic representation in the figure of the redneck, who stands for everything that is bad—and, following Fox, therefore good—about country music's defiant alterity.

Country music mobilizes the trope of the redneck at least in part also to undermine and counter what Judith Halberstam has called "metronormativity." In her discussion of queer identities and their inscriptions in concretely placed, rural locations in *In a Queer Time and Place* (cf. 36–38) Halberstam claims that in many critical discourses the urban (i.e. metropolitan) point of view is established as the norm from which rural identities—such as the one proffered by country music—cannot but deviate. Through such a "metronormative" (36) lens, country identities are predetermined as non-normative and therefore valued as bad or deviant. Interestingly enough, however, country music does not deny or reject this metronormative gaze but rather adopts and returns it by claiming the very redneck abjection ascribed to it. Appropriating this metronormative lens, then, country music insists on its own difference *as* redneck, yet doing so establishes its own set of normative identities that are quite restrictive in terms of their racial and sexual politics. While the redneck's—and country music's—racial politics have been studied quite extensively in the last few years, its sexual politics need further

analysis.[4] In this respect it is important to point out that the redneck not only "serv[es] as the popular American signifier for a 'defensive articulation of whiteness,'" as Mann convincingly has argued (81). Rather, and often overlooked in readings of the redneck, it also signifies an implicit sexual politics that is enmeshed in these 'white trash' identities. Through embracing the frowned-upon symbolic identity of the redneck, then, country music self-consciously, and proudly, establishes its very difference from the urban, popular mainstream norm and cedes the metronormative relation of seeing and looking down on the country only to re-value this (much in the sense of Fox's notion of the sublime badness of country music). To a certain extent, it makes sense for country music to inhabit the redneck as a response to such negative metronormative framing; more often than not, however, the redneck is pictured solely as a male, heterosexual figure. What country music refuses to see and hear, then, are the female, the queer, and other, non-normative sexual 'kinds' that go against the grain of traditional versions of the redneck.[5]

4 For the most part, discussions of redneck identity reverberate around issues dealing with race, as the epithet 'white trash,' which is often used interchangeably with redneck, already indicates. Rightly so, as class, regional identity, and the social capital—or lack thereof—associated with these identities are closely linked with racial identity. For a good introduction to white trash cf. Wray and Newitz. For discussions of white trash and the racial implications of country music, cf. Ching, Aaron Fox, Pamela Fox, Mann, and Pecknold. Sex and gender within country music have been extensively studied, yet the way in which the figure of the redneck has been gendered and sexed (on top of being raced in a particular way) in country music has been studied so far only by Hubbs. Cf. the McCusker and Pecknold-edited volume for the most widely cited study of gender and country music.

5 As late as the year 2000, successful country artist Chely Wright felt the need to start a much-publicized romantic liaison with fellow artist Brad Paisley in an effort to hide from the public a monogamous lesbian relationship. As it turned out, Wright had good reason to be anxious about her career prospects within the country music industry; when she finally did come out as a lesbian in 2010, she was more or less banished by that industry, as she criticizes in her autobiography *Like Me: Confessions of a Heartland Country Singer* (2010). Similarly, the second season of the ABC television-drama *Nashville* includes among its main cast an up-and-and-coming male

EMBRACING YOUR INNER REDNECK

From David Allan Coe's "Long-Haired Redneck" (1976) and Hank Williams's Jr's "A Country Boy Can Survive" (1982) to George Jones's "High-Tech Redneck" (1993), Jason Aldean's "Hicktown" (2005) and Craig Morgan's "Redneck Yacht Club" (2005), musical examples of country rednecks are legion.[6] For my purposes, Alan Jackson's 2001 song "It's Alright to Be a Redneck" provides as good a starting point as any. The song consists of a foot-tapping driving rhythm provided by the drums and a double bass, over which piano and pedal steel, and an occasional mandolin, provide the main harmonies. Jackson's signature baritone voice sings the lyrics in a decidedly country twang and thus establishes the lyrical and musical atmosphere to its honky-tonk beat. In addition to the song's traditional musical and sonic presentation, the lyrics list a long line of traditional stereotypes about the red-

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country singer who also publically stages a wedding to a female country star so as to hide his homosexuality, knowing full well that an outing would devastate his budding career prospects. Not surprisingly, then, to this day there has not been a single openly homosexual artist in the top ten of the country music charts. There are, however, first indications that this may change: Brandy Clark, one of the co-writers of Musgraves's "Follow Your Arrow," has recently come out as gay (cf. also note 17), even though her career as a solo artist so far has not matched her songwriting accolades. In fact, her public outing has landed her an extended discussion on savingcountrymusic.com as *the* country artist to sexually integrate the entire genre, even if the article's titular use of the past tense—speaking about the industry's integration as an established fact and something that happened in the past—appears more than a little premature (cf. "Why Brandy Clark").

6 Successful novelist and songwriter Alice Randall has put together a book that provides an endless repertoire of lists of thematically arranged country songs. The first section of the book, entitled "Who We Are," includes a list of twelve songs grouped under the label "Rednecks." In the chapter's headnote, Randall writes: "A persona that is either a source of pride or humiliation, the redneck is a character that says much about the convergence of issues of class, caste, and race in the South. Often used humorously, and sometimes proudly, the phrase can impart a load of pain" (38). Perhaps ironically, this list is situated in-between chapters entitled "Hookers" and "Angels," thus placing the redneck between the two most extreme roles reserved for women within country music.

neck—from "shoot[ing] a bunch of duck" and "drink[ing] a couple of beers after bailin' hay" to liking "fr[ied] chicken," "chew" tobacco, and "beer," all the way to having a "girl named Thelma Lou" and a cousin with a "tow" truck—only to assure all rednecks that it is acceptable to enjoy all of these things. That is to say, the song confirms the stereotypes about country rednecks as it both affirms the metronormative gaze and re-values these stereotypes into positive attributes that simultaneously serve as community-building elements. The music video even more strongly turns the eponymous redneck into a term of endearment, as the song is introduced as the school project of an adorable little girl, whose frame narrative already gives away the gist of this tale, namely that it is "alright to be a redneck." After Jackson and his band have been established as educational examples of musical redneck-dom in the class-room context, the finger-snapping, boot-tapping rhythm of the song sets in and immediately establishes a communal context by including a wide variety of average Joes that sing along with the catchy song, creating a community of swinging, singing rednecks in the process. Unsurprisingly, the image of the redneck they paint in words and song is deeply imbued with nostalgia for the times when many people were actually still "balin' hay," as the lyrics declare. Reassuring all country boys and girls that it is, indeed, alright to be a redneck, Jackson constructs a community of country rednecks with the help of very traditional country music instrumentation played in traditional honky-tonk style. Yet not only does the visual rendering of the redneck no longer invoke the hard-working elements established by the lyrics but, instead, shows people celebrating the redneck lifestyle. In addition, the nostalgic counter-identity of the redneck taps into old-fashioned gender roles—as all of the musicians are male, whereas the grade school teacher and the diligent student are female—and even includes a very sexily dressed mock-policewoman at the end of the video. Moreover, the song is sung from a decidedly male perspective as it makes reference to "chas[ing] around the girls on Friday night" and to "hav[ing] a girl named Thelma Lou." As a whole, the video thus implicitly codes 'redneck' as

a male phenomenon[7] as it mixes nostalgic longing with modernized images of quite traditional and sexist representations of women.

Providing the female counterpoint to Jackson's song, Gretchen Wilson's 2004 hit single "Redneck Woman" creates a very similar community of proud rednecks even as the song's general tone is less jocular and more openly defiant than Jackson's. Her song directly addresses the very metronormative assumptions that define the redneck as a horribly abject figure and explicitly responds with a resonant "Hell Yeah!" to all those who look down upon the redneck. Moreover, in its direct address to and inclusion of all the "redneck girls like me" the singer constructs a counter-community to the metronormative disrespect for the redneck as a figure of abjection. In terms of its gender politics, the song broadens the scope of the redneck moniker, explicitly including women—the song's oft-invoked "redneck girls" and its eponymous "redneck woman"—within its folds and creates a redneck-solidarity across genders. Calling the song "a milestone in country music" in her important study of the queer and the redneck, Hubbs argues that its titular "statement is a defiant apologia for [Wilson] herself and her redneck sisters and their 'trashy' social position" just as much as it is a "gender-inclusive statement of redneck pride and a call to twenty-first century working-class consciousness" (*Rednecks* 107, 108, 118). Correspondingly, Wilson's song does not set the female *against* the male but "makes common cause with redneck men and draws on cherished symbols of good ol' boy ideals and prerogatives to articulate its manifesto, a cross-gender, macho-affirmative rejection of the very standards of hegemonic middle-class femininity" (125). That is to say, it is not a feminist response to male disrespect for women but a working-class reply to middle-class metronormativity. As Hubbs concludes, "at the working-class and rural intersection staked out in 'Redneck Woman,' gender skews masculine, by comparison with urban norms, for males and females alike"

7 Speaking about the redneck more generally, Huber observes that "the 'redneck' label conventionally attach[es] to maleness" (qtd. in Hubbs, *Rednecks* 112).

(122–23). Put differently, the song constructs the redneck as a figure of communal regeneration of working-class pride above and beyond male or female sex, yet establishes country music's identity as being coded as strongly masculine. The community it envisions is one of proud rednecks, of masculine figures of rural redemption—both male and female. Here it becomes clear that the (sexual) political unconscious established by these redneck songs constructs a new, if implicit norm; namely, that in order to be country one has to be redneck, masculine, and, on top of it, heterosexual, as the song's music video's lack of queer representations implies.

In this video, the song is staged as an intense, almost intimately communal concert performance in a live honky-tonk setting that culminates in the rousing rendition of the chorus's "Hell Yeah!" hurled in the face of those attempting to use 'redneck' as a term of abuse. Ramping up to this chorus, the pre-chorus twice represents the metronormative gaze on these country identities by including a hypothetical outsider's second-person perspective: "Some people look down on me"—"Well, you might think I'm trashy" only to respond to this not with a refutation of the claim but, instead, a proud embrace in the form of a "Hell Yeah!" Grounding her song on a rhythm provided by a honky-tonk piano, the lyrics invoke legendary country figures, both male and female, such as Charlie Daniels, Tanya Tucker, or Hank "Bocephus" Williams, Jr., as steel guitar and fiddle provide the melodic arc in traditional country fashion. Yet even in its female version, the redneck is clearly coded as a strongly masculine figure as Wilson flaunts her redneck womanhood "with the same masculine bravado admired in hard country male performance" (Fox, *Natural Acts* 205), evidenced both in the gutsy performance on the video's live stage and in the song's lyrics. There, the singer calls herself "a little too hardcore" and likens herself to the three "hard country" artists name-checked in the changing chorus. Moreover, by ironically deploying two of the lyrically invoked musical icons—Kid Rock and "Bocephus"—as cameos, the "gender conflict is thus revealed as a send-up, and class solidarity is reinforced anew," as Hubbs points

out (126). The music video clearly supports this reading, as it shows the singer engaging in a variety of masculine-coded activities, such as driving a four-wheeler through a dirt field and drinking in a "tavern," but also in its portrayal of the singer in solidarity with the male members of the audience and enjoying the same things as the male singers guest starring in the video. And while this redneck solidarity across genders is not a bad thing, the way in which women are portrayed as sexual objects of the male gaze—be it Wilson's striptease in front of Kid Rock and Bocephus or the scantily-clad cage dancers on stage in the honky-tonk setting—points to some of the more problematic aspects of this masculine encoding of the redneck persona. In short, the song not only revalues the figure of the redneck into a positive example but also codes it as a masculine, heterosexual identity that at least implicitly rules out queer or feminine identities that fall outside this norm. Generally speaking, "Redneck Woman" then can be read as a defiant response to metronormativity, evidenced in the chorus's repetition of negative descriptions of what the singer is "not"—namely, a "high-class broad"—as it constructs a notion of community in which the figure of the redneck is, in the words of the second pre-chorus, the norm rather than the exception: "But in my neck of the woods / I'm just the girl next door." Only a few years later, the newest trend in country music, bro-country, continues where Wilson left off in that it has established the redneck as *the* representative of country identity.

REFUTING THE BRO-NECK: "GIRL IN A COUNTRY SONG" AND THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF BRO-COUNTRY

Considering both the underrepresentation of female country musicians in the charts and the connection of the redneck with masculine identities, Wilson's song continues to be an exception as the redneck usually is not only poor, hard-working, and fun-loving; *he* is also male, hard-drinking, heterosexual, and, at times, slightly sexist. Over the last few years, this gender imbalance has grown even

stronger with the rise of a subgenre that music critic Jody Rosen fittingly has labeled "bro-country" (cf. Rosen). In many ways, bro-country has started to create inroads for country music into the mainstream of popular music: it has done so musically by using rapping, hip-hop beats,[8] rock- and pop-influenced musical styles, instruments, and rhythms; it has done so lyrically by hailing its listeners into their youthful masculinity in songs that deal not so much with the hardships of rural working lives but, instead, provide the musical soundtrack to an everlasting party. Furthermore, bro-country has done so in terms of visual representation, as the young men singing these songs no longer dress according to the stereotypes of country music but present a hipper, more urban style. However, more uncomfortably, their music videos also present images of women as (mostly) sexual objects. In many respects, bro-country can be read as the perhaps overdue modernization of country music as it adapts country from a musical genre about the nostalgia for the cowboy into a celebration of contemporary life and thus part of today's popular culture. Male-dominated and male-centered, it is no exaggeration to state that this subgenre dominates the current commercial country music scene and that it lives up to its moniker: it is music by, about, and for men.

8 In the context of bro-country one could almost speak of a hip(hop)-fiecation of country music, as it makes the music 'hipper' and simultaneously moves it closer to hip-hop music. In the music videos of bro-country songs, then, we see scantily clad, objectified women (called "girls" instead of hip-hop's "hos"), big shiny cars (pick-up trucks instead of Porsches), booze (beer instead of Cristal champagne), clothes (cut-off jeans instead of oversized pants and designer robes), and partying (tailgates instead of parties in dance clubs or on big yachts). In this context, it would be interesting to discuss Kenny Chesney's single "Come Over" (2012) that uses all of the visual accoutrements of a hip-hop video (a yacht, a villa, a pool, a sexy bikini-clad lady) to visualize a country song. Down to the music, this song is almost indistinguishable from other styles of music, the only thing marking it as a country song being Chesney's status as country music superstar and the cowboy hat he wears in (surprisingly few of) the video's shots.

In the midst of bro-country's growing crossover success, the question arises: has the redneck then perhaps become mainstream? Interestingly enough, the roster of bro-country performers has not used this mainstreaming of their music as an opportunity to move away from the music's association with the slanderous epithet 'redneck.' On the contrary, more than ever their songs celebrate the redneck as the new cool and firmly ensconce him as an icon of rural masculinity. In spite of its modernizing tendencies, bro-country's unconscious sexual politics in fact remain wrapped up in the generic masculinity of the redneck, as any example from the genre can prove. The duo Florida Georgia Line (FGL) is perhaps the genre's best representative, as their super-smash hit "Cruise" not only exemplifies the genre's huge crossover success (cf. Jessen) but also epitomizes all of the negative traits of bro-country. In the lyrics of the song, the woman remains just a "babe," not much more than a "bikini top" and "tanned legs," ready to "Cruise" with the lyrical Is, who sweeps away the anonymous beauty in his pimped-up Chevy. Similar examples that explicitly code the protagonist of bro-country as a redneck include Tyler Farr's "Redneck Crazy," a song about a man mistreated by his "baby," who responds by getting his "pissed off on" and by violently stalking her; Luke Bryan's "Country Girl (Shake it For Me)," a song about "the rednecks rockin' 'til the break of dawn," who make the songs' eponymous country girls—whose barely-covered bodies dominate the screen in the songs' music video—"shake it" for them; Blake Shelton's (feat. The Pistol Annies) "Boys 'Round Here," a song about the eponymous boys who like "girls," "trucks," "tobacco," and old-school honky-tonk country music, and whose evocative and almost slogan-like chorus includes the repetition of the term "red red red red red redneck" for those boys, whose main goal is "[...] to get the girl";[9] and, finally, Jason Aldean's "Dirt Road Anthem,"

9 It is important to note in this context that especially "Boys 'Round Here" clearly plays with many of these stereotypes self-consciously and ironically. What remains a fact, however, is that the song, even if read as a satirical comment on the sexual politics of bro-country, invokes the same monikers

which has lived up to its title and has become something like bro-country's anthem, with its celebration of the free and easy life of cars, drink, and the rural dirt roads upon which it is lived. What unites all of these songs, beyond the musical and thematic elements mentioned above, is their sexual politics: these songs are sung by men and sing about exclusively male points of view. The lyrical staples of this music, fittingly, are "tailgates," "girls," "beer," "cut-off jeans," and "bikini tops," and the more or less overt sexual innuendoes of what the song's exclusively male lyrical I will do with the song's girls on the innumerable "Dirt Roads" after the music is over and the lights are dimmed.

In the face of this preponderance of songs by, about, and for men, two young, previously unknown female country musicians have taken aim at bro-country's sexual politics by musically asking: what's with the girls in these country songs by and about male rednecks? Within a few short months, Maddie & Tae's "Girl in a Country Song" became the single most talked-about country song of 2014. Their song responds directly to the bro-country redneck craze and addresses the deluge of superficially painted—always voiceless—female characters in these country songs as it revolves around its titular phrase.[10] Its main point is that being the girl in the country song means being objectified and treated as a voiceless body and a mere sexual object, rather than as a strong subject with agency, and, thus, it is nothing to be aspired to. In the lyrics to the song, Maddie & Tae pretend to be singing from the point of view of the girl in the country song, naively

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and presents the same images of women, as do less complex and less self-aware bro-country songs. Shelton's song further complicates simplistic taxonomies of contemporary country music as it co-stars Shelton's wife Miranda Lambert as part of her girl-group The Pistol Annies, one of the loudest female—and feminist—voices within the genre.

10 For another female response to the rednecks of bro-country, cf. Taylor Swift's "Picture to Burn" (2008), one of her many songs about a failed relationship. In this particular song, the chorus repeatedly criticizes the singer's ex-boyfriend for being "a redneck heartbreak" and links this to his signature "pickup truck" as emblem of his dominant masculinity.

asking if they "really have to wear" "cut-off jeans" and a "bikini top [...] all day." And they offer their song as a rejection of the prospect of being merely that anonymous "girl" in a country song, a development their chorus unveils as severely misguided by asking, "How in the world did it go so wrong?" Moreover, the chorus summarizes the sexual politics of contemporary country music by only seemingly matter-of-factly stating: "We used to get a little respect / Now we're lucky if we even get / To climb up in your truck / Keep my mouth shut and ride along / And be the girl in a country song." Additionally, the song minces no words as it points out the culprits of this flawed sexual politics by invoking, more or less directly, the major players of bro-country in their lyrics: Aldean's "Dirt Road Anthem" is alluded to with a ride "Down some old dirt road we don't even wanna be on"; FGL's suggestion, in "Get Your Shine On," to "slide that sugar shaker over here" is rephrased into the rejection that "there ain't no sugar for you in this shaker of mine"; and the title of Farr's "Redneck Crazy" is combined with Shelton's redneck-staccato in the second verse's ramp into the catchy chorus, as the singers describe how it's "driving [them] red-red-red-red-red-red-redneck crazy being the girl in a country song." The video takes these criticisms over the top and turns them into parody. It starts out, in true bro-country cross-over fashion, with the sound of a banjo plucking the melody over a pronounced acoustic guitar strumming the harmonies against an electronic scratch sound. While we see Maddie & Tae singing their song, two scantily clad women perform the stereotypical role of the "girl in a [contemporary] country song," walking down a dirt road in their jeans shorts and bikini tops. As the music revs up to the chorus and the drums pause for one beat, the lyrics' staccato of "redredredredredneck crazy" segues into the chorus as the drums hit the "song" of the chorus' first line in full stride. It is exactly here, as the first chorus gathers momentum, that Maddie presses a huge "role reversal" button and the song suddenly changes into a full-on parody of bro-country and its sexual politics. Now, it is the boys who are reduced to sex

symbols, having to wear the girl's signature clothing, strutting down the dirt road as Maddie & Tae, i.e. the "girls," sing the song.

While Maddie & Tae's proto-feminist[11] intervention into the gender politics of bro-country is a laudable attempt to provide some gender balance to the music, the concrete way in which they do so still leaves their song open to criticism. As the crude device of the role reversal button indicates, the sexual politics and gender roles are merely reversed rather than critically interrogated. And while the music video makes fun of the necessity of showing young girls as sexual objects by having men cross-dress in these very outfits, it still performs its own contradiction by staging both men and women as objects. Hess pinpoints this issue when she argues that

> the video's ostensible aim is to demonstrate how ludicrous it is that women in country (and in music, and in America) are treated like candy for men to consume, but turning "sexy men" into a joke just ends up poking fun at the very idea of a female (or a gay male) gaze. Conveniently, the "sexy women" are preserved throughout the video to satisfy the straight men in the audience. As for Maddie & Tae, they appear in full makeup and slightly "classier" sexy clothes. The video ends up looking like a call for a more modest presentation of femininity, not a real rejection of sexism in country.

11 In a recent interview, the duo explicitly rejected the term 'feminists' and stated that this "whole thing [i.e. the song] is just us wanting to come at this from a different perspective and making sure that the girl in these songs these guys are singing about gets a voice 'cause you very rarely ever hear from her" (cf. "Maddie & Tae Respond"). Working in the conservative realm of country music, it is understandable that the duo feels the need to distance themselves from the term 'feminist,' which, for the most part, is still frowned upon. Even though they eschew the term, Maddie & Tae's song—as well as their statement about it—is nothing if not feminist. Hubbs includes a short coda on the label "feminism" in country music, in which she observes that the rejection of the label feminism in country music may have as much to do with the term's association with "white middle-class identification[s]" (*Rednecks* 129) as with questions of women's rights and equality.

Throughout the second half of the video, both boys and girls wear the same women's clothes and are shown in identical sexual poses, the parallelism of which goes to show that both men and women can be objectified. The difference, of course, persists, as the male characters are portrayed as parodies—rather than true sexual objects—whereas the female characters remain truly sexualized surfaces and thus do not get out of the bro-country stereotyping of women as (mere) bodies, even if Maddie & Tae themselves provide the counterexample of women as voices rather than bodies. Rather than presenting a true alternative to the sexual politics of bro-country, Maddie & Tae offer its flip-side, namely a female version that merely inverts—rather than truly questions—the sexism implicit in the genre. In short, what the song offers is a different type of the redneck—namely, an implicitly female one—that follows more or less the same heteronormative, slightly sexist gender norms as does bro-country's redneck. Here, again, it becomes clear that the redneck, indeed, "skews masculine" (Hubbs 122–23) in its exclusive rendering of women as (potential) sexual objects. Clearly, the video presents sexualized images only of women, whereas the scantily dressed men are a source of humor rather than—and thus parodies of—truly sexual objects.

The video not only implicitly criticizes the comparative disregard of and disrespect for female characters within country lyrics but also points to a much bigger problem; and that is the relative lack of successful female performers within contemporary country music, as evidenced by the lack of female artists in the top ten of the country charts or the almost exclusively male list of past winners of the CMA's most prestigious "Entertainer of the Year" award.[12] Hidden in the mass of male rednecks, the outstanding talents of the many excellent female artists, then, are often not adequately heard and acknowledged. What drives Maddie & Tae "red-red-red-red-red-red neck

12 In December 2014, "Girl in a Country Song" became the first female-performed number one single on country radio in over two years (cf. "Maddie & Tae's 'Girl in a Country Song'"), indicating a first subtle shift in the male-female power balance within country music.

crazy," therefore, is not the figure of the redneck per se but rather *his* sexual politics and the masculine normativity of looking *at* rather than also listening *to* the female point of view. And while Maddie & Tae's musical protest, with its simple role reversal, falls somewhat short of achieving a full reconfiguration of the narrow confines of redneck sexual politics, other artists go further. Given the heteronormative contours of the redneck and its predominantly male representatives, it is entirely unsurprising that the few 'queer' interventions into the sexual politics and the political unconscious of contemporary country music have come from female artists, such as Miranda Lambert or Kacey Musgraves.

QUEERING THE REDNECK

Amidst the run-away chart success of bro-country and its articulations of redneck identity, artists such as Miranda Lambert have started to provide valiant counterexamples, such as her 2011 single "All Kinds of Kinds." This anthemic song loudly bangs a drum for everyone's right to live their lives however they see fit and explicitly includes counter-normative lifestyles such as a cross-dressing Congressman named "Thomasina." Moreover, the penultimate chorus explicitly excludes the singer from the narrow-mindedness of her fictional hometown by "scratch[ing] off [her] number while hitching out under / That bush league population sign" in an attempt to withstand and ultimately escape the confining contours of small-town sexual norms. Rather than defending a narrowly conservative notion of redneck identity, the simple chorus of this powerful song matter-of-factly states that "Ever since the beginning to keep the world spinning / It takes all kinds of kinds." In these two short lines, Lambert's song gives the lie to a nostalgic image of the past as consisting of just one kind of folk. And by explicitly including transgressive sexual identities, this song undermines simplistic notions of normative sexual and gender relations and complicates notions of brawny masculinity so closely associated with many versions of the redneck. Instead of celebrating

one particular normative ideal, Lambert's song grants "all kinds of kinds" the equal right to existence and refuses to invoke the redneck at all. Thus, it transcends the boundaries of normativity—rather than formulating a redneck counter-discourse—and allows her to show that country and queer, indeed, go together. As Hubbs observes, "country music and the non-metropolitan white working-class constituency associated with it—often conjured in the stereotype of the redneck—are presumed to represent ideological and social positions far from, and even opposite to, those of the queer" ("Country Music" 853). Lambert's song bridges precisely this chasm between Southern redneck identity and queerness by singing about rural small-town identities, yet it does so without invoking the redneck and without stigmatizing queer others. In this context, it is important to note that her song does not come from the fringes of country music but, with Lambert being one of the most successful mainstream country artists of the past few years, speaks from its very center.

Musically, the song is quite traditional with its lilting waltz rhythm in ¾-time, its instrumentation with dobro and mandolin, and Lambert's signature Texas voice resonating thickly with a Southern twang. As traditional as the music sounds, however, the lyrics about a cross-dressing Congressman, a "dog-faced boy" or a "tattooed lady" productively jar with traditional norms. In the words of Lambert's final chorus, "If they'd look in the mirror they'd find / That ever since the beginning to keep the world spinning / It takes all kinds of kinds." That is to say, her music holds up a "mirror" to the country music community so as to make them see that they, too, need all kinds of kinds and that the "destiny of [the country] community," to invoke Jameson again (56), relies on more than crude nostalgic images of the redneck. Even the music itself is less straightforward and traditional than it may initially appear. As Hubbs points out, the "compelling and equally eccentric two-against-three polyrhythmic groove" (*Rednecks* 159) of Lambert's song mirrors and underlines its 'queer' lyrics as it complicates its harmonious lilting waltz by adding a 'queer' rhythmic counterforce. Indeed, the song's quite complex rhythmic and metric

form musically 'ensounds' the conflict between normative, generic identities and those queer ones that fall outside that norm, just as the marching rhythm of the drums counters the harmoniously whining resonator guitar so prominently used in the early parts of the song. In the verses, the marching-band-style drum plays a pattern that does not neatly fall into a groove with the soothing harmonies provided by the mandolin just as the implied uniformity of the military rhythm counters the anything-but-uniform and -normative lyrics. This slightly unusual rhythmic accompaniment of the verse works against the waltz meter of the chorus, and this musical tension echoes the queering of the lyrics, both of which are only resolved in the chorus and the final instrumental play-out. Only here all instruments and, figuratively, all kinds of kinds come harmoniously together as the song both lyrically and musically resolves the tension built up so far.[13] As the song crescendoes into its final chorus, it reaches its peak by criticizing some people's "ignorance" before ending in a harmonious play-out in waltz time that unites the plucking of the mandolin, the sliding sounds of the Dobro, and the rhythmic accompaniment of shuffling hi-hats, sending an invitation to the audience to dance along, whoever they may be. Musically as well as lyrically, the song thus complicates the rhythms and harmonies of country music only to resolve them in a final waltz of all kinds of kinds that goes beyond any notion of normative identities. Fittingly, the music video portrays all (queer) kinds of people—everyday people holding up signs that indicate their particular, if slightly unusual, "kind." In addition to this motley mixture of diverse fans, the video also shows Lambert leading a live audience on stage in a sing-along of the all-inclusive chorus, and a black-and-white rendering of the recording session of the song in a studio, in which the musicians come together in a circle of chairs. Visually, the song thus establishes a strong claim of being-in-it-together despite—or perhaps because of—all of their differences. Contrary to Jackson's and

13 Many thanks to Dr. Knut Holtsträter for helping me straighten out the rhythmic structure of the song.

Wilson's similar community-building performances, however, "All Kinds of Kinds" explicitly refrains from ensconcing the redneck as the figure of integration suggested by the latter songs as it eschews establishing any kind of new norm, be it the redneck or anything else.[14]

Another song that challenges the narrow contours of country music's sexual identities is a song by the CMA's "New Artist of the Year" 2013, Kacey Musgraves. Her single "Follow Your Arrow" similarly attempts to queer country music's identity, and it was this song that secured her an invitation to the 2014 New York GLAAD Media Awards—as the first country artist ever to perform at this event held in support of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (cf. Bolles). In its lyrics, the song calls on everybody to "follow your arrow wherever it points" and entails the suggestion to "kiss lots of boys or [to] kiss lots of girls if that's something you're into." In its open encouragement of all kinds of sexual preferences, Musgraves's song is a proud anthem much like Lambert's and rebels against confining demarcations of identity construction in its chorus: "When the straight and narrow / Gets a little too straight / Roll up a joint, or don't / Just follow your arrow / Wherever it points." As such, it strongly criticizes normative identity constructions and encourages its listeners to follow their own individual ways, even—or perhaps especially if—they might be a little queerer than commonly accepted. This holds especially for heteronormative ideas about sexuality and, especially, marriage. As the first verse tells, "if you don't save yourself for marriage you're a horr-ible person," pointing to (heterosexual) marriage as the default condition from which one had better not stray. Moreover, Musgraves draws out the "horr-ible

14 Lambert continues to bang this drum, as can be gleaned from her performance at the 48th CMA awards in Nashville. Together with pop sensation Meghan Trainor, she performed the latter's "All About That Bass," a song that celebrates all kinds of women beyond mainstream standards of slimness and/as beauty against which the two feisty ladies, both known for their outspokenness against narrow notions of femininity, embraced women's bodies bigger than "size two," as the song's lyrics stipulate (cf. *48th CMA Awards*).

person" so as to make it sound as if she were going to sing "whore" and thus links a refusal to get married to a judgment of loose sexual morality in a stinging indictment of heteronormativity and conservative sexual politics. The song explicitly references the difficulties one will encounter when dealing with the "straight and narrow" of sexual identities, yet insists on the need to "follow your arrow": "Just 'cause you can't beat 'em / Don't mean you should join 'em," she sings as the third, and final, verse segues into the chorus. Much like the singer persona of "All Kinds of Kinds" leaving the narrow confines of her "Bush league" town, "Follow Your Arrow" similarly calls on everybody's right to be different, *not* to join the majority, and to stray beyond the restrictive sexual politics so often embedded—albeit unconsciously—in country music discourses. In addition to its hopeful and upbeat lyrics and sound, the song's third verse also contains the concession that, no matter what you do, you "can't win for losin'"—perhaps especially as a country singer daring to approach these topics. Ultimately, however, the song looks beyond these restrictions as it inserts a bridge between the two final choruses that includes the open encouragement to "Say what you think / Love who you love / 'Cause you just get / so many trips 'round the sun." And, as if to provide a loud example of doing precisely that, the final chorus changes one line to include the singer's very personal statement by no longer singing "Roll up a joint, *or don't*" but, instead, "Roll up a joint, *I would*" and, thus, following her very own individual arrow.

In order to communicate her message musically, Musgraves's "Follow Your Arrow" enlists quite traditional elements from the repertoire of country music, such as the pronounced whine of a pedal steel guitar and the use of otherwise acoustic instrumentation. In many respects, then, Musgraves inscribes her critical, non-normative message into traditional musical forms and into the signature small-town lives of country music, firmly establishing a queer element at the

heart of it.[15] Much like Lambert, who also consistently portrays small town country folk and celebrates being "Famous in a Small Town" (cf. Schmidt, "Famous"), Musgraves refuses to invoke the figure of the redneck. Thus, while both Lambert and Musgraves celebrate the small town lifestyle so closely associated with the redneck, they both dismiss the narrow contours of redneck sexual and gender politics. From this point of view, it is also not surprising that both songs narrate tales of defiant individual resistance in the face of the overwhelming powers of oppression and as such also employ a common narrative arc of much of country music. Yet, as could have been expected, the specific forms of defiance and resistance that "Follow Your Arrow" advocates go against the very grain of the redneck as country music's political unconscious. And this would not be country music if the industry—or, in this case, the television industry associated with it—would not find it necessary to stymie such a queering.

CONCLUSION: SILENCING THE QUEER REDNECK

A telling incident that happened to the song at the 2013 CMA awards in Nashville demonstrates how deeply ingrained the discomfort with anything beyond the narrow limits of acceptable normative identities is within country music. The censorship of Kacey Musgraves at this awards show reveals the unconscious workings of redneck identity within country music. As Musgraves performed the song at the show, at which she was nominated for six awards in some of the major categories and thus clearly one of the stars of the evening, ABC decided

15 Musgraves's entire musical œuvre proudly celebrates a trailer-trash identity that remains close to stereotypical notions of the redneck even if she never explicitly invokes this term. Not only is her album entitled *Same Trailer, Different Park,*—and her most recent single the "Trailer Song"—but the lyrics throughout the album also celebrate these small-town identities. They do so, however, not without also satirizing the heteronormativity and hypocrisy of traditional lifestyles, as in her first hit single "Merry Go 'Round," which reveals marriage as the source of rather than the solution to many existential crises in small-town life.

to mute the singer's microphone whenever she sang the word "joint" so as not to offend the sensibilities of the music's audience.[16] To be sure, censoring supposedly amoral material has a long tradition in American television—one only has to think of the Janet Jackson-nipple slip controversy of 2004. Yet what this incident *does* tell us is that ABC simply was not willing to risk the wrath of a supposedly quite conservative country music community—an audience that also watches the country-themed TV drama *Nashville* on ABC (at about 5 million viewers per episode), the CMA awards, and other country staples televised by the network. What ABC is unwilling to concede, I argue, is exactly Hubbs's point, namely that redneck and queer need not and should not be thought of as diametrical opposites—even if they often continue to be viewed as such. At the end of the day, the very attempt at muting turns into a revealing gesture of the redneck mentality that makes up the unconscious if not invisible—yet in this context deliberately inaudible—identity of country music. Within the metronormative gaze trained on country music—in this case by ABC—there is no room for progressive views on either drug use or sexual identity, even if in this case only the former was actively muted.

Making room for the queer within the redneck is what makes songs such as Lambert's and Musgraves's so important, as they come from the very heart of contemporary country music and thus bring the queer right into the center of Nashville. Or rather, they show that the queer has always already been there. Silencing the queer redneck, then, is the performative enactment of the metronormative point of view that refuses to acknowledge the presence of queerness within the redneck identity that country music so consciously embraces. In the final analysis, muting Musgraves's live performance provides literally

16 Cf. "Follow Your Arrow, *47th CMA Awards.*" Her usage of the joint, of course, evokes Merle Haggard's iconic, at least equally controversial, and perhaps deeply ironic, hit "Okie from Muskogee" (1969), in which he sets himself and his fellow Okies apart from the marijuana-smoking hippies out in California. To this day, the song flabbergasts commentators of country music as to what exactly its message was supposed to be (cf. Hubbs, *Rednecks* 136; Malone and Stricklin 132; Willman 249).

sound proof of the perspicacity of Jameson's insight that all "cultural products" are "political" (5), and how strongly country music's political unconscious continues to be informed by the trope of the redneck. This muting is truly revealed as, in Jameson's words, a "symbolic meditation on the destiny of community" (56), a community that desperately clings to a misty-eyed and nostalgically purified notion of the redneck that defies the course of time. What manifests itself in the seemingly ever-present image of the redneck in country music, then, can be read as the music's way of communicating a longing for stable forms of community and the normative sexual identities they presumably require. And while bro-country, arguably, is not much more than a current fad that will pass as trends do, the general sentiment of the redneck will continue to inflect much of country music's sounds for years to come—as it has done throughout its history. In this context, it is all the more important that especially the women of country music—and the girls in the country songs—complicate the redneck mentality and present queer counter-voices. Here it becomes clear that Musgraves's microphone might have been muted but her words still rang true—perhaps not loudly but certainly quite clearly.[17]

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17 In fact, her song won the "Song of the Year" award at the 2014 CMAs, thus crowning it as the one song that represents country music to the world. As Musgraves acknowledged in the very first words of her acceptance speech: "Oh my goodness, do you guys realize what this means *for country music*?" (*48th CMA Awards*) First indications of just how much this may mean are the outings of (former) country stars Ty Herndon and Billy Gilman shortly after, the former of whom explicitly mentioned Musgraves's winning of the Song of the Year award as a liberating moment for country music (cf. Nelson).

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CONSTRUCTING THE AMERICAN HUGUES PANASSIÉ

Mario Dunkel

In the 1937 March of Time newsreel "The Birth of Swing," the Voice of Time narrates how jazz emerged in 1917 when the Original Dixieland Jazz Band recorded the first jazz record. It then went through a period of decline in the 1920s and early 1930s, until its renaissance, under the label "swing," was inaugurated when such European critics as Hugues Panassié discovered the music's aesthetic value. By 1937, Panassié, barely 25 years old, was an iconic figure within circles of American hot jazz aficionados, despite the fact that most American jazz critics had never actually met the French jazz enthusiast. When Panassié visited New York for the first time in 1938, the young jazz record producer George Avakian even observed that, due to Panassié's visit, New York's jazz scene was improving, since people sought to cater to the world's leading jazz critic's taste (Avakian 6).

This paper investigates the vast chasm between Hugues Panassié and Hughes Panassie (as his name was often spelled in American jazz writings)—that is between Panassié's role in the French jazz scene and his reception and appropriation in the U.S.[1] I argue that, in an American context, Panassié was significant in three different ways. First, he was a pioneering jazz impresario who built a multi-faceted apparatus in order to support hot jazz—defined as an essentially black, improvised type of New-Orleans-based small-combo jazz. This apparatus inspired similar initiatives on behalf of hot jazz in the U.S. Second, his writings were rhetorically significant. Providing taxonomic models, analytical assessments, as well as rigorous, critical judgments, his texts contributed to the transformation of rhetorical strategies in the larger legitimization of jazz in both France and the U.S. This was true especially for the rhetorical elevation and

1 The title alludes to the title of Walter Grünzweig's study *Constructing the German Walt Whitman.*

aestheticization of improvised music. Third, I argue that Panassié functioned as an icon that was partly invented by American critics in their efforts to authorize their critical perspectives and to legitimize jazz by tapping into larger narratives about the value of American culture.

PANASSIÉ AS PIONEERING IMPRESARIO

As an outspoken opponent of democracy, a monarchist, and a nationalist with close ties to *l'action francaise*, Panassié was an unlikely champion of the American hot jazz movement (cf. Perchard, "Tradition, Modernity" 27). Indeed, in terms of their political ideology, it would be difficult to imagine two poles that were more alien to one another than Panassié and the American hot jazz circles of the 1930s. While French hot jazz enthusiasts were politically diverse, the emergence of hot jazz criticism in the 1930s U.S. was closely aligned with the large social movement on the American left that Michael Denning has termed "the cultural front" (cf. *The Cultural Front* 328–47). Such early jazz critics as Abbe Niles, Charles Edward Smith, and John Hammond sought to define hot jazz as an interracial, working-class music, making it an integral part of the interracial aesthetics and politics of the American left (cf. Dunkel, "Ideological Implications"; "W.C. Handy, Abbe Niles").

Regardless of his political ideology, Panassié had in fact pioneered the institutional promotion of hot jazz. In the late 1920s, he spearheaded a new generation of French critics who began to redefine and promote jazz. The son of Louis Panassié, a wealthy engineer, Hugues had a large fortune at his disposal that enabled him to fully dedicate himself to his artistic and critical interests. Immersed in late-1920s' jazz circles in Paris, Panassié took saxophone lessons with the French jazz musician Christian Wagner and joined Philippe Brun's gramophone sessions, listening to jazz records while befriending French and American musicians. When the Jewish American clarinet player Mezz Mezzrow visited Paris in 1929, he would tell the

seventeen-year-old jazz devotee that the only true jazz was black jazz, and that white musicians could aspire to the black style only by means of technical imitation (cf. Gumplowicz, *Les Rèsonances* 252). Mezzrow told him that Armstrong's *West End Blues* was the best jazz record ever and that "Louis is a genius. Everyone wants to play like him. He influences everyone" (Mezzrow qtd. in Panassié, *Monsieur Jazz* 73). In the following years, Panassié would become one of the greatest promoters of Armstrong's music.

In 1929, Panassié wrote his first articles on "Le jazz hot." He further increased his visibility as an expert on hot jazz when, in 1930, the 18-year-old Jacques Bureau asked Panassié to help him start a jazz radio show. In the fall of 1931, Bureau, Panassié and two of their teenage listeners founded the world's first jazz association. Initially named Jazz Club Universitaire, the association was soon renamed into Hot Club. In the following years, Hot Club President Panassié and the other members increased their promotional activities, giving lectures, writing articles, broadcasting radio shows, and organizing hot jazz concerts in Paris. Their criticism appeared in the first small magazines that were exclusively devoted to jazz, *Revue du jazz* and *Jazz-Tango-Dancing,* which both first appeared in 1929 (cf. Dregni, *Django* 75–78).

Panassié's activism was inspired by the surrealist movement. While the surrealists' communist sympathies had kept Panassié from supporting their movement whole-heartedly, he nonetheless admired André Breton and some surrealist artists, despite their political differences (cf. Panassié, *Monsieur Jazz* 49). Panassié's organizational efforts to build an apparatus in support of hot jazz were patterned after Breton's leadership of the surrealist movement. Similar to Breton, Panassié promoted a new type of art by simultaneously giving it a rigorous definition and advocating it through a wide variety of channels. He also followed Breton in building up a tightly-knit circle of insiders who were united in their efforts to proselytize this new artistic idiom. If the surrealists promoted their art through "manifestos, announcements, declarations, group questionnaires, political

tracts, exhibition catalogues, glossaries, definitions, litanies, canonical texts, mock trials and debates" (Tythacott 24), Panassié and the supporters of hot jazz likewise boosted their art through concerts, articles, radio broadcasts, journals, lectures, debates, and the publication of books and discographies.

Panassié's organizational efforts, which implicitly claimed improvised jazz as a new artistic expression or "school," greatly inspired American hot jazz enthusiasts of the early 1930s. In 1935, a number of internationally connected U.S. critics started to organize an American version of the European associations of hot clubs. The foundation of the United Hot Clubs of America (UHCA) was the brainchild of Marshall Stearns, a PhD student at Yale where he headed the university's local hot club (cf. "'Hot Clubs' Being Organized from Coast to Coast" n.p.). Similar to the Hot Club de France, The UHCA organized hot jazz concerts, provided a platform for debates, facilitated the exchange of hot jazz records among members, and tried to pressure the record industry into re-issuing valuable jazz records. It also created channels for the promotion of jazz within the U.S., such as the small news bulletin *Tempo*, which provided hot club members with record and concert reviews as well as news on recent developments in hot jazz. Compared to its European counterparts, however, the UHCA grew slowly and remained rather small (cf. Dunkel, "Marshall Winslow Stearns"). The collaboration between Panassié and the American hot jazz movement peaked when Panassié internationalized the jazz magazine *Hot-Jazz*, which in the mid-1930s became a truly transatlantic platform for jazz debates and criticism.

PANASSIÉ'S AESTHETICIZATION OF JAZZ

In addition to impacting the organizational development of hot jazz support in the U.S., Panassié was significant in the conceptualization of improvised, small-combo jazz. Prior to the mid-1930s, American hot jazz enthusiasts had largely promoted improvised jazz within a

folklorist discourse. According to such early jazz and blues writers as Abbe Niles and Charles Edward Smith, hot jazz was significant as an outgrowth of interracial, working-class communities in the United States. However, according to their definition of this musical idiom as a communally expressive folk music, hot jazz could not aspire to the same aesthetic level as art music. Its value seemed to lie in its existence as a sonic representation of contemporary folk culture's essence (cf. Dunkel, "W.C. Handy, Abbe Niles").

Panassié's writings were fundamental to overcoming this impasse in the legitimation of jazz. In contrast to American jazz writers, Panassié never attempted to define hot jazz as folk music. Inspired by the French theologian Jacques Maritain, Panassié rather regarded improvised jazz as a divine expression of the immortal soul. Maritain introduced Panassié to a binary framework for the reception of art. In *Art et scolastique*, Maritain distinguished between "veritable" art and pseudo-art. Accordingly, true artistic creation was a reproduction of the divine, and every type of "true" art was a transient imitation of a divine, eternal truth that transcended generations of people and multitudes of artistic styles. Panassié's distinction between hot and sweet jazz corresponded to Maritain's dichotomy. In addition to borrowing Maritain's binary distinction between true art and pseudo-art, Panassié adopted Maritain's synthesis of intuition and intellect. In *Art et scolastique*, Maritain repeatedly accentuated that intuition and intellectuality were not mutually exclusive, but that true artists were both intuitive and intellectual at the same time—that they had to develop an "intellectual intuition,"[2] as Maritain put it ("Maritain, Jacques"). While Maritain's synthesis of intuition and intellectuality referred to the value of medieval art, Panassié used it in order to argue in

2 Maritain's use of "intellectual intuition" corresponds to Henri-Louis Bergson's reconfiguration of this term. While Kant, who coined the term, argued that metaphysical phenomena had to be approached "intellectually," Bergson accentuated the significance of intuition as a means of cognition (cf. 163).

favor of the inherent value of hot jazz. According to Panassié, “Le jazz est une musique intellectuelle dans ce sens que ses développements subtils s’adressent avant tout à l’intelligence. Les chorus *hot* sont une sorte de développement, d’analyse d’idées et l’esprit, pour les suivre, doit fournir un effort attentif et constant” (“Le jazz hot” 290).[3] The way in which Panassié used Maritain’s synthesis of intuition and intellect, thus countering the image of jazz’s imperfection, demonstrates the transvaluative force of Maritain’s theological teachings.

Panassié’s accentuation of jazz’s inherent intellectuality was complemented by his taxonomic approach to jazz. Panassié’s writings were characterized by a great repertoire of newly coined taxonomic categories. Many of his concepts, such as “Chicago school” and “collective improvisation,” circulated widely among American jazz enthusiasts who even adopted some of Panassié’s racialist categories. Ernest Borneman, a widely read German jazz critic who migrated to England in the early 1930s and later moved to Canada and the U.S., praised Panassié, claiming that “of all the contributions that jazz made to music, this business of improvising collectively is the most important one” (207). According to Borneman, Panassié was not only one of the most perceptive critics, but he had also identified and named the driving force behind jazz music.

Wilder Hobson, the author of *American Jazz Music*, the first American monograph on hot jazz, for instance, used Panassié’s notion that black jazz was characterized by a musical “warmth” (Panassié’s “*chaleur*”), thus separating between an ostensibly warm black jazz and its colder, white counterpart (cf. 103, 134). His concept of an essentially “Negroid” sense of rhythm was similarly reminiscent of Panassié’s *swing nègre*. While many of Panassié’s other racialist categories (such as *style nègre*, *vibrato nègre*), were discarded by

3 “Jazz is an intellectual music in the sense that its subtle developments primarily speak to the intelligence. Hot choruses are a sort of development, of analyses, ideas, and spirit. In order to follow this progress, everyone must make a constant and attentive effort” (my translation).

American jazz critics, the notion of "collective improvisation" developed a life of its own in American jazz discourses when such writers as Marshall Stearns used it in order to argue for the essentially democratic nature of jazz. It would be wrong to assume, however, that U.S. critics ever received Panassié uncritically. If American critics were fascinated by the legitimating power of Panassié's enthusiastic aestheticism, they were also selective regarding which aspects of Panassié's writings to use in corroborating their positions. As critic Stephen W. Smith put it, "It never occurred to them to take his word as law" ("Hot Collecting" 31).

PANASSIÉ AS ICON

Rather than following Panassié blindly, American critics in fact appropriated him as an icon in the legitimation of jazz. The use of Panassié as a means of legitimation was facilitated by several assumptions about the French critic. For one, he was associated with Paris, which had for a long time served as a place where art was "consecrated," to say it with Pascale Casanova (127–33). The fact that hot jazz had its own Parisian authority undoubtedly seemed to add to the music's significance. Stearns reminded his readers that a similar process of Parisian consecration had catapulted American Romantic writers such as Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe to the top of world literature. As he put it, jazz was "one of the few unique American contributions to the world. Like the poets, Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe, the fact that it was first truly appreciated abroad, only adds to our obligation to study it generally and spread an understanding of it at home" ("Members of the 'Hot Clubs'"; cf. Dunkel, "Marshall Stearns" 472). Stearns thus used the fact that jazz was celebrated abroad—and most importantly in Paris—in order to legitimize it at home. Similar to Stearns, Armstrong's (largely ghostwritten) 1936 autobiography *Swing That Music* also pointed to the importance of French critics in the consecration of American art (cf. 108). Even those American critics who disagreed

with many of Panassié's views pointed to the historical significance of the fact that a French writer was pioneering the serious investigation of jazz. Charles Edward Smith, for instance, claimed that Panassié reminded him of the history of heroic French contributions to the United States, including Lafayette's involvement in the Revolutionary War (22).

Besides appropriating Panassié in the larger legitimation of jazz with American elites and the American middle class, critics also used his name in internal debates. Panassié's authority in the field of jazz for instance helped such Afrocentric jazz writers as Stearns to confront other types of jazz historiography by authorizing his views on the history of jazz. In 1936, Stearns made the distinction between what he called a "colored-influence school" of jazz criticism and a "white-influence school" ("Influences on Bix Beiderbecke" 5). Tied to Yale University, the race-oriented colored-influence school around Stearns and John Hammond claimed that the class-oriented white-influence school around Charles Edward Smith was misguided. Stearns and Hammond publicly embraced the President of the Hot Club de France as a champion of Afrocentric jazz criticism while Charles Edward Smith was opposed to many of Panassié's views. In his review of the English translation of Panassié's 1934 study *Le jazz hot* Smith appreciated the fact that Panassié's book would contribute to a greater interest in hot jazz, particularly within the U.S., but he nonetheless criticized Panassié harshly, calling him "erudite, opinionated, and addicted to overstatement" (22). Smith expressed particular opposition to Panassié's definition of jazz as an African American idiom. According to Smith, such a view was a "fallacy" since it reduced the multi-layered character of jazz to a monolithic racial expression. Since Smith claimed that jazz was the product of many interrelated folk musics, including "Elizabethan folksong," he thought that Panassié's view of jazz as an aesthetically autonomous type of black art ignored the contingencies of jazz's development, leading to erroneous assumptions concerning the value of early jazz (cf. 22).

The so-called colored-influence school, in particular, had little interest in refuting the notion that Panassié had privileged access to American culture. Quite the contrary, Stearns and Hammond supported Panassié's self-aggrandizement as an arbiter of jazz music, for it was through Panassié that they could both authorize their views on jazz and legitimize jazz with the American middle-class by incorporating it into the larger narrative according to which American art had to be consecrated by European authorities.

CONCLUSION

Panassié's first visit to the U.S. in 1938 also marks the peak of his popularity and authority with American critics. He began to lose this authority with the publication of his second monograph, *The Real Jazz*, in 1942. After the German invasion of France, Panassié had moved to Vichy, France, where he was insulated from new developments in jazz music. In *The Real Jazz*, he self-critically recanted his earlier notion that white and black musicians could be equally good at playing "real jazz." He now claimed that black jazz musicians were always superior to whites. As a result of his limited access to information and his open self-contradictions, Panassié's credibility suffered. When he openly attacked bebop in the mid-1940s, claiming that it had nothing to do with jazz, Panassié further alienated American jazz critics. In addition, his function in American discourses on jazz changed. By the 1940s, jazz was legitimized less by pointing to its appreciation abroad than through emerging academic discourses. Those race-oriented critics who had supported Afrocentric theories with Panassié's writings in the 1930s now referred to Melville Herskovits's research in order to provide evidence for the African origins of jazz (cf. Gennari 133–7).

Although Panassié's glory began to fade in the 1940s, the myth that he discovered jazz's value has nonetheless remained remarkably persistent. It originated as a result of Panassié's pioneering role in building an apparatus of jazz support and his aestheticization of

improvised jazz as an autonomous art. In addition, it emerged as American critics fashioned an image of Panassié that was conducive to the promotion of African American improvised jazz as an American national art. In an American cultural context, the socially conservative work of a right-leaning monarchist thus took on an emancipatory function as it was re-appropriated in the democratic discourse employed by left-leaning American jazz critics.

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WELCOME TO ATLANTA WHERE THE BLUESMAN PLAYS

TOURING THE DIRTY SOUTH WITH BLIND WILLIE McTELL

Jürgen E. Grandt

In 2002, the summer smash hit "Welcome to Atlanta" by Jermaine Dupri and Ludacris announced that the city had, indeed, become the undisputed capital of the newest of the new Souths, the Dirty South. Somewhat predictably perhaps, the song is a party anthem more than anything else. Even though the chorus extols "Big beats, hit streets, see gangstas roaming," the very next line defuses the allusion to street violence by adding that "parties don't stop 'til eight in the morning." The accompanying video shows an utterly harmless cityscape, one welcoming to even the most unhip of squares. The video's narrative consists of Dupri and Ludacris taking a double-decker bus full of unsuspecting visitors on a tour of Atlanta. An elderly white tourist with a Midwestern accent asks the rap duo's provocatively dressed female assistant as he boards the bus, "Ma'am, in this brochure it says, 'This tour is crunk'—what does that mean?" Accordingly, the tour literally bypasses historical Atlanta—the Auburn Avenue District and Ebenezer Baptist Church, for example (let alone the Margaret Mitchell House or Stone Mountain)—as the video intermittently shows a city map with the bus's route. Setting out from, appropriately enough, the futuristic Philips Arena, the tourists first stop in College Park for a visit with boxing legend Evander Holyfield; cruise on to Decatur to pose for snapshots with fellow rapper Da Brat and basketball star Dominique Wilkins; then back to southwest Atlanta, colloquially known as the SWATS; and finally the tour ends in the (in-)famous Club 112 (actually located in Midtown, not in Buckhead as the video implies), where Lil' John, the King of Crunk, holds court. Along the way, members of the multi-ethnic, international tour group are assimilated one-by-one into the local hip-hop culture: a middle-aged white woman gets a "thug-life" tattoo across her belly in College Park and poses next to

a young, black wannabe-gangbanger "representin'" his "'hood"; a turbaned Hindu purchases a pair of Lugz and a sweat-suit at a store in the SWATS and proceeds to show off his hip-hop dance moves; and an Asian woman gets her hair braided in cornrows in Decatur. At the end of the video, when the tourists re-board the "Dirty South" bus after a night of partying in the club, the same Midwestern gentleman has doffed his cowboy hat and Stars-and-Stripes polo shirt in favor of a doo-rag and a fly T-shirt, pats Dupri on the back and exclaims, "Thanks for showing me around, shawty." Thus, Atlanta provides the symbolic ritual ground for the expurgation of (Southern) history: it's not the victory of Western democracy and free market capitalism over the Warsaw Pact and centrally planned economies that heralds the "end of history," as Francis Fukuyama had declared triumphantly a decade earlier (xii), but partying at Club 112 with JD and Luda.

To be sure, while Dupri and Ludacris may very well have enjoyed presenting Fukuyama with a doo-rag too, they do not attempt to emulate Goodie Mob, along with Outkast the original cartographers of the Dirty South, or Arrested Development—to reference three Atlanta-based hip-hop acts whose music displays a salient social and historical consciousness. The song's only nods to the past are implicit: the sample that furnishes the musical foundation of "Welcome to Atlanta" is lifted from the Miracles' 1974 song "Do It Baby," and Dupri pays homage to the mythical cradle of hip-hop, Brooklyn, when he appropriates a few lines from Whodini's "Five Minutes of Funk" from 1984. But in its very ahistoricity, "Welcome to Atlanta" is in fact historically rather accurate. In *The Souls of Black Folk,* W.E.B. Du Bois had described a city "turned resolutely toward the future; and that future held aloft vistas of purple and gold:—Atlanta, Queen of the cotton kingdom; Atlanta, Gateway to the Land of the Sun; Atlanta, the new Lachesis, spinner of web and woof for the world" (48). But Du Bois's essay also contained a stern warning: juxtaposing Atlanta's miraculous rebirth after the devastation at the hands of Sherman's Union armies with the Greek myth of Hippomenes and the golden apples, the same drive and determination that allowed Atlanta's citizens—both black and

white—not just to persevere, but to build upon the smoldering ruins of their town an economic powerhouse, was in danger of "suddenly sink[ing] to a question of cash and a lust for gold" (50). As if in anticipation of the excesses of the Dirty South, Du Bois condemned "the rising Mammonism of the reborn South" as but one symptom of an increasing historical amnesia of a city that was constantly forward-looking, constantly reinventing itself (50). And yet, between Du Bois's description of Atlanta that warns of the very materialism and hedonism Dupri, Ludacris, and others would celebrate unabashedly a century later, lies the Atlanta of one of the most important, and yet still often overlooked, bluesmen, Blind Willie McTell. The symbolic territory of McTell's soundscapes marks the passageway from Du Bois's "City of a Hundred Hills" (47) to the dance floor of "Welcome to Atlanta's" Club 112 and amplifies persistent traces of the past in the ostensibly ahistorical matrices of hip-hop's Dirty South.

Born in the town of Thomson in east Georgia, in 1903 or 1904, McTell grew up in Statesboro, in the center of the state. Having lost his eyesight at a young age, he gravitated toward music early and eventually adopted the twelve-string guitar, a rather unusual choice for bluesmen of his time. Even more unusual was the fact that young Willie would receive a very thorough education, attending several different schools for the blind, and for the rest of his life he would read anything published in Braille he could lay his hands on (Gray 172–73). Despite his handicap, he embarked on the life of the wandering musician, performing in locations as far-flung as Maine and Illinois. Though his early recordings, done in the late 1920s, sold in respectable numbers, he never became a star the way fellow Georgian Ma Rainey was in life, or his Mississippi counterpart Robert Johnson, King of the Delta Blues Singers, would become in death. Partly that was also a result of the fact that he recorded under a variety of names—among them Hot Shot Willie or Pig & Whistle Red, for instance—sometimes for contractual reasons, sometimes to separate his secular records from his religious songs. Returning to the studio only sporadically in the wake of the Depression, McTell

died in 1959, probably from a brain hemorrhage brought on by complications from diabetes and chronic alcoholism.

But much like with Johnson, McTell's musical influence grew only after his passing. In the 1950s, a teenager named Robert Zimmerman growing up in, of all places, rural Minnesota, fell under the spell of McTell's twelve-string guitar and would later, after he had reinvented himself as Bob Dylan, pay repeated homage to the Georgia bluesman in his songs.[1] And "Statesboro Blues" is perhaps McTell's most famous song largely because it remains, to this day, the traditional concert opener of the Allman Brothers Band, the granddaddy of Southern rock (Grandt 89–91). Unlike Robert Johnson however, McTell has never really become the subject of rampant myth-mongering and crude commercialization. Even though he was allegedly seen, Elvis-like, at the funeral of his old friend and long-time collaborator Curley Weaver three years after his own death, or playing an Atlanta storefront church in 1972, most other legends about McTell—some perhaps true, others probably not—revolve around his blindness. Always immaculately, stylishly dressed, McTell was said to know the busy streets of Atlanta, his home-base from the 1920s onward, so well by sound alone that he was capable of navigating them from behind the wheel of an automobile, and white patrons often spoke in awe of McTell's ability to tell the denomination of paper money by feel (Bastin 213–14; Kent).

Over the course of his life, McTell recorded approximately 150 sides, and they display the wide stylistic variety, well beyond the genre proper of the blues, that the repertoire of almost all working bluesmen and -women had to incorporate if they wanted to satisfy the needs of different clienteles; fittingly, his biographer, Michael Gray, calls him "the human jukebox" (1). McTell's working catalogue comprised songs like "A to Z Blues" with its violent and disturbing misogyny—again anticipating the crasser manifestations of Dirty

1 Dylan covered McTell's "Broke Down Engine Blues" as "Broke Down Engine" on his World Gone Wrong album, and he even recorded a song entitled "Blind Willie McTell."

South hip-hop—as well as the deep and heartfelt spirituality of "Pearly Gates" or, from his childhood, "Old Time Religion." In fact, spirituals, church hymns, and the wildly popular genre of gospel, then being pioneered by fellow Atlanta resident Thomas A. Dorsey (who performed his secular blues under the name "Georgia Tom"), constituted a significant part of his repertoire, as did folk ballads, railroad songs, ragtime, and, of course, the pop hits of the day (Dorsey 4–7). McTell took work where he could find it, playing for the guests of some of the finest hotels along the Southeastern seaboard, in the dives lining Atlanta's notorious Bell Street, in parking lots of restaurants, or as a member of traveling medicine shows (cf. Evans; Wald, *Escaping* 33–34; Wilkins et al. 231). As with most itinerant bluesmen, McTell's lyrics are much less territorial than those of his hip-hop descendants. For example, "That Could Never Happen No More" he would sometimes locate in Atlanta, sometimes in Chicago, probably depending on the audience he was playing for at any given time. But throughout his recorded output, Atlanta is refracted in many ways as a forerunner to the Dirty South's capital.

Perhaps the most obvious precursor to "Welcome to Atlanta" is the infectious "Georgia Rag." McTell first recorded it on October 31, 1931, as "Georgia Bill" for the Okeh record company. As the title indicates correctly, this is indeed a rag, not a blues, and rags made for a significant portion of McTell's repertoire. A stunning display of his virtuosity on the twelve-string guitar, "Georgia Rag" is also noteworthy in that it anticipates how Jermaine Dupri and Ludacris would represent the city seven decades later. Here, the singer proclaims that "Down in Atlanta on Harris Street" is "where the boys and gals do meet" to indulge in "[t]hat wild rag, that crazy rag, better known as the Georgia rag."[2] The allure of "Dark Town" is so strong that the black

2 True to Du Bois's resolutely future-bound Atlanta, the City Council in 2011 attempted to rename Harris Street, so known since shortly after the end of the Civil War, to John Portman Boulevard, sparking some resistance from the community, including a lawsuit (cf. Suggs; Visser, "Controversial," "Harris").

section of Atlanta has in fact become an international tourist destination: "Came all the way from Paris, France, / Come in Atlanta to get a chance / To do that rag, that Georgia rag." All that is missing is the Dirty South tour bus that takes the (elegantly) slumming visitors from Europe "Down in Dark Town," where the party goes on "night and day, / Trying to dance them blues away." "Atlanta Strut," another guitar showcase, was recorded two years earlier for Columbia (by "Blind Sammie," so as not to jeopardize the contract with Columbia's competitor Victor). Here, McTell meets with his posse, "a gang of stags," on Marietta Street (rechristened Marietta Avenue by the singer). The gang—reminiscent of the harmlessly roaming "gangstas" invoked on "Welcome to Atlanta"—offer him a quart of corn liquor, but McTell spots "a little girl" who "looked like a lump of Lord-have-mercy." Consequently, he decides to go clubbing with her: McTell's instrument imitates the couple walking down 9th Street and up the stairs to a rent party, as well as the cornet, piano, and bass of the jazz combo playing there. His date is so impressed by the good time he shows her that she "Hug me and she kissed me, called me sugar lump, / Throwed them sweet arms around me like a grapevine around a stump."

Thus, McTell's Dirty South is typified by the hunt for pleasure. "Kill It, Kid," finds McTell roaming from party to party on 6th Avenue in Miami—later the birthplace of Miami bass, the rap genre that would significantly influence Dirty South hip-hop (cf. Miller):

> Put out the light 'bout half past one,
> We gonna dance from now 'til sun:
> Kill it, kid—
> Hot mama, let's kill it, kid.

In other words, McTell exhorts the partygoers to be "as nasty as they wanna be." Exactly like the cityscape of his hip-hop descendants, McTell's Dirty South provides perennial good times fueled primarily by dancing, by sex of course, and by booze: it is worth pointing out here that the frequent references to alcohol consumption in McTell's

songs blatantly describe an activity that was illegal until the repeal of Prohibition in 1933. The sexual exploits his songs boast about may be more metaphorically veiled than those of contemporary hip-hoppers—even though a tune like "Let Me Play with Yo' Yo-Yo" does not require much exegesis—but they are just as braggadocious, and often just as misogynistic. Given the racial politics of McTell's America, his swagger exceeds even that of, say, the 2 Live Crew's "2 Live Blues" when McTell exclaims on "Hillbilly Willie's Blues" (which sounds very much like a parody of white hillbilly music) that he "got a gal in the white folks' yard; / She don't drink liquor, but she do play card, darling." He is every bit a "playa," so much so that he cannot elude the nymphomaniac groupies even after death: "I even heard a rumbling deep down in the ground: / It wa'n't a thing but the women trying to run me down" ("Talkin'"). The 'hood in McTell's Dirty South is therefore not significantly different from the Atlanta the international group tours in 2002: both are almost completely dehistoricized, both advertise the instant gratification, excesses, and self-indulgence of the playa's lifestyle.[3]

Musically, too, McTell's Dirty South prefigures that of his hip-hop descendants. Much like "Welcome to Atlanta" samples snippets from Whodini and from the Miracles, McTell's songs frequently appropriate other source material, a practice as common in the oral art form of the blues as sampling has been in the postmodern art form of hip-hop (cf. *Blind;* Wald, *Escaping* 66–69). "Georgia Rag," for example, incorporates whole verses from native Floridian Blind Blake's "Wabash Rag," first recorded in 1927. To Ed Rhodes, who produced McTell's last recording session in 1956, the veteran bluesman

3 By the time McTell's voice was first captured on wax, the reputation of Atlanta as 'party central' had already been well established in African American popular music. The first female blues singer recorded in Atlanta, Lucille Bogan, gave the Okeh field recording unit "Pawn Shop Blues" in June of 1923; that following March, Okeh returned to Georgia's capital to capture the first male blues singer, Ed Andrews and his "Barrelhouse Blues" (cf. Oliver 23–26, 69–72). Both songs limn Atlanta as a place where money and morals are easily lost as the city's good times are virtually irresistible.

admitted laconically, "I jump 'em from other writers, but I arrange them *my* way" (cf. Last; Evans; Gray 208–211). In his own way, then, McTell was indeed 'sampling' as liberally as rappers are today.

But McTell's Dirty South wasn't all fun and games. Songs like "Bell Street Lightning" and "Bell Street Blues" reveal a much more notorious section of "Dark Town" and describe an inner city beset by random violence, substance abuse, police brutality, and political corruption. "Last Dime Blues" finds McTell surveying black Atlanta from Decatur Street and listing the results of urban blight: broken families, street crime, poverty, and domestic violence. The trope of travel that recurs in so many of McTell's other blues is completely absent in these songs; it is as if the singer's persona and the characters he encounters in Atlanta are confined there by forces beyond their control. In this respect, McTell's Dirty South is significantly different from that presented in "Welcome to Atlanta"; instead, it anticipates very much the original cartography of the Dirty South as staked out by the hip-hop quartet Goodie Mob—comprised of Cee-Lo, Big Gipp, Khujo, and T-Mo—on their 1995 debut album, *Soul Food.*[4] Like the characters of "Bell Street Blues" or "Last Dime Blues," Goodie Mob and their collaborators inhabit a territory where they appear to be trapped, tragically so, in an inescapable present. *Soul Food*'s stark, Southern landscape is also suffused with a pervasive sense of constraint: on the satirical "Live at the O.M.N.I.," for example, Goodie Mob transform the name of the Atlanta landmark from an entertainment and sports venue into an acronym for "One million niggers inside." It is a Dirty South that seems to have left history behind—even its own: the Omni Coliseum was razed after the 1996 Olympics and replaced by the Philips Arena, point of departure for Dupris and Ludacris's Dirty South tour ("Omni").

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4 While the birth of the Dirty South is often dated to Outkast's 1994 debut, *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*, which also featured cameo appearances by members of Goodie Mob, the phrase does not occur anywhere in its lyrics—though the album does introduce Atlanta as "the Motown of the South"; only the release of *Soul Food* a year later popularized (if not invented) the phrase. Both albums were recorded by the same Atlanta production team, Organized Noize.

However, “Dirty South,” the track that codified this, the newest of the New Souths, also implies that the current, bleak present of crime, drugs, corruption, poverty, and despair is indeed in part the legacy of Southern history:

> See, life’s a bitch, then you figure out
> Why you really got dropped in the Dirty South.
> See, in the third grade, this is what you told:
> You was bought—you was sold.

Goodie Mob, in the booming 1990s, attack not just a socio-political power structure that continues to thrive—if by other, more complex means—on the continued subjugation of Americans of African descent, but also a complicit educational system that trivializes the history of blacks in the New World and ignores their suffering. The result is not just a sense of betrayal, but also a pervasive hopelessness. Goodie Mob’s rhymes capitulate often before the underlying reasons that inform the rituals of death and deprivation taking place within the boundaries of their Dirty South:

> I struggle and fight to stay alive
> Hoping that one day I’d earn the chance to die.
> Pallbearer to this one, pallbearer to that one—
> Can’t seem to get a grip ‘cause the palms sweatin’.
> (“I Didn’t Ask to Come”)

It is a Dirty South whose blues McTell would recognize instantly: even though his own songs never addressed Atlanta’s and the South’s past explicitly, surely not even Blind Willie could have been blind to the fact that the racial dynamics in the city in which he lived were the direct ramifications of the historical practice of chattel slavery in the New World.

The funeral scene Goodie Mob describe on “I Didn’t Ask to Come” has its Dirty South harbinger in Blind Willie McTell’s “The

Dyin' Crapshooter's Blues." A so-called talking-blues, a sub-genre in which all or part of the lyrics are narrated rather than sung (another intriguing foreshadowing of rap), the song is not really a blues at all: in another instance of proto-sampling, McTell uses, appropriately so, the harmonic structure of the old New Orleans stalwart "St. James Infirmary." "See," McTell explains on the last of the three different versions he recorded over the course of his career, "I had to steal music from every which way to get it, to get it to fit" *(Last).* "The Dyin' Crapshooter's Blues" combines not only the Dirty South imagery of "Georgia Rag" or "Kill It, Kid" with the much more sobering observations of "Bell Street Lightning" or "Last Dime Blues," but, true to the blues aesthetic, also the tragic with the comic, despair with hope, resignation with resilience. On the final version, McTell introduces the song's protagonist as an actual friend of his, who requested on his deathbed that McTell play it at his funeral.[5] Little Jesse Williams

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5 There is no written record of a Jesse Williams being shot by Atlanta police in 1929; in and of itself, this does not say much at all in a city whose mainstream media rarely, if at all, considered the violent demise of a black street hustler newsworthy (cf. Gray 186–87). Whether or not Little Jesse actually existed is, in the context of the argument put forth here, less important than the symbolic territory he inhabits. For a fictionalized account of the event that inspired the song, see David Fulmer's murder mystery *The Dying Crapshooter's Blues.* Fulmer's historical novel is set in Atlanta in December of 1923 and uses as its catalyst the shooting of Little Jesse witnessed by McTell. Though the prolific Fulmer is most certainly no hip-hop aficionado—he produced and directed a 2001 TV documentary about the Georgia blues singer—his novel anticipates the Atlanta of the Dirty South in many ways as a city not just awash in sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, but also in political corruption, economic disenfranchisement, and pervasive racism. One of the novel's many subplots has two record producers from New York, George Purcell and his assistant Jake Stein, audition undiscovered musical talent in their hotel room in the whites-only Dixie Hotel, but management asks them to leave when it is discovered that they smuggled McTell into their suite. Unperturbed, Purcell and Stein are determined to return, for "[t]here was money to be made. It was a clear sign that the recorded music business was on the verge of something. No longer were phonograph records only for the well-to-do. Poor families, black and white, could afford a small Edison player. Mr. Purcell knew that he and Jake would be back to the city, time and again, and so would Vocalion, Okeh,

was a wily street hustler who cheated at cards and liked to chase loose women. In flippant defiance of Du Bois's admonition, Little Jesse's motto was to "get rich or die tryin'"—much like that of his distant relative 50 Cent. But unlike 50, die he did. After being fatally shot on Courtland Street in 1929 in what apparently was a random act of police brutality, a dying Jesse instructs his friend McTell how he wants his funeral to be held: a playing card painted on the side of the hearse, eight crapshooters as pallbearers, and a grave dug with the ace of spades. The racism of law enforcement and the corruption of the judicial system are alluded to when Little Jesse says

> I want twelve polices in my funeral march,
> High sheriff playing blackjack, leading the parade.
> I want the judge and solicitor who jailed me fourteen times
> Put a pair of dice in my shoes. ("Dyin'")

Jesse also insists that his funeral should not be a sad affair: Little Jesse's would very much be a New Orleans-style funeral—a 'party favor' amplified by the chord progression of "St. James Infirmary" underlying Jesse's song:

> Little Jesse went to hell bouncing and jumping.
> Folks, don't be standing around old Jesse crying:
> He wants everybody to do the Charleston whiles he dying.
> One foot up, toenail dragging,
> Threw my buddy Jesse on the hoodoo wagon.
> Come here, mama, with that can of booze:
> The dying crapshooter's leaving the world—
> The dying crapshooter's going down slow
> With the dying crapshooter's blues. ("Dyin'")

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and every other label with the budget to send an engineer and rent a room. Atlanta was going to be a busy place for the record companies for years to come" (208).

Of all Jesse's wishes, only one his friend Willie could not fulfill, as the bluesman laconically admits: "He wanted twenty-two women out of the Hampton Hotel, / Twenty-six off of South Bell [Street], / Twenty-nine women out of North Atlanta" ("Dyin'"). Reincarnated perhaps as *Lil'* Jesse, baller, street hustler, and pimpologist Little Jesse would have felt right at home with Outkast at the "Player's Ball," or with ex-convict 50 up "In da Club."

But the session that produced the first recorded version of "The Dying Crapshooter's Blues" also illuminates how Southern history shapes even the often ahistorical blues of Blind Willie McTell. In the fall of 1940, 73-year-old folklorist John Lomax, the Great White Father of all sounds ethnic, was on an extended research trip with his wife Ruby to collect recordings and interviews for the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song. One of the performers they sought out in Atlanta was McTell, who was shepherded by the puzzled staff of the posh, whites-only Robert Fulton Hotel into the Lomaxes' room on November 4 (cf. Gray 264–78). John Lomax had already installed his portable recording equipment, and the blind bluesman sang, played, and talked for almost two hours. In perhaps the most telling exchange, Lomax asked, "I wonder—I wonder if, if you know any songs about colored people having hard times here in the South." He interrupted McTell when the latter did not respond in the affirmative right away: "Any 'complaining songs'? Complaining about the hard times and sometimes mistreatment of the whites? Have you got any songs that talk about that?" The response that there were no such tunes "at the present time because the white peoples is mighty good to the Southern people—as far as I know" did not satisfy the old Texan, who appeared not to have noticed the pregnant pause before McTell's qualifying addendum and therefore kept pressing: "And you don't know any 'complaining songs' at all? [...] 'Ain't It Hard to Be a Nigger, Nigger,' do you know that one?" At this point, the tension in the hotel room that day is still palpable over seven decades later just listening to the exchange. Even Lomax finally noticed and inquired with paternalistic concern, "You keep moving around like you're

uncomfortable. What's the matter, Willie?" The shrewd McTell gave an answer as laughably untrue as his earlier claim that white folks had been "mighty good" to him and his, but that did appear to satisfy Lomax finally: McTell explained that he had been in a fender-bender riding around town with friends the night before and was still a bit "shook up."

Clearly, Lomax wanted his blues to be 'authentically black,' ideally performed by an embittered, illiterate, and oppressed sharecropper yanked from behind a one-eyed mule plowing an isolated patch of cotton in Du Bois's "Black Belt" somewhere south of Statesboro—not by a self-assured, suavely urban black man immaculately dressed in suit and tie who had received an education superior to that of most Southern blacks (and perhaps even many whites) who were *not* visually impaired (cf. Du Bois 69–82). In other words, the socio-aesthetic predilections of ethnomusicologist John Lomax did not differ all that much from the expectations catered to by Ludacris and Dupri's marketing slogan, "This tour is crunk." In both cases, pre-existing standards of authenticity result in the consumption of Dirty South iconographies akin to, in the words of R&B scholar Mark Anthony Neal, "ethnographic surveys and forms of cross-cultural ghetto surveillance" (*Songs* 32). Consequently, the tapes Lomax recorded that November day were never commercially released in McTell's lifetime.[6] But professional musician that he was, performing for all kinds of audiences in all kinds of places, McTell never did limit himself to the deep blues in which Lomax and his peers heard *"the 'Blackness*

6 Michael Gray, one of the few researchers who has heard the Lomax discs in their entirety, maintains that the abridged, edited version that is commercially available not only renders silent the important part Ruby Lomax played, but casts her husband in an even more unfavorable light. To be sure, John Lomax's racialism and paternalism are there for everyone to hear, but at the same time Gray is certainly correct when he points out that Lomax was one of the very, very few white musicologists who heard, decades before the folk revival of the 1960s, in African American blues an important art form, and not just the quaint sounds of a curious, exotic people (cf. 269–74).

of Blackness'" (cf. Ellison 9; Grandt 81–84; Ostendorf 81). Billed as Doogie & Lloyd, McTell would often perform with fellow bluesman Blind Lloyd, following the tobacco markets from Florida up the eastern seaboard through Georgia to the Carolinas. Lloyd recalled that his partner knew how to 'play' his white audiences exceptionally well:

> They was a fool about him, all them white folks. . . Man, they used to have us . . . they used to have them old bar-rooms up there, you know. "Come on, come on, Doogie and Lloyd." That was some old white people. "By God, we got to have a little tune today!" We'd go in that bar-room in there. Different boys'd be having half a pint. Ha ha. Get us keyed up. Have a chicken supper. (qtd. in Gray 275)

Without a doubt, the tunes Doogie and Lloyd performed in those barrooms were not the same at all as the ones with which McTell would regale Bell Street audiences. And much like the blues, hip-hop, too, has long ceased to be a niche genre that appeals only to a specific, ethnically circumscribed audience. In fact, 60 to 80 percent of consumers in the U.S. who purchase hip-hop music are white—a number that may very well exceed even 80 percent when factoring in international sales (cf. Bialik; Kitwana). Surely, the Cash Money Millionaires of New Orleans know the core demographic of their audience as well as Blind Willie McTell knew who he was interacting with that autumn day in the Robert Fulton Hotel, or who he was performing for in those whites-only barrooms where he made much of his livelihood. It is therefore also no coincidence that in the global marketplace of the early twenty-first century, only one (presumably) African American couple can be seen boarding Ludacris and Jermaine Dupri's Dirty South sightseeing bus. And so, the fact that this particular tour of the ATL makes its first stop in the 'hood indicates that the market dictate for 'real' black music today has remained largely unchanged since the days John Lomax deemed McTell's variegated blues of little to no anthropological interest. Hip-hop scholar Jeffrey Ogbar writes: "Realness (and its corollary, blackness) is [...] relegated to poverty,

dysfunction, and pathology. Indeed, the pathological becomes normative. This problematic position circumscribes blackness into a narrow expression. The limited expressions of 'realness' in rap reflect the pernicious stereotypes promoted by society at large" (69).

To be sure, Blind Willie McTell's Dirty South is not completely identical with the Dirty South of Luda, JD, Outkast, the King of Crunk, the Cash Money Millionaires, or even Goodie Mob. For one thing, hip-hop's Dirty South has never been a clearly demarcated, homogenous territory by any means, but one with a rather fluid topography. As Matt Miller has explained the evolution of the Dirty South from the socio-political commentary of early Goodie Mob to the endless partying with Ludacris and Jermaine Dupri at Club 112 with their largely invisible but authenticating posse of roaming gangstas,

> [t]he politically oppositional orientation of the Dirty South—expressive of the reclaiming of former sites and symbols of enslavement and segregation, and the legitimation and celebration of 'lowdown and dirty' working-class African American culture—diminishes as the concept spreads outwards into global markets, and is often eclipsed by superficial notions of edginess afforded by the appropriation of contemporary southern urban blackness. ("Dirty")

The economic changes in the landscape of Atlanta's music industry, specifically the merging of L.A. Reid's LaFace label into Arista Records in 2000, made the term *dirty south* into a commercial decal rather than a circumscribed soundscape (cf. Grem 56, 65–69). Goodie Mob's own trajectory is emblematic in this regard, as the successes of more mass-market oriented hip-hoppers from the ATL compelled the quartet to release the eponymous *World Party* in 1999, whose disappointing sales contributed to the disintegration of the group. Bill Campbell, himself mayor of Atlanta during the booming 1990s and the ascendancy of Dirty South hip-hop, once quipped that "[t]here is no Atlanta Sound [...] unless, of course, you like the sound of money" (qtd. in Sack). For instance, Cee-Lo Green's mainstream success as

a solo artist and then judge on NBC's talent show *The Voice* caused Dirty South iconographies to recede further and further into the background. The depreciation of the "Dirty Dirty" seemed almost official with the original Mob's 2013 comeback album, *Age Against the Machine,* which alludes to Georgia's capital but thrice. T-Mo's boast on "Special Education" that he is a

> Heavyweight in the game:
> T tip the scale.
> I travel over the world back to ATL—
> I'm friends with the mayor, I'm a truthsayer

would have been unthinkable in *Soul Food*'s claustrophobic Atlanta, whose political power structure is thoroughly corrupt and forestalls legitimate opportunities for economic advancement, let alone access to the global marketplace.

As for his part, McTell never enjoyed the commercial success of his Dirty South descendants, but his blues are different in other ways, too. His arresting "Broke Down Engine Blues," for example, which McTell revisited several times in the studio, combines the two most characteristic tropes of blues poetics, tropes largely absent from the figurative territories traversed by hip-hop. The first of these is the trope of love, more often than not love wronged, lost, betrayed, unrequited, or warped; the second is the trope of travel and mobility. In "Broke Down Engine Blues," both tropes coalesce when McTell bemoans that his lover has left him after he gambled away all of his money, and now he feels "like a broke down engine, ain't got no whistle or bell; / Feel like a broke down engine, ain't got no whistle or bell: / If you're the real hot mama, drive away daddy's weeping spell." In the genre as a whole, tropes of love and mobility emerge as metaphors for freedom and self-determination in a racially segregated America that for much of the twentieth century was still far from making good on the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the promises of the Emancipation

Proclamation (cf. Davis 473–75; Gussow 87–89; Robertson 67–73).[7] Blues, after all, is a music invented by a people for whom any kind of love or travel had been a very precarious proposition indeed since their arrival in the New World: as Toni Morrison's Paul D muses, "to go to a place where you could love anything you chose—not to need permission for desire—well now, that was freedom" (162).

By contrast, only very rarely does rap bemoan love lost or mobility curtailed: the Dirty South tour bus in "Welcome to Atlanta" does not even venture beyond I-285 that loops around the city, whereas McTell wishes for nothing more than his "broke down engine" to be running again at full steam. Hence, the investment into an authenticating territoriality is much higher in hip-hop, whose symbolic geography often concentrates the *genius loci* of the genre in a spatially circumscribed (yet simultaneously mythologized) 'hood—such as the Dirty Dirty (cf. Cobb 74–75; Ogbar 6–8). Mark Anthony Neal has pointed out what is perhaps the most crucial difference: what he calls "the post-soul generation," the generation that pioneered hip-hop and disseminated images of New World blackness in mass consumer cultures across the globe on a heretofore unprecedented scale,

> becomes the first generation of African Americans who would perceive the significant presence of African-American iconography within mass consumer culture/mass media as a state of normalcy. It is within this context that mass culture fills the void of both community and history for the post-soul generation, while producing a generation of consumers for which the iconography of blackness is consumed in lieu of personal relations, real experience, and historical knowledge. (*Soul* 121)

7 At the same time, one wonders if the crass materialism celebrated in so many hip-hop songs and videos does not, if only in part, contain a certain socio-historical subtext as well: for the descendants of a people who were once property themselves to flaunt their "bling" in the face of white America—especially considering that many hip-hoppers do come "straight outta Compton" (N.W.A.) as it were—could well be considered a 'signifying' form of social commentary of sorts.

Still, as the video of "Welcome to Atlanta" suggests, the symbolic territory of the contemporary Dirty South carries within its sonic matrices traces of Blind Willie McTell's blues. The two genres therefore limn a continuum rather than a binary. Tracking the trail from Blind Willie McTell's Atlanta to the capital of the contemporary Dirty South reveals a dynamic that Amiri Baraka has famously dubbed "the changing same" (203). Possibly the most crucial factor to obscure this continuum is sound reproduction technology: clearly, it is a much different sensory experience to walk past a blind singer strumming an acoustic guitar in the Piggly Wiggly parking lot—even if McTell did switch to the twelve-string guitar because of its added volume—than to stop at a red light in the SWATS next to a pimped-out ride with "Welcome to Atlanta" blasting from its sub-woofers (cf. *Blind*; Gray 1–3). Perhaps, then, the sometimes disturbing violence, misogyny, and hedonism of Blind Willie McTell's blues are veiled by an aura of nostalgia that we contemporary listeners willy-nilly project onto those crackly, hissy, old-fashioned, seemingly hokey recordings. Blues scholar Elijah Wald asks the rhetorical question:

> If Robert Johnson had been born in 1975, can anyone honestly argue that he would not have been caught up in the humor and passion of Straight Out of [sic] Compton? His descendants in the Mississippi Delta of the late 1980s responded to LA's gangsta rappers just as he did to the promise of 'Sweet Home Chicago.' If the words were less optimistic and the backing more relentlessly, aggressively urban, that is the truth of the times. ("Hip")

The Dirty Souths, old and new, are thus always also characterized by the desire for, as Baraka puts it, "[t]he freedom to want your own particular hip self" (195). As ahistorical as Ludacris and Jermaine Dupri's bus tour through the ATL appears to be, ultimately it cannot transcend Southern history altogether. For underlying the global reach of the Dirty South, and of hip-hop in general, that "Welcome to Atlanta" so boastfully celebrates and projects is a profound question: whose 'blackness' is it, anyway? Who gets to claim, describe, define,

perform, and market blackness? What does it mean that hip-hop is as firmly entrenched in the charts of pretty much any western country as it is on its 'home turf'? It would appear that in many ways, this question remains as pertinent today as in 1940 when McTell walked into the Lomaxes' room at the Robert Fulton Hotel—or in 1903 when Du Bois pondered the significance of the "sorrow songs" for the future of post-Reconstruction Atlanta. Listening carefully to Blind Willie McTell's Dirty South just may help us negotiate the contemporary ramifications of these tricky issues of cultural property and cultural propriety. If it is indeed true, as Goodie Mob maintained on their debut album, that "Shit just don't sleep / In the Dirty South," then welcome to Atlanta—where the bluesman plays.

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BLACKNESS AND IDENTITY IN JAZZ

Christian Broecking

As the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch points out, "work on one's identity is becoming more and more work on the integration of components of differing cultural origin. And only the ability to transculturally cross over will guarantee us identity and competence in the long run" (199). In my piece I would like to discuss some recent approaches to identity and blackness and how Black American identity is reflected by jazz artists of the post-Civil-Rights generation. Has Black American identity fifty years after the Civil Rights Act come to be defined as preservation or even enshrining of blackness in order to fight segregation and racism, or has it become more individual in its significance, more "one's identity" as it is described by Welsch? In my long-term research on Wynton Marsalis and the canon debate that had its peak in the mid-1990s (with the Ken Burns documentary as its final blow), I came up with three primary dimensions of black artists' positionality towards politics and society: the essentialist/nationalist (anti-imperialist, homogenous black culture), the blues-idiomatic (canon building, integration) and the trans-idiomatic (in-between, transgressive) (cf. Broecking). I would suggest that the blues-idiomatic and trans-idiomatic perspectives on producing and perceiving music are still the most efficient and significant today.

Let me remember Albert Murray for a moment, who passed away in August 2013 at the age of 97. Twenty years before, I entered the last "jazz war" by stepping right into its New York headquarters. As a German freelance journalist, I was interested in reporting about and translating the debate among jazz canonists and experimentalists. I made frequent trips to New York in order to meet the activists from both sides: neo-traditionalists and avant-garde players. What I encountered was a mixture of Civil Rights and Cold War rhetoric combined with a deep love for the music, an endless game of words

that sounded like war, an endless monologue of black jazz aesthetics versus European perception—a one-way street in every case. I recall meeting Stanley Crouch at his home who presented me with a personal lecture on how great an avant-garde Wynton Marsalis was. At one point Crouch mentioned Albert Murray. And when I was wondering if Murray might be available for an interview, Crouch simply picked up the phone. The codes used by Crouch while talking to Murray on the phone were something like, "Here is a German guy who tries to get the facts right," and, "He is on our side."

Three days later, on a hot and sunny afternoon in June, I entered Murray's apartment in Harlem. There was a Romare Bearden painting in the lobby celebrating black life; his living room was filled with books; photos of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington hung on the wall. The conversation with Mr. Murray focused mostly on Wynton Marsalis, and there is no need to go into further detail here. Murray clearly loathed sociological approaches to music, especially if they focused on any kind of protest image of black music. His position was: "Protest is left-wing thinking—Marxist thinking and whatnot. That's failed. You know, seventy years of experimentation, most advanced civilizations in the world sold themselves into slavery, gave up their freedom, had less freedom than anybody. That's the left-wing. That's not the right-wing. These are the rebels, the successful rebels established." Murray's approach was about defining the responsibilities for an American intellectual: "I defined America in the most comprehensive terms, Albert Murray was not a black writer, but he's an American writer, I'm not shouting to be the black intellectual" (Murray).

When I met Wynton Marsalis during his first European interview-tour in the spring of 1993 in Hamburg, he, just like Albert Murray, who he claimed to have been his mentor, assumed to represent the Black community. I might add that back then, already, Steve Coleman had an argument about the representation of the community as a whole: "There is no such thing like black culture in the United States.

There's a lot of variety between Snoop Doggy Dog and Anthony Braxton. There is a lot of different things happening there. So even in the music and in the culture itself, there is a lot of variety. It's never been one thing." The change of the African-American perspective, as discussed by Paul Krugman in his book *Conscience of a Liberal: Reclaiming America from the Right*, is about social and cultural moves in the 1990s and 2000s. More recently, Marsalis addresses social changes in a similar way:

> It's not anymore protest against segregation, but protest against the lack of quality. Because people now in my age, black and white, and our kids don't maintain on the legacy of segregation. When integration came, a lot of my friends in school were white. My father didn't have that experience. He was segregated. He couldn't ride a car on the street until he was 26. The American way is very different now. Also on TV you can see a lot that you wouldn't have seen. A black man with a white woman, you never saw that before. (Marsalis)

According to the New Orleans trumpeter Nicholas Payton, *jazz* is a racist term from a time when black Americans were still referred to as "niggers"—thus the music would desperately be in need of a new name. When Payton explained why jazz was not cool anymore in an essay of that very title, he did not say anything new. We heard the argument before, claiming that jazz is dead, that jazz has become incestuous and removed from popular music, that jazz has moved so far out, that the musicians could no longer find their way back from their esoteric circles to the original setting, characterized by Congo Square in New Orleans. The 40-year-old Payton, who, like his mentor Wynton Marsalis, comes from a family of black musicians based in New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz, now claims to play "Black American Music" (BAM). All of this may have been a clever marketing strategy to promote Payton's recent CDs; however, that would neither explain the response he received nor the debate that followed focusing on abandoning the word *jazz*. Fellow

musicians, both black and white, took cross-generational followers like Gary Bartz and Bill Cosby as a sign that Payton's concerns should be taken seriously.

A follow-up BAM conference held in New York's Birdland jazz club was hosted by the African-American journalist Touré. In his book *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness? What It Means to Be Black Now*, Touré outlines a typology of black positionalities in current America. According to Touré, blackness today primarily stands for diversity of identity and expression. Referring to the black sociologist Michael Eric Dyson's three primary dimensions of blackness (accidental, incidental, intentional), Touré distinguishes between introverted, ambiverted and extroverted positionalities towards blackness.

Touré, born in 1971, speaks to a post-Civil Rights generation, which, from his point of view, already experiences 40 million directions of being black in America. As he puts it: "Post-Black means we are like Obama: rooted in but not restricted by Blackness" (12). Thelma Golden, the director of the Studio Museum of Harlem, and the visual artist Glenn Ligon were creating their notion of Post-Blackness in the late 1990s in order to overcome "the immense burden of race-wide representation, the idea that everything they do must speak to or for or about the entire race" (Touré 29). To me, this is a major shift: black artists can be interested in black culture but they do not have to represent it anymore.

The concept of a unified black voice, that essentialist positionality represented by Amiri Baraka, has been confronted and updated by the concept of Post-Blackness. Nevertheless, as much as black jazz and black jazz musicians have entered the mainstream, the history of African-American people and culture has to be told and explained over and over again. Referring to the typologies mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the telling will be different depending on the perspectives.

The pianist Jason Moran remembers how the 86-year-old saxophonist Jimmy Heath recently told about his experiences during an

extended tour of colleges in the South, where student marching bands have a long tradition. When Heath asked the youngsters about their future plans and whether they could imagine a jazz musician's career, their answer was one of incomprehension: "Jazz is white music, so why should we want to play it?" (Moran) Such a mix of hubris and ignorance may be at the bottom of the current debate. The sociologist Herman S. Gray suggests reading it as a comment on "the transactional costs of the music's movement into the mainstream. Perhaps it is the alignment of the desire for a coherent and legible blackness and immediacy of access to black social life that has been severed. Jazz is the site and the vehicle through which the claim on blackness survives this separation" (Gray, "Interview"). Nicholas Payton lives in New Orleans, where there still is a black audience and a sense of tradition of a music that from the beginning on was always closely associated with dance. But today, New Orleans is an exception, and as soon as he or any other musician leaves that city, they will miss this black element in the audience.

Jason Moran, who is also senior jazz curator at the Kennedy Center in the U.S. capital, argues that the current public debate actually mirrors a long-standing discourse within the black music community about a general revision of terms. "The United States is a young country and African Americans change from generation to generation, and still there is the phenomenon of the first blacks. The first black mayor recently passed. My students at the Conservatory, who never used to talk about racial issues, now want to discuss it in class. This is still fairly new." Professor George E. Lewis might be seen as one of those "first African-Americans" Moran is talking about. At Columbia University he holds the chair of American music and composition. Referring to the body of African-American experimental music, Lewis talks about its stability-threatening quality: "Slavery was three hundred years of silence, not just 4'33". Composition is a transgressive act, because blacks were not allowed to compose" (Lewis). Soon, however, different cultural authorities showed up to make the rules of how this transgression should work. Referring to a

new definition of jazz which became popular during the 1990s and is exemplified by Wynton Marsalis's programming at Lincoln Center, Lewis criticizes its effect on young musicians:

> No music has been policed on the level of Black Music—policed for authenticity, policed for correctness, policed to make sure that it doesn't exceed its boundaries of going to places where it 'doesn't belong.' I don't see a reason why jazz should suffer that kind of brain drain, jazz history is in total opposition to that kind of highbrow thinking. I want to say it very clearly: Jazz is an international symbol of freedom and mobility. You can lose it in the blink of an eye. And you won't get it back. It's all about mobility. Who does not move is dead. (Lewis)

That jazz has reached America's most important cultural institutions can be credited to the work of Wynton Marsalis, whose budget for "Jazz at Lincoln Center" is specified above $40 million per year. The ticket price for an event at "Jazz at Lincoln Center" costs almost as much as a visit to the Met or the New York Philharmonic, a fact that makes Jason Moran talk about the acceptance of a reasonable value of jazz, while Nicholas Payton criticizes that precisely the black population, which he would like to see in the audience, will not be able to afford a ticket. "It is an open secret that black Americans today understand jazz as white music and have almost completely lost touch with it" (Payton, "Interview"). Payton recalls a time when the jazz stage was the only place on earth where a black American could feel free to express himself. Blues, gospel and jazz marked the blacks' pathway to freedom, but only few people in the black communities still have a clue. Spirituals once contained codes for runaway slaves to find their way to freedom. "Jay-Z may have the same rhythmic code like Charlie Parker and Louis Armstrong, but his audience can't decrypt it anymore" (Payton, "Interview"). Payton complains that music lessons in predominantly black districts are cut, while in the white suburbs almost every high school has a big band.

Wynton Marsalis puts the blame on a lack of education as well; music should be brought back into the schools:

> There are no black middle class families that put their kids in music education and there are no American middle class families that do that. Music has been taken out of the schools since the 1940s. After the first depression we have started to take the arts out of American schools. It is a national debate. What can we do to get arts and music back in our schools? We don't have a black audience; the education is not good enough. Black people have more pressing issues. There are not that many black people involved in the arts or in anything serious about the arts. The Afro-American issues are pressing in other areas. The arts are items of luxury, the items of necessity deal with your identity. If you are lost in your identity it means that you don't know anything about the arts. The pressing needs are a job, the ability to take care of your family. To have the community coming to the concerts, you would need to raise money and get more education and make the ticket prices lower.

In her essay on Barack Obama and black identity, "Speaking in Tongues," writer Zadie Smith describes blackness as a "quality each individual black person was constantly in danger of losing. And almost anything could trigger the loss of one's Blackness: attending certain universities, an impressive variety of jobs, a fondness for opera, a white girlfriend, an interest in golf." Smith also points out "a generational conflict in the black community" about what blacks will say in public and what they will say in private. When Obama lectured a black church congregation about the "epidemic of absent black fathers," he was accused of talking down to black people and of washing dirty laundry in public. For the Civil Rights generation, any criticism of the black community was to be kept in the family, whereas for the post-black generation factual truth comes first. If you talk to Christian Scott, Ambrose Akinmusire or Gregory Porter these days, you will get an idea of this change into a retro-style attitude.

Confronted with the accusation of conservatism, singer Gregory Porter redefines protest in a post-black setting.

> Someone said about my record 'Be Good,' there is no protest songs here. And I said to him, you have to know the protest in order to hear the protest. Seventy percent of black children are born without the mother and father being married. And in many cultures the divorce rate is high and the families are fractured. But then we find family in a whole bunch of different ways. We create them and we make them. The human spirit protects itself very well and we find ways. The mama becomes mother and father. You know, a whole bunch of ways. We work it out, but in some pockets of the world it's a rare thing that the family is preserved. And I know when things are right and that is just the standard, then there is nothing to celebrate. But it is to celebrate when there is in a fractured way. As corny or as poppy or as trying to appeal to somebody's ear, somebody thinks my song 'Real Good Hands' is, that is a protest song about asking the woman that you've been dating for ten years, going to her mother and father and saying, may I marry your daughter. *Mama don't you worry 'bout your daughter / 'cause you're leaving her in real good hands, / I'm a real good man.* It´s just an approach, it's just a slight little push back to seventy percent of black children being born out of that luck. That's my own little private thing. But there's a lot of people that hear the message, who can hear the message. See the fractured families. So for families that are whole and all of their friends families are whole, this song is just a beautiful song as well. But some people have said that that song makes them sad. Because they have never experienced that. And that's deep to me, that's deep to me, that's deep to me. Yes. (Porter)

Regressive values as pointed out here by Porter, like the projection of an ideal family, are transferred into a positionality of progress and as a significant example of "work on one's identity."

In his book *Disintegration. The Splintering of Black America*, Eugene Robinson offers a typology of black classes. In addition to the Emergent, the Abandoned and the Mainstream, he defines the

Transcendent as "a small but growing cohort with the kind of power, wealth, and influence that previous generations of African Americans could never have imagined" (140). The older black aristocracy as represented by Reverend Jesse Jackson has obviously been replaced by a new black elite.

Although Anthony Braxton locates himself somewhere between the black and white communities, he clearly clashes with the jazz positionalities as promoted by Marsalis:

> The New Orleans people, for example, would enshrine Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington in a way that would contain the implications of what their music set into motion. And as a result of this approach, suddenly we find ourselves in an antebellum time-space, and I think, for me, when I look at the subject, I am reminded of how disappointed I am in the left and the right, and that more and more I hope for a new fusion separate from the 20th century models. (Braxton 2012)

Theodor W. Adorno's warning against the burdens of slavery that have inscribed themselves on the representations and performances of black culture seems to be both justified and old hat at the same time: "Ist es nicht eine Beleidigung der Neger, die Vergangenheit ihres Sklavendaseins seelisch in ihnen zu mobilisieren, um sie zu solchen Diensten tauglich zu machen? Das aber geschieht, auch wo man zum Jazz nicht tanzt [...] Der Jazz ist schlecht, weil er die Spuren dessen genießt, was man den Negern angetan hat" [893]. Duke Ellington, Miles Davis and Abbey Lincoln had felt decades ago already that calling their music *jazz* was an insult. Nevertheless, to me it seems clear that you cannot build a new audience for a music formerly called jazz just by renaming the genre. "Call it BAM or BAMBI," as William Parker puts it, "but stay true to your art." According to Amiri Baraka, the changing same is ready for you.

When thirty years ago Wynton Marsalis limited the jazz canon by excluding fusion and avant-garde, one of his objectives was to redefine jazz as the most original American music, as America's true

'classical' music, and to establish a corresponding canon of masterpieces. To this day, Marsalis keeps up this concept of jazz, despite opening up the program of "Jazz at Lincoln Center" from time to time:

> We played some of Muhal Richard Abrams' music and we paid extra attention to the rehearsal of it. And when we finished he said thanks for giving your gig to my music. We didn't say, it is not jazz so we don't care. No, we gave even more attention to this music. We also played Ornette Coleman's music. Ornette Coleman opened our season that year (2010). Put that in the articles. But not that I come around to change my point of view because I am not! That's not a jazz concert because that's not enough. Not enough for people to be happy with. (Marsalis)

In his book *Cultural Moves. African Americans and the Politics of Representation* Herman S. Gray suggests to talk about a "jazz left" (i.e. left of Lincoln Center), exemplified by artists like Steve Coleman, the AACM or Don Byron. The term *jazz left* originates with clarinetist Byron, who in an interview in 1993 described jazz as "a two-headed monster, with a Democratic and Republican side" (Gray, *Cultural* 62), considering himself to represent the Democratic and Wynton Marsalis the Republican side. From a European perspective, this seems to be an oversimplified model, considering that Marsalis campaigned for the re-election of President Clinton. As Gray has pointed out, "with the canon builders who occupy the jazz mainstream, the jazz left forms part of a broader and as I have tried to suggest, contested cultural formation" (*Cultural* 69). I would suggest speaking of independent jazz networkers instead, while I would at the same time agree with Gray when he considers "the cultural moves by the canon makers like Marsalis" (*Cultural* 71) as oppositional. They are oppositional by achieving institutional recognition and support for jazz and they are "oppositional to the extent that they articulate a vision of blackness and black experiences in those cultural spaces that have heretofore not recognized such

experiences" (*Cultural* 71). Gray asserts that "institutionalization—including Lincoln Center and the Ken Burns documentary—is conservative" (*Cultural* 71), a description that probably fits in the same way as Joshua Redman's observation after seven years of involvement with SFJAZZ does: institutionalization implies both conservatism and permanency.

Anthony Braxton still criticizes Marsalis and writer Albert Murray for defining the jazz part of what he would call the "antebellum movement" of the 1980s:

> It would begin as a traditionalist movement, a movement that sought to go back to the fundamentals. In fact, that movement, in my opinion, has been very unhealthy for the African-American community, setting African-American community in a direction going backwards at a time where the technology is changing. The technology in the last thirty years has changed so dynamically that any group not looking towards the future is at a disadvantage. And as such, Mr. Murray's concept of progressionalism and traditionalism had aided those forces that are moving in a retro fashion as opposed to clarifying the opportunities of this time-space. (Braxton 2007)

Here, Braxton refers directly to an old debate among black musicians about not being black enough:

> The idea of 'authentic negro' vs 'inauthentic negro' in my opinion is part of the legacy of the antebellum time space in the pre-civil-war-period, related to perceptions of 'what is the correct place for the African American, what are the correct parameters for afrocentricity?' I've always disagreed with this way of thinking. My viewpoint had been, that I have the right to learn about anything I want to learn about, I have the right to pursue anything I want to pursue, and I am not interested in any perspective that says, as an African American I cannot explore and learn about whatever I want to look at. (Braxton 2007)

While reading this, keep in mind Braxton's role model, Ornette Coleman, who refused ever since to regard his work as a radical expression or a representation of blackness.

It seems that Black American identity still cannot be disconnected from the history of segregation and racism. Black American artists are still confronted with, judged and marketed by the European value system. The identity of blackness was once a synonym with avant-garde, creating something unique and new. In the 1990s, Marsalis started a retro movement referring to jazz as "American Classical Music." The discussion of "post-blackness" among African-American visual artists in New York has led to a self-restriction that has limited the public perception of their work. A resolution still has not been found. According to George Lewis, maybe "Post-Europe" is long overdue—but the introspection of many African-American artists is, still in 2015, determined by racism. Disrespect, disregard, discomfort.

Nonetheless, Welsch's notion of "transcultural crossover" sounds familiar. To me the connection with Anthony Braxton's trans-idiomatic positionality is quite evident and effective, as my final quote about his hope to finally overcome the African-American construct of jazz shows:

> I am not from New Orleans, I am not a jazz musician, I am not a free jazz musician, I am not a classical or modern classical composer, my work is like my life. It's in between the black and white community, it's in between jazz and classical music, it's in between the left politics and the right politics, I'm interested in what I would call the in-between-way. And by 'in between' in this context I'm saying that there is a global reality that has yet to be understood, that reality is a reality that brings people together not apart, that reality is transidiomatic and can incorporate many different methodologies and aesthetics. And at the same time of course, I am looking for myself, I am looking for an experience that relates to the community and I'm looking for a model that can help me to have hope for the future. (Braxton 2007)

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VIBES: TAPE-RECORDING THE ACOUSTIC UNCONSCIOUS

Hanjo Berressem

And what is good form in living nature is bad form in the symbolic.
— Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II* 306

The air is a microphone.
— Leonard Cohen, *The Favourite Game* 10

The miracle of concrete music [...] *is that* [...] *things begin to speak by themselves, as if they were bringing a message from a world unknown to us and outside of us*
— Pierre Schaeffer, *In Search of Concrete Music* 91–92

1969. ALVIN LUCIER: "I AM SITTING IN A ROOM"

In 1969, the Electronic Music Studio of Brandeis University became the acoustic setting for the premier performance of American composer Alvin Lucier's composition "I am Sitting in a Room." The piece consists of Lucier, sitting on stage, tape-recording a text that he speaks into a microphone. The taped text is then played back into the room, where it is once more picked up by the microphone, recorded, and played back into the room. This procedure is repeated until Lucier's voice has completely 'vanished' into an anonymous sound that corresponds to, or, as Lucier notes, more precisely, that 'articulates'—in terms of 'making audible,' or 'actualizing'—the resonant frequency of the room. The text spoken by Lucier provides a very concise description of the acoustic process at work in the composition:

> I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed. What you will hear, then, are the natural resonant frequencies of the room *articulated by speech*. I regard this activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but more as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have.[1] (Lucier, "Sitting"; emphasis added)

In the following, I will provide two analyses of Lucier's piece; one acoustic, the other schizoanalytic. The former introduces some of the acoustic theory necessary to conceptually appreciate Lucier's composition. The second, after providing some historical background to the genres of electro-acoustic and electronic music, introduces Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer and Rosalind Krauss's notion of an 'optical unconscious,' Fredric Jameson's notion of a 'political unconscious' and Friedrich Kittler's notion of a 'technological unconscious.' Drawing on the distinction sound studies make between 'white noise' and 'pink noise,' it then compares and contrasts an 'acoustic unconscious' that is based on Félix Guattari's notion of schizoanalysis, of which Lucier's piece can be read as an acoustic instantiation, to the notions of the optical, the political and the technological unconscious. In a final step, taking its cue from Jimi Hendrix's performance of "Star-Spangled Banner" at Woodstock, it delineates the political implications of an 'acoustic unconscious' in reference to electronic music and to a politics of 'vibes' in the work of Thomas Pynchon.

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1 For the score of "I am Sitting in a Room" see Lucier, *Chambers* 30–31. For a description of the piece, see: *Chambers* 33–39, Lucier, *Reflections* 312–15; Lucier, *Music* 88–91. For a 'Deleuzian' reading of Lucier's work, see Higgins 72–73. For a critical reading of Higgins in relation to noise, see Hainge 157–170.

FOURIER

In 1863, Herman von Helmholtz published *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* [*Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen als Physiologische Grundlage für die Theorie der Musik*], in which he introduces the concept of what he calls 'eigentones' [*Eigentöne*], translated by Alexander J. Ellis as 'proper tones.' Helmholtz illustrates the characteristics of eigentones, which he defines as "tones of strongest resonance" (90/150),[2] by way of an acoustic experiment. In a room, two 'identical' tuning forks are positioned on equally 'identical' resonance cases. When one tuning fork is stroked with the bow of a violin, or brought to vibrate by other means, the other tuning fork begins to sound as well. In terms of acoustics, this effect, which is called 'sympathetic response' or 'sympathetic resonance,' works as long as the second tuning fork is 'on the same frequency' or 'in tune' with the first. Such a direct acoustic resonance between objects is very fragile, and small changes in the overall landscape of frequencies or in relation to the tuning forks that cause the forks to no longer have the same eigenfrequencies, will destroy the effect.[3]

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2 Unless noted otherwise, all of the Helmholtz citations will be provided first with the page number of the English translation from 1895 and then with the corresponding page number of the original German edition from 1863.

3 "Tuning forks are the most difficult bodies to set in sympathetic vibration. To effect this they may be fastened on sounding boxes which have been exactly tuned to their tone [...]. If we have two such forks of exactly the same pitch, and excite one by a violin bow, the other will begin to vibrate in sympathy, even if placed at the further end of the same room, and it will continue to sound, after the first has been damped. The astonishing nature of such a case of sympathetic vibration will appear, if we merely compare the heavy and powerful mass of steel set in motion, with the light yielding mass of air which produces the effect by such small motive powers that they could not stir the lightest spring which was not in tune with the fork. With such forks the time required to set them in full swing by sympathetic action, is also of sensible duration, and the slightest disagreement in pitch is sufficient to produce a sensible diminution in the sympathetic effect. By sticking a piece of wax to one prong of the second fork, sufficient to make it vibrate once in a second less than the first—a difference of pitch scarcely

While the resonance between the two tuning forks is 'harmonious'—a term that I will return to—physics also knows the phenomenon of "unpredictable" (Cramer 84) resonance catastrophes, which can cause, as Friedrich Cramer notes in *Symphonie des Lebendigen: Versuch einer allgemeinen Resonanztheorie*, "the destruction of a building or a technical installation through vibration. The cause for this is resonance: the energy is optimally conveyed by periodic excitation and it is stored in the system. Through this storage and the further input of energy, the system's vibrations increase until the breaking point is reached" (53).[4] If "resonance consists in that vibrations enter into correlation and interfere with each other" (53) and if, when "waves of equal frequency run into each other, their antinodes strengthen" (53), it sometimes happens that "vibrations within the system synchronize to such a degree, get so much into step, that their amplitudes reinforce each other and become so strong that they bring the whole system to burst asunder" (80).

The perhaps most famous, and certainly the most spectacular example of such a resonance catastrophe is the Tacoma bridge disaster, which Michael Braun describes in his book *Differential Equations and Their Applications* as follows:

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sensible to the finest ear—the sympathetic vibration will be wholly destroyed" (39–40/68–69).

4 Although they denote temporal and local invariances or stabilizations within a larger field of frequencies, and thus closed off from it, eigenfrequencies continue to resonate with the overall material medium. In fact, all resonance phenomena rely on material media because "[a] wave needs a medium in order to propagate itself, for a liquid wave it is the water, for the sound it is generally the air, for light the electromagnetic field (which used to be called aether), for earthquakes the crust of the earth" (53). Sound waves, for instance, "are transported by the medium of air, which is brought to resonate and conveys these vibrations to an object of appropriate frequency that is able to vibrate" (65). Generally, far-from-equilibrium systems are more sensitive to minute perturbations within the landscape of frequencies. (Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.)

> The Tacoma Bridge was built in 1940. From the beginning, the bridge would form small waves like the surface of a body of water. [...] At one point, one edge of the road was 28 feet higher than the other edge. Finally, this bridge crashed into the water below. One explanation for the crash is that the oscillations of the bridge were caused by the frequency of the wind being too close to the natural frequency of the bridge. The natural frequency of the bridge is the eigenvalue of smallest magnitude of a system that models the bridge. This is why eigenvalues are very important to engineers when they analyze structures. (171–73)

The more spectacular and catastrophic aspects of the world of frequencies and acoustic intensities has been taken up not only by music that operates according to a poetics of 'the art of noise'—from Luigi Russolo's "L'Arte dei rumori" to 'industrial music'—but also by the cinema, as when, in *Spiderman 3,* Spiderman surrounds Venom with a ring of metal rods which he then strikes, causing them to resonate on a frequency that is detrimental to Venom's organic eigenfrequency; a sounding that brings about Venom's private resonance catastrophe and his subsequent 'death by frequency.' In the cinema, the susceptibility of aliens to specific acoustic frequencies is of course a well-known fact. In *Mars Attacks!*, for instance, the aliens suffer 'death by the song "Indian Love Call".'

As these examples show, the acoustic frequencies with which material bodies resonate—their 'invariant' internal frequencies—are directly related to their material and to their form, and they respond to the overall landscape of frequencies to which they are immanent. The body of an instrument, for instance, resonates on a specific eigenfrequency, and it produces specific eigentones. As von Helmholtz notes, "[a]n inclosed mass of air, like that of the violin, vióla, and violoncello, bounded by elastic plates, has certain eigentones which may be evoked by blowing across the openings" (Helmholtz 86/147; translation modified); a process that produces the "eigentone of the resonator" (44/75; t.m.).

Although each class of instrument, as well as the human voice, has a comparable eigentone, or timbre—a quality von Helmholtz also calls "tone color [*Klangfarbe*]" (88/148; t.m.)[5]—and *tessitura*,[6] every single instrument's and voice's eigentone, timbre and *tessitura* varies, sometimes perceptibly but often 'imperceptibly,' from that of other instruments and voices. Because of these subtle differences—which is why to talk about 'invariance' is an idealization—Helmholtz built, for use in his acoustic experiments, what would later be called 'Helmholtz resonators': a series of carefully pitched, enclosed air spaces with a single aperture, constructed to vibrate only at a particular frequency and resonate, on that frequency, for a considerable length of time. While Helmholtz resonators are carefully pitched, in more general terms, all hollow bodies with at least one opening, such as the cavity of the mouth, the body of a violin or of an acoustic guitar, conch shells and teapots,[7] are resonators.

In that they 'govern' the resonances between sounding objects, eigentones and eigenfrequencies are important in terms of tuning instruments.[8] As each instrument has a minimally different resonance space, and as every performance takes place in a different space of resonance—which is one reason why every performance of Lucier's piece has a different acoustic dynamics, or, as Higgins notes, why "each room sounds different when performed in the piece" (73)—instruments need to be acoustically aligned. Such 'sound checks' align them according to each other's eigenfrequencies and

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5 Timbre is the quality that differentiates a particular musical sound from another sound of the same pitch (the range of 'high' and 'low' frequencies) and the same loudness (amplitude).

6 *Tessitura* is the tonal range of an instrument's or a voice's 'best timbre.'

7 In this context, see also Lucier's work "Chambers" (1968). For the score of "Chambers," see Lucier, *Chambers*, 3–6. For a description, *Chambers*, 7–14; Lucier, *Reflections* 62–73; Lucier, *Music* 91–93.

8 "Every individual single system of waves formed by pendular vibrations exists as an independent mechanical unit, expands, and sets in motion other elastic bodies having the corresponding eigentone, perfectly undisturbed by any other simple tones of other pitches which may be expanding at the same time" (Helmholtz 48/81–82; t.m.).

eigentones, as well as according to the specific milieu of the performance. Again, however, although tuning matches the instruments' eigenfrequencies and eigentones, there will always be subtle, irreducible differences between them. One might say, then, that to make fine acoustic distinctions and adjustments, whether in a musical or any other context, relies of the ability to hear and to measure the subtle differences between sets of eigentones and eigenfrequencies.[9] With new technologies such as autotuning, these acoustic alignments are given over to extremely accurate acoustic machines. For many musicians, the results of such machinic tunings are often disturbingly 'überharmonic.'

Another acoustic field in which the notions of eigentones and eigenfrequencies are important is the analysis of the harmonic components of complex tones, which are tones that consist of more than one frequency component. The spectrum of such assemblages of overtones and the harmonic relations of these assemblages have once more to do with the scalar multiples of their specific eigentone. The physical protocol to analyze complex tones is the Fourier analysis—first developed by Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier 1822 in *Théorie Analytique de la Chaleur*—which allows to break up a complex system of soundwaves into what is called its 'Fourier's components;' to disentangle a complex tone into 'its' single strands of pure sinusoidal waves (cf. Kittler, *Grammophon* 75–6; *Dracula* 172, 197, 201). A characteristic to which I will return is that in the physical world, the acoustic spectrum that is 'temporally frozen' in a Fourier analysis is in actual fact constantly changing as the harmonic components in the spectrum are constantly changing in amplitude.

9 In "The Art of Fiction," Henry James uses the image of a spider web as a pick-up device of currents of air to illustrate how experience picks up life's eigenfrequencies: "[e]xperience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web, of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative […] it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations" (58).

In his novel *The Crying of Lot 49* Thomas Pynchon has used the procedure of a Fourier analysis as the conceptual background of a metaphor about a 'hippie harmony.' If a synthesizer assembles single frequencies into complex architectures—"Put together all the right overtones at the right power levels so it'd come out like a violin" (Pynchon, *Crying* 142)—the disc-jockey Mucho Maas can

> do the same in reverse. Listen to anything and take it apart again. Spectrum analysis, in my head, I can break down chords, and timbres, and words too into all the basic frequencies and harmonics, with all their different loudnesses, and listen to them, each pure tone, but all at once. (Pynchon, *Crying* 142)

In fact, Mucho can not only hear each single sinoidal wave, he can also align all of the single iterations of a specific string of words—considered, as with Lucier, as an assemblage of frequencies—across time, according to a frequency manipulation Kittler refers to as 'time-axis manipulation' (cf. *Dracula* 182–207):

> Everybody who says the same words is the same person if the spectra are the same only they happen differently in time, you dig? But the time is arbitrary. You pick your zero point anywhere you want, that way you can shuffle each person's time line sideways till they all coincide. Then you'd have this big, God, maybe a couple of hundred million chorus [...] and it would all be the same voice. (Pynchon, *Crying* 142)

By way of such time-axis manipulation, Maas—who, figuring in the inevitable acoustic distortion of sound in its electric transmission, signs off, at another occasion, on a radio interview he has conducted with Oedipa Maas, with "Thank you, Mrs. Edna Mosh" (139)—can bring about, at least in his head, the harmony that pertains between single instances of a specific performed string of sounds. The result of Mucho's Fourier analysis and time-axis manipulation is the

phantasm of a sonorous social consensus: 'She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah.' Doper's paradise. As he tells Oedipa,

> "[w]henever I put the headset on now," he'd continued, "I really do understand what I find there. When those kids sing about 'She loves you,' yeah well, you know, she does, she's any number of people, all over the world, back through time, different colors, sizes, ages, shapes, distances from death, but she loves. And the 'you' is everybody. And herself. Oedipa, the human voice, you know, it's a flipping miracle." His eyes brimming, reflecting the color of beer.
> "Baby," she said, helpless, knowing of nothing she could do for this, and afraid for him.
> He put a little clear plastic bottle on the table between them. She stared at the pills in it, and then understood. "That's LSD?" (143)

In terms of eigentones and frequencies, the complex tones of the sentences Lucier 'articulates' into the microphone are a set of acoustic eigenfrequencies—Lucier's voice, especially through his stutter, is different from any other voice—that could be broken down into their acoustic components by a Fourier analysis. Lucier's piece, however, develops not only 'within' these tones, but also, and more importantly so, between these tones and their acoustic environment. It concerns the single tones, as well as the acoustic architecture within which these sounds are produced.

This relation of a sound to its overall acoustic landscape—which is in itself a complex milieu of eigentones—has to do with the phenomenon of reverberation, which is seminal for Lucier's piece. In terms of physics, reverberation concerns what, in analogy to the physiological 'persistence of vision' that defines the perception of film, is called the 'persistence of sound'; in acoustic terms: the reflections of sound waves from the surfaces in the environment. For every sound, a large number of such reflections are created which 'decay' more or less rapidly, as the sound is, more or less slowly and intensively, absorbed by the surfaces of the objects and the living beings—which function

somewhat like the resonators used in the design of concert halls—in the surrounding space.[10] Acoustically, reverberations are "minute or fractional time delays in the perception of sound waves" (Holmes 164); almost inaudibly fast 'echoes' of a sound wave that result from the sound wave bouncing back and forth between 'circumstantial' surfaces. As such, reverberation and reverberant quality—which, as an acoustic indicator of spatial depth and distance, is one way in which one orientates oneself in a given space—is the result of a multiplicity of echoes. This reverberant quality of an acoustic environment is what allows for the effect of 'acoustic smoothing' in "I am Sitting in a Room," whose repeated, positive feedback-loop of reverberant sound results in the sound of "the natural resonant frequencies of the room *articulated by speech*" (Lucier, "Sitting"; emphasis added). As Stina Hasse notes in "'I am Sitting in a Room.' From a Listener's Perspective," "[t]he technology, the recording equipment and the sound production, slowly transforms the voice into the sound of transmission, reflection, resonance, feedback and reverberation."[11]

Lucier's description highlights that the natural frequencies of an object need to be 'brought into sound.' As he notes in *Chambers*, about "I am Sitting in a Room": "Every room has its own melody, hiding there until it is made audible" (37). The frequencies that make up

10 In the acoustic design of large-scale acoustic spaces such as concert halls, resonators are sometimes used to absorb frequencies by way of turning acoustic waves into kinetic energy and as such absorbing them (cf. Janssen). On the acoustics of concert halls, see also Schroeder, 68–70, 74–79.

11 The effect works also if one uses digital components. As Hasse notes about her re-performing Lucier's piece, "[i]nstead of using a tape recorder, as Lucier did in his piece from 1969, I used a computer for recording and playback. This is a conversion from analogue to digital media, where sound is created in a system of discrete logic." Hasse also performed the piece in an anechoic chamber, which brought into play, metamusically, the surfaces and volumes of the sound machines as the only resonators. "Instead of bringing out the resonant frequencies of the room (of which there are almost none) it instead brings out the technological resonances of the equipment she used: the electronic noise of the digital recorder, the acoustic coloration of the microphones, the inevitable hisses and clicks of the physical world" (Douglas Repetto, qtd. in Hasse).

these melodies need to be articulated. If one were to close all doors of the concert hall except one and use a machine to blow air across the opening, one would hear the sound of the room's resonant frequency 'articulated by a current of air.' Lucier's use of electric machines allows for the articulation of this frequency "by speech," which is why, as Lucier notes, "perhaps" a particular rhythm will remain of his speech. In other words, at the end of the performance, the 'diagram' of frequencies will not be completely random. In acoustic terms, the result of "I am Sitting in a Room" is less like 'white noise,' which is the result of a completely random distribution of frequencies, than like 'pink noise,' a differentiation to which I will return.

THE ACOUSTIC UNCONSCIOUS

In *The Optical Unconscious*, Rosalind Krauss refers to the notion of a 'perceptual unconscious' that Helmholtz develops in his *Treatise on Physiological Optics*. Helmholtz's idea of "'unconscious inference' as the ground of all perception" (135), which Charles Sanders Peirce will take up in his notion of 'perceptual judgement' [*Wahrnehmungsurteil*], allows to build a bridge between Fourier and Freud, and, in its applicability to all forms of perception, to conceive not only of an 'optical unconscious' but also of an 'acoustic unconscious.'

It is necessary, however, to differentiate between various forms of the unconscious. When Walter Benjamin talked about an 'optical unconscious,' for instance, what he had in mind was neither a physiological unconscious such as that proposed by Helmholtz, nor a Freudian unconscious, but rather a technological unconscious. If psychoanalysis is interested in the human eye and visual perception—in the sense that, later, the Lacanian imaginary would be considered as an inherently optical milieu with a carefully calibrated relation to the Freudian unconscious—Benjamin considered the optical unconscious as optical 'realities' that were imperceptible without technological assistance. The new technologies of photography and, even more, of film, however, with its specific possibilities of

the manipulation of images and movements, such as slowing images down, of providing close-ups and zooms or of showing unexpected points-of-view, could bring these realities into optical consciousness. Eadweard Muybridge's famous optical analyses of patterns of movement by breaking them down into still images is an early, pre-cinematic example of such 'manipulation' of reality by optical media.

To make the optical unconscious conscious, therefore, calls for an 'optical analysis' rather than a 'psycho-analysis.' Symptomatically, such an optical analysis is not performed by a psychoanalyst, or even by a human being, but by a technological media-machine. As Benjamin notes, it is the film camera that "introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses" ("Reproduction" 237).[12] Such an analysis by a media-machine allows to confront the normally unperceived, unconsciously lived rather than consciously experienced world of the material and social reality that surrounds us, and which we are a part of. Lucier's work "Sferics" from 1981 is a good example of an acoustic rather than an optical analysis by way of technological media. The title refers to natural radio waves that are caused by lightning in the ionosphere. As some of these radiofrequency emissions fall into the spectral range of hearing, they can be picked up with the help of special antennas and receivers. As Lucier describes the piece, by putting up an antenna and a receiver, "you can hear them, they are very beautiful. That is all I have done, that is to make it available to people to hear. Very simple" ("'Sferics'").[13]

12 Benjamin first used the term in "Small History of Photography": "It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. Details of structure, cellular tissue—all this is in its origins more native to the camera than the atmospheric landscape of the soulful portrait. Yet at the same time photography reveals in this material the physiognomic aspects of visual worlds which dwell in the smallest things, meaningful yet overt enough to find a hiding place in waking dreams, but which enlarged and capable of formulation, make the difference between technology and magic visible as a thoroughly historical variable" (243–44).

13 For a description of "Sferics," see: Lucier, *Reflections* 456–65; *Music* 150–52.

Benjamin was not alone in his interest in media-machine analysis. In his *Theory of Film*, Siegfried Kracauer also claimed that photographic images and films allow for the 'redemption' of physical reality, which ultimately means its redemption from its state of being unconscious. For Kracauer and Benjamin, as early practitioners of what is today called 'Material Culture Studies,' film allows for the optical analysis of the world of 'our' material and cultural objects. When, half a century later, Jameson takes up Benjamin's term, he turns to literary works rather than to recent technologies as media that can introduce us, by way of their implicit political dimensions, to a 'political unconscious'—an expression that Jameson manages to not once relate to Benjamin's notion of the optical unconscious—of late capitalist society; to its 'unconscious ideology.' Jameson's conceptual reference, like that of Krauss, who notes that the resonance of *The Optical Unconscious* with Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* is "intended" (27), is Lacanian psychoanalysis. Krauss notes, in fact, that she developed her version of an optical unconscious directly from the "idiotic simplicity and its extravagant cunning" (27) of Lacan's 'Schema L.'

As both Jameson's and Krauss's respective optical and political unconscious are not really concerned with specific technological media, they are somewhat misleading references. In remaining within the conceptual frame of the Lacanian unconscious, they provide critiques from within the optical scope of the Lacanian imaginary. Despite Jameson's claim that "[t]he thrust of the argument of the *Anti-Oedipus*" is "very much in the spirit" (6) of *The Political Unconscious*, this Lacanianism is clearly visible in his reference to the imaginary quality of ideology that he picks up from Louis Althusser.

There is a difference, then, between Krauss and Jameson on the one hand, and Benjamin, Kracauer and, later on, Kittler on the other. Although both groups are concerned with our 'naturalized,' ideological immersions into political and cultural space, only the latter ground their argumentation in new technologies. For Benjamin, Kracauer and Kittler, technological inventions and practices allow

for new analytic perspectives. Although their notion of the unconscious is similar to that of Helmholtz because they consider the unconscious to be the unperceived, they are not so much interested in the physiology of the human being as in the 'physiology' of the technical medium. As tools to bring 'the imperceptible' into perception, film and photography, like that of Eugène Atget, make possible, much like scientific apparatuses such as the microscope or the telescope, to optically dissect—a term dear to Benjamin—political and material reality.

It is more to the technological analysis of a 'material unconscious' that I will relate an acoustic unconscious, although I think that Lucier's work goes, in important ways, beyond that of Benjamin, Kracauer and Kittler. In terms of an optical unconscious, consider the optical version of "I am Sitting in a Room:" "Polaroid Image Series #1." The series consists of Mary Lucier taking a Polaroid photo—entitled "Room"—of the room in which Lucier first 'performed' the piece, and then in optically repeating the routine of Lucier's piece by copying the photo and then re-copying the copy over 50 generations. The technical machine she uses is obsolete today, but part of the ecology of optical media of the 1960s and 1970s: a 'Polaroid copier,' which allows for the production of a Polaroid copy of a Polaroid picture.[14] The result of the operation is an 'optical unconscious' that goes beyond that of Benjamin, Kracauer and Kittler in that it concerns the unconscious not so much of culture, but of the optical medium itself. The same is true for Lucier's 'acoustic unconscious,' whose currency is sine waves rather than waves of desire, whose pathologies are measured in 'hertz' and whose Freud and Lacan are Fourier and Helmholtz.

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14 For some performances of "I am Sitting in a Room," the 50 black and white slides were projected sequentially, along with the original thirteen-minute audio work. The first joint performance of the "Polaroid Image Series" and "I am Sitting in a Room" took place at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on March 25, 1970.

From phonographs to oscilloscopes, 'media history' has provided ample material on the technical machines that call for analyses of an acoustic unconscious. For Lucier's "I am Sitting in a Room," the analytic machine is the tape recorder, which, after the gramophone, was the 'new' medium that could be used to archive and to manipulate sound. After its commercial distribution, the tape recorder became, quite instantly, one of the machines around which new musical practices, such as electro-acoustic and electronic music, accrued.

Composers in Paris had used the tape recorder in the development of *musique concrète*, which involved editing together recorded fragments of natural and industrial sounds; a technique that puts, quite literally, Benjamin into acoustic practice.[15] The difference between electro-acoustic and electronic music occurred around the 1950s. While the first relies on natural sounds, the latter synthesized music entirely from electronically produced signals and 'sound-devices' such as the Telharmonium, the Theremin—which was invented by Léon Theremin around 1919–20 and first called the Etherophone—as well as the Hammond organ, the electric guitar, and later the computer. Of course, there were also hybrids: Edgard Varèse's *Déserts*, composed between 1950 and 1954, was a work for chamber orchestra and tape. The American composer's George Antheil's unfinished opera *Mr. Bloom* was composed for mechanical devices, electrical noisemakers, motors and amplifiers.

By the 1940s, magnetic audio tape provided a medium for musicians and composers to record sounds and perform time-axis manipulations, such as changing speed or direction during recording or playback that was more plastic than the gramophone record. In fact, like strips of celluloid in film, strips of tape could now be physically edited. As Pierre Schaeffer calls it, the tape-recorder introduced a poetics of "glue and scissors" (175) into composition. One could create montages, remove or replace unwanted sections of a recording,

15 See Prendergast's discussion of this in *The Ambient Century: From Mahler to Trance: The Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age.*

'edit in' segments of sound from other recordings and create endless loops of recorded material.[16] As Kittler notes,

> [a]t each given moment, the stored technical signal corresponds to the amplitude the stored material has at that particular moment. This continuous mapping of continuous vibrations is why [...] before the introduction of the tape recorder, it was as unimaginable as it was undoable to cut around in sound-signals and to patch together its shreds at will, as was common with filmic montage. (*Optische* 276–77)

In 1940, "AEG discovered by chance that magnetic tape does no longer have an unbearable signal noise if a high frequency pre-magnetizes it" (Kittler, *Musik* 376).[17] Five years earlier, the German electronics company AEG had introduced the first practical audio tape recorder, the Magnetophon (K-1), at the Berlin Radio Show (cf. Engel and Hammar). At the end of WW II, Magnetophon recorders and reels of IG Farben's ferric-oxide recording tape were brought to the United States as technological spoils of war and used in the development of the first commercially produced tape recorder, Ampex's 'Model 200.' Soon after, an ecology of further media-machines developed around tape technology, such as audio amplification, mixing equipment, and echo machines that produce complex, controllable, high-quality echo and reverberation effects that would be practically impossible to achieve by mechanical means.

In the United States, electronic sound machines were used as early as 1939. John Cage's *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* used two variable-speed turntables, frequency recordings, muted piano, and cymbal. *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* is for twelve radios. *Imaginary Landscape*

16 Although the record has become the medium of choice in contemporary musical time-axis manipulation, there is scrubbing, an analogous practice that uses reel-to-reel tape recorders where the tape is manually moved back and forth against the playback head.

17 On the history of the tape recorder and its use in electronic music, see also Lucier, *Music* 103–08.

No. 5 from 1952 uses 42 recordings and is to be realized as a magnetic tape.[18] In 1951, 'The Music for Magnetic Tape Project' was formed. In America, 'live electronics' were pioneered in the early 1960s by members of Milton Cohen's Space Theater in Ann Arbor by musicians such as David Tudor. The Sonic Arts Union was founded in 1966 by Gordon Mumma, Robert Ashley, Alvin Lucier and David Behrman. Later, Laurie Anderson would string magnetic tape on a violin bow to create startling voice manipulations.[19] When Oedipa Maas, the heroine of *The Crying of Lot 49*, visits 'The Scope,' a bar that features 'live electronic music,' with Metzger, one of the patrons tells her:

> "That's by Stockhausen, [...] the early crowd tends to dig your Radio Cologne sound. Later on we really swing. We're the only bar in the area, you know, has a strictly electronic music policy. Come on around Saturdays, starting midnight we have your Sinewave Session, that's a live get-together, fellas come in just to jam from all over the state, San Jose, Santa Barbara, San Diego—"
> "Live?" Metzger said, "electronic music, live?"
> "They put it on the tape, here, live, fella. We got a whole back room full of your audio oscillators, gunshot machines, contact mikes, everything man." (48)

In analogy to photography and film, the tape recorder's ability for recording sound, and for time-axis manipulation, allows for experimental analyses of the world of sounds and frequencies such as Lucier's. It renders an unconscious acoustic realm audible and analyzable that, quite literally, could not be heard and manipulated before.

In nine dense pages of *Grammophon Film Typewriter* that are driven by a fast-forward, highly compressed historical narrative from the end of the Second World War to Jimi Hendrix, Kittler reads the

18 On Tape composition and "I am Sitting in a Room," see Holmes 153–74.
19 On Anderson's "Tape-Bow Violin," see Lucier, *Music* 99.

tape recorder into his signature alignment of technology, war and the media; here in particular music and 'cut up' literature. Although Kittler's acoustic unconscious is inherently technological, what keeps it from resonating with the poetics and the acoustics that underlie Lucier's piece is that Kittler's reference to the Lacanian unconscious, which is 'structured like a language' or, more Lacanian even, 'structured like mathematics,' is not really 'in tune' with Lucier's acoustic unconscious, which is 'structured like a sound,' or, more generally, 'structured like acoustics.'

Symptomatically, in his theory of 'writing systems' *(Aufschreibesysteme)* Kittler separates quite distinctly between sound as an embodied experience and sound manipulation as a technological challenge; a field in which phenomena such as resonance are usually disregarded, except as sources of interference or 'noise.' As Kittler notes in reference to Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, the mathematical and cybernetic treatment of sound operates most ideally "if one disregards, as is common, the ambient sound-effects" (*Optische* 276).[20] Although Kittler, unlike Benjamin, Kracauer and Jameson, breaks the optical and the acoustic unconscious down into its smallest elements—photons for the optical unconscious, sine waves for the acoustic unconscious—he remains within a Lacanian logic, which conceives of the symbolic as "a numeralization [of the Real] in cardinal numbers" (*Dracula* 73). This is why Kittler quotes Lacan's statement that "what is good form in living nature is bad form in the symbolic" as "admirable clear text [*bewundernswerter Klartext*]" (75).

20 As Zöllner notes, "External acoustics and ambient sound-effects are not important [...] in Kittler's media analysis and thus negligible. They are not even important as noise, because by way of digitalization, noise has become completely computable and thus controllable." In this context, see Lucier's account of a performance of "Wave Songs" in a hot environment. The movement of the "several hundred of paper fans" that the organizers had handed out "for the audience to cool themselves" (*Music* 82) disturbed the pure waves that were part of the piece. "Even if you move a little, you can disturb them. It's like standing in a pool of water and sending out ripples with small movements of your body" (*Music* 82).

For Kittler, the 'white noise' of the Real is opposed to the signals of the Symbolic and thus also to an unconscious that is 'structured like language.' It is at this point that the differentiation between white and pink noise can help to delineate the difference between a psychoanalytic and a schizoanalytic acoustic unconscious. As Martin Gardner explains in "White, Brown and Fractal Music," white noise, which, as Berit Janssen notes, "contains all frequencies to the same amount" (60), is "a *colorless* hiss that is just as dull whether you play it faster or slower" (Gardner 3; emphasis added). Although white noise is the most common and well-known reference in terms of acoustic noise, there are other forms of noise *(Rauschen)* that are differentiated by 'color.'[21] In white noise, tones—considered as 'bundles' of frequencies—are entirely uncorrelated, which means that white noise is uniform over time. In 'brown noise,' tones are strongly correlated over short periods of time, after which there is a hard break in terms of correlation. In the terminology of non-linear dynamics, in brown noise, tones take "random walk[s]" (Gardner 4).[22] Pink noise—also called $1/f$ or flicker noise—lies, in terms of correlation, between white and

21 On the tape-recorder, on white noise and on colored noise, which Lucier defines as "white noise filtered in such a way as to give it pitch" (*Music* 7), see *Music* 6–8; on the production of white noise 'by tape,' see Holmes 162.

22 "$1/f$ noise is also called 'pink noise' because its power spectrum density and frequency distribution are typically characterized as intermediating the general features of 'white noise' or Johnson noise ($1/f^0$), and the so-called 'red' or 'brown noise' ($1/f^2$). Since spectroscopy considers that pink is an intermediate color between white and red, in a metaphorical way this description takes the same meaning for the acoustic signals. Unfortunately this metaphor leads to several misunderstandings. In fact, white noise takes its name from white light in which the power spectral density is distributed over the visible band in such a way that the human eye's three color receptors (cones) are approximately equally stimulated. In its turn, 'brown' or Brownian noise is named after scientist Robert Brown (1773–1858), who was the first to describe the chaotic behaviour of the so-called Brownian motion, similar to the characteristic pattern of $1/f^2$ noise. Instead of following this metaphorical usage (using adjectives such as white, pink or brown), this study prefers the proportional analogies $1/f^0$, $1/f$ and $1/f^2$" (Pareyon 239). See also Gardner 13; Schroeder 111.

brown noise. Tones are "moderately correlated, not just over short runs but throughout runs of any size" (Gardner 6).

If white noise has no memory and brown noise a short-term memory, then, as Gabriel Pareyon notes in *On Musical Self-Similarity*, "1/*f* noise has long-term memory inasmuch as its events recur the same configuration for each period of time" (240). In terms of non-linear dynamics, pink noise is a fractal noise: "1/*f* noise wavelets and signals, in scalar invariance, are related by their generalized self-similarity" (Pareyon 238).[23]

The 'fractal properties' of 1/*f* noise" (Pareyon 239) make pink noise an inherently 'ecological' sound. This, however, does not mean that pink noise simply 'imitates' specific natural sounds. In fact, many natural sound patterns consist of very short, repetitive blocks, such as bird song or insect noises (a characteristic that corresponds to brown noise), or are very chaotic, such as ocean waves or wind in trees (a characteristic that corresponds to white noise). Rather, pink noise has to do with acoustic sequences and inherent patterns of sound that are related and varied over longer periods of time. As Richard Voss and John Clarke note, "loudness fluctuations in music and speech, and pitch (melody) fluctuations in music exhibit 1/*f* power spectra" ("Music and Speech" 317).

Pink noise occurs in a wide range of natural phenomena that concern 'non-equilibrium driven' dynamical systems. "Thus vacuum tubes, carbon resistors, semiconducting devices, continuous or discontinuous metal films, ionic solutions, films at the superconducting transition, Josephson junctions, nerve membranes, sunspot activity, and the flood levels of the river Nile all exhibit what is known as '1/*f*

23 "Brownian motion has in common with other stochastic processes—like Markov chains—the fact that any of its events in a moment z is determined by its immediate antecedent in a moment y. This corresponds to a random walk pattern in which each point 'moves' in a random Gaussian distribution with respect to the previous point" (Pareyon 241). In this context, see also Gardner: "Since mountain ranges approximate random walks, one can create 'mountain music' by photographing a mountain range and translating its fluctuating heights to tones that fluctuate in time" (9).

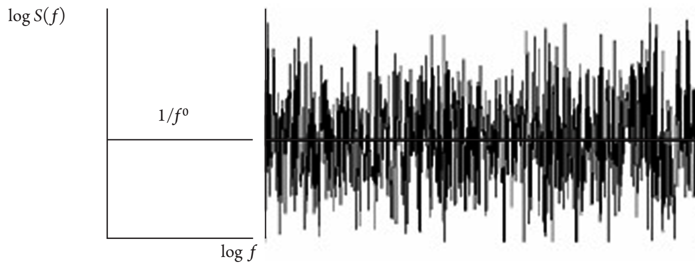

Fig. 1 – $1/f^0$ noise (or white noise*).*

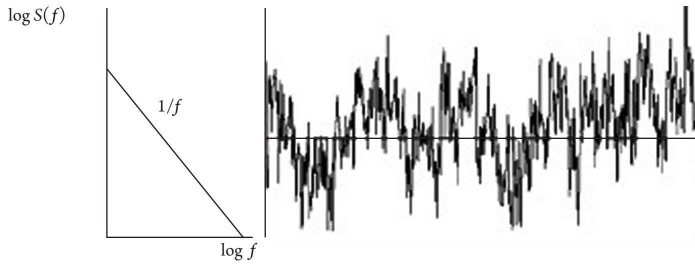

Fig. 2 – 1/f noise (or pink noise*).*

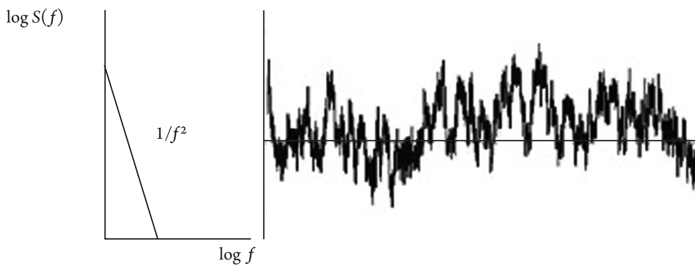

Fig. 3 – $1/f^2$ (or Brownian noise*)*

(Pareyon 240)

noise'" (Voss and Clarke, "Music from 1/*f*" 258). Pink noise occurs in meteorological data series and in heart-beat rhythms. Benoît Mandelbrot has found pink noise in "the wobbling of the earth's axis, undersea currents, membrane currents in the nervous system of animals" and in "the fluctuating levels of rivers" (Gardner 10). In fact, as Gardner notes, there is scarcely an aspect of nature in which pink noise cannot be found. Even electrical fluctuations of the brain approach pink noise. Perhaps the fact that "[i]t turns out that almost every listener agrees that such music is much more pleasing than white or brown music" (Gardner 6) has to do with this neural correspondence.[24] When Voss and Clarke "used a 1/f flicker noise from a transistor to generate a random tune, it turned out to be more pleasing than tunes based on white and brown noise sources" (Gardner 12).[25] In fact, commenting on the intermediate relation of pink noise to the past—white noise is uncorrelated to the past, brown noise is very correlated—Voss and Clarke "speculate that measures of 'intelligent' behavior should show a 1/*f-like* spectral density" ("Music from 1/*f*" 261).

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24 On a 'pink aesthetics,' see also Schroeder 109–12. In this context, see also Lucier's piece "Music for Solo Performer" (1965), which consists of a "performance of live brain waves" (Lucier, *Reflections* 48).

25 "The observation of 1/*f*-like power spectra for various musical quantities also has implications for stochastic music composition. Most stochastic compositions are based on a random number generator (white noise source), which produces unrelated notes, or, on a low level Markov process, in which there is correlation over only a few successive notes. Neither of these techniques, however, approximates the 1/*f* spectrum and the long time correlations reported here in music. We have used independent 1/*f* noise sources, in a simple algorithm to determine the duration [...] and pitch [...] of successive notes of a melody. The music obtained by this method was judged by most listeners to be much more pleasing than that obtained using either a white noise source (which produced music that was 'too random') or a $1/f^2$ noise source (which produced music that was 'too correlated'). Indeed, the sophistication of this '1/*f* music' (which was 'just right') extends far beyond what one might expect from such a simple algorithm, suggesting that a '1/*f* noise' (perhaps that in the nerve membranes?) may have an essential role in the creative process" (Voss and Clarke, "Music and Speech" 318).

If, rather than 'mirroring' specific natural sounds, pink noise "mirror[s] a subtle statistical property of the world" (Gardner 3), it imitates the sound made by the 'acoustic system of the world.' On this background, and in the light of John Cage's remark that art should be an "imitation of nature *in her manner of operation*" (100; emphasis added), Lucier's "I am Sitting in a Room," which records the dissipation of a tonal eigenvalue into a site-specific acoustic anonymity of the world, is a perfect instantiation of such an ecological, 'pink' art.

White and pink noise, then, are related to different forms of the acoustic unconscious. The Lacanian unconscious is defined by a digital distinction between the Real, which is either a vacuum or a field of completely random, white noise, depending whether one looks at it from a phenomenological or an ontological point of view, and the Symbolic. In acoustic terms, the Real—as the 'primal repressed'—is either the realm of silence or, in terms of sound, the realm of *white* rather than of *pink* noise. From an ontological point of view, it consists of random, "structureless" (Voss and Clarke, "Music from $1/f$" 262) signals with a constant power spectral density (cf. Kittler, *Dracula* 178–179); of "the abysmal stochastics of noise" (146)[26] rather than the fractal, invariably site-specific complexity of the world's ambient noise. The Real's "[w]hite music" (Voss and Clarke, "Music from $1/f$" 262) and "white melody" (Gardner 4) against pink music and a pink melody. A white unconscious against a pink unconscious, psychoanalysis against schizoanalysis.

Along the lines of this pink logic, Lucier proceeds further into the ecological than Benjamin, Kracauer, Jameson, Krauss and Kittler, for whom, despite their differences, unconscious imperceptibilities are 'culturally constructed' and in need of conscious, digital analysis. For

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26 As Pareyon notes, "music can be conceived as 'inherently significant' inasmuch as its probabilistic wave moves from a random walk (e.g. $1/f^2$ noise), into a consistent and relatively self-similar waveform ($1/f$ noise); and 'less significant' as its probabilistic wave tends to aperiodicity and to continuous self-dissimilarity (e.g. $1/f^0$ noise)" (249). In relation to Lucier, it might be interesting to note that rhythm is not part of their 'pink algorithm.'

all five, film and photography are media of manipulation that allow for a political, psychoanalytic treatment of the visual, and in extension, of an acoustic world. Lucier differs from this in that he 'tapes' into the analog, anonymous, unconscious, purely acoustic ecology of sound. Programmatically, he dissolves the voice not so much into ideological figures as into pure sound. Individuality is dissolved into the singularities of an acoustic milieu. De-subjectification brings about re-singularization, in the sense of Michel Foucault's famous image of man "erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (387).

GUATTARI

The properly musical content of music is plied by becomings-woman, becomings-child, becomings-animal; however, it tends, under all sorts of influences, having to do also with the instruments, to become progressively more molecular in a kind of cosmic lapping through which the inaudible makes itself heard and the imperceptible appears as such: no longer the songbird, but the sound molecule.
— Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 248

Although Jameson would, perhaps, dismiss this gesture of singularization as ultimately apolitical, when one looks at Lucier's work from the point of view of Félix Guattari's notion of schizoanalysis, it brings into play that notion's fundamental 'given;' the 'multiplicity' that forms the reservoir of any technological and political practice.[27]

Is that schizoanalytic multiplicity white or pink? In order to address that question, let me, in no doubt too general terms, contour schizoanalysis against psychoanalysis. Generally, schizoanalysis is to psychoanalysis as topology is to classic geometry, in the sense that geometrical space is empty and abstract while topological space

27 On Deleuze and Guattari and music, see Buchanan and Swiboda, Campbell, and Hulse and Nesbitt.

is full and concrete. For schizoanalysis, the anonymous acoustic unconscious consists of vibrations of the air that the sense of hearing picks up as 'sound,' in the same way in which photons are elements of light that the sense of sight picks up as 'light.'

In that schizoanalysis treats all elements that make up the world as in some way sentient, all of them have an unconscious, which consists for each of them of 'that which they do not perceive.' What we call light is the unconscious of bats. As psychoanalysis maintains that only humans have an unconscious, it cannot conceive of these realms of the non-human unconscious. Krauss, therefore, answers her own rhetorical question "[c]an the optical field—the world of visual phenomena: clouds, sea, sky, forest—*have* an unconscious?" (179) with a resounding 'no.' As she notes, Freud "is clear that the world over which technical devices extend their power is not one that could, in itself, have an unconscious. [...] This is why for Freud a sentence like Benjamin's [about the 'unconscious optics'] "would simply be incomprehensible" (179). Her own use of the term is, therefore, as she herself notes, "at an angle to Benjamin's" (179).

If psychoanalysis stresses meaning and its breakup, schizoanalysis stresses how meaning emerges from noise and how it dissolves into it. While the former is structural and impervious to temporal and spatial changes, the latter is pragmatic and at every moment time- and site-specific. As Guattari notes in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, it invariably concerns "*a given problematic context*" (18) and as such it stresses movements of emergence and decay; 'pink processes' of "self-organization or singularization" (18).

Psychoanalysis, which deals with a return to noise in terms of the return of the repressed, and with the return of the repressed in terms of involuntary misfirings of language, is an attempt to close off the realm of representation from the milieu of that given noise. In fact, the difference between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis is that in the latter, language at all times 'trails behind' and remains tied to the intensive milieu of acoustic frequencies. How could it not, Guattari would note, when it has emerged from this milieu in

the first place? As such, the many interpretations of "I am Sitting in a Room" that stress the "degenerative effects of recording and re-recording" (Holmes 156), or, even more drastically, read it as a "sonic suicide" (Strickland 199), overlook its inherently creative aspects. Although the 'serial generations' of the looped voice do imply a 'degeneration of the individual voice,' they also bring about a 'regeneration' of the sound of the world and its 'articulation' by a singular voice.

In acoustic terms, one might argue that psychoanalytic music can be 'easily' scored and reproduced, while schizoanalytic music demands an open, diagrammatic score and is almost impossible to repeat except in very general terms, as the acoustic operations never lie in a dimension outside of the acoustic milieu (n–1). As Ronald Bogue has shown, Deleuze and Guattari's use of Sylvano Bussotti's "XIV piano piece for David Tudor" (3) as the motto at the 'beginning' of *A Thousand Plateaus* is programmatic.[28] If psychoanalytic music does not worry too much about the space in which it is performed—except of course in terms of the architectonics of an ideally neutral resonant space, in the same way in which in modern museums the walls should be preferably a neutral white—schizoanalytic music is, like Lucier's piece, dependent on an acoustic milieu that directly, that is to say, acoustically, enters into its performance. In fact, Guattari's definition of a "[s]chizoanalytic subjectivity" resonates directly with a notion of a 'schizoanalytic music' in that it "is established at the intersection of Flows of signs and machinic Flows, at the junction of the facts of sense, of material and social facts, and, above all, in the wake of transformations resulting from their different modalities of Assemblage" (*Cartographies* 20).

Tendentially, schizoanalysis might be said to stake fluid, smooth pragmatics against the solid-state, striated axiomatics of psychoanalysis. If libido is analogous to frequency, "[t]he libido finds that it has two statuses conferred on it. That of a processual energy making

28 See the first page of *A Thousand Plateaus*' introductory chapter.

dynamic relations drift far from their equilibrium position, or that of a static energy contributing to the stratification of psychic formations" (Guattari, *Cartographies* 30). Against a 'molar music' and its psychoanalytic logic of reduction and lack, schizoanalysis sets a 'molecular music' that works "rather than moving in the direction of reductionist modelisations which simplify the complex, [...] towards its complexification, its processual enrichment, towards the consistency of its virtual lines of bifurcation and differentiation, in short towards its ontological heterogeneity" (61).

As I noted, however, these differentiations are ultimately too simple and too clear, because reduction and complexification are complementary rather than 'simply oppositional.' Still, in the same way in which a Fourier analysis, as a literally 'spectral' analysis, follows the breakup of Lucier's voice into the specific spatial milieu into which it is spoken, a schizoanalysis 'follows' the subject's dissemination into the milieu 'given' by the world. Even in a very molar music, there are lines of flight. At the same time, lines of flight can only be thought of from within a molar system. Like light waves, as a multiplicity of rays that bounce through the milieu of material surfaces, sound waves consist of a multiplicity of singular waves that bounce between material surfaces. These sonorous multiplicities are the ultimate reservoir of the 'musical unconscious' as the unconscious of the sonic realm, just like the optical multiplicities form the reservoir of the 'optical unconscious.'

In fact, Lucier's "I am Sitting in a Room" charts quite literally an 'acoustic' rather than a psychic 'regression' in terms of Michel Serres' definition of an unconscious that is 'structured like sound' rather than 'like a language'; an unconscious that consists of a recursive stacking of black boxes, each of which contains not-yet integrated, as yet imperceptible and in that sense unconscious operations. For Serres, whose work is deeply indebted to non-linear dynamics, such an unconscious

> gives way from below [recedes into the depths]; there are as many unconsciousnesses in the system as there are integration levels. It is merely a question, in general, of that for which we initially possess no information. [...] Each level of information functions as an unconscious for the global level bordering it. [...] What remains unknown and unconscious is, at the chain's furthermost limit, the din of energy transformations: this must be so, for the din is by definition stripped of all meaning, like a set of pure signals or aleatory movements. These packages of chance are filtered, level after level, by the subtle transformer constituted by the organism. [...] In this sense the traditional view of the unconscious would seem to be the final black box, the clearest box for us since it has its own language in the full sense. (80)

For Serres, the analogy between technological media and the senses lies in that both are 'integration machines.' Although Kittler is very aware of this, he might be said to concentrate only on 'this side of integration' and to remain fully anthropocentric. Although he is obsessed with cybernetic and *psycho*netic modes of control, ambient sound enters his analyses only negatively as a noise that is never acknowledged as anything other than disturbance that can be captured, mathematically, in a 'signal-noise ratio.'

In a schizoanalytic unconscious, however, in which the analyst's office is replaced by the concert hall, the Oedipal acoustics that lie at the bottom of a psychoanalytic unconscious give way to the experience of an anonymous, multiplicitous soundscape understood, quite literally, as 'disturbances of the air' that acoustically articulate, by speech, wind or tape, the sonorous world. Serres' notion of pure exchanges of energy—which schizoanalysis also reads as 'exchanges of desire'—as "set[s] of pure signals or aleatory movements" (Serres 80) should be understood as a dynamics of non-linear, 'pink movements'; as the acoustic reservoir that allows for processes of the emergence of music. In fact, if one were, in another example of time-axis manipulation, to play "I am Sitting in a Room"

backwards, one would hear the 'miraculous' emergence of meaning from pure sound.

In the light of such a miraculous reversal, however, one should note that schizoanalysis never aims to remain *within*, reduce everything to, or return to an anonymous, purely virtual multiplicity, which Deleuze and Guattari also call the 'pure plane of immanence' understood as a plane of "zero consistency" and "zero" memory (Guattari, *Cartographies* 106; 119); a 'white plane' of 'infinitely fast energy transfer,' or, in an acoustic context, of 'infinitely fast change of frequencies' that Greg Hainge relates, in reference to Serres's reference to 'white noise,' to an "infinite multiplicity" (19) and potentiality. Rather, its aim is to construct and to establish *from* and *within* that plane of immanence what Deleuze and Guattari call 'planes of consistency' and 'planes of composition;' to create viable, musical milieus that treat the landscape of frequencies as a reservoir of 'sound,' in the same way film uses the reservoir of 'light.'[29]

In his discussion of noise Hainge notes, in reference to a passage in which Deleuze and Guattari see too much noise as 'negative,' that they "fall prey […] to a misprision of noise" (21). As if even Deleuze and Guattari, who should be the true champions of noise, would retreat from too much noise. While Hainge reads this as "a break in their thought" (22), I would rather see it as a statement about the fact that while 'white noise' is the ultimate reservoir, the inherent potentiality and the constant companion of music, it is not its aim.

While Hainge notes that "white noise is simply modulated into different colors of noise as the virtual is contracted into the actual via expression" (22), a more precise way of describing this process by way of Guattari's *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* would perhaps be to say that *within* and *from* the both optically and acoustically

29 Higgins describes it as "a diagram of sonic potential" (63) and as "not a meaningless obfuscating miasma, but a rich, multivalent cloud of potential" (56). "[W]hereas this noise communicated to the faculties is generally suppressed as interference, it is actually the very ground of the thought of sound" (59).

'white,' anonymous plane of immanence as a plane of 'purely virtual non-consistency,' colored, and thus individuated, noises emerge, as acoustic planes of consistency and composition; with 'acoustic' pertaining to the empirical field of 'pure frequencies.' These planes are not temporally successive to the plane of immanence, but rather another 'aspect' of it. Further, Hainge's statement would have to be extended by noting that for this field of an actual, empirical acoustics there is, invariably, a complementary field of virtual, transcendental music. In terms of Guattari's diagram, the complementary fields are those of acoustic 'Flows' and 'Phyla' on the one side, and of musical 'Refrains' and 'Universes' on the other.

To delineate these planes in such detail is necessary because it is only at the 'meeting' of frequency and music that the actual and the virtual—as the fields of 'matters-of-fact' and 'events'—converge. If noise is the name given, retroactively, from within musical orders to the play of frequencies considered as disruptions of that order, the project of schizoanalytic music is to see the two levels of noise and music as complementary rather than as antagonistic, and to make them correspond 'in their manner of operation.' If 'white noise' is the pure sound that is 'both inside and outside of' every acoustic and musical coherence as a permanent source of 'disturbing potentiality,' the difference between a schizoanalytic and a psychoanalytic music is not between atonal multiplicity and tonal order, or between smooth noise and striated music. Rather, the ultimate 'test' of a schizoanalytic music, whether that be atonal or tonal, lies in how it creates from that white noise alignments of pink noise and pink music.

This is precisely what Henry David Thoreau did in *Walden* when he identified the sounds made by telegraph wires as those of a "universal lyre" (168). Realizing long before Marshall McLuhan that the medium is indeed the message, Thoreau, unlike Kittler, was not interested so much in the digital messages that were being transported by the wires as in the analog landscape of frequencies of which the wires were an inherent part. Already for Thoreau, transcendence, as

the telegraph's transported message, was always a product of immanence, as the wire functioning as a cosmic instrument. Sound studies before sound studies.

In his novel *Cryptonomicon*, Neal Stephenson provides a similar image of a pink, and even 'harmonious' world; a term to which I promised to return. For both Thoreau and Stephenson, a 'natural music' follows neither a pre-established harmony nor a 'white noise.' Rather, it shows 'inherent harmonies' that need to be 'articulated' at every moment. At any given moment, the world's overall landscape of frequencies consists, on the one hand, of an interplay of an 'infinity' of resonance catastrophes that happen on an 'infinity' of levels, and, on the other hand, of the emergence of assemblages of acoustic refrains and universes. In terms of Deleuze and Guattari, it consists of a constant play of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization. When Stephenson describes the breakup of a stable current of air, he in fact does so in terms of a landscape of turbulent resonance interferences and catastrophes:

> From the wind's frame of reference, it [the wind] is stationary and the hills and valleys are moving things that crumple the horizon and then rush towards it and then interfere with it and go away, leaving the wind to sort out the consequences later on down the line. [...] If there was more stuff in the way, like expansive cities filled with buildings, or forests filled with leaves and branches, then that would be the end of the story; the wind would become completely deranged and cease to exist as a unitary thing, and all of the aerodynamic action would be at the incomprehensible scale of micro-vortices around pine needles and car antennas. (622)

What Stephenson describes in terms of a resonance catastrophe, however, is only catastrophic from the perspective of the current as a turbulent system. On a human scale, most frequency catastrophes are in fact not perceived as catastrophic. Also, as it relies on an overall 'metastable equilibrium,' the world is, most of the time, defined by instances of 'inherently harmonious' frequency interference, such as

the one Stephenson describes when the wind resonates with a staircase that becomes, in the process, the architectural equivalent of a musical scale. As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe noted, architecture is indeed frozen music:

> Wind and water have been whipped into an essentially random froth by the storm. A microphone held up in the air would register only white noise —a complete absence of information. But when that noise strikes the long tube of the staircase, it drives a physical resonance that manifests itself in Waterhouse's brain as a low hum. The physics of the tube extract a coherent pattern from meaningless noise [...] Waterhouse experiments by singing the harmonics of this low fundamental tone. [...] Each one resonates in the staircase to a greater or lesser degree. It is the same series of notes made by a brass instrument. By hopping from one note to another, Waterhouse is able to play some passable bugle calls on the staircase. (Stephenson 230)

To play music, Waterhouse must consider himself as a part of the infinitely complex landscape of frequencies the world quite literally 'is,' and at the same time as someone who extracts a specifically human music from that landscape.

Another approach to the structural difference between psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic music is to say that the former proceeds from three major cuts—say, three major harmonies—while the latter proceeds from an infinity of cuts and a multiplicity of 'inherent harmonies.' While psychoanalytic music retrieves a musical ideology and the subjects' pathologically joyful submission to it—often the 'hit single'—schizoanalytic music retrieves the world and the subject's positively joyful immersion in that world, as in Lucier's "Sferics." In a very Spinozist passage, Deleuze and Guattari note that "the goal of schizoanalysis" is "to analyze the specific nature of the libidinal investments in the economic and political spheres, and thereby to show how, in the subject who desires, desire can be made to desire

its own repression" (*Anti-Oedipus* 105). In fact, the questions schizoanalysis asks are implicitly ecological:

> How does one Assemblage relay another Assemblage so as to 'administer' a given situation? [...] How do several Assemblages enter into relation and what is the result? How are the potentialities for the constitution of new Assemblages [...]? How are the relations of production, of proliferation and the micropolitics of these new Assemblages to be 'aided' in such a case? (Guattari, *Cartographies* 19–20)

In terms of such an acoustic politics, the schizophrenic is precisely the figure of someone who refuses repression: "We knew the schizo was not oedipalizable, because he is beyond territoriality, because he has carried his flows right into the desert" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 67). Against psychoanalysis' triangularization of desire and the psychic realm, schizoanalysis sets site-specific analyses of the relations of assemblages to themselves, to other assemblages and to the world at large. At the same time, molecular music aims at creating 'acoustic individuals'—'compositions'—that are once more "capable of connecting with the singularities and mutations of our era" (Guattari, *Chaosmosis* 106).

Very generally, the musical project is, in parallel to the project of individual life, to open up potentialities of musical mutation: "a singularity, a rupture of sense, a cut, a fragmentation, the detachment of a semiotic content [...] can originate mutant nuclei of subjectivation" (Guattari, *Chaosmosis* 18). The aim of schizoanalytic music is not white noise, but rather a "deterritorialising complexification" (Guattari, *Chaosmosis* 19) with a stress on "processuality, irreversibility and resingularisation" (29) and on "unlimited combinatories and creativity" (45). Pink music.

Schizoanalytic music, then, is an attempt to rescue the musical subject from the Oedipal ecology of the family triangle—to rescue the multiplicity of frequencies from their reduction into basic, human harmonies—and to release music into a much more

general ecology of the living; to open the listener up to the drifting, "orphan unconscious" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 82) of the acoustic world. In that it treats the production of frequencies as a desiring-production, schizoanalysis is a psychic version of a Fourier analysis. If "desiring-production is pure multiplicity, that is to say, an affirmation that is irreducible to any sort of unity" (42), schizoanalysis is, quite literally, the analysis of the acoustic schizzes—cuts—within a composition and between this composition and its milieu.

Ultimately, the schizoanalytic question is about the production of an ecosophical music; a music shot through with the "infinite determinability" (Guattari, *Cartographies* 103) that is 'given' and 'secured' by the white schizo state but that builds from that state, and without 'losing' its intensity, a pink music that is 'in adequation' with pink noise. How to create musical universes that allow for 'lines of flight' that never lead out of the milieu but allow the acoustic subject to move more freely through the striations that have hardened its life? Although these lines of flight cannot escape the world, they can initiate, by a smoothing of the milieu, new, perhaps less heavy arrangements.

A schizoanalytic music, like "I am Sitting in a Room," dismantles 'heavy, molar harmonies,' and it creates new, more molecular harmonies. These harmonies are never provided beforehand because, as Guattari never stops noting, the adequate practice for schizoanalysis is experimentation. Harmonies need to emerge from a specific milieu. Like Lucier's musical practice, it will "never limit itself to an interpretation of 'givens'; it will take a much more fundamental interest in the 'Giving' [...] that promote the concatenation of affects of sense and pragmatic effects" (Guattari, *Cartographies* 19).

Everywhere the world consists of actual and virtual resonances and frequencies. Even cognition, as embodied or enacted, is based on what Francisco Varela, Eleanor Rosch and Evan Thompson call "*resonating neuronal ensembles*" and "adaptive resonant neuronal networks" (96). A system, in particular a musical system, is thus not

only 'in reference' with its milieu, but also, and more immediately, 'in resonance' with it. In this context, Lucier's piece concerns the 'becoming sound' of meaning; the dissipation of meaning into a space not of 'white noise' as radically chaotic and not site-specific, but of the 'pink noise' that, as I have tried to show, defines the most unconscious layers of the world's sonorous spectra. Schizoanalytic music as the world's eigenmusic.

In terms of vectors of assembly and disassembly, Lucier's work "Music On A Long Thin Wire"—first performed in 1979 at the Winrock Shopping Center in Albuquerque and broadcast uninterrupted by the KUNM radio station for a five days and nights—might be seen as a companion piece to "I am Sitting in a Room." As Lucier describes it on the Album Notes (1992):

> *Music on a Long Thin Wire* is constructed as follows: the wire is extended across a large room, clamped to tables at both ends. The ends of the wire are connected to the loudspeaker terminals of a power amplifier placed under one of the tables. A sine wave oscillator is connected to the amplifier. A magnet straddles the wire at one end. Wooden bridges are inserted under the wire at both ends to which contact microphones are imbedded, routed to a stereo sound system. The microphones pick up the vibrations that the wire imparts to the bridges and are sent through the playback system. By varying the frequency and loudness of the oscillator, a rich variety of slides, frequency shifts, audible beats and other sonic phenomena may be produced.[30]

30 For the score of the piece, see Lucier, *Chambers* 160–61. For a description, see Lucier, *Chambers* 163–70, Lucier, *Reflections* 360–63; *Music* 146–48.

1969: METAL MACHINE MUSIC

Tell me I'm your National Anthem.
— Lana Del Rey; "National Anthem"

The Dean Martin of Dissonance.
— Thomas Pynchon, *Bleeding Edge* 382

It was the most riveting moment [...] *Just that single guitar, so piercing and so pure. At the time, there was just a knot of people on the hill. Those huge speakers bouncing sound off the hillsides, and an eerie, silent, pre-dawn, misty kind of silence. The notes reflected back again.*
— Henry Diltz, *"Interview"*

The sounds and their echo returning from the hills that Diltz remembers come, like Lucier's premier performance of "I am Sitting in a Room," from the year 1969. The place is Woodstock, the guitarist is Jimi Hendrix playing his infamous version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" which, like "I am Sitting in a Room," disassembles a form, only that in this case it is not a number of sentences that are dissembled, but rather a melody—the lyrics to which are virtually present, however—as the musical equivalent of a number of sentences. Also, with Hendrix, the result is not an anonymous landscape that resembles pink noise but rather a set of disharmonious acoustic clusters created 'around' the initial melody.

The setup of the acoustic situation is also slightly different from Lucier's in that it is more comprehensively electric. Although it concerns the same parameters, the loop develops between a musical signal and an electric pick-up rather than a voice and a microphone. More importantly, rather than giving the play of frequencies free reign, Hendrix keeps on administering the chaos by manipulating his guitar. The wall of feedback in the open acoustic space is the result of an electric milieu that is assembled between the manipulated audio input of Hendrix' guitar pick-up, his playing of the guitar, an amplifier and loudspeakers. The loops consist of the reverberations

and frequencies of the sound coming from the loudspeakers being picked up by the instrument's electric pick-up, which once more amplifies them and brings them into the loop of sound coming from the loudspeakers.

In terms of physics, such audio feedbacks consist, like the Tacoma bridge disaster, of positive feedback loops. The frequencies of the resulting sound are determined by the resonance frequencies of the instrument or microphone, the amplifier, the loudspeakers, the acoustics of the room, the directional pick-up, the emission patterns of the microphone and loudspeaker, as well as the physical distance between them.[31]

Hendrix is the perhaps most famous practitioner of a feedback music, as in his rendition of "Can You See Me?" at the Monterey Pop Festival, where the entire guitar solo consists of amplifier feedback, or in the moment after "Wild Thing" when, after another session of feedback, Hendrix sets his guitar on fire. According to one urban myth, such feedbacks were introduced into what used to be called 'pop music' when, quite unintentionally, John Lennon leaned a semi-acoustic guitar against an amplifier. While Hendrix is its most visible icon, the magnum opus of feedback music is arguably Lou Reed's

31 As Tony Visconti recalls about Robert Fripp's guitar work for David Bowie's "Heroes," "Fripp had a technique in those days where he measured the distance between the guitar and the speaker where each note would feed back. For instance, an 'A' would feed back maybe at about four feet from the speaker, whereas a 'G' would feed back maybe three and a half feet from it. He had a strip that they would place on the floor, and when he was playing the note 'F' sharp he would stand on the strip's 'F' sharp point and 'F' sharp would feed back better. He really worked this out to a fine science, and we were playing this at a terrific level in the studio, too. It was very, very loud, and all the while he was playing these notes—that beautiful overhead line—Eno was turning the dials and creating a new envelope and just playing with the filter bank. We did three takes of that, and although one take would sound very patchy, three takes had all of these filter changes and feedback blending into that very smooth, haunting, overlaying melody which you hear" (118). Not only in this specific context, see also the work of Brian Eno.

"Metal Machine Music" from 1975, which consists in its entirety of feedback loops played at different speeds.

Electronic music had entered the universe of what used to be called 'pop music' in the late 1960s, when bands such as The Beatles and The Beach Boys began to use electronic instruments such as the Theremin or the Mellotron. Although the music of The Beach Boys is not known as 'experimental,' the fact that the 'wet spring reverb' that was incorporated into Fender amplifiers from 1961 is thought to emulate the sound of the waves, provides a good reason why they would be interested in electronic sound effects.[32]

As the examples from Pynchon's work that I have already mentioned show, the relation between Pynchon and Lucier pertains generally to the theory and practice of electronic music, although Lucier's work has to do with a formal approach to a schizoanalytic 'politics of sound,' while Pynchon's shows a more content-oriented approach to a politics of sound. Still, there is a deep affinity between Lucier and Pynchon. In fact, Lucier references Pynchon in his description of "Sferics" in *Music 109*. Although Lucier gets it slightly wrong when he asks "[d]oesn't Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* pen with a scene at a whistler listening station in Africa?" (150), because the scene comes from chapter 9 of *V.*, "Mondaugen's story," there is indeed a reference to sferics:

> Mondaugen was here as part of a program having to do with atmospheric radio disturbances: sferics for short. [...] the whistler was only the first of a family of sferics whose taxonomy was to include clicks, hooks, risers, nose-whistlers and one like a warbling of birds called the dawn chorus. No one knew exactly what caused any of them. Some said sunspots, others lightning bursts; but everyone agreed that in there someplace was the earth's

32 While The Beach Boys reference nature, the new sounds were also used as the sounds of the future and of technology—the score for *Forbidden Planet* in 1956 is entirely composed using custom built electronic circuits and tape recorders; the soundtrack of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* uses the Theremin—as well as the sounds of the new unconscious of horror movies.

> magnetic field, so a plan evolved to keep a record of sferics received at different latitudes. (230)

Mondaugen—who will return as a character in *Gravity's Rainbow*—will find out that the sferics indeed spell out a finely ironic message, which, as in the poetics of electronic tape-recorder music, splices, here in reversed order, the letters of his name, Kurt Mondaugen, into Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous statement that "[t]he world is all that the case is [*Die Welt ist alles was der Fall ist*]" (278). As such, it aligns a purely material spectrum of sound with a message from a transcendent source from outside this world.[33]

While in *V.*, as in *The Crying of Lot 49*, the question is still about whether music, such as the songs of The Paranoids in *The Crying of Lot 49* express the "luminous beauty" (136) of a metaphysical truth about the world, or whether music expresses nothing but a physical "power spectrum" (136), in *Vineland* the question is no longer so much metaphysical than political. Is there the possibility of an acoustic politics that is, as "premodal" (Pynchon, *Vineland* 224) outside of modal conventions and norms?

One passage in *Vineland* addresses directly the cultural impact of digital media that have relegated analog media to a nostalgic past; a time before, as the disgruntled musician Van Meter—a name that perhaps references the guitarist Sally van Meter, who is famous for her playing a Dobro resonator guitar, often in lap steel-guitar, bottleneck fashion—notes, "analog arts blended into digital commerce" (224). In a both political and poetological move towards a utopia of the continuous, Van Meter materially smoothes out the discrete, digital frets that define the single notes on his bass guitar in order to recreate a field of continuous 'modulation' and thus opens up, like electronic music, "new pitch systems" (Holmes 155).

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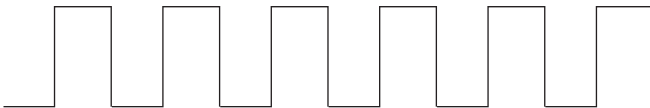
33 Note also the 'return' of the "warbling of birds" in the character Riggs Warbling in *Inherent Vice*.

> Tonight all he'd brought was an ancient Fender Precision bass that he'd taken the frets off of himself back around '76, when he heard about Jaco Pastorius doing the same to a Jazz Bass. Van Meter had seen in the act further dimensions, the abolition of given scales, the restoration of a premodal innocence in which all the notes of the universe would be available to him. He filled in the grooves with boat epoxy and drew lines where the frets had been, just to help him through the transition. (Pynchon, *Vineland* 224)

For Pynchon, an acoustic politics would be a 'sliding politics;' a politics that assembles far-from-equilibrium political milieus that allow for new, analog harmonics and sounds. A politics that is organized around analog frequencies and vibes rather than around digital control. In this celebration of the analog, Pynchon's project is, for once, set 'at an angle to Kittler's digital universe.'

Digital signal



Analog signal

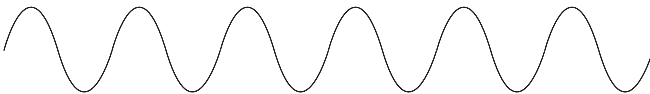


Fig. 4 – Digital and analog signal

The politics of sound should be adequate to the differently 'colored' noises and musics that define the operations of the world.[34]

Throughout his work, Pynchon's use of musical terms is directly related to a politics of sound, such as to be 'on the same frequency,' to be 'in tune' or 'in sync.' From the family called Vibe in *Against the*

34 On acoustic coloration and timbre, see Janssen 30–32.

Day—with members ranging from Scarsdale to R. Wilshire—to the 'good vibrations' that defines the life on the beach in *Inherent Vice*, Pynchon's prose is filled with political and ecological vibes. One of Pynchon's main concerns is to show how terrifying it is when the will to communal resonance is overridden by forces that cause literally, or better acoustically, bad vibes. In Pynchon, the main reasons for such bad vibes are invariably greed and the desire for personal power.

It is always bad vibes versus good vibes. Real-estate versus the beach. The utopia is, as in "I am Sitting in a Room," always that of dissolving into waves; whether ocean waves, waves of drifting fog, the light-waves that make up 'magic hour,' the oneiric waves of the unconscious, or sound waves such as those of the song of The Beach Boys Doc Sportello plays on his car's "Vibrasonic" sound system in the closing section of *Inherent Vice*, waves that define an anonymous community and truly democratic multitude, the parliament of living beings, or, as Pynchon calls them affectionately, 'living critters.'

Fittingly, the beginning of the song Sportello listens to features a Tannerin, which is a variation of the Theremin, which is the only instrument that produces sounds directly by using the body's electric capacity to manipulate an electro-magnetic field as the medium for the production of the sound. Unlike the Tannerin, which works by way of material touch, the Theremin operates completely by a gestural manipulation of the 'electro-acoustic milieu.'

When Doc Sportello is driving southbound on the 405, his Vibrasonic sound system literally engulfs him in reverberant sound. The songs Pynchon references and that reverberate into our own lives, are mellow songs that stress vocal harmony—The Beach Boys, Fapardokly, Elephant's Memory, The Spaniels. All of them advocate a musical politics that is beyond politics; a reverberant harmonics; a communal politics of sound.

Although a metaphysical hope of revelation still reverberates through the scene—a hope for the fog to "burn away, and for something else, this time, somehow, to be there, instead" (369), which links the ending of *Inherent Vice* directly to that of *The Crying of*

Lot 49—the question is now more about the inherent beauty of the power spectrum. Pynchon ends *Inherent Vice* by setting up a densely affective space whose atmosphere is carried by the final song of Pynchon's soundtrack of the 1960s. It is a song that contains, or better, that 'contracts' most of the novel's themes and topics. The song is "God Only Knows" by The Beach Boys, "which Doc realized after a while he'd been singing along with" (368); a song with a whole range of resonances, especially for Pynchon, who met Brian Wilson in 1968 in Wilson's Beverly Hills home.[35]

What with the novel's surf philosophy and politics, and its love of the liminality of the beach—from the novel's epigraph "Under the paving-stones, the beach!" to the novel's most frequently repeated sentences, which are all variations on the theme of 'back to the beach'—The Beach Boys are obvious candidates for the novel's musical finale. Beach music. Surf music. They are the perfect carriers of the vibes *of* and *on* the beach, although Pynchon would also have been aware that The Beach Boys represent mainstream America rather than its subcultures. They are to the beach, perhaps, what The Carpenters are to the flatland, and thus they are not an obvious choice for Pynchon. Even more, the music of The Beach Boys links one of the book's dark attractors, the Manson murders, to the surfertopia through the real-life connection of Dennis Wilson to would-be musician Charles Manson, from whom The Beach Boys took the song "Never Learn Not to Love." In fact, the relation between Wilson and Manson might be called 'high magic' in itself. To make the space of resonances even more dense, Paul McCartney of "Helter Skelter" fame—the song from which Manson took some of the messages that kept his paranoid, racist universe running—has called "God Only Knows" "the greatest pop song ever written" (Kent 3).

35 "Brian was kind of afraid of Pynchon, because he'd heard he was an Eastern intellectual establishment genius," Siegel recalls. "And Pynchon wasn't very articulate. He was gonna sit there and let you talk while he listened. So neither of them really said a word all night long. It was one of the strangest scenes I'd ever seen in my life" (qtd. in Carlin 103–04).

EPILOG

A politics of sound, then, can take many forms. It may be said, in fact, to have only one common denominator: it relies on an underlying multiplicity that it honors in all of its practices; in terms of content as well as in terms of form. While the electro-acoustic music of John Cage and Alvin Lucier are 'formal' examples of a politics of sound, Pynchon's is a more 'content oriented' version. This said, there are no general rules for calling something schizoanalytic music, because it always depends on the circumstances and as such is invariably time- and site-specific.

In *Vineland*, Pynchon had lamented the slow, inexorable destruction of a politics of the senses. "[S]oon they're gonna be coming after everything, not just drugs, but beer, cigarettes, sugar, salt, fat, you name it, anything that could remotely please any of your senses, because they need to control all that. And they will" (313). In such a control society, the various forms of an unconscious of the senses that works, simultaneously, in all 'centers of sentience'—in the human context: the optical, the acoustic, the haptic, the olfactory and the gastronomical unconscious—as well as their respective politics, will vanish as well. While the optical and the acoustic unconscious are well-rehearsed by now, we still need a schizoanalytics of the other three senses.

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"IT FLOWS THROUGH ME LIKE RAIN"
MINIMAL MUSIC AND TRANSCENDENCE IN *AMERICAN BEAUTY* (1999)

Christof Decker

1. INTRODUCTION

Minimalism in film scoring may seem like a contradiction in terms. When Hollywood cinema began to draw on composers like Max Steiner or Alfred Newman in the 1930s to write original film scores, they established a late-Romantic maximalist soundtrack of 'wall-to-wall' scoring, overwhelming audiences with lush melodies, symphonic instrumentation and catchy leitmotifs. Yet during the second half of the 20th century, a different style of music began to shape a number of films that was characterized by simplicity and repetition and drew inspiration from the art of minimal music. Focusing on an influential example of this tradition, *American Beauty* from 1999 directed by Sam Mendes with a film score written by Thomas Newman, this essay will explore how minimal music and film may be interrelated and how they interacted, in this case, at the borderline of mainstream and art cinema.

A brief initial section will revisit the discourse on music in film as an intermedial constellation and elaborate on Nicholas Cook's metaphor model of musical meaning. The discussion of *American Beauty* will then revolve around two basic issues: on the one hand, how minimal music interacts with the film's themes, and on the other, to what extent minimalism may be seen to represent an American idiom of film music. Although from its inception Hollywood cinema was a globalized industry transgressing national boundaries of style, I argue that, beginning in the 1990s, minimal music came to be coded as a musical vernacular distinct from the European leitmotif tradition on the one hand, and the pop and rock song tradition on the other. In a number of significant productions that belong to the category

of 'network narratives,' minimal music began to interact with issues and images of contemporary American society. Generally, the thematic implications were varied and open, yet in some cases like *American Beauty* the music came to signify the desire for an idealized American community by shaping a style of dehierarchized musical relations that projected as one of its features a sense of equality and connectedness.

2. FILM MUSIC AND MUSICAL MEANING

In the introduction to his study *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, the British musicologist Nicholas Cook emphatically states that "music is never 'alone'" (23). Cook is sketching his argument that the interaction between music and other media should be seen as a metaphorical relationship, and he explains why an interest in questions of multimedia is crucial (3–23). In order to investigate the potential of music as a source of meaning, the notion of multimedia is important because this meaning hardly ever emerges from music alone. As Cook suggests, listeners and spectators hardly ever encounter a musical piece as music only, i.e. as a form of aesthetic experience in complete isolation from other semiotic systems. The meanings that music may create are therefore usually entangled with the meanings suggested by the combination of music with images, lyrics, visual sequences, texts, sounds, actions on a stage, program notes, and much more. Instead of dealing with music only, we are thus dealing with "instances of multimedia" (100), as Cook calls them for lack of a better term. As a consequence, the investigation of musical meaning should begin by thinking about the synesthetic as well as relational nature of these instances.

When dealing with the specific case of film music, one might object that the mediated character of music has always been a focal point of classic studies by authors such as Hanns Eisler and Theodor W. Adorno. Yet Cook's renewed emphasis on the 'never aloneness' of music, i.e. on its specific contribution in hybrid multimedia

constellations, allows us to approach film music as one of the crucial, if not constitutive instances of multimedia of the 20th and 21st centuries. Beginning with the scathing aesthetic critique by Eisler and Adorno in the 1940s, and supported by a plethora of anecdotes about the lack of musical sophistication in the Hollywood establishment, film music in the United States has had a long struggle of being accepted as a legitimate art form. Following Cook's suggestion about the cultural significance of music as an irreducible part of multimedia constellations, this lack of appreciation may be reframed: in an age of technological reproduction, and drawing on a long history of music theater, film music becomes an exemplary site for the creation of complex and manifold interrelations of music, sound, and visual sequences. In the United States, but also at a global level, it represents the cultural 'benchmark' for instances of multimedia which all subsequent media constellations have had to confront.

This essay will therefore approach film music as a major field of multimedia innovations, yet a few initial observations on its treatment as lacking in complexity or cultural prestige may frame the following discussion. As a musical practice, film music developed under the conditions of industrial forms of cultural production. It was shaped by the division of labor, a logic of standardization and the efficient use of resources as well as the goal of profit maximization. In the early 1930s, after the transition to sound cinema had been completed, a pattern was established that saw film scores being added in the final steps of postproduction. Composers had to work under enormous time pressure, often composing, orchestrating, conducting, and recording the music in eight weeks or less. Stories of frustrated composers are legion, recounting how directors or producers with no musical education wanted to use film music without appreciating its intrinsic qualities or its value as an art form (cf. Cooke, *History* 69–93; Darby/Du Bois 184–97).

From this angle, as a last minute addition intended merely to increase the entertainment value of the visual narrative, film music was traditionally assigned the low status of functional music

(*Gebrauchsmusik*) as opposed to the higher status of autonomous or art music. For Adorno and Eisler, writing in the 1940s, it was contaminated by the commercial organization of the culture industry relegating music to an inferior position *vis-à-vis* the image track and limiting its role to creating the illusion of unity (cf. Adorno/Eisler 3–19). The contested value of film music in relation to other forms of music was thus deduced from the various ways in which industrial as well as artistic practices combined music and image, and from the degree of dependence or autonomy that these practices attributed to the music.

In this sense, the mode of production often contributed to the impression that the relationship between visual sequences and music had been established in hierarchical terms in the cinema—with the image track as superior and the music as inferior. As Cook argues, this traditional view led to a relative paucity of models analyzing the relationship between image and music, while the dominant model of parallelism versus counterpoint was insufficient to grasp the complexity of creating meaning in instances of multimedia and thus failed to adequately appreciate the contribution of music in these instances (cf. Cook 57–97). Academic research of the last twenty-five years, however, has amply demonstrated that film music has always been a core element of film narration as well as a sophisticated stylistic device: film music produces emotional effects, projects moods and interior states, guides the viewers' attention, establishes generic traits, and announces plot points. It provides atmosphere and local color, identifies and characterizes individuals, provides continuity, constructs space, punctuates storylines, creates suspense, and much more (cf. Kalinak; Cooke, "Film"). And yet, Cook's point is well taken; in order to better appreciate the contribution of music to the production of meaning in complex instances of multimedia, more elaborate ways of grasping their hybrid, synesthetic quality are needed.

In *Analysing Musical Multimedia* Cook proposes a metaphor model of multimedia relations based on interactive processes of attribute

transfer that informs the following discussion. In the course of his argument he posits two important premises: first, the relationship between music and pictures is seen to be dynamic and shaped by semiotic difference. As he puts it, "the music signifies in a manner that is qualitatively different from the pictures" (67). Second, music does not reproduce a meaning that may be unproblematically presupposed for images or words, but rather music constructs and projects meaning in its own right (cf. 57–97). Again, the interrelation is dynamic, based on "the reciprocal transfer of attributes that gives rise to a meaning constructed, not just reproduced, by multimedia" (97). Indeed, this notion of a "transfer of attributes" (81) lies at the heart of Cook's metaphor model. In order to create meaning through the process of interrelating music and images, an 'enabling similarity' between music and images is needed. This similarity becomes a precondition for the applicability of the metaphor model, in which the experience and understanding of something is achieved through expressive means of another medium (cf. 70). Yet Cook emphasizes that the notion of similarity should not be seen as the end result, but rather as a way of initiating the interactional process.[1] The construction of musical meaning thus becomes just as important for instances of multimedia as the creation of meaning via the visual and sound tracks.[2]

1 He writes: "The metaphor model [...] invokes similarity not as an end, but as a means. Meaning now inheres not in similarity, but in the difference that similarity articulates by virtue of the transfer of attributes [...]" (Cook 81).

2 In subsequent chapters, Cook suggests that their respective contributions may be analyzed along the lines of a new terminology of conformance, complementation, and contest; for a discussion of this terminology, cf. Gorbman. A general overview of models dealing with the interrelations of film and music is provided by Buhler, Neumeyer and Buhler, and Kalinak.

3. MINIMAL MUSIC AND FILM

Minimalism in film music may be defined in very broad terms as a musical style characterized by reductionism and simplification, both in harmonic as well as melodic registers (cf. Potter). Due to the varied and hybrid nature of film music, precluding, in most cases, the stylistic and generic coherence or 'purity' of autonomous music, the minimalist character of individual scores needs to be discussed on a case-by-case basis.[3] Minimalism in film is usually one musical element among others, particularly in mainstream narrative cinema which freely mixes musical styles, sonorities, and preexisting classical or popular pieces.[4] Following Timothy A. Johnson's suggestion for minimalism in art music, it therefore seems useful to conceptualize minimalism in film scoring not so much as an autonomous aesthetic or a coherent style but rather as a technique with specific features, among them "a continuous formal structure, an even rhythmic texture and bright tone, a simple harmonic palette, a lack of extended melodic lines, and repetitive rhythmic patterns" (Johnson 751). How many of these features derived from minimalism in art music need to be fulfilled may certainly be a point for discussion, yet film scores

3 In the discourse on minimalism in art music, many authors point to the difficulties of trying to establish clear-cut definitions and to the great variety of different sub-styles. They also mention the rejection of the fuzzy label 'minimalism' by many composers. A common strategy has been to find a number of similar stylistic features but to refrain from trying to define an overarching minimalist aesthetic. Johnson sees "simplicity" (748) as a common feature of many works, while Heisinger points to recurring "practices of restriction and reiteration" (435). Following Heisinger, the notion of 'artistic redundancy' consists of certain stylistic elements: "It features reiteration [...]—long sustained tones, repeated rhythmic, melodic, and/or harmonic patterns, cells, or phrases, or the like—that creates relatively static 'drawn-out' qualities" (434). Bernard discusses the interrelation of minimalism in the plastic arts and music as well as the more recent 'resurgence' of tonality in American music; cf. "Minimalist Aesthetic" and "Minimalism."

4 However, some directors and composers working in an art cinema tradition such as Peter Greenaway and Michael Nyman have aimed for more 'pure' instances of minimalist scores.

drawing on some of them for extended narrative sequences may rightfully be called minimalist in character.

According to the historical overview provided by Mervyn Cooke, minimalism in film scoring established a 'middle-ground' between the traditional forms of orchestral scores, electronic music, and pop tunes. Based on the repetition of intricate yet simplified musical patterns it was an avant-garde inspired departure from the classical tradition of symphonic scoring and its post-Romantic, leitmotif-based technique. Yet at the same time, adjusted to the needs of film narratives, it was more accessible than the autonomous minimalist pieces by composers such as Steve Reich, Philip Glass, LaMonte Young, or Terry Riley (cf. Cooke, *History* 478–483). Due to its specific character, minimal music in films represented two major differences vis-á-vis the leitmotif tradition: from a technical point of view, it appeared to be highly efficient and functional. It was easily adjustable according to the needs at hand such as the length of the passage or the balancing of music and dialogue. Yet at the same time, it also posed new challenges for the creation of narrative meaning. As Cooke points out, minimal music seemed to be a good match for passages of emotional neutrality and distance, yet for more conventional narrative requirements it appeared to be too static and inflexible (cf. Cooke, *History* 478–483).

Despite these ambiguous qualities, Cooke suggests that, with jazz having become a global phenomenon, minimal music in film was developing into an "understated nationalism" (*History* 478). It was seen to express an American national musical idiom, even though, judging from the various influences shaping its aesthetic, film music in the United States may be regarded as a prime example of American popular culture's hybrid, transnational and global character. Historically film music had mixed different kinds of musical traditions and styles, drawing on European music initially but gradually extending its range to include indigenous symphonic styles (e.g. Aaron Copland) as well as high or low, experimental or mainstream, symphonic or popular forms. From this perspective, then,

the "Americanness" of film music in the United States lay in the way of using music to create a specific kind of aesthetic experience, i.e. a mode of interrelating image, sound and music, rather than in shaping a national musical idiom.

And yet with the arrival of minimal music in film scoring, this situation seemed to change. As a radical counterpoint to the leitmotif tradition dominated initially by the European school of composers such as Max Steiner, Erich Korngold, or Franz Waxmann, it introduced a musical style capable of creating new metaphorical connotations for the sound of American culture and society. Early examples of the minimalist tradition represented by composers such as Thomas Newman, Philip Glass, or Mark Isham were written for "network narratives" (Bordwell 29) and attempted to find new ways of interrelating heterogeneous slices of American life. *Short Cuts*, Robert Altman's film from 1993 based on Raymond Carver's literary tradition of minimal realism, established an influential model.[5] It used Mark Isham's score as a richly suggestive glue connecting and holding together the fragments of a larger kaleidoscopic image, and it presented the music as a metaphorical construction of a community emerging from the nodal points within the network.

Several characteristics of minimal music support this potential. It is characterized by a sense of openness in terms of its musical structure as well as its cultural and narrative meanings. The 'spatial' organization of minimal music implies that it is not structured in a linear fashion, not driven by melody but by minimal variations of tapestry-like melodic and rhythmic patterns which support the notion of horizontal expansiveness. Furthermore, due to this formal organization of expansiveness and semantic indeterminacy, it is also less attached to a single individual or location than the traditional leitmotif.

5 Just as in musicology, the concept of minimalism in literature is an equally contested issue which has been discussed along the lines of the maximalist tradition of postmodernism and the parallel tradition of minimal realism or neorealism epitomized by Raymond Carver; cf. Leypoldt.

Minimal music seems to be the ideal musical idiom evoking a trans-individual, even transcendent notion of community.

Both characteristics are present in this essay's case in point, *American Beauty*, where minimal music is metaphorically projecting and creating a notion of communal cohesion. It achieves this through a double movement: by shaping a style of dehierarchized musical relations based on a sense of equality and dynamic exchange of its constitutive elements, and by showing, at the same time, that it represents an idealized or 'imagined' notion of communal cohesion that is constantly challenged by the gendered and generation-specific popular music. As the following sections shall demonstrate, minimal cues and popular tunes are vying for attention in *American Beauty*, creating the sense of a musical 'war' and invoking the desire for a less pathological and less corrupted idea of community.

4. MINIMAL CUES AND THE MUSICAL WAR IN *AMERICAN BEAUTY*

Thomas Newman, who wrote the music for *American Beauty* and who is a prolific composer of minimalism in film scores,[6] developed his distinctive style through the creative use of a relatively limited set of instruments, a strong compositional base in percussions and rhythmic arrangements, and, as Newman himself states, intricate patterns of repeating musical phrases that shift the focus away from harmonies (cf. Cooke, *History* 478–483; Clemmensen, "Newman"). To be sure, all of these characteristics were present in the long history of film scoring—one of the early masters of enigmatic ostinato patterns is without doubt Bernard Hermann—, yet with composers like Thomas Newman the narrative and metaphorical potential of minimal cues took on a new force in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the crucial films shaping the transitional period of the 1990s in this regard was indeed

6 The score of Robert Altman's second influential film from the early 1990s, *The Player* (1992), was written by Newman.

American Beauty with Kevin Spacey and Annette Bening in the title roles, a film which has been subjected to numerous interpretations focusing on questions of sexuality, gender, or the suburban malaise, but not on the music. Newman's score uses a wide variety of instruments including xylophones, marimbas, bongos, cymbals, guitars, piano, banjo, detuned mandolin, or steel guitar.[7] It shifts from multilayered, hypnotically paced percussive sections to short melodic cues relying primarily on the piano, and it contrasts these minimalist passages with strategically placed and cleverly selected source music drawn primarily from rock songs and big band tunes, among them "All Along the Watchtower" (Bob Dylan), "All Right Now" (Free), "The Seeker" (The Who), "Call Me Irresponsible" (Bobby Darin), "Where Love Has Gone" (Bobby Darin), and "Something Grand" (Hilton Ruiz Ensemble).

This musical 'war' between Newman's minimalism and the gender-, class- and generation-specific popular songs becomes the structuring principle of the musical constellation in *American Beauty*. Yet the film is primarily seen to have established and legitimized the minimalist idiom as a forceful tradition in its own right. Ironically enough, however, it also seems to epitomize the difficulties of dealing with the aesthetic of minimal scores in the first place. As one critic pointed out: "There are, from time to time, film scores that are an absolutely perfect match for the content of their overarching production, but which, for whatever reason, largely fail when heard on album. *American Beauty* is perhaps one of the most vivid examples of such a score" (Clemmensen, "American Beauty"). Since the score did not include a theme song, this critic observed that, on its own, "it risks becoming a dull and unremarkable listening experience" (Clemmensen, "American Beauty").[8] The score's distance from a tra-

7 This list is taken from the analysis of Clemmensen, "American Beauty."

8 Clemmensen even suggests to disregard the score in favor of the collection of popular songs: "This is one of the rare occasions when a score collector might be better off purchasing the popular song album for *American Beauty* and hearing seven of the very best minutes of Newman's

dition of using theme songs and musical leitmotifs, then, was seen to be at the same time its greatest strength and, to some critics and collectors at least, a weakness of the movie.

Many of Newman's minimalist cues in *American Beauty* are used to situate and frame specific scenes such as the sequences where the young 'romantic' Ricky (Wes Bentley) is observing the sadness or beauty of everyday life through the viewfinder of his video camera, the satirically inflected attempts of Carolyn (Annette Bening) to succeed as a real estate agent, or the dream sequences in which Lester (Kevin Spacey) envisions the sexually tempting Angela (Mena Suvari) as an object of desire.[9] The source music, on the other hand, propels the narrative in a much more direct and visceral sense. When the Burnhams are listening to Peggy Lee's rendition of "Bali Ha'i" (1949) over dinner, the teenage daughter Jane (Thora Birch) objects to the music by calling it "elevator music," thus highlighting the fact that the question of which music should be played in which scene becomes a contentious issue, a culture war separating the characters along the lines of generation, gender, subcultural belonging, and musical taste—the scene is mirrored at a later stage, when the 'remasculated' Lester violently protests against Carolyn's preference for a style of music that he calls "Lawrence Welks shit."

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score along with a more enjoyable collection of songs" (Clemmensen, "American Beauty").

9 Following Erving Goffman and James Naremore, we can distinguish between two basic levels of performances in audiovisual narratives: first, acting in social situations to define, influence and control the situation; second, consciously shaping and presenting one's alignment in a scene as a way of reflecting on the scene and/or the strategic nature of performances (cf. Goffman 13–82, Naremore 9–96). Performances as bodily acts are based on the fuzziness of analogous forms of semiotic signification. Musical scores help to delimit and sharpen the possible meanings of gestures. To be sure, this is not the only, and probably not the most important, function of film music, but it represents what shall be called the musical framing or situatedness of performances in this essay. One of the initial questions may therefore be to what extent minimal music establishes a more open framing of performances, i.e. a more fluid and mobile form of situating actions and interactions.

American Beauty is thus characterized by various intricate combinations of music and performance defining the film's metaphorical projections that shall be discussed by concentrating on three key moments: the exposition, the middle section including the often discussed 'plastic bag sequence' and the concluding montage of Lester's death. One of Newman's most well-known cues titled "Dead Already" on the CD of the film's soundtrack appears right at the beginning in what shall subsequently be called the "exposition sequence."[10] Here exemplary everyday situations, played out visually, are combined with the hypnotically rhythmic marimba and percussion patterns at the musical level, and the voice-over of the main character Lester Burnham commenting retrospectively, from an 'impossible' postmortem position, on his earlier life. This intricate constellation, reminiscent of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), immediately establishes an atmosphere of distance and meta-fictional reflexivity on the character's lives and the performative dimension of their behavior, their feeling of having to act specific roles. It creates a heightened sense of witnessing what James Naremore has called a "performance within performance" (cf. 68–82), i.e. a representation of performative codes that are explicitly addressed at a higher, second level.

5. SETTING THE TONE

After a brief, videotaped prologue, in which Lester's daughter Jane comments disparagingly on him, the "exposition sequence" opens the narrative of *American Beauty*. An excellent post-classical example of providing the audience with a highly condensed exposition of story material, it defines the setting as white American suburbia and identifies the main characters: the angry teenager, the nagging wife, the middle-aged male "gigantic loser," and their neighborhood. It

10 All subsequent references to the titles of Newman's cues are taken from the CD, cf. "*American Beauty*. Original Motion Picture Score."

looks forward to the future death of Lester Burnham and it looks back, nostalgically, to a life when the couple was happier than in the present, thereby introducing key themes: the importance of outward appearances, the drive to succeed, sexual frustration, the routine of everyday life, and the determination to win back what was lost along the way. Moreover, the "exposition sequence" establishes the style and tone of the narration, a deadpan, ironical mode full of sophisticated observations and insights. Lester Burnham reflects upon himself and his family from the distance of postmortem hindsight, yet the tone of his voice has an informal, intimate quality, while voice-over and visual focalization together create a dense network of interrelations resulting from acts of observing and evaluating others, and likewise, of becoming their object of observation and evaluation.

In this intricate narrative as well as social network, the first and probably most famous cue of Thomas Newman's film score "Dead Already" sets in with a simple pattern of three diatonic harmonies played by marimba. The jazzy pattern is repeated a number of times, but it is clearly a repetition with a difference as the rhythm is picking up speed and new instruments as well as sounds are added. Closely aligned with the action, the music helps to punctuate and structure the scenes and the voice-over. Yet its aesthetic form also shares elements with the action. Its sense of repetition points to the routine and everydayness of getting ready to go to work, while its lack of complex melodies or leitmotif-like themes establishes a sense of ordinariness. Although this becomes clearer as the narrative unfolds, at this early point in the story the music already interacts with the visual scenes and the voice-over by introducing the rhythm of life's small steps, repetitions, and variations in an abstract, yet playful form. In this opening sequence, then, the music establishes two core functions of Newman's score in the film as a whole. First, in a quickly changing, elliptically condensed array of scenes and locations, minimal music

establishes a sense of continuity.[11] Second, it signifies at the level of metaphor. It helps to create the image of a transindividual community, a vision of interconnectedness that evokes and eventually attempts to uphold the ideal of communal belonging.

At this early point in the story, however, the visionary connotations of the minimalist cues are not yet evident. Rather, *American Beauty* sets out as a social satire on the aspirations and self-delusions of the white, suburban middle-class that permeate the spheres of family, work, and sexuality. It registers a profound feeling of frustration and disappointment at the core of this lifestyle and tells the story of this crisis through Lester Burnham's "attempt to recapture his youth, his freedom from authority, and his sexual attractiveness" (McKittrick 5). Thematically and musically, Lester's energies are channeled in two opposite directions: the nostalgia of a lost past full of promise and vitality, and the desire generated by the spectacular fantasy of a sexual encounter with his daughter's friend Angela. Both directions are fuelled by the longing for a different life built on the notion of innocence—the innocence of youth not yet corrupted by the pressures of adulthood, and the (presumed) innocence of a precocious sexuality.[12]

American Beauty may therefore be seen not just as a social satire but also as a melodrama centering on Lester's sense of victimization—a melodrama of white middle-class masculinity.[13] In the sphere of work Lester feels victimized as a 'whore' for the advertising business and blackmails his way into a severance package that

11 This function of creating continuity is, of course, not unique to minimal music but a very common and traditional way of combining different styles of music with visual sequences (cf. Cooke, "Film Music").

12 On the ambiguous implications of Lester's fantasy transgressing the taboos of incest and pedophilia, cf. McKittrick; Karlyn.

13 As numerous critics have pointed out, the film participates in the 'crisis of white masculinity' discourse characteristic of American cinema in the 1990s (cf. Karlyn; Nungesser). Focusing on questions of religious ecstasy, Leonard discusses *American Beauty* and its relation to the history of melodrama. For a more extended discussion of the melodramatic mode and its relation to American cinema in the 1990s, cf. Decker.

is based on a fictitious sexual harassment charge for which he fantasizes himself as the victim of forced homosexual acts. At home Lester regresses to a stage of adolescent behavior reminiscent of the rebellious counterculture of the late 1960s, yet this behavior does not lead to his liberation, it merely speeds up his decline. After losing his job, Lester continues to follow a logic of self-abasement by seeking a job with the least amount of responsibility—selling burgers in a fast-food chain. Self-abasement and a sense of humiliation, then, underlie many scenes related to work but also to sexuality. In the "exposition sequence" Lester is seen masturbating in the shower, later, during one of his incestuous fantasies, his wife catches him masturbating in bed. Humiliating revelations such as this and the frustration of being an object of ridicule for young women mark him as sexually inadequate and incapable of prevailing in the power relations of gender.

The final irony for Lester is that, even though he is clearly coded as heterosexual, he is mistaken for being homosexual. His refusal to reciprocate the advances of the "repressed homosexual" (McKittrick 5) Colonel Fitts (Chris Cooper) seals the fate of his death. Lester has to die as a stand-in for the Colonel's self-hatred and his shame of having been discovered as a 'faggot-hating' homosexual.[14] Clever and sensitive as Lester's meta-fictional observations and comments are from the first moments of the "exposition sequence" onwards, he is singled out as the pathetic victim of a hostile and corrupting workplace, the power of women, and the lethal consequences of masculine aggression. If Newman's "Dead Already" cue, relying on the repetition and variation of rhythmically dense but simple melodious patterns, conjures up an egalitarian ethos of democratic cultures,

14 Potkay observes that the character of Colonel Fitts plays on "'suburban gothic' clichés" (84); however, the question of homosexual relations, including homosexual desire and incest, has been discussed as a marginalized, yet crucial aspect of *American Beauty* complementing questions of heteronormativity (cf. McKittrick; Karlyn). In a Lacanian reading, Hausmann critiques the film for its "denial of Otherness in homoerotic and homosexual relations" (115).

treating every character with the same kind of detached compassion and respect, the malaise at the heart of *American Beauty*'s suburban culture is the relentless production of differences in the spheres of work, gender, and sexuality. While this is only alluded to in the "exposition sequence," it takes center stage as the film develops and begins to inform the musical 'war' between minimalist cues and popular songs. One sequence from the middle of the film featuring the rock song "American Woman" may serve as a case in point for how popular songs support the production of cultural hierarchies and how, following suggestions by Adorno and Eisler, they gain their force by drawing on music's power to animate the image and, by implication, the body.

6. ANIMATING THE BODY

In *Composing for the Films*, Adorno and Eisler argue that, in the cinema, images and music had been brought together through technology, not through an intrinsic logic of their respective and distinctive developments. This premise is crucial for them to claim that, at heart, the combination of images and music is antithetical and should not be masked by an illusion of unity. Accordingly, one of the 'magical' functions of music has been to animate the images, which, on their own, appear to be ghost-like—at the same time "living and nonliving" (75). Due to this ghost-like status, Adorno and Eisler conclude, music is needed to make the images come alive:

> The photographed picture as such lacks motivation for movement; only indirectly do we realize that the pictures are in motion, that the frozen replica of external reality has suddenly been endowed with the spontaneity that it was deprived of by its fixation, and that something petrified is manifesting a kind of life of its own. At this point music intervenes, supplying momentum, muscular energy, a sense of corporeity, as it were. (78)

This notion of music being a "stimulus of motion, not a reduplication of motion" (78) points to the unique role of music helping to animate visual sequences that, by themselves, appear to be overdetermined by the markings of technological reproduction. Put differently, in the relational model of Adorno and Eisler bodily gestures are not expressed by music but rather activated or justified through the music (cf. 78). This potential of activating movement, of making the images more animated, more 'alive' is shared by the music in *American Beauty*. Pop and rock songs as source music not only have a special capacity to capture the nostalgic memory of a specific historical period, they also trigger an intensified bodily reaction.[15] They animate the bodies and initiate passionate, explicitly theatrical or posed actions. In short, they highlight the performative character of animated bodies and thus raise awareness for the presentation of a 'performance within performance.'

This becomes most obvious in the "'American Woman' sequence" which is placed roughly in the middle of the film and marks a major turning point in the story. Lester Burnham changes from being a passive "loser" and "whore for the advertising industry" to becoming an active agent, if mainly regressing to attitudes of independence and toughness modeled on his adolescence. Carolyn, on the other hand, begins an affair with Buddy Kane (Peter Gallagher), the King of Real Estate. While Lester starts working out to enhance his body shape, she is taking shooting lessons. Both seem to be getting ready for a final confrontation that is also played out at the level of diegetic music. In her car, Carolyn sings along to the big band music of Bobby Darin, while Lester seems to relish the aggressive power of "American Woman" by The Guess Who from 1970, a song based on heavy drums, bass and rock guitar, a simple three-chord riff and high-pitched vocals. The misogynist lyrics (written, albeit, by a Canadian band) echo the allegorical tone of the film's title *American Beauty* by

15 On the history of pop music and film cf. Cooke, *History* 396–421 and Lack 213–23.

channeling Lester's aggressive energies not just against his wife but rather against the kind of emasculating power that Carolyn represents to him.[16]

In this way, the presence of generation-specific source music and the nostalgic desire it evokes in *American Beauty* becomes an important instance of framing and situating performances by musical means. As Lester sings along to "American Woman" at the top of his lungs, the irresistible pull of the music triggers the body's desire to perform, culminating in his mimicking of the lead guitar solo and thus highlighting the 'performance within performance' mode. Source music in *American Beauty* is often used in this way like a classical leitmotif to identify and flesh out the characters, yet due to its musical characteristics, in particular its reliance on clichés as well as its time and technology-bound sound design, it seems to narrow the characters down, to make them less rather than more complex. Source music is thus needed to evoke the nostalgia of the character's lost past, but it also represents the nightmare of a musical memory perpetually arrested in a kind of fake rebellion.

Both forms of this 'rebellion' encoded by the diegetic music—Lester's retreat to adolescent masculinity and Carolyn's stylized image of toughness and commercial success—are ultimately doomed

16 In this sense, the female characters in *American Beauty*, though anchored in the fictional universe of white middle-class suburbia, represent allegories of femininity at a higher level. Indeed, "American Beauty"—the name of a rose—is one of the most conventional symbols of femininity that visually links both, the young woman and the middle-aged wife, turning them into ideologically coded allegories of 'America': on the one hand, the young, seductive all-American girl Angela, Lester's object of desire who turns out to be a virgin, and on the other, the domineering, emasculating wife and aggressive business woman Carolyn. Envisioned and narrated by Lester, both allegories are imaginary objects, one of desire, the other of fear, created to mask his self-loathing and feeling of impotence. Cf. Karlyn for a critique of Carolyn as the 'castrating mother' (82–85). Karlyn comments pointedly on the final scene between Lester and Angela: "*American Beauty* tells the nymphet's story as male fantasy: she exists for the man, the power she holds over him is illusory, and under the surface of her assertiveness or sexual forwardness is a helpless little girl" (87).

to failure. Foreshadowing this outcome, their musical worlds, made up of his rock tunes and her big band music, are both presented as another version of entrapment. Just as Lester and Carolyn, as representatives of a general lifestyle, are locked in their cars, suburban houses and gardens, the musical subcultures to which they retreat are one more indication of their mental and emotional limits. Thus, source music in *American Beauty* is a symbol of imprisonment, while the way out lies in Thomas Newman's nondiegetic minimal cues. In the "'American Woman' sequence" the rock music is juxtaposed with the "Lunch with the King" cue, in which small, simple melodious piano parts are built on a rhythmic foundation of bongos and other percussive instruments. With ease and grace the cue connects all scenes: Lester's "I'm just an ordinary guy with nothing to lose" stance, Buddy's advice "to project at all times an image of success," Ricky's filming of a dead bird because he thinks it's beautiful, and, finally, Carolyn's pleasure of "getting nailed by the King". As with the scenes at the beginning, the minimal cues create a sense of temporal continuity, yet they also establish more subtle and complex reverberations among the scenes. In their movement from repetition to variation, from simple patterns to surprising shifts and sounds, they manage to bridge and connect what seems to be divisive and fragmented at the level of source music, establishing a higher, transindividual notion of connectedness and attachment that will only be fully realized by the characters at the moment of irrevocable loss—the concluding sequence of Lester's death and the memories as well as reactions it evokes.

7. AURAL VISIONS OF TRANSCENDENCE

In contrast to the limitations of popular music and to the cultural distinctions of class, gender, race, or taste that it produces, minimal music in *American Beauty* may be seen as a signifier of the film's imagined American community. Its metaphorical implications as well as musical connotations help to project the desire and nostalgic longing

for a different, better, more beautiful and harmonious America at the heart of the film. If, following Nicholas Cook's suggestion, an enabling similarity between music and pictures is needed to speak of metaphorical cross-media references, then in *American Beauty* it seems to lie in a notion of equality *vis-à-vis* the rigid and destructive hierarchies of gender, work, and age. In this sense, the metaphorical implications of minimalism are a leveled musical playing field, its repetitive character, the horizontal, spatial organization of its rhythms, and cues and, finally, a dehierarchized yet dynamic overall structure full of internal, relational tensions. To be sure, these musical meanings are only realized in the hybrid combination of music and images. Yet in the case of *American Beauty*, the indeterminacy or openness of minimal music becomes the precondition for a vision of transcendence that goes beyond the realm of the visible to privilege the sound of the human voice and the connotations of a simplified yet richly suggestive musical universe.

Two key sequences establish the importance of musical minimalism for this visionary power; in one (placed almost immediately after the "'American Woman' sequence"), Ricky shows Jane his most precious videotape, a plastic bag circling in the air together with dead leaves against the background of a red brick wall; in the other (at the end of the film), Lester is shot, his voice-over sets in and he recalls the images and memories from the moment of his death, while it is simultaneously revealed who shot him. In the first sequence, as Ricky and Jane are staring at the low-resolution video image of the dancing plastic bag, Ricky describes the moment as the epiphany of an "entire life behind things" with a "benevolent force" signaling to him not to be afraid. Like other videotaped scenes recorded by Ricky to be able to 'remember,' the plastic bag alludes to, but does not reveal the overpowering "beauty in the world" that he confesses to feeling at times. In the final sequence of Lester's death, both the images of the circling plastic bag as well as the confession to a jubilant feeling of beauty are echoed in Lester's recollections, thereby linking his quest for happiness with the sensitivity and joy of the younger, romantic outsiders

Ricky and Jane.[17] Indeed, since the dancing plastic bag is included in Lester's visual memories even though he has not *seen* the videotape before, the film leaves behind notions of plausibility to invoke the fantasy of transgenerational connections and to conjure up a transcendent vision of community.

Scholars commenting on this vision have critiqued the notion of transcendence in *American Beauty* as a "New Age spirituality" (Karlyn 78). Others have seen it more positively as a "feeling of interconnectedness" (Leonard 825) that leads up to "a transcendent meta-narrative of cosmic order and moral justice [...]" (Leonard 836). Similarly, Lester's final thoughts are seen to share a romantic, Wordsworthian vision of beauty and joy that communicates the lesson "of seeing one's relation to the wider circles that radiate outward from one's own egocentric sphere" (Potkay 84). Spirituality, interconnectedness, joy as "a de-individuating passion" (Potkay 78)—the final moments of *American Beauty* zooming out of middle-class suburbia seem to suggest the overcoming of the rampant, destructive individualism at the heart of the film, a shift from disappointment and depression to acceptance and joy. And yet, these readings fail to acknowledge some of the ambiguities inherent in the ending, the most obvious being that the vision of transcendence is not realized at the visual level but rather at the level of the music.

If the sequences of Ricky's videotape and Lester's recollections are connected through the images of the revolving plastic bag and the overpowering feeling of beauty, they are also linked through Newman's cue "American Beauty" playing alongside the videotape of the plastic bag and reappearing, in a slightly reworked and extended version, as "Any Other Name" at the end of the film.[18] At its core, the

17 Cf. Karlyn on the strategies of mirroring and pairing different characters in *American Beauty*.

18 As one element of this reworking, the piano parts intersperse and echo the distinctive marimba pattern from the initial "exposition sequence" in subdued and less rhythmical but still recognizable form (cf. the cue "Blood Red" on "*American Beauty*. Original Motion Picture Score").

cue consists of a simple diatonic six note melody in C sharp major, built on the foundation of the tonic C sharp in low strings (or synthesizers) and moving in half and full notes around the dominant G sharp at its center. It is played, softly, on the piano and eschews the rhythmic percussiveness of the earlier cues. Yet it still moves with rhythmic and melodious variations along the basic circular pattern shifting the emphasis from one note to the next, adding and dropping variations, developing in an almost improvisational manner. Together with Ricky's comments on the epiphany-like moment of watching the revolving plastic bag, the "American Beauty" cue creates its own pattern of moving around in circles but it clearly projects the beauty of the "life behind things" that Ricky discovered and that the blurry images of the videotape recall but fail to reveal. It is the beauty of simplicity and of a repetition with a difference that both the bag as an indexical sign of the wind and the animated gestures of musical variations share—the breath of life.

In Lester's final montage of mnemonic images and scenes, the plastic bag sequence similarly emphasizes the visual act of remembering and of discovering beauty. Yet even though the cinematic quality of Lester's visual memories—the boy lying on the grass, his grandmother's hands, his daughter, his wife—surpasses the video footage in visual detail and splendor, they, too, in the end do not reveal the 'life behind things.' Rather, relying on the aesthetics of advertising cinematography, they primarily offer the superficial beauty of 'pretty images,' or the nostalgic black-and-white glimpses of the past. The powerful vision of transcendence, of going beyond the confines and entrapments of the material world, of being able to experience beauty and joy, then, is not realized at the level of visuality, it manifests itself at the aural level of Newman's minimal music.

While the reworked "American Beauty" cue reappears at the end, Lester's voice-over recounts that it is sometimes too much for him to *see* all the beauty at once. As his visual sense overloads, he stops trying to hold onto his impressions: "And then it flows through me like rain and I can't feel anything but gratitude for every single moment

of my stupid little life." Like Ricky's epiphany of the wind animating an inanimate object of human waste, Lester at this point expresses the joy of being transfused by rain water, thereby linking beauty with nature and its corporeal experience. If beauty and transcendence are thus partially placed into a Romantic tradition, the final metaphor of beauty flowing through the body like rain may also be read as the experience of a musical piece. In this sense, the vision of beauty at the brink of death, unfathomable as it ultimately may be, is displaced from visuality to aurality, from images to music where it does not manifest itself as cognitive possession but as corporeal animation. With Thomas Newman's minimalist cues, this experience revolves around simplicity and repetition, variation and interconnectedness to project a vision of beauty and community that builds on internal tensions but, by taking improvisational turns, eventually gives equal value and weight to its individual musical elements.

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MUSIC AND CIRCULAR NARRATION IN JIM JARMUSCH'S *PERMANENT VACATION*

Benedikt Feiten

At the beginning of the play "God, A Play" (1975) by Woody Allen, two characters named Writer and Actor hold a conversation about the play in whose world they are situated. Writer complains about having written a play without a beginning, a complaint Actor dismisses as absurd. "Every play must have a beginning, middle, and end," he says, and gives the reason: "Because everything in nature has a beginning, middle, and end." Writer objects: "What about a circle?" After a short reflection, Actor admits: "Okay…A circle has no beginning, middle, or end—but they're not much fun either" (Allen 132).

Actor's notion of circularity as boring is often perceptible in an entertainment culture whose stories have traditionally been told, received and discussed in terms of development and dramatic tension. The filmmaker Harmony Korine, whose experimental work relies more on non-linear, motivic rhythms than on plot, made David Letterman's audience burst into laughter when he quoted Jean-Luc Godard in an interview with Letterman in 1997: "In every movie there needs to be a beginning, middle and an end, but just not in that order." Of course the audience's reaction in a late-night television show should not be overstated, but it still reflects how forms of storytelling that do not conform to conventional plots with chronological and causal structures are perceived as oddities.

Judgments of Jim Jarmusch's films as circular, repetitive and thus "not much fun" recur throughout the criticism of his films. It has often been noted that characters lack clear ambitions and psychological motivations, and that the causes for plot events remain blurry. The apparent lack of events in Jarmusch's films raises suspicions about his aesthetic practice on many levels. For example, Klaus Walter comments upon the intertextuality of Jarmusch's films and speculates that it serves to build a second level of references that entertains the

audience, if it is bored by the "actual film" (cf. 161; my translation). Even if Walter's critique remains vague, it points to the problem of how to approach Jarmusch's films—not only to consider their deviations from conventional narratives but to unmask the way they tell their stories and describe what constitutes the "actual films" of Jim Jarmusch. The aim of this essay is to explore the role of gamelan music in the circular narration of Jarmusch's debut film *Permanent Vacation* (1980). First, I contextualize Jarmusch's style and use of music in independent film and conventional/illusionist and subversive/self-reflexive narration. Then, I bring aesthetic principles related to circular narration to a reading of *Permanent Vacation*'s gamelan music from different perspectives (musical minimalism, visual art and literature). By doing so, I demonstrate that in its use of gamelan music *Permanent Vacation* remodels the leitmotif for a narrativity that moves against progress and illusion and creates a sphere with a latent tension where meaning is found in nuances. I also hope that, even though this approach cannot offer an exhaustive theory, it can open up the treatment of circular narrations as anti- or unconventional to a more constructive understanding of the potentials of that type of storytelling.

Jim Jarmusch's films are mainly perceived and analyzed as alternative projects to the narrations of Hollywood cinema. Robin Wood is one of many film scholars making this argument when he appreciates Jarmusch in *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan…and Beyond* as an eminent opponent to Hollywood cinema: "He is one of the only contemporary American filmmakers of consistent and distinguished achievement who has dared to say a resounding No! to contemporary America" (342). And yet the question remains which aesthetic and narrative potentials Jarmusch can draw from his stance as independent filmmaker. As Oliver Schindler notes, creative control is crucial for film auteurs to develop a distinct style (cf. 16). Independent auteur Jarmusch has an unusually high degree of creative control and even owns the negatives of his films (cf. Eue 104; Merritt 360). This allows for an understanding and analysis of his films as resulting

from genuine artistic decisions. For Greg Merritt, Jarmusch has succeeded in creating his "own distinct style—a cinematic language of slow rhythms, minimalist camerawork, and deadpan dialogue" (360).

Indeed, intertextuality is a decisive part of that style. A view that is, like Walter's, primarily concerned with the referential level of Jarmusch's films, however, fails to recognize their narrativity. Especially the rhythmic repetitions of elements that are playfully modified throughout the films form an important narrative structure strongly supported by music. The basic principles of this aesthetic are already present in Jim Jarmusch's debut film *Permanent Vacation*.

Permanent Vacation's storyline portrays the aimless wanderings of its protagonist, Allie, through the derelict spaces of New York. "Everyone is alone," he says, "that's why I'm just drifting." Backyards, abandoned alleys, Allie's sparsely furnished apartment and a sanatorium his mother is housed in picture a dismal and empty urban landscape. Allie relates to these surroundings merely *en passant*. He has random encounters with other outsiders, all of whom exhibit some form of estranged subjectivity: a veteran is hiding in an abandoned building, a crazy lady sings a Spanish song in an alley, a black man tells Allie a joke, and in the final scene, right before Allie leaves the city, he meets a young Frenchman who just arrived in New York and is depicted as Allie's counterpart. As this brief summary suggests, *Permanent Vacation*'s plot does not offer much character motivation and development or conflict structures. Allie's conclusion at the end of the film laconically exaggerates this refusal: "There is nothing that can be explained, and that is what I was trying to explain in the first place." For Tina Hedwig Kaiser the film's narrative mode already takes boredom and lack of motivation into account (cf. 103). It is no surprise that what Jarmusch's films deny and omit is often considered more striking than what they show.

In its search for alternative narrations, *Permanent Vacation* is of course not singular. The independent film of the 1980s drew heavily on New Hollywood cinema and other national cinemas of the 1970s,

especially the French New Wave of the late 1950s and 1960s. Both these movements, in turn, had drawn on, remodeled and critiqued the narrative modes of classical Hollywood cinema, and Hollywood too has always been constantly reinventing itself. The 1990s would see an international trend of commercially successful and critically acclaimed films experimenting with narration, time and causality—a trend Eleftheria Thanouli calls "post-classical cinema." In *Narrative Across Media,* Marie-Laure Ryan identifies three basic characteristics of narrativity which constitute a helpful starting point for contextualizing *Permanent Vacation* in narrative conventions: first, a "narrative text must create a world and populate it with characters and objects." Second, this world must "undergo changes of state [that] create a temporal dimension and place the narrative world in the flux of history." Third, the text has to "allow the reconstruction of an interpretative network of goals, plans, causal relations, and psychological motivations [that] gives coherence and intelligibility to the physical events and turns them into a plot" (8–9).

While the first condition clearly applies to *Permanent Vacation,* there is no such congruence regarding the second and third criteria. The film deals differently with changes of state (criterion 2), as it shows but does not use them to locate the narration in time. Instead, its circularity undercuts chronological order. The "accidents" that prompt changes are not much more than everyday encounters whose order seems arbitrary. Even though the audience can see Allie's aimless wanderings as "deliberate human actions," it remains unclear why he decides to visit his mother, for instance. This closely relates to the "interpretative network" criterion 3 asks for. While the reconstruction of such a network is possible for the viewer of *Permanent Vacation,* the movie's narration constantly undermines coherence. It is an example of what David Bordwell in his influential book *Narration in the Fiction Film* calls "art-cinema narration" (205). Bordwell understands episodic forms of narration in art cinema as alternatives to a traditional dramatic structure. He sees intentional gaps, uncertain character motivations and erratic story lines—all of

which are overtly present in *Permanent Vacation*—as an alternative to classic narration (cf. 205–07), which creates development through distinct causal and temporal arrangements moving towards a coherent conclusion. As an art film, *Permanent Vacation* composes a more complex world view which incorporates contradictions and uncertainties in its plot events and its characters' psychological motivations. Reflexivity is another subversive narrative tradition both art film and Jarmusch's auteur style are related to. It is present in many films of the French New Wave but is not a crucial part of post-classical storytelling. Robert Stam defines reflexivity as "the process by which texts [...] foreground their own production, their authorship, their intertextual influences, their reception, or their enunciation" (xiii). It is a strategy directed against the illusion promoted by the overwhelming aesthetics of Hollywood cinema. Werner Wolf sums up key characteristics of aesthetic illusion as follows:

> [Aesthetic illusion] adheres to fundamental commonsensical concepts (e.g. to the stability of logical hierarchies and identity, and to the absence of unresolvable contradictions) and [...] is structured according to general assumptions on which perception is based (such as the linearity of time, the consistency of space, the existence of causality, the difference between reality and fiction, etc.). (45)

The film music of classical narration tends to support this illusionistic unity. It often bridges temporal and spatial gaps and omissions in montage sequences and illustrates place and time of a fictional world through stereotyping (cf. Larsen 208–10). Jarmusch's film music, by contrast, is often self-reflexive. It accentuates its own artificiality and undermines such an illusionistic sense of unity.

This instability is evident from the very beginning of *Permanent Vacation*. The first scene of the film shows passersby on a busy sidewalk in New York City. A saxophone can be heard playing tentative, fragmentary riffs that seem to be searching for a melody, while the corresponding musician stands near the crowd on a street corner.

The movements of the crowd are shown in slow motion but music and background noise are not slowed down, thus contrasting the temporality of the image with that of the music. Roman Mauer writes that this technique serves to make the scene seem less real (cf. 18). However, image and sound are not disconnected completely. We hear snippets of talk, footsteps and traffic noise; we hear what the image would have us expect. As the saxophone player appears a second time and from a shorter distance, his music sounds louder than before, so that the camera's approaching movement is supported by the sound layer. This creates a sense of tension: the scene introduces a subjective perspective expressed by the spatiality of image and sound. At the same time the scene evokes friction by means of the slow-motion effect which undermines a coherent subjective position. This first scene already disrupts the conventional unity of sound, space and time, thereby destabilizing several narrative conventions. The position of the music remains unclear. At the same time it resides within and outside of the image: discernible sounds fit with the images of the musician and the crowd. But the sound does not fit the image's temporal progression. Consequently, the scene is anti-illusionist, as it breaks "the imaginary occupying of a position within the represented world," which Wolf sees as central to illusionist recentering (12).

The sequence anticipates Allie's subjective perspective, which absorbs spaces and sounds in passing and never arrives at a spatially or temporally stable position. However, the film's protagonist has not yet been introduced at that moment, so even if the exposition hints to Allie's perception pattern of spatial, temporal and acoustic disorientation, it does so in his absence. This introductory theme of dislocation is also present in the saxophone music: the man with a red hat playing the saxophone in this scene is an unknown actor and not yet John Lurie, the saxophone player who composed and recorded the music and who will appear as a street musician in later scenes.

Thus, subjectivity in *Permanent Vacation* does not presuppose Allie's physical presence; rather, the whole fictional reality is shown

as being shaped by Allie's memory and perception, a perception that has lost its grasp on time and space. Allies first words in the movie are indicative of this: "So here I am now, in a place, where I don't even understand their language. But it doesn't matter: strangers are always just strangers. This story is about how I came from there to here, or maybe I should say, from here to here." The words correspond to the dislocation established through the acoustic and visual layers of the film. Allie is saying those words after he has left New York and has emigrated to Paris (his departure is shown at the end of the movie). So the story is not about how Allie leaves New York for Paris, but rather about a circular movement "from here to here," with Allie remaining a stranger throughout. This circularity is also reflected on a temporal level: his exile in Paris is at the same time the beginning and the end of the story.

While the circularity of *Permanent Vacation* is reflexive in that it makes its own structures overtly visible and audible, it is also part of a narrative space that contains constructive oppositions. In *Permanent Vacation*, story, visuality and music establish a rhythm of recurring elements in an ongoing flow of variations with no discernible direction and little development. From the interplay of transitory sequences and calm spaces in *Permanent Vacation* to the rhythmic intertextuality of sampling in *Ghost Dog*, Jarmusch's films rely on repetitions that generate a continuous and contemplative flow. On the level of plot, the most striking repetitions in *Permanent Vacation* are Allie's strolls, his frequent encounters with other outsiders, and the off-narration at the beginning and end of the film. On the visual level, the most striking repetitions are Allie's movements through urban landscapes, which the camera captures in asymmetric compositions. The film music is situated on two main levels: John Lurie's saxophone improvisations which a musician (portrayed by Lurie himself) plays intradiegetically most of the time,[1] and Javanese gamelan music that

1 An important exception is the film's ending when Allie's ship moves slowly away from the skyline of New York and the saxophone can be heard with no diegetic source.

is extradiegetic and for the most part connected to Allie's wanderings. While repetition and variation are not exclusive to Jarmusch's films in particular, or to independent film as a genre, as well as to circular narration more generally, the difference in how music is employed in the circular narration of *Permanent Vacation* lies in the *nature* of the repetitions. In the film, variations refer back to a common motif, but this motif does not undergo a more or less linear transformation in its different variations. There is little or no development in any of the aforementioned examples of repetition. Thus, circular narration as it is employed by Jarmusch undercuts causal and temporal orders by establishing a rhythm of recurring elements that do not develop continuously. Beginning and end do not protrude in the flow of encounters and partings in the film's narration. In fact, the end is at the same time a new beginning for Allie in Paris and for the young Frenchman he meets, who has just arrived in New York. The fathoming of subtle atmospheric changes through different similar scenes works correspondingly in music, visuality and plot. Chance encounters and conversations set anchor points in between.

The leitmotif is the most important repetitive structure in most film scores. *Permanent Vacation* remodels film music's central narrative device for its mode of circular narration. Leitmotifs function on basic premises that Timothy Scheurer describes as follows: "In the way that they are repeated in a score, motifs, topics and gestures [become] elements that are often characterized and deemed significant to the narrative by merit of their repetition or their *avant/après* placement in the text" (24). The leitmotif thus is central to the basic function of film music, according to Peter Larsen: "The task of film music is to transform a stream of fragmentary, visual and auditive information into a cohesive whole, into a perceptual *Gestalt*" (217). This task is often supplemented by film music's function of transmitting meaning and emotion, which are not preexisting—Anahid Kassabian rightfully notes that "we learn through exposure what a given tempo, series of notes, key time signatures, rhythm, volume and orchestration are meant to signify" (23). However, there

is virtually no such history of exposure and learning in the case of gamelan music in fiction film, so that the audience's attention shifts from the music's meaning to its structure.

Whereas gamelan has no melody in a Western classical sense, it inherits rhythmic and tonal structures that come into dialogue through different instruments. Ben Brinner describes those cross-references as "a highly variegated flow of sound in which the individual strands, characterized by particular idioms linked to specific instruments, are nonetheless closely linked to another" (582). Those strands differ in tempo, register and timbre, and the "melodic strands progress from one main pitch to the next, each of these goal tones *(sèlèh)* serving as a brief point of rest or arrival" (Brinner 582). This network of relations within gamelan mirrors the inner rhythmic structures of *Permanent Vacation.* When we imagine aforementioned motifs as different strands proceeding at different speed, this illustration should help understand how gamelan corresponds to structures of the whole film:

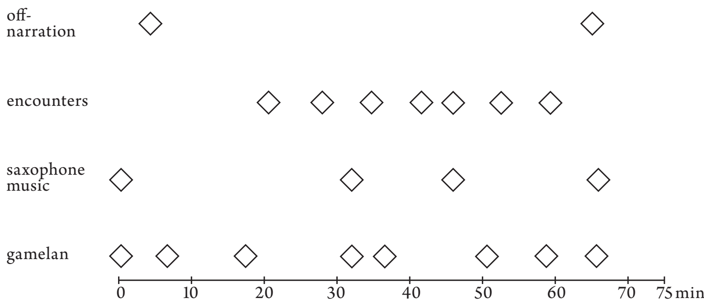

Fig. 1 – Repetition of different themes in Permanent Vacation

Such a structure of the repetition of different themes could be extracted from almost any classical narration and its respective film music. Yet in classical narration and film music the leitmotif is not only expected to provide coherence but also to support development.

Scholars like Peter Larsen and Gregg Redner point to film music's roots in Western classical music, which has goal-directedness as major basic characteristic. Larsen writes:

> The structuring of the sound material with the aid of formal repetitions and variations creates an expectation of a 'continuation' that drives the music forwards, while the dissonances, with their establishing of harmonic tension and their promise of later dissolution and resolution, give the forward movement a direction, a goal. (206)

In reference to Ryan's categories, Emma Kafalenos formulates the narrative qualities of music in a way that explains quite well how development is one of the major paradigms of conventional music:

> Most music moves in ways nearly everyone hears as changes of state (condition 2): from one rhythmic pattern to another, theme to theme, fast to slow, major to minor, tonality to tonality. Moreover, listeners need not ascribe these changes of state (or the events that introduce the changes) to anthropomorphic agents to (re)construct patterns of goals and successes, networks of causal relations (condition 3); these are patterns that trained listeners will agree (in broadest terms and, of course, with variation) that they hear. (279)

Clearly, there is a relation between narratives relying on development and the music they use. Gamelan in *Permanent Vacation* also functions according to the conventions of supporting the image and supporting the narration. But the ways in which it does so are different because the narration as a whole works differently. The gamelan music used in *Permanent Vacation* does not move towards dissolution or a goal, and it does not establish harmonic tensions waiting for dissolution. As the words "most music" at the beginning of Kafalenos's quote already reveal, her description is relative. Not all music builds causal relations and moves through contexts describable in terms of rhythmic, harmonic or tonal change. Gamelan evades

such an approach, and later examples from the work of Jarmusch do so, too: for example, John Lurie's soundtrack to *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984), the sample-based hip hop in *Ghost Dog* (1999), and Mulatu Astatké's Ethiopian jazz music in *Broken Flowers* (2005) all have in common that rhythmic and motivic structures are repeated again and again while undergoing only subtle changes. Greg M. Smith undertakes a rare effort to approach Jarmusch's film music through the arrangements of its themes. He shows how the leitmotif of *Stranger Than Paradise* can indicate moments as emotional by means of denser cuing, even though the theme itself does not develop (cf. 59). The temporal relationship between the instances is crucial in that approach. As we can see above in Fig. 1, even though *Permanent Vacation* is narrated at a slow pace and musical themes are not developed, the placement of encounters, saxophone music and gamelan becomes denser towards the end, creating a subtle sense of tension.

The most striking returning element in this circularity is gamelan music. It is closely linked to Allie's habit of roaming without clearly formulated departures, goals or directions. When Allie enters the frame for the first time, this also marks the first time gamelan music blends with the distant traffic noise. In the course of the film, gamelan appears especially when Allie moves through urban spaces, or in scenes of (relatively) high emotional density. The introductory sequence slowed down the visual track of passersby on a New York sideway, and the gamelan sounds we hear later are slowed down electronically (cf. Worthmann 177, Suárez 23), so that the musical track does not merely support the visual track but both relate to each other and interweave their rhythms on an equal level. Juan Suárez posits that gamelan expresses a subliminal unease that drives Allie's restless roaming (cf. 23). At the same time it demands an attentive listening mode. Gamelan in Java is played in rituals for hours and even days, putting musicians and listeners in a trance. For Suárez it is

> an ongoing flow without accents, identifiable melody or structure, or beginning or end. It is an unbound aural landscape which solicits a form of listening different from the structure-oriented focus demanded by western traditional music. Here one listens instead for atmosphere and for the subtle microtonal shifts, much richer and more nuanced than those allowed by the standard western scale. (23–24)

This dense flow provides a more fruitful approach to *Permanent Vacation* than most film music discourse, which is (for its focus on development) of limited use for analyzing repetitions in circular narrations. Therefore, the following paragraphs will bring in perspectives from different (but related) artistic procedures to a reading of the film music and narration.

The musical and visual structure and rhythm in Jarmusch's narration relies on strong similarities between repeated elements. This connects it to other artistic projects where nuances of difference are emphasized in serial repetition. Sandro Zanetti explores similar techniques in varied art forms which foreground subtle changes through constructing strong analogical relationships. He draws a line from Marcel Duchamp's and Andy Warhol's graphic reproductions to musical styles like minimal music in the 1960s and electronic music. For Zanetti, those procedures emphasize small deviations in their repetitions through the stability of their basic characteristics (cf. 127). Not only camera movement, visual composition, dialogue and narrative parts but also the music works according to this principle in *Permanent Vacation*. As the gamelan motifs undergo very slight changes throughout the film, those minute variations and their placement in the film become crucial. For instance, when Allie decides to leave the country, the music is ever so slightly faster than in the rest of the film. As much of the material is consistent, the changes become more important and the music can function by very slight variations that demand careful reception.

Suárez considers the influence of gamelan on Debussy and contemporary experimental music, and he concludes that gamelan "with

its roundabout evocations of Cage, Reich, and Riley and its non-narrative drift, makes sense as a minimalistic gesture and reveals Jarmusch's indebtedness to this aesthetic" (24). The functions of musical minimalism in film—because of its structural similarity to gamelan—allow for insights into how gamelan affects *Permanent Vacation*. Pwyll ap Siôn and Tristian Evans consider minimalistic music as especially autonomous in relation to the image: "A dialogue or discourse is set up between the two elements, broadly based on the principle of complementation, but one which allows for—indeed, may even encourage—opposition or parallelism, rather than integration" (671). Consequently, the use of minimalist music moves away from the film music paradigm Gorbman famously coined as "unheard melodies" in her study of that title and becomes part of a reflexive strategy that lays open the synthesis of image and sound. Ap Siôn and Evans explicitly consider minimalistic music an opponent to the leitmotifs and themes of narrative film music, as minimalism does not share their semiotic mode (cf. 680).[2] Repetitive structures in minimal music in their view do not, in themselves, imply narrative progress through "harmonic movement, melodic periodicity, metrical hierarchy or formal principles," so that minimalism has no objective to "strive towards some ultimate goal or resolution" (679). Thus repetition in minimalist music (and gamelan) fundamentally differs from repetition in traditional Western music. Ap Siôn and Evans explain how in Western music "a large section, such as an exposition in sonata form, is subdivided into sub-sections, and sub-sections into periods, periods into phrases, and phrases into themes" (680), a subdivision that also applies to rhythmic structures. In minimalism, smaller rhythmic units are non-hierarchically connected to form larger

2 In their variations of basic material, Jarmusch's films are related to other aesthetic principles. For example, Emily Petermann analyses novels based on Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and emphasizes: "Each variation, after all, builds not on the previous variation, but on the theme itself, so that the development of the thematic material is one of accretion rather than progress" (62). This provokes an understanding of time as "cyclic and iterative" instead of "linear and progressive" (61).

sections. This style of non-hierarchic assembling strongly relates to the repetitions and variations in *Permanent Vacation*. Because a smaller repeated unit does not have to fulfill a function in a larger section, it is not fixated temporarily.

This mirrors Godard's and Korine's understanding of narration when they say that beginning, middle and end do not necessarily have to come in this order. The undercurrent circularity prevents an understanding of Allie's move to Paris as an arrival. In *Permanent Vacation*'s sphere of latent tension, suspense is found in the placement of themes and in nuances of their variations. While the film evokes subjectivity, this subjectivity is never clearly located in time and space. Gamelan's circular structure accompanies Allie's rhythmic, repetitive drifting and creates a state that inherits oppositions and uncertainties: it creates a sphere of mobility, but this mobility is lacking movement towards a goal. It shows constant change, but this change is depicted as a state. Resting points remain temporary, and closure in the form of a newly found home, of successful development of character, or of resolution of conflicts is denied. The fragmented abeyance of an estranged individual losing grip on time and space is confronted with the narration's structural density, which expresses a fantasy of reconciliation and belonging that is inaccessible to its protagonist.

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'THE WHITE (STRAIGHT) MAN'S BURDEN'?

RACE, HIP HOP AND HOMOPHOBIA IN MACKLEMORE'S "SAME LOVE"

Thoren Opitz

"If I was gay / I would think Hip-Hop hates me": this line by white American rapper Macklemore attacks an originally black musical genre for its perceived homophobia problem. Part of the commercially successful song "Same Love," which supported the marriage equality Referendum 74 in his home state of Washington, it created awareness for the issue in the election year of 2012.[1] Received very positively, it also earned critique from gay rappers asking why a straight artist is publicly held up as the first champion of gay rights in the rap community. However, in a genre where consumers are traditionally seventy percent white and artists predominantly black, is this also a case of, in the problematic language of colonialism, white men having to carry 'the burden' of correcting uncivilized behavior in others?[2] As renowned African-American scholar Tricia Rose notes in her study *The Hip Hop Wars* (2008), rap's recipients and performers are classically divided by the community in either 'players' or 'haters,' meaning only people on the inside who appreciate the art are allowed to criticize it (cf. xi). In relation to Macklemore the question can be raised in how far those two positions can be conflated, as he appears to be both a proponent and a critic of Hip-Hop's values. The crucial point this paper seeks to address is whether the video accompanying

1 The publisher's note on YouTube specifically reads: "We support civil rights, and hope WA State voters will APPROVE REF 74 and legalize marriage equality" (Macklemore, *Same Love*), and so the video itself is directly pushing a concrete political message.

2 See Tricia Rose's remark in *The Hip Hop Wars* that "[a]ccording to Mediamark Research Inc., increasing numbers of whites began buying hip hop at this point. Indeed, between 1995 and 2001, whites comprised 70–75 percent of the hip hop customer base—a figure considered to have remained broadly constant to this day" (4).

the song repeats racial stereotypes and blames the Civil Rights Movement for not supporting LGBTQ rights, as it appears to do with a narrative surrounding an interracial same-sex marriage. Since it does not criticize the Catholic Church, the most active opponent of Referendum 74 in Washington State, it also raises questions about Macklemore's performance persona, as he, by default, identifies with a nationality strongly associated with Catholicism in such flag-waving songs as *Irish Celebration*. By looking at the history of American music and its problem of the color line, the aesthetics of the music video, and Hip-Hop's homophobia problem, this paper intends to create a context that reveals the necessity to conduct a close reading of the second verse and the accompanying video material of "Same Love" in order to point out mixed, or unconscious, messages that otherwise might be lost.

However, before getting into a close reading of the video and introducing the various discussions that surround it, some preliminary remarks about the title of this paper shall serve to focus on the problem an intervention such as "Same Love" poses. The title refers to Rudyard Kipling's 1899 poem "The White Man's Burden," which is conventionally quoted as actively arguing for imperialism and paternalism towards other cultures. In the instance this paper addresses, we might add the attribute 'straight' to white man, as Macklemore appears to not only comment on the condition of homophobia in Hip-Hop music, but is publicly held up as a corrective to its seemingly dominant narrative of intolerance. Therefore, we have to ask the question if we are dealing with a case of cultural colonialization. However, in the arena of the American culture wars, every performance of sexual, religious, or racial identity is already politically charged, however implicitly, and regardless of whether its offense towards any kind of 'other' is intentional or not. As will be shown later, Macklemore is very aware of his status as a white performer in a black genre, and therefore any overt racism would be suicidal. Nonetheless, an unconscious reproduction of a position not wholly unlike Kipling's, a compulsive criticism of black culture as backward,

in this instance homophobic, seems to be written into the visual narrative of "Same Love." Since this paper does not intend to speculate on the motivations of its authors, the lyrics of the song will simply be weighed against the video's use of symbols and iconography, arguably revealing a correctional stance as referenced in the poem.

While the musical qualities of the song undoubtedly are a part of its lasting success, this paper is neither going to look at "Same Love" from a musicological perspective nor conduct an in-depth analysis of its audio content, as the lyrics are considered only in their written form, regardless of their performance. Nonetheless, some general aspects of its orchestration should be mentioned here since they are arguably conducive to the song's mainstream reception. "Same Love" is driven by a repetitive piano loop that is accompanied by a horn section in the chorus, which is performed by a melodious female voice. It lacks the aggressive drums and sound samples that often characterize rap music, and therefore could be categorized as 'pop' music or a hybrid pop-Hip-Hop tune, rather than being labeled a rap song. This generic distinction will become important for evaluating the ensuing discussion surrounding the song, which circles around, yet does not address, the question of its genre. The focus of this paper lies on the extensive video that the song is embedded in. Almost seven minutes long, it lends the song an anthem-like quality, surrounding the sound with a melodramatic visual narrative that is partly responsible for its 141 million views on YouTube at the time publication (Macklemore, "Same Love").[3] It also has to be pointed out that the song and the video were produced independently from each other without the financial support from a major music label; Ryan Lewis, Macklemore's musical collaborator, usually shoots their videos and is also credited as the director for "Same Love" (05:33).

In the following section, I will describe the video's plot and give a preliminary analysis of its most crucial scenes, since none of the

3 That is territory normally reserved for industry-backed, veteran recording artists, a commercial support system the duo did not have at the publication of "Same Love" in October 2012.

various media voices discussing it delve into a methodical close reading, thereby neglecting important details that could either support or reverse some of their arguments. Before the music proper of the song starts, the video opens with a hospital scene, in which its male protagonist is born to mixed-race parents (00:00–00:43). While the visual narrative accompanying the first verse of "Same Love" follows the protagonist from birth to adolescence, historical images of an all-American childhood are interlaced with the storyline, which sees the young boy running through a forest and playing football with his dad in their white-picket-fence-style front yard. As the visual material is suggesting a safe and peaceful middle-class upbringing, Macklemore relates a personal story of doubting his own sexual identity as a child, since he has a gay uncle and compares various stereotypes of supposedly homosexual nature with his own behavior. He furthermore criticizes religious reactions on the issue, as images of priests and congregations appear. Throughout the first verse, these critical comments about some aspects of Christianity in general do not bear any racial connotations despite the fact that the images that accompany Macklemore's personal story are depicting the mixed-race protagonist's early life story. Therefore a certain discrepancy between those two parallel narratives emerges, as it is unclear how the textual and visual levels are linked, apart from a broad thematic similarity.

The second, and in terms of this paper most important, verse finds the protagonist of the video at a typical teenager's party, where he is the only boy not dancing with a girl, indicating his early tussle with heteronormativity. It is at this exact moment of isolation that the aforementioned lyrics are heard over a frontal shot of the boy's face "If I was gay / I would think Hip-Hop hates me" (02:09–02:19), which starts off a series of problematic statements that steer the song's content from a critique of religious sexual discrimination towards an implicit critique of two distinctly African-American movements, those for civil rights and the Hip-Hop community. The protagonist is then shown as a young adult professional in his own private office, indicating a middle-class status. From here on the visual narration

is interlaced with iconic historical images of black civil rights activists on the stairs of a courthouse, a burning cross, and an African-American girl holding up a sign saying "We believe in the supreme court," accompanying the lyrics "The same fight that led people to walk-outs and sit-ins / It's human rights for everyone, there is no difference" (02:45–02:50). Although the civil rights movement was not monochrome, only black people are shown in this segment. Equating the historical and oftentimes fatal struggle for civil rights with contemporary manifestations of LBGTQ groups creates an asynchronous relationship between the two social movements that do not simply operate in chronological continuation of one another. As Macklemore lyrically expands his critique from a private to a societal issue, he also shifts the focus in terms of who he addresses: since the members of the black civil rights movement once experienced institutionalized racism directed at them, they should now automatically support the fight against another form of discrimination he broadly paints with the same brush.

Then the unnamed protagonist and his white male partner meet his parents, presumably in a conscious effort to confront them with the nature of their relationship. Sitting at the family's dining table, the four of them pray, while Macklemore's lyrics criticize the church for its hypocrisy on the issue of homosexuality, presenting another instance in which the textual and visual narrative are temporarily interlinked and create meaning collaboratively (02:53–03:05). Then the black father of the protagonist makes an angry gesture and leaves the table in disapproval, followed by his wife, played by a lighter-skinned Hispanic actress. This is the first moment in the video in which the characters' reactions to same-sex relationships are becoming obvious, and immediately the race of the respective characters plays a crucial role, as the only dissenter to the two young men's relation is the father figure which is, in comparison to the three other actors present, the darkest-skinned individual in the domestic scene. Within the context of the visual narrative, it is impossible not to frame the father as a misguided, and probably homophobic, private

opponent of the public cause for the civil rights of LBGTQ persons. And while he may already be generally associated with the historic civil rights movement through the previous visual practice of coloring its members, an even more blatant continuity is established in the following shot. Here, a picture of Martin Luther King appears for a second, significantly synchronized with the image of the father, as both black men wear mustaches, shortly cropped hair and a collared shirt, thereby suggesting that the contemporary stand-in does not honor the tolerant heritage of the Christian leader and male African-American role model (03:06–03:07). Yet another contrast of color is created as, following Martin Luther King's picture, images of rainbow-flag-waving activists, a majority of whom are white, are juxtaposed with images of the stars and stripes, concluding the second verse. As shown above, a multiplicity of visual clues throughout this part of the video implicitly point even further towards the role of African-American citizens in the political battle over LGBTQ rights, stressing the matter more than the lyrics do on their own.

In the third verse, we see the white partner proposing to the protagonist and a marriage ceremony taking place, in which his previously introduced mother leads him down the aisle and shares a laugh. Unlike her, his father is only shown once, sitting stone-faced in the dark background, suggesting that he is only begrudgingly present and still has not come to terms with the events (03:55). Moreover, the guests at the ceremony and the reception are almost exclusively white, implying that the protagonist's side of the family is severely underrepresented. These are even more details of the video that especially stress the responsibility and reactions of black communities toward the overarching issue of same-sex marriage and equality. The video then ends with the couple holding ringed hands on the mixed-race partners' deathbed, pointing out that their relation fulfilled the traditional marital vow of "until death do us part," in an illustration that gay men can honor the Christian institution of marriage (05:00–05:23). This last message the video sends cannot be separated from its previous positions on race and Macklemore's insistence

on criticizing another social institution besides the church, one he claims to be affiliated with by choice: Hip-Hop.

On the lyrical level, Macklemore identifies with Hip-Hop in the line "*Our* culture founded from oppression" and concerning homophobia says "*our* genre still ignores it" [my emphases], claiming his place as an insider of the Hip-Hop community that would grant him, if we follow Rose's distinction between critics and defenders, the right to point out short-comings amongst the group. While in the song "White Privilege" (2005) Macklemore still acknowledged that he "gentrified" Hip-Hop and that it is "culturally appropriated by the white face," before finally stating "the fact that this culture's not mine." Why he previously specifically excluded himself from the in-group in terms of his own race, and why he now claims to be a part of the culture, is not clear, and his change of perspective on the issue is not visible or detailed in his later work. On the contrary, in the song "A Wake" from *The Heist*, the 2012 album that contains "Same Love," Macklemore raps "Don't get involved if the cause isn't mine / white privilege, white guilt at the same damn time," reiterating his earlier statements that he is not in a position to identify with the Hip-Hop community and thus unable to formulate a credible critique. So while his own lyrics offer a theoretical perspective on his ambiguous position, he still proceeds to reap the benefits of his privilege in practice, for example when winning the Grammy for best rap album in 2014, while Kendrick Lamar, a black artist, by Macklemore's own admission, should have won this award instead of him. He even acknowledges that his race probably gave him an unfair advantage at the Grammy ballot, but he still accepted the award (Baker, "The Grammys"). This last example shows that, within a community relying intensely on tropes of competition to articulate and compare value, Macklemore is on the one hand indeed in the privileged position to criticize 'his' genre, while on the other hand he is commercially profiting from being seen as standing apart from it.

Following the visibility that Macklemore's status grants him, it is not surprising that since the video's publication, it has been subjected

to a wide-ranging cultural critique of its overlapping themes, although the blogs discussing it neglect to consider it as a multimedia work. One of the most outspoken criticisms of the video comes from Hel Gebreamlak writing on the website racialicious.com. His article entitled "Race+Hip-Hop+LGBT Equality: On Macklemore's White Straight Privilege" takes issue with Macklemore being stylized as the white savior of rap without involving gay black artists, while the song features white spoken-word artist and singer Mary Lambert, who self-identifies as lesbian. One notable reaction to this article on the blog *gawker* is Rich Juzwiak's "Self-Appointed Privilege Police Officer Denounces Macklemore's Pro-Equality Anthem." His arguments are best summed up by responses left in the comments section of the website, as some of them are wondering if Macklemore's personality can undermine the legitimacy of his effort, and if the racialicious.com article confirms that the political left engages in so-called 'circular firing squads,' chasing away potential straight white allies with the idea that they cannot authentically speak on the issue because they are tainted by their white privilege. One commenter also facilitated the theory that Christianity and thereby homophobia was superimposed on the black community during slavery.[4] While these are interesting discussions, they offer little in substantial analy-sis of the video and how it conveys its controversial messages. Yet it shows that the video itself is not consumed completely unconsciously, but that some of its messages still needed to be examined more closely.

One more form of criticism from inside the rap community has to be addressed. Gay rap artist Le1f responded to Macklemore in a series of tweets, one of whom reads "that time that straight white dude

4 Rose presents a more nuanced version of this simplified argument in *The Hip Hop Wars*, arguing that a "general culture of homophobia is compounded by black males' long-denied access to the full powers of patriarchal masculinity, which in turn may have encouraged a particular brand of black homophobia" (237). She also refers to Earl Ofari Hutchinson and his comments "on the important role of black conservative religious leaders in reinforcing a religious justification for homophobia" (238).

ripped off my song then made a video about gay interracial love and made a million dollars" (Sauvalle, "Rapper Le1f"). He is channeling a frustration also evident in the racialicious.com article, namely that Macklemore profits from being held up as the first voice in Hip-Hop advocating gay rights, while a whole sub-genre called Homo-Hop is already doing just that. Both Gebreamlak and Le1f also refer to Ellen DeGeneres, perhaps the most influential and visible LGBTQ personality on American TV, who introduced Macklemore on her show with the words "No other artists in hip hop history have ever taken a stand defending marriage equality the way they have" (Gebreamlak). This is correct if "the way" is supposed to mean 'with such a catchy tune.' Rhetoric aside, the problematic positioning of three white artists as Hip-Hop's spokespersons, especially in an originally black genre, by a white TV personality, while seemingly ignoring many other voices who address gay and lesbian issues, sparked a controversy now surrounding the song permanently.

Given this statement by DeGeneres and the controversy the video sparked in the blogosphere discussing its political implications, it is also worthwhile to review Hip Hop's state on the issue in 2012, when "Same Love" was released in October. After Barack Obama endorsed the right to same-sex marriage on May 9 (Calmes, "Obama"), so did Jay Z as arguably Rap's most prominent figure, on May 15 (Yates, "Jay-Z"), explicitly stating that he supports the president on the issue and thus qualifying Obama's impact on the Hip-Hop community.[5] Kanye West, perhaps the most innovative and politically provocative mainstream rap artist, has been a supporter of gay rights from the beginning of his career, although he also has occasionally invoked gay slurs (cf. Rose 239). Some highly talented new artists that have emerged before 2012 but whose first commercially successful albums

5 In 2008, then presidential candidate Barack Obama told *Rolling Stone* magazine that he listens to Jay Z on his iPod. Thus the relationship between the influential rapper and the president is probably a mutually beneficial one, and not just a one-way connection as the example above may suggest (cf. Wenner).

were released in 2013, acts such as Kendrick Lamar and Asap Rocky, are now already in favor of equality and do not use discriminating language any more. Frank Ocean, an openly bisexual Hip-Hop artist and R'n'B singer who collaborated with Kanye West and Jay Z on *Watch the Throne* (2011), greatly increased the visibility of a queer presence at the upper echelon of the community's output. In any case, the problem remains that the most visible strand of Hip-Hop, commercial gangsta and party rap, is an alpha male culture relying on tropes of dominance and competitiveness that often feminize opponents as unmanly and spread prejudice against gay men. But since rap has a certain hierarchy in which newcomers are looking up to the established leaders, it is worth discussing if the evolution on the issue by Hip-Hop's most influential artists can cause a trickle-down effect, changing the attitude amongst rank-and-file rappers as well. However, so far no famous Hip-Hop artist openly complained about Macklemore's aesthetic and political statement, although arguably a mentality shift amongst the most prominent artists of the genre had already occurred when "Same Love" was published.

Before situating "Same Love" in a critical context that mobilizes the complex relations of race and sexuality that are highlighted in the video, the qualities of "Same Love" as a cultural artifact should be briefly examined in order to point out the difficulty of analyzing music videos that often feature multiple layers of meaning. John Mundy, in *Popular Music on Screen: From Hollywood Musical to Music Video*, generally distinguishes between two types of music videos: performance videos that depict live concerts and videos with a narrative mode. While the video for "Same Love" can be safely placed in the second category, its analysis is complicated by text and video not contributing to just one single mode of narration. As Mundy argues that music videos are not an essentially new postmodern form of art but have historic roots in musicals and film music, he acknowledges that they are problematic texts, relying on, amongst other techniques "[…] complex referentiality, the apparent lack of coherent temporal and spatial structures, fragmentation and displacement […]" (237).

All of those can be found to some degree in "Same Love," although it is a rather conventional and chronological cradle-to-grave story. Ultimately, the aesthetics and the "very openness of the polysemic music video text" invites us to interpret a "range of potential meanings in any one text" (237). So how do we read a multimedia narrative if music itself is already always multiple media, if one considers lyrics and audio content as independent (yet clearly connected) categories? Do we read them in conjunction, talking to each other, or as separate strands? In the "Same Love" video, the lyrics are sometimes disassociated from the video story, as the first verse recounts a personal experience of Macklemore while he only appears very briefly in the video as a guest of the wedding (04:28–04:30). Yet they are still packaged as one, and therefore the viewer's analysis of the various layers of the narration is dependent on which strand is foregrounded, just as this paper especially examines the images seen in the video as a complementary background to the lyrics.

This method of reading the multimedia text of "Same Love" will help understand the plurality of overlapping historic discourses feeding into its controversial reception. In *Souled Americans: How Black Music Transformed White Culture*, Kevin Phinney argues that in the long history of creating American musical genres such as Blues, Jazz, Rock'n'Roll, R'n'B, Soul and Gospel, there has always been a tug-of-war between black originators and white imitators, a conflict between the musicians and the industry, and an exchange between mixed audiences. He "asserts that African Americans are the unsung innovators of American music, while white artists tend to popularize and develop each trend to a creative and commercial end" (18). This is the negative notion that most of the dissenters in the web forums pin onto Macklemore. Perhaps the most polarizing personality in this regard still is Marshall Mathers, aka Eminem, whose 2002 song "White America" includes the lines "look at my sales, let's do the math / If I was black I would have sold half," thereby acknowledging that it is an asset to rely on identification with the overwhelmingly white audience while using a black genre that constantly tries to

reinvent itself and its slang in order to exclude unknowing outsiders, as Phinney writes in his chapter on rap entitled "Wigga Wonderland." So the notion of white artists exploiting a black genre while being aware of their beneficial status precedes Macklemore. However, while discussing a musical genre's racial origins, it is also important to note what Adam Bradley, one of the editors of the *Anthology of Rap*, in his *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop*, has argued: "Rap was created by Black Americans. Rap is a Western poetic form. These are not contradictory assertions" (19). Without oversimplifying this notion, it is necessary to state that rhyming couplets and other traditional poetic elements employed as standard building blocks in Hip-Hop have also, but not exclusively, been used by European poets before the distinctly African-American genre has been developed. Thus the "Same Love" video has to be looked at not only as a mixture of different media forms but also as a text whose content was drawn from different lyrical and musical discourses.

These constant reminders of race in the debate over Hip-Hop can also be found, at a more subliminal level, in the title of one the most important books written on the topic, Rose's *Black Noise* (1994), itself metaphorically overwriting the concept of the constant presence of white noise. With her seminal study, Rose was one of the first scholars to take a serious academic look at the subculture of Hip-Hop. Fourteen years later, *The Hip Hop Wars* illustrates the discussion between opponents and defenders of rap, and while these parties disagree on a whole lot of issues, she identifies six topics in which they practice what she calls "mutual denial," homophobia being one of them: "Homophobia is tacitly accepted on both sides of this battle over hip-hop" (237). She argues that even highly skilled artists such as Busta Rhymes, or rappers labeled as politically conscious for their intellectual content such as Mos Def, are uncomfortable discussing homosexuality and therefore fall in with radical conservative counter-forces that ignore homophobia and focus on sexism when criticizing Hip-Hop since their own values are not too far away from views expressed in certain songs using gay slurs (239–40). However,

in the same paragraph Rose wisely proceeds to mention several gay Hip-Hop artists and gives them visibility, as opposed to the lyrics to "Same Love" that still describe Hip-Hop as a uniformly homophobic genre. Rose's survey also highlights another aspect that makes the visual narrative of "Same Love" stand out amongst the genre of Hip-Hop videos: "[w]hile homophobic lyrical content laces many rappers' rhymes, the music videos that get produced and aired do not consistently accentuate homophobia or feature gay characters" (237). By focusing on a same-sex couple in "Same Love," Macklemore's video lends visibility to a hitherto underrepresented group and thereby visually confronts the genre with its own suppressed content.

What is important in this regard is that while Hip-Hop draws a diverse audience and includes all kinds of producers, the commercially promoted brand of rap disproportionately pushes sexist and homophobic images that are manufactured by media corporations along the lines of stereotypes of black hypermasculinity. Rose argues that there are essentially only three acceptable public personae for commercial Hip-Hop artists, the "gangsta," the "pimp," or for females, the "ho" (cf. 23). It is due to the recording industry's narrow focus on just a small sample of Hip-Hop that "[d]espite the diversity of fans and artists on the commercial margins, then, the public struggle over hip hop is waged over the images, stories, and market power associated with black male and female bodies" (Rose xii). Therefore, the stress on the black male protagonist in the "Same Love" video represents more than a random choice of narrative perspective. It is tied to the most crucial identity formation in rap: that of the black male. Amplifying this notion in his aforementioned book, Phinney states that "[j]ust as white men created *Playboy* in the 1950s to express their dreams and realities, rap began as a playground for the fantasies and frustrations of black males" (303). As he implies the sexual connotations this form of musical identity formation contains, it is not by accident that he compares it to the commercially successful and soft-pornographic *Playboy* magazine, as it is also surrounded by an aura

of controversy and is being made responsible for a commodification of the human body.

Moreover, Rose asserts that "Hip Hop reflects the important role homophobia plays in defining masculinity" (237) and continues to argue that especially black masculinity is at stake since they were long denied power and citizenship. It is therefore significant that the video follows the life of the black partner in the relationship. Through this, the video addresses, and indeed colors, the comments at the beginning of the second verse. Also, the family of the white man in the couple is never explicitly shown, implying that for them homosexuality is apparently not an issue. And while Macklemore performs in a black genre, his audience is most likely overwhelmingly white, as Rose states while relying on consumer profile reports of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) (cf. 4). So if the audience is mostly white, why not single out the white partner? The problem remains that a majority white audience, which presumably identifies with the tolerant crowd of white guests at the same-sex ceremony, consumes stereotypes about black characters. In this respect, it is important to notice that Rose calls attention to "the role of unexamined desires among many white fans to consume destructive stereotypes of black people [...]" (cf. 228). This context illustrates why the positive reception of "Same Love" is problematic: while it is a unique combination of activism, commercial and critical success, and while it deals with two of the most central issues of the genre, homophobia and race, it simultaneously revokes prejudice about the former at the expense of the latter. Although Macklemore and Ryan Lewis were not dependent on a major record label at the time they released the video to "Same Love," which addresses a topic potentially too controversial for a mainstream company anyway, they do not clearly articulate their position on black male masculinity in their ambiguous video.[6]

6 On the interconnectedness of those issues, a whole excellent study has been written by Miles White, *From Jim Crow to Jay-Z: Race, Rap, and the Performance of Masculinity* (2011), so it must be conceded that the topic

What especially qualifies the video and its interracial storyline for closer examination is the fact that the lyrics do not address a specifically racial aspect but deal exclusively with gay rights. Whether Macklemore and Ryan Lewis are additionally tapping into this controversial conversation accidentally or intentionally, it arguably compromises their stance on same-sex equality by directing the discussion, as seen above in the comments from the blogosphere, to what is rightfully one of the most embattled motifs of American (literary) history. As Werner Sollors states in his Introduction to *Interracialism. Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature and Law*:

> One theme that has been pervasive in U. S. history and literature and that has been accompanied by a 300-year-long tradition of legislation, jurisdiction, protest, and defiance is the deep concern about, and the attempt to prohibit, contain, or deny, the presence of black-white interracial sexual relations, interracial marriage, interracial descent, and other family relations across the powerful black-white divide. (3)

Read against this intensely contested background, the decision to illustrate their, on the surface level, race-free song lyrics with a narrative containing that much historical baggage is puzzling, as their intent to make a moral argument against sexual discrimination is clearly stated by the political message to vote for referendum 74, indicated in the credits of the video. Furthermore, they actually foreground interracial sexuality by staging the confrontation with the parents of the partner of color in the domestic sphere of the nuclear family's dining room, unfolding a situation which Sollors has rightly described as the central concern of racial matters in America. Directly following his summary quoted above, he writes that "[m]any fears have been attached to the formation of the otherwise ideal American social institution: the heterosexual family" (3). Since the ensuing

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is way more complex and that this paper cannot do justice to the full complexity of this topic.

angry reaction of the black father is evidently not directed at the choice of his son's partner in terms of his white race, as he himself has married a Hispanic woman, but his sexuality, the video pretends that racial prejudices have been replaced by sexual ones.

What also has to be taken into consideration is that in "Same Love" Macklemore criticizes "right wing conservatives" and the "Church" in general, but does not single out the Catholic Church in particular, although it was the most active opponent of the marriage equality law in Macklemore's home state of Washington (cf. Conelly). Moreover, in an interview Macklemore compares the Catholic community he grew up in, and the Hip-Hop community he grew into, as being equally homophobic (cf. Lynch). Equating these two distinct religious and cultural discourses of identity formation in this manner not only ignores the discrepancy between the impact of a nearly 40-year-old subculture and 2000 years of institutional sexism and discrimination, but it also begs the question if the Catholic aspects of his persona are carried over into the performative space of the "Same Love" video and thereby compromise his criticism of Hip-Hop's values.

And while amorphous identities and their images in pop music can change from video to video, it is worth considering if they are so arbitrary that they are newly created in each text. In this respect Mundy states that "[w]hat matters is the presence and the persona of the musical performer" (242). With this notion in mind, one might question what happens when the persona is largely absent from the narrative of the video and only present in the lyrics. Mundy argues that, similar to those in Hollywood musicals, music video "performer(s) exist both within and outside the text, so that the performance in a specific text draws upon, amplifies and resonates with all those performances by that artist which exist in one form or another elsewhere" (243). Accordingly, one might wonder if Macklemore's persona in "Same Love" is still partly a flag-waving, Catholic Irish nationalist, an image he created for his persona in the video for the song "Irish Celebration" (2009). Is it possible to reconcile those

dissonances? If the prior persona is there, is it just as an unconscious undertone in his voice? Are the personae of pop stars coded so temporarily that they lose all validity from one song to the next, or does this not count for 'serious' artists? How is one to distinguish this? Can authenticity be measured or maintained if an artist changes cultural costumes? These questions matter beyond their aesthetic implications. According to Mundy, the goal of the performers is not to identify with their past incarnations but with the implied internal audience, a collective like-minded consumer group: "[t]his attempt through music video to implicate us within a constructed community has similarities to the attempts by the Hollywood musical to locate us within what are presented as sustainable utopias" (243). So depending on which of Macklemore's videos we watch, his audience is either, or both, part of a drinking and partying pseudo-Irish bachelor party, superficially untainted by nationalism and Catholicism, or a liberal, secular elite that soberly fights for marriage equality as a continuation of the struggle for civil rights. The question if these different personae constitute a contradiction is tied to how we understand popular performers who write and direct their own music and the videos accompanying them. Are they actors who are heralded for slipping from one role to the next without being attached to a character they formerly played, or are they authors whose integrity is dependent on the partly autobiographic content their performed identity is based upon?

Along the lines of this argument, one last item in Macklemore's musical catalog has to be scrutinized. He has written a song, "Wings," about the commodification of the sport shoe and its desirability as a product, only to perform the very same song in an advertisement for the NBA All-Star Day, perhaps the biggest advertisement stage for the massive sneaker industry (Martins).[7] Even more plainly,

7 Macklemore defends himself against the Hip-Hop communities' accusations of selling out on his website, arguing that sports fans who liked the version of the song he performed for the NBA advertisement, which does not contain an anti-consumerist message anymore, will eventually come

in an interview and photo shoot with *Rolling Stone* magazine, he is asked about wearing Nikes, and he answers "Am I being hypocrite? Absolutely. But that's ok. I'm a fucking human being and I don't need to be perfect. I can make a song like 'Wings' and wear Nikes" (Juzwiak, "Macklemore"). This answer resonates with American poetry's most infamous self-fashioned persona, echoing the Whitmanesque principle of contradicting one's self and indeed being proud of it. However, in Whitman's case his 1855 assertion that "Very well then....I contradict myself; / I am large....I contain multitudes" (709) is due to his trying to represent the whole plurality of American democracy and all its 'others' within himself. In contrast, Macklemore manages to contradict himself all by himself by using and endorsing the same products he criticizes in his songs, again marking the difference and non-continuity of the various personae invented in, and limited to, their respective performative spaces in videos and song lyrics.

Consequently, when Macklemore consciously changes or mutes messages within two versions of the same song, it is not unfathomable that the controversial and, at times, contradictory meanings of the lyrical and the visual narrative of the "Same Love" video are not coincidental, or, to put it another way, are related to each other in an unconscious way. As the initial reactions from various bloggers show, confronting the video with discourses about race, Hip-Hop and gender will produce heated discussions among the various agents and recipients of an online public. However, dissecting the video's multiple, parallel narratives more closely, and thereby revealing its complex ambiguity as a pop-cultural artifact, can complicate our understanding of what mass media products are capable of. Additionally, the ethical integrity claimed by artists using a persona based on their personality to convey political messages can be influenced by prior performances that attach different characteristics to their alter egos. These temporarily coded personae might be especially difficult to

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around and listen to the original. See Macklemore "Wings, The NBA All-Star Day, & Selling Out" (Macklemore.com) for the full response.

uphold in the genre of Hip-Hop, which assigns value due to the credibility and authenticity of the performer's personality, attributes that are extremely hard to measure or judge objectively. In the bigger picture, this situation points to the difficulty of maintaining an omnicritical position, one that simultaneously and fairly treats matters of race, sexuality, religion, nationality, class and gender. Within the genre of Hip-Hop, however, where issues of race and gender have been problematic almost from the start, with the discrimination of homosexuals having been largely dismissed until lately, a failed experiment to create such a position seems especially self-destructive. While the song's audio content raises awareness about homophobia in Hip-Hop, the video, which was added later on, visually criticizes black culture for its ignorance on the topic. The inaudible critique thus constitutes a sort of dog-whistle racism by a white artist operating in an originally black genre. That Macklemore reflects on his difficult position, and admits his own hypocrisy in other aspects of his work, does not make his aspiration of acting as a corrective to the culture he appropriated any less offensive than Kipling's poem.

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PUNK NOISE, SOCIAL CRITICISM, AND QUEER-FEMINIST DECOLONIAL POLITICS, OR "THE PROMISE OF NO FUTURE"[1]

Katharina Wiedlack

In my essay I will introduce the musical and political genre of queercore, sometimes also referred to as homocore or dykecore, which can be briefly described as hardcore punk with a queer-feminist message. First, I provide a very brief overview over the movement's most important musical aspects, lyrics, as well as performances and sounds. Giving some examples of some recent punk rock lyrics and performances I will develop the argument that queercore can and should be understood as a figuration of queer politics. Relating queercore to scholarly work following the anti-social turn in queer theory, I will show that its specific musical and performative forms can be theorized in terms of a queer politics of negativity. Moreover, by analyzing a politics of negativity within lyrics as well as performances, I emphasize the importance of anger as an emotional and performative state—for punk as well as queer politics. Finally, in giving some evidence for the historic communication between punk rock and queer theory, I make the argument that punk rock is capable of communicating queer-feminist theoretical positions in a non-academic setting. Moreover, I argue that punk rock is not only a form of queer theory but influenced queer theory, or in other words: that the musical unconscious of contemporary queer theory is punk.

1. HISTORY

Two queer-identified punks who brought the newly emerging genre and politics of queercore to a broader audience were the Canadians

1 "[T]he promise of no future" is a line from the song "No Future" by the band Agatha. This essay is based on my monograph *Queer-feminist Punk: An Anti-Social History* (Vienna, Zaglossus 2015).

Bruce LaBruce and G.B. Jones. In April 1989 they published an article titled "Don't be gay: Or, how I learned to stop worrying and fuck punk up the ass" in the international punk magazine *Maximumrocknroll*. In their article Jones and LaBruce call out the hardcore punk scenes, the core audience of *Maximumrocknroll*, for their misogyny, homophobia and sexism. Moreover, they criticize the gay and lesbian club culture for its shallowness. Despite their serious criticism, they develop a humorous argumentation about the intersections of punk and homosexuality. Quoting an unspecified dictionary entry for the word 'punk,' they emphasize its former usage to describe homosexuals as well as prisoners. The passage explains that "[…] punk is also an archaic word for dried wood used as tinder, the original meaning of the word 'faggot' as well. Homosexuals, witches, criminals, all denounced as enemies of the state, were once burned at the stake. The word for the material used to set them on fire became another name for the victims themselves." Jones and LaBruce emphasize the sexual qualities and meanings of the word 'punk' and draw attention to the anti-social meanings of the word 'queer' at same time. This strategy of discovering queer meanings within the word and concept of punk can be read as 'queering.' By adding or discovering similar or even related semantics in punk and queer, they simultaneously do a 'punking' of queerness. When Jones and LaBruce wrote this article, the hardcore punk scenes and the queer scenes could not have been further apart, and drawing such a close connection between punk and queer offended the homophobic hardcore scene as much as the gay scenes. In their *Maximumrocknroll* article as well as in their zines and local radio shows, Jones and LaBruce exaggerated the extent of the queer hardcore punk scene, which was only just emerging. They and their friends provided this imagination with the appropriate sound, for example through Jones's band Fifth Column. Soon after, queer punk fans and musicians from the U.S.-American West as well as East Coast joined the movement. The Californian band Tribe 8 started producing provocative and humorous punk music, and so did their fellow San Franciscans Pansy Division. In Washington, D.C., Donna

Dresch started her queer-feminist punk zine *Chainsaw* in the late 1980s and created an independent record label with the same name in 1991. Chainsaw Records produced bands like Heavens to Betsy, Excuse Seventeen, and The Need, who became popular as riot grrrls. Later Dresch started her own musical punk project Team Dresch. Around 1988 a queer-feminist punk scene emerged in New York around the "Lower East Side Mecca The World, where the Sissified Sex Pistol threw Rock'n'Roll Fag Bar on Tuesday" (Downey 24). Additionally, the New York locals Sharon Topper and Craig Flanagin formed their band God Is My Co-Pilot in 1990.

All these bands contributed to the redefinition of the terms 'homo,' 'dyke' and 'queer' by appropriating them for their politics. Like Jones and LaBruce, they criticized the male dominance within the hardcore punk scene as well as the gay and lesbian scenes, which seemed to them one-dimensional, superficial, and segregated. Being queer for them did not simply mean being gay or lesbian. They developed an understanding of queerness as a means of criticism towards fixed identity categories. Their emphasis on the primary pejorative quality of the term was intended to mark the homophobic climate within which they navigated. Moreover, it was a strategy to draw attention to the brutality of normativity for the non-normative and equally to liberate themselves from the normative social corset. Thus, queer-feminist punks anticipated what has come to be known as the anti-social turn in queer theory.

2. "NOT GAY AS IN HAPPY, BUT QUEER AS IN FUCK YOU"—NEGATIVITY AND/IN ANTI-SOCIAL LYRICS

The first anti-social queer theorist Leo Bersani rooted the groundwork of this theoretical approach within a psychoanalytical Lacanian understanding of sexuality. According to the Lacanian framework, sex in general, and particularly "homo-sex," need to be understood as a self-deconstructing or self-undoing death drive (cf. Bersani, *Homos*). In his 1995 publication *Homos*, Bersani suggested that

every sexual act, and especially homo-sex, needs to be understood as anti-communicative, anti-identitarian, and destructive, because it irritates the psyche's self-imagination as an autonomous subject, on which its well-being depends. This definition of sex—unsurprisingly—broke uncomfortably with the romantic connection between the emotion of love to sexual activity. Rather, it addressed the public picture of queer and especially gay sex during the AIDS crisis and beyond, where homosexuality was indeed seen and publicly denounced as a passage to death.

The theorist who arguably most significantly influenced the anti-social queer discourse, which understands queer as a socially negative term, is Lee Edelman. In his book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive,* Edelman takes up Bersani's elaborations and identifies queerness not only as individually self-destructing but also as "the place of the social order's death drive" (3). Moreover, he argues that within the social order of meaning sexuality can only ever be viewed in a positive light if it is interwoven with reproduction. 'Positive' to Edelman always implies a specific version of futurity in which the continuation of society is biologically ensured. The cultural symbol for this future is the capital-C "Child" (Edelman 3). Therefore, queer subjects have been reduced epistemologically to non-meaning or nonsense, negativity and unintelligibility. What makes this culture of the Child especially hurtful to all queers is that politics—the meaning of politics as such—can only ever be understood in service of the future, even if the political actions are contradictory to this goal. Notably, Edelman is not concerned with *Realpolitik* but only with the system of meaning production and the symbolic order. His neglect of actual political action as well as the real circumstances of children that are outside this logic and are not privileged by the worship of the "sacred Child" (Edelman 3) is highly problematic, and many scholars diverge from Edelman's view because of it. However, Edelman does have a point when he argues that the rhetoric of contemporary mainstream politics that addresses ecological, economic, infrastructural or social development issues

refers to the future generation of 'our children' or uses the imagery of children when speaking about the preservation of our human future. For example, one of the most obvious forms of contemporary futurity in the name of the imaginary 'sacred Child' are the activities of Scott Lively, who has called for the criminalization of what he understands as a public promotion of homosexuality within the U.S. In 1998, he published *Seven Steps to Recruit-Proof Your Child: A Parent's Guide to Protecting Children from Homosexuality and the "Gay" Movement.* One early but significant example of such gay-hate rhetoric was Anita Bryant's "notorious 1977 'Save Our Children' campaign" (Murphy, Ruiz, and Serlin 1). The U.S.-American pop-country and folk singer Bryant had multiple hits during the late 1950s and the 1960s, and she used her popularity and public attention for anti-homosexuality propaganda. Bryant's campaign "led to the repeal of a civil rights ordinance protecting gay and lesbian employees from discrimination in Dade County, Florida" (Murphy, Ruiz, and Serlin 1) in the late 1970s. "The brand of antigay politics perfected by Bryant and practiced by her followers in the late 1970s has proven more resilient perhaps than even Bryant herself could have imagined" (Murphy, Ruiz, and Serlin 2). That actual queer and other children suffer most from a criminalization of positive discourses about homosexuality is of no concern to Lively and his followers.

Coming back to Edelman, it is interesting that many of his most provocative formulations sound like lyrics of punk songs. Especially queer-feminist punk lyrics used the same language as Edelman years before him. The line "We're here we're queer we're going to fuck your children" (God Is My Co-Pilot, "Queer Disco") by the early 1990s punk band God Is My Co-Pilot could stem from Edelman's book, and his "Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized" (29) could come up in a queercore song. A song that tops Edelman's anti-social writing is "I Kill Kids" on God Is My Co-Pilot's 1992 EP *How I Got Over.* They sing: "I kill kids better keep hid I kill kids don't look under the bed you'll wake up dead I'll [cut up] your head and grind you up for bread" ("I Kill Kids"). On the one

hand, this drastic formulation can be understood as the anti-social shock value of punk music. On the other hand, it must be understood as answer to the homophobic rhetoric and discourse in the United States among social conservatives.

Many queer scholars like Judith Jack Halberstam (cf. "The Anti-Social"), José Muñoz (cf. *Disidentifications*), or Tavia Nyong'o (cf. "Do You Want") share the view proclaimed here that the embracing of negativity is not only significant for queer-feminist punk but also organic to the genre of punk rock itself. Punk rock emerged as aggressive anti-social, anti-authoritarian 'statement' from the perspective of a disadvantaged youth. It has ever since connoted anti-social rebellion. *The* slogan of the rejection of society and its norms was "No Future," first used by the Sex Pistols in their song "God Save The Queen," and repeated by thousands of punks to follow. Most recently, the queer-feminist punks Agatha released the song "No Future," commenting on punk's most famous phrase with the line "Do you remember, The hallow [sic] sounds of sinking ships? The promise of no future."

Edelman's usage of the punk phrase as the title for *No Future* can hardly be detached from the genre's history, despite his often-repeated rejection of any link between the title and punk. To many punks the connection between punk, queerness and negativity or anti-futurity is so obvious and 'natural' that Edelman's rejection comes as a real surprise. Edelman's notion of queerness builds on the twentieth-century usage of 'queer' as "the most popular vernacular term of abuse for homosexuals" (Dynes 191). What constitutes and structures queerness as a meaningful term according to Edelman is not queer desire, but something that psychoanalytic theorists following Lacan call *jouissance* or enjoyment. In contrast to common forms of pleasure or enjoyment, *jouissance* is "the painful pleasure of exceeding a law in which we were implicated, an enjoyment of a desire [*désir*], in the mode of Žižek's rage or grief, that is the cause and result of refusing to be disciplined by the body hanging from the gallows of the law" (Povinelli, "The Part" 288). The law that Povinelli

refers to is not only a juridical law but the Law with a capital L, "the fundamental principles which underlie all social relations" (Evans 98). *Jouissance* violates these social relations, rules and norms. It also transcends relations to the object, regardless of whether it is another person, a fetishistic object, a thing, or even the individual's imagination of an object. If queerness is understood as something shaped through or for *jouissance*—the pleasure of exceeding normativity—then it is a force, the 'death drive,' which appears in the sexual act. This death drive necessarily results in a pleasure (a *jouissance*-like experience) that destroys (or at least harms) the self or ego.

A psychoanalytic concept of sexuality and sexual desire, like the one represented in Edelman's notion of queerness, seems like an interesting starting point to analyze punk's use of queerness as negativity because it is able to account for the violence, aggression and anti-social aspects of punk—punk's acoustic and performance style like shouting, screaming, swearing and jumping into the mosh pit—in reference to sexuality. A recent song addressing queer as sexual, disruptive and dirty, as well as exploring the term's political potential, is Agatha's "Queer as in Fuck You." Here, queer carries negative but also positive sexual connotation. The negative centers around the meaning of 'fuck you' as an offensive anti-social gesture of rejection. However, the same 'fuck you' gets a more positive connotation later on in the lyrics when it refers to sexual intercourse. This meaning of a sexual act is immediately marked as political by the line "I wanna sing about liberation but I can't do that without talking about your lips." "Lips" can be understood as lips of a mouth but also as labia, and "liberation" is a reference to the homo- or queer liberation movement. All those double connotations and meanings reflect on the term queer, which is key within the lyrics, and which in turn makes all the other lyrics meaningful in Agatha's specific queer-feminist context. 'Queer,' in other words, draws on all these connotations—sexual acts, sexuality as identity, negativity and rejection and political activism—and the song thus questions the subcultural meaning and usage of the term 'queer' as such. It can be argued that Agatha use

their song as political activism and action, and they reconnect queerness with deviant sexualities in an attempt to make queer sexy again. This is a statement against the neoliberal appropriation of queer as a term for a fashionably gay lifestyle. It is a reminder of the history of 'queer' as a derogatory term during the late 1980s and early 1990s and its provocative appropriation by ACT UP, Queer Nation and other HIV/AIDS activists. The politics of such groups did not aim at being accepted or tolerated by heteronormative hegemony. In fact, they rejected a civil-rights model of inclusion, as scholars like Lisa Duggan have documented (cf. 16). Contemporary bands like the Seattle-based Agatha follow such politics. At the same time, their energetic performance imitates queerness as *jouissance*, in moments when the fast rhythm of the drums overwhelms the lead guitar and the singer's voice almost collapses while screaming. At these moments the pleasure of performing seems to be a drive or force to the audience that take—at times—part of the spectacle within the mosh pit.

3. FEELING PUNK—SOUND, RHYTHM AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Especially in punk rock, sound as well as the experiences during a concert are often much more meaningful to the audience than the actual lyrics. Moreover, punk lyrics regularly transform into sound, as they are usually more screamed than sung and hardly ever clearly understandable. Punk style is edgy, fast and short in general, irritating, violent, aggressive and bold. Queer-feminist punk songs traditionally contain only a limited range of chords and heavily emphasize drums and screamed vocals. This style is a questioning of the values of beauty, musical mastery and professionalization. Although the do-it-yourself ethos of punk rock is intended to provide easy and uncomplicated access to the genre, it is additionally—or maybe primarily—a statement of style. This style or sound is marked by an emphasis on negativity and a counter-mainstream effort, especially in reference to anti-social queer-feminist punk lyrics. Amateurism as

style can be seen as an anti-social political statement as well, as gesture against hegemonic music industry production.

Placing emphasis on sound does not mean that lyrics are not significant for the production of meaning in punk. During every queer-feminist punk performance a few words—often 'queer,' 'homo,' or 'sex'—are articulated enough to create a meaningful and politicized atmosphere. Moreover, most performances are staged in an already politicized setting. As will be shown by the example of a concert featuring the band Stag Bitten (also known as Negro Nation), a setting becomes politicized through the announcement of the concert, advertisements, choice of location, posters and flags with political messages, and many other factors.

The second part of this essay will focus on the bodies of the performer(s) and the (physical) experience of queer-feminist punk rock to reach a better understanding of the negativity of queerness and the aspects of *jouissance*. Investigating into the relationship between musical style, anti-social lyrics and the actual performance, I argue that the concept and affect that connects physical agitation, queer negativity and communication is anger.

3.1 Punk's Angry Politics

The very first punk researcher, Dick Hebdige, already suggested that the most prominent connotation of the punk aesthetic, besides rebellion and rejection, is anger (cf. 132). Many recent scholars like Michelle Habell-Pallán confirm Hebdige's initial judgment, emphasizing the connection between anger and gendered and racialized experiences in punk. In an interview conducted by Habell-Pallán, Alicia Armendariz Velasquez—better known as Alice Bag—, one of the very first punk musicians of Los Angeles, confirms the common association of punk with anger when she describes her musical performances in the following way:

> all the violence that I'd stuffed down inside of me for years came screaming out…all the anger I felt towards people who had treated me like an idiot as a young girl because I was the daughter of Mexican parents and spoke broken English, all the times I'd been picked on by peers because I was overweight and wore glasses, all the impotent rage that I had towards my father for beating my mother just exploded. (Habell-Pallán 226)

Feminists like Audre Lorde or bell hooks have emphasized the political potential of anger. They argue that anger can be used for political activism and as an affirmation of agency, if it is reflected as well as consciously communicated. Lorde famously wrote in "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism" that "[a]nger is a grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change" (129). Lorde and hooks developed their theories of anger as politics against a sociocultural climate that was not only racist and homophobic but also allowed for unequal access to the emotion of anger. Until today, non-whites are often signified and denounced as angry and dangerous in the (white) public eye. Knowing about this public image of people of color (and queers), especially non-white females discipline themselves, afraid to otherwise confirm racist clichés and expose themselves to social and economic sanctions. Lorde and hooks see this as a strategy to guarantee the continuation of white male colonial hegemony. They emphasize that anger, while partly appreciated or tolerated for whites, is understood as dangerous, uncivilized, inappropriate, and a marker of the working class when expressed by women and racialized individuals or groups. Although it is true that anger is neither appreciated in white women (especially lesbians) nor in people of color, the degrees of disciplining as well as punishment are quite different for the respective groups. The recent excesses of right-winger Sarah Palin are a good example of the fact that anger among some angry white conservatives has become very much tolerated and even appreciated by some in recent years. A similar example where an angry black woman becomes accepted or even appreciated to the same degree is rather hard to imagine. The abjection of

black anger must be understood as a way to "perpetuate and maintain white supremacy" (hooks 15) and to continue the colonization of black U.S. residents. This unequal distribution and appreciation of anger within U.S. society includes the construction of 'the political.' Politics continue to be perceived as belonging to the sphere of 'the rational,' which is understood as the opposite of 'the emotional,' and thus of affects like anger. Cultural studies scholars like Neil Nehring and Sara Ahmed show that the denial and rhetorical abjection of emotions, and especially of negative emotions like anger, is a successful tactic in the field of politics. The distinction between the political and the emotional needs to be upheld, despite the continued usage of emotions within politics, to perpetuate white male hegemonic power (cf. Nehring, *Popular* xi). Like hooks, Nehring, Lorde and Ahmed, queer-feminist punks of color diagnose a similar abjection of black anger within their predominantly white punk communities.

With her article "On Being Critical," Lauren Martin documents the stereotypical connection between black women and anger in Mimi Nguyen's popular zine *Race Riot II*. She tells her personal story about a white woman's response to an earlier article of hers on "racial and ethnic identity and the racial and class politics of zines, punk, and riot grrrl":

> The implications of [the white woman's] message were downright disturbing—it's okay to argue, just as long as I do it nicely and hide my fury. Not too messy. Don't cause a scene. She wasn't the first or the last to imply this. […] I was reprimanded by an Asian American boy for being 'too critical' when I pointed out the grossly obvious fact that HeartattaCk's 'Women' and 'Race' issues were tokenizing gestures. My hand wants to reach for the butterfly knife every time I am told I am too PC, too sensitive, lack sense of humor. (Martin, "On Being" 33)

Martin's writing gives a good account of the fact that anger from non-white individuals and groups continues to be understood as uncivilized, inappropriate, and marking a status of working-class or below

in the early 2000s and indeed today. The cultural signification of racialized anger as anti-social legitimizes the dismissal of the angry speaker's agency and therefore the formation of strong positions against racism and sexism. Hence, an acceptable form of articulation of racialized and sexualized oppression can only originate from a weak position as victim. This strategic maneuver of keeping anger in place permeates every sphere of the social, and it is in fact internalized in the psyche of those who need to be kept in place. The severity of the disciplining of black and female anger, however, suggests that anger carries great political potential. Queer-feminist punks see this revolutionary potential of queer and black anger and seek to tap it through their music.

The quality of queer-feminist punk's anger is of course very specific. Punk's anger is relatively mediated, purposeful and staged. Although it is produced on purpose and almost never a spontaneous reaction or affect, it is no less genuine. In contrast to most other forms of anger, punk anger is *enjoyed*. This form of enjoyment felt during the physical and verbal expression of angry punk lyrics, sounds and movements comes very close to the description of *jouissance* by Lacanian theorists.

Especially the angry performances by queer and feminist punks of color like Armendariz Velasquez or Stag Bitten, who I will discuss later on, can be read as *jouissance*-like drives. Such performances transgress the norms of (most) punk environments which are often male, heteronormative and white-dominated. Their singers' extremely energetic, forceful stage presence gives the impression of a movement that compels the subject to constantly attempt to transgress the prohibitions imposed on his or her (orgasmic) enjoyment, to go beyond the pleasure principle, which is by definition *jouissance*. Like every musical performance, punk music produces meaning, but at times—especially at live performances—the screams and rapid movements of the performers, the beats, sound or noise seems to take over and the bodies seems out of control. In these moments punk *jouissance* goes beyond meaning and produces non-meaning. I

understand such performances as highly political, despite Edelman's insistence that *jouissance* is the opposite of politics. The politics of *jouissance* partly exceeds the level of language. Anger as well as enjoyment are bodily expressions, reflections of experiences, and also a reactions to experiences. Accordingly, queer-feminist punk *jouissance* is not only political but can be read, understood and collectively shared with audience. This does not mean that the audience can participate within the individual *jouissance* or drive, but an individual's drive can influence others and create something within them. To analyze this collective aspect of queer-feminist punk *jouissance*, the Lacanian concept needs to undergo yet another transformation from its original theorization.

Elizabeth Povinelli suggests to rethink the threat or negativity *jouissance* poses to the psyche. She proposes to understand the undoing of the self, the becoming vulnerable, not as danger but as possibility. Through *jouissance*, especially through politicized situations of enjoyment or *jouissance*, the self can become vulnerable, available, and thus open to the Other. This happens when mind and body are freed from the strict corset of the symbolic order of meaning, the normative social order, in the moment when the undoing of the self within the social order becomes embraced (cf. Povinelli 290). Making oneself vulnerable is of course always precarious, putting the subject in danger of being harmed or undone. However, it is also a situation of communal enjoyment: Povinelli challenges the binary construction of *jouissance* and the social sphere, arguing that the intense moments of enjoyment emerge in the midst of "specific social orderings […] even if they cannot be contained within any particular social ordering" (290). She further explains that "[e]very moment of enjoyment emerges from the specific and differential way that a social order apprehends bodies and subjects" (290). Such "[e]njoyment is separable from the social order only from an analytic point of view—which does not mean that it is the same as the social order. The same is true for potentiality and actuality. The differential spacings that are enjoyment and potentiality emerge within specific social

orderings" (Povinelli 291). Following up on this, Povinelli outlines an understanding of queer not only in terms of (non-) signification, but also as an affect that enables subjects to relate to others. Connecting queerness and anger within the mode of *jouissance*, as it was already suggested throughout this essay, anger can equally become an affect that is potentially shared. *Jouissance*-like enjoyment can be seen as an individual experience and hence as a dividing force that separates the subject from its social surroundings (cf. Povinelli 300), as signifying difference through social conditions or regulations. Similarly, however, this very same enjoyment can become, or rather produce, the "social bond" that joins individuals. Such a bond has the potential to connect people through their angry social criticism and their enjoyment of the excessive demonstration/performance of this anger.

This potential of queer-feminist punk's anger and negativity can be best illustrated by framing it around the physical activity of screaming. The act of screaming renders visible the previously discussed connection between the body, its interruptive forces as well as its function of transporting language in terms of communication. Screaming in punk rock has a meaning beyond the delivering of lyrics. To a degree, screaming is pleasure for the singer. This pleasure might be a cognitive as well as a physical experience. At the same time, however, especially expressed by women and other subordinated groups, screaming carries negative connotations. Punk's screaming has become a norm itself, but because screaming in public is still kind of 'verboten,' with a few exceptions, for instance in sport arenas, and understood as disturbing and inappropriate, vulgar and a marker of a low social status, its celebratory use in punk scenes is still liberating for its protagonists. Especially for female-identified or feminine-acting persons punk screaming is a self-emancipatory act, as female and feminine screams are highly sanctioned expressions. Joanne Gottlieb and Gayle Wald argue that the common association of female screaming "with femininity at its most vulnerable, the scream in its punk context can effect a shocking juxtaposition of sex and rage, including the cultural terrors of the open expressions

of female sexuality, or feminist rage at the sexual uses and abuses of women" (261). Furthermore, "[i]f female screams are often associated with women's sexual violation and rape, then these examples seem to voice a collective outrage at such abuse" (Gottlieb and Wald 261). Following Gottlieb and Wald, the scream in its punk context may signify female sexuality, feminist rage and oppression at the same time. Musical screaming by female-identified persons in punk rock can be understood as a rejection and appropriation of socio-cultural stereotypes. Within queer-feminist punk scenes, punk screams often also refer to sexuality or somewhat mirror or imitate sexual acts. Hence, queer-feminist punk screams not only signify sexuality on the level of criticism but rather imitate sexuality in its most pleasurable, yet violent, or negative, stage that is *jouissance*.

A further aspect why queer-feminist punk of color screaming needs to be understood as an act of violating social norms and rules is that punk scenes are aware of the unequal leniency towards and sanctions of rage, anger and anti-social behavior for whites and non-whites in public, of racial profiling and police brutality. Many individual punks and some queer-feminist punk collectives took part uprisings like Occupy Oakland in 2011 and 2012 (cf. Wiedlack) or the riots in Ferguson in 2014. In the following passage a concrete performance by the band Stag Bitten will be analyzed in order to further concretize features of queer-feminist punk politics at the connection of negativity, (non-)meaning, the body and relationality.

Stag Bitten is a hardcore punk band from Portland, Oregon, consisting of a drummer, a guitarist and a vocalist. They frequently perform in contexts of queer-feminist punk and queer punks of color. The most remarkable feature of Stag Bitten is their vocalist, Arolia McSwain, a female-bodied person of color. McSwain performs in a very high-energy, intense way, screaming and shouting from the top of her lungs. The experience of McSwain's strong, sharp and loud voice is further intensified by her bodily movements and her facial expression, shaking her whole body in arrhythmic rapid movements that look like painful spasms. Her body communicates intense

emotions—rage and anger, so it seems, but also a lot of pleasure. During every song she seems detached from the place of performance, in a stage of agitation or ecstasy. It is exactly the word 'drive' that describes McSwain's performance best. Yet she clearly remains connected to her fellow bandmates, who provide the beats and melodies to her screams. The audience is able to experience the energy of her drive by watching, listening, and dancing in the mosh pit and they mainly relate to the singer not through verbal communication but through nonverbal affect.

The politics of Arolia McSwain's angry queer-feminist punk screams can be found on various levels. To fully understand the politics of Stag Bitten's performance it needs to be noted again that all members of the band are people of color. Although the socio-cultural discourses around people of color and screaming are different than around white women, non-whites are both seen as screamers and excluded from socially acceptable forms of screaming, or any other form of angry articulation, as Audre Lorde and many others have shown. Therefore, performances of screaming, as in the example of McSwain, can be understood as a rejection of the prohibition to scream. It is a violation of gender norms as well as racial norms. At the same time, it is also an appropriation of stereotypes, because women are associated with screaming (and emotionality in general in certain contexts) and so are people of color. It is a performance of the stereotype but on their own terms; female punk screams show strength and pleasure, not pain or fear, and angry screams by queer-punks of color can be understood as a gesture of taking the right to scream, to loudly and verbally criticize racialized injustice and enjoy the screaming. Her punk screams address violence against women and people of color, and at the same time function as a sign of strength and agency because the band—which also performs under the name Negro Nation—is known for its decolonial politics.

In addition to the violent quality of screaming, the screamer, as already noted, is nevertheless able to establish relations between herself and the audience. Arolia McSwain can create such a social bond

through the sensual quality of her performance, the screamer's bodily presence and the sound. Additionally, the shared cultural script for anger in punk, as well as the political reasons for being angry, connect the singer to the audience. The quality that draws the audience closest to her, however, is the disposition towards *jouissance*.

As already established, queer-feminist punk screams by people of color can be understood as *jouissance*-like performances that irritate and violate meanings, social structures and politics. Additionally, dispositions to *jouissance* within punk performances and punk anger have a potential to initiate queer bonds, which I will explain in the following by combining Elizabeth Povinelli's concept of *jouissance* with José Esteban Muñoz's concept of queerness and collectivity in order to analyze futher the productive potential of queer-feminist punk music.

3.2 Ecstasy, Jouissance, and Queer Bonds

José Esteban Muñoz challenges contemporary queer activism and theories in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* with the idea that queerness is a future-bound phenomenon that has yet to emerge. Queerness in Muñoz's sense is the experience of non-normative or queer time. Although queerness is not here yet, we can glimpse a queer present in the moment of queer ecstasy. He sees the actualization of queerness in moments of "ecstatic time" (*Cruising* 25), during concerts, performances, or other social gatherings. Ecstatic time is signaled at the moment one feels ecstasy, "when one looks back at a scene from one's past, present, or future. Opening oneself up to such a perception of queerness as manifestation in and of ecstatic time offers queers much more than the meager offerings of pragmatic gay and lesbian politics" (*Cruising* 32). Muñoz's theorization is unmistakably an answer to Lee Edelman and other theorists of the anti-social turn in queer theory, whom he challenges for their unawareness of their white privilege and misogyny (cf. Muñoz, "Forum"). Nevertheless, his concept of ecstatic time comes very

close to the reading of *jouissance* suggested above. Accordingly, it seems appropriate to relate his account to the psychoanalytical concept and the vocabulary of *jouissance* and the death drive.

Feeling ecstasy irritates the mind; time seems to move slower or faster. This quality or effect could be seen as a queering of normativity, in a positive sense, while it is irritating in the language of negativity. However theorists term it, queer-feminist punks themselves view this effect as positive. Hence, the irritation or suspension of normative senses of time can be understood as creative or positive. Following Muñoz in understanding this effect as creative allows us to recognize punk as a negative force while imagining a queer-feminist and punks-of-color existence and resistance against violence and oppression. Muñoz argues that in the moment when normative time is suspended a queerness becomes possible, whereas anti-social queer theory understands queerness in general as impossible because it would be incomprehensible to the mind. As much as anti-social queerness is impossible, it is also unable to be shared, because it makes communication of any kind impossible. Muñoz's account, however, supports the imagination and recognition of sustainable queer bonds or communities. Moreover, his emphasis on the bodily quality of queer-feminist punk participation makes the imagination of a queer bond thinkable, a relationality or alliance that connects individuals with all their differences and structural (in)equality. This aspect needs to be emphasized, as commonly relationality is based on similarity, not difference.

Muñoz describes the intense experiences of pleasure during a queer-feminist punk concert, which I previously labeled with the term *jouissance*, as "ecstatic" and the temporality of such moments as "ecstatic time" (*Cruising* 25), as already mentioned. Like *jouissance,* Muñoz's ecstatic moments are moments of intensified emotionality, a state of losing control over one's body and voice. Yet while the term ecstasy carries the connotation of heightened feelings of 'love,' *jouissance* marks not only self-destructive feelings and thoughts, the violence and negativity towards the self, but also

those feelings initiated by negativity, like anger. Despite this difference in emphasis, I argue that ecstasy and *jouissance* are two aspects of the same drive.

Ecstatic time, in Muñoz's terms, or moments of *jouissance*, is a time beyond the past, the present and the future that becomes experienced when someone "feels" (Muñoz 32), rather than knows. In other words, these moments can be located in the body and its affects rather than as forms of cognitive experience. Nevertheless, experiencing ecstasy as well as intense bodily and emotional *jouissance* creates forms of recognition and bonds on multiple levels of experience, including the rational level. Arguably, it is not very specific to punk rock to reach an ecstatic or *jouissance*-like state as such experience can be reached though any kind of intense music. However, the particularity of queer-feminist punk music is be found in the political aspect—the simultaneity of queer-feminist and antiracist politics, the enjoyment of anger and angry social-criticism, as well as the feeling of communality or collectivity. All this is conceived through the screams of Stag Bitten. They enable queers of color to become a "part that can have no part in the common world—the thing that cannot be, yet is, concretely, before us" (Povinelli, *The Part* 304) in a very concrete physical sense, by occupying space as dancers, performers, or listeners. Moreover, through the combination of meaningful textual references, physical representation and sound, performances by Stag Bitten make room for collective recognition of historic resistance and struggles by people of color. Such music creates relations on the grounds of punk knowledge, but this knowledge about structural oppression, sexism, homophobia, racism and classism is not necessarily based on personal experience. The recognition of different individuals, accordingly, is not a question of identification or experience. It is rather a question of a shared politics, namely a rejection of hegemonic oppression. These politics are not exclusively or merely on the verbal level, they are experienced through the drive towards *jouissance*.

4. CONCLUSION

Queer-feminist punk by bands like Agatha or Stag Bitten combines and creatively reworks queer theory as well as feminist philosophy. Sometimes, like in the lyrics "Do you remember, that time you told me we would die? You promised me no future, and now i know that was a lie" (Agatha, "No Future"), punks comment on punk's meanings as well as anti-social accounts of queerness such as Edelman's, holding their lives and life-experience against that theory, proving the possibility to think time, politics and futurity differently than in the normative service of the 'Child.' A more realistic look at the real-life circumstances of non-white, non-normative and/or non-privileged U.S. Americans makes clear that there are many different futurities. Just because these futures and people are meaningless within the symbolic order does not mean that they are not meaningful or powerful at all. Bands such as Agatha, Stag Bitten, or God Is My Co-Pilot see and imagine a different futurity for themselves and others—a future that is not dominated by white male privilege. Similarly, they understand the regimes and realities that oppress on the intersection of class, race, gender, and sexuality. They use punk rock to communicate their queer-feminist positions as well as a critique that reflects discussions within queer and feminist theory as well as everyday experience and practice. They adapt negativity and anger for their cultural, political and aesthetic mode or style. At the sphere of meaning and verbal expression, punk's politics of anger communicate social criticism. However, this anger can be located not only on the level of verbal expressions but also within music, sound and bodily expressions. It was shown in reference to work on emotions and emotionality that the politics of anger and negativity operate forcefully at the intersection between rational, emotional and bodily cognition and meanings. Because queer anger, negativity and pleasure go beyond the level of meaning, the possibility of relationality emerges. This relationality allows queer bonds that allow for the recognition of difference—in terms of race, class, gender and

sexuality—and the formulation of alliances against oppressive forms of normativity.

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U.S. BLACK METAL, FOLK MUSIC AND POLITICAL RADICALISM

PANOPTICON'S *KENTUCKY*

Paola Ferrero

I will surrender my heart to no one but me
There are only a few things that I believe:
that people are born free and slavery is murder
property is theft and government is tyranny: anarchy is liberty
— Panopticon, "Flag Burner, Torch Bearer" on: *Panopticon* (2008)

The label "Old Weird America" was famously coined by Greil Marcus to describe the collection of traditional English and Scottish ballads, Appalachian folk tunes, work songs, African-American blues and social dance songs in Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*. These heterogeneous songs from the 1920s and 1930s were not, as Greil Marcus argues, "historical dramas," but instead were a "national dream, a flux of desire and punishment, sin and luck, joke and horror" (104) that has inhabited the American musical unconscious ever since. Music critic Robert Cantwell aptly describes the power of American folk music to generate new meanings for each coming generation as "a cloud of obfuscating signs that a confluence of various forces in successive moments [...] have brought together into a system of signification that perpetually renews itself at the same time as it reincorporates its whole genealogy as a vital element of that renewal" (187). This process of reincorporation and renewal of the genealogy of American folk music, a slippery and obfuscating label in and of itself, has found fertile grounds in every Folk Revival of the second half of the twentieth century, from the celebrated years of the counterculture in the 1960s to its most recent and fragmented iterations in the 1990s.

However, nothing seems to be more "weird" or "obfuscating" than the unholy marriage of American folk music and black metal (BM)

in Panopticon's *Kentucky* (2012), a topical record about the bloody history of coal mining and environmental destruction in Harlan County. To most people, the harsh growls, the furious blast beat of the drums and the relentless tremolo-picked arpeggios and heavily distorted guitars are an unlikely match for the melodies of a gently-plucked acoustic guitar or a melancholy violin. Still, the inherent fury and sonic aggression of Panopticon's BM seem to me the perfect counterpoint to the equally incendiary songs of coalminers' daughters and performers like Florence Reece and Sarah Ogan Gunning. The sprawling melancholy of atmospheric BM morphs effortlessly and surprisingly well with the "high lonesome sound"[1] of Appalachian folk music to offer a new conceptualization of United States Black Metal (USBM)'s experimental possibilities.

This essay will present Panopticon's *Kentucky* as a quintessentially USBM record that forgoes the imagery and musical influence of European BM to carve out a space for the emergence of a genre rooted in and part of the American musical tradition. In order to understand the political and musical roots of Panopticon, I will first analyze how classic heavy metal bands from both the United States and Europe have tried to incorporate their political beliefs into their lyrics. Then, I will narrow my focus and concentrate on BM's controversial association with extreme right-wing ideologies as well as the current state of USBM. Finally, I will present Panopticon's *Kentucky* as an 'unicum' in the history of the genre, a bold musical experiment that further emancipates USBM from the tradition of Norwegian BM, arguably the most influential of the entire genre, both musically and ideologically. I will argue that the uniqueness of this record lies in its clear left-wing if not anarchist political stance, a characteristic that sets Panopticon's project further apart from the usual tropes of Satanism and nihilism in BM. It actively incorporates

1 What has come to be known as the very definition of Appalachian folk music is taken from Bill Monroe's 1966 album "The High Lonesome Sound of Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys." Bill Monroe is considered by many to be the "father of bluegrass music" (Klein and Coleman).

the native folklore and the autochthonous musical traditions of the United States while evoking the historical wounds of the troubled Kentuckian landscape. This record jogs our forgetful collective memories, bringing back the forgotten stories and protest songs of the American Mine Wars and "Bloody Harlan." It resurrects the quintessentially American musical tradition of the protest song to remind us of today's destruction of the land through fracking and mountain-top removal and the consequences of such practices on the health of the local populations.

THE POLITICS OF CLASSIC HEAVY METAL

Since its momentous emergence in the early 1980s, heavy metal has consistently fashioned itself as a rebellious force against conservative social mores and the established order. Bands like Iron Maiden, Judas Priest and Mötorhead, the so-called New Wave of British Heavy Metal, came from a working-class background and appealed to the sentiments of dissatisfaction and rebellion among the younger generations living in the British midlands (cf. Walser 11).[2] However, their imagery and lyrics were not overtly political and relied more on tropes typical of Hard Rock and early Heavy Metal of rebellious youth, studs-and-leather machismo or shock-horror, as Eddie, Iron Maiden's zombified mascot, testifies. For instance, Iron Maiden's cover of their 1980 single "Sanctuary" featured Eddie holding a knife and leaning on the body of then U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, but it was tongue-in-cheek humor, used for its shock value rather than as a political statement (cf. Christie 28).

The thrash and speed metal wave bands of the mid-1980s, originally from the San Francisco Bay area and Los Angeles, inserted more overtly political themes in some of their songs. As Deena

2 Judas Priest's 1980 album *British Steel,* title notwithstanding, was certainly not a political record. Songs like "Breaking the Law," "Living After Midnight" or "The Rage" testify to the NWOBM's essentially playful and unpolitical character.

Weinstein points out, bands like Anthrax, Megadeth, Metallica and Slayer adopted the blueprint of the protest song to explore themes of power, alienation, social injustice and the horrors of war (cf. 51). Metallica's 1988 *And Justice For All…* was their most explicit protest record. The opening track, "Blackened," attacked environmental destruction, "And Justice For All…" targeted the corruption of the legal system, and the sprawling, eight-minute-long "One" chronicled the tale of a wounded soldier trapped in his own maimed body. Megadeth, the creature of controversial leader Dave Mustaine, have long toyed with themes of war and social oppression in explicitly titled albums like *Peace Sells, But Who's Buying?* (1986), and songs like "Rust in Peace…Polaris," "Holy Wars…The Punishment Due" and "Take No Prisoners" (from 1990's *Rust in Peace*).

In the United Kingdom the death metal and grindcore scene of the mid-1980s produced some of the most influential and sonically brutal acts known to the genre. More to the point, some of these bands infused their lyrics with an explicitly political message. For instance, Birmingham's Napalm Death displayed clear left-leaning sympathies: their seminal 1987 album *Scum* denounced the evils of globalization and the power of international corporations in the era of conservative Thatcherism. Liverpool's Carcass couched their support of vegetarianism in splatter-gore lyrics equating human meat with animal meat (cf. Phillipov 108).

Finally, a somewhat peripheral band to the core of heavy metal, California's Rage Against the Machine, usually identified as the creators of the hybrid genre of 'rap metal,' became the most overtly political heavy metal band of the 1990s. Their 1993 hit single "Killing In The Name" was a very catchy and highly popular song with a killer guitar riff, but the lyrics, repeated obsessively by singer Zack De La Rocha, condemned police brutality and racism (cf. McIver, ch. 3). While heavy metal has never been directly linked to protest art, these early examples show how a number of now established bands utilized the aggressiveness of the genre to reflect on American society's evils and injustices.

THE POLITICS OF BLACK METAL

BM's political stance is nebulous at best. As it is the case with the 'mother' genre, the myriad scenes and projects spread all over the world make it hard to pinpoint a common political denominator. BM, arguably the most extreme strand of heavy metal, has been historically associated with right-wing, even Nazi-fascist politics and ideology. The reasons for this association are mainly two: the violent facts involving Norwegian BM in the 1990s and the use of pagan imagery and themes inspired by Norse and Germanic mythology. BM's true codification came to fruition in the genre's "second wave": between 1990–1994 a number of Norwegian bands from Oslo created one of the most influential scenes in the modern metal underground.[3] Bands like Burzum, Darkthrone, Mayhem, Emperor and Ulver (only to cite a few) created a whole new musical subculture. The imagery was harsh and obscure: everything from the convoluted and almost unreadable band logos to the menacing stage names and the use of corpse-paint had to suggest an image of inaccessibility and mystery. The majority of the bands wrote lyrics relating to Satanism and Viking and Norse mythology and advocated a return to pre-Christian Paganism as a form of rebellion against the establishment. The scene was plagued by a series of violent incidents, namely the murder of Mayhem's guitarist Euronymous by Burzum's main man Varg Vikernes and a series of church burnings, which helped crystallize an all-encompassing and misleading image of the entire scene as violent, Satanic and neo-fascist (cf. Patterson 147–48). While the story of the Norwegian scene is too complex to be dealt with in full here, it is true that the sensationalistic events surrounding it helped to make Norwegian BM an export product, which found one of the most flourishing scenes in the U. S.

Black Metal has long flirted with folklore and traditional music, particularly in Northern Europe, where Viking history and Norse

3 The so-called "first wave" of BM came to fruition in the early 1980s with seminal bands like UK's Venom (who gave the name to the BM genre), Switzerland's Celtic Frost and Sweden's Bathory. See Patterson 6–57.

mythology have shaped the lyrical imagery of many bands like Bathory, Enslaved, or Moonsorrow. As Granholm illustrates, early Norwegian BM bands already expressed sentiments of nostalgia towards the pagan 'past' of the nation, as in Burzum's "Det som en gang var" (What Once Was) and Darkthrone's "Cromlech" (from 1990's *Soulside Journey*) (cf. 258). The reclamation of the pagan and mythological past has been carried out in its fullest form by bands now routinely grouped under the label Viking Metal. This offshoot of BM is usually attributed to the legendary band Bathory, who inaugurated the genre with 1988's *Blood Fire Death*. Its follow-up, 1990's *Hammerheart*, caused quite a controversy by sporting on the album's artwork the sunwheel, an ancient pagan symbol appropriated by Nazism and subsequently by extreme right-wing groups since the Second World War (cf. Patterson 35). The use of labels like 'Viking,' 'Folk' or 'Pagan' Metal has therefore become quite suspect, though Viking bands have always explained their use of runes and pagan stories as a way of reconnecting to the culture of their ancestors. The genre also includes established acts like the Faroese Tyr, Norway's Enslaved and Finland's Moonsorrow, which have never voiced fascist sympathies. Since the late 1990s, the European scene has indeed been plagued by explicitly or not-so-explicitly National Socialist or extreme nationalist groups, particularly in Eastern Europe. The most notorious bands deemed to be part of the controversial subculture known as National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) are Poland's Graveland and Thor's Hammer and Ukraine's Hate Forest, Drudkh, and Nokturnal Mortum. Though some of these bands, particularly the Ukrainians, have tried to distance themselves from the stigma of being associated with National Socialism, their sympathies towards rightwing nationalist movements make their political allegiance still suspect and controversial (cf. Patterson 371).

Contemporary USBM is displaying a growing interest in folk music and local traditional cultures, though with a slightly more spiritualistic and ecologist stance. The child of both traditional Norwegian BM and autochthonous 1980s and 1990s American bands

like Von, Absu, Profanatica, Krieg and Weakling, USBM is as diversified and expansive as the North American continent, and talking about a coherent scene with precise stylistic elements is impossible as well as misleading. The Pacific northwest and California are home to bands like Agalloch, Alda, Blood of the Black Owl, Echtra, Fauna, Fell Voices, and Wolves in the Throne Room. These bands have been lumped under the label "Cascadian Black Metal," a very loosely defined strand of USBM concerned with nature, ecology, tradition-al American folk culture, mysticism, and the transcendentalist philosophies of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. However, this scene cannot be delimited locally, stylistically or even ideologically. Alda and to a lesser degree Wolves in the Throne Room have expressed an allegiance to anarcho-primitivism and deep ecology, while others, like Blood of the Black Owl, Fauna and Echtra are instead more interested in ritualism, shamanism and the spiritual communion with nature (cf. Shakespeare 5–7). For instance, outsiders like West Virginia's Nechochwen incorporate the myths and rituals of their Native-American ancestors into their lyrical imagery and mix BM with Native American instrumentation and chants (cf. Nechochwen Bandcamp). Similarly, the band Horseback, the project of multi-instrumentalist Jenks Miller, offers a disorienting mix of drone-doom metal and melancholy Americana. His latest record, *Piedmont Apocrypha* (2014), is an ode to the traditional music and folklore of the Piedmont region of Appalachia, a mix of Native-American drumming, folk-blues dirges and of course screaming vocals and distorted guitar drones (cf. Horseback Bandcamp). Stylistically, these bands are equally influenced by post-rock, neo-folk, Norwegian BM and progressive BM's long-winding, repetitive and disorienting compositions. However, they seem to share the common, though by no means totalizing intent of trying to recuperate the musical traditions of American native culture and folk music, while at the same time espousing a sort of spiritual pantheism inspired by Native American rituals rather than European paganism.

BM has also witnessed the rise of a vital and mainly underground current of far-leftist bands collected under the label "Red and Anarchist Black Metal" (RABM). While this is a worldwide scene, the North American bands are the most well-known and are oftentimes confused with the Cascadian bands as a result of their ideological affinity, specifically their concern with environmental destruction. For instance, the Canadian band Iskra is a committed anarchist band, with lyrics denouncing capitalism and the American way of life, and advocating class warfare. Their fellow countrymen Skagos, whose latest record is significantly entitled *Anarchic* (2013), identify in the anarchic way of life a total communion with nature and the natural cycle of death and rebirth rather than a precise political commitment.[4] This partial overview of heavy metal and BM's various political facets reveals the prismatic character of the genre's ideological tenets and the impossibility of pinpointing an all-encompassing 'politics' of Heavy Metal. It also reveals how BM has always been struggling with its more nihilist and individualist impulses *vis-à-vis* the more extreme and controversial political beliefs of some the scene's members. In particular, USBM bands have been trying to carve out a place

4 See for instance the explicitely political lyrics to Iskra's "Face of Capital" from their self-titled 2004 album: "Capitalism for most Americans is synonymous with democracy / Yet the bitter fight for civil-rights is written in our history / Any freedom we might enjoy was fought against brutal opposition / The men who opposed liberty are those who built this system / The wealthy population protects and nurtures its own class / Refusing to react responsibly: a historical habit of this caste / Far from defending America's few hard-won rights / They threaten democratic process and freedom's still out of sight" (Iskra). And the more "spiritual" lyrics of Skagos's *Anarchic*: "The soil is the seed's universe. It is oblivious, as it longs and strains and reaches to sprout from the ground, to what lies beyond what it has always known. But it is born to strive upward, to whatever grief or joy is beyond. As I rise above the world, as I hurtle through the sky, as I expand in every direction, I do not know what is beyond these stars or the vast and aching blackness they pierce. But I must strive, I must rise. I must go beyond. It does not matter whether it is the boundary or myself that is destroyed. I am the transgressor! May my body break these bonds or may these bonds break my body" (Skagos).

of their own in BM's musical panorama by exploring the musical and spiritual roots of the nation. Panopticon's unique brand of BM on *Kentucky* takes a further step by tapping into the material history of the Mine Wars and "Bloody" Harlan County and by utilizing the musical idiom of the folk protest song. At the same time, the album manages to radically inscribe American folk music 'into' BM, finally rooting the genre in the American musical tradition.

THE "ANARCHO-PAGAN" U.S. BLACK METAL OF PANOPTICON'S *KENTUCKY*

Panopticon, the one-man project of Austin L. Lunn from Memphis, Tennessee, is an odd creature even in the odd world of BM. He appropriately describes his music as "anarcho-pagan black metal" (cf. Williams), a label that indicates his affinity with both the Cascadian/ritualistic scene and the lesser-known RABM scene of bands like Skagos and Iskra. Lunn is a self-proclaimed anarchist with a passion for Norse mythology that has influenced his rather unique and multi-faceted musical output. His 2008 split with Lake of Blood featured a song entitled "La passione di Sacco e Vanzetti" dedicated to the two Italian anarchists executed in the U.S. in the 1920s. His second full-length album, *Collapse* (2009), used characters and stories from Norse mythology, like in "The Death of Baldr and the Coming War," to posit a regeneration of society through violence and a new anarchist order. His 2011 album, *Social Disservices,* chronicled his disastrous experience as a social worker in a mental institution and denounced the poor living conditions of the patients and the prison-like system of mental-health assistance (cf. Panopticon Bandcamp).

With his latest work, *Kentucky* (2012), Lunn tackles directly the history of human destructive activities throughout the epochs with the use of traditional Appalachian Folk music and coal-mining protest songs. More specifically, he recuperates those songs of the coal-mining protest tradition relating to the Harlan County Mine Wars of the 1930s, "Which Side Are you on?" by Florence Reece and "Come Ye

all Coal Miners" by Sarah Ogan Gunning, which were a central part of the 1960s Folk Revival's leftist culture (cf. Denisoff 21). This album, which a commentator has mockingly dubbed "Alan Lomax Metal" (cf. Obstkrieg), sports a heavy use of banjos, flutes, mandolins and penny-whistles intersecting with soaring, ten-minute-long suites of blast-beat, screaming vocals and surging post-rock melodies to create a unique blend of black metal bluegrass. The enthusiastic reviews that have been pouring in since the album's release have all been quick to note how Panopticon is the first metal act to actively incorporate the tradition of American folk music and of union anthems into a 'protest' BM record. With Panopticon's latest work we go back, through BM of all genres, to the Appalachia of the Mine Wars and of the fecund folk tradition of this land. Lyrically, the album is a painful lament of human unquenchable thirst for land, power and energy. The songs chronicle the continued abuse of Kentucky's landscape by the coal-mining industry, from the Mine Wars in West Virginia in the 1930s to the Harlan County strikes in the 1970s and up until today's silent destruction through mountain-top removal and fracking. Musically, this album suggests new ways in which the traditional American folk music idiom can be manipulated by other genres and how it can generate new musical meanings with such apparently distant forms as metal and extreme music.

This generative power is at work in Panopticon's *Kentucky* in multiple ways that go beyond the use of some bluegrass instrumentation or the covering of some folk protest song. The first track of the album, "Bernheim Forest in Spring," is a straight-up Appalachian bluegrass up-tempo song that is unmistakably familiar in melodic and picking style, for instance, to Appalachian staples like Buell Kazee's "East Virginia," Clarence Ashley's "Coo Coo Bird," and Uncle Dave Macon's "Way Down the Old Plank Road" or "Buddy Won't you Hold Down the Line."[5] The opening track, an instrumen-

5 These songs are part of Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* (1952), an invaluable collection of folk and popular American songs from the 1920s and 1930s. The compilation became one of the greatest inspiration

tal intro, is here used to evoke the beauty of the uncontaminated, pre-lapsarian nature of Bernheim Forest, while the familiar sounds of acoustic guitars, banjos and violins lull the listener into a sense of homely complacency. The spell is soon broken by "Bodies Under the Falls," a structurally complex ten-minute suite about the alleged 1810 Ywahoo Falls massacre of Cherokee women and children in Daniel Boone Forest, KY. The ferocious pummeling of the blast beat and searing wails of Lunn's growls that open the song are used to deliver scathing lyrics about the massacre as symbolic of the centuries of genocide of Native populations in America. Even if one does not understand the lyrics, the sheer intensity of the screaming vocals as well as the melancholic melodic line on tin whistles that sustains the main riff convey the utter rage and pain towards the senseless slaughter. In the main acoustic bridge to "Bodies Under the Falls," a banjo produces—through the modal tuning typical of the Appalachian sound—a melancholic, eerie melody, reminiscent of that "high, lonesome sound" used to describe the music of Appalachian singer Roscoe Holcomb. The bridge is then followed by a mid-tempo section where a solitary violin intones a sad dirge over a layer of distorted guitars and Lunn's wail to create a unique sense of sonic estrangement.

The entire record is in fact a play on sonic contrast, a compositional strategy that uses the acoustic folk idiom to evoke the peaceful Kentuckian landscape and the BM idiom to convey the havoc wreaked on the land as well as the anger, pain and anguish of the human survivors. The album opening and closing acoustic tracks, "Bernheim Forest in Spring" and "Kentucky," are in fact pastoral, nostalgic odes to Austin's adoptive land that mourn the inevitable pollution of the natural habitat. Between these two tracks, the flow of unrelenting BM's aggression is interrupted by two classic reinterpretations of union staples "Which Side are You On?" and "Come All

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of the urban folk revival of the 1960s and an important document in the dissemination of American roots music in the era of the counterculture. See Marcus and the *Anthology of American Folk Music* booklet.

Ye Coal Miners." These two songs are re-arranged in a very classic manner, attempting to be true to the original material and not black-metalize it, which is part of Panopticon's intention to use them as rallying cries, as calls to arms adapted to the present struggle. As Lunn explains, the choice of these two acoustic tracks was strategic to the overall message the album wants to convey:

> Those songs are songs about empowerment. They are songs meant to refuel people that are worn from their struggle. Even the melodies lend themselves to it. So, it made a lot of sense to me to do those songs. There are many others, but they are more mournful… So I chose to use more well-known songs that were more of a battle cry than a lament. (Lunn)

The songs of the Harlan County struggle of the 1930s, as Serge Denisoff points out, were some of the earliest examples of folk songs with a "conscious message" (26) of universal protest against the evils of capitalism. As such, Panopticon is able to resuscitate the songs of the Harlan Mine Wars and revitalize them for the present struggle against the new threats against the Kentucky land and its people.

The record also makes heavy use of samples documenting the struggles in Harlan County between the union workers, the union scabs and the police. For instance, "Black Soot and Red Blood," a song about the Harlan County Mine Wars of the 1930s, features a lengthy testimony of an old survivor of these Mine Wars.[6] The old

6 Excerpts from the songs "Black Soot and Red Blood" and "Which Side Are You On?" show the affinity of Panopticon's rhetorical choices with the protest songs of Harlan struggle. Panopticon: "Fight for what is right, for every working man to earn his keep / Fight for what is right till they meet your demands…in Bloody Harlan…lives laid down for the union / Scarlet red around your neck / Black lungs and broken backs in Bloody Harlan, in Bloody Harlan…in Bloody Harlan / The years go on and the mountains crumble / The right to live and work, sacrificing body and land / From Kentucky to West Virginia, the workers rise and fall while wringing hands profit off of it all…" Florance Reece: "They say in Harlan County / there are no neutrals there / You'll either be a union man / Or a thug for J. H. Blair… /

mine worker remembers the violent practices of the police and the private mine guards to break the protests and preaches the value of solidarity among workers. The song then closes with a recorded sample of a group of people at a sit-in during the "Brookside Strikes" against the Duke Power Corporation in the 1970s. The voice of a 91-year-old woman present at the sit-in and shouting at a union scab "I'm ready to die, are you?" symbolically conjoins the fifty-year-long struggle of Bloody Harlan.

Panopticon's album frames Kentucky as a ravaged land marked by a long history of violence, labor wars, and poverty whose strongest, most resilient voice of the continuing struggle has been its appealing folk music repertoire. The cover of *Kentucky* features a famous Earl Palmer photograph from the 1930s of a coal miner, Teach Slone, wearing his working clothes and holding a shovel, his four-year-old son by his side, also with a shovel, his face black with soot. This photograph became very popular in leftist political circles in the 1960s and was used as the cover of several anthologies of protest and folk music. The black and white photo is superimposed on a color photo of a Kentuckian forest, creating a stark contrast between the lushness of the forest and the drab attire and tired gaze of the miner and his son. By using this particular composition for the cover art, Panopticon identifies himself unequivocally with the tradition of political radicalism and protest sparked by the mineworkers. He also manages to use the tragic history of grassroots union organizing in Kentucky to revitalize contemporary environmental protest at a time when unions are seen as dangerously superfluous in America. The album becomes a rallying cry against indiscriminate fracking, mountaintop removal, underground gas pipes and 'Drill, drill' policies that are ravaging the landscape and compromising the health of the local populations.

Don't scab for the bosses / Don't listen to their lies / Us poor folks haven't got a chance / Unless we organize" (Denisoff 24).

Panopticon's unique and inspiring black metal bluegrass is shaking the received boundaries of BM to the roots, a very conservative genre both in its music and its iconography. As stated earlier, Cascadian Black Metal bands like Alda, Skagos and Wolves in the Throne Room have also concerned themselves with issues of environmental destruction. But their concern with the protection and the conservation of the American landscape is not rooted in the specificity of the history of a fixed place, but rather, as Sascha Pöhlmann argues, in the common history of humanity and the common threat of annihilation:

> Cascadian Black Metal espouses a view of human existence that is not defined by essentialized identities but rather by a common environmental and temporal embeddedness: humanity is defined as a community by the very fact that it has a *common* future, and that this common future is threatened by a common finality. Cascadian Black Metal is explicitly *global* in its ecological outlook and its perspective on futurity, and despite its acknowledgment of its respective emplacements it is nevertheless never *limited* to a particular cultural or national context. It remains true not only to a future-oriented Whitmanian philosophy of compost that contemplates regeneration beyond anthropocentrism, but it also is true to his insight into the globality and universality of cognition, perception, and environmental embeddedness, and the resulting radical equality of all across time and space [...]. (28)

Panopticon's BM environmentalism is instead firmly grounded in the history of a particular place, Kentucky, and in the power of grassroots political action and protest to effect change. The deep-ecologist prospect of regenerating the American soil by going beyond the primacy of anthropocentrism is here overturned in favor of a deeper focus on the now seventy-year-old struggle of the Kentuckian people. BM's usual nihilist and individualistic slant is overturned in favor of a topical record deeply concerned with communal well-being and political action. As Diarmuid Hester rightly

argues, USBM is also individualistic, but rather than embracing the exclusionary, nihilist vision of traditional BM, it searches a kind of Thoreauvian isolation in the company of nature (cf. 80). In the case of Panopticon, as Lunn states, the political consciousness of the miners' struggle merges with his love for the land, its natural beauty and its traditions:

> Well, my political beliefs jell very well with the ideology of the unions and their historic struggle. Kentucky is also highly important to me as it is where my family and loved ones are, so I certainly seek to support and protect it. Often, I am inspired and in moments of impulsivity decide 'I am going to make this record' and then the inspiration fades…but the drive to make this album never faded. It just intensified…with every mountain I hiked, every waterfall, every forest, every beer I shared with my family and friends…It just solidified my love for my home state. (Lunn)

With *Kentucky,* Panopticon has literally created a blueprint for American folk metal. He has found the perfect harmony between the ancestral 'high lonesome sound' of the Appalachian repertoire we all know and USBM's long and mournful suites of sonic devastation and deep emotional resonance. Panopticon's *Kentucky* is indeed the twisted chronicle of the American 'national dream.' It is the story of American prosperity and of the endless, bountiful American wilderness but also of its dark side, the slaughter of Native populations, the continued plundering of the American soil for coal and gas, and the exploitation of Kentucky mine workers. With this unique record, Panopticon has managed to revitalize the art of the American folk protest song through the lens of an uncompromising political radicalism, while at the same time 'disrespectfully' elevating BM, a genre known for its individualistic nihilism, to a form of communal protest art.

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"HARMONICA, KAZOO—A FRIEND."

PYNCHON'S LESSONS IN ORGANOLOGY

Christian Hänggi

In his entire œuvre, Thomas Pynchon refers about 800 times to 140 different musical instruments. Three instruments he treats with particular sympathy are the harmonica, the kazoo, and the ukulele. These somewhat strange subjects of organology have a lot in common and resonate with many of Pynchon's preferred themes and concerns. As Sean Carswell has already written extensively about Pynchon's use of the ukulele, I will investigate the other two instruments that in many ways seem aligned with the small Hawaiian guitar.[1]

Although the three instruments have predecessors that go back hundreds, if not thousands of years, they acquired their current form in the nineteenth century and quickly rose to wide popularity, especially in the USA. They were never considered respectable instruments but rather toy-like sound-producers for the common man, woman, and above all, child. One could say that they are preterites of organology; instruments that are passed over and not given much serious attention by the music critics of the day. The disdain of the critics also meant that, for a long time, there were few if any professional musicians playing these instruments. When in 1942 and 1947, the American Federation of Musicians went on strike against the recording companies, the harmonica, the ukulele, and the kazoo were exempt because their players were not unionized. As cheap

1 See Carswell's dissertation chapter "An 'Ukulele Guide to Contemporary Resistance." Carswell reads the ukulele in Pynchon's work as a symbol of hope and resistance to Empire (in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's sense): "It is born of colonialism, global markets, and militarization [...], but it is also born of celebration, community, and cultural identity" (Carswell 193). At the time of the submission of his dissertation, Jim Tranquada and John King's excellent *The 'Ukulele: A History* was not yet published but Carswell wrote to me that he heavily relied on an academic essay written by those two authors.

and easy-to-learn instruments, they were at all times affordable for households with meager economic outlooks. Their compact size and inexpensiveness also led to their wide distribution among soldiers of different wars, most notably the two World Wars. One could argue that their inexpensiveness and simplicity lend them an air of democracy: they are instruments that, as a ukulele advert in 1915 had it, "Anybody Can Play" (Tranquada & King 97). More than other instruments, the harmonica, the kazoo, and the ukulele are figured out in the hands of the learner and not at the advice of a teacher. Something similar seems to be true for the early inventors and manufacturers who were clockmakers or carpenters and figured out how to build these relatively simple instruments. The producers quickly found their mass market niches and exploited them with ingenuity, and it was the migrations across the Atlantic which formed the basis of the instruments' development and success: from Madeira to Hawaii, from Germany to Canada and the USA, but also from Africa to the USA.

I will attempt to retrace the harmonica's and the kazoo's history with respect to Pynchon's work, always with a view to their entanglement in social struggles, warfare, power games, and consumer culture. This allows for discovering a multiplicity of connections, both historically grounded as well as speculative, in the way Pynchon stages these instruments. While he mostly treats them as comical, in line with their historical reception, Pynchon problematizes this position and employs his sly signature humor to shed light on the darker sides of the contexts in which they appear.

ATTEMPTED MOPERY WITH A SUBVERSIVE INSTRUMENT

The first European harmonica appears in Vienna around 1820. Kim Field reports that "[b]y 1830 most Europeans knew the mouth organ as the *mundharmonika* [...]" (25). Already in 1827, the mouth harmonica came to the German village of Trossingen where thirty years later, Matthias Hohner opened his own business and turned out 650 instruments that year (26). In 1862, Hohner began exporting

instruments to the United States, which laid the foundation of a global musical instruments empire, overshadowing its early competitors by high-quality instruments, clever marketing, industrial espionage, diversification, and buying up rivals.[2] Unexpectedly, it would be the USA where the harmonica enjoyed most success, starting in the regions with large German immigrant populations, such as Texas and the Carolinas (cf. Wenzel & Häffner 58). The small and affordable instrument that allowed to bend notes for less rigidly defined tonal systems than the European one soon came into the hands of African-Americans as "even the poorest cotton picker could scrape together the few cents needed to acquire one" (58–59).

By 1911, the company—renamed Matth. Hohner AG—shipped out around eight million instruments and had branches in New York, Toronto, London, Warsaw, and Vienna (cf. Wenzel & Häffner 21). The harmonica was already widely distributed during World War I. In 1930, Curt Sachs wrote: "Inexpensiveness and smallness have earned the harmonica the favor of the broad masses [...]. The role it played in the World War will be a glorious chapter in its history; on never-ending marches, the undemanding harmonica [...] replaced entire regimental bands" (Eickhoff 66; my translation). The harmonica in World War I was recently commemorated with the exhibition *Lebensretter und Seelentröster* ("Lifesaver and Soul Comforter") held at the Deutsches Harmonika Museum in Trossingen in 2014, where, among other things, harmonicas were on display that had caught bullets and saved their owners' lives. In order to be able to export to countries such as France and Great Britain during the war, Hohner opened a branch in neutral Switzerland (cf. Wenzel & Häffner 24).

2 In the course of the company's history, Hohner also manufactured saxophones, recorders, and a number of other instruments. While most other Hohner instruments were not as highly regarded as the harmonicas and accordions, some instruments such as the Melodica and Clavinet acquired outright cult status among musicians in the 1960s and on.

By the 1930s, Matthias Hohner AG employed 4,000 workers and manufactured about 25 million harmonicas each year.[3]

During World War II, Hohner was unable to export to the USA and had to dedicate two thirds of the factories to the war effort, producing armaments with the use of Russian and Eastern European forced labor. The remaining production was geared toward soldiers. A Hohner advertisement from the time of World War II shows two happy soldiers with harmonicas in their hands and reads: "Wer dem feldgrauen Mann eine wirkliche Freude bereiten will, schenke eine 'Hohner'" ("If you want to bring real joy to the field-gray man, give him a Hohner," reproduced in Häffner 43 and Eickhoff 62). More than any other musical instruments manufacturer, at least to my knowledge, Hohner was not only instrumentalized by a war-waging government but in turn also instrumentalized the war to further sales. Hohner was quick to capitalize on the circumstances by producing a number of war-themed harmonicas—ranging from sentimental to martial—, by targeting families of soldiers as a new market, and by cooperating with the Nazi government. The main reason, however, why Hohner was able to capitalize on the war—within the limits afforded in times of crisis—was its well-oiled marketing machinery and the fact that the harmonica is a small, inexpensive, and easy-to-learn instrument which is well suited for distribution in great numbers.

Pynchon's perhaps most famous harmonica scene takes place in *Gravity's Rainbow.* During a hospital visit in 1939, where Tyrone Slothrop receives an injection of the truth serum sodium amytal, he has a vision of visiting Boston's Roseland State Ballroom where a young Malcolm X works as a shoeshine boy and Jack Kennedy is a regular, albeit absent that night. As Slothrop vomits in the men's room, he accidentally drops his harmonica in the toilet bowl, "the low reeds singing an instant on striking porcelain" (*Gravity's Rainbow* 64,

3 The sources differ slightly. Eickhoff writes that the first major shipment to the USA took place in 1868 (29) and that 25 million harmonicas were produced in 1939 (30).

subsequently cited as *GR*). While he is deciding whether he should go after it, the 1938 jazz standard "Cherokee" is resonating through the walls from downstairs. Slothrop remembers the sweet and sentimental lyrics of the song alternatively titled "Indian Love Song" and calls it "one more lie about white crimes" (*GR* 65). As he plunges into the toilet bowl in search of his beloved harmonica and disappears down the white ceramic rabbit hole into the collective unconscious of the shit-brown sewage system, he very nearly escapes being sodomized by Red Malcolm and his gang. If Slothrop's penis is not his own (cf. *GR* 219), at least his anus is. His descent into the underworld in the hope of retrieving his instrument is a first intimation of his becoming Orpheus later on in the novel. Slothrop disappears, as would become his habit, but only when he is reunited with his harmonica will he be able to disappear for good.

As he is looking for the harmonica, that German-Austrian instrument which in its African-American idiom allows "tunes to be played, millions of possible blues lines, notes to be bent from the official frequencies," he vainly places his hopes in Kennedy Jr. to help him retrieve it: "If anybody could've saved that harp, betcha Jack could" (*GR* 67). If anybody could have saved those lost, the preterite—the African-Americans, the Native Americans, and anyone who came under the scrutiny of Joseph McCarthy and the Nixon administration—and acknowledged what is bent from the official frequencies of white Anglo-Saxon capitalism, Slothrop seems to say, John F. Kennedy could. But before the novel is published, Kennedy will have gone the way of all flesh, and it is Richard M. Nixon/Zhlubb who survives until the very last page.

As Slothrop reaches street level again, he hears a "mouthsucking giant five-note chords" harmonica accompaniment to "Red River Valley" with altered lyrics informing him that "the toilet it ain't going nowhar" (*GR* 69). To choose "Red River Valley," a sentimental song about a girl who must leave the valley, comments on the fate of both the harmonica as well as Eurydice. While many other lyrics were set to this song during World War II, the original lyrics go: "From this

valley they say you are going / We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile / For they say you are taking the sunshine / Which has brightened our pathways a while," and in the sixth verse: "As you go to your home by the ocean / May you never forget those sweet hours."

N. Katherine Hayles and Mary B. Eiser argue that White-Red-Black is the basic triad in *Gravity's Rainbow,* and "red, the third term, is meant to open a space in which color can again appear. [...] [R]ed is the mediating third term that comes between black and white to signify a potential for transformation, a germ of passion [...]" (7). It is the color associated with the preterite. Red and its washed-down, pale companion pink/rose are very much present in this scene: Red Malcolm, Cherokee, the Roseland Ballroom, Roosevelt, to name a few. Still, Pynchon does not simply use the three colors white, red, and black (which were also the colors of the flag of Nazi Germany) as stand-ins or symbols for, say, white Americans, Native Americans, and African-Americans. This triad would exclude everything in between these colors, such as the West Indian bartender (cf. *GR* 64). Instead, Pynchon complicates matters and undermines the notion of authenticity along ethnic lines: "Cherokee" is a song about an Indian maiden written by a British composer after his emigration to the USA. Only by being performed by African-Americans, most notably Charlie Parker, was it able to lose its sentimental undertones and become something other than "one more lie about white crimes."

Fast forward to August 6th, 1945, or August 5th in German local time: While the atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima—or shortly before—"a crowd of Army personnel, American sailors, NAAFI girls, and German fräuleins" convene at a bar in Cuxhaven, the launching site of the V-2 rockets, to celebrate (*GR* 603): "Ukuleles, kazoos, harmonicas, and any number of makeshift metal noisemakers accompany the song ['It's Mouthtripping Time'], which is an innocent salute to Postwar, a hope that the end of shortages, the end of Austerity, is near" (*GR* 603). The harmonica, the kazoo, and the ukulele are staged as instruments of communal music-making of the common man and woman. They were the ones most likely to be

available in a postwar setting as they were shipped in large quantities to soldiers during the war or possibly distributed by organizations like the British NAAFI, the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes.

Alhough the setting is quite different from the one in *Vineland* discussed further down—taking place in a bar in postwar Germany and not on a beachhead in Southern California during the Vietnam war—they share some characteristics. Both scenes take place in a territory where sovereignty is either unclear or temporary. The Potsdam Conference ended on August 2 and Cuxhaven became part of the British Zone as agreed at the Yalta Conference, but it was planned to restore Germany to the German people once the demilitarization was completed and democracy reinstated. The British Zone is simultaneously a postnational and a prenational one. Consequently, the crowd celebrating in Cuxhaven is composed of British, Americans, and Germans—civilians, military personnel, and civilians in uniform. Pynchon shows that preterition is a condition that defies separation into military or civilian functions and is not restricted to any one nation state. While the preterite are not sovereigns over a territory, what is required for them to convene in a joyful way is a territory where the elect's sovereignty is also in dispute. Only in the absence of power can there be a community of like-minded people who play along with no clear objective other than making music together, not in a hierarchical entertainer/entertainee setting but with everyone having an equal share in the participation and enjoyment, that is, in the production and consumption of music.

During his meanderings through post-war Germany, Slothrop eventually finds the harmonica he lost in his vision of the Roseland Ballroom (or the harmonica finds him), and he immediately recognizes it as his, as it must be if there is "[o]ne of everything" (*GR* 69) in the world. The rediscovered instrument comes up after the tail end of the bickering between Gustav the composer and Emil "Säure" Bummer about whether tonality as exemplified by "Spohr, Rossini, Spontini" (*GR* 634) or the Row as exemplified by Schoenberg is of higher musical value. This is significant insofar as neither the tonality

whose end Richard Wagner (who is ever present in *Gravity's Rainbow,* cf. J.O. Tate) begins to introduce nor the consequences of this move by Schoenberg's invention of the dodecaphonic row is able to break out of the European twelve-tone scales. It takes an instrument as small as the harmonica in the hands and at the lips of Americans to bend the official frequencies, "bends Slothrop hasn't really the breath to do…not yet but someday…" (*GR* 67), and move into the microtonality of blue notes.[4]

After Slothrop finds his harmonica, he becomes a "crossroad […], and his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural…" (*GR* 638). This scene occurs sometime after the day of the Feast of the Transfiguration, which in 1945 ironically or perversely coincided with the bombing of Hiroshima.[5] Slothrop disappears or dies or is transfigured somewhere in Germany's Harz Mountains, and if he indeed did die on the "green wet valleyed Earth" (*GR* 638), or if death is another word for his disappearance and scattering, then "They will bury [him] where you have wandered / Near the hills where the daffodils grow," as the lyrics to "Red River Valley" go. Though Pynchon does not make this link explicit by mentioning "Red River Valley" here, it harks back to the Roseland Ballroom and Slothrop's escape from the sewer. Now that he is reunited with the harmonica, he is allowed to let go and become one with the earth. Now it becomes clear why Pynchon, with one exception (cf. *GR* 635), did not choose the word "harmonica" to designate Slothrop's instrument,

4 Incidentally, Pynchon does not seem to move beyond the micro-tonalities of blue notes in Western music (though he does in "world musics" such as the Tuva throat-singing in *Against the Day*). Besides an acute ear for sounds in general, there is no mention of the turn inaugurated by John Cage, and when it comes to musical instruments, the Theremin which thrives on microtonalities only briefly appears in *Bleeding Edge* (454).

5 It also brings to mind Martin Heidegger's notion of the fourfold of the earth, the sky, the mortals, and the divinities, another crossroad—the place of dwelling in the mode of safeguarding where one of the terms always already implies the fourfold of Being (Heidegger 344–45).

but "harp," short for "mouth harp" or Hohner's famed "blues harp."[6] It allows him to link Slothrop to Orpheus, as is announced first by his descent into the underworld of the sewer and then by the insertion of an excerpt from Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*. Weisenburger notes: "With his harp he is Orpheus, the dismembered Greek god [sic!]. He embodies the acceptance of pain in Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus,* with their climactic expression of being and flux—'To the rushing water speak: I am'" (321). And a few pages later: "Slothrop's Hohner is a sign of his identity with Orpheus, the mythic harp player and dismembered holy Fool. The Hohner is thus also a sign of Slothrop's preterition" (324–25). I would maintain that the analogy holds even though Pynchon and Weisenburger are a little imprecise when it comes to Orpheus's instrument. Orpheus is reported to have played the lyre and not the harp. Nevertheless, I agree with Weisenburger when he links Slothrop's instrument to preterition but would maintain that the harmonica—like the kazoo and the ukulele—is always already a sign of preterition in Pynchon's worlds. It is never an instrument played by the elect but always the preterite.

After Slothrop's disappearance, there is a passage where harmonica blues-playing is philosophized: "Blues is a matter of lower sidebands—you suck a clear note, on pitch, and then bend it lower with the muscles of your face. Muscles of your face have been laughing, tight with pain, often trying not to betray any emotion, all your life. Where you send the pure note is partly a function of that" (*GR* 656). The transformation of pain into laughter resonates with Slothrop's transfiguration in a state of *Gelassenheit* or selflessness. This loss of self, painful as it may be, is also liberating, as Sascha Pöhlmann writes: "At the cost of his self, he manages to break out of all hegemonic narratives that constructed and fixed his identity" (*Postnational* 358). Slothrop—if that is still his name after the transformation—finally escapes control and conditioning and cannot be

6 The blues harp product line, distributed under the name Marine Band in honor of John Philip Sousa, is Hohner's best-selling instrument and has been in production since 1896.

apprehended anymore. Some believe that fragments of his former self roam the earth and have "grown into consistent personae of their own" (*GR* 757). The novel mirrors this by falling apart into more or less disjointed scenes, episodes, and fragments with increasing frequency as it nears its end.

Some twenty pages before the end, we learn that "[t]here's supposed to be a last photograph of him on the only record album ever put out by The Fool, an English rock group. […] There is no way to tell which of the faces is Slothrop's: the only printed credit that might apply to him is 'Harmonica, kazoo—a friend'" (*GR* 757). Like the novel itself, which is bracketed between a dedication to folk musician Richard Fariña and the singing of a hymn composed by Slothrop's ancestor William, its main character Tyrone Slothrop is introduced as playing the ukulele, "an American George Formby" (*GR* 18), and is bid farewell by crediting him for playing the kazoo and the harmonica. Slothrop has left a "busted corkscrewing ukulele string" (*GR* 19) on his littered desk at the beginning of the novel, constraining the potential of the instrument. But as Slothrop gradually loses his identity and finally his self, his music-making moves in the opposite direction: from the impossibility of playing the full range due to the busted string clearly attributed to Slothrop to a fixed historical record leaving some doubt if Slothrop really is The Fool's harmonica and kazoo player. He is compared to a real ukulele and banjolele player at the beginning and to a member of a fictitious band at the end, mirroring *Gravity's Rainbow* opening with a dedication to a real musician and its ending with a fictitious hymn. What Pynchon seems to say here is that in order to liberate oneself from the imposed order and leave a trace in the world, one must move into the realm of the imagination: becoming requires letting go. Or in Pöhlmann's words: "Pynchon […] postulates no necessity except the necessity to imagine these worlds in order to change this one" (*Postnational* 365).

Although this is the last time Slothrop is referred to more than in passing, there are more harmonicas coming up. Shortly before the end of *Gravity's Rainbow*, in a prolepsis playing out around 1970, Pynchon

takes up the harmonica politics of the Third Reich to underline the instrument's preterite nature and draw parallels between Hitler and Nixon aka Richard M. Zhlubb in a mock newspaper article entitled "Orpheus Puts Down Harp":

> Richard M. Zhlubb, night manager of the Orpheus Theatre on Melrose [on which the rocket will descend in the last lines of *Gravity's Rainbow*], has come out against what he calls 'irresponsible use of the harmonica.' [...] Zhlubb states that his queues, especially for midnight showings, have fallen into a state of near anarchy because of the musical instrument. [...] Steve Edelman, a Hollywood businessman, accused last year of an 11569 (Attempted Mopery with a Subversive Instrument), is currently in Atascadero under indefinite observation. It is alleged that Edelman, in an unauthorized state of mind, attempted to play a chord progression on the Department of Justice list, out in the street and in the presence of a whole movie-queue of witnesses. (*GR* 769–70)

Edelman commits three crimes or misdemeanors: in an unauthorized state of mind he *allegedly* and in public plays a banned chord progression on a subversive instrument. Even the Nixon administration would have to recognize that these allegations are too flimsy to justify a conviction. Therefore, he can only be accused and placed under indefinite observation under a doubly vague allegation: mopery, and not even one that was carried out but only attempted. Mopery is a vague term whose exact legal ramifications are unclear. According to the OED, mopery is "[t]he action of committing a minor or petty offence, such as loitering, etc.; contravention of a trivial or hypothetical law, esp. when used as an excuse to harass or arrest a person against whom no more serious crime can be charged." In *Gravity's Rainbow,* which was published in 1973, as the Watergate investigations were unraveling but before Nixon was forced to step down, Pynchon makes accusations which, if read literally, would not be substantive. As an allegory, however, they amount to a clear political statement about the FBI's COINTELPRO and similar programs which were

assumed to be in place. The two gravest accusations Pynchon makes is that under Nixon and McCarthy (as well as under Hitler) thoughts were not free and that petty accusations were manufactured to put supposedly subversive subjects away.

The other meaning of mopery, according to the OED, is the behavior of a moper. If we were to bring these two meanings together, it would be illegal to mope, that is, to fail to display enthusiasm for what is economically and politically given. By playing his subversive chord progression, Edelman breaks up the orderly rows of moviegoers that will be fed into Hollywood's feel-good machinery of the Orpheus Theater, symbolic of the globalization of depoliticized commodity fetishism, which will be further examined in *Vineland*, a novel that accuses film and TV for lulling in formerly subversive forces and making them complicit with capitalism's consumer culture.

What appears to be a humorous fancy is based on the conflicting ways the Third Reich dealt with harmonica instruments, that is, the accordion and the harmonica. Already in 1929, one Georg Götsch wrote a "Report on the Adequacy of the Harmonica as a Students', Orchestra's, and People's Instrument" in response to a harmonica advertising campaign and criticized it harshly: "The harmonica is a machine that offers not only a ready-made tone but also a ready-made tone sequence, even a ready-made sound sequence, and is thus suited for tonal dullness at the most, but does not educate toward intellectual or creative freedom" (qtd. in Eickhoff 38–39; my translation). In 1933, it was argued that the accordion was not a jazz instrument, apparently the biggest threat to the *Volksgeist,* and there was no reason to ban it—unlike the kazoo or the harmonica in Zhlubb's world (*cf. GR* 771). Although the harmonica was already hugely popular,[7] Hohner's mass-produced instruments did not accord with the spirit of the music pedagogy at the time (cf. Eickhoff 36–37). In February 1938, the *Reichsjugendführung* (The Reich's Youth Leadership)

7 Eickhoff reports that in 1938, there were 6,000 harmonica orchestras in Germany with a total of 300,000 members (241).

prohibited the establishment of harmonica and accordion orchestras in all formations of the Hitler Youth (cf. Eickhoff 75, 241).

Steve Edelman has a Jewish-sounding name (*Edelmann* means noble man), another comment on the proposed likeness between the Third Reich and the Nixon administration. Zhlubb, on the other hand, is a slippery name with a slippery, comical sound reflecting perhaps the sound of a flushing toilet where the excretions that are part of life but too shameful to talk about are washed away never to be seen again.[8] The name Zhlubb cannot be placed in any one natural language but it rhymes with Krupp—visually, but also when pronounced in German—, the German steel production dynasty, which manufactured tanks, guns, submarines, and other war technology. The key to understanding the name Zhlubb might, however, be Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs. Initially—that is, around 1953—a tender onomatopoeia to express the desire to merge with a loved one, Ginsberg later writes that schlupp means "to devour a soul parasitically" (Burroughs 6), which clearly resonates with much of the criticism directed at Hollywood's culture industry.[9] By giving the preterite a noble name and the elect a disfigured, comical one at the end of the alphabet, Pynchon implies that respectability resides with the preterite and not the elect: "So the last shall be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16, *King James Bible*).

While this scene at first appears to be an allegory on and critique of the Nixon administration by drawing parallels to Hitler, Nixon's anti-communist predecessor, Joseph McCarthy, is also present. In this reading, the Hollywood executive Steve Edelman would stand for the mouth organ virtuoso Larry Adler, who was of Jewish descent and much present in Hollywood. While *Adler* in German means eagle, *adlig* is also a synonym for *edel,* noble. Larry Adler's father

8 In his comic book series *Sin City* (1991–92), Frank Miller chooses the name Burt Shlubb for an incompetent criminal charged with disposing of dead bodies.

9 For a more detailed discussion on schlupp and schlupping, see Kahn 299–312.

changed their family name from Zelakovitch to Adler because he was tired of being the last one called in the immigration queues (cf. Freedland). Larry Adler was a member of the Committee for the First Amendment protesting the blacklisting of Hollywood writers. Before long, the House Committee on Un-American Activities blacklisted him as well, which resulted in the virtual impossibility for Adler to find work in the USA and led to his emigration to Britain (cf. Freedland). While Edelmann plays a banned harmonica chord progression, so does Adler: he plays the tune of resistance to repression and constraint of creativity of the film industry to Joseph McCarthy. If history repeats itself, then Adler/McCarthy was the tragedy and Edelman/Zhlubb the farce.

I would, however, claim that Pynchon's lineage of totalitarianisms that are to be criticized for their ways of dealing with the arts extends beyond this. In his preface to *The Bass Saxophone*, Josef Škvorecký, who had lived in Czechoslovakia as an amateur musician and jazz lover during both the Hitler and the Stalin eras and emigrated to Canada after the Prague Spring, observed that "many titles on Senator Joe McCarthy's index of books to be removed from the shelves of US Information Libraries abroad are identical to many on the Index issued in Prague by the Communist Party early in the seventies" (8). He also observes that the propaganda machinery of the Third Reich and communist-era Czechoslovakia dealt in a very similar—and not always consistent—way with jazz music. When he published a decalogue of regulations issued during World War II by the local *Gauleiter* in Czechoslovakia's first jazz almanac in 1958, the censors promptly confiscated the entire edition (cf. Škvorecký 11). If it were not tragic, the list of regulations from today's vantage point appears almost comical and makes Edelman's breaking of laws and regulations seem less farfetched than at first glance.[10]

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10 The list of regulations, republished from memory in *The Bass Saxophone*, prohibits "Jewishly gloomy lyrics"; "Negroid excesses in tempo"; "drum breaks longer than half a bar"; "plucking of string instruments"; and scat singing. Double basses must be bowed, saxophones replaced with

To come back to Pynchon: Pöhlmann makes a point that Pynchon's novels transcend the boundaries not only of nation-states but of nation-ness as well: "*Against the Day* leaves no doubt that a nationalized view of the world is simply too narrow, even dangerously restrictive in many regards; it emphatically demands a global approach from its readers" ("The Complex Text" 24). Indeed, anarchist dynamiter Veikko Rautavaara—possibly a nod to Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara—had "never seen much difference between the Tsar's regime and American capitalism. To struggle against one, he figured, was to struggle against the other. Sort of this world-wide outlook" (*AtD* 92). While the totalitarian conception of society starts from a conception of nation-ness, of us and them, inside and outside, and may attempt to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state to gain further influence, anarchism—like communism before its corruption by real politics, personal greed, and hunger for power—has always had a transnational outlook. This also allows Frank Traverse, Irishman Wolfe Tone O'Rooney, and the African-American musicians of the Merry Coons jass band to have a discussion about Anarchist theory (cf. *AtD* 416–417), and it is further illustrated by the fact that both the Chums of Chance and their Russian counterparts Tovarishchi Slutchainyi ("accidental comrades") eventually break all ties with their respective governments.

the cello or the viola, and mutes "which turn the noble sound of wind and brass instruments into a Jewish-Freemasonic yowl" are prohibited. "Pieces in foxtrot rhythm (so-called swing) are not to exceed 20% of the repertoires" and "so-called jazz compositions may contain at most 10% syncopation." Finally, preference is given "to brisk compositions over slow ones (so-called blues); however, the pace must not exceed a certain degree of allegro, commensurate with the Aryan sense of discipline and moderation" (10–11).

STRAINS OF SUBVERSIVE MUSIC DAY AND NIGHT

In *Vineland,* the harmonica serves as a prop for strengthening communal bonds against the overwhelming military power. On the outskirts of an army base on the Trasero County coast,

> Against the somber military blankness at its back, here was a lively beachhead of drugs, sex, and rock and roll, the strains of subversive music day and night, accompanied by tambourines and harmonicas, […] finding the ears of sentries attenuated but ominous, like hostile-native sounds in a movie about white men fighting savage tribes. (*Vineland* 204, subsequently cited as *VL*)

The harmonica finds itself placed between warfare and subversion again. The instrument which had afforded soldiers consolation in the trenches and barracks of the European wars and the American Civil War is reappropriated by dope-smoking hippies for their Dionysiac frolicking, mocking the orderly procedures of chains of command before the sentries' very eyes and ears. The beachhead meant to be reserved for military forces is situated on the periphery, in line with Pynchon's preference for staying at the margins. The threshold between land and water, but also between occupied and occupiers, becomes an extraterritorial space wedged between the forces of subversion and the forces of repression defying the dichotomy between the open beach related to drugs, sex, and rock'n'roll and the closed fortress related to discipline and hierarchy. From this dichotomy will arise a process of "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" as described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari:[11] "Deterritorialization must be thought of as a perfectly positive power that has degrees and thresholds (epistrata), is always relative, and has reterritorialization as its flipside or complement. An organism that is deterritorialized in relation to the exterior necessarily

11 *Vineland* also refers to the fictitious "*Italian Wedding Fake Book,* by Deleuze & Guattari" (*VL* 97), to my knowledge Pynchon's only direct reference to French theory.

reterritorializes on its interior milieus" (5). Thus, the space around the College of the Surf which was deterritorialized by usage later "secedes" from California and becomes the self-proclaimed People's Republic of Rock and Roll (or PR^3, where one cannot fail to hear 'public relations to the third power,' or in Deleuze and Guattari's words the reterritorialization of the interior). In other words, the informal deterritorialization becomes solidified, formalized, before it is again reterritorialized by the armed forces.

The tambourine accompaniment harks back to the percussive nature of African musics, reminding the guards of "hostile natives." The tambourine is also an inexpensive instrument that requires little skill, apart from a feeling for rhythm. Anyone can pick it up, and many did, not always to the great delight of the classically trained listener such as Nixon/Zhlubb, as we learn in *Gravity's Rainbow:* "'At least it's not those tambourines,' Zhlubb mutters. 'There aren't as many tambourines as last year, thank God'" (*GR* 772). What Zhlubb cannot bear is the democratic nature of the tambourine, the harmonica, and the kazoo, the fact that anyone can participate without the intervention of an authority and everyone's voice is heard without passing through the filters of censorship. Zhlubb's comments on the tambourine are uttered or muttered in the early 1970s, after the deaths of icons of hope such as Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy and after the Altamont Speedway concert which marked the end of the peace and love movement. As Zhlubb correctly remarks, by the 1970s, there were far less tambourines played in public than just a year or two before, a sure sign that the repressive forces were getting the upper hand again.

The "savage tribes" and the "hostile-native sounds" resonate loosely with Barbara Stewart's supposition about the initial use of the kazoo's sound-producing mechanism by African shamans as "weapons of intimidation" and to convey messages from the beyond (cf. Stewart 2). Significantly for *Vineland,* there is no "authentic" image of the savages; it has already passed through the filters of Hollywood and is mediated by film or television. Towards the end of the novel,

Isaiah Two Four (whose name harps on the Bible verse as well as on the 24-frames-per-second celluloid film)[12] brings Pynchon's critique of the former subversives' surrender to the establishment to the point and sheds light on why Pynchon made Richard M. Zhlubb the owner of a movie theater: "Whole problem 'th you folks's generation [...] is you believed in your Revolution, put your lives right out there for it—but you sure didn't understand much about the Tube. Minute the Tube got hold of you folks that was it, that whole alternative America, el deado meato" (*VL* 373). Or, as Thomas Hill Schaub observes, "In *Vineland*, primary among the mechanisms maintaining the status quo is the mediating power of television and film" (35). The soldiers' worldview relating the subversive strains of music to savages has already been co-opted by television and film but the hippies will not be spared either as time progresses and an entire generation promising of change comes of age.

The fate that already hovers over *Vineland's* first harmonica scene is spelled out in the second one. Zoyd Wheeler and his baby Prairie embark on a bus to Vineland, cross the Golden Gate Bridge, and head into the countryside towards Eureka:

> Aislemates struck up conversations, joints appeared and were lit, guitars came down from overhead racks and harmonicas out of fringe bags, and soon there was a concert that went on all night, a retrospective of the times they'd come through more or less as a generation, the singing of rock and roll, folk, Motown, fifties oldies, and at last, for about an hour just before the watery green sunrise, one guitar and one harmonica, playing the blues. (*VL* 315)

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12 "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4, *King James Bible*). In both his Inaugural Ceremonies (1969 and 1973), Richard Nixon had his two family Bibles open to Isaiah 2:4.

The nostalgia of a youth outgrown is celebrated, first as a festive retrospective in which everyone takes part, a reliving of the old and carefree times, which in the early morning hours reverts to a lone blues with minimal instrumentation, symbolic of a community split up into individuals by Nixon's state apparatus's strategy to divide and conquer. Blues lyrics, which are as integral a part of the blues as its musical form, are usually first-person accounts that focus on the human condition as it is experienced personally. LeRoi Jones writes: "Blues was a music that arose from the needs of a group, although it was assumed that each man had his *own* blues and that he would sing them. As such, the music was private and personal" (82). The blues is a democratic form of music, and this is why the harmonica is so well suited to the needs of it—apart from the fact that it can bend notes. Jones believes that the blues is not only African-American in origin but also in spirit, that, unlike jazz, it is not an American form of expression but an African-American one. Still, it speaks to the musical form and its resonance that it can be performed and understood by people of other sociocultural and ethnic backgrounds as well. Pynchon does not specify the ethnic origin of the person playing the blues, which is why it can be assumed that he does not intend to limit its value to any one ethnicity.

Blues melody lines begin with a high note, usually the octave or the fifth, and descend from there all the way down to the tonic (Jahn 28).[13] The descending melody lines point towards a sense of helplessness, resignation, or decline, but the return to the tonic also expresses a return home. This return to the tonic is not only reflected in the melody line but also in the overall structure of the standard blues form where the last two bars are set to the tonic. One could say that the bus riders' return home is accompanied by the distinct feeling that the celebration is over and the state of affairs has not changed. The blues developed in the cotton fields as a more or less solitary pas-

13 Additionally, blues scales are the only ones that are noted from the highest note to the lowest, and not vice versa.

time and later moved to the city where it became music performed for the entertainment of others. The bus ride reverses this chronology. As the bus pulls out of San Francisco, the passengers celebrate the Haight-Ashbury spirit where music could be played for its own sake but where concerts were also the order of the day. As the bus heads "for nothing but trees, fish, and fog" (*VL* 315), fatigue eventually sets in and the passengers doze off one by one. What remains is two people playing music for no one in particular other than for their own comfort. This music may be performed, it may be heard, but it is not listened to. It reverts from public and collective to private and personal.

IN THE INTRICACIES OF GREED AS PRACTICED UNDER GLOBAL CAPITALISM

It is in *Against the Day* that Pynchon brings the full comic potential of the harmonica to bear. In a cartoon-like episode worthy of a Spike Jones soundtrack, he has the Chums of Chance, the young skyship explorers and heroes of a fictitious boys' adventure book series, "drift into the brief aberration in their history known as the Marching Academy Harmonica Band" (*Against the Day* 471, subsequently cited as *AtD*). They stay at a harmonica boarding school in Decatur for an unspecified period of time, hiding from Trespassers from another time or dimension (cf. *AtD* 471–78).

Like Slothrop's Roseland Ballroom episode, the Marching Academy Harmonica Band takes place in the excluded middle between consciousness and unconsciousness or between the "real" world and a dream world. In both episodes, the characters later remember it as if it had been real, and objects or persons from the dream suddenly appear in the protagonists' waking state. The name of the institution where the Chums—or possibly their stand-ins—reside also keeps shifting. Pynchon variably uses the designations Marching Academy Harmonica Band, Harmonica Band Marching Academy, Marching Harmonica Band Academy, and Harmonica

Academy Marching Band. By assigning different names to the academy and its various subroutines, Pynchon plays on the boarding school's elusiveness, its u-topic position, and its resistance to identity formation. As an institution with several names and an ambiguous location,[14] it cannot be apprehended and remains outside the grasp of external forces. It is a microcosm ruled by an ambiguous power—reterritorialized on the interior—and it remains such in the memories of the Chums.

Into this hypothetical space "not strictly speaking on the map at all" (*AtD* backcover blurb), Pynchon infuses a number of novelty instruments like the D-flat Reverberating Harmonica, the I.G. Mundharfwerke "Little Giant," the "two-hole silver and pearl Microharmonica," as well as the "bell-metal bass harmonicas six feet long—great whopping *tubas* of harmonicas" (*AtD* 473). He shows knowledge of the various shapes and sizes of harmonicas that have been manufactured over time as well as the names of the models—and exaggerates them to comical effect.

Harmonicas are available in all tunings, but according to Martin Häffner, director of the Deutsches Harmonika Museum, most diatonic harmonicas produced are tuned to D-Flat.[15] While in a classical, European musical setting, D-Flat is not the most usual of keys, a number of compositions were written in this key, and if Pynchon had one of them in mind, it might well have been the second movement ("Largo") of Antonin Dvořák's *Ninth Symphony*, also known as the *New World Symphony*. The mood of the second movement contrasts the merry goings-on at the Academy and brings to the fore the darker undercurrents of the school. Although Pynchon does not mention Dvořák, there are a number of connections that lend plausibility to this interpretation, literary and musical ones. Dvořák was present at

14 Pynchon does not specify which Decatur, other than the school's advertisement which states it is located in "The Heart of the Mississippi Watershed" (472). There are cities, towns, and villages named Decatur in fifteen U.S. states.

15 Personal e-mail (13 Nov. 2014).

the Chicago World's Fair where he conducted his *Symphony No. 8* in G major on 12 August 1893 and some of his *Slavonic Dances* (Downey 174; Tibbetts 17). In a *New York Herald* article from 15 December 1893, Dvořák, who by then had been in the United States for a little more than a year, is quoted: "Now, I found that the music of the negroes and of the Indians was practically identical" ("Dvorak on his New York" 11). In an article in the *Boston Herald* from 28 May 1893, he stated: "I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies" ("American Music"). Possibly, he based his judgment on the use of pentatonic scales or the rhythms and drones in some native American musics, but today, there seems to be agreement that he must have had a shallow understanding of Native American music, as opposed to African American music (cf. the articles by John Clapham, Charles Hamm, or Michael Beckermann in *Dvořák in America* [Tibbetts, ed.]). According to Dennis B. Downey, his

> comments transgressed the boundaries between elite and folk culture. But his more cosmopolitan sensibilities also ran contrary to the *educational* philosophy of the fair's own music department, which traced America's musical heritage to West European antecedents. Furthermore, and most controversial, Dvorak's statement contradicted reigning racial stereotypes of the day, ones firmly embedded in the cultural symbolism of the 'White City' itself. (176)

Perhaps unaware of the controversy this might provoke, Dvořák created a community of the marginalized by bringing together the diverse ethnic backgrounds of Americans for a future foundation of American music. His gesture is also Pynchonian or postmodernist in stepping across the boundaries of high and low art. The admiration for African-American music and his linking it to that of the Native Americans takes us back to the Roseland Ballroom with its many references to both African-Americans and Native Americans. Thus, in

the D-flat Reverberating Harmonica, Dvořák's appreciation reverberates into the past of 1893 as well as into the future of 1939.

With the remaining three instruments of Pynchon's imagination, he stakes out the extremes between which the other harmonicas find their place in a continuum of possibilities of musical expression. The largest harmonica currently offered by Hohner is a Chord 48 with an impressive 192 holes, but its length is 58.7 cm, a far cry from Pynchon's six-foot harmonica. The smallest harmonica manufactured is Hohner's four-hole "Little Lady," mere 35 mm in length. Pynchon plays on the name of that model by opposing it to the I.G. Mundharfwerke's "Little Giant." It would hardly make sense to manufacture a two-hole harmonica as such an instrument would only produce four notes (two for drawing and two for blowing, or, as Pynchon prefers: sucking and blowing) and no chords (or harmonies), as opposed to the "Little Lady" with four holes and the full range of an octave. Pynchon does not specify the range or size of the Little Giant but its name indicates that it must be somewhere between the two extremes. With these four instruments, Pynchon posits something funny against the somber background of the harmonica academy and implicitly argues for diversity as no single instrument could cover the entire range of expression or the different musical sensibilities.

Hohner was and is not the only manufacturer of harmonicas, but there is little doubt that Pynchon has Hohner in mind when he writes about the harmonica. The I.G. Mundharfwerke is a portmanteau of Hohner, rendered as mouth harp works, and I.G. Farben, the chemical industry conglomerate frequently referred to in *Gravity's Rainbow* known for having collaborated with the Nazi leadership and producing Zyklon B, the gas used in the extermination camps. This unsavory amalgam between music and war is historically precise, since Hohner produced munitions with the use forced labor and collaborated with the Nazi government. Hohner's market dominance, then and now, is also reflected in *Against the Day:*

> The institution [i. e. the Harmonica Marching Band Academy] had its origins […] in the intricacies of greed as then being practiced under global capitalism. German harmonica manufacturers, who led the world in production of the instrument, had for some years been dumping their surplus inventory on the American market, with the result that soon every community in the land had some kind of harmonica-based marching society, often numbering in the hundreds. […] It was only a matter of time before this unforeseen outcome of the Law of Supply and Demand was consecrated as the Harmonica Marching Band Academy […]. (*AtD* 472)

This characterization early on in the Harmonica Academy episode casts its shadow over the boyish fun the Chums experience. Pynchon draws readers in with his comically absurd sidesteps, the "spirited cakewalk allowing opportunities for brief novelty effects, locomotive noises, barnyard animals" (*AtD* 473), the lectures in "Chromatic Harp Safety, and the particular need to keep those nasal hairs closely trimmed" (*AtD* 474) and the funny harmonica routine centering around the vanished harpman Alonzo Meatman (cf. *AtD* 472–73). At a second glance, however, it becomes evident that there is a dark undercurrent of the boarding school and the respite it offers is but temporary. What Pynchon seems to ask of the readers is to look behind the act and consider the strict disciplinary regime which lies beyond a well-rehearsed show pulled off as if it were completely natural. He also cautions against accepting the notion of hospitality thoughtlessly. Like every traditional (that is, conditional) form of hospitality, that of the Academy as a safe haven from the Trespassers has its flip-side. While the youngsters are promised careers, they need to undergo hardship and submit to the rules of the sovereign. Conditional hospitality is always ambiguous and violent because it must by necessity posit a dichotomy between outside and inside, where the liberation from the rules and conditions of one always entails submitting to those of the other.

In line with the strict formations and hierarchies of a marching band, a large part of the repertoire studied at the Academy is patriotic.

Besides "My Country 'Tis of Thee," which had served as a national anthem until 1931—the melody is based on "God Save the King"—it includes the 1896 John Philip Sousa march "El Capitán," the Marines' Hymn "The Halls of Montezuma," and, on a brighter and less patriotic side, the two Kerry Mills compositions "At a Georgia Camp Meeting" and "Whistlin' Rufus." To choose Sousa is fitting as he also endorsed Hohner instruments, was a celebrated presence at the 1893 World's Fair, later composed a march entitled "Harmonica Wizard," and conducted the Philadelphia Harmonica Band on several occasions. The operetta *El Capitan*, from which the march is taken, tells the story of a Spanish viceroy in sixteenth-century Peru who kills the rebel leader and then takes on his identity to lead the rebels to defeat against the Spanish forces. The march is on the lighter side, in line with the overall mood of an operetta. "The Halls of Montezuma" is based on Jacques Offenbach's operetta *Geneviève de Brabant*. Its title is a reference to the United States army's victory over the Mexican forces at the Battle of Chapultepec in 1847. The sheet music of "At a Georgia Camp Meeting," published by F. A. Mills in 1899 advertises the song as "A Characteristic March which can be used effectively as a Two-Step, Polka or Cake Walk." The cakewalk initially made fun of the mannerisms of white plantation owners, comically exaggerating their gaits and gestures. It was an African-American form of entertainment, which was later taken over by minstrel shows, first the white ones and then black ones. Jones notes that "the first Negro minstrels wore the 'traditional' blackface over their own" (85) and muses: "If the cakewalk is a Negro dance caricaturing certain white customs, what is that dance when, say, a white theater company attempts to satirize it as a Negro dance? I find the idea of white minstrels in blackface satirizing a dance satirizing themselves a remarkable kind of irony—which, I suppose, is the whole point of minstrel shows" (86). In all of the songs practiced at the Academy, the question of authenticity and make-believe arises, that is, the relationship between "reality" and what appears on the surface (or on the stage) and the question if such a reality even exists or if it necessarily must

be framed again and again according to its context and social setting. Pynchon's choice of songs would then show how music as a living form of expression can be appropriated and changed around across borders of nationality and ethnicity, from "God Save the King" to "My Country 'Tis of Thee," from *Geneviève de Brabant* to "The Halls of Montezuma," from light operetta to patriotic march, from black to white to black entertainment. What becomes interesting is not so much the origin of a tune but its history of derivations. Especially the cakewalk with its ever-shifting disguises and "The Halls of Montezuma" lead the readers to question the position and intent of the Harmonica Marching Band Academy, the Trespassers, Alonzo Meatman, or the Authorities sending the Chums of Chance on their missions.

A-AND WAIT'LL THOSE KAZOOS COME ON!

Inherently more comical than the harmonica is the kazoo, "Pynchon's favorite preterite musical instrument" (Fowler 223). To this day, its origins are obscure, and the only (semi-)authoritative source appears to be kazooist Barbara Stewart's primer *The Complete How To Kazoo.* Stewart displays the same type of mock-seriousness as Pynchon—with her puns and humor a worthy rival of Pynchon's in his most family-friendly moments.[16]

From the family of membranophones, and more specifically tube or vessel mirlitons, the kazoo is not a musical instrument in the ordinary sense. The distinct sound is produced by humming, speaking, or singing, and not by blowing, into the instrument. A membrane or resonator such as plastic or tin foil—Pynchon calls it reed—is inserted between the main body and the turret, producing inner and outer air vibrations. Within the main body, the vibrations are detracted from

16 Stewart's own kazoo ensemble Kazoophony, dressed in black concert suits and white bow-ties, played such timeless favorites as the "William To Hell Overture," the "Beermeistersinger's Song" from *Tannheuser Busch* or "I'm Inclined to Kazoomusik" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozartsky.

a single stream of air and intermingle. A similar effect is produced by the saxophone when, while blowing into the instrument and bringing the reed in vibration, the player hums or sings at a slightly different pitch or in harmony. This technique called growling produces a raspy sound and is described in *Inherent Vice* as humming "through the reed of a tenor or sometimes alto sax a harmony part alongside whatever melody he was playing, as if the instrument was some giant kazoo" (37).

According to Stewart, the sound-producing principle of the kazoo has been known to many African tribal cultures. Unfortunately, she is not more specific about which cultures and what times. She writes that this voice distorter was used to "impersonate voices of the dead, to make terrifying sounds and bring messages from the spirit world" which "were interpreted by tribal officials to make sure the meaning was clear" (2–3). It is thought that the American kazoo was invented in the 1840s in Macon, Georgia, by Alabama Vest, an African-American, and built to his specifications by Thaddeus Von Clegg, a German-American clockmaker (cf. Stewart 3). First exhibited at the Georgia State Fair of 1852, it was then sold to a toy manufacturer (cf. Stewart 5). Thus, the kazoo's sound-producing principle in the service of the ruling class underwent a process of profanation and became one of a small number of genuinely American musical instruments.

Early kazoos appear to have been manufactured from wood, such as the one patented "as toy or musical instrument" by Warren Herbert Frost in 1883, and a musical toy it seems to have remained ever since, making it a perfect fit for a 'preterite' instrument.[17] It was not until World War I that, according to Stewart, referring to Rudolph A. Clemen Jr. of the American Red Cross Library, the kazoo

17 Of the 59 kazoo-related U.S. patents registered between 1877 and 2003, 31 carry a designation that combines the terms "music" and "toy" in some way. For a list of all patents, see *http://kazoologist.org/patents.html* (18 Oct 2014). The first mention of the kazoo that I have encountered in writing is in an article from 1884 in the *Shenandoah Herald*, on display at the Kazoo Museum in Beaufort, SC.

was introduced in significant quantities to Europe. Clemen believes that the kazoo was the most likely musical instrument to be sent and distributed for free to American soldiers and sailors in 1917 and 1918 "due to the higher cost of harmonicas and the difficulty of fitting anything much larger into Red Cross boxes" (8). Only after the war, in 1920, did the name "kazoo" first appear on a patent.

Pynchon's first mention of the kazoo is in *V.* when "[t]hree rambling musicians, guitar, violin and kazoo, stood on a corner [in Via Porta Rossa, Florence], playing sentimental airs" (*V.* 201). Later, at a party in Washington D.C., Profane and Pig Bodine meet

> an unemployed musicologist named Petard who had dedicated his life to finding the lost Vivaldi Kazoo Concerto, first brought to his attention by one Squasimodeo [...] who had heard not only of its theft from a monastery by certain fascist music lovers but also about twenty bars from the slow movement, which Petard would from time to time wander round the party blowing on a plastic kazoo. (*V.* 419)

To choose Vivaldi as a composer, the violinist and priest from Venice who died in poverty in Vienna, is certainly fitting for a novel entitled *V.* Pynchon leaves no pointers as to a real Vivaldi concerto on which the Kazoo Concerto might be modeled. The possibilities are endless as Vivaldi was perhaps the most prolific composer of concertos. He also established the concerto form with three movements, fast–slow–fast. While some of his lost works have been unearthed later on in the course of history, around fifteen concertos or parts thereof are still considered lost.[18] Why the musicologist-kazooist is named Petard, French for joint, makes sense once we realize that the classical kazoo shape is the one most suitable for hash pipes (cf. *GR* 759–60).

Petard or someone else is successful in tracking down the lost Kazoo Concerto because in the beginning of *The Crying of Lot 49*,

18 These are RV (Ryom-Verzeichnis) 174, 193, 200, 255, 290, 304, 305, 316, 337, 351, 573, 751, 752, 784, and 805.

Oedipa Maas listens to the Muzak version of "the Fort Wayne Settecento Ensemble's variorum recording of the Vivaldi Kazoo Concerto" featuring Boyd Beaver as a soloist (*The Crying of Lot 49* 2, subsequently cited as *CoL*). It is fitting to mention Muzak, the epitome of industrialized, planned, and calculated music to increase the productivity of cows and humans, early on in a novel dealing, among other things, with entropy and the proliferation of potentially empty signifiers. "Muzak", as Philipp Schweighauser writes, "is the supreme expression of Oedipa's world. This world of undifferentiated sameness and cultural inertia corresponds to a thermodynamic state of maximum entropy at which the system has reached its final destination and come to a standstill" (159). Moozak, as R. Murray Schafer prefers to call it, "reduces music to ground," and unless one pays attention to it, it should not be discernible but act on a subliminal level; it "is not to be listened to" (98). Significantly for *The Crying of Lot 49* and for Pynchon's general interest in the overlap of the military-industrial complex and consumer culture, Muzak Holdings was founded by Major General George Owen Squier shortly before his death in 1934. Squier also developed a camera to measure the speed of projectiles as well as telephone carrier multiplexing, which allowed for transmitting multiple signals simultaneously over a single telephone line. Having served in the Spanish-American War, he was later promoted Chief Signal Officer in the California district.[19]

In this particular work and its recording, Pynchon condenses many contradictions and absurdities. The most obvious one is to attribute the designation "kazoo," which appears around 1884, to an Italian composer who died some 140 years earlier. To elevate—or denigrate—Vivaldi's Kazoo Concerto to Muzak not only links it to telecommunications, consumer culture, and the military but brings forth a number of contradictions. Although Vivaldi, especially *The Four Seasons,* is a favorite of Muzak and background music in

19 For a detailed biography, see the National Academy of Sciences' "Biographical Memoir of George Owen Squier" by Arthur E. Kennelly.

general[20] the kazoo's timbre is such that it would never go along with the smooth and carefully orchestrated arrangements that rely heavily on strings, woodwinds, and brass. Solos in Muzak are rare, and when they do occur, they are usually played by unobtrusive instruments such as the panpipes or a harp. What is more, Muzak is not recorded by orchestras that have a name. The recordings seem to pop out of nowhere and return to nowhere; they are not tracked back to a particular performer, orchestra, or arranger. While Muzak recordings are based on a canonized, familiar repertoire, they do not lend themselves to canonization. To imagine a variorum recording is difficult as it is, but to imagine a Muzak version of a variorum recording is simply nonsensical.[21] If the kazoo is a subversive instrument, here it is co-opted to serve the purpose of the nameless consumer industry unaware that by introducing the kazoo, the purpose of Muzak is undermined. Schafer claims that in order to defeat Muzak and bring it back from ground to figure, one must listen to it (98). Oedipa is intuitively on the right track with the Kazoo Concerto. She not only listens to the music, rather than simply hearing it; she is also able to pinpoint the composition, the recording, the orchestra, and the soloist, as well as noting that "she came through the bead-curtained entrance around bar 4" (*CoL* 2).

While *The Crying of Lot 49* contains Pynchon's perhaps best-known occurrence of the kazoo, it is in *Gravity's Rainbow* that we find the most elaborate descriptions. Toward the end, Pynchon presents us with another obscure and anachronistic kazoo composition. Roger Mexico and Seaman Bodine walk in on a concert by Gustav Schlabone (second violin/treble kazoo), André Omnopon (viola/alto kazoo) and an unnamed first violinist and cellist. This time it is

20 Music critic David Patrick Stearns writes: "If ever a composer was too amiable to be controversial, it was Antonio Vivaldi, or so it has seemed, given his current status as the prince of classical Muzak in elevators, dentist's offices and on FM radio."

21 The term "variorum" originates in literary criticism and is, as far as I know, not applied to music. It designates an edition of a text containing variants, earlier versions or notes by various editors and commentators.

Joseph Haydn's "suppressed" 'Kazoo' Quartet in G-Flat Minor (Op. 76) whose "Inner Voices are called to play kazoos instead of their usual instruments," that is, alto and treble kazoos, "creating problems of dynamics for cello and first violin that are unique in the literature" (*GR* 725). To this background music, a culinary gross-out contest unravels with alliterative favorites such as "scum soufflé [...] with a side of menstrual marmalade" (*GR* 729). Eventually, "Gustav and the rest of the quartet have abandoned Haydn and are all following Roger and Bodine out the door, kazoos and strings accompanying the Disgusting Duo [singing Acne à-la-mode]" (*GR* 731). David Cowart summarizes the performance as follows: "Performed at a dinner given by munitions magnates, the 'subversive' Haydn composition disrupts the unsavory proceedings, its mannered silences intimating knowledge suppressed by military-industrial entities busy changing their Nazi spots" (122). While this dinner party is given by exponents of the weapons industry in postwar Germany, the anarchic festivity is reminiscent of the frolicking and dancing in Cuxhaven and it is again a preterite instrument which brings disorder by speaking a language the elect cannot parse.

Haydn's Op. 76 consists of six string quartets with four movements each. Pynchon indicates that his kazoo quartet refers to the second movement of the fifth string quartet, that is, the "Largo, cantabile e mesto" in F-sharp major. Pynchon's own G-flat minor as a key signature is as absurd as a Haydn kazoo quartet as it would have as many as nine flats and cannot be said to have a real existence in music theory. Nevertheless, the kazoo might be the only musical instrument for whose performers G-flat minor poses no serious problem, as kazoos are hummed into and its players are therefore much less hung up on musical notation. Because the pitch of kazoo music is dependent on the range of the performer's voice and not on the length of the instrument's body, it makes no sense to introduce alto and treble kazoos as instruments but only as voices. Finally, giving these inner voices to two men would require them to sing falsetto—that is, in a false voice.

Another reason for Pynchon's choosing G-flat minor may very well be his well-documented love for blue notes, especially the flatted fifth (which only appears as a blue note in bebop), to which he dedicates ample space in *Mason & Dixon* and *Gravity's Rainbow.* G-flat, as the flatted fifth of C major, is, after all, the first note that comes to mind when thinking of flatted fifths, and blue notes are themselves something like preterites, that is, microtones that are always outside not only of the established Western scales but also outside of standard musical notation.

One reason for the suppression of the Kazoo Quartet is the

> subversive use of sudden fff quieting to ppp. It's the touch of the wandering sound-shadow, the Brennschluss of the Sun. They don't want you listening to too much of that stuff—at least not the way Haydn presents it (a strange lapse in the revered composer's behavior): cello, violin, alto and treble kazoos all rollicking along in a tune sounds like a song from the movie *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* 'You Should See Me Dance the Polka,' when suddenly in the middle of an odd bar the kazoos *just stop completely,* and the Outer Voices fall to plucking a non-melody that tradition sez represents two 18th-century Village Idiots vibrating their lower lips. At each other. It goes on for 20, 40 bars, this feeb's pizzicato, middle-line Kruppsters creak in the bowlegged velvet chairs, bibuhbuhbibuhbuh this does not sound like *Haydn,* Mutti! (*GR* 726)

The slow movement of the actual Op. 76 No. 5, has many piano-to-forte crescendos, but also a number of diminuendos from sforzato to piano. There is one diminuendo going all the way down to pianissimo, from bar 29 to 32. At the end of the quartet, there is a sforzato to piano descrescendo in bar 86. From then on it stays in piano until the last two-and-a-half bars, which are in pianissimo. It appears a little exaggerated to talk about "ppp-to-fff blasts" or vice versa in this softly played quartet, and it is not unambiguous which diminuendo is "the one, the notorious One" (*GR* 726). Since Pynchon—in analogy to the V-2—refers to the *Brennschluss* of the Sun, that is, the moment when

the fuel is burned out and the rocket (or the sun) is left to external forces, it is likely that he is talking about the diminuendo in bar 86, shortly before the end.[22]

The rest of the description of the Kazoo Quartet bears no recognizable likeness to the "Largo, cantabile e mesto." It may be that Pynchon inserts another Haydn quartet, such as the Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 33 No. 2, subtitled "Joke," which bears some faint resemblance with "You Should See Me Dance the Polka," the tune Dr. Jekyll hums before turning into Mr. Hyde in the 1941 movie directed by Victor Fleming. In the entire Op. 76 there is no instance where the outer voices would fall into plucking a non-melody, which, among other things, accounts for not sounding like Haydn, as the Krupp employees complain.

Bodine does not say who suppressed the quartet, "meant to express a type of unearthly radiance" (Weisenburger 360). The most likely candidates would be the Authorities or the musicologists of the present or the past. The unspecified "They" (or "they"; the pronoun is at the beginning of the sentence) would point toward the former, broadly understood as the elect. Why exactly they—or They—do not want you to listen to too much of that stuff is not evident to me. It could be that they do not want the preterite to be reminded of the end of the parabola (in the case of the V-2) or the end of life on earth (in the case of the sun) for fear that the masses would break into doomsday mayhem and get out of control. It could be that They Themselves in their power fantasies do not want to be reminded of the apocalypse and their mortality. It could be that they deem it inappropriate to make fun of such serious matters.

But the *fff*-to-*ppp* reversed blast is only one reason for the suppression of the work. There could be any number of other reasons. One would be the supposedly subversive nature of the instrument, especially in Nazi Germany, where an instrument, invented by an

22 The *Brennschluss* of the Sun contrasts with the previous quartet, Opus 76, No. 4, which is nicknamed "Sunrise."

African-American, produced in America, popular in American musics and distributed to American troops will not be esteemed. Other reasons could be that its sound is offensive to classically trained ears or that here, Haydn becomes a prankster, which does not conform to the publicly held image of the revered composer. But perhaps Pynchon simply wants to stage the instrument as subversive and suppressed, irrespective of historical evidence, because this allows him to attribute the small and cheap noise-maker to the preterite.

But why attribute this kazoo quartet to Haydn and not another composer of renown? Arnold Werner-Jensen writes that "the string quartet owes its unique status in chamber music to Haydn and through him became the benchmark and challenge for all subsequent composers and musicians" (186, my translation). Thus, while Pynchon attributes the Kazoo Concerto to Vivaldi, the master and trailblazer of the concerto, he attributes the Kazoo Quartet to the master of the quartet. As opposed to Mozart and Beethoven who were both born into families of privileged musicians employed at the court of a count, Haydn was the son of a wagonmaker and Vivaldi the son of a barber who later became a violinist. From an emancipatory or democratic viewpoint, the inclusion of kazoos—an instrument for anyone and everyone—in this hypothetical quartet would also be in line with the 1790 publication, allegedly by Haydn, of a *Gioco Filarmonico,* subtitled "an easy method of composing an endless number of minuets and trios, *even for those unlearned in counterpoint*" (Maconie 393, my emphasis).[23] This could be considered a subversive move by trained composers employed at the courts, as, with the help of this method, even the unlearned would be able to break into their profession and undermine the separation between the elect and the preterite.

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23 At the time, there were a number of similar initiatives for aleatory compositions within established musical forms. Cf. Maconie 392–95. Maconie assesses these inventions as "already a good fit with an eighteenth-century aristocracy obsessed with mechanical automata and devoted to the Cartesian doctrine of human beings as machines" (395).

In *The Complete How To Kazoo,* Stewart names extra-musical uses for the kazoo, such as "splints for small animals with injured legs" (44), lightning rods (without kazooist) (71), or to punch pasta (171). What eludes her or was deemed inappropriate but could not be missed by someone like Pynchon or any number of potheads, was its use as a hash pipe. Harking back to Petard, the unemployed musicologist of *V.* who is named after the French slang word for a marijuana cigarette, Pynchon explicates this particular use with great gusto:

> Gustav and André, back from Cuxhaven, have unscrewed the reed-holder and reed from André's kazoo and replaced them with tinfoil—punched holes in the tinfoil, and are now smoking hashish out of the kazoo, finger-valving the small end pa-pa-pah to carburete the smoke—turns out sly Säure has had ex-Peenemünde engineers, propulsion-group people, working on a long-term study of optimum hashpipe design, and guess what—in terms of flow rate, heat-transfer, control of air-to-smoke ratio, the perfect shape turns out to be that of the classical *kazoo!* (*GR* 759)

It is not reported if the hippies in *Vineland* or *Inherent Vice* were aware of this use, but it would certainly lend the kazoo an extra aura of subversion in the eyes of the elect. Needless to say that this use would not only require the classical kazoo shape but also the classical kazoo material, that is, metal and not plastic. Although Cowart says that "[d]rugs, at once destructive and subversive, correlate to powerlessness" (99), he also concedes that "taking drugs (as opposed, perhaps, to dealing them) remains a powerful metaphor for the idea of an alternative to the rapacious capitalism and consumerism that afflict American society" (120). By smoking hashish (as well as taking the many other intoxicants of their choice), Gustav and André turn on, tune in, and drop out. The kazoo is complicit with their becoming unavailable for the dominant discourses and the grand narratives of progress and protestant work ethics.

As always with Pynchon, looking closely at his novels reveals a multiplicity of connections both between his works as well as to military, social, and economic history and the musical tradition. Like Oedipa Maas's continued quest for clues, it is difficult to determine where something was placed for the reader to discover and where those links and references are coincidental. What is evident, however, is that Pynchon has intimate knowledge of the subject matter he writes about. Even in *Vineland*, where the harmonica mainly appears as a prop, he places it in a history of struggle between the preterite and the elect, between music-making and war. He portrays the harmonica and the kazoo as American instruments. While he stages them as subversive and played by the preterite—with the exception of the ambiguity of the Harmonica Marching Band Academy—he makes it clear that the instrument per se is innocent but its history is not. In it, we can find the struggles between de- and reterritorialization, appropriation and reappropriation, a continuous game of who has the upper hand. In all of this, however, Pynchon stays true to his belief that music offers respite and that making art—popular, lowbrow, participative art in particular—may be the only way to put up resistance to top-down hierarchies of power, be they economic or otherwise political. The greatest power of "subversive" music-making then comes from refusing to speak the language of the elect and choosing a means of expression which, as some believe, cannot lie. At the same time, Pynchon shows that this resistance can only be temporary—at least with a view to history—and this is perhaps why it is so important. While music can be appropriated by political and economic forces, a living, continuously changing music based on practice among like-minded cannot turn fascist but will remain dialogic, to use Vilém Flusser's distinction between broadcast and network media (cf. 172–74). If we are to escape becoming bogged down in power struggles whose conditions we are unable to shape, perhaps the only thing to do is to pick up an instrument and strum, hum, blow, or sing along.

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MIXING POP AND POLITICS

CAMPAIGN SONGS AND THE BATTLE FOR AMERICA'S MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS

Björn Sonnenberg-Schrank & Jan Niklas Jansen

1. HOMER VS PAPPY: WE WANT THE AIRWAVES

This paper aims to investigate the relationship of American politicians to pop music or pop musicians by analyzing several examples when politicians appropriated specific songs and/or their singers as a means of campaigning and communicating. Before introducing the theoretical framework we will use for our analysis and case studies where actual politicians and pop music meet, we will draw on a Hollywood example to prepare the ground.[1]

A fantastic and pivotal scene from Joel and Ethan Coen's *Oh Brother Where Art Thou?* (2000) illustrates this project beautifully. *Oh Brother...* is an American travel narrative, loosely based on Homer's *Odyssey*, set against the rural backdrop of the American South during the depression era. A group of four escaped prisoners start a journey to retrieve the alleged loot of some robbery. On the way, they record a song calling themselves the Soggy Bottom Boys,

1 After all, as Jean Baudrillard reminds us in *America*, the USA and its cinema are intertwined to a degree where they are no longer separable or separate entities but altogether constitute culture: "The city was here before the freeway system, no doubt, but it now looks as though the metropolis has actually been built around this arterial network. It is the same with American reality. It was there before the screen was invented, but everything about the way it is today suggests it was invented with the screen in mind, that it is the refraction of a giant screen. [...] [E]ven outside movie theatres the whole country is cinematic. *In America cinema is true because it is the whole of space, the whole way of life that are cinematic. The break between the two, the abstraction which we deplore, does not exist; life is cinema.* [...] Most films [...] are made up from the same everyday romance: cars, telephones, psychology, make-up. They are purely and simply illustrations of the way of life" (55–56, 101, our emphasis).

which unbeknownst to them becomes a hit due to radio airplay. At the end of the film, the band makes an appearance at a political convention shortly before an election where the two opposing candidates, governor Pappy O'Daniel and his contender Homer Stokes, speak to the public.

Fig. 1 – Micropohone, amplification, broadcasting: Taking the political stage to the private home.

Homer Stokes interrupts the group's performance and tries to debunk them as non-white, devil-worshippers, and criminals to the dismay of the audience. Pappy O'Daniel, however, quickly realizes where the audience's sympathy lies and that the more fruitful strategy in this situation is to fraternize with the Soggy Bottom Boys. He enters the stage with silly dance moves, thereby demonstrating his humor and closeness to the people. He stands shoulder to shoulder with the four musicians, thanks them and sings along with them, and announces that once re-elected, he will not only pardon these convicts, but also make them his 'brain trust.' As a matter of fact, both parties profit from this union: while the Boys are pardoned and even promised a prestigious position amidst the political elite, Pappy O'Daniel in return can transfer the group's popularity to himself and his political

campaign, since after all pop music reaches the hearts and souls of the common people much deeper than polemic rhetorics.

An aspect this scene illustrates quite remarkably is the importance and function of technology and media: it is not just the ethereal, 'magical' qualities of a popular song, its tuneful melody or appealing lyrics that enables it to reach people, it is technology. The Soggy Bottom Boys have become famous via radio (and as a prerequisite, recording technology), which alludes to the power of the medium to directly reach and infiltrate private homes and minds. Even on the visual level of the film, we are reminded of radio technology and its presence with a cut to a living room where listeners witness the described tumultuous scene via live broadcast from a distance. Subsequently, Homer Stokes asks for a microphone when he is about to defame the Boys. Once it is unplugged, he is no longer audible in the large room nor via radio transmission: he is drowned out by booing, overpowered, forcefully taken away the microphone in an act of 'medial castration,' and finally carried away, possibly to be tarred and feathered. Pappy O'Daniel on the other hand not only physically enters the stage and thus an elevated position in the room, but with grandiose gestures and pompous intonation he also assumes a position right in front of the microphone, aware of its power to amplify not only his voice, but the whole situation and its effects by multiplying it into the potential infinity of the airwaves and the transmission's reach.

2. WARFARE IS THE MOTHER OF POP. KITTLER, NIETZSCHE & MUSIC

The film scene illustrates the two principal things this paper deals with: the first is the appropriation of pop music and specific musicians by politicians, the second is technology as its precondition. In his famous essay "Rock Musik—ein Mißbrauch von Heeresgerät ["Rock Music—the Misapplication of Military Equipment," our translation]," Friedrich Kittler in his typical techno-deterministic

thinking connects the recordings of 1960s and 70s rock groups with technological advancements from the military field:

> Just like the misapplication of military equipment that was constructed for static warfare from 1917 led to radio's monophonic medium waves, the misapplication of military equipment constructed for the blitzkriegs of tank divisions, bomb squadrons and fleets of submarines led to rock music. [...] Hifi and Stereo are both originally based on sonic detection methods. (207, 209; our translation)[2]

This part of Kittler's analysis is not a matter of interpretation or standpoint but basically reiterates historical facts: like pretty much every medium used for communication or entertainment purposes, the recording and broadcasting of music (and thus by extension the basis of popular music and the music industry) is rooted in communication technology originally devised for modern warfare. Even though the proximity of popular music and political agendas often might seem far-fetched, their bond is congenital and rooted in a shared technological and evolutionary gene pool, as a matter of speaking.

To Kittler, who was always concerned with what he called "Aufschreibesysteme,"[3] art and especially music become nothing more than "Nachrichtentechnik," i.e. communication technology,

2 "Wie der Mißbrauch von Heeresgerät, das für Stellungskriege von 1917 konstruiert war, zur Mittelwellenmonophonie führte, so der Mißbrauch von Heeresgerät, das für Blitzkriege aus Panzerdivisionen, Bombengeschwadern und U-Boot-Rudeln konstruiert war, zur Rock Musik. [...] Hifi und Stereo gehen also beide auf Ortungsverfahren zurück. Bomberpiloten erfuhren, wo der Feind stand. Inzwischen haben auch Konsumentenohren gelernt, jede Gitarre im Klangfeld zweier Lautsprecher, zwischen Bücherregal und Heizkörper zu lokalisieren." (207, 209)

3 The literal translation of "Aufschreibesysteme" is "systems of writing down / writing-down-systems" or "notation systems." Kittler's book *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900* (1985), however, was translated as *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, since the term—as Kittler applies it—refers to a "network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to transmit, record and process relevant data" (369).

a means of recording and transmitting information (without having to rely on humans). He partially bases this thought on Friedrich Nietzsche's evaluation of poetry in *The Gay Science*:

> In the old times which called poetry into being, people had still utility in view with respect to it, and a very important utility—at the time when rhythm was introduced into speech, that force which arranges all the particles of the sentence anew, commands the choosing of the words, recolours the thought, and makes it more obscure, more foreign, and more distant: to be sure a superstitious utility! It was intended that a human entreaty should be more profoundly impressed upon the Gods by virtue of rhythm, after it had been observed that men could remember a verse better than an unmetrical speech. It was likewise thought that people could make themselves audible at greater distances by the rhythmical beat; the rhythmical prayer seemed to come nearer to the ear of the Gods. Above all, however, people wanted to have the advantage of the elementary conquest which man experiences in himself when he hears music: rhythm is a constraint; it produces an unconquerable desire to yield, to join in; not only the step of the foot, but also the soul itself follows the measure,—probably the soul of the Gods also, as people thought! They attempted, therefore, to constrain the Gods by rhythm, and to exercise a power over them; they threw poetry around the Gods like a magic noose. (Nietzsche 63–64)

The intention of poetry, of arranging words and speech by rhythm and rhyme is twofold: first, it a mnemonic device to be able to remember certain things more easily. (Anyone who studied Latin at some point in their lives probably to this day remembers poetry-like mnemonic tricks, e.g. about with which prepositions to use the ablative.) The second function of poetry is "to come nearer to the ear of the Gods," or in simpler terms: to be louder, more compelling. According to Nietzsche, "music produces an unconquerable desire to yield, to join in; not only the step of the foot, but also the soul itself follows the measure."

Body and mind are enchanted and carried away in the hypnotic sway of music. Consequently, poetry and music and the unifying effect of rhythm and chanting have the ability to exercise power over humans and the Gods alike with loudness, rhythm and their built-in order to join in. We can link Nietzsche's quote and the pre-eminent psychological function and power of poetry and music to Plato's stance towards music and musical education in *The Republic*, in which he proposes that "rhythm and harmony find their way into the secret places of the soul."[4]

To Kittler, rock music must be evaluated as contemporary poetry or literature (cf. 200, 207) because it possesses the necessary attributes for global power: inescapability, ubiquity and its repetitive character epitomized by the typical and generic hooklines and choruses. On the psychological level, both political agendas along with their rhetorics as well as rock music aim to overwhelm with the same methods in their respective pursuit of power. Their connectedness on the technological level has become clear by now, too. Pop or rock music's roots in military technology are to some degree hidden in dark places, they are something which is there and not there at the same time, something which is always present and cannot be erased, oscillating between the repressed and the unconscious, to apply Freudian terminology and a link to Fredric Jameson's "political unconscious" that serves as the conceptual template for this volume's

4 "Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul; on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful; and also because he who has received this education of the inner being will most shrewdly perceive omissions or faults in art and nature, and with a true taste, while he praises and rejoices over and receives into his soul the good, and becomes noble and good, he will justly blame and hate the bad, now in the days of his youth, even before he is able to know the reason why; and when reason comes he will recognise and salute the friend with whom his education has made him long familiar" (Plato, *The Republic*, Book III, 400d–e).

title. Therefore, let us dwell on these "secret places of the soul," the unconscious, or rather the "musical unconscious" for a moment.

Walter Benjamin introduced the notion of the "optical unconscious." Reflecting on the new visual mass media of his time, namely photography and cinema, he stated that "[t]he camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses" (30). By alluding to psychoanalysis and especially Freud's *The Interpretations of Dreams* from 1899, Benjamin attested the camera the ability to excavate the unconscious, to reveal what is hidden, e.g. by technological possibilities such as zooming, close-up, and in the case of the moving image also devices such as slow-motion, pausing, rewinding, fast-forwarding. He expanded this idea also to a political analysis of fascism when he stated that "mass movements are usually discerned more clearly by a camera than by the naked eye" (30), where he clearly refers to the way the Nazis—who were masterful in understanding and (ab)using new media, such as cinema and radio—appealed to a collectivized unconscious which only became discernible at close inspection.

According to Benjamin, the closer inspection of recorded images or sounds allows for decoding their unconscious, their secret content, hidden messages and meanings. Consequently, whoever is in power over the produced images or sounds can access the unconscious of spectators, maybe even manipulate and control it (which can be linked to Louis Althusser's notion of how the "state apparatus" in its manifold incarnations exerts its power over subjects via what he calls "interpellation"—and it presents a link to Frederic Jameson, who to some extent develops Althusser's idea further).

If we assume that there actually is an optical unconscious that can be revealed by an analysis of recorded images, we can also assume that there is a musical unconscious: an undercurrent, partially a hidden layer, partially a shared knowledge, which when triggered by musical impulses opens up a string of associations and connotations. The existence of an underlying musical unconscious is not even that much of a secret; its existence is a huge part of rock music's mythical

allure and has been the projection screen of hilarious conspiracy theories over time (e.g. satanic messages audible when a record is played backwards or the Beatles giving clues on the "Paul is dead" myth). Kittler comments:

> It is for a good reason that rock music—at the peak of its technological capabilities—is not content with merely offering 'canned music' like everybody else. In a strategy game with their audience, records can become secret messages that transmit coded meanings somewhere between the record sleeve and the vinyl's last groove. ("Rock Musik" 212)[5]

3. A BOTTLE OF CAMPAIGN

In the before-mentioned film scene from *Oh Brother…*, technology in the form of the iconic microphone plays a major role in defining power and reach. It is an interface that allows for control of the situation—and the audience within its reach, in the venue where the event is taking place and in the households to which it is broadcast. In that sense, technology is shown as something that political powers use to exert influence on several levels. On the conscious (and visible) level, politicians, like in this case Pappy O'Daniel, openly, physically, and explicitly align themselves with the artists and technology enables to document and disseminate this act. But Pappy O'Daniel's embrace goes deeper than that: through taking ownership of the moment he has not only claimed the artists as his own, but their art as well, so the people's dance that follows can be seen as an affirmation of him (which happens 'invisibly' and on the unconscious level).

5 "Mit gutem Grund bleibt Rock Musik, wenn sie auf hochtechnischer Höhe war und ist, nicht dabei stehen, Musikkonserven wie alle anderen anzubieten. In einem Strategiespiel mit ihrem Publikum können die Platten zu Geheimbotschaften werden, die irgendwo zwischen Cover und letzter Rille eine verschlüsselte Nachricht übertragen" (212).

Such an appropriation of music and musicians by American politicians has a history, which dates back to an era before the major breakthroughs in communication technology allowed politicians to professionalize their incorporation of popular tunes and singers. However, we must distinguish between specifically written campaign songs and already existing songs which have not been specifically written for a presidential campaign, but which were appropriated and brought into the political arena from a music or pop culture sphere. There is a well-documented[6] tradition of made-to-order theme songs for presidential campaigns which can be traced as far back as to Andrew Jackson's 1824 campaign,[7] and which spawned such remarkable songs as "Lincoln And Liberty." These songs mostly tried to appeal to a more or less clearly targeted demographic by catering to their assumed musical taste and at the same time implement political messages, or at least function as a sonic calling card which informs about the character and plans of a candidate. As 'discursive formations' in the Foucauldian sense, these songs can be read as textual and musical artifacts that reveal quite a bit about the way campaigns interacted (or tried to do so) with their (pop)cultural zeitgeist. Also the fact that this strategy is practically no longer used is revealing and sheds light on how political campaigning or marketing in general

6 E.g. included in the exhibition "The Living Room Candidate. Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952–2012" by New York's Museum of the Moving Image, also to be found online at http://www.livingroomcandidate.org.

7 This example is not quite spot-on, since it was not exactly custom-written for Jackson: in 1824 and 1828, Andrew Jackson used "The Hunters of Kentucky" penned in 1821 by New England author Samuel Woodworth (variations of the song title are "The Battle of New Orleans" and "Half Horse or Half Alligator") as campaigning song. In the tradition of folky street ballads, the celebratory lyrics commemorate Jackson's victory over the British, yet they mention Jackson by name just twice: "I s'pose you've read it in the prints / How Packenham attempted / To make old Hickory Jackson wince / But soon his scheme repented. / For we, with rifles ready cock'd / Thought such occasion lucky / And soon around the gen'ral flock'd / The hunters of Kentucky. […] But Jackson he was wide awake / And was not scar'd at trifles / For well he knew what aim we take / With our Kentucky rifles" (Hickey 347).

has changed. A media-savvy (post-)modern audience necessitates different modes of address, and as advertising more and more incorporated strategies that speak to the unconscious rather than to the conscious (not rarely by postmodern techniques such as referencing and appropriation), so did political campaigning. Whereas the 'classic' campaign song from the perspective of a present-day audience might seem too overt an advertisement and thus indistinguishable from the way food, cars, or other consumer goods are marketed, the appropriated song allows for an image transfer of all the song's and artists's connotations onto a candidate and is a way to present them as connected to an existing discursive field outside of politics. But even though the twentieth century with its rapidly growing media landscape and the birth of what we now refer to as the music industry, pop music or pop stars, there still are some noteworthy examples for the classic campaign song, especially during Richard Nixon's various campaigns (they were used as background music for TV commercials or at political rallies, and even sold as 45 rpm 7" singles). After 1968's loungey, swingy, showtune-esque "Nixon's The One" sung by Connie Francis (Nixon vs. McHumphrey vs. Wallace), his 1972 theme and campaign song (Nixon vs McGovern) was "Nixon Now." A multitude of anonymous male and female voices sing, sometimes together, sometimes grouped into men and women:

> Reaching out to find a way / to make tomorrow a brighter day / making dreams reality / more than ever 'Nixon Now' for you and me. / Nixon Now, Nixon Now / he's made the difference / he showed us how. / Nixon Now, Nixon Now, more than ever Nixon Now / listen America: Nixon Now! / Reaching out across the sea / making friends where foes used to be…

The feel-good, upbeat tune with its saccharinely pleasing harmonic simplicity and naïve melody is more reminiscent of then-contemporary TV show theme songs (such as the musical intro to *The Brady Bunch*), but quite out of step with the (pop-)musical (and political) landscape, especially the allusion to Nixon's foreign policy, his

"reaching out across the sea" to former foes must have seemed odd against the backdrop of the ongoing Vietnam War. Clearly, this kind of song was already a semi-nostalgic proposition at the time, not only in comparison to the era's musical preferences, but also bearing in mind that the way campaign songs were constructed, used, and attached to specific singers had started to change since the archetypical pop star Frank Sinatra had re-recorded his Oscar-winning[8] hit song "High Hopes" from 1959 for John F. Kennedy's 1960 campaign with altered lyrics:

> Everyone is voting for Jack / 'Cause he's got what all the rest lack / Everyone wants to back—Jack / Jack is on the right track / 'Cause he's got high hopes / He's got high hopes / 1960 is the year for his high hopes / Come on and vote for Kennedy
>
> Vote for Kennedy / And we'll come out on top! / Oops, there goes the opposition—ker— / Oops, there goes the opposition—ker— / Oops, there goes the opposition—KERPLOP!
>
> K-E-DOUBLE N-E-D-Y / Jack's the nation's favorite guy / Everyone wants to back—Jack / Jack is on the right track / 'Cause he's got high hopes / He's got high hopes / 1960 is the year for his high hopes
>
> Come on and vote for Kennedy / Vote for Kennedy / Keep America strong / Kennedy, he just keeps rollin'—a— / Kennedy, he just keeps rollin'—a— / Kennedy, he just keeps rollin' along! / Vote for Kennedy!

Another significant shift closely connected to the use of media and technology is the fact that these 1960 presidential elections were the

8 The song (written by Sammy Cahn and Jimmy van Heusen) was introduced in Frank Capra's comedy *A Hole in the Head* (1959), which also featured Sinatra as an actor. The original version lists improbable, comical situations in which animals strive for things that are seemingly unattainable for them, but they all have "high hopes."

first to be preceded by the televised Presidential debates, which were immediately established as an integral part of political campaigning from then on. And along with the growing reach of audio-visual mass media in the post-war USA, the fight for the musical unconscious of the nation has forever intensified. More than any lyrical content of the songs used, the transfer of image became what really mattered. This reached another apex when "rock 'n' roll president" Bill Clinton famously put on sunglasses and his saxophone to play a rendition of the Elvis Presley classic "Heartbreak Hotel" on the Arsenio Hall show in 1992. As far as political substance goes, this went about as deep as Clinton's notorious answer to the eternal question of "boxers vs briefs."[9] However, Clinton's being fluent in the visual and musical codes of popular culture and media of the time was as important as anything actually articulated, arguably even more so. As statements addressing the collective unconscious of the electorate, these moments spoke clearer than any speech might have.

Along the way, the relationship between artists and politicians has often been a slightly uneasy one. Elvis Presley's 1970 visit to president Nixon's White House is not seen as a career highlight by many (this rather very bizarre episode almost led to Nixon making the King of Rock 'n' Roll his "brain trust," since Presley, who tragically died after a long history of substance abuse, offered in a handwritten letter to the president to cooperate with the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs to combat illicit drug use by passing on information about the drug use of his fellow pop stars). A few decades

9 Dan Fastenberg writes in his article in *Time*: "He was the first U.S. president born after World War II and admitted to trying marijuana and having had marital difficulties. Thoroughly modern Bill Clinton was a natural ally of the MTV generation, and Generation X was vital to his 1992 election victory. Once in office, Clinton looked to make good on his promise to keep in touch with America's youth on issues like teen violence. Amid talks of a national crime bill, spectators were caught off guard when Clinton chose not to exercise executive privilege while taking part in an April 19, 1994, *Enough is Enough* town hall sponsored by MTV. After being asked, "Is it Boxers or Briefs?" Clinton laughed, and conceded, "Usually briefs."

later, Bob Dylan looked uneasily stoic when he received the Medal Of Freedom from President Obama. Indeed, despite his early fame for outspoken protest songs such as "Masters of War," Bob Dylan has shied away from politics and overt messages for most of his career and turned to his own brand of surrealist Beat poetry to explicitly avoid any appropriation by politicians' agendas; he only really warmed up for Jimmy Carter who called the singer a friend and often quoted him in his speeches. In his time as governor of Georgia Carter said that "after listening to [Dylan's] records [...] I've learned to appreciate the dynamism of change in a modern society" (*Government* 18). And when accepting the candidacy for president in 1976, he told the delegates at Madison Square Garden: "We have an America that, in Bob Dylan's phrase, is busy being born, not busy dying" ("Our Nation's Past and Future").

4. BORN (AGAIN) IN THE USA

The American artist whose music became the single most contested battleground in the fight for the musical unconscious is arguably Bruce Springsteen. On his albums, Springsteen frequently addresses topics at the very heart of American identity. The way in which he uses genuinely American tropes of hope, love, toil, urban and industrial decay, class, and automotive travel certainly strongly contributes to the way he was perceived from early on as all-American: hardworking yet fun-loving, smart but not an intellectual, at the same time socially conscious but also highly individualistic. This recalls the phrase "e pluribus unum" from the American seal: this motto-like doctrine of "out of many, one," which combines collectivism and individualism, is further emphasized by the fact that Springsteen is not the member of a *band* (like one of the Beatles), but *backed* by a stable band who are galvanized by him as their leader. Springsteen's narrative as an artist and public persona was built on exactly this genuine American-ness, including the ambivalences inherent in that notion. Both 'realness' and American-ness as qualities that may not

be synonymous, but very much mutually dependent, are at the core of this narrative.

The battle for co-opting this image of the quintessential American superstar in the political realm was initiated with a short side note of a speech Ronald Reagan delivered on his 1985 campaign trail in Hammonton, New Jersey: "America's future rests in a thousand dreams inside your hearts. It rests in the message of hope in the songs of a man so many young Americans admire: New Jersey's own Bruce Springsteen." The reasons why a sentence that reads like a simple, off-hand remark has survived and is often quoted when discussing the significance of both Reagan *and* Springsteen are key to understanding both the ways and strategies politicians appropriate pop singers, the effect this has, and why Bruce Springsteen seemed such an apt projection screen for sometimes diametrically opposing politicians. By 1985, when Reagan was in his second term, Bruce Springsteen had reached a previously non-existent status in pop culture (which, by the way, remains unbroken to this day). He was one of the stadium-filling superstars that rose to fame in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and who was seen as a credible role model across a wide range of age-groups, classes, and ethnicities, among other reasons also due to his ethnically mixed backing group, the E Street Band. Since the 1980s, his releases regularly sold in the multimillions, became staples for radio stations and thus found their way into homes and cars across the country (or the whole world, for that matter). His dissemination was further accelerated especially by the video for his song "Born In The USA," which became a huge success on MTV (the TV station had begun broadcasting and defining youth culture in 1981), further solidifying Springsteen's blue-collar image along the way.

Springsteen's commercial success, media presence, and popularity with heterogeneous audiences showed that he clearly tapped into the collective unconscious of the American people, but what was he saying exactly? Musically, "Born in the USA" is driven by one of pop-rock's most stoic, brashest and loudest backbeats until that point, a beat that practically commands listeners to pump their fists,

at least if these fists are not already too busy waving American flags. Nietzsche's thoughts about rhythmic speech being audible over a greater distance and the compelling power of rhyme, melody, and rhythm, certainly apply here: "Rhythm is a constraint; it produces an unconquerable desire to yield, to join in; not only the step of the foot, but also the soul itself follows the measure" (64)—and the rudimentary bass-snare figure definitely is a beat to drive the key sentence into the furthest reaches of any stadium in the world. This drum pattern is such an important element in defining the rhythmic and sonic architecture of "Born in the USA"—and thereby partly also its impact—that it needs to be considered just as much as the lyrics or Springsteen's delivery. The development of Benjamin's 'optical unconscious' to a 'musical conscious' has to take place on two levels: the first level is the shared knowledge connected to a piece of music about which we already spoke in some detail, the associations and connotations triggered by a song and/or artist. The second level is something that is not so much a matter of personal connotations, or an interpretative close reading, which, as some might argue, is often like a Rorschach test and says much more about the commentator than it says about the artefact itself that is being commented on. On this second level we must probe the song and its actual musical/sonic content for what is hidden in it, for a musical unconscious that can be revealed by an equivalent to the zooming in or slow motion used to reveal the optical unconscious of a photograph or film.

If we take such a look at (or rather: listen to) the production of the song, the way recording technology and studio 'trickery' is used to achieve a certain effect, we can for instance observe the unnatural sound of the snare drum. Using recording technology such as compression, gating, and lots of reverb, the impression of a huge, echoing space is created. This space does not sound a bit like drums played in a rehearsal room or a music club, it does not even sound a bit like the studio recordings Springsteen had released so far (the rather dry and defined production on mid- to late-1970s studio recordings when multi-track technology enabled overdubbing on a bigger scale and

changed production from capturing a group of musicians playing live in a room to separating the players more and more to achieve a less roomy, drier, more defined sound, an aesthetic especially distinct on drum recording). On the one hand, one could assume that at that time, due to his success and thus the ever-increasing venue size in which Springsteen performed, he and his band had outgrown the way a rehearsal room or music club sounds and gotten accustomed to the sonic makeup of music performed in large arenas, so that consequently opting for a huge sound was as a matter-of-fact way to capture the 'natural' sound of the band. On the other hand, one could see the artificial recreation of a 'stadium sound' as a statement in itself, something that not lyrically, not performatively, but sonically suggests a particular perception. Understood like this, the sonic architecture of the song already contains the stadium, the huge stage, the powerful amplification, and the position of power to be able to claim this stage, to use this powerful infrastructure as an apparatus to send out messages. The musical unconscious of the song in this sense is the huge space it so powerfully claims and commands (to some extent, this idea follows Marshall McLuhan's notion that every medium refers to, or even contains, another medium).

The music video will only be mentioned briefly here, even though it merits its own close reading. It is put together in a quite simplistic way, even though the music video as an art form of its own was starting to come into existence at that time when sophisticated, orchestrated videos were already an established and often-used device in the marketing of music and construction of an artist's image. The clip alternates between live footage of Springsteen and his band and seemingly random, almost banal images from everyday life in the USA. The live footage of the musicians signifies authenticity as opposed to a studio stage which would rather signify an artificial recreation of the authenticity of a band playing together; on the sound level, there is recorded applause and audience reactions blended in the mix, even though the version of the song is clearly not a live recording but the studio-recorded album version. The interwoven

short non-musical scenes are presented in the style of found footage: the star-spangled banner, a photo of young Springsteen in his high school yearbook (further underlining his normalcy: he may be a superstar, yet he has a similar backstory as you and me—one out of many in a variation of 'e pluribus unum'), and scenes that could stem from documentaries such as images of workers leaving a factory or a line of people applying for food stamps, and home-movie-like scenes of suburban housing, a couple getting married—all in all scenes that signify the American everyday experience with all its struggle and love, beauty in the little things and ugliness in the big things. The live footage of the musicians mainly focuses on close-ups of Springsteen, which visually emphasize what his vocal delivery already indicates audibly by showing him almost vibrating tensely and concentrated: singing this song is hard physical labor! He stretches the vowels to a point where his raspy voice almost gives in, until he is almost out of breath. He is not merely performing the song, he is working it, and thereby is performatively creating a spectacle that celebrates masculine physicality, American-ness, passion and diligence, heroic individualism (he is the sole lead vocalist) and community (his equally loud band rhythmically and harmonically unified and the mixed-in audience), belief and conviction in the face of adversity.

Lyrically, there is doubt in the verses, but it gets methodically pulverized in each and every chorus, emphasized by the major chords that dominate the song's misleading embracing and 'positive' feel:

> First verse: "Born down in a dead man's town / The first kick I took was when I hit the ground / You end up like a dog that's been beat too much / Till you spend half your life just covering up"
>
> Chorus: "Born in the U.S.A, I was born in the U.S.A."
> (repeated four times)

There is indeed a method to this, as Springsteen himself attested in a 2005 NPR interview conducted by Terry Gross: "In my songs, the

spiritual part, the hope part is in the choruses. The blues, and your daily realities are in the details of the verses. The spiritual comes out in the choruses, which I got from Gospel music and the church." This duality turns the song into a symbolic container that can hold a lot of competing meanings—and it has become such a significant American object exactly because of this ambivalence. The story of the disillusioned Vietnam veteran depicted in the song evokes experiences almost any family at the time in the USA could relate to, and it speaks of a piece of history any U.S. American would have an opinion on. The portrayal of post-Vietnam desolation in the verses were kept in a language that most heartland conservatives would be able to get behind with a sense of hurt pride, while left-leaning liberals may have felt invited to find irony in the almost endless, quasi-mantralike repetitions of the titular line in the chorus. The song represents mainstream America not despite, but because the opposites it contains are not resolved.

The prominent use of "born" as the operative word, always in conjunction with the geographical attribution "in the USA," allows for a patriotic sentiment regarding one's roots, but it also evokes the importance of birth/being born and its symbolic re-enactment in Christianity in which being baptized is seen as a re-birth under a new value system. Especially in the USA—and especially since the conservative backlash of the Reagan years the Evangelical Right who often refer to themselves as "Born Again Christians"—"born" not only refers to the physical birth, but also to the symbolic (re-)birth into a new symbolic order. Certainly, this is not something The Boss had in mind when he wrote the lyrics, but it adds to their ambivalence, to the way many (contradicting) meanings can be attributed to the song. Moreover, a song built around the phrase "Born in the USA" lends itself to being used by presidential campaigning so well since one of the few preconditions to become president of the USA is (at least in theory) not a specific sex, ethnicity, or class, but having been just that: born in the USA.

The images Springsteen conjures up with the song speak so strongly that even though he never actually and specifically mentioned "Born In The USA," Reagan's single allusion to Bruce Springsteen during the aforementioned speech in New Jersey forever tied the song to that presidential campaign. As a matter of fact when pressed in an interview, Reagan said his favourite Springsteen tune was "Born To Run," as is documented e.g. by Jack Doyle in his comprehensive article on the Springsteen-Reagan connection:

> The national campaign press, meanwhile, after hearing Reagan's mention of Springsteen at Hammonton, were skeptical that Reagan knew anything at all about Springsteen or his music. Some asked what Reagan's favorite Springsteen song was, for example. After a time, came the answer: 'Born to Run.' Late night talk show host Johnny Carson began making jokes about Reagan's new favorite music.

One might say that the connection between Reagan and "Born in the USA" was willed into existence by the collective unconscious. It seems too plausible to *not* exist—and factually, it does not (yet it is an interesting coincidence how the title "Born to Run" combines Reagan's activity of 'running for president' and Springsteen's "Born in the USA").

Obviously, the connotation was aided by the language of Reagan's statement. He alludes to the American dream, adapting it to his politics by de-collectivizing it into thousands of individual dreams, which follows the logic of what we now call neoliberalism. Using more abstract, subjective, albeit powerful buzzwords such as 'hope' or 'future,' all staples of political rhetorics, he then goes on to flatter (and thereby merge) both his and Springsteen's audience by addressing them as "young Americans," before pandering to local patriotism and finally hitting the home-run by dropping the superstar's name. Speaking of Reagan's methods of appropriating ownership, critic Greil Marcus states: "Making their victory his—in its primitive

form, that's how the process seems to work. [...] This is altogether a pop process" (293).

At the time of Reagan's presidency, Springsteen was reluctant to discuss the differing views of what "Born In The USA" actually means, instead shying away from grander social statements on subsequent albums and dropping the song from most of his set lists, or playing dark and despaired blues versions of it that turned its initial duality on its head. Only after the attacks of September 11, 2001 did he revert to frequently playing the song in its original, defiant form. He went on to regularly pairing it with songs that directly addressed social unrest in the United States. Over twenty years after the song had been released, these methods of planting it firmly in liberal territory proved that the battle for control over its meaning in the collective unconscious was still on, and Reagan's claim for it still resonated all these years later.

5: NEW AGE, NEW BOSS(ES): BARACK OBAMA AND SPRINGSTEEN

After "Born in the USA," at least three more songs by Bruce Springsteen have been utilized as campaign songs, all of them by candidates of the Democrats: "No Surrender" (which had been recorded and released alongside "Born in the USA" and shared a similar fate of being mostly played in a stripped-down, acoustic arrangement) was picked by John Kerry's team for his 2004 campaign. And both in 2008 and 2012, Barack Obama's campaigns included tracks by Springsteen: "The Rising" in 2008, and "We Take Care of our Own" in 2012.

In March 2011, as President Obama took the stage at the annual Gridiron Dinner in Washington, D.C., he stopped the traditional entrance music "Hail To The Chief" to dance a few steps to "Born In The USA." With this small move, he both mocked those among his political opponents and conspiracy theorists who had doubted he had been born in the United States and proved his superior ability to

utilize pop-cultural references. In a sad side note, at around the same time Springsteen's ever-present hit was (ab)used in an entirely different facet of the political arena and this time not at all to subtly access any unconscious: reports emerged that the song had been used at extreme volume in hands-off torture methods at the Guantanamo Bay camps (cf. Clive Stafford Smith). The idea of music as a torture method, by the way, reunites rock music with its estranged roots in the misapplied military equipment Kittler writes about and even turns music itself into military equipment.[10]

This hijacking of Springsteen's art for purposes of warfare or torture aside, the relationship of President Obama and Springsteen actually goes further. On January 18, 2012, Springsteen's new song called "We Take Care Of Our Own" (from the album *Wrecking Ball*) leaked on the internet and when Barack Obama was re-elected into office for a second term in November 2012, at the moment when the vote's outcome was announced and the race was officially over, balloons and confetti flew around McCormick Place in Chicago and the tune blared loudly in the building and on TV screens around the globe. In content and structure it is remarkably similar to "Born In The USA": again the song's title is repeated as the rousing chorus of the song, while the verses paint a bleak picture of United States that are marked by years of economic hardships and crumbling solidarity. Instead of detailed storytelling, this newer song works around lyrical snapshots. The first verse reads:

> I've been knockin' on the door that holds the throne / I've been lookin' for the map that leads me home / I've been stumblin' on good hearts turned to stone / The road of good intentions has gone dry as bone.

10 For a further exploration of what he terms 'loud texts,' also see Gunter Süß's fantastic contribution to this volume, "Cultures of Loudness: From Jim Crow to Guantanamo," where he discusses the (mis)application of American music for purposes of torture in Guantanamo (and also mentions Bruce Springsteen).

Noted critic Robert Christgau gave it a glowing review:

> (It is) all heavy irony shading over into murderous rage, with refurbished arena-rock to slam it home; it's perversely anti-political to lay any other interpretation on […] "We Take Care of Our Own," which cites places "From the shotgun shack to the Superdome" where we—meaning the U.S.A. so many Americans weren't even born in—documentably haven't taken care of our own. It's protest music, damn right about moral abstractions rather than those finely lined characters good little aesthetes get gooey about.

Indeed, the song can be read that way, but it does take a certain mindset to do so. "In the U.S.A., we want to sing along with the chorus and ignore the verses, ignore the blues" (45), writes author Sarah Vowell in her interpretation of Reagan's campaign in 1984. Christgau's reading of "We Take Care of our Own" takes this dichotomy as gospel, which has to result in seeing "heavy irony" in the words of the chorus. But it is worth noting that the disconnect between verses and choruses is a lot less explicit than in "Born In The USA."

Structurally, it follows a pattern that Springsteen employs in many of his most successful songs: The lyrics feature gritty episodes of hardship in the verses and offer a resolve in the chorus in which the titular line is repeated three times ("Wherever this flag's flown / We take care of our own"), again the lyrical content is emphasized by the song's harmonic structure and the arrangement.[11] Different from the line "born in the USA" where the noun stands in the past participle and thus is a description of a condition, "we take care of our own" is a full sentence with subject, verb, and object. The subject "we" clearly states what it does or plans to do with the object "our own": to take care, in the present tense. This line is not as much about the "what is"

11 "My songs are filled with hope," [Springsteen] answered. And in 'Born in the U.S.A.,' he explained, "The pride was in the chorus […]. In my songs […] The hope part is in the choruses. The blues, […] your daily realities […] are in the verses" (Vowell 44).

and much more about a way of behaving, an ethos. However, both the "we" and the "our own" are as ambiguous as can be, depending on each American's (or listener's) individual definition of what "we" refers to and who is part of it. Is it everybody who lives "wherever this flag's flown,"[12] or everybody who was "born in the USA," every member of the E street band, every member of humankind? Is the proclamation the "we take care of our own" to be understood as something inclusive or exclusive? To some extent, the "imagined political community" (6) as Benedict Anderson calls social constructs such as a nation or the abstract "we" in this case, remains unspecified. Sung by Springsteen and with some knowledge about his stance, the line "we take care of our own" is inclusive and affirmative of his social conscience (see also footnote 13). And arguably, this is why this specific song by this specific singer seems tailor-made for Obama's self-positioning. It delivers at the same time a poignant slogan (pretty much in the same vein as the connotation-laden "yes, we can"), functions as a 'my policies in a nutshell' one-liner, and conveys (by absorbing it) what the singer represents: genuine down-to-earth Americanness, honesty, integrity. That is what listeners around the country (or within the further reach of the broadcast's transmission) were bound to feel about President Obama, his political agenda, and this celebration, no matter what meaning was lurking in the actual lyrical content.

Said honesty and credibility so integral to Springsteen's image, or for lack of a better term, his 'earthiness,' was reinforced by the

12 This line and the image of flying a flag introduces another level of ambiguity, bearing in mind not only the fact that the 'Star-Spangled Banner' is not explicitly mentioned, but a much more general nondescript "flag," which could be any flag. For a listener, however, who supposes that the flag referred to is actually the American flag, there is an undeniable undercurrent, as the song was written at a time of massive U.S. engagement in overseas military struggles. Thousands of Americans in an amphitheatre in the Midwestern heartland singing this line would be an entirely different thing than thousands of Americans singing it in a theatre of war in Afghanistan or Iraq.

production. By now, the larger-than-life sound design of the *Born in the USA* album was a distant memory. On the 2012 song and album, the production no longer implies a huge stadium or expensive world-class studio, but rather an amplified realism, evoking a great-sounding rehearsal room via 'polished grit' on everything from the crack of the snare drum to the jangle of the guitar amplifiers. In the arrangement of "We Take Care of our Own," the piano reprises the glockenspiel from "Born to Run" before the strings pick up on the theme. In the final repetitions of the chorus, the strings slowly morph the theme into something so overt and suggestive in its awareness of the affective power of certain sounds and instruments that it could easily be featured in a Hollywood movie soundtrack or car commercial, additionally reinforced by a choir and group ad-libs that slowly build to create a sense of community. By the end critics like Christgau who attested the song with irony seem almost cynical: if this is supposed to be irony, it is an awful lot of people being ironic together.

In the end, what makes Springsteen such a preeminent figure—as a fan one could say: his genius, as a semiotician one could say: what makes him a symbolic container that can hold a lot of competing meanings—is his ability to write a song the downtrodden patriot can get behind as well as the guilt-ridden leftist. And the genius of the Obama campaigns is identifying, incorporating and appropriating exactly these kinds of cultural signifiers. Different from the 2008 election,[13] in 2012, Springsteen did nothing to resolve this situation, refusing to endorse any candidate in the presidential race. In Christopher Rosen's Huffington Post article, he is quoted as saying:

13 Springsteen is quoted by Rachel Sklar in her Huffington Post article: "Like most of you, I've been following the campaign and I have now seen and heard enough to know where I stand. Senator Obama, in my view, is head and shoulders above the rest. He has the depth, the reflectiveness, and the resilience to be our next President. He speaks to the America I've envisioned in my music for the past 35 years, a generous nation with a citizenry willing to tackle nuanced and complex problems, a country that's interested in its collective destiny and in the potential of its gathered spirit. A place where '…nobody crowds you, and nobody goes it alone.'"

"I prefer to stay on the sidelines. I genuinely believe an artist [is] supposed to be the canary in the coal mine, and you're better off with a certain distance from the seat of power." However, the machineries of image transfer care very little about reluctant artists, and moreover, they work in two directions. As "distance from the seat of power" is not always a position one can freely choose, the week following Obama's speech at the Democratic National Convention on September 6, according to Rosen's article, sales of "We Take Care Of Our Own" rocketed by 409 %.

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CULTURES OF LOUDNESS

FROM JIM CROW TO GUANTANAMO

Gunter Süß

'White' workers who use burnt cork to blacken their faces perform allegedly African-American songs and dances in North-Eastern urban centers. An Otello who stammers conventional wisdom in rich plantation slang marries Desdemona; they both live and together they have a baby who is literally half white and half black. A girl, Capitola Black, survived growing up in the Bowery by cross-dressing and really is an heiress of a big estate in Virginia. Cap roams the woods close by her home and she finds and punishes crooks, robbers, and rapists. A Mexican miner who was abused by white Americans and whose wife was raped by them becomes the biggest robber in California shortly after the Mexican-American War. Now he is on a mission to wipe out the whole 'American' race.

These are some of the plots and protagonists of popular texts of the American Antebellum. On the one hand, they could not be more different in terms of ethnicity, gender, class, but also location or region within the U.S. Furthermore, the texts in which these protagonists appear are very different: a dime novel by John Rollin Ridge titled *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854); Minstrel shows and songs by T. D. Rice, especially the various versions of "Jump Jim Crow;" the Shakespeare adaptation *Otello* [without the h], also attributed to T. D. Rice; and the novel *The Hidden Hand* by E.D.E.N. Southworth that was serialized three times in 1858, 1868, and 1883 in the *New York Ledger*. On the other hand, these texts and their protagonists share remarkable similarities. In all of them, the contradictions, ruptures, breaks, and inconsistencies—in short, all of the cultural conflicts of this era—are very visible; or should I say audible? These narratives are *loud* in a very specific sense, which I will elaborate in the following essay. They are what I call 'loud texts.'

Loud texts are disturbing in many ways; for example, they are disturbing the bourgeois capitalist system exactly because they lay bare the contradictions of a cultural period. This holds true for their narrative structure as well as their aesthetics. They can be excessive, spectacular, sensationalist, or melodramatic, all in one single text. The contradictions that are present on an ideological level find their expression on an aesthetic as well as a formal level.

When I first used the term 'loud text' I did so in a purely metaphorical way. However, it soon struck me that the concept of the 'loud text' is more than a metaphor. All of the stories I mentioned were performed, even the two that started out as a print text, namely the novel about Joaquín Murieta and *The Hidden Hand*. Murieta can be found in *corridos*, Mexican ballads, but also in movies, a Soviet rock opera, and plays.[1] *The Hidden Hand* was first and foremost performed as a theater play. All of these texts as well as the performances of Jim Crow and Otello can quite literally be called 'loud.'

In this paper I will sketch out what the concept of loudness can stand for, both in a metaphorical as well as in a literal sense. What are 'cultures of loudness'? I will start by discussing the 'loud text' as a new analytical concept and continue with some of the challenges researchers face when they deal with historical auditory culture, which can roughly be defined as anything before 1900 (cf. Volmar 228). I will then analyze two very different phenomena: first the early history of Jim Crow the trickster, and then the so-called "Gitmo playlist," the songs that were used in the prison camp in Guantanamo

1 The oldest preserved recording of a Murieta *corrido* is attributed to Los Madrugadores and dates back to the year 1934. There are more than a dozen films with the character of Joaquín Murieta. The first one is *The Gay Defender* from 1928. The most widely known movies are *The Robin Hood of El Dorado* (1932) and *The Mask of Zorro* (1998). Murieta also is the main protagonist of the play *Fulgor y Muerte de Joaquín Murieta* by Pablo Neruda (1967), which was subsequently made into the Soviet rock opera *Звезда и Смерть Хоакина Мурьеты (Star and Death of Joaquín Murieta)* and a movie with the same title (1982). The last three texts explicitly link the fight of Murieta to anti-imperialism, the Civil Rights Movement, and opposition to the war in Vietnam.

Bay to torture inmates. I will argue that these two examples are, first, representative of different cultures of loudness. Second, they are two poles of a continuum in regard to the political potential and implications of loudness. As this article spans more than 160 years it will necessarily be theoretically speculative and will aim to stimulate further research.

THE 'LOUD TEXT' AS A NEW ANALYTICAL CATEGORY

While the 'loud text' may be a new analytical category it shares some similarities with other concepts. First of all, the "incoherent text" of film scholar Robin Wood comes to mind, but also Hubert Zapf's model of literature as "cultural ecology" presents a similar argument, especially when it comes to the function of literature to act as an "imaginative counterdiscourse" (70, my translation).

When Wood talks about the "incoherence" of a text, he does not refer to texts in which the fragmentation is deliberately produced by artists for artistic reasons, since in "such cases the fragmentation—the consciously motivated incoherence—becomes a structuring principle, resulting in works that reveal themselves as perfectly coherent once one has mastered their rules" (41). Rather, Wood is "concerned with films that don't wish to be, or to appear, incoherent but are so nonetheless, works in which the drive towards the ordering of experience has been visibly defeated" (42). The incoherence in these texts is produced by the "cultural assumptions of society":

> Those cultural assumptions themselves have a long history (from the immediate social-political realities back through the entire history of humanity) and will themselves contain, with difficulty, accumulated strains, tensions and contradictions. (42)

All the 'loud texts' I mentioned at the beginning are "incoherent" in Wood's understanding. The contradictions and strains are barely

contained and create the incoherence present at the formal, but also at the ideological level.

In this sense, all the 'loud texts' foreground the experience of individuals and social, ethnic, class- and gender-specific groups which are rarely at the center of attention in mainstream discourses. Therefore—and this is the first reason why I think that the concept is useful—'loud texts' can act as an alternative historiography. These texts acted as the thorn in the side of the majority, a reminder that different marginalized groups were not only silently present in this space called America, but that they also filled this space with noise, and with loud noise at that. The second reason for the usefulness of the concept marks a possibility for new readings, the possibility to combine these dissimilar primary texts in analyses, in order to think about them simultaneously, or to connect them in order to get fresh perspectives and ultimately form new hypotheses.

CHALLENGES FOR HISTORICAL SOUND STUDIES

"While it has acknowledged and followed the increasing importance of music in American cultural production in various ways," Julius Greve and Sascha Pöhlmann write in their Introduction to this volume, "[the field of American Studies] mostly privileges textual and visual forms of art as its objects of examination" (9). This volume takes a step to "adjust this imbalance" (9) and demonstrates the manifold contributions to the research of all things aural. My paper is another small piece of the puzzle.

However, American Studies as a discipline is not alone in privileging visual phenomena and printed texts over music and sound. A quick look at some of the concepts and theories of the humanities in the 20th century such as "the male gaze" or "the panopticon" bears witness to this phenomenon. Traditionally this has also been the case for history or cultural history. In his programmatic essay "The Sound of History and Acoustic Memory: Where Psychology and History Converge," Jürgen Müller writes:

> Historians rely in their research almost exclusively on their power of vision. They *look* at the sources and they form an *image* of the past—this has always been and still is the primary, often the only, form in which the past is perceived and consequently interpreted. (444)

Müller calls for an incorporation of auditive phenomena within historical research, so that scholars should deal with "the history of listening, [...] historical soundscapes and their meaning" (443). However, when working with historical aural or performative texts, researchers face at least two problems. First and foremost we have to address the problem that for the time before the age of wax cylinders, shellac records, or, later, magnetic tape, we do not have recordings available.[2] We can actually not really listen to these aural performances. All of the 'loud' texts of the mid-nineteenth century I mention above are in this sense ephemeral. How do we cope with that? How do we adequately analyze these texts? And what does "adequately" mean in this regard? Jürgen Müller writes:

> The soundscapes of earlier historical periods can be reconstructed through written accounts of the specific noises of the past and their effects on the cultural, social, and political life. As historians are studying pictures and visual memories, they may also investigate the auditive codes of past epochs. (456)

Apart from written records[3] which can be analyzed Müller points to another source: "[t]here still exist some artefacts that produce the

2 A recording of "Jump Jim Crow" played by Henry Reed on the fiddle is available at the Library of Congress. However, this specific recording dates back to 1966. It can also be accessed online at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afcreed.13035a39>.

3 In his essay "Echoes in Print: Method and Causation in Aural History", (sound) historian Mark M. Smith argues against the position that "the lack of recorded sound from the antebellum period poses serious methodological problems [...]" (319). He claims: "For the historian, interest lies in how these sounds were perceived, the meaning different

same noises as they did hundreds of years ago" (448). Furthermore, "various systems of musical notation" (Müller 449) can be used to reconstruct the sound of songs. In the case of "Jim Crow" sheet music abounds. The image of the following page shows one of the early representations of the song in a sheet music collection which dates from 1849.

In the case of "Jim Crow" there are actually a lot of sources, written documents, and sheet music. However, it is important to note that most of them come from the late 1840s or early 1850s, a time when the Jim Crow character already took some decisive turns, as I will show later in this paper.

The second challenge concerns methodology as well; sound has effects on the human body that are difficult to describe and to analyze for 'classical' sign-based cultural studies: how does music, how does sound signify? Does it signify at all? Christian Huck writes: "More than other sensory realms, sound facilitates non-semiotic perceptions that nonetheless work on the recipient, that are significant without signifying. 'Classical' cultural studies, with their emphasis on signs, have difficulties 'reading' these effects" (188). The effects of music or sound on the human body have been studied first and foremost from psychological perspectives. In the 1980s and 1990s quantitative studies have especially considered the role of music in connection to consumer choices and shopping behavior[4] or the role of music in treating illnesses such as dementia, Parkinson's disease, or stress-induced psychic problems.

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constituencies attached to certain sounds, and the weight sounds carried in shaping consciousness of self, otherness, and, yes, sectional identity" (319). In a similar fashion as Müller, Smith points to written and printed documents of the time in question: "I would argue that, while actual sounds could not be reproduced with true fidelity until the invention of electromagnetic recording devices, print itself provided a form of recording, as the use of aural metaphors, similes, and onomatopoeia, and even mundane descriptions, attests" (319).

4 Examples for the first category include Yalch and Spannenberg's study "Effects of Store Music on Shopping Behavior" and Kellaris and Cox's research on "The Effects of Background Music in Advertising."

JIM CROW. 19

1st Voice.

1. Come list - en all you gals and boys, I's just from Tuck - y - hoe: I'm goin to sing a lit - tle song, My
2. O I'm a roar - er on de fid - dle, An down in old Vir - gin - ny, They say I play de sky - en - tific, Like
3. I went down to de rib - er, I did'nt mean to stay, But dere I see so ma - ny gals, I

2nd Voice.

4. I got up - pon a flat boat, I cotch de Un - cle Sam, Den I went to see de place Whar
5. An den I go to Orleans, An feel so full ob fight, Dey put me in de cal - a - boose, An

BASE.

name's Jim Crow. Wheel a-bout and turn a-bout an do jis so, Eb-ery time I wheel a-bout I jump Jim Crow.
Massa Paganinni.
could'nt get away.

dey kill'd Packenham. Wheel a-bout and turn a-bout an do jis so, Ebe-ry time I wheel a-bout I jump Jim Crow.
keep me dere all night.

Fig. 1 – Sheet music, "Jim Crow" in the
The Ethiopian Glee Book (1849).

During the last fifteen years the new discipline of sound studies[5] has developed, influenced by musicology, psychology, philosophy, ethnography, art history, and the study of the history of technology. Psychoanalytical approaches, some of them originally coming from film studies,[6] have also been influential. However, a comprehensive theory that incorporates non-semiotic perceptions of sound into cultural studies is still missing.

5 One of the pioneers of sound studies is the Canadian composer, writer, and artist R. Murray Schafer. His book *The Tuning of the World* (1977) has been especially influential. In recent years several anthologies, essay collections, and introductions have been published, providing an overview of the young discipline. Among them are *The Auditory Culture Reader* (2003) by Michael Bull and Les Back, Holger Schulze's *Sound studies: Traditionen—Methoden—Desiderate: Eine Einführung* (2008), Mark M. Smith's *Hearing History: A Reader*, and Karin Bijsterveld's collection *Soundscapes of the Urban Past: Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage* from 2013.

6 See among others the works of Michel Chion, especially *L'Audio-Vision. Son et image au cinema* (1991, 2005) published in English as *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (1994), and Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (1987).

JIM CROW, THE TRICKSTER AS 'LOUD TEXT'

With these preliminary thoughts in mind, I will move to Jim Crow or, more precisely, to the prehistory of Jim Crow, a phenomenon we cannot listen to. Of course we do not have recordings of these performances, although it would probably be one of the richest, multilayered, multimedial phenomena we can imagine. What we have are printed lyrics, some descriptions of performances, pictures, and sheet music, which date back to the 1840s and 1850s.

Jim Crow is known as a racist stereotype. He is often depicted as a scarecrow in rugged clothes and became a standard figure in the minstrel shows of the 1840s and 1850s. Later, the term was used to describe blacks in general, and following 1877, Jim Crow acquired a different meaning as the name of segregation laws, and more than that, a racist code of conduct in the American South (cf. Tischauser). Thomas Dartmouth Rice, or Daddy Rice, has been credited as the inventor of Jim Crow and there are different stories of origin. One of them holds that Rice learned the dance by watching an old, crippled slave in Virginia.

W. T. Lhamon argues against such tales. In his account, Rice was in contact with African-Americans already by the mid-1820s, possibly at Catherine Market in New York, where blacks were dancing for eels. Lhamon continues to contend that Rice was not a racist, and he rather stresses the sympathy and attraction between African-American youth and white working-class men. Lhamon concludes that the stories of origin were invented retroactively to serve a political function: "They told these condescending stories to contain blackface performance and to root it in racism. Jealous of blackface popularity, they told stories to belittle and wedge apart its affiliations" (154). Indeed, we can find several arguments and texts that point to the ambiguity of early blackface performances and the fascination of white, urban, working-class youth with black cultures. James V. Hatch writes that Jim Crow can be imagined as a trickster figure who "made his audience laugh at greed, hypocrisy, and stupidity, much like the sting of Michael Moore in his book *Stupid White Men* (2002)" (338).

Jim Crow as a trickster seemed to possess the greatest of ease. He could live for the moment and celebrate his lust for life with a childish naïveté. As David Roediger argues in his book *The Wages of Whiteness,* these elements account for the attraction of the black minstrel figures for the white working class whose freedom was constricted by industrialization: "[the] white working class, disciplined and made anxious by fear of dependency, began during its formation to construct an image of the Black population as 'other'—as embodying the preindustrial, erotic, careless style of life the white worker hated and longed for" (13–14). Examples can be found for instance in the lyrics of "The Original Jim Crow." Here, Jim Crow is portrayed as a free, wild good-for-nothing, a womanizer, slacker, and drinker, who has fun all day long when he is not sleeping:

> 4
> I went down to de riber,
> I did'nt mean to stay,
> But dere I see so many galls,
> I could'nt get away.
>
> 5
> An den I go to Orleans
> An feel so full of fight
> Dey put me in de Calaboose,
> An keep me dare all night. (Rice 2)

However, Jim Crow has political thoughts, too, and sometimes these thoughts are radical:

> 37
> Should dey get to fighting,
> Perhaps de blacks will rise.
> For deir wish for freedom.
> Is shining in deir eyes.

38
And if de blacks should get free.
I guess dey'll fee some bigger.
An I shall concider it,
A bold stroke for de niggar.

39
I'm for freedom,
An for Union altogether,
Aldough I'm a black man,
De white is call'd my broder (8)

These are pretty bold strokes indeed. In stanza 37, Jim Crow refers to slave uprisings and violence in the wake of the sectionalism of Northern and Southern states. Jim Crow as a black man longs for freedom and supports the Union. At the same time, he considers the white man his brother. However, this dramatic political gesture is soon interrupted by irony as Jim Crow cannot be serious for very long. In a reference to Andrew Jackson and the Nullification Crisis of 1832 Jim Crow mixes the political and private level, claiming

40
I'm for union to a gal.
An dis is a stubborn fact,
But if I marry an dont like it,
I'll nullify de act. (8)

Clearly, there are some racist moments in this early version of Jim Crow: the exaggerated slang, the stereotypical speech. Jim Crow does not seem to be the most intelligent guy, but appearances can be deceptive. As a trickster, the crow can hide its cleverness behind the looks of a dumb façade. In his book *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World,* Dale Cockrell concludes:

> The meaning of Jim Crow is thus slippery—all contestation and ambiguity. The song is, in this respect, much like a carnival, for it is of the common people (and not), of social criticism (and centers of power), of hope (and control), noise (and music), the public sphere (and the private), the body (and the mind), the obvious (and the subtle), all mingling, smudging, transgressing, fun, and blackface—all paradox and meaning, if you'll allow me my carnival moment. (89)

The early Jim Crow is a prime example for a 'loud text' which foregrounds the conflicts and contradictions of antebellum culture—especially in terms of race and class. However, the ambiguity did not last long. Jim Crow only had a short liminal moment, after which the minstrel show was institutionalized as a genre and thereby tamed and contained. It was made palatable for a racist middle-class audience. This goes hand in hand with the general tendency of disciplining sound in the antebellum:

> Class relations were the keys. Elites listened for and heard the putative lack of discipline and the supposed excesses of passion of the lower orders with impressive precision. Attempts to control and discipline this 'canting and shrieking, very wretched generation or ours' required firm self-restraint. Should individuals prove unable or unwilling to control themselves, then patricians would gladly assume the responsibility. (Smith et al. 367–68)

From today's perspective of cultural studies, this short liminal moment is not lost. It lives in the 'loud text' of Jim Crow, in the cracks and contradictions, and functions as alternative historiography. 'Loudness' in this sense is a progressive category which ensures that the marginalized groups are heard, too.

In the context of this anthology, it is important to note that the 'loud text' shares similarities with the notion of "the musical unconscious in its social sense" (21) or "culture's musical unconscious" (19) as developed by Julius Greve and Sascha Pöhlmann in their Introduction. The 'loud text,' too, can be described as "a form of art

that haunts a society, a restless ghost that will not leave you alone, only that it haunts you in broad daylight when you are shopping at the mall rather than in a gloomy house you should not have entered in the first place" (21). The juxtaposition of the mall and the gloomy house is important here as it signals that you can be haunted everywhere by an obtrusive 'loud text.'

TRANSIENT SOUND, NO TRACES LEFT

The sound of early Jim Crow is, therefore, something we might call transient or fleeting like the marginalized social and ethnic groups themselves. These sounds haunt the hegemonic classes, and sound has, as Randi Gunzenhäuser writes, "uncanny power[s]" (13). These transient texts tell us about possibilities of the past, but also about the people who do not usually fill the history books: "Sound and voice continue [...] to haunt the visual as its untamed other" (Gunzenhäuser 14). These may be the sounds of Jim Crow, the sounds of songs and dances by and about African-American others, but it may also be the sounds of the city dwellers that we can find, for instance, in literature. Writing about "Nervous Sounds: Auditive Aspects in American City Texts," Gunzenhäuser states: "If the social or ethnic other can be overlooked as part of the visual cityscape, it cannot be neglected as part of the soundscape" (20).

Sound (especially as noise) has distressing and agonizing qualities. It often stands in for repressed and traumatic experiences. Although it works on the individual's body, it cannot be seen or proven to others. Sound, therefore, may seem solely subjective, as the example of tinnitus shows; such noises in the ear have specific individual qualities as they are not audible by other human beings. Moreover, sound is transient and fleeting in regard to something completely different. Sound leaves no visible traces, no visible traces of trauma. As Suzanne G. Cusick points out, music (or sound) has been used both as a weapon as well as an instrument of torture by the U.S. military. By music as a weapon she refers, among others, to the development of the Long

Range Acoustic Device by American Technology Corporation. As Cusick claims, it was most likely this device which was used in the second 'Battle of Fallujah' in November 2004 to bombard the city with music. This use was by no means new. In 1989 the U.S. military invaded Panama and made General Noriega, the country's military dictator, flee to the Papal Nunciatura, the embassy of the Vatican. In order to make Noriega surrender, the U.S. military blasted loud music at the building and its inhabitants (cf. Cole 61). Whether it was only the noise or additional diplomatic pressure on the Vatican we do not know, but Noriega left the Papal Nunciatura after a couple of days.

The second use of music or sound as an instrument of torture took place at the U.S. detention camp at Guantanamo and other (secret) prisons in Iraq as well as possibly all over the world. Loud music was played for long periods of time to prisoners in windowless rooms with stroboscopic light or in complete darkness with low temperatures in so-called 'stress positions' or the prisoners were humiliated by being naked.[7] What is at stake here is a permanent assault on all senses. Music is not used as 'music,' but as pure force, or as Cusick calls it "sheer sound." She points to the differences of sound as a weapon and sound as torture:

> The common premise is that sound can damage human beings, usually without killing us, in a wide variety of ways. What differentiates the uses of sound or music on the battlefield and the uses of sound or music in the interrogation room is the claimed site of the damage. Theorists of battlefield use emphasize sound's bodily effects, while theorists of the interrogation room focus on the capacity of sound and music to destroy subjectivity.

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7 Again, these inhumane practices are much older, but were not documented widely before 2003. Of course, there is a reason for that. The military has no interest in discussing this: as long as this practice is not officially called torture, it can still be used. Accordingly, Cusick calls these practices and other "no-touch torture" elements "the military's oral tradition."

If this is the case, then the effects of sound have a physical dimension as well as a psychic, emotional, and affective dimension.[8] Battlefield use is more concerned with the physical dimension (such as orientation, balance, etc.), whereas sound as torture aims at psychic, emotional, and affective levels.

I have not touched upon the semiotic level so far, but it seems to me that this level was the center of attention in Western cultures. Although it was not for their musical or semiotic qualities that these songs were used, people in the Western world were especially interested in the so-called 'Gitmo playlist': which songs by which artists were played to the detainees? It does not come as a surprise that most of the songs could generically be classified as Hard Rock, Heavy Metal, or Rap. For people from a non-Western cultural background, but also for many Westerners genres such as Metal and Rap may be culturally unfamiliar, may sound utterly aggressive, and may as such be scary (and again as noise, not as music). Yet there are also children's songs to be found on the list, among other genres:[9]

- The "Barney and Friends" Theme
- The "Sesame Street" Theme
- "The Real Slim Shady" and "White America" by Eminem
- "Killing in the Name" by Rage Against the Machine
- "…Baby One More Time" by Britney Spears

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8 Since the early 2000s classical music by Bach, Mozart, Vivaldi, and Brahms is played at Hamburg's central railway station to cast out homeless people and drug addicts. While this use is surely not comparable to musical torture, it is structurally similar in that it aims at the psychic, emotional, and affective levels of people, too (cf. Brandt).

9 There are several lists of songs allegedly played at Guantanamo. The list used here was published by several local TV stations in the U.S. and tabloids such as *The Daily Mail* referring to a leaked CIA document entitled "Guidelines for Interrogation Methods" (cf. Vinter). The document also stated the permitted volume levels and durations of the music blasted at the detainees: "as loud as the highway for 18 hours a day, the volume of a cranked up motorbike for eight hours or a jackhammer for two hours" (Vinter).

- “Enter Sandman” by Metallica
- “Babylon” by David Gray
- “Born in the USA” by Bruce Springsteen
- “Bodies” by Drowning Pool
- “Shoot to Thrill” and “Hell’s Bells” by AC/DC
- “Don’t Gimme No Lip” by Pearl Jam
- “Somewhat Damaged” by Nine Inch Nails

Some of these songs seem to be highly unsuitable for use by the ‘establishment.’ After all, songs like “White America” by Eminem and “Killing in the Name” by Rage Against the Machine are deeply critical of mainstream bourgeois America. These songs can even be called ‘loud texts’ according to the definition I introduced earlier. While I cannot answer the question of how much the semiotic level mattered or even existed for those subjected to this torture, it is important to note that cynicism and sadism rule at the semiotic level for the torturers. Take, for instance, this stanza from Queen’s “We are the Champions”:

> I’ve paid my dues
> Time after time
> I’ve done my sentence
> But committed no crime

As Clive Stafford Smith writes in *The Guardian*: “Sometimes the selections used are wryly appropriate for prisoners being held without trial for years on end.” It is interesting to note that the choice of music was up to the individual soldier—at least for the use of music as a weapon or as sheer sound, as Cusick points out: “It is because music is incidental that the repertoire is delegated to individual PsyOps soldier’s creativity.” Although we cannot be certain here, the same seems to be true for music as torture. This leaves two possibilities for the ‘Gitmo’ playlist: it was either a ‘compilation’ preselected by CIA officials from which the individual torturer could choose or a

'best of' album compiled after the songs had already proved useful as instruments of torture.

In any case, these songs with their lyrics, song structures, performances, and music videos and the use of these songs as weapons, as "sheer sound" and instruments of torture point to the multiple layers acoustic phenomena possess simultaneously. These texts are 'loud', too, but on a very different level. Their 'loudness' derives from the ability to trigger bodily and psychic reactions. Together with the semiotic elements these songs possess, they point to another quality of the 'musical unconscious' introduced by Greve and Pöhlmann: the musical unconscious as excess and recontextualization. After interpreting several songs as part of a soundtrack of a movie and pointing to 'new,' even retroactive meanings these songs can acquire, they write:

> Such contextualization not only refers to an intermedial framework, though. It also describes the privileging of certain aspects of music at the neglect of others, in which case the musical unconscious can be used to understand this rest or excess of signification. It is particularly a certain *de*contextualization and *re*contextualization that adds meaning to music, and both form part of the musical unconscious as a resource of connotations that oscillate between presence and absence without ever fully being either. (26)

One example of this proliferation of possible meanings is Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA," a song with a contested polysemic history and a prominent place on the Guantanamo playlist. "Born in the USA" can be seen as a song protesting the treatment of Vietnam veterans in the 1980s. However, it was reduced to its chorus as a patriotic hymn by Ronald Reagan, who wanted to use it in his reelection campaign in 1984, and by the majority of 250,000 East Germans who attended Springsteen's concert in 1988 in East Berlin. For many East Germans, however, the song will always be linked to the song "Born in the GDR" by punk band Sandow, which refers to the Springsteen

concert in the lyrics. "Born in the GDR" itself has a polysemic history (cf. Siebert) as it was interpreted both as the iconic song of the 'Wende' and as a celebration of the GDR.

Moreover, "Born in the USA" can trigger physical reactions. In my very personal case I am reminded of the smell of the AMIGA record every time the song has been played since.[10] More than that, I smell it again. While these are rather pleasant bodily reactions, inmates of Guantanamo tortured with "Born in the USA" might react to the song being played with panic attacks, vomiting, sweating, and other symptoms. "Born in the USA" hints at the baroque pool of semiotic, physical, psychic, emotional, and affective reactions to music and sound. Furthermore, the song attests to the quality of the musical unconscious as mapped out by Greve and Pöhlmann "[to insist] on the embeddedness and interconnectedness of musical cultural artifacts and their irreducible proliferation of meanings" (28). What, then, are the qualities that the 'loud texts' of the antebellum and the Guantanamo playlist share? I think that we can point to two distinct features: even if we can technically record sound now, all these texts keep some of their transient, fleeting, and spectral qualities. And they will keep coming back. Coming back to haunt and cause pain—for better or worse.

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10 "Born in the USA" was one of the few Western records which were released in the GDR by the state label AMIGA. However, the Springsteen record was scarce, so that most GDR youths got it from the library.

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PHILADELPHIA'S MUSICO-SONIC-OPTICAL UNCONSCIOUS

OR, FROM THE LEGACY OF A GLASS HARP TO PARADES, PARADOXICAL SUBLIMATIONS AND REFRAINS

Arthur J. Sabatini

The wordy title of this paper emerged in part during the festive atmosphere of the Christmas holidays in Philadelphia, which culminate on New Year's Day with the Mummer's Parade, an extravagant day-long cacophonous spectacle that sonically, visually and performatively resonates throughout the city. The locally organized parade has a 135-year history in Philadelphia and its main participants, Mummers (whose name derives from the German), flaunt everything the unconscious stands for, and then some. Produced without corporate support and staged by dozens of long-standing clubs and associations, the Mummers are comprised of white, working- and middle-class men and, for the past few decades, women and their families. With garishly painted faces, multicolored wigs, and flamboyant satin and feathered costumes, the Mummers, in teams ranging from one to hundreds, prepare short musical theater sketches performed with well-practiced amateur theatrics, choreography and continuous live and recorded music. Many of their routines display flourishes of satirical and indirect political wit, while others are intentionally parodic and raucous. For the thousands of spectators at the New Year's Day festival, which takes place in the downtown area and some neighborhoods, the Mummers are experienced as joyfully antic, restorative and creative. The parade outwardly engages a sense of nostalgia for 'good times' and fulfills a desire for a particular communitarian ideal. It also serves to reinforce a conception of a deeply felt populist strain of urban fun-making, where music, noise, and elated, self-regulating crowds on the city's streets are acknowledged as a distinct civic value.

Fig. 1 – At the Mummers Parade, Downtown Philadelphia, New Years Day.

As a paradigmatic example of the carnival spirit, the Mummers are characterized by showy fusions of sound, sight, and spectacle and, as such, represent a version of how Philadelphia's 'musical' and 'sonic unconscious' manifests itself in forms of theatricalization and the valorization of ceremonies and traditions.

That is, historically and in the present, Philadelphia's 'sonic unconscious' is largely recognizable as it appears visually and performatively. In essence, with homage to Walter Benjamin's notion of an *optical unconscious,* a more accurate formulation for Philadelphia's sonic unconscious would be a *musico-optical unconscious* and, even more broadly, as it often includes non-musical sound and noise, a *sonic-optical unconscious*. There are, as this paper will demonstrate, historical traces and contemporary evidence of both a *musico-optical unconscious* and *sonic-optical unconscious* identifiable in specific sites and through multiple productions, practices and on-going social activities in the city's life. These phenomena disclose various indications of social and class desires, relationships to memory and

localized structures for performance and communication, which contribute to the city's sonic and musical vitality.

The Mummers are among the major figures from Philadelphia that I will reference regarding the persistent and recurrent signs of a sonic-optical unconscious. Others include individuals such as Philadelphia Founders William Penn and Benjamin Franklin, and prominent jazz, opera, soul, and pop stars who are native to or lived in the city. Images of the latter performers are visible in oversized realistic or stylized murals that appear on the sides of buildings throughout the city. Created by an artistic community-based organization called the Philadelphia Mural Arts Project, the murals are instances of musico-optical and sonic-optical imagery that enlivens and cultivates a sense of indigenous music-making and cultural awareness, particularly in African-American and ethnic working-class neighborhoods. Examples of such musico- and sonic-optical imagery include representation of musical instruments, notation or musicians in performance. In numerous public locations, there are sculptures, plaques and other material signs that also underscore a heightened sense of sound made visible and citywide sonic production.

What follows frequently comments on the uses of Fredric Jameson's notions in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* But I also call attention to different conceptions of the unconscious and its workings in order to assess particular Philadelphia-related themes and practices. For example, prompted by Jameson's theorizing, the dynamics of Philadelphia's musico-optical and sonic-optical unconscious are decipherable in relation to an aesthetic system. That is, Jameson indicates that events and related performances (such as parades) can be viewed as forms of "cultural artifacts" that have the potential "to be read as symbolic resolutions of real and political and social contradictions" (80). Although, *pace* Jameson, it could also be said that symbolic parades and what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "the carnival sense of the world" (*Problems* 123) are not always aspects of an overtly politicized unconscious but supplement the formation of collective unconscious production in the sense outlined

by Herbert Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization*. In that study, Marcuse's analysis of the psychic mechanism of sublimation and its implications for social order advance my discussion. So, too, does Bakhtin's formulations of carnival and carnivalization in *Rabelais and His World*, and also later in his book on Dostoevsky, where he writes of "carnivalistic misalliances"; a notion that depicts how "[a] free and familiar attitude spreads over everything: over all values, thoughts, phenomena, and things" (123). In addition, as will be noted, Bakhtin and his co-author V.N Voloshinov suggest a non-Freudian model of an individual unconscious in their study, *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, and instead posit a more social and ideological conception of consciousness, one "in every respect determined by socioeconomic factors" (86). This usefully expands the sense of the unconscious and allows for the perspective developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Deleuze and Guattari also critique Freud's model of the unconscious and outline the possibility of regarding social productions such as parades and, for that matter, daily life in cities as polysemous and embedded in what they call "assemblages" of "semiotic flows, material flows and social flows" (22–3). Their thinking echoes themes outlined by Marcuse and Bakhtin and suggests a rhizomic extension of the concept of a musico-sonic-optical unconscious. In the closing pages of this paper, I refer to their sonically derived concept of the 'refrain' and indicate how it provides another dimension for the consideration of Philadelphia's musico-sonic-optical unconscious. In the end, I will contend that Philadelphia's musico-sonic-optical unconscious—and its related communicative systems, discourses and aesthetics—are nurturing and productive. At its best, Philadelphia's musico-sonic-optical unconscious is essential to currents of dialogic relationships citywide and is integral to the production of a sustaining, liberating, generative environment that functions to retain and transform meaning and provide memories and imaginings.

In the spirit of carnivalesque and metropolitan heterogeneity and Deleuzian and Guattarian proclivities toward multifarious

engagement, then, my paper will forgo theoretical purity or a singular interpretation of a musico-sonic-optical unconscious and instead offer an assemblage of discourses on Philadelphia's musical, sonic, visual and performative cityscape. An overarching contention of this paper is that Philadelphia stands apart from other American cities in that, historically and currently, a musico-sonic-optical unconscious in tandem with musical cultures (producers, audiences, institutions, and other important elements of those cultures) are demonstrably and irrepressibly animated to visually, tactically and performatively represent sound and music. One strain of this results from Philadelphia's ideological and socio-historical processes of memory, memorialization and self-recognition, all of which produces an array of residual visual objects, themes and significations that can be traced to the city's origins in the Colonial Period. The resultant successive celebratory acts that have emerged since are infused with class and racial musical, sonic imagery, iconographic symbolism, self-referencing discourses and vitalizing social practices.

ON IDENTITY AND PROBLEMATIC ORIGINS

To begin, then, it should be noted that Philadelphia is not renowned as a national and international center for any one dominant musical genre, sound or musical institution. It is not New York City, where music, money, business and fame have been deeply intertwined for a century; and, unlike jazz in New Orleans, Memphis and the blues, Nashville and country music or Seattle and its rock, grunge and alternative scenes, there is no defining genre that characterizes the city's musical cultures. Rather, there has been a long, self-conscious history and much continuous and varied musical production extending from classical to avant-garde and experimental music, from doo-wop, rock and roll to rock and pop, along with be-bop, jazz, funk, folk, Latino, and hip hop.

Importantly, this musical production rests on the foundations of a quite proudly held historical cognizance of Philadelphia traditions.

In turn, this knowledge has been developed and is encouraged by long-established and ever newly created musical and public institutions. In part, as I outlined in a paper titled "Sounds, Frequencies and Sonic Resonance in Philadelphia," the city's musical and historical self-awareness appears in the context of its promotion of tourism. A central theme that appears in tourist material as well as in the discourses related to social, economic and civic practices is a reminder of how Philadelphia was America's first capital. In other texts and rhetoric, profit- and non-profit organizations, public and private venues, educational and music training academies produce their own images and narrative histories of a sonic past. There is, for example, a 'Philadelphia Sound' claimed by the Symphony Orchestra and 'The Sound of Philadelphia' promoted by soul music producers of Philadelphia International Records and their famed studio, Sigma Sound. The Free Library of Philadelphia houses the Edwin A. Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music, which, it states, "is the largest lending library of orchestral performance material in the world. Founded in 1909, the collection comprised just over 3300 works when donated to the Free Library in 1929" (Free Library of Philadelphia). Since the 1970s avant-garde and experimental music has been integrated into the city's audio and live performance cultures by such groups as the Relâche Ensemble, Orchestra 2001, and Bowerbird Music. The Philadelphia Clef Club is dedicated to the past and present life of jazz, and another group known as "Loud! Fast! Philly!" recounts and revives the city's punk music scene. In short, from its ethnic and racial communities (Irish, Italian, Polish, African-American) to its economically elite strata (granting foundations and supporters of the symphony and opera) to multiple mainstream, over- and undergrounds of jazz, rock, alternative, hip hop, DJs, and radio-station followers, Philadelphia understands itself and functions as an abundantly varied multi-musical community.

Needless to say, each producing organization and its constituents, as with the Mummers, are replete with specific imagery, organized events and discourses that engage diverse social sectors and

neighborhoods. Individual, collective, civic, institutional and commercial efforts thus consistently affirm a sense of musical vitality and richness. The functional practices of all involved have resulted in productive, well-connected social, personal and on-line networks that actively inform the city's sonic life and its conscious self-conception. Musical communities form fluid, generally non-competitive financial and interpersonal networks that supply discourses and material production but also exhibit unconscious social-psychic manifestations.

In the efforts for recognition, the self-promotion and communicative signification of groups and institutions necessarily rely on constructing identities through slogans and imagery, some of which betray, to take up Freudian categories, anxieties and other mild pathologies. This is apparent in marketing gambits as well as localized mythologizing. Along Broad Street, in Center City, there is a Walk of Fame with sidewalk plaques sponsored by The Philadelphia Music Alliance. Eschewing more modest adjectives, its website boasts that it "promotes the vast contributions of Philadelphians to all music genres." For example, identifying an orchestral or R&B 'sound' as representative of an entire city overstates the reality of the city's widespread, diverse music making. A similar case could be made with the depiction of early rock and roll stars such as Frankie Avalon and Chubby Checker and the popular 1950s teenage music and dance show television show, Dick Clark's American Bandstand. These singers and other acts were part of Philadelphia's music scenes 'back in the day' and they are recalled visually in mural arts images and performatively through radio programs, and club events where 'oldies' are featured. However, this pop-culture historicizing is uneasily lionized in the sense that public acknowledgment of them exposes the precariousness of adolescent behavior and, simultaneously, the unresolved emotions of having been lived in an earlier, perhaps, innocent time. This is another way in which Philadelphia unconsciously demonstrates that it is a city of neighborhoods overshadowed by the grander, more worldly, urbanity of New York City; and its self-aggrandizing comes to resemble a noticeable display of a

wish for recognition, if not an inferiority complex. This is added to by the tourist industry's main theme of Philadelphia as the historical center of America where the Founding Fathers gave birth to liberty and freedom, a narrative clearly open to Oedipal interpretations.

ON A POLITICAL AND SONIC UNCONSCIOUS IN PHILADELPHIA'S ORIGINS

For Jameson, all aspects of social and political reality become "'in the last analysis' political" (20). He then adds that "a political unconscious proposes that we undertake just such a final analysis and explore the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" (20). Postulating Philadelphia's musico-sonic-optical unconscious is an analogous process, with the proviso that it is less clearly about the finality of political interpretations. To approach the subject, it is telling to follow Freud and his followers on selected themes and the symbologies of birth and trauma, and to explore conceptions of psychic mechanisms of sublimation. Such an assessment can illuminate historical and psychic traces left by a compact constellation of primal ruptures dating from events in Philadelphia's early history. These involve William Penn, the founder of Philadelphia, the American Revolution and its symbolic master tropes, and the *armonica*, an instrument invented in the 1760s by Benjamin Franklin.

Consider: the socio-political foundations of freedom and liberty in America were first established by its Quaker Founder, William Penn, who also named the territory "The City of Brotherly Love." The Quakers were a Protestant sect who rebelled against religious oppression in England. Their beliefs forbid idolatry and visual imagery. To worship, even today, they assemble for services in plain meeting rooms and practice meditation and silent prayer. The name by which they were first identified was not their own but used derisively by other British Christians. While praying, the sect members were said to quake or tremble at the word of the Lord, in effect

performatively signifying the very silence they embraced. Thus, the implied images—of male relationships in 'brotherly love' and the 'inner sound' of Quaker prayer, whether actually perceived or not—connotes visual representation.

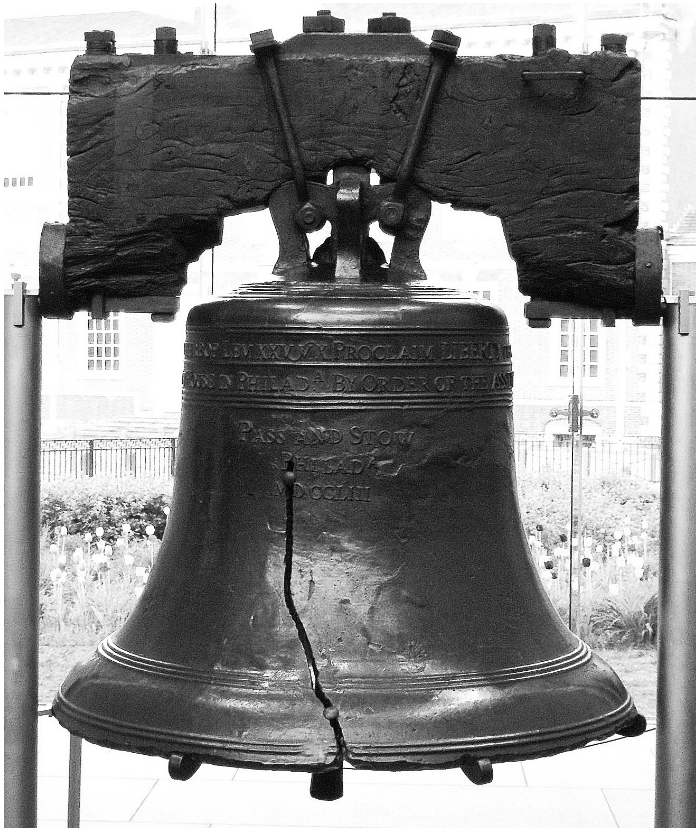

Fig. 2 – The Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, Philadelphia (photograph: Tony the Misfit/Flickr/Wikipedia).

With the American Revolution, Philadelphia became known as 'the Birthplace of America,' 'the birthplace of freedom' and the 'Cradle of

Liberty.' Ironically, the sound of freedom was proclaimed in a written text, *The Declaration of Independence*. More to the point for this paper, 'freedom rings out' in the sound of the Liberty Bell, which was famously cracked upon its arrival and has required constant repair. It has never functioned satisfactorily, though rung on many occasions, the last time on a commemoration of George Washington's birthday in 1846. As a silent icon for over 150 years, it is currently located in a glass-enclosed display area in Independence Park Mall where it can be seen but never heard. (*Wave Forms*, a public art sculpture of the Liberty Bell by Dennis Oppenheim, located in West Philadelphia, represents the bell in an abstracted form as a series of aluminum and mesh concentric 'wave structures.' It is, of course, also silent (Oppenheim)).

Though unacknowledged, the conflictual problematics of sight and sound in Philadelphia's collective consciousness and historical memory commence through these material signifiers: an object created to sound yet is noiseless and a written text. Or, more directly, a non-ringing Liberty Bell from which citizens are to hear the sound of liberty and a Declaration of Independence which proclaims an ideology of independence and freedom of speech through the silence of a printed document. Though not intentionally aesthetical, the well-wrought bell and visually impressive printed Declaration of Independence text—and the sense of it as a speech act—exhibit obvious political and ideological aesthetics of their own. Jameson offers an insight that is instructive here when he writes "ideology is not something which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to irresolvable social contradictions" (79). Without pursuing a political analysis, it is arguable that the aesthetic form and narrative of independence and free speech itself can be regarded as formalized, imaginary tropes for the performance of 'solutions' which, regarding free speech, remain on open question in American society.

From the perspective of the public, should they reflect on the matter, a silent bell and a written text proclaiming freedom may seem a mild but significant example of a conceptual schism and, more overtly, of a visual/verbal paradox. In relation to sound and imagery for The City of Philadelphia and the United States, the bell and the signing of the proclamation of freedom became symbolically associated with noises in the form of the celebratory festivities on Independence Day, the Fourth of July. Designated as a National Holiday in 1870, Independence Day is chiefly characterized by voices and sounds, crowds, parades and civic performances—and fireworks, which are categorically audio-visual and bodily effecting phenomenon. Fireworks are not to be underestimated as aesthetic events that prompt multiple responses, including sensory dissociation. That is, we see the light and imagery produced by fireworks before actual sounds are experienced.

It should not be surprising that Philadelphia has extensive Fourth of July celebrations and that recalling historical events and acts of remembrance are a distinct feature of the living city's practices and consciousness in relation to its ideological foundations. Exercising free speech and demonstrating—especially in the area of Independence Hall or the Constitution Center—inevitably leads to an invocation of the Declaration of Independence and the significance of the Liberty Bell. To speak in those areas, which occurs both spontaneously and during planned events, is to perform intentional, politicized instantiations of 'free speech'—a right, though one which carries with it the contradictions of being aware of the potential of speech being silenced or repressed. Moreover, except for special events, the majority of the speech exercised in the parks and around historical sites is by ordinary citizens, many of whom are visitors to the city.

As public performances, unrestrained political 'free speech' is necessarily fraught with symptoms of unconscious desires, flows, unstated meanings and implications for both speakers and others. In festivals or celebrations, speaking or shouting out loud and using the voice represents a sense of shared pleasure and solidarity with the

crowd. But to exercise 'free speech' on the street, as a political act by an individual, often without an interlocutor and with props such as placards or flags, constitutes another order of production and signification. Regardless of the coherence or rhetorical aesthetics that such acts of speaking might display, a solitary speaker in such a situation suggests a rarefied instance of social and libidinal exhibitionism, a status that, without intervention, collapses the boundary between conscious and unconscious behavior. Who is to say? It is not that this is acknowledged, per se, but to be in Philadelphia's Independence Mall area is to know that the conception of free speech does not specify that what is said by any given speaker can, or should be, distinguished as being representative of conscious or unconscious content and significance. As performances, such acts function to license theatricalizations and, to recall Jameson's claims, offer 'solutions,' albeit unsanctioned ones.

Of course, the very naming of Philadelphia as "The City of Brotherly Love" is symbolic of desires that can be interpreted as proposing solutions that are political, social, even gendered. Be that as it may, William Penn is less promoted by or associated with the city than the inimitable figure of Benjamin Franklin. Franklin's accomplishments are diplomatic, political and scientific. They also extend to quasi-aesthetic acts related to visuality and sound. He is credited with various inventions, including bifocals and a musical instrument, the *armonica*. The latter resulted from a trip to England in 1762 where he saw and heard musicians play water-filled wine glasses by circulating their fingers on the rims. In Philadelphia, he pursued the invention of a mechanical version of the instrument. Instead of wine glasses he commissioned glass blowers to make individual, flattened circular shaped hollow rings in sizes ranging from 3–9 inches in diameter. These glass rings were arranged side by side on a pole and separated from each other by pieces of cork. The pole and glass rings were fixed horizontally in a wooden box and, by operating a pulley system and foot pedal, players could rotate the glass rings and produce sounds by pressing their moistened fingers on the

edges. Franklin engaged in extensive research and correspondence to guide the glass blowers to achieve precise tunings up to 37 pitches for the different-sized rings. He then devised a system by which the pitches were identified by colors (The Franklin Institute). Writing to Giambatista Beccaria, with whom he shared an interest in electricity, Franklin notes that to "distinguish the glasses the more readily to the eye, I have painted the apparent parts of the glasses within side, every semitone white." He then adds, "and the other notes of the octave with the seven prismatic colours, *viz.* C, red; D, orange; E, yellow; F, green; G, blue; A, Indigo; B, purple; and C, red again; so that glasses of the same colour (the white excepted) are always octaves to each other" (Franklin).

Franklin's creative tendencies are worth considering from the perspective of the musico-optical unconscious. Specifically the mechanism of sublimation, which in Freudian thought describes how desire, when not repressed into the unconscious, results in individuals devising substitute behaviors or artistic, aesthetic, or quasi-aesthetic actions. Freud elaborates on sublimation in his study *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of Childhood* where he underscores the pursuit of knowledge as another characteristic of the instinct, or drive. Franklin's lifelong investigations exemplify this propensity, as does his scientific experiments, many of which, such as his kite, key and lightning demonstrations, were conducted as public performances. Notably, he attempted to measure the distance sound waves travel during a public lecture event; and he experimented with colored clothing and heat absorption. As for sublimation more generally, in *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud remarks on how it functions in relation to "the instincts":

> One gains the most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of physical and intellectual work […]. A satisfaction of this kind, such as an artist's joy in creating, in giving his fantasies body, or a scientist's in solving problems or discovering truths, has a special quality […]. (26)

In Franklin's case, the creation of his self-designed, mechanical musical instrument as a substitution for wine or water glasses could be identified as a form of sublimation. It certainly provided him with great satisfaction. The letter cited above details his intention to construct a "new instrument" that was in "a more convenient form" than a simple cluster of glasses. He boasts that "its tones are incomparably sweet beyond those of any other; that they may be swelled and softened at pleasure by stronger or weaker pressures of the finger, and continued to any length; and that the instrument, being once well tuned, never again wants tuning" (Franklin).

In terms of sublimation, the addition of color-coding for practical purposes is suggestive of how, as Freud wrote of Leonardo, a tension develops in creative people between their artistic and scientific "researches." Freud notes that Leonardo "undertook paintings to solve problems and many works were left unfinished after he found solutions or recognized other problems that led him to pursue his "endless inexhaustible investigation of nature" (*Leonardo* 27). By contrast, Franklin was highly pragmatic and derived pleasure from making his research useful. That Franklin could be said to operate with a musico-sonic-optical unconscious seems reasonable. As for Leonardo, Freud did not propose any explicitly named subsets for the workings of his unconscious.

By color-coding the glass bowls, Franklin subtly calls attention to the fact that when rubbed by fingers and hands, the glass and water—transparent stuff through which one can see—may potentially have a relation to sound as a phenomenon that itself has properties like light, which has a spectrum of colors, as can be seen through a prism. At the time, he was an enthusiastic adherent of Newtonian optics and knowledgeable about and fascinated with Newton's prism, and likely also aware of Newton's circular color wheels. With today's visualization technology, as we know, sound waves can be identified on a color spectrum. Franklin would not be surprised. In any case, the act of color-coding pitches is a provocative association in that it instantiates a continuum between objects, human activity and sound made visible.

Franklin's *armonica* engages the human fascination with the relationships between sight and sound, things heard and unheard(-of), the visible and the invisible, immediacy and remoteness. For audiences, his quite unusual instrument and the act of playing it also demanded that it be looked at as a particular object: one that is not a traditional musical instrument but functions as one. The audience also observes the performer closely to see and hear the sounds it produces. (Incidentally, in Franklin's letter to Beccaria, he states that he named his instrument the *armonica* after the Italian 'harmony.' For the title of this paper, I used the related description "glass harp" instead of *armonica*, inadvertently slipping Freudianly, as a Philadelphian who selects visual imagery when it comes to sound.)

That Franklin was from Philadelphia is of significance. It was a city where people from a sect were identified by bodily quaking and silently praying, where freedom was proclaimed in writing and with a bell that did not ring. In Philadelphia, as the next section will discuss, sound and sight played upon the senses through fireworks, celebrations and war. To all that, Franklin added a musical instrument that, when manipulated, converts the transparency of glass and water into sound and color, thereby contributing to an archaeology which discloses how future gestures unconsciously transform sight and sound into the realms of the visual and performative. Herbert Marcuse, as will be shown, posits that such gestures could be representative of a broader social process of sublimation.

INTERLUDE — NIETZSCHE, THEATER AND BAKHTINIAN CATEGORIES

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche remarks that "Dionysian *music* in particular excited awe and terror" (40). Unleashed in festivals, he continues, with such music "man is incited to the greatest exultation of all his symbolic faculties" (40). In contrast with the clarity and "pleasurable illusion" provided by Apollonian imagery, celebratory sound, music, and festive dance are experienced through the

senses and in the body, leading, Nietzsche proclaims, to a "mysterious primordial unity" (37). Among the many commentaries on *The Birth of Tragedy,* performance theorist Herbert Blau considers Nietzsche's understanding to be "that perception of the deepest kind was finally a matter of the auditory, a reversion of the visual to its primordial state as sound" (99). In his study *The Audience,* Blau proposes "that music is not only the consummate sound but the true idea of the cosmos, image and action" (99). This recalls Nietzsche's claim that the "Dionysian musician is, without any images, himself pure primordial pain and its primordial re-echoing" (50). For Nietzsche, writing with the operas of Richard Wagner in mind, the Greeks recognized the need for an aesthetic fusion of Dionysian and Apollonian forces in tragedy. Blau's inquiry—and mine—relates to the consequences of theatricalizing and dramatizing music with images and bringing sight and sound together (100). Blau's focus is the audience and the aesthetics they derive from their perceptions and experiences. He explores his thesis historically from Greek drama to the present and investigates audiences as crowds, spectators, and collective bodies at various events. Audiences, he observes, recognize tragedy, as "a form born out of pain, with the physiology of the aesthetic" (100).

Tragedy, no less than ritual, communal rites, seasonal celebrations and festivals always contain the echo of primal trauma as the recollection of human beings' "primordial unity." Such events simultaneously enact a rupture with ordinary life and recognition of earlier states of birth and transformation. When marked symbolically by sound, imagery, familiar music, and performance, the aesthetics of a *musico-sonic-optical unconscious* condition can be said to be born.

Imagine, then, the originary drama of Philadelphia. The child is a collective, identifiable as male British citizens, many with divided loyalties, who is reborn as an American. The neo-infant Philadelphians are traumatized by birth and separation from their previous parents, and they face freedom and uncertainty. As children, they grow in excitement though frightened by exuberant, public celebrations,

separations, declarations of independence and the reality of war. As with fireworks, "the bombs bursting in air," in the words of America's national anthem, sight and sound are in reality dissociated but illusorily unified by the spectacle in the night sky. The pleasure and pain of the new Americans' predicament is exhilarating *and* its violence is ever replayed, even anticipated. Put differently: Philadelphia is a city named after the idealization of a polis characterized by an emotion and a type of gendered relationship, i.e. of brotherly love. In it, birth and freedom and the trauma of war and separation are based on proclamations of speech and social communion and seemingly made whole in ritualized spectacles celebrated with fireworks. It is not quite Greek or Wagnerian tragedy, but an Americanized cathartic and symbolic version, with politics, high ideals and populist pageantry almost ready-made and on display. As such, an unconscious content is invariably present, whether or not it is specifically a musico-sonic-optical unconscious.

As with my comments on Franklin, this characterization of Philadelphia is partly conjectural, but it is for the purpose of establishing a key theoretical point. Whether in individual experience or in relation to audiences or social groups, human beings' responses not only differ aurally and visually, but perceptions through those senses are often in conflict. We might say: *I cannot see what I hear, I cannot hear what I see*. Or, as Blau succinctly writes: "the individual spectator is divided in consciousness by the neurological gap, which is, *however you look at it, listen as you will*, a metaphysical abyss between the perception of eye and ear" (11). For Blau, theater, carnival, and related cultural practices dramatize this condition and, in different historical and cultural contexts, present audiences, spectators, or participants with functional or ideological but never completely satisfying possibilities for responding. "To be the audience remains the burden of those who understand," he writes (11). Such understanding is no doubt unconscious.

That is, we understand that while we can close our eyes, we cannot close our ears. Passing over the electrochemistry of brain functioning

and neurological complexities, when it comes to intentional cognitive acts such as reading, seeing a film or attending a performance, in Western cultural history we privilege—by desire, cultural learning or training—one perceptual system over the other. At the movies, musicians tend to always hear the score more than their friends. There is the male gaze in the perception of women and conflicted emotions when we look at sexual acts and violence. As individuals, we often look away only to know that we desire to look.

From cultural, historical and anthropological perspectives, societies vary in their representation and understanding of the relationships between sound and image, whether static or in performance. Moreover, while the cognitive and neurological sciences may explain human experiences of multi-sensory perception and knowledge, to assert conclusive findings on the subject seems unlikely. As my concerns are far more limited and not data-driven, the suggestion of a musico-sonic-optical unconscious presumes an interplay of socio-cultural and historical (and political) elements in individual and collective constructions, memories and behaviors, which in this case are quite identifiable.

So, to return to Philadelphia, for over two centuries—but especially from the early twentieth century to the present—although the inherited originary contradictions of sight, sound and music have been relatively obfuscated, they have been reintegrated in the form of frequent noisy, symbolically dense parades, rituals and festivals. These major public events, such as The Fourth of July, the Memorial Day Parade and New Year's Day Parade, invariably feature fireworks, Mummers groups and historical re-enactors in Colonial dress. The Mummers are sometimes in costume but are also identified by recorded music or live musicians marching and performing recognizable Mummers' tunes and playing styles.

Such recurrent celebrations have had, to use Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology, the result of carnivalizing aspects of the city's culture. In his studies *Rabelais and His World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin demonstrates how when the period of carnival

celebrations end, traces of the performance genres, spirit and activity remain. For example, individuals may wear festive clothing or use the boisterous language or performance style specific to carnival events. Bakhtin identifies this influence as 'carnivalesque,' and this is widespread in Philadelphia. The repeated parades with their implicit echoing of historical significance and the associated discourses, stylizations and gestures have created a disposition among individuals and groups for spontaneous and planned festive activities accompanied by persistent insertion of residual celebratory imagery, sonic motifs and theatricalized movement into everyday life.

Jameson notes Bakhtin's emphasis on "the heterogeneous and explosive pluralism of moments of carnival and festival" (84). He reads Bakhtin as propagating a "positive hermeneutic" wherein there is "a carnivalesque dispersal of the hegemonic order of a dominant culture" (285). For him, Bakhtin's theorizing has the potential for "articulating a properly Marxian version of meaning beyond the purely ideological" (285). In an American context, this hardly seems possible as the residual after effects of carnival imagery in language, dress, performance genres or related tropes are devoid of larger content. They may serve as a reminder of a festive spirit but do not actively function ideologically in social life, at least in terms of a Jamesonian narrative or Freudian political unconscious. But what if the carnivalesque could be seen to persist in relation to a different concept of the unconscious?

Jameson does not mention the rejection of Freudian thought in Bakhtin and V. N. Voloshinov's 1927 book, *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique.* In that book, Freud's concepts of the unconscious are dismissed for lack of a "scientific" or materialist base. Writing under the close scrutiny of censors, the authors regard Freud as merely representing "European bourgeois reality" (8) and argue for a historical, social and ideological approach to human beings. Replacing the division between the conscious and unconscious, they posit a distinction between an official and unofficial consciousness. This allows for expressions of personal and political dissatisfaction to be considered

as historical, social and in the public realm, and not as a symptom of a subjective psychic life. As they observe, "the Freudian unconscious does not fundamentally differ from consciousness; it is only another form of consciousness, only an ideologically different expression of it" (85). To wit, trauma or experience, or defiant political views, are not repressed or sublimated by people, but consciously concealed from "official" culture. In Bakhtin's work on carnival in Rabelais's medieval world, this separation is vividly played out when, during festivities, there is a sanctioned collapse of official and unofficial consciousness.

Bakhtin scholars Clark and Holquist argue that Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's approach offers "a new way to conceive Freudian theory" (185). While that remains to be seen, it is a suggestive model of the unconscious in that it is independent of the Freudian notions of drive, mechanism and etiology. It allows for the conscious, though not officially present, preservation of experience—and its significance—not as repressed or even sublimated, but, more directly, as what is not part of official culture. It also further pluralizes the character and workings of the unconscious and calls attention to "a concept of discourse that binds human beings together in their social contexts of action and history through language" (Bakhtin and Voloshinov viii).

In relation to Philadelphia's musico-sonic-optical unconscious, this notion seems worth considering in order to reassert the valuation of authority regarding the city's historic past, traditions and forms of remembering. That is, from the perspective "an unofficial consciousness" Philadelphians represent themselves outwardly *and* reflexively as living in a place where vibrant celebrations regularly erupt citywide and on a variety of occasions. In the downtown areas, for example, acknowledging the city's history through sight and sound is reinforced by performances in the small parks and memorial sites surrounding Constitution Hall and Franklin's printing shop. In warm weather, it is not uncommon to see drum and bugle ensembles

in Colonial outfits marching in front of buildings, or a Benjamin Franklin look-alike playing the *armonica*.

Beyond the Independence Mall attractions in the more ethnically and racially homogeneous neighborhoods, there are long-standing and newly established sites where seasonal and annual public events take place and sustain a daily sense of carnivalized life where sound and image are visualized. These include, to name a few: the Italian Market Festival, Odunde Celebration, Jam on the River, Philadelphia Folk Festival, Reggae in the Park, Chinese New Year in the city's Chinatown section. Needless to say, in this media-saturated age, sound and image constructs also take the form of projections and installations. Benjamin Franklin's head, for example, is part of the logo of The Electric Factory, an industrial building that was converted into a rock 'n' roll concert venue (cf. Electric Factory).

There are also weekend and nightlife dance and pub areas clustered for different musical cultures. If one drives in Northern Liberties, Old City, along the Delaware River (north of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge) or on Broad Street by the concert halls and theaters, the very clothing and demeanor of the crowds waiting in lines signifies hip hop, hipster, or symphony and opera audiences. Certainly, all cities have music festivals and creative commons districts, but, in the context of Philadelphia, there is a more pronounced receptivity for music, and the discourses that refer to it, to function with expectations of festivity and eventfulness. There is room for unconscious or, it could be said, unofficially conscious signification through visualization.

This pattern of the carnivalesque has had the positive social effect of normalizing and proliferating a free, productive circulation of audio-visually performative signs that, although Jameson may think it so, is not always indicative of politicized instantiations but of what Marcuse, expanding on theory of sublimation, calls a creative "cultural order" (218).

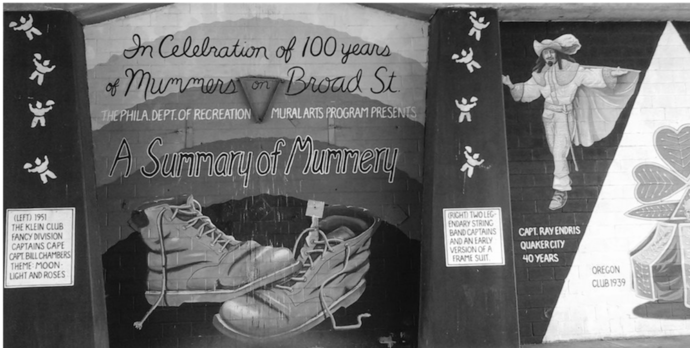

Fig. 3 – A Summary of Mummery: South Philadelphia Mural.

Fig. 4 – Mural of Mummers song "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers!"

MUMMERS AND MURALS: MAINSTAYS OF PHILADELPHIA'S CULTURE ORDER

As a prelude to discussing Marcuse directly, it is necessary to underscore the characteristics of two main groups responsible for establishing the tone of visual/sound/music performance in Philadelphia. They are the Mummers and, since 1984, the Mural Arts Program. In order to expand on the notion of Philadelphia's musico-sonic-optical

unconscious, it is necessary to sketch aspects of the local, social and historical significance of these two civic institutions. After discussing them, I will also point to public art and more focused aesthetic and experimental aspects of sonic and musical interests that are part of Philadelphia's cityscape and activities.

Briefly, the pre-history of the Mummers is generally traced to northern European rituals, holiday and celebratory traditions. Through the post-Colonial period and after the Civil War, parades in Philadelphia featured numerous groups, including Mummers, and evolved to incorporate the city's increasing nationalities, including those with African-American lineage. In 1901, the City of Philadelphia officially began sponsoring the New Year's Day parade and, to the present, it has continued to operate with government and independent, local funding and no commercial support. As immigrants settled in various sections of the city, Mummers clubs reflected ethnic and neighborhood differences, though all were comprised of working-class members. Club names, for example, are 'Italian-American,' 'Polish-American,' 'Greater Kensington,' or 'Two Street Shooters.' Women in auxiliary groups have always had a role in the production of Mummers events, particularly in the design and sewing of the costumes. They did not begin marching in the parade until the 1970s. Since that time, driven in part by the popularity of the parade, a marked family orientation has characterized the Mummer experience for participants as well as spectators. Though initially the Mummers were all male and of European descent, as Masters relates, there is a complicated history of African-American clubs involved in the parade which should be noted, though it does not inform this discussion (cf. 75–87).

With some similarities to New Orleans *krewes* and samba schools in Rio de Janeiro, there are Mummers clubs, neighborhood associations and affiliated groups citywide dedicated to the production of the costumes, floats, sketches, musical routines and performances that occur on New Year's Day. Five Mummers divisions (Comics, String Bands, Fancy Brigades, Wench Brigades, Fancy Divisions)

form the parade, and their acts range from anarchic clowning to elaborate four-minute skits staged with portable scenery, props and choreographed dances. Mummers wear flashy costumes of satin and feathers, with wigs, headdresses, capes and various props (depending on the theme of their performance). Exaggerated make-up, lipstick and stockings accentuate the cross-dressing males, who, in various skits, prance and dance with each other. As Mummers are from the blue-collar or working- and lower-middle classes, or have origins in these social strata, the explicit mocking play with gender roles, cross-dressing, and feminine forms of movement permitted by carnival betray, in Jameson's terms, symbolic images and performances oriented toward resolving social contradictions of male identity and gender differences. (Naturally, in the present, the antagonistic edge of such symbolism is not what it was prior to, say, the late 1980s.)

Mummers club themes range from pop culture to historical and even literary topics. Always pun-laden, and both present and nostalgically tuned, 2015 parade skits included: "Log-A-Rhythm," "Alice in Wonderland: We're all Mad Here," and "Fifty Shades of Hay." Wearing their garish, sequined costumes, gold-painted shoes or sneakers, the Mummers' routines are dominated by the unamplified street sound of String Bands. Comprised of banjos, marching drummers, glockenspiels, saxophones, trombones and other brass, the plucky ensemble string band sound homogenizes—it could be said they *mummerize*—every genre of music. (The music for some routines is also provided by prerecorded material played through loudspeakers on flatbed trucks.) In addition to the string bands, as the Comics and other clubs march, they are accompanied by brass bands whose players are, for the most part, African-American. Riding in open trucks, these ensembles, many from high schools and churches, do not dress up nor act out in performances. They are part of the sonic density of the New Year's Day parade; however, they are rarely acknowledged in the Mummers' histories and self-representations.

The point to be made here is that the distinctive sounds of the string bands and their resonance in city life beyond New Year's Day exist in relation to Philadelphia's musical unconscious as quasi-theatricalized signs of a selective type of historical and localized social recognition that discloses unacknowledged attitudes regarding class status and racial disparity. Two musical works, "The Saints Go Marching In" and "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers," are significant in this regard.

By informal agreement among city government and parade organizers, social and political issues do not figure directly in the current New Year's Day parade performances. (Paraders in blackface were outlawed in the late 1960s.) In the past there were allusions to politics, but this is understood as an individual gesture. In 2015, for instance, a comic Mummer held a sign commenting on the police and racial issues of the preceding summer: 'Mummers Matter, too'. However, regardless of any given performance theme or musical material, as the bands march, and in every recorded sequence, they play and replay brief or complete versions of the two tunes that are the parade's signature theme songs, "The Saints Go Marching In" and "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers." The latter, written in 1879 by an African-American, James A. Bland, evokes minstrelsy and is accompanied by a back-and-forth stepping and spinning dance move called the Mummers Strut. The melodies of these songs are also repeatedly quoted in New Year's Day performances. For Philadelphians, particularly those with roots in the neighborhoods and the Mummers traditions, "The Saints Go Marching In" and "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers," provoke a deep, instantaneous association with the Mummers, the New Year's Day parade and the moving image of the Mummers strutting. "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" and a Mummer in costume are ubiquitous features in Philadelphia's civic awareness and are regularly promoted by tourist advertising, television news collages and others as representative of the local color of the city. Additionally, the Mummers image and sound also extends to signage, places, products, which can be seen in the interiors and

design of neighborhood clubs, taverns and an actual Mummers Museum. As can be expected, hats, T-shirts, tattoos and Mummers paraphernalia are marketed and visible year-round. One prop is a satiny, decorated toy-like Mummers Parasol, which is pumped up and down while strutting, and which contributes to spreading visual and sonic music images. In Philadelphia, the widespread dispersion of the Mummers sound/imagery lends itself to many public performances. Full string bands or smaller ensembles play for conventions, weddings, at ball games, neighborhood events; a few also tour. "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" and "The Saints Go Marching In" are the leitmotifs of their repertoire.

The repeated phrases in both these catchy and memorable tunes are interwoven with ceremonial, religious and racial symbolism alluding to flight, freedom and salvation. Furthermore, both tunes are literally and metaphorically about bodies in motion, making music, making places. As sung in "When the Saints Go Marching In" they are: "trav'ling in the footsteps / Of those who've gone before / And we'll all be reunited / On a new and sunlit shore." In "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers," the slippers are what the singer intends to wear to his wedding, and the lyrics include the lines: "Golden slippers I'se goin' to wear / To walk the golden street," implying heaven. And just as "When the Saints Go Marching In" is associated with the visual and musical construct of New Orleans, its Mardi Gras and African-American funeral processions, the refrain of "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" invokes the constructed image of the Mummers parade for Philadelphians. (Using a concept from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus,* the music and phrases are 'refrains' that literally name both actual and imaginary 'territories.') The sheet music of "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" itself is painted on a mural on Washington Avenue, near the Mummers Museum in South Philadelphia. Other images of Mummers are also prominent in the area, where there are a number of clubhouses and taprooms ornamented with Mummers' motifs.

Popularized by Louis Armstrong, the gospel tune "When the Saints Go Marching In" was written by Virgil Stamps in 1937, with lyrics by Luther G. Presley. Both Stamps and Presley were white. African-American and Philadelphia composer James A. Bland wrote the music and melody for his gospel-inspired 1879 song, "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers." It was performed in blackface in minstrelsy shows in the nineteenth century and, when first adapted by the Mummers, became mildly controversial. The music and lyrics of both tunes are profound, as folk music can be, in terms of hope, aspiration, gaiety and sadness though set in a Biblical and socio-cultural allegory. In content and as narratives, they reflect on African-American fears and desires though "When the Saints Go Marching In" was not explicitly written for any one community, except Christians looking toward Judgment Day.

On the other hand, or better, foot, "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers," with its 'slave dialect' and history in back-face minstrelsy strut is a more complex text (although, ironically, 'dem' for 'them' is a common pronunciation in some white working-class neighborhoods). There is almost no public discussion of the song, and it is doubtful that Mummers know all the lyrics, which relate the preparations for getting married, for which the singer has saved his golden slippers, along with his banjo and a "long tailed coat." He will wear his golden slippers among friends, who he calls "the darks." As well as being properly ceremonial, the golden slippers likely refer to the footwear worn by angels in popular religious paintings. Although about an upcoming marriage, the allegorical implications of death and salvation intrude when the singer says, "So, it's good-bye, children I will have to go / Where the rain don't fall and the wind don't blow / And yer ulster coats, why, you will not need / When you ride up in the chariot in the morn." From this perspective, the fact that "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" has become a signature song for the Mummers and for a certain class of white working-class Philadelphians could be considered a form of psychic defense or sublimation. As with young white audiences and hip hop music and

dance today, the appropriation of the voice and movement of "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers," once performed in blackface by Mummers clubs, is a negotiation of racial consciousness, marked by ambivalence, through a symbolic, dialogic relationship that has persisted for decades. This may be in accord to Jameson's claim for 'symbolic resolutions' but by now, in Philadelphia, the sound of string band versions of "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" has become so appropriated and normalized for the white population it barely retains any racial overtones. In that sense, it is not unlike the other prominent characteristic of the Mummers that outsiders notice but have become unremarkable to local Philadelphians: males wearing wigs, make-up and cross-dressing to march, dance, and performance in choreographed performances.

As the sonic complement of the Mummers costumes, the String and Brass band sound absorbs all past and present music (pop, rock, opera, big band, world music melodies and rhythms), resolving them into sound structures and material that can be said to represent the unconscious desire of class members to 'artfully' and humorously appropriate a richer, if imaginary past as well as a contemporary culture more conducive to their class interests, fears and aspirations. This is particularly evident in the string and brass bands' assimilation of music from cultures worldwide. Mummeresque interpretations of Asian, African, and Latin music are common, and while in the past this may have indicated unconscious affirmations of American triumphalism, today such sonic practices are no more nationalist or colonialist than sound sampling in film scores, hip hop or postmodern music. Even so, some Mummer clubs continue to choose performance themes within which they mockingly dress-up and replay 'jungle' music, clichéd Native American scenes with drum rhythms or 'Chinese' sounds (twangy American 'hillbilly' music is another target). When such 'mummerized' music-making takes place in public performances, the string band sound ironizes the act of cultural appropriation.

Fig. 5 – Music and the Community.

Images of Mummer iconography, mythology and performance appear in a number of murals created by the Mural Arts Program, a non-profit organization dedicated to "create art with others to transform places, individuals, communities and institutions" (Mural Arts Program). The primary activity of the Mural Arts Program is to bring artists into neighborhoods and involve the community in developing large-scale murals. Their mission statement explains that the "mural-making process gives neighborhood residents a voice to tell their individual and collective stories, a way to pass on culture and tradition, and a vehicle to develop and empower local leaders" (Mural Arts Program). To date, some 3,600 murals of different sizes have been created throughout the city, with nearly 100 thematically related to sound, music, and performance. These range from commemorations of musicians who were born or have lived in Philadelphia to dramatizations of local musical sites and histories. There are also fantastic, realistic and abstract images of community values expressed in relation to sound and music. Murals dedicated to performance venues include: The Uptown Theater and The Royal Theater, the 1950s rock 'n' roll television program Dick Clark's American Bandstand, the WXPN radio station, and the recording studio of Philadelphia

International Records. Regarding famed musicians, there are prominent murals of John Coltrane, Marion Anderson, Paul Robeson, Pearl Baily, and Patti LaBelle. In South Philadelphia, once mainly populated by Italian-Americans, there are murals with Frank Sinatra, Frankie Avalon, Fabian, Al Martino, and opera singers Frank Guerro and Mario Lanza. The latter are depicted in scenes drawn from operas. There is also a Mario Lanza Institute and Museum and Park. Lanza (1921–1960) supposedly listened to records in his early years and gained famed as the clown from the Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. In accord with the propensity to create sonic images, the mural dedicated to him shows Lanza in costume as Pagliacci posing next to a Victrola stacked with records. One comic mural on South Street is of Larry Fine, the frizzy-haired comedian from The Three Stooges team, popping out from a yellow target playing the violin.

The neighborhood-centered murals portray commonly held values, memory and musicality, as well as cultural idealizations of class, elements of which reveal unconscious attitudes. An image in a Latino community includes a guitar player and singer wearing more rural than urban clothing. Other murals show children learning or playing instruments. The mural on the unused art deco Royal Theater (also on South Street), built in 1920, contains ten panels that represent the appearance of jazz and blues stars and the vibrancy of nightlife 'back in the day.' Nearby, there is a mural of the gospel based back male quartet, "The Dixie Hummingbirds."

There are also several quite abstract murals featuring musical and sonic imagery. These contain representations of scores, keyboards, musical notation, and players in suits. One, "The Experience of Music," has Klee-like sound clouds bending across a wall and, cleverly, is bordered by a sign for a check-cashing business. There is also a remarkable proto-cubist mural of houses clustered together with a white ribbonny stave, painted with notes, winding through the open windows and doorways. Images are drawn from each neighborhood's daily life and local history, and memorialized icons are visible yet soundless signs of an unconscious desire for musical celebration and

its promised collective forms of identity, unity and momentary suspension of the quotidian. Like the Mummeresque imagery through the city, the numerous Mural Arts Project images sustain a sense of musico-optical unconscious in Philadelphia.

The elaborate and continuous visualizing of sound and music from its historical origins to street life, media systems and the overall cityscape of Philadelphia can be approached as a species of what Herbert Marcuse frames as 'group sublimation' in his 1955 study *Eros and Civilization.* For Marcuse, the alternative to rebellion against repression—political, religious or otherwise—can occur when desire is sublimated into work and creative acts that are socially directed. Drawing on Freud's *Introductory Lectures,* Marcuse writes that sublimation means a change in the aim and object of instinct "with regard to which our social values come into the picture" (206). The process requires that work is not forced labor but self-generated, communitarian. Citing Charles Fourier's utopian society, he notes that through sublimated processes,

> [t]he working communities of the *phalanstère* anticipate 'strength through joy' rather than freedom, the beautification of mass culture rather than its abolition. Work as free play cannot be subject to administration; only alienated labor can be organized and administered by rational routine. It is beyond this sphere, but on its basis, that non-repressive sublimation creates its own cultural order. (218)

This is roughly what happens in Philadelphia where the machineries of the populations' musico-optical unconscious play in community and civic efforts, propelled by Mummers Mural Arts Project goals and activities. Audio-visual performances and mural productions create a 'cultural order' through a popular aesthetic of sound and image representations that resonate and circulate throughout by the people and for the people. They comprise a continuous intensification of pleasure and culture-making. The labor involved in the production of music, sounds, images and performance is sometimes remunerated

but generally given freely. In the performance, reproduction, and consumption of music for non-professionals, the city's music is not driven by capitalist institutions but involves commitment and literal, physical activity, organization and work. As Marcuse remarks, "work pleasure results from the satisfaction of the mastery instinct," which, in this case, means satisfaction in holding events and renewing social relations (219). This also holds true when, for example, after the Mummers Parade, secondary neighborhood parades and events occur far away from public view. For the Mummers, there is also a highly competitive aspect to the production of their costumes, music and routines. As said earlier, the Mummers Parade, importantly, is not and never has been corporate-sponsored. Similarly, the mural painters, jazz musicians, church choirs, folk ensembles, community groups, experimental music ensembles and weekend punks and rockers—and many event organizers—depend on volunteers in Philadelphia who are not paid laborers (though, to be fair, supplemental payment is involved for professionals through philanthropic arts and music grants and the loose underground economy of paid artists and musicians).

Another point addressed by Marcuse regarding the processes of sublimation involves gender and community. In a chapter titled, "The Transformation of Sexuality into Eros," Marcuse writes that in Greco-Roman and Platonic thought, via the myths of Narcissus and Orpheus, the renewal of the social order occurred by men and through the idealization of beauty in young boys (cf. 197–221). It is almost inconceivable that this would occur, even symbolically, in the context of working-class male culture of the Mummers. However, as the extension of a family support system has emerged over the past few decades, along with the inclusion women and children in the New Year's Day parade, the Mummers tradition could be regarded as modulating, unconsciously, toward a less completely male-dominated sensibility. On this point, Marcuse cites Freud's attention, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* to community, male and female love and "*un*sublimated as well as sublimated libidinous ties" (207).

Fig. 6 – Mummers String Band.

Fig. 7 – City of Music.

REFRAINS

For my part, Philadelphia, its sonic cultures and its musico-sonic-optical unconscious, as with most cities, is broad enough to entertain a parade that is inclusive of Jamesonian political, Freudian psychoanalytic, Bakhtinian Russian-Marxist and Marcusian Frankfurt School interpretations. Though, for Jameson, the 'last analysis' may be political and dialectic (a position refuted by Bové (cf. xx–xxvii)) and for Freud, libidinal, it seems that the unconscious is a realm that remains open for different re-imaginings. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari propose that the individual and social forms of the unconscious are better approached as different kinds of multiplicities, or, more specifically, "molecular multiplicities" (32). Deleuze and Guattari's practice of reading cultural texts, which they term "[s]chizoanalysis, [...] treats the unconscious as an acentered system, in other words, as a machinic network of finite automata (a rhizome), and thus arrives at a different state of the unconscious" (18). They accuse Freud of not realizing that "the unconscious itself was fundamentally a crowd" (29) and call attention to peopling, flows, networks, dispersions, eruptions, heterogeneities, circulations, assemblages and densely semiotic entities in human relations—as if everyday life is and always has been, in effect, a carnival or a city that can be parsed temporally, spatially, and through grids of differentiation formulated by diverse discourses. More topological and oriented toward mapping signs, relations and connections rather than tracing signification, they refute ideological positioning as a grounding framework of analysis and seek to inquire how 'things work' in the real world as conceived by situated human communities. In that sense, throughout this paper, there has been an attempt to recognize and assess Philadelphia's *musico-sonic-optical* unconscious through multifarious discourses in relation to: the outgrowth of conflicted origins and ambiguously acting forefathers, desire carnivalized and sublimated, recurrent cultural production sustained and circulated by affirmations and practices perpetuated from the city' institutions, and selected actors and collectives. If there is, then, an unconscious,

a political unconscious, an optical unconscious and a sonic unconscious, there is likely a musico-sonic-optical unconscious. And it plays a role in constituting and identifying Philadelphia's ways of making meaning.

As for sound and music, images and performance and collective lives in a city like Philadelphia (or any landscape), Deleuze and Guattari propose a useful category for analysis by considering what they call the "refrain." Although this is a musical term which references melody or other structures, Deleuze and Guattari use it to call attention to any constructed or conceptualized phenomena that, for animals and well as humans, serves to provide recognition, familiarity, and, over all, a known sense of a felt time, place, or "territory." Moreover, "[m]usic is a creative, active operation that consists in deterritorializing the refrain" (300). Music is disruptive but often becomes the source of a new refrain. Of this, they write:

> In a general sense, *we call a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes* (there are optical, gestural, motor, etc., refrains). In the narrow sense, we speak of a refrain when an assemblage is sonorous or "dominated" by sound—but why do we assign this apparent privilege to sound? (323)

Yes, why sound? Their answer only indirectly adds—though also concludes—this survey of Philadelphia's musico-sonic-optical unconscious and the more general theorizing I have been suggesting.

So, as a mode of reformulating categories, Deleuze and Guattari question the separation of the arts under a "fine-arts system" and pose the conditions for "the possibility of a simultaneous usage of the various arts within a determinable multiplicity" (300–301). When they later refer to animal and human examples they note: "Bird songs: the bird sings to mark its territory. The Greek modes and Hindu rhythms are themselves territorial, provincial, regional" (312). But they also admit to the relationship between the refrain and the exact place, conditions and circumstances from which it

emanates. As the bird sings from a branch in a tree, in the nest that has been has prepared "he uncovers the yellow root of certain feathers underneath his beak: he makes himself visible at the same time as sonorous" (331). This leads Deleuze and Guattari to the proposition that

> the sounds of an animal coexist with its colors, gestures, silhouettes; or else the sounds of a given species coexist with the sounds of other species, perhaps quite different but close in space. The organization of qualified marks into motifs and counterpoints necessarily entails a taking on of consistency, or a capture of the marks of another quality, a mutual branching of sounds-colors-gestures, or a capture of sounds from different animal species, etc. (330)

This both hints at synesthesia or, more simply, a biologically derived performance aesthetic, and I read this as an understanding of what occurs in Philadelphia, where the Mummers garb themselves in feathers and whose professional football team is The Eagles. Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari repeat and then answer their question:

> So just what is a refrain? *Glass harmonica:* the refrain is a prism, a crystal of space-time. It acts upon that which surrounds it, sound or light, extracting from it various vibrations, or decompositions, projections, or transformations. The refrain also has a catalytic function: not only to increase the speed of the exchanges and reactions in that which surrounds it, but also to assure indirect interactions between elements devoid of so-called natural affinity, and thereby to form organized masses. (348)

Of course, the "masses" of which they write are not those of Marx, Jameson, Marcuse or Bakhtin and Voloshinov, per se. Nor does their refrain seem exactly synched with a musico-sonic-optical unconscious. Yet there are correlations to be made. As for the *glass harmonica,* should any readers come to Philadelphia—and it would be best

around New Year's Day—one can be found, though with a slightly different name, at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute.[1]

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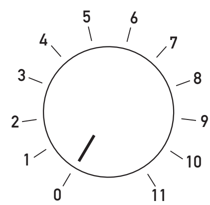
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