A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia.

Macon Ashford Bannon Holt.

CENTRE FOR CULTURAL STUDIES,

GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in Cultural Studies.

2017

Declaration.

I declare the following thesis to be my own work. Where the works of others have been used they are cited and referenced in the bibliography. Any assistance from others has been listed in the acknowledgements.

Candidate Name: Macon Holt,

Student Number: 33254455.

Date: 01/08/17

Candidate Signature: *Macon Holt*

Acknowledgements.

This thesis has caused me to not make a great deal of sense for a great deal of time and getting through that would not have been possible without the help of many other people and institutions. I would like to thank my supervisors Dr. Mark Fisher and Dr. Anamik Saha, for their guidance and expertise and reminding me that what I had to hand-in had to be vaguely "Ph.D. shaped". That said, their encouragement of me to explore the odd terrain that this thesis churned up was vital for me in completing it. I would also like to thank the Centre for Cultural Studies for providing a space in which what is "Ph.D. shaped" can be challenged and explored. In particular, I would like to thank the convener of the Ph.D. program, Dr. Luciana Parisi, whose course, "Critical Theory of Interactive Media", has changed the way that I think about pretty much everything. To this day I'm not sure I have caught up to where it sent my thoughts.

I would like to thank Ark Books of Copenhagen for giving me a welcoming place of camaraderie when writing alone in my own cave became an insurmountable task. I would like to thank my parents, Duncan Holt and Fiona Bannon, for their unceasing support and showing me, by example, that this kind of undertaking is something possible. A note of gratitude for my brother Lewys, whose patience with me as I pontificated over the years is to be commended. And as engaged audience and critic, he helped me grow my confidence to where I felt able to wax on for 200 odd pages. That said, he is an inspiration in his own right. Finally, I would like to thank Katrine Pram Nielsen for her immeasurable support and inspiration. If this thesis were to be dedicated to anyone, if theses received dedications, this one would be to her.

In the months following the initial hand-in of this thesis Mark Fisher took his own life. This tragedy was a great shock to me and his friends and family, one from which we are all still reeling. Mark and his work had been a major inspiration and influence throughout this project, as he was to thousands of others across the world. With the help of Anamik and my examiners Dr. Ayesha Hameed and Prof. Holger Schulze, who picked up on some of the underdeveloped influence of Mark in this thesis, I have been able to transform it into some thing that I hope can honour the legacy of his thought, scholarship and activism.

Abstract.

This thesis attempts to re-engage the practice of Sonic Fiction devised by Kodwo Eshun, within the historical context that Mark Fisher termed, *boring dystopia,* and produce *A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia*. This also shows how the practice of sonic fiction might intercede to overcome an impasse between a traditional critical theory (Adorno) and Deleuzian approaches to the analysis of popular music.

The thesis is in two parts; the first provides an overview of the concept of boring dystopia and the practice of sonic fiction. The second is *A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia*, that performs an experimental exploration of the practice sonic fiction set across five concepts; *Attention*, *Complicity*, *Catharsis*, *Home* and *Conjunction*, three chapters that reconceptualize the works of David Foster Wallace, Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, and Theodor Adorno as theory-fictions and sonic fictions, and 6 experiential fictionalized accounts of musical experience. This is followed by the conclusion of the thesis.

By developing these tools it is argued that we can chart a 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013b: 13) to overcome the impasse that inhibits our thinking about the emancipatory potential of popular music. To help us move beyond the rigid pessimism of critical theory and the sometimes apolitical optimism of the Deleuzian approach. Thus allowing us to discover new territory, which the present paradigm may also afford.

Contents.

Introduction.

This thesis attempts two distinct but related tasks. The first is an extended and applied exploration of the practice of sonic fiction to produce a sonic fiction of *boring dystopia* to illustrate how this methodology can produce knowledge. The second is the subject to which the sonic fictional method is applied; the critical impasse of debates that surround the intersection between popular music, capitalism and subjectivity.

To address the second task first, these debates appear to operate, on the left, between two polarities of contention that could be called the Adornian perspective and Deleuzian perspective. The Adornian perspective is based on the work of Frankfurt School philosopher Theodor Adorno and presents popular music as a field that is necessarily a field of oppression, resulting from music's adoption of the commodity form, with numerous and complex consequences. The Deleuzian perspective, on the other hand, sees potential, in some of the formal developments of popular music, to create liberating inter-subjective spaces that can break down barriers between self and other through the immanent experience of sound. Thus such experiences can potentially rupture the individualized structures on which liberal capitalism is founded.

Whilst both perspectives arguably persist in various forms they belong more properly to particular historical paradigms. The Adornian point of view requires that the culture industry appears to operate more as a monolith than it appears today. This appearance was already beginning to change at the time of Adorno's death in the late 1960s, with the rise of the counterculture, which required, diversification on the part of the industry to provide for increasingly individualistic consumers. Likewise, the Deleuzian perspective was engaged with by critics at the end of the Twentieth Century and beginning of the 21st, when the rising popularity of club culture, and its relationship to non-semantic music and drugs that engendered empathetic experiences, seemed to open up a new revolutionary space.

This period was also the moment when the practice of sonic fiction emerged as a way to traverse the impasses imposed by theory and music up to this point. The work of Kodwo Eshun in *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (1998), was both a response to and move beyond what had become stale conventions of music writing. Those being types of music writing which fell into one of two camps; academic theorization, which reduced the experience of music to easily comprehensible theory/ frameworks, perfect for conference debate but devoid of excitement; and music journalism that could only discuss the semantic content of songs, reducing everything else to the claim that music could speak for itself. Eshun had respect for both fields, if not their moves to assert dominance, and he sought to use the tools of each to move beyond practices that attempted to reduce the experience of music to the constraints of writing, and instead produced writing that could intensify the experience of music.

This project is very much one of the Deleuzian paradigm and most of its insights are still remarkably relevant. That being said, it is the contention of this thesis that we are living through a different paradigm. The basic definition of this paradigm is found in work informed by the philosophical insights of Deleuze and Guattari, and promulgated by Anahid Kassabian, is as one of ubiquitous music and ubiquitous listening. Kassabian builds this concept from the notion developed in the 1970s of ubiquitous computing (1971), which posited that in the future, our present, computing would be of such social saturation that it would cease to be identified as computing and fade into the background of everyday activity. As this prediction has come to pass for computing, we now live, according to Kassabian, in an environment in which listening to music often ceases to be an identifiable activity. We are so saturated in music for such a wide range of intentions that for many listening to music has become the default position, which has changed our cultural orientation to these cultural productions. 'On' is the default, 'off' is an active choice.

Where in the preceding paradigms, music was something to be entered into or not, we have increasingly built up a culture in which the reverse is the case. The choice, such as it is, is to opt out of music, but even this may no longer be a possibility. If we add to this that digital media is forcing the price of the music, as recorded sound, ever closer to zero, the expectation of listener/consumers has become one of the constant demand for high quality, well produced, sonic entertainment at the lowest possible price. Streaming services such as Spotify exemplify this perfectly and the corollary rule that for this to be economically viable, there can only be one. Where writers who engaged with the Deleuzian paradigm saw music as a way in which to create spaces that were incompatible with the demands of neoliberal capitalism, the ubiquitous listening paradigm reintroduces elements of the Adornian paradigm. In the liberating potential of inter-subjective spaces, under the conditions of diffuse distribution of music as ever cheaper, ever more affecting commodity, music becomes little more than a self-medicated salve to facilitate living under economic subjugation. The economic system both produces suffering and has developed ingenious ways to provide one with temporary relief through sound.

Ours is a somewhat different future to the most optimistic speculations of the Deleuzian point of view. Sonic fiction was built out of a science/theory fiction paradigm that imagined the future as something radically different, especially regarding the constitution of the subject. While these visions were not always pleasant (to bourgeois subjects reading them), they were presenting a future that was challenging in its difference from the present. However, as Mark Fisher (2012: 2) argues, the conditions of neoliberalism are such that imagining the future, in any meaningful sense, as being different is no longer possible. More and more material is foreclosed by the axiomatic nature of neoliberalism, as it deterritorializes even the domains of capitalism's

traditional allies in conservatism. There are those looking forward to some sort of post-human future, which may yet arrive at this situation; however, it is likely to be characterized by dull corporate conformity that is perhaps even more limiting than the more traditional definitions of the human.

The science fiction that speaks to this is a science fiction of disappointment. A science fiction set firmly in a word after Baudrillard's semiotic apocalypse (Fisher 2000). To use another term of Fisher's, we need a science fiction of out *boring dystopia* (Kiberd 2015). We can find this in David Foster Wallace's 1996 novel *Infinite Jest*. This is a novel about the desperate search for meaning in a world where even time itself functions to valorize capital. It is also a work that exists in highly self-conscious awareness of the theoretical polarities discussed above, and one that finds these approaches both enthralling and lacking. Applying the ideas, generated by such a nuanced and reflective work, to music, may allow for development that surpasses the semantic limitations of meaning to a notion that is derived from the complex conjunctions of media, subjects and systems that music can engender.

This thesis seeks, by way of demonstration, to diagram a line of flight that can perhaps move the practice of music writing away from reduction by default, to a mode of intensification. This demonstration provides new insights to the continuing debate about popular music, its relationship to oppression under capitalism and its role in the formation of subjects.

To achieve this, the thesis is comprised of two parts. The first part could be considered to be an extended introduction, which focuses on defining what is meant by the term *boring dystopia*, what popular music sounds/looks like under these conditions, and the historical context and methodological considerations that situate sonic fiction. The second part is *A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia*. This thesis is a multilayered text with numerous levels of narration and self-reflection. It is made up of three types of texts; extended explorations of the contemporary experience of popular music through five conceptual frames (*Attention, Complicity, Catharsis, Home* and *Conjunction*), six shorter dives into particular musical experiences, and three position chapters that serve as literature review and outline in detailed the aforementioned impasse through three fictional/philosophical projects (Wallace, Deleuze & Guattari, and Adorno).

The conceptual chapter and the accounts of situated musical experiences produce a sonic fiction of boring dystopia but the narrator of these sections is not aware of this. However, the narrator of the position chapters is and fold in more conceptual grounding to bind the analysis of popular music and culture to the methodology of sonic fiction.

In more detail, the chapters of this thesis are as follows; The following chapter *Popular Music in Boring Dystopia* attempts to give a definition to Fisher's proposed

notion of boring dystopia and situate it within a specific historical context. In addition to this, it outlines the different analytical tools need for the analysis of contemporary popular music which will be folded into the musicological and sonic fiction elements of this thesis.

The following chapter, *On Sonic Fiction*, give a working definition of the practice as well as an account of its historical context and emergence, in addition to a literature review of a variety of examples of the practice. The shorter chapter that follows this, *The Sonic Fiction Ahead*, outlines how this particular practice will be deployed in this thesis and attempts to address some of the methodological concerns brought up by this specific instantiation of the practice. This concludes the first part of the thesis.

This is the beginning of *A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia*, which makes up the bulk of this thesis. It beings with an essay on David Foster Wallace's novel, *Infinite Jest* (2007 [1996]), which, while it is not itself in any way sonic fiction, is argued to provide the appropriate science fiction tools to perform a sonic fiction of boring dystopia. The position of Wallace is one that exists in an environment characterized by the aforementioned theoretical impasse and attempts to find a route through it. Additionally, it argued that the register of critique levelled at the culture of boring dystopia in the novel is what is needed for contemporary cultural analysis.

This is followed by a short experiential text, *Jessie J at the closing of the 2012 London Olympics,* which leads into the first conceptual chapter; *Attention*. Attention, as a behaviour is a starting point commonly used to critique cultural production and is rooted in the tradition of the Frankfurt school, where the productions facilitated and promoted by capitalism become tools of ideological and subjective modification that serve the status quo. However, through an engagement with the philosophical tools of sonic ontology, it can be shown that this understanding has problematic essentialist underpinnings that would make any role for popular music in emancipation impossible, and that said emancipation would itself be limited by capital.

This is followed by a text on the situation of licensed busking on the London Underground boor moving onto the next conceptual chapter *Complicity*. This chapter delves into the conclusions of attention centred critiques of cultural production and popular music. That, in attending to such productions can make one complicit in the systems that produce them. This chapter considers, on both an abstract and a material level, how we engage with popular music can be said to make us complicit with the prevailing social order. Through this combination of elements (the abstract and the material, the macroeconomic, the mineral trade and the micropolitics of cultural capital), it is suggested what may motivate this complicity and in doing so begin the process of narrowing down what role popular music is to play in emancipation from capitalism.

At this point, there is the section position chapter on Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project. This could be considered as typifying one position on the theoretical impasse. This chapter focuses on these author's conception of desire as a productive force, created by a process of passive synthesis, and in particular, the conjunctive synthesis. And, some of the ontological considerations to which their perspectives give rise and the implications they have for understanding musical and subjective experience. Throughout these concepts are linked to the formation of sonic fiction as a practice and the limitations of pursuing a sonic fiction of *boring dystopia* with these tools alone.

Returning to the voice of the narrator of A *Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia*, there is a short account of the mediation of musical experience in the piece *On "Bored in the USA" On Letterman On YouTube*, which leads into the next conceptual chapter. This chapter is entitled Catharsis, which takes the attention to popular music, and the resultant and implied complicity with the status quo and interrogates what exactly is desired through this arrangement. The conclusion of this investigation is that the purgation of the negative effects that are suffered, in both survival under capitalism and complicity with it. However, in a similar way to the critique of the art object oriented analysis of cultural production, this desire for catharsis is shown to be another mechanism for control based on essentialist assumptions.

From here we move to a short piece exploring the idea/experience of aura in the context of being close to a Rolling Stones concert, which introduces the next conceptual chapter *Home*. This chapter moves from the examination of catharsis provided so far, to precisely unravel what the normatively defined state of purification at which we are encouraged to aim is. The answer is found in the commonly understood definition of home that in the West is entangled within the Freudian idea of the bourgeois family. However, through a reinterpretation of Freud's notion of the uncanny as applied in the example to the work of the musician FKA Twigs, we can see that popular music can offer ways of moving beyond this search for catharsis and still operate in a vernacular form.

This is followed by the final position chapter on the work of Theodor Adorno and his analysis of popular culture. Adorno's position can be understood as the opening gambit of radical cultural critique and, as such, is steeped in certain prejudices that have led to our present theoretical impasse. In this chapter, the work of Adorno is reframed as an unselfconscious sonic fiction, that intensifies certain dynamics to exposed levels of oppression that disavow their very operation. It is with this position in mind this sonic fiction of *boring dystopia* proceeds into a final movement, which attempts to overcome this theoretical impasse while retaining both the criticality and the potentiality of the aforementioned positions.

After an experiential piece, on the way in which the experience of music shifts with time in relation to a song by Carley Simon, the final conceptual chapter begins. This chapter is *Conjunction*. Once the uncanny becomes a field to explore, rather than a firm boundary to break the imperatives of popular music, relationships to emancipation are reframed. By engaging with Berardi's development of Deleuze and Guattari's theory conjunctive semiosis, we are able to present a new role for popular music in emancipatory politics, that being as a filter of the complex networks of power, oppression and potential that surround us into configurations that can create something new. This chapter attempts to move beyond the impasse rather than resolving it through the theoretical frame of conjunction, something that is continued in the final experiential essay on the band Xiu Xiu.

After the sonic fiction of boring dystopia, the text then returns to this voice for the conclusion. Here, each of the tasks outlined above will be discussed together in order to offer some conclusions on how sonic fiction may help us move beyond the theoretical impasses that hamper the analysis of popular music with a view to emancipatory political projects. It will provide the groundwork for the development of future research and practices that can come about unhampered by the limitation of previous perspectives.

Pop Music in Boring Dystopia.

In 2015, the late cultural theorist Mark Fisher coined the term boring dystopia to describe the coalescence of the neoliberal political economy with the ideological resignation of capitalist realism as a phenomenological experience. The is a term that not only describes a set of material conditions but also a subjective stance toward them. A stance that, while it may seem critical of the status quo, is actually a requirement for the functioning of the material conditions that produce boredom. While this may seem complex, it is a fairly intuitive concept, the architecture of which is all too familiar

We become aware of *boring dystopia* when the sensation hopelessness that washes over you as you stand sleep deprived and nervous, sardine-like, on the early morning train, wherein the only thing safe for you to affix your stare is with a post-ironic commercial for a prohibitively expensive personal driver service. The other option is staring at the news updates on your phone that lament the drowning of refugees and, one story down, relay the opportunistic warnings politicians calling for an end to "unchecked immigration". At least the Xiu Xiu album you're listening to reminds you of a sense of possibility that affirms your hope that this will not be forever. Of course, this feeling has been traded for isolation, but talking to anyone around you is terrifying.

As you make your way out of the station, you pass a busker playing in one of the pitches licensed by the city. He is a young man with one arm and has managed to develop a technique to play melody lines in a heavy metal style. Today, he is playing interpretations of Coldplay hits over a backing track. A wealthy man in a suit stops him between songs and chats with him about guitar tech, eating into the musician's limited time-slot. As you exit the station, you are hit but a misting rain as you look across the street, you see a line of closed and run-down shops that stretches to your office building.

Another setting where the boringly dystopian could be found were the living rooms of new-build houses in commuter towns across the UK on the evening of the London Olympics opening ceremony. As medley after medley of British pop poured from the televisions into the homes of middle England, the true purpose such an event was realized as the games became part of a national myth, which, in turn, became part of innumerate personal myths. Even if such sentimentality would be publicly disavowed, this event allowed for a moment of investment in something with the appearance of substance. That said, this appearance of substance has been provided in large part by the public funds that otherwise could have been directed to during up the welfare state, were it not for the policies of post-crisis austerity.

Boring dystopia, as a concept, started as a joke facilitated by the image sharing capabilities of social media networks. The irreverence of the term is part of what gives it its critical potential. However, it also presents some limitations that need to be addressed. It briefly became a Facebook community until the tendencies toward inter-group antipathy that are built into such technologies overwhelmed the groups intent. Indeed, this was the risk of using a platform that could be described as a defining characteristic of *boring dystopia* to develop this critique. This fact may somewhat speak to the limitation of the concept it self as well. Despite Fisher not having developed this concept more formally, it could be argued that the resonance of this concept, as indicated by its flash of self-immolating popularity, points to something about the spirit of the present moment. So it is with this in mind that this thesis hopes to deploy this term as a description of the condition of contemporary culture.

It is within this frame that the discussion of popular music takes place. Indeed, *boring dystopia* is the setting for the sonic fiction that will form the majority of this thesis. It is, however, not simply that popular music is to be viewed through the depressive lens of *boring dystopia*, rather popular music is a resource for the construction of this world view. The important and open question is: can popular music be a resource for something else?

This thesis takes an approach to the analysis of popular music wildly at odds with much of contemporary musicology and, indeed, some quarters of cultural studies and critical theory. This is because, while music is vital to this project, music itself is not the object of research. At the same time, the manner in which music is engaged throughout this thesis problematises the privileged role of theory in the analysis of culture through cultural artefacts and practices. What needs to be established, for this thesis to work, is an understanding of these concepts as entangled in and reinforcing one another. And that popular music, and our relationships to it, in particular, should be understood as being expressive of the complexities of contemporary culture and politics. To that end, what follows are a set of tools for getting a working understanding of the historical specificity of *boring dystopia* and the implications of the concept and tools with which to approach popular music in this context.

Boring Dystopia

As stated earlier, *boring dystopia* describes not only material conditions but set of subjective experience that can be instantiated by those conditions. This is a theory built out of a Marxian understanding of the relationship between the subject and the conditions under which they are produced and that they, in turn, play a role in reproducing. To that end, certain tools of analysis are necessary for understanding this

dimension of the contemporary morning as *boring dystopia*. These are tools that allow us to consider capitalism as more than merely an economic system but as a component that structures reality.

Capitalism and Subjectivity.

Historically, capitalism emerged from the imperial powers of Western Europe at the very moment at which the power of traditional monarchies was receding, and notions of individual liberty were beginning to take a hold. At this point, these nations were slowly moving towards more democratic governments. What came about, however, was a democracy of a particular kind, based on particular individuals gaining, through wealth, the right to own property. It is, however, important not to conflate these two things. As Jeremy Gilbert is careful to point out in *Common Ground* (2014) economic liberalism is not a prerequisite for democracy (79).

However, what liberal democracy requires is a notion of subjectivity that positions the individual, as what Gilbert refers to, as an 'ontological, phenomenological and epistemological [category]' (31). Such a definition has significant implications for how a member of a society relates to that society, and would indeed seem to require some form of capitalism. Gilbert goes on to explain these implications;

> The original meaning of 'individual' is literally 'that which cannot be divided' (Williams 1976), which tells us a lot about what the term implies. Properly speaking, the term 'individual' not only expresses the singular uniqueness of the person (or object) it describes, but also implies that that uniqueness is dependent upon its indivisible nature, hence upon something which is absolutely intrinsic to it and not at all a function of its relation with others. The concept, therefore, implies both an inherent simplicity and ontological anarchy: a radical independence which is the most fundamental feature of the person or object. (ibid).

For Gilbert, it is this notion of an individual who is placed in rather than as a part of a society that frames or economic and social understandings. Without establishing the existence of many indivisible units of experience, capable of acting in some sort of rational accordance with that experience, capitalism, at that historical/technological moment, would not have been possible[1].

It is this notion of profound separation of one subject from all others and the world that *boring dystopia* is founded upon. This is the precondition without which the particular kinds of alienation and even material suffering experienced today would not

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[1]This echoes the image used in Marx's first volume of *Capital* (1990), of the fictional character of Robinson Crusoe as a proto-capitalist. He is the European individual, who is able to shape the world and the situation in which he finds himself thrust into, and not only survive but prosper. (170, 1022). In capitalist theories of production, this 'singular unit of experience' is always separate from the rest of the world and able to manipulate it through reason and skill.

be possible. If we consider the work of Deleuze and Guattari, in synthesizing the findings of anthropological and historical research, we can find evidence to suggest that early feudal societies experienced suffering and oppression very differently than today (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 214). Thus, we could have oppressive systems of inequality but the experience of this would be very different if we understood ourselves to imminently connection to everything else that composed that system. This is not to say this was better but merely to say that our experience is particular. A particularity built out of particular historical conditions.

In a traditional Marxist understanding, capitalism is a historically necessary but transitory phase. After the Hegelian notion of the world spirit moving towards reason (Žižek 2008: x), a Marxist view holds that the antithetical pressures on capitalism, stemming from its internal contradictions, would lead to its overthrow and eventual replacement by a form of communism derived from reason (Gilbert 2014: 129). However, the overthrow of capitalism by historical dialectical inevitability is not something held to in this thesis. That being said, Marx's analysis of capitalism is of great importance to the understanding of *boring dystopia* and the project of sonic fiction.

In addition to the Marxist interpretation of capitalism's influence on subjectivity, there are others who argue that the nature of subjectivity is formed through the confluence of this economic system and particular historical conditions. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2006), originally published in 1904, Max Weber argued that the emergence and spread of capitalism has as much to do with the understanding of an individual's worth being tied to their labours, as is found in Calvinist Protestant Christianity (102), as it does to any claims of efficiency. Weber's perspective has helped to spur on the notion of culture being in some way culpable for the reproduction of exploitative and oppressive systems. The economic basis of these conditions is, of course, vital to their reproduction but culture is not a mere discursive super structure to be logically disproved. The beliefs promulgated by culture are what shapes a subject's relation to said logic and thus produce the field of what is politically possible. This allows the political analysis of this thesis to move beyond a simplistic critique of capitalism.

Unlike traditional Marxist critiques, the analysis offered by engaging with the notion of *boring dystopia* is not that capitalism is exploitative, inefficient or prone to crisis. Exploitation is not a condition that capitalism created, merely one that was rationalized under its mode of production. Relative efficiency is something that is so dependent on particular criteria that this debate cannot be advanced in any discussion not dedicated to it. Such an argument runs into contradictions with the operation of capital. It is the inefficiencies that produce the spaces in which to derive profit. Efficiency is not a case for or against capitalism, being as it is dependent on competing

interests that can be mutually exclusive. Less so that it is prone to crisis, as numerous commentators have observed, crises in contemporary capitalism are viewed as opportunities, rather than unfortunate, unavoidable consequences (Mirowski 2013: 28). Rather the critical position of *boring dystopia* seeks to reclaim the notion of the cultural critique of capitalism on the grounds of its insufficiency. This is an intrinsic part of the economic system in relation to the cultures that serve it and that it helps produce. Just as in Protestantism escape from toil is not possible in life, capitalism produces a lack that can only be filled in the production of more lack.

The Specificity of Neoliberalism.

Capitalism should not be understood as a static monolith. The operations of capital always take place within a specific historical and cultural context We can call the form of capitalism that created the present circumstances, which have emerged in the late 20th century, neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, in Western capitalist countries, emerged, as documented by writers such as Foucault (2008), Mirowski (2013), Maurizio Lazzarato (2014), out of the relative prosperity of the social democratic project following World War Two. This period was defined by a decrease in the level of income disparity and the introduction of social welfare programs, which was motivated by a fervent anti-communism (Graeber 2014). In short, the intention was to mitigate exploitation such that workers would not look for alternative social models. This period is often referred to as *late capitalism.* The governments of Margaret Thatcher from 1979 in the UK, and Ronald Reagan from 1981 in the US, however, took this anti-communism to a logical end and began dismantling the social democratic government structures that provided services to their populations in favour of free market solutions.

According to David Graeber (2014), with the final demise of the Soviet Union in 1989 and with it the last example of real existing socialism as a global superpower, the impetus for western capitalism to moderate the externalities of social inequality inherent capitalist market economies also disappeared. "There is no alternative", became the mantra emanating from mainstream political discourse (Fisher 2009: 8).

Put simply; neoliberalism is a form of governance that holds that individuals are rational economic actors, who, when acting with their own self-interest, will behave in such a way as to produce economic growth. Neoliberalism codifies the basic operating principles of capitalism as a set of tacit ideological assumptions. To this way of thinking, government intervention in the economy is never desirable as the power it wields disrupts the behaviour of markets and may have unforeseen consequences. That said, a strong government, capable of writing and enforcing laws and contracts, is vital to creating confidence in the markets of neoliberal economies (Fisher 2009: 40). This applies also in a physical sense, meaning the force of the police, security and armed

services have a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence to ensure an international climate in which business is able to take place without fear of certain externalities such as political unrest[2].

In this thesis, in addition to the term neoliberalism, the terms capitalism, late capitalism, and post-industrial society, are used to denote different things. Late capitalism refers to the capitalism that existed through the cold war, in relation to the competing Soviet communist superpower of the USSR. While this was a period of welfare states and a project of social democracy, as well as the expansion of industrial production it was also, at the same time, it also produced a backlash against the norms of exploitation. As Marcuse documented in his book *One Dimensional Man* (2013 [1964])*,* this was a period that seemed to have ever increasing living standards at the expense of limiting human potential to a particular kind of capitalist conformity. Conformity that was ostensibly intended to move a subject from industrial working class to post industrial bourgeois life.

Post-industrial society is the contentious term used to describe the situation in many western nations that have seen a fall in industrial production output in favour of service and finance based economies. Many of these have enjoyed massive but uneven growth, with communities devastated by the sudden loss of employment opportunities with the disappearance of industry. The term is problematic as it implies that industrialism has ended, when in fact it has simply moved to parts of the world where labour is cheaper and the rights of workers are less protected. Here, it is used with this description and caveats in mind. Capitalism, in general, is used to donate the common thread that links these ideas, that society should be organized in such a ways as to facilitate the efficient accumulation of capital by individuals under the conditions of scarcity.

It is from the assertion that this scarcity is not only inevitable but also a social good that the discourse of neoliberalism has emerged and, in turn, has made certain assumptions about human subjectivity. From these assumption that the pervasive conditions of *boring dystopia* are instantiated and reproduced. Relating to its origins in classic liberalism, neoliberalism imagines a subject as a rational individual, as discussed above with Gilbert. However, some resistance is met when trying to organise people in accordance with such behaviour. While capitalism had emerged from the Calvinist principle of hard work being evidenced in society, by the late twentieth century this motivating principle had begun to fade.

In *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005), sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello argue that the sources of the motivating energy that propelled capitalist production had to change significantly in response to the cultural shifts of the later half

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[2] Unless of course the unrest is a necessary component of a particular commodity.

of the twentieth century. Borrowing the notion of the "spirit of capitalism" from Max Weber, they suggest that not only is a such a motivating spirit of capitalism possible under ostensibly secular condition but that an internalized motivation for production They source evidence for this in an extensive discourse analysis of management literature from the 1990s (2005: xix). The changes in this literature were to incorporate, in some form, many of the desires that can be found expressed in the protests of May 1968. These included a desire for more autonomy and self-expression in the face of the homogeneity of industrial production. Boltanski and Chiapello suggest that when looking at this protest movement, the myriad critiques of capitalism can be understood as falling into one of two camps, though not without some overlap and combination.

The first is the so-called *artistic critique,* coming from a bohemian perspective focused on 'the loss of meaning and, in particular, the loss of the sense of what is beautiful and valuable, which derives from standardization and generalized commodification, affecting not only everyday objects but also artworks (the cultural mercantilism of the bourgeoisie) and human beings' (38). The second, the so-called *social critique,* was concerned with 'the egoism of private interests in bourgeois society and the growing poverty of the popular classes in a society of unprecedented wealth—a mystery that will find its explanation in theories of exploitation (ibid). These writers argue that, in the protests of May 1968, certain elements of these critiques were combined to form a unified challenge to industrial capitalism. This can be viewed as a moment in which students united with workers. However, the response from those in positions of power was to separate the critique and act to address the valid, but in isolation insufficient, points of the *artistic critique.*

Many of the foundational elements of the *social critique* seemed to have been in some way addressed in Western democracies in the formation of post-war welfare states. Even if, as has been argued by Graeber, this was only a response to the threat posed by real existing socialism [RES], it did succeed in increasing the quality of life for many in these societies for a time. However, Marcuse is correct to assert that this is somewhat illusory, as a constituent part of the increase in comfort is a requirement for a reduction in the scope of possible human subjectivity to that which best serves the economic system (Marcuse 2002: 4-5). In theory, people were presented with a social contract, whereby if they were readily available for full-time employment they would be rewarded through a decent wage, that was able to be taxed to facilitate the welfare state, and to have enough free-time to engage in pastimes or hobbies[3] or drinking. However, in practice, this was rarely the case.

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[3]Adorno's essay *Free Time* (Adorno 2001: 187) provides an interesting critique of this notion.

Today, in arguments about raising inequality, we are often pointed to a comparison between the wages for employees of the American car manufacturer General Motors in the 1960s and an employee at Wal-Mart today. The wages at GM allowed for a near bourgeois standard of living. Where as Wal-Mart, an extremely profitable company, fails to pay the majority of its employees the living wage and is even dubious in its meeting of the minimum wage (Saltsman 2016). While this can be taken as evidence in support of Graeber's argument—that, in the absence of RES, capitalism has once again returned to the practice a more pronounced exploitation of workers—it is also an isolated and incomplete presentation. The nature of the working conditions in factories, such as those owned by GM, was still, in a Marxian sense, exploitative and alienating. Indeed, as they operated (and many different factories still operate) under Taylorist and Fordist models of managing labour power, the experience of working in one can only be dehumanizing. This way of using labour was a continuation of the reductive machinic treatment of humans as described by Marx in the *Grundrisse* (1993: 615), where people are merely an organic component to be maintained in its own particular, but standardizable, way.

This was what the intent of the May '68 revolution was directed against, and exemplifies the linked character of the social and artistic critiques, social and economic inequality is inexorably connected to the ethico-aesthetic question of the good life. As has been suggested so far the concept of boring dystopia is an attempt to reform the connection between the sensation-based field aesthetics and the idealist question that lead the development of ethics To neglect this is to hamper many critiques of capitalist culture and renders them meaningless. Capitalism has a vested interest in this, as such false dichotomies can fuel the notion of a society constructed of isolated hermetically sealed individuals.

Boltanski and Chiapello argue that by seemingly addressing the *artistic critique*, in line with numerous aspects of the contemporary cultural shifts, those in power (as expressed in the popular management literature) were able to offer a pseudo-autonomy and pseudo-authenticity (2005: 177-178). In doing so, capital was able to artificially divorce the *artistic* elements from the *social critique.* This left the unjust and exploitative economic system as an apparent necessity required to underpin a limited understanding of authenticity and autonomy. This has facilitated and precipitated the particularities of present day neoliberal capitalism in becoming social norms. Additionally, by relating seemingly emancipatory cultural values and practices (individuality, self-expression, flexibility), through 'rhizomorphous' (xxiv) forms of organization, the understanding of the concepts at stake in the artistic critique has become confused with the outcomes of our exploitative economic system. This has created a false dichotomy between the aims of an a*rtistic critique* of society and any attempt to change society's economic system. It places autonomy and individuality

against economic equality and social justice. In short, as has been observed by Gilbert, it makes liberal market capitalism, appear synonymous with democracy and the conception rights enshrined therein (2013: 3-5). In the face of this, as Boltanski and Chiapello argue, there has been a shift towards a discourse on the need for workers commitment to the accumulation of capital (2005: 55). An individual 'choice' to partake enthusiastically in the pursuit of profit, be it through your skill, or willingness to be managed, this commitment has become essential to the maintenance of the system and the worker's own continued exploitation.

As mentioned earlier, in reference to Weber, with these developments it is no longer possible to only consider the role of cultural production as merely the maintenance of an ideological superstructure. This is not to say that they do not still retain that function, but rather that their functions have been expanded. Post-Fordist labour, with its tendency to require a certain degree of intellectual engagement, tends to make the worker identify more fully with the labour in which they are engaged, rather than only engaging to the minimum level required out of necessity. This cannot be understood as some brainwashed commitment to a firm. The firm has largely disintegrated into outsourcing. It is instead a commitment to their skills as productive agents in capitalist realism (Fisher 2009: 16). In this conception, cultural production is not only a tool of oppression through Marcusian repressive desublimation (2002: 59) but actually a tool for the oppression of a subject by the self[4]. In this environment, cultural productions are transformed into cultural capital. Merely something necessarily accumulated to illustrate the self's commitment to cultural norms. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, popular music is a particularly useful commodity in this regard. It can allow for the display of expertise with limited commitment, it can facilitate social relations and it readily adaptable and it can enhance the selling and buying experience of almost any other commodity.

To some extent, this thesis is an attempt to reinvigorate the artistic critique as something intimately connected to the social critique of capitalism. This requires engagement with both the claim that popular music can help us understand capitalism, and without capitalism, contemporary popular music makes no sense. Common to both the artistic and social critique is the concept of insufficiency. The social critique of capitalism points to the manner in which the motivation of individualized capital accumulation is insufficient in producing a just world wherein human potential is realized. Similarly, the artistic critique finds the same insufficiency when considering this single motivation from human endeavour and what that would produce. Popular music is an ideal form through which to consider this condition. Arguably, by its very nature, popular music is to be consumed by the greatest number of people possible. At

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[4]As a psychoanalytic concept.

the same time, it has a rather elastic form that is often in tension with the capitalist principles of society and the other motivations that create it that often stem from a desire for some sort of authenticity of expression. Attempts to draw out this type of expression are in part what drives the practice of sonic fiction; a practice that attempts to take these seemingly incommensurate ideas and allow us to understand their intimate connections.

<div align="right">

21st Century Pop.

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Popular music is a term that is problematic to define prescriptively. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, what qualifies as popular music shall be decided on the basis of its function and self and media description. That being said some broad criteria should be clear. In general, we are referring to music that is in the most part commercial produced and funded. This is music the audience of which can make an overt demand of enjoyment rather than differing to any other form of sublimation. In a contemporary context, it is music that was at one point, at least generically speaking, profitable in its recorded form, the exchange value of which is now, due to technological developments, moving ever closer to zero.

How should we analyze popular music in *boring dystopia*? It has long been clear that we cannot rely on the tools of traditional musicology, such as harmonic and formal analysis, alone to engage the experience popular music. These techniques install their own telos to the music they analyze. Similarly, the Marxist critiques, of those like Adorno, buy into this same kind of thinking as conservative musicology, in that it treats music as a perfectible science comprehensible to the, albeit disavowed, bourgeois individual. These thinkers rightly point out that the form is comprised of commodities but stop short of noticing how popular music and the experience of it may exceed this category. That being said, the reaction to this in the formation of popular music studies, which has often looked to celebrate the possibilities of community and connection facilitated by popular music too often slips into "dismal celebrations of consumerism and and interminable excuses for mediocrity" (Goodman 2010: 17).

Suffice to say, to consider popular music in the context of *boring dystopia* will require a mixed approach. The tools of traditional musicology are not useless; they allow us to understand cultural norms of practice, it is only they are merely insufficient to tackle music in the age of ubiquitous listening. Likewise, the perspective of immanent critique, developed by critical theory, will help us see through the inconsistencies and contradictions of artistic expression in the culture industry, but we must not become enamoured with the position of the critique. That being said, the

same must be true of the position of the champion, while allowing for the possibility, shown by popular music studies, that there is social and cultural potential in popular music, we must be mindful that this is not the logic that governs the majority of its production or influence.

We will need further tools to carry out an analysis and critique of popular music in *boring dystopia*. Chief among these is the practice of sonic fiction, which requires far more space than is available here and shall be addressed more fully in the next chapter. What can be addressed here are the theoretical frames that feed into the practice of sonic fiction and connect it to the specific context of *boring dystopia*. These include Steve Goodman's theory of vibrational ontology, which gives this approach a material underlay; Kathleen Stewart's notion of atmospheric attunements, which brings the cultural into the realm of phenomenological experience; and affect theory, which provides a bridge between these disparate levels. Additionally, into affect, phenomena such as popular music can encode and decode as cultural resonances. What follows are outlines of these tools as mechanisms by which to explore popular music in *boring dystopia*.

Vibration.

One of the most compelling understandings of sound, which we can use to underpin the material phenomenon that is referred to as popular music, can be found in Steve Goodman's *Sonic Warfare* (2010). For Goodman, it is not enough to consider these phenomena as audible sound waves but more fundamentally; as vibration. This is his attempt to move beyond the anthropocentric understanding of sound, which privileges the limited range of human hearing and often ignores sound that falls outside these parameters (9). Goodman' term, 'the vibrational force' refers to the energetics introduced into material so as to induce its vibration. These can be earthquakes (77) or cosmic shifts (81), but it can also be music (1). Even in the example of music, however, the vibrational force extends far beyond that which is audible to humans. Vibrational ontology provides an approach to sound that is also an attempt to build its conceptual frame from scientific empiricism.

This may seem an overly complex perspective from which to examine an everyday experience. However, without such an approach, explanations of what sound, and music specifically, does to people, bodies, and cultures, has had trouble and moving beyond the level of normative assumptions, as the material is relegated to a popular form of discourse. The ontology of the vibrational force, on the other hand, offers a way of understanding music as complexly enmeshed with human physiology, history and the tendencies that spiral out from them. But this means starting before the human. As Goodman explains;

> This vibrational ontology begins with some simple premises. If we subtract human perception, everything moves. Anything static is so only at the level of perceptibility. At the molecular or quantum level, everything is in motion, is vibrating. Equally, objecthood,[...] is an event irrelevant of human perception. All that is required is that an entity be felt as an object by another entity. All entities are potential media that can feel or whose vibrations can be felt by other entities. This is a realism, albeit a weird, agitated, and nervous one. (Goodman 2010: 83)

For Goodman, sound only appears ephemeral. It is materially speaking, always a physical force causing material action on bodies and objects, which are in turn capable of responding, in line with the physical laws of energy transference. This is to say also that this force exists materially and ever present. The vibrational force can make media out of any entity. The entity that we understand as sound uses/is air. More precisely energetic pressure waves, which are part of the vibrational force, cause air to behave in such a way that the ear can detect and when transferred as nerve impulses, the brain can interpret as sound. These pressure waves affect the body in other ways too, but we don't call this sound. Instead, Goodman calls this unsound and uses it to illustrate the often unnoticed mechanisms of affect (xx).

While this may seem to be an abstract position from which to consider popular music, as Goodman goes on to explain, it is from this immanent vantage point that one is able to experience the 'affective agency in sound systems'. Arguably this implies that phenomena with such a culturally contingent appearance can also be remarkably affecting in seemingly universal ways.

> An ontology of vibrational force forms the backdrop to the affective agency of sound systems (the sonic nexus), their vibrational ontology (rhythmanalysis), and their modes of contagious propagation (audio virology). In its primary amodality and secondary affinity to the sonic, a discussion of vibrational ecologies also helps counter ocularcentric (modeled on vision as dominant sensory modality) conceptions of cyberspace, contributing to a notion of virtual space that cuts across analog and digital domains. (Goodman 2009: 83)

Goodman's theory allows us to bridge the illusory gap between the flow of energy described by quantum physics and for example, the hit singles of Justin Bieber. In this material way, we are able to think of popular music as intimately linked to the networks of communication, resource gathering and exploitation used in its creation and consumption. However, we still need tools to emphasize what we call popular music in order to examine it and the manner in which it connects to these networks and how it shapes our experience.

In his book, *Infinite Music: Imagining the next millennium of human music making* (2011), Adam Harper charts a route that takes us from the seemingly abstract

ontology of the vibrational force described by Goodman, to an everyday understanding of popular music. Harper understands music as an emergent concept; a concept that is the result of the actions and interactions of various factors with various variables. These are both sonic and not (2011: 108). Meaning that our understanding of music is not limited to the sound, nor the outer limits of the vibrational force. Other forms of cultural signification come into play. For example, the same song, perhaps 'The Jean Genie', written and performed by David Bowie (Bowie 1999), has a particular range of cultural resonances. If the song were to have been made famous by someone else; a performer who was not so experimental with performing gender and persona, even if it were to sound identical or near identical, it would have a different cultural resonance.

To the extent that popular music is sonically defined, it is a particular formation of the vibrational force as described by Goodman (2009: 81). This formation can be understood in terms of variables (Harper 2011: 15). These include pitch, rhythm, timbre (a dense field of variables in itself), the number of voices and so on. These variables have values that may be fixed or may change over time within certain parameters (18-20). This is the field within which the sounds of popular music operate. There are certain culturally understood, defined and maintained, congealments of granular values, for a potentially infinite set of variables. While this varies from person to person, we can point to certain aggregates of variables for working definitions of what would widely be understood as popular music. This thesis tries to take into account these norms as in some way constituting the object of research, between popular music and the experience of it. While of popular music, as has been shown so far, is a nebulous concept with expansive margins and a diverse range, this range contains some sort of median point. As distasteful as it may be, that median point is culturally significant. And with the tools offered by the perspective of vibrational ontology, there is the opportunity to unpack these congealed norms and the mechanism by which they operate. One such mechanism being, the field of atmospherics.

Atmospherics.

To discuss the experience of ubiquitous musical reception suggested by Kassabian requires conceptual inquiry to move the discussion beyond traditional notions of linear transmission. Kassabian argues that our society has reached a point of technological advancement that is sufficient for commercial actors exploit the material qualities of music in such a ways as to make it appear ubiquitous (2013: 9). This could be a point at which one could argue the perspectives of Adorno and Deleuze and Guattari converge. As indeed we see with the industrial reification of music to control the functioning of the social environment (3). At the same time, however, the desired inattentiveness of

the audience relies on a thorough understanding, by the industry, of physical affect. A useful way to approach this, when discussing the experience of popular music, can be to focus on how this material interacts with the environment; its atmospheric qualities. In her 2011 essay 'Atmospheric Attunements', Kathleen Stewart argues that in attending to what is perceived as an atmosphere, one can find suggestions of 'something of the plasticity and density of lived compositions now proliferating in ordinary scenes of living through what is happening' (Stewart 2011: 446). We can see parallels here with the discussion above of popular music as a particular formulation of the vibrational force. An atmospheric understanding of popular music gives a tangible and commonplace application of thinking of music as physically acting upon people and things. What is made clear in the atmospheric metaphor, is that there is never a point at which one is not interacting with some form of the vibrational force.

The term atmosphere is evocative. When used scientifically it refers to something that is a basic prerequisite for life. Importantly, this is not neutral. It has considerable power to affect subjects even within seemingly narrow parameters of variation. It plots a trajectory and the range of variations within a tendency. When we move out of the scientific definition and into Stewart's metaphor, we find a concept that is equally powerful, but not quite as absolute. 'An Atmosphere', Stewart writes, 'is not an inert context but a force field in which people find themselves' (2011: 452). Despite the inevitable influence of an atmosphere, in Stewart's use of the term, it may also be something that can be escaped. However, arguably for this to be the case, inasmuch as one atmosphere being exchanged for another, it may be a matter of atmospheric composition. The question could be, of which elements are this atmosphere composed? If an atmosphere has some connection to the vibrational force, then the ability to apprehend it may well be a matter of intensity and focus.

The composition of a particular atmosphere is shaped in the relation between subjects and a milieu and is always in a state of flux. What the atmospheric conception allows for is the possibility that such affects are not only a matter of subjective agency. This acknowledges that someone can be affected by something even if they do not apprehend it. To this end, a notion of atmospherics enables a way to understand material like popular music that seems riddled with contradictions, as at once hetero and homogeneric, liberating and oppressive. It is an issue of particularity, perception, subject position and intensity. These things are always shifting and yet can retain the appearance of sameness.

Stewart aligns her thinking for this approach to research with the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger (445) but twists this through a combination of non-representational theory and fictocriticism (ibid). This is what gives this approach critical potential rather than only being a descriptive tool. This also provides some of the resources necessary to set a sonic fiction in the milieu of *boring dystopia*. And, like

Deleuzian approaches to sonic fiction, the practice of atmospheric attainment seeks not reduce musical and sonic experience to theoretical frames but rather to intensify it (Eshun 1998: 46). Atmospheric writing, as a research method, is an empirical practice but one that makes no pretense to objectivity or to take aim at some sort of transcendental truth. An important example that Stewart gives to illustrate this is the section on West Virginia (2011: 447). In this long exert Stewart writes of the economic and social despair that seemed to appear simultaneously with the election of Ronald Reagan, arguably a starting point for the gestation of *boring dystopia*. But this is not simply applying a "great man" theory of history to the social decline instead, the election is the background hum to a decline created by deeper rooted problems;

> I was living in the coal mining camps in West Virginia when Reagan was elected. Right away everyone knew that something was happening, that we were in something. Right away the stories started about the people who were getting kicked off social security disability [...] Old people were buying cans of dog food for their suppers; you'd see them at the little rip store [...]. Young people were living in cars; the stories traced their daily movements over the hills—where they were spotted parking, how the baby's dirty diapers were piling up in the back seat. [..] None of this was a surprise. Just a shock. Just the recognition. When things shifted in the political economy of coal, the big mines closed and people were getting killed in the deadly little punch mines. Then it was over. The union died one day in the middle of a strike. [...] The bodies wheezed. They reeled. They were hit by contagious outbreaks of "the nerves." People "fell out." [...] The force of things amassed in floods of stories and in ruined objects that piled up on the landscape like an accrual of phantom limbs. This was not just some kind of resistance, or even the resilience of a way of life, but the actual residue of people "making something of things." The material, sensory labor of attending to an emergent and enduring hum that stretched across the world as they knew it. (ibid)

This sort of writing exposes connections between events that may seem at first to be entirely disparate. If one was to research the effect of the Reagan administration's economic policies on blue collar communities in certain North American states, then this picture could equally leap out of the statistics (Though the reinterpretation of those same statistics could be made to paint an entirely different picture). Stewart is not making the claim that this practice is a route to truth but rather that it allows us to understand how 'incommensurate elements hang together' (452).

There is a great deal of applicability here to the experience of popular music in a ubiquitous media environment. Incommensurate elements hang together as a matter of course, as the multiplicity of lived experiences moves through the world come into contact with the myopic imperatives of commercial activity. Atmospheric attunement is a practice that can produce knowledge of the complex and often contradictory nature of these experiences, without making reductive gestures to flatten the experience to fit within pre-existing structures. The hope seems to be the generation of a more ethically

engaged form of social critique. One not interested in proposing simple solutions but rather producing a cartography that cannot be completed but can, perhaps, become ever more meaningful.

Despite this, we are still, however, face the problem of apprehension. To write about something is to have already apprehended it in some way, leaving what was not apprehended still unwritten. This problem that Kassabian and others have also wrestled with (2013: 110). Overcoming this is difficult, time-consuming and not entirely resolvable. This is why Stewart calls for the practice of attunement, to work on the skills of noticing and reading atmospheres and seeing through the obvious to 'a space to clear the opposition between representation and reality' (2011: 452). In discussing music especially (but indeed any atmosphere), the experience that is not apprehended may well be, in the long run, the most affecting.

Affect.

There are theoretical tools that can help with this interrogation of the inapprehensible. At its simplest, this can be thought of as the moment before you are aware something is happening, and yet you are already acting. This is the most concrete example of what is called affect, though it can also operate on more abstract and virtual planes. This is described by Brian Massumi as 'the mystery of the missing half-second' (Massumi 1995: 89). A window of time in which certain experiments have shown the body to be responding to something before the person is consciously aware of it. Affect theory provides a conceptual framework through which we can examine and expand this missing half-second. This is a space of time large enough for semantic meaning to congeal. Focusing on this time window can expose a process of congealment that may offer insights into experiences that don't lend themselves to semantic explanation. Affect is an important tool with which to explore the complex information communicated in the experience of music. Particularly popular music, where arguments and perspectives derived from the process of "rational," focused listening do not in the main, apply.

It is important to note that the term is difficult to pin down to a single definition. Various schools of thought operate with slight but significant differences in definition, for a variety of different projects (Gilbert 2004: N/a). Affect, as defined by Massumi in his notes on his translation of *A Thousand Plateaus,* a work considered to be one of the cornerstones of affect studies, is;

> Affect/Affection. Neither word denotes a personal feeling [...]. Affect (Spinoza's affectus) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an

augmentation or diminution of that body's capacity to act. (Massumi
in Deleuze & Guattari, 2013: xv)

If we were to apply this definition to the experience of music, we could see, even with something as quotidian as tapping a foot to a beat, that this sensation seems to stimulate something within this listener long before you are conscious of the act. This makes the field at once so fascinating and difficult to fathom. If we add to this the exploration of common qualities of popular music—namely its need for mass appeal—we can perhaps argue that the intensities and particularities of vibration have been configured to exacerbate this. Thus, we can consider, with Harper and Goodman, that the affective potential of music to relies on the configuration of variables of sound and extra-musical qualities in such a way as to resonate with experiences of individual subjects. However, at the same time, the logistics of ubiquitous media have meant that a very small group have had undue influence in the co-construction of these experiences. This is a worrying mechanism, but as we delve into its operation there is perhaps some hope that we can escape this, although not without other problems.

What is perhaps most interesting in Massumi's definition is the notion that this experience is 'prepersonal'. Meaning that it is experienced before we are able to filter the experience through some sort of frame of a socially constructed self. This is a rather commonplace experience, perhaps most readily recognized in times of adrenal stress. The account of such experience is often that one acted without thinking. However, some dense sense memory of the experience remains, though perhaps distorted. Thus the usual normative and quasi-rational tools at the disposal of the analysis of personal experience cannot be applied to affect until after the fact. And indeed, this perspective provides a very different interpretation to an event, than would have previously been available.

This informs the way in which Kassabian looks to apply this concept to music. Her argument, following Massumi and Deleuze, is that when so much of what can be identified as a person is formed in this prepersonal space, in this missing half second, an essentialist understanding of identity becomes unstable, and perhaps untenable. This does not, however, mean that the question of identity disappears. Rather they are complexified into the shifting terrain of experience and never fully settled (Kassabian 2013: xxvii). Kassabian argues that music, with its particular affective characteristics, is formative in creating a sense of identity. However for Kassabian, to give a one to one account of how this creation-of-identity works would be impossible, as there are 'too many tiny little events' (xxviii) and are always tied up in the virtual (xxix). Thus, a crass empiricism would leave out much of what we know to be going on but is simply resistant to clear definition. Again, we are better of charting a cartography or diagram of subjectivity, than insisting on some prescriptive methodology.

When we want to interrogate the manner in which something as amorphous and seemingly trivial as popular music can be useful for something as nebulous as capitalism, then this is the field to examine: the field of affect. Affect is a difficult field to locate. Indeed much of the rhetoric of mainstream support for market capitalism and its discourse would refuse to recognize its existence, as it is based on the disingenuous assertion that society is built upon independent actors in the marketplace. But the practices of the marketplace reveal this space of the missing half-second and prepersonal perception to be real and this is what ubiquitous popular music occupies (Taylor 2012: 101).

Building on his work with Deleuze, Guattari went on to form some of the most complex examinations of affect and the consequences that such an understanding of experience that this phenomenon implies. In an essay on Guattari's use of the concept to analyze power in everyday life, Bertelsen and Murphie give the following account of Guattari's position.

> ...he allows for no position outside of, certainly not above, affective forces. *One could almost say that for him affect is all there is.* What follows is an aesthetic approach to politics, meaning that Guattari acknowledges importance of both sensation and creation.[...] Guattari's embracing of affect in social practice is ethical in that it evaluates practices of living. In sum his is an "ethico-aesthetic paradigm". [...] In ethico-aesthetics "to speak of creation is to speak of the responsibility of the creative instance with regard to the thing created, inflections of the state of things, bifurcations beyond pre-established schemas, once again taking into account alterity in its extreme modalities" (107). (Bertelsen & Murphie in Gregg & Seigworth 2010: 140-141)

It is this ethico-aesthetic understanding of the affective power of popular music that this thesis looks to articulate, unpack, critique and use as a resource for constructing something that could be considered to be emancipatory. Many of the tools for this can be found if we move beyond pseudo-scientific approaches to empiricism (Guattari 1995a, 10) and engage with affect as something to be interrogated. The significance of this move is that it takes us beyond the limited discourse of status quo, which relies on rational actors processing near perfect information. As mentioned above, affect does play a role in the functioning of capitalism market economies but only as something to be disavowed. An ethico-aesthetic approach requires one consider questions of what constitutes the good, in relation to their own sensation derived experiences and the interrogation of these experiences. This examines the aforementioned disavowal as something consciously enforced. This will be discussed more fully in the chapter on the methodology of sonic fiction. For now what is important to emphasize is the complexities of approaching something as quotidian as the experience of popular music as an object of research. And to submit that these complexities are not an

inconvenience but the tools of an opportunity to overcome a fascism, which will become apparent in later chapters.

On Sonic Fiction.

In the UK, towards the end of the twentieth (and early 21st) century, an intellectual movement surfaced that looked to develop what could be called theory-fiction. Building on the work of writers such as Georges Bataille, Deleuze and Guattari and Jean Baudrillard, theory-fiction was, as the name suggests an attempt to combine these approaches to cultural analysis. Fisher understands the impetus for theory-fiction as stemming from what Baudrillard termed as the arrival of third order simulacra. This could be understood as symbols that no longer bear a relation to that which they may have once signified as there are too many complicating steps of signification between them (Fisher 2000). With this, Baudrillard concluded that the distinction between theory and fiction was no longer distinguishable[5]. Thus, it was necessary to create analysis and critique that could operate in the same register as fiction, if it is to communicate in a culture that created such fictions on a daily basis.

At this point in time, it had become difficult to critique music, in a larger social context, and offering meaningful critique without producing blundering elitist reductions. The same problem of signification persisted for the analysis of music, theory and fiction independently, could produce only cynical indictments or promises of utopia, reductions to the ineffable sound or the universals of theory. It is in this context that Kodwo Eshun produced the first work that was self identified as sonic fiction, *More Brilliant Than The Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (1998). In short this book sought to move music writing to a mode of intensification, rather than the reductions practiced both by normative cultural fictions and traditional theoretical analysis.

This chapter provides an examination of what sonic fiction is and what it can do for the analysis of the experience of music. It will provide an overview of two historical tendencies that lead the emergence of the practice; the development of theory-fiction by the CCRU in the 1990s and the historical frustration with the limitations of music writing throughout the 20th century. With this back ground in place, it is then possible to out line how sonic fiction helps us to think seemingly amorphous and complex concepts and practices, such as popular music and capitalism, together in a way that is, informed, informative and critical. This chapter will perform an examination of the history of sonic fiction as a practice and a detailed consideration of the mechanisms that are visible in its operation. This is done in the service of the production of a

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[5] This condition seems to have persisted, if Lazzarato's understanding of asignifying semiotics, as they relate to financialization, is taken to be valid (2013: 80).

methodology for this thesis, which looks to engage this practice in some way to reveal more about both the mechanisms and play and as a way to produce new insights into the aforementioned nebulous fields.

(The) Cybernetic Cultures Research Unity Did Not Take Place[6].

According to the Mark Fisher (2000), a major consequence for Baudrillard of the cultural shift to the field of third order simulacra was the elimination of the distinction between fiction (particularly science fiction) and social theory. While we could say that there are fictions that play more strongly into this new relationship theory, it is clear, even if it is often disavowed, that theory has for a long time been entwined with fiction. In that, we can perhaps say that fiction often makes arguments and claims about experience. And theory, in the sense meant here, is not about laying out a prediction that can be tested with experimentation, rather it is an attempt to narrate empirical experience.

This line of thinking lead to the emergence of a practice that explicitly positioned itself as *theory-fiction*. While earlier writers, such as Bataille, Nietzsche, and Sartre had attempted to use fiction to develop a philosophical project, these works often served as illustrative, where they fiction served the philosophical project. In the 90s, however, theory-fiction, a practice built out of the shaky ontological foundation of postmodernism, attempted to collapse these things into one another. Here, the writing of theory could fictionalize and produce reality. In short, this method was built from the understanding that our ideas about reality, our theories of it, came out of fictions. Fictions we used to act and shape reality. However, for many of theory-fiction's practitioners, the fictions that we lived with in the 90s and even now had not kept pace with our strange new world.

Key to the development of what is considered theory fiction today was, the institutionally disavowed, CCRU (Cybernetic Culture Research Unit), a group of students, lecturers and researchers from the University of Warwick's philosophy department throughout the 90s. More than merely a banal research cluster, CCRU attempted to collapse themselves into an entity that was both singular and multiple, through experimentation with drugs, their interpersonal relationships, music, technology, and writing. They produced enigmatic texts that, while they may have become somewhat kitsch now, at the time turned theory into a fiction of the real. For example, this extract from the text *Swarmachines*

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[6] The is section was adapted from a text original published on *Ark Review* entitled "The Terrifying Ambivalence of Theory-Fiction" .

> There is no doubt anywhere that matters: simply facts. Debate is idiot distraction, humanity is fucked, real machines never closed-up inside an architecture. Schizo-capital fission consists of vectors dividing between two noncommunicating phyla of nonpersonal multiplicity. First pyramid structures control structures: white-clown pixel face, concentrational social segments, EU-2 Integrated history horizon. Second, Jungle-war machines: darkening touch densities, cultural distribution thresholds, intensive now-variation flattened out into ungeometrized periphery.

> No community. No dialectics. No plan for an alternative state. (CCRU in Mackay & Avanessian 2014: 327)

This is madness. But madness that should not be confused with uselessness. And it is especially the case when the object you are trying to describe is, for most of us, incomprehensible. Rather than pretending it was possible to "make sense" of a world in the process of technologically dissolving the boundaries that defined the individual and underpinned the late capitalist culture that persisted after the end of the cold war, with these texts CCRU shifted theory into a fictional register so as to approach a field of research that was both tantalisingly apparent but also beyond the analytical tools of quotidian discourse. That being discourse between individuals as opposed to the immanent discourse of an ever approaching cybernetic future.

The use of theory-fiction by CCRU developed into the politico-philosophical school of accelerationism. This school of thought should not be confused with the traditional leftist view of "sharpening the contradictions", where agitators help capitalism become more oppressive to instigate a revolution. Instead, accelerationism uses an unconventional reading of Marx and Deleuze and Guattari to argue for the harnessing of the capacity of capitalism to dissolve boundaries (for example, the dissolution of national borders through trade) as a way in which to liberate human potential. And perhaps even liberate it from the human form itself. This is where the ambivalence comes in.

A central figure in this development was the philosopher, and CCRU's patriarch, Nick Land. Today, Land is a controversial figure. While his philosophical work and radical anti-humanism were always provocative, since leaving academia, his development of the explicitly racist and sexist neo-reactionary political project, around right accelerationism, is deeply troubling (Noys 2014: 57). There are valid debates to be had about the implications of this for the practice of theory-fiction. It is true that the ontological foundation of this practice, which cast aside some of the more easily

adopted systems of knowledge that are used to conceptualize truth, leaves open the possibility of the pursuit of trajectories such as the one currently pursued by Land. That said, this open possibility is not the same an inbuilt tendency, though it is something to bear in mind.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this capacity is entwined within CCRUs particular manifestation of theory-fiction. The particular instantiation of the practice was, however, instigated by the acceleration of culture that was taking place as the internet began to seep into daily life. While Eshun's work was also connected to these beginnings of the practice, shifting it into sonic fiction and in particular in relation to the music and sound cultures of the black diaspora of the west, now possibilities for sonic/theory- fiction emerged.

A History of Sonic Fiction.

Sonic fiction was a term coin by Kodwo Eshun in the title of his 1998 book *More Brilliant Than The Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction.* The term arose from Eshun's practice itself. Sonic Fiction has no particular manifesto that predates it and thus has no strictly limiting definition, however, in Eshun's work this approach is clearly enunciated. Eshun's book itself is a piece of sonic fiction but so too are the pieces of music and artists it describes, purposely blurring the role of the theorist and the object of research as traditionally understood. An intention of sonic fiction is to disintegrate the dynamic wherein criticism and theory explain music and at the same time cast aside the notion that music should somehow be left to speak for itself. Rather than reduction, by moving beyond these binary positions, Eshun is able to explore them both as being entangled with one another. Thus intensifying relationships that strictly delineated theory or fiction divide would neglect. Eshun writes;

> All these troglodytic homilies are Great British cretinism masquerading as vectors into the Trad Sublime. Since the 80s, the mainstream British music press has turned to Black Music only as a rest and a refuge from the rigorous complexities of white guitar rock. Since in this laughable reversal a lyric always means more than a sound, while only guitars can embody the zeitgeist, the Rhythmachine is locked in a retarded innocence. You can theorize words or style, but analyzing the groove is believed to kill its bodily pleasure, to drain its essence. [...]
>
> In CultStud, TechnoTheory and CyberCulture, those painfully archaic regimes, theory always comes to Music's rescue. The organization of sound is interpreted historically, politically, socially. Like a headmaster, theory teaches today's music a thing or 2 about life. It

> subdues music's ambition, reins it in, restores it to its proper place, reconciles it to its naturally belated fate. (Eshun 1998: -007, -004)

These passages outline a dialectic Eshun sees in the practice of music writing at the end of the 20th century. A dialectic that considers music to be either some unknowable sublime or a riddle for theoretical frameworks to solve, both of which he rejects. Instead, Eshun suggests sonic fiction can do something else by ignoring this pseudo-contradiction;

> In *More Brilliant than the Sun* the opposite happens, for once: music is encouraged in its despotic drive to crumple chronology like an empty bag of crisps, to eclipse reality in its wilful exorbitance, to put out the sun . Here music's mystifying illogicality is not chastised but systematized and intensified - into MythSciences that burst the edge of improbability, incites a proliferating series of mixillogical mathemagics at once maddening and perplexing, alarming, alluring. (-004)

What Eshun is calling for is a reevaluation of theory's contribution to our understanding of music, as providing tools for the discovery of new connections that are not otherwise obvious. At the same music becomes an energetic resource that can invigorate staid systemic theoretical convention. Here theory shifts from a role as gatekeeper, allowing access to the pursuit of an idealized notion of truth, to a tool for the narrative construction of sensation and music becomes the equally vital material. This is not to say Eshun disregards theory that has gone before. This text is saturated with theory, including; the speculative school of critique, and aesthetic practice, afro-futurism (-005), which Eshun then runs through the philosophical tools derived from the philosophies of difference and immanence found in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (53). It is with this theory, horizontally structured with the experience of music itself, that Eshun constructs a work that can produce musical affects and through this make alluring points of argument and exploration.

Eshun's use of style, as much as the content itself, is communicative of analysis. When he constructs a sentence, such as the final one in the quote above, he is communicating as much about the words, as they would be spoken and perceived through audition, as through their semantic meaning. The subtle shift between the American and British spelling of "chastised" and "systematized" prompts the reader to feel a sonic difference. This spelling could be said to shift as they cross Gilroy's 'Black Atlantic' (2007). The site in which contemporary popular music emerged from the capital produced by the enslavement of those with black bodies. The same appeal to the sonic can be said of Eshun's use of composite neologisms such as "MythSciences" and "mixillogical", they provoke enunciation into the air. In a similar vein, to writers such as Deleuze and Guattari, George Bataille and Michel Serres—whose writings seem to want the text to disappear and communicate concepts, not as semantics but as

sensations—Eshun's work in this book forces theory-as-writing into sound. At the same time, it's a particular set of reference that he makes. These are steeped in the thought of recent French philosophy. Adorno receives not a single mention as he is irredeemably in the position of the headmaster. Indeed, we can see a refusal, for conceptual reasons, to accept the premise of many of the contradictions presented by Adorno and his ilk in this field, in a similar vein to the rejection of Marxist contradiction found in Anti-Oedipus (2013a 177).

For those looking for a social scientific appraisal of the cultural impact of music produced by the black diaspora, this text appears to be of no help. However, at the same time, it is performing a right of refusal that is perhaps more informative. In declaring its object of study as myth, science, math, magic, and fiction, it rejects modes of investigation that have only recently opened sufficiently to consider such music a serious field of study. Sonic fiction even rejects the serious (or unserious) as a qualification for investigation. Indeed, it can be argued that Eshun's sonic fiction makes a greater use of empiricism than some more conventional methods of data driven inquiry, as sonic fiction makes no attempt to reduce this data conventional frames. However, this is not to claim that the practice is in any way objective. In Eshun's work, sonic fiction is a way by which we can drop the pretence of objectivity when addressing affective, aesthetic forms, without becoming enamoured with the symbols of signification (34). It performs a schizoanalytic manoeuvre (26), the sensations of music are a starting point for a complex net of associations and possibilities, not the manifestation of a standard route back to an innate drive under neurotic compression. Instead, for Eshun certain music of the black diaspora builds a future that we can access now (30).

This is exemplified in how Eshun can articulate the implications of the Afrofuturism of Sun Ra. Sun Ra was not only musically innovative in ways that seemed to look far beyond the present, but he added the iconography of a complex intersection of science fiction and Egyptian mythology. Eshun's sonic fictional method allows him to engage with this densely knotted practice and presentation on its own terms, as neither acolyte, nor critic, but still engage with the ideas as ideas, rather than in the condition of the ideas of someone or a particular artist. What some might dismiss as eccentricities, Eshun is able to illustrate as culturally significant. He connects overlapping, but not directly connected, strata, such as; of 60s Marvel comics (85), the civil rights movement (154), the enthralling power of despotism (155) and science fiction (029) to the work of Sun Ra to create a story of 20th century culture that would otherwise be imperceptible. In a manner similar to that of Stewart's atmospheric attunements, discussed in the previous chapter, devised some thirteen years later, Eshun can hang these seemingly incommensurate elements together and hue from them into a sensible narrative. If the historical theory fiction divide had remained in

place, then this narrative would have otherwise remained hidden in the age of third order simulacra.

However, more than simply being a device for complexifying history, Eshun's sonic fiction can reveal some of the cultural forces at play, by way of the creation of concepts. The concept of the Futurhythmachine entangles the machinic unconscious, found in Deleuze and Guattari's Capitalism and Schizophrenia (2013a: 65), with the musical concept of rhythm (also thoroughly explored in A Thousand Plateaus (2013b: 364-365) and places it with a notion of speculation (the future) common to science fiction. This concept, or its variant the more clearly Deleuzian rhythmachine, features throughout the book through which Eshun engages with a variety of artists and practices. These are a retelling of this music through a fictional concept of the futurhythmachine. A concept that can transform the material to which it is attached. Eshun describes the Futurhythmachine thusly;

> At the Century's End, the Futurhythmachine has 2 opposing tendencies, 2 synthetic drives : the Soulful and the Postsoul. But then all music is made of both tendencies running simultaneously at all levels, so you can't merely oppose a humanist r&b with a posthuman Techno. (-006)

Again, we see oppositions proposed, while the notion that their contradictions are irreconcilable, or even in need of reconciliation, is rejected. It is also temporally contingent. These opposing tendencies are what can be seen at the end of the 20th century, not at all times. This machine, at this moment, engages these two opposing tendencies of soulful and 'postsoul'. Roughly speaking, this is a productive characterisation of the debate around the so-called organic nature of music, and whether it is corrupted by computers. However, rather than engaging with the minutiae of this debate he gives these positions characters that underline their similarity. In calling the position that welcomes digital technology to music making 'postsoul', Eshun shows its inherent relation to the soulful, as 'post' is not simply after or against because it describes its contingent past. Today, however, such a debate has largely been filtered out of mainstream discourse. Only in the most neglected corners of the internet will you still find concern about real music being lost to machines. However, this not simply a matter of us simply getting used to the idea. Familiarity has played a part, but rather the postsoul could be considered music's postmodern position. Meaning that with the tools of modernity now applied to music production and consumption, the particularity of that modernity ceases to be. Today you can use a vast sample bank on a laptop and produce a convincing piece for big band or the most minimal techno imaginable. We have vast algorithmic composition tools that can humanize manual input midi data or compose entire pieces based on some abstracted piece of genetic data. This is, however, a description of now as an ossified position, Whereas Eshun's Futurhythmachine

provides us with a capacity to see this as a process. The opposing pulls of the Futurhythmachine still persist with no call for simple resolution, but the clarity of these positions has been obscured by almost two decades of interweaving produced by this tension of apparent contradiction.

One key way in which Eshun is able to intersect philosophy and music comes in the more formal device of repetition. A repetition that, in a Deleuzian sense, is also productive of a difference (2001: 90). This is what he does with the Futurhythmachine. He gives the concept shape by weaving it into the story of 20th century music; lamenting its neglect in the world of jazz following the innovations of the late 60s (001), the potential it has to be utilized in jungle (076), its relationship to military technology in culture (085), and the possibility of radical expansion in an increasingly cybernetic culture (137). Each iteration, inflected with the particular context and increasing familiarity allows us to recognizes the synchronicity of this previously neglected historical and conceptual force. One might say amplifying the micro-politics of music culture.

The style of sonic fiction that Eshun presents is, however, not prescriptive for the practice on the whole. For Eshun's work, delving into the possibilities of sonic Afrofuturism at the dawn of the 21st century, his stylistic approach enhances and reinforces his arguments. However, there are other theory fictional stories to be told, not just of that particular paradigm but others that precede it and those that come after. Those that exist in the virtual and may disappear as the events of the actual cause this realm of experience to mutate. These require other ways of writing, even if they share similar philosophical and political outlooks. This is a practice that looks to place a greater emphasis on particularity while not losing sight of the wider context. That having been said, this is not a practice that can produce universal truths. But this is also not the aim; indeed it may be counter to the ethos of the practice. The unwillingness, and unsuitability, of sonic fiction to insist and fix some sort of ideological, idealist notion of universal truth should not be confused with relativism. Sonic fiction, on the whole, cannot have a universal agenda, but agendas exist in each instantiation of the practice. This idea will be explored further later on in this chapter, in relation to the epistemic value of this practice. To give that discussion appropriate context requires a historical perspective of how this practice has been developed, and how its emergence in the 90s builds upon ideas about sound's mythological potential has a history. A history that was particularly shaped by the development of recording technology. The intention here is not to provide a comprehensive history but instead outline examples which are part of the field from which this thesis draws.

A starting point for sonic fiction could be said to predate Eshun's deployment of the term. In the early 20th Century Futurist composers such as Luigi Russolo, whose *The Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto* (in Cox, Warner 2008: 10) called for a music that would embrace the mechanical cacophony of the modern world to help push society into a mechanized future. The fictional conceit was that such an overt parallel was vital to human progress. However, this notion of releasing a potential future through sounds was in the service of fascism (Noys 2014: 16). This is one potential problem for a sonic fiction that is unaware of its fictional voice. That being a temptation to insist on a universal.

In 1977 the French economist Attali published the original French edition of *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, a polemical narrative that traced music power to predict coming social paradigms through its organization (Attali 1985: 3). In ways similar to Eshun, Attali claimed his work was 'not only to theorize about music but to theorize through music' (4). This work produced some significant but problematic insights that will be engaged in more detail later. For the time being what is important to take from these examples is, that while these works predate the term sonic fiction, they established a precedent for it in the music writing that preceded it.

After Eshun's establishment of this term as a mode of musical inquiry, the practice proliferated and mutated. With Steve Goodman's *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect and the Ecology of Fear* (2009) we saw a variation in the form. While it was not immediately obvious that this work is sonic fiction, the case that it is can, however, be made (Schulze 2013). It not simply that Goodman seeks to construct a particular narrative (a history of vibration). Rather, to go about this, Goodman has employed stylistic features of Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus, with each chapter assigned a year relating to some significant piece of history in the development of sonic warfare within the military entertainment complex (Goodman 2009: 31). This could be argued to become a fictional framing device, placing his investigations within another project of ontology. This allows Goodman to construct a precise argument in this philosophically complex book; when one considers society from a cosmic perspective of vibration and frequency, rather than just volume in relation to human thresholds for pain, the affective administration of fear and control can be uncovered as wells a the possibility for resistance. He becomes a character that would write A Thousand Plateaus of sound.

We can gain a greater insight from *Sonic Warfare* if we identify this work as sonic fiction, rather than simply some form of the philosophy of sound, although these are not exclusive categories. The sonic fictional device allows us to consider the virtual

reality of an ontology of vibration, while at the same time providing a narrative route to the modes of social organization that has revealed it. *Sonic Warfare* approaches the cosmic and political significance of vibration through a historical narrative. Unlike the ambiguous first/second person in Eshun's work, however, this is a clear third person narration. This could be thought of as a standard academic argument. However, the particular ways in which Goodman engages and combines with empirical research, philosophy, academic sound writing, fiction, and myth, is in the service of something that needs to be considered through a fictional lens. This work does not produce a master theory to the exclusion of others. However, particular elements, when taken together, can offer a meaningful description of both the history and future of sonic warfare. Sonic fiction provides an avenue to those capable of recognizing this constellation.

Holger Schulze practices a form of sonic fiction quite distinct from the work of Eshun or Goodman. His approach presents a greater emphasis on academic meta-textuality (2013). The intention is to objectify the researcher as much as the object of research. Schulze draws on the work of Michel Serres whose literary poetic explorations of sensory experience provide both a critique of the limitation produced by reductive rationalism and an argument for the potential of a more holistic and enmeshed engagement with sensation. With this perspective, Schulze is able to chart his own sonic fictional style, one that does not attempt an imitation of the afro-futurism or Deleuzian resources that inspired its originators. At the same time, he also attempts to bridge the gap between the practice and more conventional academic writing.

> This Late Night Show ends with Flying Lotus. You can read the closing credits for A Night School on Sonic Fiction, as the driving beat of the first track, All In, of Flying Lotus' most recent album Until The Quiet Comes plays. A year or so has passed since I wrote the entry paragraph of this text. Our daughter now has a pair of younger twin siblings. Right now I am sitting in a train that brings me from one workshop I gave on the heuristics and the insights of sound studies in Innsbruck, Austria, to a lecture I will give tonight in Munich on the concept of an ontology of vibrational force as proposed by Steve Goodman. (Schulze 2013)

While this may not be as overtly exciting as what we find in Eshun, the potential it suggests, for opening up academic music writing with a fresh approach, is both timely and necessary. Schulze's main contribution in this piece is to argue from the need to expand our epistemic toolbox to encompass the act of creation. In constructing a piece of sonic fiction from sonic experience, we engage in a heuristic practice. This highlights the non-universalist agenda of the practice, asserting the importance of that which is incorrect and incomplete. This also highlights the practices micro-political potential as a heuristic practice does not need to aim for theoretical perfection, but can instead

become deeply enmeshed in the empirical minutiae of a multitude of lived experiences. A vital task, if we are to disentangle subjectivity from the conception of capitalism we have so far outline; something nebulous that relies on its subject management/ oppression of themselves for its reproduction.

Schulze's approach opens up for a sonic fiction that takes the potential of previous examples; the capacity to consider ideas qua ideas, and move this closer to immanent subjectivity. Through this, we can not only to investigate the pieces of the event in question but also the very nature of sensory experience and the persons we construct from it.

The practice's theoretical apparatus has been expanded in Salomé Voegelin' *Sonic Possible Worlds* (2014). This work combines the literary theory interpretation of David K Lewis' possible world theory of modal logic, with the body-based phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This work also dwells in the hinterland space, similar to that of Goodman. It is of a dense theoretical academia, inflected with the lyrical idiosyncrasies that attempt to make the argument more immanent to the reader. Perhaps the most significant contribution of this work to our understanding of sonic fiction comes from the attempt to apply the literary interpretation of a logic theory to sonic experience. In particular, it is the shift from attempting to excavate the intention of a piece of sound and instead using it as the basis of extensionality (52). To explain this capacity of sound she writes;

> Sound does not propose but generates the heard whose fictionality is this not parallel but equivalent: it produces a possible a possible actual fiction rather than a possible parallel fiction and sound as "world creating predicate." Sonic fictions do not propose a bridge between the actual and the possible but make the possibility of actuality apparent, building in the contingent and rickety shape of its own formless form. Thus, the sound artwork as sonic fiction is a phenomenological, a generative fiction, rather than a referential fiction. (51)

This is a remarkably complex idea. However, with careful reading, it provides an important theoretical underpinning to the practice of sonic fiction, through which the insistence that listening to sound is a productive activity in a concrete sense. This implies that experiencing sound produces something new rather than simply enunciating something that has already been contrived. This shift in the role of the critic or theorist, from revealing the truth to engaging in world creation is of great importance for the development of the tools necessary to move beyond the various impasses mentioned in previous chapters. This may present a way to refuse the contradictions that exist between oppressive modes of cultural production and the oppressive tendencies of prescriptive emancipatory politics.

Recent publications, such as Daniela Cascella's *F.M.R.L* (2015) and Joanna Demers *Drone and Apocalypse* (2015) seem to apply sonic fictional techniques to sound and musical inquiry, in a way that is less self-conscious of the novelty of the practice. However, the reasons for this are different in each of these cases. Cascella's book is enmeshed in the tradition that overlaps the radical academia, which underpins Eshun's work, that being a style of totally subjective experiential art writing. A practice that does not so much reject the more stale convention of safely couched academia, as ignores them while in the pursuit of communicating sensation. Here we can see the stylistic hallmarks of traditional sonic fiction, with a debt to the likes of Bataille and perhaps Serres, as the style attempts to evoke empathy and sensation as the first step in pursuit of sharing ideas. In the following passage from Cascella, we can see how it is the particularity of a sound experience that becomes the starting point;

> Grandmother did not go to school, she could not read. She did sing.
> Out of the cave at the back of the house in the mountains, that herself
> and my grandfather used as a cellar for bread, meat, cheese and
> firewood, I recall her lullabies (Cascella 2015: 35-36).

This passage is an example of clear attempts to make the writing disappear in favour of a non-semantic mode of communication. This is a contemporary work that was nurtured in the same intellectual environment as Eshun, whom she references directly in the selected bibliography.

However, in the case of Demers work, this disciplinary lineage is missing. Demers' work takes the form of an exhibition catalogue for a retrospective 20th and early 21st-century drone based sound art held to 200 years in the future. Specifically, this exhibition is viewed through the lens of texts written by a long dead fictional artist named Cynthia Wey, a character of Demers' invention. This work, while certainly experimental for traditional academic publishing, is far less daring then many other works that engage with sonic fictional practice. Demers makes no reference to Eshun or Goodman in her book, despite the obvious relevance that Goodman's work on vibration and fear would have to a book that explores drone, as there are few other forms that foreground vibration as much. That being said, this shows that Eshun is not alone in the field, and despite being well respected for a remarkable body of work, it is still possible for others to pursue similar goals without noticing all that has gone before. However, such work appearing outside of this obscure discipline's particular enclave belies the fact that there is a frustration that appears to be experienced by many who work between musicology and cultural studies and perhaps in the humanities more generally. That being the limitation of an artificially competitive research environment that works counter to the kinds of practices that can most incisively investigate our experience.

A specific example of this frustration in relation to music can be seen in the work of Kassabian. In *Ubiquitous Listening*, she describes the inherent contradiction in asking subjects to describe their experience of media they were not necessarily meant, or even capable, of noticing. This clear logical contradiction, while it applies to many of the particularities of digital and networked media, points to a fundamental problem for the study of all cultural production. This applies especially to those that are produced under technologically advanced capitalism. While this may seem to be an ontological problem, it is exacerbated as research is directed away from these areas in favour those that are more easily comprehensible. This point is raised by Alexander Weheliye in *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (2005), in which he identifies the apparent conflict that exists in a professional academic study of cultural practices, the logic of which cannot easily be made to conform to the discourses of which academic investigation (199).

Weheliye goes on to cite Eshun's development of sonic fiction (202) as an attempt to question and move beyond the status quo. But at the same time, one can get the sense that Weheliye sees this as an outlier in the increasingly professionalized world of humanities academia. It should also be noted that Weheliye's book is now more than a decade old. In the context of the post-financial crisis environment, with budget cuts across higher education especially in the humanities, and the reconceptualization of student as consumer, the incentives to 'toe-the-line' could be said to have increased. However, it could also be argued that total lack of security, even for the most diligent of producers of "impactful" output, may turn out to be freeing. The incentives to explore knowledge on its own terms rather than within institutional frames could be just as strong since neither can reliably be said to provide the resources necessary for the reproduction of life.

With this overview of the literature and philosophical backing that underpins the methodology of sonic fiction, it is now possible to more specifically consider what it brings to this thesis. This will require a close examination of its approach to epistemology and the specific form it takes in this thesis.

Sonic Fiction as an Epistemic Tool.

With this contextual understanding established we can move on to discuss what epistemic tools sonic fiction brings to this thesis. Some of this has been mentioned so far, particularly in reference to Eshun and Schulze, and will be further developed in this section. As has been argued so far, sonic fiction as a practice was born out of a particular set of methodological concerns. Namely a frustration that theory attempted to aggressively define music within pre-existing concepts that were often a bad fit, while other approaches seemed to abandon the notion of music analysis altogether, in

favour of a mystical understanding of music's ineffability. Sonic fiction rejected the conflict between these positions. As a practice, it recognizes both the impulse to theorize and the impulse to claim music is inexplicable, and rather than struggling between these potions uses this tension as productive resource. A resource that shall be argued here to have a potential for expanding the epistemology of music.

Within this thesis certain limitations are unavoidable. Particular conventions need to be observed if this piece of work is to meet the criteria of qualification. That being said other conventions need to be pushed if the arguments of this thesis are to be effectively advanced. As has already been mention this thesis has two distinct but intertwined threads that run through it. The first is an engagement with an established debate over the relationship between popular music and capitalism, and whether this relationship can be reconfigured to be emancipatory rather than oppressive. The second thread problematizes the previous approaches to this debate by exploring the relationship between music, theory and fiction. Engagement with this second thread has required careful consideration of the methodological approach to this field and its epistemic implications.

Indeed, with the claim that what this practice produces is in some way a fiction the position of the writer is somehow dislocated from the flesh and blood human created the text. In short, we have to address the idea of writer-as-persona. A construct or character that the reader needs to be aware of as such a being is partial or incomplete. To a certain extent such a being is constituted by the subject, it writes about, which in some way may offer an opportunity to critique the position of the researcher while still offering up new ideas. In *More Brilliant Than The Sun*, Eshun does this by adopting or drawing on, a persona radically at odds with the image of the Oxbridge scholar that his biography declares him to be. By occupying this space, a sort of betweenness, he is perfectly placed to critique a range of perspectives on music while offering something new.

This may be a way through a persistent problem for a field that seeks to critique the general experience of media that largely goes unnoticed. That being, as mentioned by Kassabian (2013: 116), the position of the researcher. To position oneself, so as to say something (in this case about popular music) that seems relatively benign but is in need of urgent critique, places you into an outside position. However, this is a particular kind of outside position as it has been negatively defined by the object of research. The existence of this position relies on the object it is against. Thus such a position, if it has an imperative to reproduce itself is incapable of moving beyond the status quo that established the position in the first place. This is a hierarchical virus, where the theorist's position is produced and reproduced by feeding on the object, which in this case is popular music and the oppression of people entangled in their enjoyment of it. This perpetuates the myth that the observer is somehow objective and

unaffected by the direction of their attention. That to attend to the attention of others is somewhat parasitic.

This awareness is largely and perhaps unsurprisingly absent from Adorno's work on the political consequences of particular forms of cultural production. As a result, by the 1980s, in the work of Frith (1988) we see a determined effort to backtrack and compensate from such clumsy universalism. This has gone on to characterize much of the academic study of popular music. On the one hand, it has made the discussion of popular music, as something ethico-aesthetic, apolitical (Goodman 2010: 17). While on the other hand, attempts to re-politicize the discussion are steeped in a now defensive political tradition. A tradition that ends up reproducing the same problematic elements found in Adorno's work, as well as new problematics resulting from its anachronism (Weheliye 2005: 200). This thesis seeks to provide ways beyond this problem through its engagement with sonic fiction.

A clear illustration of the mechanics of this problem can be found in the work of feminist theorist Sara Ahmed. In her essay, "Happy Objects" Ahmed illustrates the need for a distinction between an object and the affect a subject may have associated with it (2010: 40). She offers a concrete example from Nietzsche, of associating a nail with pain, following an experience where a nail is stepped on (presumably with bare feet). Ahmed argues there is a tendency to then retroactively assign to the nail the role of 'feeling-cause' (ibid). This can be helpful because it allows you to construct the 'anticipatory causality' manifest as a fear of nails, thus modifying your behaviour to avoid stepping on them. This helps you to avoid pain. However, this is at the same time a misappropriation for, as helpful as it may be to think the nail is not the cause of pain because the cause of the pain was the act of stepping on it, not the nail per se. If we allow ourselves to believe that nails are the cause of pain, without realizing that this is only the case in particular circumstances, then we may well be precluded from building anything with nails.

It is with this frame that Ahmed critiques the 'anticipatory causality' that allows particular people to be dismissed as 'feminist Kill-joys'. The feeling of having some form of joy interfered with by another, results in the bad feeling-cause being assigned to those that have criticized the joy. They are now the 'Kill-joy'. This reflexive response derived from associating the affective experience is defensive and short-sighted. It prevents the reflective task that would question the validity or ethical culpability of the 'joy' under dispute. Perhaps this is a joy that should be killed (50).

Bearing this in mind, the simple application of this to the study of mass cultural production such as popular music is also a problematic one. It could be imagined that one could apply this principle to Adorno's work, to explain the reflexive response that rejects his point of view. But this does not hold up under sustained analysis. While to some extent this dynamic may be taking place, those who occupy the position of

cultural critic have incorrectly identified themselves as the nail in the metaphor above. It is the formation of their position that is the affective feeling cause, not the actions they preform from it. To explain this, the very role of critic implies that the opinion is allowed to be heard in the dominant discourse. Perhaps dismissed, but that is a choice made within the discursive structures of the culture. The work of the critic may be impotent regarding changing the status quo, but their ability and right to speak are actually, as opposed to merely officially, recognized. This, in the first instance, is a privilege, to say nothing of the material circumstances that are often associated with reaching such a position. Once we can describe the position as such, the capacity to consider it impartial or disinterested collapses. This is a particular position with infractions on it agency, desires, and interests. And, to return to the idea in the paragraph above, there is agency and perhaps a joy that is produced in deciding and executing a skillful and abstruse critique of mass cultural norms[7].

This is a concern for writing a thesis such as this. The impetus and opportunity I have to study this intersection of popular music, capitalism, and subjectivity, and whatever 'feeling-causes' other researchers or I may claim that it produces, can not be presented as objective. This is because to do so fails to take into account the position of the observer. Sonic fiction provides a way to address this. As mentioned earlier sonic fiction places emphasis on the observer/critic/theorist as persona, which can productively problematize this position. This is more than simply applying a disclaimer that seeks to overcome some difficulty but an opportunity to expand the epistemic field, as the attempt to reveal this phenomenon is caught in the process of becoming particular. This has required the development of a methodology that does not presume the problems these issues cause for some notion of objectivity are 'kill-joys' to a universalist project. A project that would presume to somehow resolve popular the relationship between popular music and capitalism. Instead, the methodology need to help in questioning the joy that such a project would produce. Of particular importance to this aim is the contribution Schulze makes in framing sonic fiction as a heuristic practice. This is because, in opening up to the notion of the observer/critic/theorist as a persona, we can more readily recognize the flaws of this position. Not to preempt these errors but to work through them as the shape the knowledge they produce. Heuristic sonic fiction engages in a practice of creation. Not a relativist, constructionist one, but one born out of what is already there, in sound and its presentation and the ways in which meaning is constructed from it. Sonic fiction reveals through the fact of its imperfection.

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[7] This subject is discussed in more detail in the recent work of Alfie Bown (2015).

A Sonic Fiction Methodology.

As has been explored so far, sonic fiction is a practice that is at once indebted to and antagonistic towards the academic humanities. While this tension is both rich and exciting to explore, to use this practice in the context of a Ph.D thesis has required some buttressing. That is what the text up to and including this section has attempted to provide. From the next section onward until the final conclusion the voice of this thesis will switch and enter a sonic fiction. However, unlike Eshun's deployment of the practice, the narrator the next section is not entirely aware that they are constructing a sonic fiction. Or, at the very least, not always self-conscious of this fact.

In Eshun's formulation, sonic fiction was not just a form of writing it was also a form of music creation and of listening. Here, I wish to expand this to a form of reading both text and of "reading" music and musical experience. Like the practice of theory-fiction, sonic fiction attempts to provide a description of reality in such a way as to accentuate the relevance of some particular connections. That is what will be attempted in the next part this thesis; to produce a text to be read as a sonic fiction. It is not a question of giving a definitive account of the experience of music or the conditions of the culture. Rather, in the first instance, it is about illustrating how, in the words of Kathleen Stewart, seemingly disparate elements do if fact hangs together. In the second instance, with the framing devices of fiction, the relationships between these elements are given new significance and intensified through narration. It is through this intensification that the critical potential of sonic fiction emerges.

What follows is an account of the various methodological considerations that have fed into this understanding of sonic fiction and the imperative to produce it. Additional, there is a description of how the instantiations of sonic fiction in next section operates.

Sonic Fiction: A Method.

Sonic fiction can be thought of as a way in which the central assertion of poststructuralism can be addressed. Namely, if one is in a position to ask questions, which are critical about the backing track to the lives of millions of people, the act of asking the question itself must also be questioned. At the same time, however, this act of self-reflection should not be thought of as an impediment to be contained and accounted for but rather as an opportunity to positively intervene across a variety of discourses. This, arguably, is the purpose of research in the humanities today, which is certainly a conclusion reached by Weheliye, through Brian Massumi;

> Critical thinking disavows its own inventiveness as much as possible. Because it sees itself as uncovering something it claims was hidden or as debunking something it desires to subtract from the world, it clings to a basically descriptive and justificatory modus operandi... The balance has to shift to affirmative methods: techniques which embrace their own inventiveness and are not afraid to own up to the fact that they add (if so meagerly) to reality (Massumi in Weheliye 2005: 208)

This is what sonic fictions have the capacity to do. Rather than confusing what is visible from the researcher's position with universal truth, the recognition of the limitations of this position produces more reality. To this end, the sonic fiction section of this thesis is an attempt to construct an argument from a particular set of, to use Voegelin's term, 'actual fictions'. These draw on the experiences of a particular subject. Not only of sound but, also, the ways in which sound can be understood as meaningful and what can be done with these meanings.

Given all that has been discussed so far (capitalism, popular music and cultural production as tools for liberation or oppression, the forces that form subjectivity, and the validity of particular subject positions), it perhaps can go without saying that, within this thesis, engagement with sonic fiction is geared to emphasize a political dimension. In particular, the field that could be termed micro-politics (Guattari, Lotringer 2009: 54). This term here is taken to refer to the way in which large scale structures of power manifest as they are suffused throughout culture in small scale informal interactions. Popular music, with its connection to commerce, technology and the emotional lives of subjects, can provide unique access to this micro-political field. That being said, the complexities of the micropolitics of popular music can be difficult to articulate through conventional analysis (arguing there is something innately political about a harmonic progression, lyrical idea, or artist/consumer relationship). Sonic fiction, with its capacity for both problematizing the position of the observer and meeting music on terms that seek to intensify the experience rather than reduce it, is cable of amplifying these micro-political relationships to the level of audibility. This process of amplification requires certain other methodological considerations when moving it to an academic setting.

The sonic fictions section of this thesis should be considered as overt narration. That said, this narration is not always aware that it is narration. And if it is, it may be only conscious of certain levels of narration. Here the understanding of theory, when used to describe cultural theory, is as a narrative enunciation to produce *percepts* and *affects* relating to *concepts* and *functions* as empirically experienced. These terms are used in reference to their application in Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* (2011: 5). In this analysis philosophy deals in the creation of concepts (ibid), science in the production and application of functions (33) and art in the production of percepts

and affects (24). These are not strictly delimited field as anyone engaged in any of these activities may have to act as a philosopher, scientist or artist to obtain the resource they need for their pursuit. What this illustrates is the wherewithal required for cultural studies to reach the critical resources that Massumi, Weheliye, Voegelin, and Eshun wish for it, when engaging with cultural production as it is experienced. Rather than asserting the capacity to uncover the truth, what is required is the capacity to straddle the diverse fields that have been falsely separated. This is exactly what was practiced by Eshun. At the same time, this is a heuristic pursuit and as such cannot make claims of certainty. The claims it makes are that of fiction and persuasion through ethos, pathos, and logos distributed through an equilibrium that reflects a lived experience. In short, this is the start of an ethical negotiation rather than a list of prescriptions. This is what is required when engaging in a micro-political project, as such a project if it is immovable and unresponsive, is easily defeated. Thus, micro-politics should perhaps be instead thought of as a project of ethics that recognizes the empirical reality of a world characterized by asymmetrical power relations.

Voice and Style.

When it comes to my deployment of this methodological practice, I am not able to arbitrarily adopt any of the stylistic approaches that have come before. These are the styles and thought modes of others, occupying and critiquing different positions. To emulate them would be an act of crass appropriation, rendering any ethico-methodological point that can be made through the practice moot. Further to this one imperative that Holger Schulze sees as a strength of this practice is the notion that sonic fiction is a specific and individual practice;

> [T]his is the value of such specific and individual practices – in writing sonic fictions, epistemological appreciation is being granted, above all, to individual articulations of sensory and sonic experiences. They are not arbitrary or superfluous; they are specific and absolutely necessary as reference. (Schulze 2013)

Sonic fiction requires specificity. Absolute universals are not the goal. The goal is to occupy that space that fiction often does, one of singularity, where particulars and universals are not held above one another but held in tension (Weheliye 2005: 206-207). As such, new tools need to be developed to explore the present singularity.

The specificity that this thesis explores is a concern born out of two intellectual traditions. Frankfurtian critical theory and Deleuzian post-structuralist theory. Where critical theory attempted to provide a rational universal analysis of the influence of cultural production in social domination, the far more granular approach of Deleuzian

theory sought to unpack even the concept of libidinal desire. The latter has allowed for a more optimistic appraisal of cultural production as a space for potential intersubjective development (Gilbert & Pearson 1999: 148). While, on the other hand, proponents of the former have produced valid critiques of the latter approach that it can result in something apolitical. The narrative of the sonic fiction section of this thesis is an oblique route through this conflict. It charts an attempt, by a character who considers himself to be a qualified critic of culture, at a universalist critique of popular music in the vein of critical theory. However, this is taking place an environment in which sustaining this perspective is unsustainable, not least due to the contribution of Deleuzian theory and analysis. Thus as the attempt progresses, it gradually begins to disprove many of the motivating assertions that instigated it. By the end, we have reached a point where some possibility popular music is recognized, but this is not a utopian view. What is arrived at is the beginning of a perpetual project of an ethics of popular music.

Between these chapters, there are accounts of moments of musical experience that being to complexify the view of the narrator. Moments that could be characterized as musical instantiation. Moments when a collision of music, thought and life, challenge many of the assumptions of the critic position and allow for an opening to the possibility of different lines of flight. This is a sonic fiction that considers the effect of the experience of music as something that can shift the perspective of the theorist.

An additional consideration is how fiction hangs in the constellation described so far. The sonic fiction of Eshun and Goodman was written to explore a particular musical paradigm, that of collectively experienced dance music, to characterize the musical experience of the very late 20th century and early 21st. To do so, they looked back to science fiction of the 1960s to 1980s, to authors such as Philip K. Dick and William Gibson. Works that more than anything explored the concepts that spiral out from the ways in which technology affects our lives. This is an approach that was suited to a particular cultural milieu. One that had long been on the horizon but only belatedly has been able to be presented in mainstream discourse.

In his 1971 essay 'Fictions of Every Kind', JG Ballard disparages the neglect that of science fiction in favour of so called serious fiction in mainstream discourse. Ballard argues that our society was in desperate need of a science fiction that would help us to understand what was and is now happening in the present moment. He writes;

> In essence, science fiction is a response to science and technology as perceived by the inhabitants of the consumer goods society, and recognizes that the role of the writer today has totally changed. [...] To survive, he must become far more analytic, approaching his subject matter like a scientist or engineer. If he is to produce fiction at all, he must out-imagine everyone else... (Ballard 1971)

This was the paradigm under which writers such as Dick and Gibson operated and from which late Eshun and Goodman drew their inspiration. The pre-emption of certain pieces of science fiction, despite the inherent ability for this form to also offer a critique of its present, often meant that the circumstances of its direct application appear sometime after their original publication. Additionally, whatever predictive power they may have had, also attenuates of over a longer time line. The paradigm that Eshun and Goodman operated under, and from which they drew their data, was one that recognized immense technological change as being still something of a novelty. This is something that came with the capacity to imagine sprawling utopias and dystopias, where everything could vibrate, flow and flux. That is not what we live under today.

As has been discussed so far, Fisher's coinage *boring dystopia,* is perhaps an apposite summary of the contemporary conditions, particularly in the UK. This may well also be the case elsewhere. The characteristics of *boring dystopia* include; persistent neoliberalism pushing to greater economic and ecological disaster, asymmetric political violence that both terrifies and numbs the empathic capacity of the population, entertainment culture that is compressed into the uneasy results of rapid technological advancement coming into conflict with the legal property structures of market capitalism. All of which limit the scope and imagination to think that any of this can be changed. Most interesting perhaps is that we are still undergoing a period of rapid technological change only now this has become a banal norm. While such a period was predicted by the likes of Ballard, the notion that it would be so oppressively boring was perhaps harder to accurately foresee.

To develop the tools to write a sonic fiction of *boring dystopia* requires, in the first instance, looking to science fiction that describes the milieu and diagnoses the underlying pathologies therein. As well as perhaps to suggest where we may find the hints of some tentative remedies. For this, there can be few better examples than *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace. Exactly how this text has influenced the sonic fiction of this thesis shall be explored in detail in a chapter that examines the position of Wallace in detail and the contribution his work makes in charting a route through this complex field.

Over the course of this chapter, we have seen how sonic fiction has developed as a practice capable of providing the epistemic resources that will allow this thesis to chart a course through the complex intersections of the fields explored the preceding chapters. This includes; shifting the relationship of cultural theory to popular music from a hierarchical imposition one of greater mutuality, an opportunity to question the role of the theorist in the analysis of cultural production, and engagement with a rich tradition of theory-fiction experimentation. Also this it has provided a methodological narrative for the third section of the thesis, which is a sustained engagement with the practice of sonic fiction as a way in which to develop new theoretical perspectives on

the analysis of the contemporary relationship between the experience popular music and capitalism. Additionally, it also allows music to have a formative role in this process.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The next section is *A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia*. It is comprised of five conceptual chapters that explore the relationship between capitalism popular music and subjective experience through a particular concept. These are interrupted by six extended explorations of particular musical experience under the conditions of *boring dystopia* and three chapters that outline three major theoretical positions. For the sake of clarity, it is worth stating explicitly the perspectives of the narrators in each these levels of text. In the conceptual and experiential chapters, the narrator is not explicitly aware that they are engaged in the production of sonic fiction. Instead, these texts are attempts to recount and theorize from experience. The conceptual chapters are *Attention, Complicity, Catharsis, Home,* and *Conjunction*, with the more experiential pieces linking between these notions.

The narrator of the three position chapters, which mark each of the moments of this sonic fiction, on the other hand, is aware of the sonic fictional construct and indeed comments upon each position in relation to the practice of sonic fiction out lined so far. However, unlike the text you are reading now,   these sections are aware they are contained within a Ph.D. These positions are that of the novelist David Foster Wallace, whose science fiction novel *Infinite Jest* is arguably a piece that has most fully, if unknowingly, described the subjective experience of boring dystopia; the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, in particular their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project, which informed the theoretical structure of theory-fiction in general. Finally we arrive at a sonic fiction reading of the work of Theodor Adorno, who produced one of the most influential and problematic radical political critiques of popular music.

A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia.

A Science Fiction: **Wallace**.

> Hal lncandenza, though he has no idea yet of why his father really put his head in a specially-dickied microwave in the Year of the Trial-Size Dove Bar, is pretty sure that it wasn't because of standard U.S. anhedonia. Hal himself hasn't had a bona fide intensity-of-interior-life-type emotion since he was tiny; he finds terms like joie and value to be like so many variables in rarified equations, and he can manipulate them well enough to satisfy everyone but himself that he's in there, inside his own hull, as a human being—but in fact he's far more robotic than John [no relation] Wayne. One of his troubles with his Moms is the fact that Avril lncandenza believes she knows him inside and out as a human being, and an internally worthy one at that, when in fact inside Hal there's pretty much nothing at all, he knows. His Moms Avril hears her own echoes inside him and thinks what she hears is him, and this makes Hal feel the one thing he feels to the limit, lately: he is lonely.
>
> It's of some interest that the lively arts of the millennial U.S.A. treat anhedonia and internal emptiness as hip and cool. It's maybe the vestiges of the Romantic glorification of *Weltschmerz*, which means world-weariness or hip ennui. Maybe it's the fact that most of the arts here are produced by world-weary and sophisticated older people and then consumed by younger people who not only consume art but study it for clues on how to be cool, hip—and keep in mind that, for kids and younger people, to be hip and cool is the same as to be admired and accepted and included and so Unalone. Forget so-called peer-pressure. It's more like peer-*hunger*. No? We enter a spiritual puberty where we snap to the fact that the great transcendent horror is loneliness, excluded encagement in the self. Once we've hit this age, we will now give or take anything, wear any mask, to fit, be part-of, not be Alone, we young. The U.S. arts are our guide to inclusion. A how-to. We are shown how to fashion masks of ennui and jaded irony at a young age where the face is fictile enough to assume the shape of whatever it wears. And then it's stuck there, the weary cynicism that saves us from gooey sentiment and unsophisticated naïveté. Sentiment equals naïveté on this continent (at least since the Reconfiguration). One of the things sophisticated viewers have always liked about J. o. lncandenza's *The American Century as Seen Through a Brick* is its unsubtle thesis that naïveté is the last true terrible sin in the theology of millennial America.
> (Wallace 2007: 694)

In 1997, David Foster Wallace produced a theory-fiction of *boring dystopia,* with *Infinite Jest;* a science fiction novel that placed the subjective experience of loneliness, sadness and boredom at the centre of an exploration of a late capitalist society, and its technologies, long after the end of history.

Theory-fiction has drawn heavily on science fiction writers such as Gibson, Dick and Ballard. Authors for whom science fiction was an avenue to explore new uncharted possibilities emerging in late modernity. While much of this work was often focused on the dark side of these developments, there was often a sense of excitement about the

possibilities of the near future. A certain jouissance. Today, however, many things that once seemed at the edge of possibility have come to pass; formed in the milieu of neoliberal capitalism. In addition to some of the various forms of oppression described by Deleuze in his 'Postscript on Societies of Control' (1992), another outcome of this has been to produce a future characterized by disappointment and boredom.

With this being the case, the various fields that would go into producing contemporary sonic fiction and the theoretical position that have attempted to address these fields in the past, have ended in an impasse. On the one hand, the radical political critique, found in writers like Adorno, who engage with cultural production as a site of struggle, have relied too heavily on a conception of subjectivity that is inseparable from capitalism. On the other hand, the imperative to move beyond these conceptions, in Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalytic project, can make political imperatives difficult to articulate, let alone act upon.

Wallace's work collides with and straddles high and popular culture as an integral part of its postmodernist methodology, rather than a stylistic affectation. His most significant work is the encyclopaedic 1996 novel *Infinite Jest*, in which he attempted 'to survey the addictions of an entire culture; from television, to alcohol and to prescribed and non-prescribed pharmaceuticals' (Ward 2011). But the task was not only descriptive, as it sought to use these conditions as a starting point to uncover what ailments these substances and practices were medicating. His conclusion was that the isolation and alienation of living after Fukuyama's end of history (1989), where all that was once meaningful has now been transformed into branding signification, exacerbated the existential loneliness of liberal society in such a way as to undercut any moral superiority it may have previously claimed.

Wallace's work explores the dialectical tension emanating from a contradiction between a desire for romantic, artistic expression, a foundational notion to the notion of the liberal individual, and the postmodern condition that makes such expression technically impossible. As literature scholar Marshall Boswell describes it; 'Wallace himself defines the multiplicity he wants to embody as a joining of "cynicism and naiveté"' (2003: 16). This is an interesting description, because as much as Wallace's approach to his field may be described as complexly dialectical (Smith 2009: 258), the work itself could be better described as a multiplicity. One in which seeming contradictions are shown to not only coexist but to actively prevent the negation they appear to demand. This establishes an understanding of subjectivity, as has also been produced by writers such as Pynchon and Kraus, amongst others, that is more complex than is permissible in bourgeois late capitalist society. An understanding of subjectivity as something that is at once fractured, dissonant and incomplete while it is simultaneously contingent on its milieu for this constitution.

In this chapter, *Infinite Jest* shall be explored as a resource for the construction of a contemporary sonic fiction, and as suggesting a possible route through the impasse of theory in addressing the experience of cultural production. This will engage with how the novel offers up cultural critique through its narrative, its use of narration and its use of critical theory.

The Conceptual Tools of Infinite Jest[8].

The contemporary paradigm for popular music is as a form of ubiquitous media, in a milieu that could be described as boring-capitalist-dystopia. This precise combination of elements is clearly enunciated in *Infinite Jest*. However, this novel goes further still. While many works of science fiction have such settings, Wallace attempts a microscopic investigation of various subjective experiences within such an environment. These range from those who are supposedly imbued with sufficient social status to allow them to enter into the culture's dominant discourse (as represented in the associated the tennis academy) to those who have experienced the various sorts of trauma that would cause them to fall out of this discourse (in the halfway house). He also represents those whom, in the words of Franco Berardi (2012: 159), have a more ironic position to the cultural discourse, with the Quebecois separatists (the A.F.R.). The A.F.R. operate from a position that holds that one's relationship to the discursive structure of the status quo is of no particular consequence. The separatists do not attempt to play the game of power that surrounds them. Instead, they expect nothing from the systems that power has constructed and give nothing to it either.

The students of the tennis academy receive training in their sport but also in academics. A minority will go on to what they call 'the Show' (Wallace 2007: 53); to play professionally and thus be subject to all sorts of media attention, even in a relative minority sport. The rest are likely to be able to win sports scholarships to universities that would allow them to enter the profession of bourgeois society, without the overly inhibiting levels of debt. However, this plan to become a valid citizen of the society and a participant in the discourse appears to be inherently flawed. For those that attain the level of "the Show", such a position has limitations imposed by virtue of the fixed definition by the culture. An example of this is Hal's oldest brother Orin. Orin lacked the aptitude as a tennis player for anything more than a sports scholarship but ends up serendipitously discovering a talent for the position of punter in American football that enables him to become a professional. However, none of this means Orin has the freedom to express anything in particular. Early in the book, in a section that begins with Orini saying 'I hate this' (65), we find him engaged in a highly technical and

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[8] For those unfamiliar with the novel, there is a summary of it in Appendix 1.

dangerous aerial marketing spectacle. One so dangerous he fears it may break his leg (66), which would cast him out of "the Show". With this, it is clear that "the Show" is just what the nickname describes, a vehicle of display, that is to be controlled by the highest bidder. Any meaning that could have been derived from the heights of physicality required to partake in it, has been collapsed within its form.

Though it is not just sport that receives such critique. Avril, Hal, Mario and Orin's mother, the widow of the academy's founder and the head of academic affairs, serves as a way to critique the composition of the discourse itself. She is an eminently qualified grammarian, whose knowledge allows her access to the various 'correct' ways to bring up her children (50). Though below the surface these are problematic. She is trapped within a rule bound obsession that leads to oddities such as Hal recalling his mother, 'alphabetizing cans of soup' (16). She identifies with the structures that are in place to such an extent that she cannot see their limitations. Leading to an odd situation, where some sort of Oedipal tension—as something necessary to the familial structures of the civilization deemed necessary by Freud—is deflected from her children and Avril has an affair with the only student at the academy whose tennis abilities surpass Hal's (552).

This is not to say that Wallace is crassly stating that the relatively privileged denizens of the Tennis Academy are worse off than the recovering addicts who live in the halfway house down the hill. However, to enter mainstream discourse, to be comfortable within its rules and structures, is not an escape from the existential meaninglessness of late capitalism. Indeed, it was engagement with a mainstream discourse that insists upon the possibility of meaning; and inevitably to being frustrated in this desire, that lead to the academic filmmaker Joelle Van Dyne and Professor Geoffrey T. Day becoming addicts in the first place. Only to find in treatment that they are presented with the infuriating axiom 'My Best Thinking Got Me Here' (1026).

Wallace does not seek to downplay trauma, but he also does not present traditional engagement, or intellectual prowess, within the status quo as an affective way out of our impasse. It is only in the terrorist group, the A.F.R., that we see something that that can escape this impasse but this is also deeply flawed. We see this in their criteria for membership, which requires one to have one's legs cripple their legs by jumping across the path of a train in the hope of jumping last and with every intention of landing safely (1060). This is a rejection of the values of a society built upon individual happiness and self-interest. The cause that they fight for is bigger than themselves or indeed bigger than anyone. The flaw, however, as Wallace presents it, is that all meaning is subsumed by the cause. This is why Marathe, a senior member of the A.F.R, feels compelled to betray his comrades to save his wife's life.

This is where we find the contribution of Wallace's science fiction as a resource for a sonic fiction in the present paradigm. Within a media landscape that does so much to ossify the conventional discursive means of resistance—a landscape in which even the notion of revolution has become little more than a mechanism for branding—other means must be sought if we are to overcome the alienating conditions of neoliberal late-capitalism. However, these means will be imperfect, uncomfortable and certainly unsatisfying. But this may be the only way to achieve anything through resistance after the end of dialectical history, in a universe with no moral arc tending towards justice (Coates 2015: 150). Without an external authority, the repercussions of oppression continue to resonate even as they are overcome. What follows is an examination of some of the area's Wallace identifies in the novel as spaces in which such flawed modes of resistance may emerge.

Infinite Jest as an Anti-Oedipal Text.

Reading *Infinite Jest* with Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* exposes what is at stake in our contemporary media-entertainment paradigm. That being that we need to address how desire and lack are formed, and what our relationship is with them. Reading these texts together forms the tools need to produce sonic fiction of boring dystopia. These tools can account for the political imperatives of socio-historical progress, but that allows for the type of complexity we face in the age of third order simulacra. To that end, I propose an anti-oedipal reading of Infinite Jest, derived from the implications of the Lacanian reading of the novel's McGuffin, provided by Marshall Boswell (2003: 128).

At its simplest, this means that reading Wallace in a somewhat unconventional way. Rather than considering him to be illustrating simple points of commonplace existential angst (Moss 2016), it can be argued that his writing works against the sort of fixed psychological structures of human subjectivity that some argue to be innate. This is unconventional because, despite clearly being aware of the various poststructuralist perspectives running through the discourse of the literary world, Wallace's work has been considered by some to contain a thread of conservatism (Flood 2012), in that it longs for some sort of moral clarity. This may to some extent be true but it is an incomplete account. While Wallace's work may suggest a desire for a social order that makes more sense than the world we actually have, this is a desire he is quick to frustrate. When some may run to nostalgia to explain something that has been lost, the pasts that Wallace depicts alongside the science fiction future are rife with their own particular problems.

One important element of world building in the novel is that the narrator is not omniscient. Many facts of the diegesis allude to the third-person voice that constructs

most of the story. On occasion, this voice even takes a subjective position on the matters being discussed and express disinterest, disapproval, enthusiasm or scepticism about the events that the narrative unfolds. This technique is deployed to comic effect but in so doing it highlights the problem of notions such as perfection, or even having the sufficiency of knowledge that is required to be a liberal individual.

This device of uncertain narration provides a look at one of the key tools for the production a sonic fiction that can engage in the contemporary paradigm and navigate the impasse of previous attempts and problematize the position of writer/observer/ critic. However, the way in which this is done requires careful consideration, as it is not as simple as rejecting the authority of this position. Wallace's approach takes this fallibility as a strength for a project of communication. This device undercuts the authority that any 'old certainly' a conservative nostalgic may assert to be necessary, while at the same time recognizing that this loss of certainty can be experienced as an absence. With this formal device, we can see a movement that bears a certain similarity to the notion of Deleuze and Guattari, that the liberation of deterritorialization can produce an angst, as reterritorialization creeps in.

There are some oblique pieces of evidence throughout the novel that suggest Wallace was to some extent familiar the work of Deleuze and Guattari and that it may have been his intention to articulate such ideas. The most direct of these is the reference, provided in the narrative by an unreliable Marxist film scholar called Molly Notkin. While she is being interrogated about the location of *The Entertainment* refers to; M. Gilles Deleuze's posthumous *'Incest and the Life of Death in Capitalist Entertainment..'* (Wallace 2007: 792) Of course no such Deleuze text exists. It is a parody title made up by Wallace, obvious from the formal 'M.' title. But it is a parody that comes out of some specific knowledge that would suggest some familiarity with *Anti-Oedipus*, and in particular, the extended discussion of incest that runs through the second chapter (2013a: 167). Though this would point to some scepticism towards Deleuze's theories, or perhaps an archetypical academic reading of this work. There are many instances like this.

However, these points only stood out when considered with a piece of literary analysis by Marshall Boswell (2003). Many analyses of Wallace's work have pointed to the critique of popular consumer culture, especially in *Infinite Jest,* which tends to be in rather broad terms (Sayers in Boswell 2014: 107) and lead to banal readings of the text as somewhat didactic. Boswell, however, adds considerable nuance in his reading by uncovering the likely theoretical underpinnings for the critique of consumerism and entertainment through the *Infinite Jest* film in the novel.

Boswell argues that one strand of the theoretical work in the novel could be considered as a critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis and the critical theory derived from it. Throughout the novel, the abstruse psychological theories about the damage

wrought upon youths are lampooned. A clear illustration of this can be found with the character Dr. Dolores Rusk, an academic psychologist who is employed by ETA as a counselor for the students. A role at which she is considered by many at ETA to be 'just slightly worse than useless' (Wallace 2007: 437), due to her tendency to relate all concerns to a convoluted understanding of the Oedipus complex (563) and to carry out research in the development of her own 'coaticue complex' (516) theory, about which the quasi-omniscient narrator even has 'No clue' (1036). At the same time, however, this is not a flat out reactionary dismissal of psychology or therapy, in fact, such a position is also mocked as being shallow. A clear example of this is that Orin cannot fathom a deeper connection between his dreams that involve his mother, his estrangement from his mother and his misogynistic compulsion for seducing otherwise happily married new mothers. This may be on account of what we can assume is macho suspicion of therapy, coupled with a suspicion of intellectual pursuits, stemming from his relationship with his mother (983). This, along with other characteristics, goes into framing Orin as being not very bright when it comes to abstract thought.

Surrounding his understanding of Lacan, for Wallace, there is a suspicion of his popularity in the world of humanities academia, which is not reactionary outright. While, as Boswell remarks, Wallace's critique in the novel may be 'viciously funny' (2003: 131)—particularly his critique of the mirror stage theory—it comes from an informed perspective. Indeed, Wallace is sympathetic to elements of the theories discussed. What Wallace objects to is the fixed nature of the damage that causes the neurosis of later life. This is what is at the core of the *samizdat* film *Infinite Jest*. The victims of the film become nearly catatonic messes because the film has seemingly resolved the psychological damage (from the early childhood mirror stage), which all their activities and achievements in life were merely a futile attempt to resolve. This has a particular affinity with Deleuze and Guattari's project in *Anti-Oedipus*. Deleuze and Guattari and Wallace argue that, while of course, the parental relationship is important to later social functioning the extent of this importance has been exaggerated and reinforced by the social structures of bourgeois society. Psychoanalysis has not only described this but then presented this description as if they had discovered some innate elements of the human condition. To a certain extent, it does not matter that the discipline of psychology has been engaged in a project of disproving the conclusions of certain psychoanalytic theories because these theories were only ever describing what the social conditions of capitalism required its subjects to experience as real. Wallace takes this perspective and applies it to cultural production to make the subtle argument that the need you feel to be satiated by entertainments that seem to fix something is real. But it is only real in the social conditions that surround us, that manufacture and direct the lack and the need. At the same time the high art projects (represented in the novel by the rest of Jim Incandenza's filmography) often wilfully ignore the reality of

this need. This is a dialectic in which Wallace is engaged. This is why his anti-Oedipalism is not schizoanalytic. He is looking to resolve a contradiction, rather than move beyond it.

Infinite Jest and Conjunction.

It is difficult to precisely describe what *Infinite Jest* prescribes as a remedy for the malaise of late capitalism media culture long after the end of dialectical history, but perhaps something can be teased out. This point is somewhat oblique, as it is made through the novel's form and structure in relation to the subjects explored, and it is certainly not overtly stated. It is something that is perhaps necessitated by the paradigm Wallace's work describes the one under which we now live. The argument is that making sense of these seemingly incongruous data points as narratives is possible but it is an act of choice, and of remarkable difficulty and importance. There are obvious parallels to Stewart's notion of atmospheric attunements and indeed the principles that underpin sonic fiction and theory fiction. However, this goes past the idea that such work can place things in interesting combinations and turn this into an imperative. This should be the practice of cultural studies, to discover the conjunctions that are shrouded by apparent incongruity.

In the novel, there is an academically defined art film movement, of which the late James Incandenza is a practitioner, called anticonfluentialism or anticonfluential cinema. These are films that resist any attempt to form a coherent narrative in which various strands are resolved. Instead, they prize incoherent narratives and the inconsequentiality of the events depicted. This is taken to the absurd as they sometimes focus more on how the camera lens refracts the light than what the forms in the light represent. This may be a jibe at novels such as those by Pynchon, in which all the elements appear to be moving towards a grand conspiratorial resolution only to ultimately come to nothing or rather nothing that is clear (Pynchon 2006). This could be argued to be one of Pynchon's great themes and most important contributions, that the culturally conditioned need to make sense can become an obsession that forms connections that, while they may exist, ultimately come to nothing. On first reading, *Infinite Jest* appears to be a complex piece of anticonfluntialism. However, on re-reading the opening chapter, the latest on the novel's timeline, new meaningful connections appear. These bridge the gap between the story up to the last page of the novel and the end of its timeline.

Infinite Jest is not the first novel to start at the end of narrative timeline and then retells events up to that point. However, what is interesting is both the density and the complexity that Wallace deploys in this structure. In particular the decision to leave perhaps as much as a third of the book's length in narrative action missing, which can

be reconstructed sufficiently to complete the narrative. Particularly as this would have been a climactic portion. However, it is still experienced as an absence.

This understanding is derived from the analysis of the late information and Internet activist Aaron Swartz, who takes Wallace at his word when he claimed that the book has an ending if one were to follow the convergences that he has laid out[9] (Swartz 2009). Swartz charts the trajectories of these convergences in great detail and in doing so, makes a convincing case that the novel is not a piece of anticonfluential literature, but also not simply the opposite. This is not a piece where, through simply connecting discrete pieces of information the truth emerges, rather only through the complex conjunction of a myriad of elements can one hope to move closer to a notion of the through-line, itself constructed in the conjunction.

The philosophical concept that this hangs on is the synthesis of conjunction as described by Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 93), this described an unconscious process by which subjectivity is produced. The resource for this came through the subject's interaction with their milieu that engenders the two prior syntheses of connection and disjunction. The conjunctive synthesis seems to produce something greater than itself, something noetic, in attempting to resolve the dialectical contradictions of the first two syntheses, a new tension that engenders desiring production and subjectivity. Franco Berardi takes this notion of conjunction even further. His argument is that the logic of semiocapital reduces experience itself from being a complex rhizomorphous conjunction to a network of comparatively simple connections (Berardi 2015b: 15). These connections require that all involved in deciphering their meaning operate within the same rule bound structure of signification, implying an internalization of certain ethics and power relations, and that one does not move beyond this system. Conjunction, comparatively, is a process of the invention that requires no shared familiarity with already contrived systems. Rather 'the exchange of meaning is based on sympathy, the sharing of pathos' (21). This is what Berardi considers see as the threat to aesthetic experience under capitalism[10]. The ability to engage at the level of pathos is diminished in favour of non-creative connection and with this, the possibility of politics and creativity is lost. It is only with conjunction that we can experience 'the pleasure of becoming other, and the adventure of that knowledge is born out of that pleasure' (Berardi 2015b: 14).

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[9]There is an ending as far as I'm concerned. Certain kind of parallel lines are supposed to start converging in such a way that an "end" can be projected by the reader, somewhere beyond the right frame. (Wallace in Swartz 2009)

[10] 'Sensibility is the sense driven creation of conjunctions, and the ability to perceive the meaning of shapes once they emerge from chaos. [...] It occurs because we perceive their aesthetic correspondence, their accordance, and conformity with the expectations of the conscious, sensitive and sensible organism.

[...]

The conjunction is the pleasure of becoming other, and the adventure of that knowledge is born out of that pleasure.' (Berardi 2015b: 13-14)

Infinite Jest makes an attempt to do this formally. Unlike other reverse chronology or non-linear narratives, this novel leaves a huge amount of the necessary information to complete narrative out entirely and the reader must create the conclusion from the trajectories (as something different from clues) set in motion. Not only is this an inventive formal strategy but it is also one that is imbued with the formal qualities of one of the themes of the novel; television, and the manner in which it affects your capacity for choice. The novel becomes like a long running episodic series on television after syndication. You catch it at the end of its run and then the channel starts to shows it again from the beginning in the very next time slot. You are to follow a long and winding narrative but something like the cancelation of the series, or your own waning interest, stops you from seeing the conclusion of the narrative. Many readers do not recognize that the novel only has the appearance of incompleteness (Herb in Swartz 2009, Boswell 2003: 179) and to them it makes an oblique point about the ever-ongoing meaninglessness of contemporary media induced loneliness. However, what the careful reading of Swartz and others has revealed is a text that requires of its readers that they engage with conjunction. To use data points and connect them together, but also to extrapolate from them and in doing so co-create the work in a way that goes beyond the acts of imagination that are customarily part of a reader's world-building. And in so doing question both the narrator's authority in this undertaking and the seeming incongruity of what is presented before you.

This could be considered to be the primary contribution of this work to the development of the contemporary practice of sonic fiction. If, we accept, with Eshun, that sonic fiction should reject both the reductive position that music must speak for itself and also reject the paternal position of theory that leads the listener to what music 'really' means underneath, which at the same time wishes to retain the potential from both perspectives for intensification, then, conjunction may be the tool we need to use. *Infinite Jest* presents the experiences of a culture that is enamoured of entertainment, with a remarkably wide lens. It may be the case that this lens is too wide for everything to be included within it in perfect focus. But what we can see is perhaps enough that we can creatively engage with it, and follow Wallace's intensifying detail and rich descriptions to chart out trajectories. Trajectories that can be traced back to as near as possible to originary causes as possible and then forward to speculate on what possible worlds could be.

Jessie J at the closing of the 2012 London Olympics.

This is an event for television. The people who are here, are here for television. They have their own reasons for attending that are woven into the stories they live by, but if it were not for television, they would not be here. What may appear to them as a personal investment in their own finite future is secondary to the sure up a larger project. This is the end of London's Olympics.

The only way the music can be audible in this stadium is if it distorts. If it is to be heard over the noise of so many ecstatic people, whose cheers alone have raised the volume in the stadium beyond the level of pain to the level of the destruction of the ear, the sound system pushes it beyond any level that would be recognizable as music and add to the destruction.

This is creative destruction though. And what is being created will be produced on television. On television, this volume can be dipped sufficiently, perhaps manually or maybe with a side-chained compressor, so a polite voice of newscasted familiarity can comment on the proceedings. These remarks work from notes, but this still requires some of the skills of an improviser. Skills that guide the uninitiated into the relevance of the images before them, and for the rest provide a seal of approval from the establishment. After all, this is live, and this is history.

A little more than four years earlier, the word was plunged into financial crisis. A crisis so severe, so empirically obvious in it causes that it lead many to speculate that this could have been the end of capitalism. In fact, it was the opposite. In its neoliberal form capitalism's criteria of success is not the generation of widespread wealth, in the style of Keynesian social democracy, it simply has to function better than anything else. This is easy when the reproduction of life is dependent on the creation of abstract financial capital. The markets may fall but capital, at least all the capital required for capital to perform its definitive function, will float. Whether or not this survival mechanism is sustainable is a question that is only of relevance to beings comprised of meat. Or rather, beings willing to concede that they are comprised of meat. To an asignifying semiotic chain in the market, sustainable survival and its antonym are literally meaningless.

Even though this event is not really for them, the audience in the stadium needs to be supported in their enthusiasm. This is accomplished through the strategic deployment of frequency. Their voices dominate the mid-range so the music must occupy the upper and lower extremes. Now it can surround the audience's response and provide a context that is more difficult to assail for any observer still uneasy with

anything resembling a rally. But here is the problem. The kinds of music with a frequency profile designed for this purpose are a niche. Far too niche for such an undertaking, what is called for is pop with its lyric driven mid-frequencies. But in these circumstances, the lyrics can only be understood by the those who already know them. And those who already know them, know them from a context of libidinal enjoyment wherein the semantic meaning can be enhanced or become meaningless.

In September of 2008, a relatively young American author hung himself while his wife was out of the house. She is the artist Karen Green, and he was the author David Foster Wallace. Wallace had battled with depression for many years, and while he had continued to publish stories and essays, he had not published a novel since the late-mid nineties. That work, *Infinite Jest*, was an attempt to explore addiction as it relates to entertainment as medicine in a late capitalist dystopia. At the time of his death, he had been working on the follow up for many years. That novel *The Pale King*, which would be published unfinished in 2011, was set in the mid-1980s, in an IRS tax office in Peoria, Illinois, at the moment that Reaganomics catalyzed the neoliberal revolution of the west.

This is not the opening ceremony in this stadium. The eyes of the world have largely lost interest. The goals here can be more specific, or specifically addressed, or more insularly addressed. You can broadcast a party and that will work perfectly. Some may get the feeling this evening that these revelries are quintessentially British, which will be both correct and not. A face is being put forward, as they so often are in countries defined by nostalgia. Those who wanted to see it could witness only a smile through gritted teeth, desperate that everyone know that they were fine but waiting for everyone to leave.

A year earlier, in a Jobcentre in the north of England, in a town whose glory days as a luxury holiday destination have long since passed, and where nothing had ever come to replace them, a middle aged man sits in for what must have been the umpteenth time, before a much younger advisor. The man, recently laid off, had been a lawyer, though an observer would not be able to say in exactly what capacity. Perhaps he had been in the employ of a firm or the legal department of some other company that needed to downsize or had simply collapsed. The advisor told him that they didn't really have anything for him here, so to keep doing what he was doing.

In the midst of her medley set, Jessie J sings out from the back of a Rolls Royce, part of a motorcade of Rolls Royces, the chorus to her song *Price Tag*;

It's not about the MONEY MONEY MONEY,
We don't need your MONEY MONEY MONEY,
We just want to make the world dance,
Forget about the price tag. (Cornish et al 2011),

This moment could have leant itself to a slue of Žižekian readings. As they are enunciated these lyrics become the big other of 21st century Britain. It tells the public, suffering the effects of post-crisis austerity policies piled upon 30 years of dismantled welfare, that this expensive spectacle was more than worth it. The games had been severely over budget and the injunction at their closing that the money is not of any importance would ring hollow if anyone were to have noticed it.

Two years before his death, Wallace gave a commencement address at Kenyon College. An address that was no doubt experienced as a pinnacle of profundity by many in the room and indeed many who have heard the audio from the day for the first time. But through repetition and the marketing pushes that follow a death of an author, it has been rendered trite. A triteness that even the evidence of the author failing to heed his own advice cannot even fully overcome. The subject of the speech was the difficulty of overcoming the default mechanisms by which we produce meaning from experience. The difficulty for fish in noticing water as water. But there was a clear, desperate insistence not to pretend this was a problem only for others. The main critique was aimed at the reflexive cynicism that, while it may be technically correct, limits the cynic's potential to examine what is really at stake in countless everyday phenomena. This was the biggest challenge Wallace thought the critic needed to be overcome.

One reason that there were no critiques of Jessie J's incongruous lyrics, at that moment, was that these words were irrelevant. To be smarter than the text of a pop song is a skill not of use to anyone. Such an exercise is an attempt to talk about something whilst refusing to recognize what it is. A song is not the instigation of ideology. The time for that has long since passed. To the extent that ideology plays a role it is that of infrastructure that the energy from the song can course along. And that infrastructure itself is built upon something deeper than can be shaken by a pithy examination of irony. That would be the default. It is too easy.

Still, something haunting persists from that night. The question is now where and how to look for it.

Attention.

This wise old whiskery fish swims up to three young fish and goes, "Morning, boys. How's the water?" and swims away; and the three young fish watch him swim away and look at each other and go, "What the fuck is water?" (Wallace 2007: 445).

Attention and Popular music.

Popular music is all around us. That is obviously one of its defining features; it is inherently ubiquitous. Particular pieces of popular music might not often be heard or at all, but some must be near ever-present in our media infused lives for "popular music" to be a meaningful term. While this may seem a banal observation, the consequences of this simple statement are actually something rather complex to comprehend. It could be argued that it is this formal quality of popular music—that it is seemingly everywhere—which is where the source of its social power lies. This does not supplant the importance of sound, however. The musical content, as traditional musicology would understand it, is indeed important as this is material that can trigger intense affective and emotional responses. However, this is due to how this content becomes enmeshed in the myriad of lived experience; particular moments and social norms, which are derived from this ubiquity. When popular music functions it leads to its ubiquity. However, it is important to stress that it is not just that something ubiquitous is "in the zeitgeist", nor is it merely that it can be intrusive, unpleasant or an affective trigger. Rather, the materiality of this particular ubiquitous media has to be considered in a wider way, not only what constitutes 'the sound' but the symbolic and imaginary constructions that accompany and co-constitute the meanings of sound.

Music can become atmospheric in the sense advanced by Stewart (2011). An important aspect of ubiquity, as a constituent of an atmosphere, is that it necessarily becomes the background and as such, it is difficult to distinguish amongst the countless other related and unrelated concurrent phenomena. This results in a more urgent problem; it is difficult to break out of the understanding, that, that which is accepted as the background is anything other than natural or normal. However, this is what the

project of cultural studies entails. Such things are regarded as a simple consequence of modernity rather than a constituting part. This makes paying attention to popular music, as an object of study difficult, especially when attempting to precisely identify it in the midst of our complex sensorial environment. And in the case of popular music, if the subject is not even really a definable specific social object. Instead, the object of research for this chapter could be understood to be the way in which this social object has come to be considered as normal. In short, the experience of living in a world in which popular music is taken for granted. A world in which popular music occupies your attention in such a way as to simultaneously be unnoticed.

This can happen in a number of different ways. We consume music, through the purchase of recordings, in the collective experiences of concerts and festivals or through the association of music with other products. The latter is increasingly the case as in the digital economy the price of the commodity of unsynchronized recorded popular music heads towards zero[11]. However, rather than approaching the idea of the ubiquitousness of popular music from an industrial perspective and in terms of access to consumer attention, the concern of this chapter will be the way in which this particular aspect of an environment affects subjectivity. This follows the work of Anahid Kassabian in *Ubiquitous Listening* (2013), which is to say that this approach is from the perspective of audience reception. The conundrum here for reception analysis is that said audience is rarely even cognisant of itself as such.

This has, of course, been a concern for some time. In his manifesto for the compositional practice of plunderphonia, composer John Oswald argues that the situation facing listeners today is one wherein people are compelled to listen to popular music, whether they desire it or not. Unbidden, it seeps into their consciousness and thus plays some role in the formation of their subjectivity. Oswald writes;

> All popular music is (as is folk music by definition) essentially, if not legally existing in the public domain. Listening to pop music isn't a matter of choice. Asked for or not we're bombarded by it. In its most insidious state, filtered to an incandescent bassline, it seeps through apartment walls and out of the heads of Walkpeople... Difficult to ignore and pointless to imitate: how does one not become a passive recipient? (Oswald 1985).

Oswald highlights something that the rhetoric of technological advancement does not often concede. Indeed more than that, this teleological progress agenda (as a marketplace activity) seems not even to allow such a point of view to be discussed as a part of normal discourse. That point of view being, that by facilitating the choice of consumers to listen to whatever music you want, where and whenever you want, also

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[11] An issue thoroughly examined in *Global Culture Industry The Mediation of Things* (2007) by Scott Lash and Celia Lury.

has an insidious and pernicious side. It is that of allowing the intrusion of whole other sound worlds into consciousness. With something like popular music, the medium itself is well suited to cultural permeation (omnidirectional and subtly synchronizable). Oswald suggests ubiquitous popular music has become normal to such an extent that it is now a cultural expectation. This is something that has only intensified in the last thirty years. Its absence is now what is conspicuous. Oswald argues that, despite the appearance that this dispersal of popular music seems to require the choices of millions of consumers, in reality, the makeup of our sonic atmosphere is largely in the hands of those who control the means of mass production and more importantly its distribution. The assertion that Oswald makes—that while music consumption has been 'democratized' its creation is still tightly controlled, may seem to some to be an out of date concept; disproven by the familiar refrain of the power of 'internet culture'. Technology appears to have triumphed over the gate-keepers.

Advanced production equipment is now relatively cheap, and computing devices are only one, relatively inexpensive or even free (legally or otherwise), software download away from becoming a powerful studio. It seems that the dreams of musical futurists such as Luigi Russolo (in Cox Warner 2010: 10-14) and modernists such as John Cage (ibid: 25-28), for any sound to be readily made and easily, fluidly organized, can now easily be realized (Harper 2011: 5). However, what will be argued in this chapter is that this is, to large extent, only technically true. This freeing of the physical limitations has indeed allowed for the creation of any conceivable sound or organization thereof. But this was always a very particular dream and as such, as an extant practice, it can only be found in the minority of music making situations. Attention to the normative modes of music making, found in the atmospheric pressure of popular music have educated music makers in what is and is not valid forms of expression. They have then educated the software designers in how best to facilitate that mode of expression. The designers, of course, produced their own ideas too, which now feeds into music making.

It was perhaps ever thus that the majority tend toward the normative. For such a view all this seems normal, and not worthy of the attention of critics that seem determined to ruin a good time. Though at the same time, when it comes to the manner in which they can facilitate the accumulation of capital, the products of these mechanisms are seemingly worth the attention of all us. However, the music produced by these tools often takes on a certain sonic and marketing character, one that conforms to previous characteristics, coevolving with technical development. By considering this kind of expression as simply the natural outcome of a set path of human progress, we somewhat unwittingly facilitate the creation of music that adheres to a particular standard. A standard that is embedded within an ideology of professionalism, and which is able to function as a commodity effectively. These tools

are most often put to use in a very specific way, to promote exchanges, which change our relationship to music. This, more than the particular content, is what is at stake when we fail to notice media as bundled up with intention. The epigraph to this chapter, in the form of a seemingly banal parable, is an expression of this notion, that, anything that is truly ubiquitous often becomes difficult to notice at all. These are the grounds that facilitate the formation of subjectivity, an area in part formed by the culture industry. The point of entry for this, however, is attention.

This is where much of traditional critical theory focuses its critique of the power of popular culture. Attention is a general trait of human and non-human behaviour (Ward 2008). It is a response to stimuli both internal and external and to the points of intersection where the distinction between these fields becomes meaningless. With this understanding of the surface level of what attention is, it is easy to see why some control over the direction of attention is an important part of capitalist accumulation, particularly so for the case of cultural production. Of course, this understanding quickly becomes far more complex. The specificity and diversity of the sorts of information the senses can transfer to consciousness, and that conscious can create for itself would be complex enough, even if one were to neglect considerations of temporality and simultaneity. Even more so, if one takes into account the varieties and depths to which any stimulation is cognized. Attention, for an individual, is thus indeterminate, but also always finite. This is particularly the case for humans who are limited by the capacities of their physicality and cognition.

As a finite resource attention is also capable of becoming scarce, and as such has been the subject of some economic thinking to show its relations to both material and libidinal economies. Despite much having been written on attention economics in relation to the media spectacle (Crary 2000, Beller 2006), particularly in film, and, again for film, its philosophical implications for ontology, epistemology and subjectivity (Deleuze 2013) many of the specific questions posed by music—stemming from its particular materiality and ephemerality are yet to have been satisfactorily addressed. This chapter shall go some way to addressing some of these questions, in order to explore the critique of the relationship between popular music and capitalism. In particular, attention should be considered as the start of this discussion, rather than the end. The real work that is to be done should be the analysis of what is what is attending and what is underneath that motivates this attention. This should help to facilitate the difficult task of critiquing something that has becomes accepted as part of the fabric of everyday experience. The precariousness of this, however, is similar to the holding of any position that seeks to challenge hegemonic norms. It is difficult to point out the problems of something that appears to be part of the wallpaper. It is like pointing out the existence of water to fish.

Attention as a concept or capacity has a variety of applications. What it can do, and how it is applied is materially and historically contingent. Of course, people have always had problems concentrating on whatever activity is the 'best' for them to engage in when many of the distractions are more pleasurable. But from the 20th century on, this issue has been complicated by economic concerns that have congealed and become cultural norms. Attention has shifted from a skill or a practice of duty, to be a reified commodity. Since the inception of the culture industry, the creation of products that could capture people's attention has been a concern for the industry. However, by the end of the 20th century, this problem has re-doubled. It was no longer enough to consider the material as the way in which to gain the attention of consumers. But instead, attention itself, and how it operated, became the object that requires examination. From this information, the material would be derived. Jonathan Crary, in his work exploring attention economics in relation to the creation of the spectacle, argues;

> I contend, however, that attention becomes a specifically modern problem only because of the *historical* obliteration of the possibility of thinking the idea of presence in perception; attention will be both a simulation of presence and a makeshift, pragmatic substitute in the fact of its impossibility (Crary 2000: 4).

Crary is describing what he sees as a historically contingent mode of paying attention that he considers to be in no way natural. While of course, it stems from certain physiological conditions, attention has been directed towards specific behavioural manifestations through a complex nexus of technological, economic and social structures. To read this with Adorno, the power that is driving this particular formation of attention is the economic imperative of the valorisation of capital. What seems to have economic value in Crary's argument is attention to spectacle. As a mediated presentation in the particular historical circumstance of industrial mediation, spectacle creates a distance between what is perceived and those perceiving. A distance seemingly formed as a pragmatic necessity, so as not to allow an experience to be exceptionally impactful or affecting. This could perhaps be evidence of how, for Adorno, the simple content of a work of art, no matter how radical or progressive could not be emancipatory as it was already reified by capital (2013: 199). Understanding something mediated as being mediated, is as clear a definition of reification as one could hope for. Certainly, phrases like 'pragmatic substitute' for 'presence in perception' do have Franfautian echoes. These are echoes that reflect and shift the understanding presented by Adorno and Horkheimer into the present; that through capitalist cultural production the "might of industrial" society becomes lodged in the

people's minds and has now shifted into the past tense. A shift where the commodities of the culture industry demand our attention and the capacity of an audience to pay attention to them is expected not requested.

This requires that certain ideas become culturally congealed norms. Under such circumstances, attention works when an audience is no longer made up of people qua people, but people qua consumers. This is not simply a categorization made on behalf of the population but is instead a way of regarding people who already behave in a particular way. It is only in a world where attention to cultural productions is a norm wherein attention proper can be regarded as an economic force in itself rather than as a means through which economic behaviour takes place.

This work on spectacle is an important contribution to the discussion of attention economics. However, such analysis does have limitations. In the contemporary media environment, as to focus on spectacle as the primary means by which to understand attention misses the diffuse nature of its present operation. Writers on spectacle are faced with a problem when attempting to understand the myriad forms that attention can take when engaging with popular music. Ubiquity, banality and indeed an 'atmospheric' capacity are characteristics of popular music consumption that require the sort of theoretical tools that can take non-spectacular experience into account. Tools that can be found in Kassabian's work. However, these need to be put together within an economic frame to gear them for political analysis.

Spectacle has played an important role in the creation of the contemporary popular music phenomenon. This was key to the formation of the current cultural congealment that gives attention its commodity status. However, as argued by Attali, such spectacle belongs to a previous age;

> By the middle of the twentieth century, representation, which created music as an autonomous art, independent of its religious and political usage, was no longer sufficient either to meet the demands of the new solvent consumers of the middle classes or to fulfil the economic requirements of accumulation: *in order to accumulate profit, it became necessary to sell stockpiles of sign production, not simply its spectacle*. This mutation would profoundly transform every individual's relation to music. (Attali 1985: 88)

Attali uses the word 'representation' according to his own musical/historical political-economy vernacular, to refer to a particular point in time. A time where the social organization of power could produce a spectacle that could 'make people believe' (46) in the consensual and just nature of their social organization. Rather than the previous barbaric order of spectacular violence, spectacle here came from the 'absence of violence' and was illustrative and illustrated by 'a harmony in order' (ibid). According to Attali, music in its current most common form (recorded) is the exacerbation of production and consumption (afforded to capitalism by industrial production), which

leaves the localizable spectacle with little capacity to influence, either the material or ideological maintenance of the extant political economy.

Instead, it is the ability to stockpile and repeat music that both allows and is indicative of, a shift in the operation of power from the embodied and identifiable to the diffuse and un-locatable (90). Attali understands these stockpiles of music through a modified use of Marxian economic terms, 'use-time', 'exchange-time'; (use-value, exchange-value). According to Attali's argument, the different qualities of music as a commodity have been given different significance in different historical settings and contexts. However, to understand what is meant by 'use' fully in relation to popular music, a concept of what music can be used for needs to be established and problematized. For this, we need at least some working definition of a use value for popular music, if we are to understand what it is that attention "pays for".

In *Capitalist Realism* (2009), Fisher diagnoses a major problem for emancipatory politics in the west that the population appears to have been swallowed up by the ideological notion that capitalism is somehow synonymous with reality. Fisher's starting point is Thatcher's declaration from the 80s that there is no viable alternative form of social organization than free market capitalism (8). The danger of this pseudo-synonym can be felt with every seemingly wise invocation of how the real world works. Meaning that the cut-throat rationalism of the market must be placed above all other concerns. However, in practice, very few people behave in this way all the time. It is rather the mere belief in this conception of reality that has had the material consequences. Consequences which, for Fisher, have helped to create the anxiety of capitalist realism as being ever present in our lives. Even if it can momentarily be kept at bay, it lurks in the background; an email that needs to be urgently addressed on a Sunday afternoon so you can continue to eat.

If this were the case, capitalist realism would extend to the classroom of public education institutions. Fisher describes an anecdote from his own experience as a teacher, in which one particular student would always either; be wearing headphones without music playing or have the music playing with the headphones dangling from his neck. In either instance, the student reports that he cannot hear the music. It is, as Fisher interprets, for constant easy access to the '*sensation-stimulus matrix*' (24), to provide relief from the boredom produced in the directed attention of post-industrial education. While this is certainly the case at one level, this behaviour must not be misconstrued as Pavlovian: The music is good, the music can be here, I must have the music near me. There is, instead, an engagement with one's immediate interests, in this case not to be bored and avoid the kind of psychic pain that boredom engenders. However, there also appears to be something deeper going on, something pertaining perhaps to the capacities of an engagement with art to fulfil an apparent need.

Music, as an art form, has particular capacities in this regard. Music has no need for narrative or any semantic language (it can use these, but it's not essential), which many consider as the constituents of thought and expression. Music happens over time, but unlike forms such as dance and theatre, it can be stored for reproduction with very little reduction and, unlike film or video, it can seem to exist everywhere at once rather than emanating from a fixed point (Holt 2014). With these strange material qualities, music can produce curious effects on the listener. In Aesthetic Theory Adorno writes;

> As a musical composition compresses time, and as a painting folds spaces into one another, so the possibility is concretized that the world could be other than it is. Space, time, and causality are maintained, their power is not denied, but they are divested of their compulsiveness. (Adorno 2013: 190)

For Adorno, at its simplest level, what music enables (art, in the more general terms of Adorno's argument) is the ability for people to imagine the world as being different from the way that they perceive it to be. However, we are left with a complex question, different in what way? If this difference is emancipation and a dis-alienated life, then this behaviour by the student in Fisher's class could perhaps be mapped entirely on Adorno's aesthetic theory. However, the use of the commodity of popular music troubles this neat solution. If, in the case of the student, we take it that there is no specific goal in mind, but just a different world than this one, then what engagement with music can do may well be just that simple. If we take 'other than it is' in Adorno, to mean exactly that, merely different, then from this description we can take specific meaning about how a general capacity of art could be applied to popular music, despite Adorno's particular disdain for it.

As mentioned above, popular music saturates the late-capitalist environment. This means that if this music can be considered art, and art has the capacity outlined above, then popular music facilitates the imagination of the world as other-than-it-is. With the particular vibrational, omnidirectional materiality of music and its particular sub-forms; popular music, a special application of this capacity takes place. It could be said that popular music charges the air with the resources to imagine the world as other-than-it-is. Even, if it cannot be interpreted as such—i.e. as the capacity for the escape and creation of a new reality by all—the experience, in general, will be familiar to many. This capacity is not the preserve of aesthetic experimentation or sombre meditations on the human spirit. Instead, it is now entirely banal, as is well captured in some the lyrics and sonics of mainstream dance music. Take this example from the Black Eyed Peas (2009) song "I Gotta Feeling";

> I feel stressed out
> I wanna let it go
> Lets go way out spaced out
> And losing all control
> [...]
> Let's paint the town
> We'll shut it down
> Let's burn the roof
> And then we'll do it again.

The lyrics in this song are a clear attempt to empathize with the everyday lives of listeners. In this case by literally describing the feelings associated with both the impetus to go out dancing and drinking and the activities that many engage in, in these episodes. However, the lyrics could easily be ignored and this song would still be able to achieve most of its desired effect. In the case of this song, the most obvious reading of the capacity engendered in listeners i.e. to imagine the world other-than-it-is, is simply without the stress of late capitalism, but with the same excesses. Popular music is not popular by accident, but nor is it by Machiavellian conspiracy. It is a vernacular form that can appeal to, and be understood by, many. Those in the industry may work to increase the commercial appeal of the music they are selling, but the appeal was not entirely manufactured by the industry alone. Popular music, as we know it today, emerged at the same moment that the everyday lives of people have intersected with the developments of capitalist media, and thus it has a propensity for the generation of an easily translatable form of energetic potential into a milieu. It is the accessibility of this potential energy that makes popular music popular; what popular music is used for and where it can produce value.

Popular music is an 'accessible provider' for this specific need to escape the world as it is. This is the demand it satisfies as a commodity. While this is a need that is not directly physical, like eating or sleeping, it is in accordance with what Marx referred to as a needs of 'the imagination' (Marx 1990: 126). That is not saying an imagined need but rather the need to exercise the facility of imagination. For humans to function in such a way that is useful to capitalism these needs must also be met but within certain limited parameters.

As has been well documented in the field of music sociology, under contemporary social conditions many regard access to music as a need. In *Music in Everyday Life* (2000), Tia DeNora documented many cases of specific people expressing how music allows them to function. DeNora particularly identifies music as a need that for some are necessary to be able to live within contemporary society (48). From these accounts and numerous musical examples, it seems correct to characterize this need for a resource to imagine the world as other-than-it-is. This could also be directed towards an emancipated utopian political project, either in Adornian terms or more generally. Frith puts forth the notion, in his critique of Adorno's position on

popular music, that in a political struggle such music would be necessary for gathering the fortitude to carry on (1981: 264). Continuing with this notion the work of Christopher Small (1998) extols the emancipatory potential of popular music in diasporic communities, to stand against the elitism of classical music (35). Offering up an important critique of the power dynamics in western music, however, with a tendency to over romanticize certain collective musical expressions, as David Hesmondhalgh argues, (2013: 16), without recognizing the exclusionary or negative consequences. Hesmondhalgh's own view is that music can work to promote human flourishing, which is incomplete if it is only individual and not also a collective flourishing (144). For Hesmondhalgh, with some potential parallels to Adorno's notion of 'content [*inhalt*]' (Adorno 2013: 6), it is not the '*deliberative publicness*' (2013: 144) of a piece of music (what the music literally expresses to a collective) but rather the '*sociable publicness*', that can perhaps be thought of as the energy it generates and the relationship it facilitates between members of a group that is conducive to this flourishing. We can perhaps consider this a capacity for the imagination of potential difference, which can and is deployed in a variety of ways but importantly that it also functions as the use-value of popular music as a commodity. The intersection of these two imperatives (an object desired for its imaginative potential made available for its commercial value) poses interesting questions about what the consequences are when one pays with attention.

Paying with Attention.

The commodities produced by the culture industry to capture the attention of consumers is of a specific nature and designed to meet a specific need. A need that can be described as a kind of access to a field of potential difference from reality as it is usually experienced. This potential is something desired from cultural production generally, but when presented by popular music it is placed in a vernacular and atmospheric form. This, as is referred to above, is a need for the instigation and stimulation of the imagination.

It could be argued that this in some way contradicts the analysis of Adorno and Horkheimer, who claim that the productions of the culture industry stultify the imagination (1997: 126-127). However, if we move out from this position we could consider this not to be a problem of content, form or even the art object, but of the relationships between these things, the wider culture and whatever constitutes its audience. With this in mind, what Adorno and Horkheimer's position views as a stultification of the imagination may only be the stultification of the imagination of and within a non-capitalist social reality.

It is clear, however, that the imagination has not disappeared. Rather it has been directed to a very specific task; imagining purely individual flourishing within existing social structures. This fixture of a particular imaginational goal, indeed that the imagination should be limited to thinking in terms of goals at all is endemic of what Harper terms as a particular 'image of music' (2011: 130). This term, a derivation from Deleuze's notion of the 'image of thought' (Deleuze 2001: 164), can be taken to refer to the unconscious, individual and cultural assumptions of what music is and what it can be. It is not a purely representational image, but rather one that, in line with Deleuze, functions as a diagram of imagination. For Harper, such an image is not innately a bad thing but rather, it becomes bad if it becomes restrictive or monolithic. When this occurs such an image enforces the limitations of imagination. That said, the activity of the imagination is still at play.

If we read this with Attali's analysis, which understands music as something that has inscribed within it the power relations of the extant political economy, then the economic function of attention can be realized. As film theorist Jonathan Beller argues attention itself can become a method of payment;

> Today, consumption is productive… because it is labour power itself that appropriates and valorizes commodities to particular ends, which are themselves productive of images. In giving his or her attention to an object, the spectator modifies both him or herself and it, thereby producing and reproducing the ever-developing infrastructure of the status quo (2006, 117).

Beller is specifically discussing cinema, but the principle can be transferred to forms of cultural content that draw attention at a variety of levels and intensities. In fact, it could be argued that Beller's understanding of the mechanics of attention economics could be more applicable to an atmospheric ubiquitous media such as popular music, as it does not require the consumer to have any intention or agency to imbibe it. When you go to the cinema, you buy a ticket and take your seat. Even when you illegally download a movie, you valorize the underlying economic forces at play on the Internet. The economic relationships from absorbing popular music can be even more abstract. As, in the words of Oswald, unbidden it blasts you in the mall. You are a passive player in this relationship, but your economic actions are being brought in line with the desires of capital. Through no action of your own, you are now in a position of consuming material specifically tailored to facilitate the accumulation of capital through the imagination. Concrete examples of this that can be found in the empirical social research of shopping mall marketing conducted by Tia DeNora and others (DeNora 2000: 131).

The implications of this are that such a relationship could be characterized as passive. However, if such a term is to be applied to people's engagements with music it

must be used with care. The notion that people do not actively choose all that they imbibe can, quite rightly, be seen as elitist. However, a certain degree of passivity in the experience of the ubiquity of atmospheric media is inevitable. To actively engage with it all would be either impossible or damaging in the attempt to do so. Capitalism has no interest in this for the time being because such damaging overstimulation would be economically unproductive. Thus 'passivity' is used here in the same sense we find in the examples given by Oswald at the beginning of this chapter. Where the assumption of the industry, is that you will, and should, remain passive and receptive. To behave otherwise is certainly a deviation.

Passivity is useful to the power elite in that it does not draw attention to itself. It is behaviour that appears natural. Displays of power in the form of spectacles can still be effective, but it a risky investment, as '[t]he attitude of ironic distance proper to postmodern capitalism' (Fisher 2009: 5) has produced an audience jaded by such spectacle as a synonym of power. More to the point, it is not in the interests of the accumulation of capital to have a population who would be cowed too easily by such displays. If Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of capitalism motion of deterritorialization is an accurate way understanding our political economy, then deference can be an obstacle to consumption (2013a: 257). Under these conditions, for attention to be productive economically, the mechanisms of productive attention need, for the most part, to remain subterranean.

As these everyday musical phenomena begin to constitute our atmosphere in more sophisticated ways, we witness what Goodman refers to as the deadening of affect (Goodman 2009: 192). The mall 'muzak' bleeds into the metro station, your housemate shared apartment and the trailer before a YouTube music video, and all the while you had your own ear buds in. All this tacitly commands you to feel something important in ways that you were not meant to notice. This is an inability to be moved from a mode of rational perception by material that may have at one time been transformative. This does not mean that we have escaped our manipulation by, what Goodman terms, the 'military entertainment complex' (31), instead we are even more enthralled to it and its ability to, in a Foucauldian sense, provide life (2003: 241). All that has happened is that we no longer recognize our oppressor as something outside of ourselves, we can no longer recognize an oppressor at all. The images that popular music creates, in concert with other social productions, cannot in themselves disrupt the status quo if they are to be accepted by those enmeshed in it. Challenges to these dominant images may just as readily be greeted with rolling eyes as shock or horror. The images of what are appropriate aspirations and social norms have been well established and provide a passive insistence that this must be maintained. This is the value of attention to valorisation; through proper direction, attention ensures the valorisation of all capital, through maintaining the imaginary of capitalist social reality.

If the definitions of the use value and the valorization process of popular music provided in the preceding section are useful, more questions arise pertaining to the (art) object of popular music. Including; to what extent can/must one blame the art object of popular music, to the degree that such a thing can be said to exist, for the effects it has? Despite the reality of passivity in music consumption, does this not rob subjects of agency? To properly consider these questions requires engagement with the theories of Adorno and of his follower Bernard Stiegler. Theories that would place the music art object at the centre of these ethico-aesthetic questions. However, in unpacking these theories severe limitation are exposed in critiques of attention that stop at the art object.

For Stiegler, technology and its capacity to be used and to use those that interact with it (technics), should be considered as a tertiary retention (20). This is a term derived from Husserl's phenomenology of memory. For Husserl primary retentions are those perceptions of sense data that become experience in the consciousness of a subject. Secondary retentions are those experiences stored as memories that can be recalled now with distance from the sense data that originally instigated them (Stiegler 2010a, 8-9). Stiegler adds to this the concept of tertiary retentions or externalized memory, in the form of the technology and technics of human beings. Popular music could be such a technology. Popular music is in part created out of numerous technologies (or tertiary retentions) intersecting with primary retentions and secondary retentions as well.

In addition to this, in Husserl's phenomenology, there is the capacity for anticipation or protention. This means that a retention results in the production of specific protentions, which then fold back and influence the processes of retention and so on. This is the mechanism through which culture constructs subjectivity in Stiegler's philosophy. Though for Stiegler this is a complex question of individuation building on Simondon's notions of crystallization (2013: 81), which is beyond the scope of this research. What can be discussed here, however, is the manner in which Stiegler, and to some extent, Adorno, understands content and its role in the maintenance of the status quo.

Stiegler agrees with Adorno, arguing that the culture industry is a system responsible for the proletarianisation of minds (20: 2013). However, he does not, as Adorno does, think that this is inherent to the mode of production that is the culture industry. Instead, Stiegler considers this system to be a pharmacological technical

system (18); meaning something that could be poisonous if administered incorrectly or perhaps a remedy for some social ills if applied with the correct care and attention (2). He locates the manifestation of this care in the content of the cultural productions (4: 2010b). For Stiegler, many of these productions are productive of stupidity that is antithetical to the care required for civilization to function (2013: 81). While this ends up in systemic stupidity (2013: 22), which moves the concern beyond discreet content, it is this content that comprises the productions of the culture industry and from where the problem emanates (ibid).

However, while Adorno's work communicated his disdain for the content of the productions of the culture industry, it was not the content alone that caused him to feel concern. For Adorno content was always already reified, particularly if it was produced as the commodity form. As opposed to this, the artwork is produced through a dialectical synthesis of form and content. This was the process by which he hoped an artwork could have some emancipatory potential, through the tension of this synthesis. However, this is not possible when producing commodities in Adorno's understanding; as the commodity form belies systemic exploitation and alienation. This is part of what created his pessimism as a thinker; the environment in which artworks are required to help free us from oppression make it nearly impossible to create them in such an environment. Only the elusive promise of what Adorno terms the 'shudder' can be sighted against the barbarism of the empirical world (2013: 110).

Stiegler is not so pessimistic. It is his contention that the systems, which could be thought of as the culture industry, that produce artworks are neither good nor bad, neither oppressive nor emancipatory. They are instead, as asserted above, pharmacological. The same systems or technics that are being used to produces systemic stupidity can be repurposed to emancipatory ends. These systems may have to undergo significant transformation, but it is possible to repurpose them to collective human flourishing.

Stiegler reaches these conclusions because he hinges his theory on the field of noetics or the spirit. He claims that social and political ills, including the financial crisis and what he sees as an increase in delinquency (2: 2010b), actually stems from a spiritual crisis brought about by the corrosion of the spirit in late capitalism. This notion is not a simple conception of spirit, and there are clear links to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of desire. However, Stiegler's application of the concept is somewhat cumbersome. Where Deleuze and Guattari are careful to enunciate that a subjectivity which experiences itself as in some way noetic is a product of particular circumstance and milieu, Stiegler's work belies something else.

John Hutnyk presents a critique of Stiegler's work, based on his enthusiasm for classical education, as a falling back to a nostalgic conservative essentialism;

It is Stiegler's argument that 'the public education systems and training programs instituted in the 1880s have been slowly but irresistibly ruined by mass media and the programming industries, in particular by television' (TC, p52). This ruination has been a 'self-labotimisation', [...] Stiegler's lament however is that professors and 'all those responsible for the transmission of knowledge' have 'become marginal at best' or 'completely stripped of their role' (TT3, p150). This belongs to 'acceleration' and a view of 'school as a kind of playground for babysitting' (TT3, p150). [...] In actuality, it is not 'only educational institutions that can provide historical consciousness to collective consciousness' (TT3, p147, emphasis in the original). Here the danger is of producing a fantasy vanguardism without a vanguard, or Party, to accompany a Kantianism without transcendental subject - in the end an echo of mechanised rote learning when things are...
(Hutnyk 2012: 135)

Hutnyk's observations of Stiegler's position are precise. While Stiegler is careful not to make bold essentialist claims about a noetic human nature, his lamentation on the effect of low quality of cultural content (education, entertainment, etc.) implies certain essentialist assumptions. If there was a particular sort of content that was not only better for human society but in fact the most beneficial, then it follows that our definitions of either humans or human society are to a large extent static. We may wish to apply such a definitions for practical reasons, as if the human subject is unknowable then emancipation may seem impossible but such reasons always come with an accompanying teleology. As described by Hutnyk, Stiegler asserts that this emancipatory content has come and passed us by. However, this perspective is somewhat fragile when this very content was actually a form of content that was intended to facilitate a previous mode of capitalist teleology.

What this points to is a serious problem for content based cultural critique that focuses on the particular qualities of the art object, as such critique also suggests a fixed notion of the consumer. As has been argued so far it is remarkably difficult to point to exactly what is meant by this signifying term: popular music. At first, this appears as a practical concern; with so much media and liveness to constitute popular music identities, how can one single out any one thing in particular as the definition of popular music? However, what has become apparent is that for any fixed definition one might wish to apply to popular music if a value judgment is made with reference to aesthetics, then it will have an implicit teleology. If we fall into this theoretical frame, we are then burdened with all the paternalistic and quasi-authoritarian baggage of false and correct consciousness.

This has significant implications for a theory of attention within such popular media. But to uncover them we have to understand another problem that comes from the art object teleology. That being, essential to both Stiegler and Adorno's argument is the notion of lack. Their claim to understand what the most emancipated state human being is, and that our interaction with pharmacologically poisonous content, or the

commodity form, is what prevents this, implies the notion of a completely emancipated human subject. This implies the existence of a human subject that is being prevented from achieving this completion, one that is lacking in some aspect or aspects. This is what we need to address to move beyond the impasse of art object oriented critique.

<div align="right">**Lack and Pre-emption.**</div>

If we continue to follow a theory of attention economics as it relates to art-objects, we end up in the notion of lack. This is an economic view, wherein cultural productions are tangible and delimited things, a view that makes certain teleological assumptions about the art object as commodity and subjectivity as a consumer. They are formed in a fixed relationship. This section will show how the notion of lack relates to the critique of cultural production. It will go on to show how theories, such as those of Adorno and Stiegler, arrive at an impasse by relying on this notion. The emancipation that is promised by filling a lack in with the art objects of the culture industry ultimately cannot lead to emancipation, or rather can only lead to a particular so-called emancipation. This is because such a lack if it were to be real, would suggest the possibility of a complete subject, and if such a thing were to exist, then it would be necessary to enforce it against any deviation. This would produce a new fascism that would undercut any emancipation that had been achieved. However as shall be shown here, with the notion of pre-emptive branding, lack is not something that needs to be addressed through cultural production rather it is a paradigm that needs to be surpassed.

To put this in more concrete terms, if there is some lack that people experience and they seek to address it with popular music, is this a problem? As apologists for the entertainment industry would argue, is this not simply giving the people what they want? Is not the experience of lack merely a way to ensure a subject can address their needs? In material terms, this relationship between need and lack appears to be relatively simple. For example, a lack of readily available food could transform into a desperate need for sustenance. However, for cultural production, this has never been so clear-cut. Although we have established through attention economics, that there are needs that cultural productions like popular music satisfy, we are then faced with the question of what is it that is lacking to produce this need?

It is important to remember that when we suggest that art works allow people to imagine the world as being other-than-it-is, in a general sense, then the resources on offer from popular music, while technically vast, are practically stifled. If we keep Adorno and Stiegler's 'art-object' based perspective as a way to examine engagement with popular music, then we can see that the popular music market place specializes in a limited range of products. A few years ago I carried out empirical research into the

constitution of the then contemporary, mainstream popular music in the UK (Holt 2012). What I found then was that, with very few exceptions, the UK top 20 was made up of a sizable minority of balladic songs by singer/songwriters and a majority of star-fronted EDM[12] songs. At the time that that research was carried out, it could be argued that the charts were becoming less representative of music consumption, as they only accounted for physical music sales at the time. This was out of step with contemporary habits of consumption.

Now the UK charts also take into account downloads and streaming services like Spotify (Williamson 2014), which arguably makes these results more representative with this inclusion of the new consumption habits of the audience that are generated by these new technologies. However, not much has changed. The only noticeable differences have followed the previous trends, with some singer/songwriters now in overt collaboration with the EDM producers (e.g. "Bloodstream" by Ed Sheeran & Rudimental), while others have established themselves as a fusion ("Love Me Like You" Do by Ellie Goulding) and some have made a self-conscious shift to fuse these genres (A good example of this is Taylor Swift's recent Album 1989)[13].

Overwhelmingly, in terms of overt content, the songs found in the mainstream chart tend to steer this capacity to imagine the world as being other-than-it-is, in a direction that is similar to the example of the Black Eyed Peas song reference earlier. That being to escape the stressful realities of life under capitalism for an evening, through the means of and experience of the excesses that capitalism facilitates ("I gotta feeling, tonight's gonna be a good night). Some music critics would undoubtedly categorize as "jouissance" (Fink 2005: 6). An enjoyment produced by transgressing "the law" (85), or what Robert Fink characterizes temporarily forgetting the law, an understanding echoed in of Lacanian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2008: 184-185), and psychoanalytic critique, which would place such an experience in these terms. Fink himself, however, would be unlikely to characterize such an example as jouissance as he finds the notion to be reductive. Despite this, it is still important to keep this concept in mind, because even though this relation may not explain these phenomena, a certain fascination with the power of authority and the rupture of this authority is culturally pervasive. This idea needs to be grappled with, but to get there we will need to understand how such a view can emerge and how the assumptions of this position underpin, much of attention economics.

The seemingly paradoxical position, where one tries to escape the suffering endemic to capitalism through the productions of capitalism, has long been a subject of study for psychoanalytic positions. Affinities can be found in Sigmund Freud's essay

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[12]Electronic Dance Music.

[13]All of these examples were gathered from BBC Radio 1's official UK Top 40 Chart for the week beginning 05/04/15.

Civilisation and its Discontents (2004 [1929]), in which he argued that humanity is caught in an irresolvable conflict between the material means of survival that are facilitated by civilisation (which in this essay Freud seems to assert as synonymous with capitalism) and the necessary suppression of the aggressive and sexual drives that constitute human nature (106). This places individuals in a difficult position. They appear to be trapped between the rational social organization that is the means of survival and the drives that would disrupt this mode of organization. With this assumption, that human nature strives to destroy that which makes human survival possible, it could perhaps be argued that music enables people, with regard to the need for a world in which their drives could be realized whilst maintaining the security of civilization. It provides them with an atmosphere that simulates this release; however, it only appears as a solution to a paradoxical situation, because the oppressive law is still very much in place.

Of course, the experience of popular music is rarely discussed in common discourse using Freudian psychoanalytic terminology. That said, there are common references in everyday speech for describing the capacity of music to allow us to "let go" (or "Shake it Off" to refer to the hit song of Taylor Swift (2014)) of what we find to be oppressing us. To be freed from normal social restrictions in order to indulge in some "true inner self". From the analysis of popular music, as a commodity, and the literature on the functioning of music in everyday life, this viewpoint, in which popular music and its enjoyment are treated by many as a means to facilitate their survival through access to an inner truth and self-knowledge, is understood as a natural manifestation of innate drives. Such a view would hold that these drives that are an indivisible part of human nature, and thus require no deeper analysis. This view implies that a constituent part of human subjectivity is lacking. The lack can be met either through the productions of capital or, according to thinkers such as Adorno and Stiegler, this lack can be addressed in emancipatory ways by particular art objects.

However, it is argued in the work of Deleuze and Guattari that this is not the case. While the art objects imagined by Adorno and Stiegler, and implicitly desired by critical attention economics, may resolve the problematics of capitalist cultural production, they produce they're own problematic by requiring a specific human subjectivity. This would require arbitrary coercion, which while it may allow for a degree of emancipation, will also produce its own oppression. This is the problem with traditional critiques of cultural production that are rooted in notions of attention. What is required instead, is a non-phenomenological approach that can account for the understanding of the power offered by post-structuralism, as something relational rather than simply pushing down. This allows for the illustration of the role of the virtual in the experience of popular music and can be most clearly observed in the concepts of distributed subjectivity and pre-emption. Notions of oppressive power that

define the oppressor as external reproduce the same conception of subjectivity that both produces and maintains capitalism. Such notions are built upon the indivisible individual as the unit of all experience, where the only interaction is exchange. Distributed subjectivity, on the other hand, allows for a conceptualization of the subject that is co-produced by the culture and the body. This, in turn, helps to move the subject out of phenomenological temporality as the subject is no longer in a single space-time position but distributed throughout the culture. These tools can help us shift from lack-based analysis to an analysis that can perhaps be understood in terms of productive passivity.

Following the work of Kassabian (2013), the notion of an individual's lack motivating consumption would be nonsensical, as ubiquitous media like popular music requires a network of desire to function and valorize capital. Individual lack is not sufficient for this kind of production. She writes;

> My basic thesis is this, put bluntly: *Ubiquitous musics,* these musics that fill our days are listened to without the kind of primary *attention* assumed by most scholarship to date. That listening and more generally input of the *senses,* however, still produces affective responses, bodily events that ultimately lead in part to what we call emotion. And it is through this listening and these responses that a nonindividual, not simply human, *distributed subjectivity* takes place across a network of music media. (Kassabian 2013: xi)

Kasabian moves beyond Oswald's reactive assertion that this is a situation to be railed against and recognizes it exposes a problem stemming from the distributed nature of subjectivity. This conceptualization is built out of other conceptions of decentered subjectivity, such as Donna Haraway's Cyborgs (2004) and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome (2013b). She uses her own term because, amongst other reasons, it allows the phenomenon of quasi-individual subjectivity to be recognized for the force that it retains. Facilitating the conceptualization of a;

> [n]onindividual subjectivity, a field, but a field over which it is distributed unevenly, over which differences are not only possibly but required, and across which information, leading to effective responses .(Kassabian 2013: xxv)

If we think in terms of the fields of distributed subjectivity and the suffering that Oswald endures, by being forced to listen to ubiquitous popular music, it is not only his own suffering that he experiences but rather a suffering which is necessarily linked to the culture which he also co-created, rather than merely inhabits. Similarly, this experience is also connected to the enjoyment experienced by others. If we apply such a diffuse concept of subjectivity, then the discourse of cultural critique cannot pretend to

be outside its field of research. Here we can begin to see the how prescriptive notions of art object content can become mere reflections of *the law* they were intended to resist.

To study the attention of others is not an autonomous direction of attention. Indeed the suffering Oswald or Adorno may experience listening to unsolicited popular music, shares the same field as the enjoyment of others. This is an active process, which plays an important role in the formation and construction of identity. Kassabian's position, in a Deleuzian tradition, is to maintain that identity is not static but rather continually produced by the traces of affect (2013: xxvii), following the understanding advance by Brian Massumi (1995: 86).

Attention to something, in particular, will produce traces of affect but that these are interrupted and mutated through a networked notion of subjectivity. This is a phenomenon that conceptualizations of popular music media and subjectivity based on fixed objects fails to account for. That said there are major implications to rejecting this notion. What Kassabian's argument calls for is a view of musical experience that is non-essentialist and is entirely contingent upon the complexities and nuances of the socially ensconced listening. This can be achieved if we follow from her position of distributed subjectivity, which, as mentioned, presupposes both productive desire and non-linear temporality. However, these implications require a more concrete formulation. This is not a capacity exclusive to music as such, and thus we can perhaps see its operation more clearly by exploring the analysis of another field that does a great deal to anticipate desire and manufactures the feeling of lack; advertising and marketing.

In *Repeating Ourselves* Fink quotes a methodology for marketing that is over a century old;

> The first time a man looks at an advertisement, he does not see it.
> The second time he does not notice it.
> The third time he is conscious of its existence.
> [...]
> The eighteenth time he swears at his poverty.
> The nineteenth time he counts his money carefully.
> The twentieth time he sees it, he buys the article, or instructs his wife
> to do so. (Smith in Fink 2005: 120)

Today this reads as an amusing truism. In many ways, it seems to match up with both lived experience in cultures where advertising is commonly practiced and supports the phenomenological understanding of multivalent protentions and retentions. And while this may well be true in the example of a single instantiation, the neatness of this model starts to break down when it aggregates with the hundreds, if not thousands, of marketing practices experienced by each of us every day. Add to this a multitude of media sensations, and suddenly the fourteenth repetition is confused with the protention of sixteenth for a different brand. Strangely, this could reinforce the

purchasing message of another product and diminish the desire for yet another. This is not a field in which a single individual's intentionality can be said to be the only, or even the main, constituent of consciousness, or indeed any notion of selfhood or subjectivity. In a field constituted by ubiquitous atmospheric media that is populated by complex networks of distributed subjectivity, the way that we attend to a want or need for something like popular music, that has clear parallels with the field of branding; Something that has moved beyond traditional advertising practices.

In *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things,* Scott Lash and Celia Lury write;

> Goods as commodities are all alike. They are distinguishable only by the quantities of money for which they exchange. Brands are not alike. Brands have value only in their difference - their distinctiveness - from other brands. Commodities only have value in the way they resemble every other commodity. Brands only have value in their difference. Brands thus are singular or singularities: commodities are homogeneities. (Lash & Lury: 2007, 6)

Brands are not a necessary extension of the commodity form. Commodities exist in the abstract field of exchange, whereas branding is a contingent discourse of identification and differentiation. They can only exist empirically and exist only inasmuch as they can be defined.

For Lash and Lury, the requirement of brands for identification also transcends their material use and to a certain extent their economic function. Whatever constitutes a particular brand must be protected. Even if such action appears economically irrational, this protection is vital as it is the only way in which the power of a brand can be maintained. The establishment of the fact of the brand is key to this business practice. The establishment of the brand as a fact is essential to the formation of its identity and thus its economic potential.

The music industry, as a definable entity, is in part constituted by the discipline of branding (Harrison 2008: 180, Taylor 2012: 217). Often times this branding practice transcending the music itself. It would appear, for example, that The Ramones band T-shirt is often worn by people who are unaware that the band actually exists (Damoiseau 2016).

In the age of digital reproduction, the synchronization of popular music with other media has increasingly become a major source of revenue (Harrison 2008: 83) for the industry. By associating a band or artist's brand with other brands through synchronization and sponsorship (200), popular music becomes a part of the vast system within the attention economy. However, the operation of this economy does not operate on the art object oriented understanding of attentional economic relations. To understand how music works in a contemporary setting it is important to recognize the

influence of branding on subjectivity, attention and the pre-emption of desire in a way that transcends the linear intentionality of phenomenology.

There is a vast quantity of literature on the practical methodologies of branding (for example Wheeler 2013), which relates the field to the first order capture of an audience's attention share in the digital age. Whereas, the critical literature is somewhat sparser. However, this literature can offer remarkable insights as it shows how second, third, fourth, etcetera orders of attentional control function to maintain social control in societies that simultaneously claim to be emancipated.

In their 2011 essay, "Mnemonic Control", Luciana Parisi and Steve Goodman offer a radical interpretation of branding. They argue that branding functions, not as traditional marketing bromides such as Smith's described above—wherein established recognition built on repetition and rational consumer associations to create familiarity —but instead as a form or pre-emptive control. They describe this as what they term 'mnemonic control'. This is a means by which '[n]ew memories are installed that have not been phenomenologically experienced in order to produce a certain receptivity to brand triggers' (167). They understand this as a coming 'through the body that remembers a virtual sensation' (ibid). This is a theory that operates in the field of affect and desire. Unlike Stiegler's conceptualization of the culture industry's capacity to control pre-emption—through phenomenological retentions and protentions, Parisi and Goodman's position is not underpinned by the Freudian drives (something innate unchanging.). Rather than understanding certain desires as something in need of perpetual repression, these theorists, like Kassabian and Weheliye, root their analysis in Deleuzian desire, as something with tendencies but that is also changeable, relational and accessible through the virtual and multi-temporal (167). With desire, there is no question of it being effectively suppressed. It can be altered only in form and directions, with subjectivity along with it. For Deleuze and Guattari desire is passively synthesized through a body's interaction with various milieus, which is a process that can constitute subjectivity, which then changes the nature of the process of the passive synthesis of desire. It is with this in mind that Parisi and Goodman argue through the production of desire, in such a way as to be experienced as lack, that branding can install un-experienced memories (168).

This perspective allows for an understanding of ubiquitous atmospheric media, such as popular music, and the formation of subjectivity it constantly produces and reproduces. This allows us to examine a particular way in which capitalism, cultural production, and subjectivity interact. This mode of economic and cultural activity is only possible if the subject is constituted across space and time, rather than in a singular location and moment. However, the subject in question must be denied actionable knowledge of this operation, as it is built on individualized lack. In some way it could be suggested that this develops the Marxian notion of the general intellect and

social production as something immanent to the experience of subjectivity, raising the specter of complicity with capitalist exploitation as something inescapable through any particular cultural practice alone.

Stiegler's Freudian interpretation would lead you to see the hedonism of a rave as innately a manifestation of the destructive forces that constitute humans. This would lead to a conclusion based on the infantilization and the proletarianisation of culture. In this interpretation, we are left with the most pessimistic readings of Adorno, where the ever-totalizing logic of capital continues to encroach upon all areas of life and experience unabated.

However, with a Deleuzian conception of desire, the same hedonism can simultaneously become a manifestation of sociality that could transcend the boundaries of control laid out by capital. Pop music scholars such as Christopher Small (1996) have argued for this more optimistic reading of the experience of popular music. Subsequently, Buchanan (1997), Gilbert & Pearson (1999) and Weheliye (2005), have all used a Deleuzian theoretical framework because it allows for certain optimistic openings, without falling into simplistic liberal relativism. This framework, which investigates what constitutes desire previously understood as immutable drives, enables a deeper analysis, at the level of singular subjectivities, as to how to read theses experiences, previously dismissed as jouissance.

Beneath Attention.

With these resources, another argument emerges that positions the problematic elements of popular musical experience not as hedonism but anhedonia. If mnemonic control operates as described above, by implanting desire through manufactured memories, producing lack, which for Deleuze and Guattari is 'a function of the market economy' (2013a: 41), then what is being branded as pleasure is a simulacrum like the H&M t-shirts for non-existent heavy metal bands. It is a hedonistic pursuit that can only result in anhedonia.

Fisher argues that he has encountered numerous students that he describes as suffering from 'depressive hedonia' (Fisher 2009: 21), under the conditions of late capitalism. In this argument, immediate pleasure is the only pursuit. Like the student who is only ever seconds away from the relief offered by his music. This pursuit is where all attention is focused and in itself it becomes oppressive. The effect is a reduction of one's engagements with popular music to something pseudo-medicinal. This is a particular mutation of anhedonic depression, wherein pleasure is unattainable from the activities that would usually result in it. In its simplest definition pleasure pertains to a happy satisfaction, this may only be temporary, but there is a respite from the pursuit of pleasure. If there is not this respite, pleasure has not been attained by the

subject through their activity. Despite the usefulness of Fisher's term, I wish to retain the term 'anhedonia', for reasons relating to the analysis that comes out in Wallace's *Infinite Jest*. Namely, that a system based on lack cannot produce something pleasurable without producing a new lack. If it failed to do so, the system would crumble. This is properly anhedonic, pleasure cannot be gained through engaging in actions that we may expect to be pleasurable only new lack.

Though, perhaps what this actually means is that under the alienating conditions of late capitalism, pleasure is unknowable as anything other than sensations branded as pleasure. In a field of branding constituted by mnemonic control, the experience of pre-emption becomes infectious. The listener, sitting on a website, skipping through songs, unable to settle on one because she knows that the software knows her taste. She constantly feels the desire for an imagined future listening pleasure that is always out of reach; always lacking. This creation of lack seems to be the goal of music technology companies, from the major players to start ups, whose revenue depends on distinct, not necessarily complete, streams. This is the mnemonic control of attention by the new apparatus of 'cognitive capitalism' (Mulier-Bountang 2011: 47).

As has been argued so far, through the work of Kassabian, with popular music we are already dealing with a media form that is by its nature ubiquitous and by its materiality atmospheric. Like the fish in the epigraph, we are unaware that what surrounds us is water. That our self-definition only makes sense in relation to what surrounds us. And that which we often unthinkingly interact with is something that can and perhaps ought to be considered critically. What surrounds us is, in part, 'productive of images', in the words of Beller and Harper. Or with Adorno's aesthetic theory, a resource that can allow us to imagine the world as other-than-it-is, in however minor a way that this may be.

However, these views are perhaps too narrow. We are left, as Weheliye may argue, fixated on particular popular music art objects. We are convinced that some object, under the correct attentional conditions, may facilitate universal emancipation. Such a pursuit is inevitably disappointing and arguably tinged with oppressive tendencies that would quash the very emancipatory potential for which it searched. However, if we think this through passively synthesized desire and the mechanisms of mnemonic control, we can see that in a field of distributed subjectivity it is not the particular lures of popular music's attentional economies that hold some hypnotic power. Rather, it is the ability to move attention though desire. It is a movement that synthesizes desire complicit with the power that oppresses it.

Busking on the London Underground.

One Saturday night, switching lines at Kings Cross Tube station, I was witness to an increasingly rare sight on the London Underground; an unlicensed busker. Slumped in an alcove along the walkway, a man in his late thirties, appearing undernourished (although this is entirely conjecture), was wearing only an oversized leather jacket, ripped jeans, gold teeth, and knotted hair. He strummed the occasional a-rhythmic chord on his guitar and was, as I walked past, singing the opening verse to Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah". Ahead of me were a gaggle of older upper-middle class people. As they passed the busker the gaggle's conversation shifted to comment upon the appropriateness of the busker's location, at which point he reached and relished the line: 'But you don't really care for music, do ya?'

I had been thinking for a while about the odd incursion, into a previously anarchistic musical practice, of allowing licensed buskers to perform on either side of the barriers at Tube Stations. Previously, busking on the Underground was an illicit activity conducted through wit, guile, community, and negotiation. Performers would self-organize about the circulation of the best pitches and had to be ready to run at a moment's notice, should the authorities show up. For more than a decade, however, the practice has been professionalized. As busker, Wayne Myers, writes; 'Since we don't have to be constantly ready to flee with all our stuff, we can use more equipment, and incorporate backing tracks and loop pedals. Amps, too, have made otherwise unplayable pitches – such as Canary Wharf, where acoustic instruments are inaudible – worthwhile.'

But Myers also mentions how the 39 pitches seem to be have been placed arbitrarily; a two-hour slot at some locations is barely able to cover the travel costs. In recent years, seemingly in conjunction with a drop in sponsorship since the election of former Mayor Boris Johnson, online slot booking has been replaced with a premium-rate phone number. The best slots are often snapped up before many performers have even managed to get through, all the while the charges tally.

In 2001, London Underground (LU), as a part of Transport For London, took a peculiar initiative. They won a court decision giving the organization the right to 'change the national law and the local bylaws to legalize licensed busking.' According to the TFL website, these buskers have a 'unique audience of around 3.5 million Tube passengers every day,' which the press releases on the TFL website suggest would make it an attractive opportunity to the sponsors. Previous sponsors have included Carling, Coca-Cola, and Capital FM. Exactly what the sponsor sponsors are unclear. The scheme's website states the buskers "are not paid by LU and rely on the generosity of

Tube passengers.' However, as the press release online notes, 'The LU Busking Scheme has up to 39 pitches across 25 Central London stations, which are clearly defined by a semi-circular floor graphic and a backdrop advert on the wall.' Which for sponsors has the benefit that '[t]hese are highly visible and attract attention because of the professional musicians performing on them every day.' Presumably, the sponsorship pays for maintenance and management of the sponsorship scheme.

The buskers are used as a snare, a device to draw attention to the sponsored plots. They are unpaid and rely on donations from travellers. This financial arrangement has been the status quo for buskers forever, however, that used to come with the freedom to choose the best location and to be free from exploitation.

To perform for the anointed pan-London mass transit user is, apparently, not something that can be entered into casually. Your craft must be up to scratch by the criteria of TFL judges, your appearance, demeanor, and sounds have to be assessed, and then, finally, you are, in a broad sense, located. In these specific spots, the activity becomes productive of value for the sponsor, thus legitimizing the busker's musical utterances. This seems to be becoming a norm across a number of musical activities but for now, a hint will have to do.

The most striking example of this phenomenon, for me, is found at the bottom of the escalator at Canary Warf underground station. As you descend the escalator and become engulfed by the modern cavernous station, all high ceilings and imposing pillars, you see a tiny busker, often strumming a guitar and singing, emerge from the darkness. The busker, so alien to the be-suited commuters around them and so dependent on said same commuters' notional generosity.

From the skyscrapers on the surface, which some consider a prerequisite of a global city, a peculiar strata of white-collar workers are making their way home. Down from the office, through the Jubilee shopping centre and its jewelled window displays, past someone with a guitar who perhaps spent an hour on a premium phone line to win this slot to be able to perform for them—attracting the commuters' attention to the surrounding advertisements, some of which make use of socialist iconography—and happy to receive any change thrown his way.

More than half a century ago, Adorno and Horkheimer wrote that music had lost its rebellious character within the culture industry. It seems, however, there may have been even more rebelliousness to lose. In the formation of politically stagnant neoliberal subjects, music becomes an inconvenience that must be justified in all forms of it to be expressed. Especially if it is to interrupt the flows of the busy people engaged in value production while they traverse London. As their website states, busking on the Underground has been a lure to now famous artists (The Libertines, Julian Lloyd-Webber, Badly Drawn Boy) early on in their careers, before licensing came in. This should not be taken as a simple glorification of "the bad old days of busking." The guy

slumped on the floor last Saturday night was intimidating, but then he wasn't there for my benefit. He wasn't there to sell a product. He wasn't an entertainer. He wasn't on the first rung of the career ladder constructing a rags-to-riches narrative. He played music to pass the time and if you threw him some change, great. If you found him unpleasant, c'est la vie.

In its sponsored plot form busking becomes a career move, though admittedly not one with many prospects of success. Under the present circumstances, however, it may be a necessary move. This is enmeshed in something systemic and the prospect of being cast out of that system is perhaps the most terrifying thing of all. When outside increasingly appears not to exist.

Complicity.

The truth will set you free. But not until it is finished with you.
(Wallace 2007: 389)

Becoming Complicit.

At the end of the chapter on attention, it became clear that to think about popular music as an object that serves the purpose of some sort of externally generated oppression, through the control of attention, was insufficient. If indeed what we consider to be oppressive are the individualizing and alienating forces that facilitate the mechanisms of capitalism, then such a way out of such a situation cannot be built on this same individualizing and alienating motion. Critiques of attention that centre on the art object produces such a motion and, in so doing, also produce a critical position that relies on existing oppressive power structures to exist. However, through Kassabian's notion of distributed subjectivity we are able to move beyond such critiques of attention and address the underlying causes of the phenomena in question. The first stage is to recognize that distributed subjectivity, which exists under capitalism, implies a certain complicity. With this recognized we can begin to unravel our complicity.

The value of popular music appears to be an inherently entangled within the logic of capitalism. This is particularly the case for technologically advanced neoliberalism. As popular music is a field that spurs the entrepreneurial spirit with little state support it is thus to be championed as it valorizes a great deal of capital; the fluxing record industry, the monopolies in the UK of live music, the merchandise, the synchronizations with products and other events. Indeed in the UK, one need only look to the lineup of the Royal Variety Performance[14] to see that popular music has received an institutional, if not personal, a seal of approval from the establishment. This acceptance has resulted in fantastical developments in both music making and consumption practices. What was, fifty years ago, viewed as an area of deviance and

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[14](Shepard 2015)

rebellion has become largely accepted. This is perfectly exemplified in the futility and wrongheadedness of the conservative movement against what they viewed as the insidious influence of popular music. This is exquisitely exemplified through the hard won warning logo 'Parental Advisory: Explicit Content' becoming a marketing gimmick rather than a heeded warning (Thomas 2010). The behaviours that some interpret as the consequences of exposing impressionable youth to the bad influence of the content of songs is far more readily explained as a reaction to broader situational factors; poverty, crime, patriarchal and racist oppression, lack of educational certificates social alienation. Many of these are exacerbated by the very market dynamics that also produce the content declared to be so problematic to conservatives.

Contemporary critics and theorists of popular music point to the evident capacities of popular music for 'human flourishing' (Hesmondhalgh 2012: 10). This state of affairs builds upon the analysis of Christopher Small, which critiqued both the institutional conservatism of the classical music establishment (1998: 6) and championed the emancipatory potential in popular vernacular musics (342). In the face of these developments critics such as Adorno, and others from the Marxist tradition, are considered to be elitists who are unwilling to engage with musics beyond of their own high-cultural paradigm (Frith 1981: 45). To a certain extent there is validity to this charge, as Frith argues, in abstracting popular music to only its musical content, without a careful examination of its actual 'use by fans' has resulted in the assumption of the Frankfurt school of the passivity on the part of listeners in the most pejorative (ibid) sense.

As we have already seen, to a certain degree passivity towards such media is unavoidable. But the view that this passivity results in some clear consumption of communicated values is certainly mistaken. This is where Stiegler's Adornian phenomenology fails as an emancipatory program. It attributes too much agency to the musical content and fails to see popular music with regard to the significance of its existence within a relational space. Rather, it seems to insist that art and media content is a distinct substance, which is imbibed in the process of forming the individual. The problem with this view is that it posits the existence of a particular piece of content that can complete the lacking human subject. However, when you read an engagement with popular music through Deleuze and Guattari's passive synthesis of desire what you see is a far more granular or continuous process. It is a process in which agency and subjectivity are distributed, and in continuous negotiations with a myriad of biological and cultural tendencies.

These tendencies have come to be formed in a particular way because they exist with the economic relations of capitalism. However, amongst other things they have also shaped the operation of this economic mode. The broader social trends throughout the later half of the twentieth century saw a blurring of the distinction between a

formally defined high-culture and the amorphous low-cultures, coalescing in what was termed the culture industry. The culture industry gained such social and economic significance that a cultural shift away from formal distinctions now appears to have been a necessity if cultural production was to primarily serve an economic function. Today, we are in a situation where pop producers make presidential campaign videos (Will.I.Am 2008), influencing the flows of globalized markets. The particular example of Will.I.Am's "Yes We Can" video/song is a complex one. It could be said that to place such an event of seeming political importance in the vernacular setting of the popular song contains a democratic potential that is involved in historical and political discussions and is located in the terms of everyday experience. However, this would be a very optimistic and perhaps naive reading[15]. A more critical perspective would perhaps see it as an extreme example of what Marcuse termed 'repressive desublimation' (2002: 75). Wherein, the energies that are required to critique and overcome capitalist hegemony are instead directed to propping up the system of exploitation that is now represented by the song in a familiar, comforting form. This, in turn, could be argued to make those who are engaged with this effective and affecting work to be complicit with the atrocities that are perpetrated by the existing power system.

Some may find this reading insists too much on the passivity on the part of the consumers, as it suggests that they have become sheep lead by the power of celebrity, with no will of their own. However, as was shown in the last chapter, passivity cannot only be considered purely as a pejorative, as it is also an existential necessity for constructing meaning and desire in a complex world. The deployment of passivity is not to deny the agency of a subject but to problematize the notion of the rational individual and account for a subject's unconscious formation and "irrational" motivations.

It was argued at the end of the previous chapter, that our desire for popular music, produced in its industrial form, like anything else, is generated by our passive synthesis of such material within the milieu of late capitalism. If this is the case, then the issue of our complicity with oppressive modes of cultural production becomes far more complex. Thus, it should be made clear here that the complicity referred to here is not meant to be considered as informed, rational choice on the part of subjects, but is nonetheless real and deeply held.

The problem with both the naive and critical reading of the Will.I.Am music video is that they rely too heavily on the communicative power of the content and as such paint too simple a picture of subjectivity and the power relations that constitute it. It is perhaps more fruitful to consider this not only in relation to the consumer but also

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[15] Though not far from how it was viewed at the time (Michaels 2008).

in the manner in which a subject's every interaction with similar (and different) material has been processed and understood by them up to this point and the expectations that this produces for potential future interactions. What is more, these interactions are relations of specific kinds that are interwoven with the experiences, both actual and virtual, that the individual goes through and from that the resources for a virtual future. This is to say that single interactions with popular music are inexorably tangled up in the ongoing process of the passive synthesis of desire and as such cannot be understood as a discrete manifestation of anything in particular. The possible exception being perhaps in the subjects' complicity in this form of desiring-production.

On a macro level, this becomes more complex. In the early, to mid 20th Century, it may have seemed to be sufficient to regard the actions of the culture industry as something enacted by those with power for the oppression of the population at large. However, with shifts in modes of production, it became more difficult to maintain this model of power dynamics. Additionally, as these shifts in production changed, the material conditions of the lived experience of western subjects, both the behaviour and the nature of subjectivity itself, began to change along a similar decentralizing trajectory. According to the analysis of Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), in order to survive the resistance of '68, capitalism adapted to the demands of what the authors term the 'artistic critique' of capitalism while allowing the radical demands of the 'social critique' (38) to go unaddressed. This has resulted in a particular kind of flexibility in employment and social position, at the expense of some notion of job security. Additionally, the interconnectivity of networks, at one time the nexus of leftist resistance and thought, were deployed to further atomize people and force them into direct competition with each other. If this is the case, as Boltanski and Chiapello argue, then the power that oppresses us is not just external but also now internal. No longer could power be viewed as a simple unidirectional process; a downward pressure from a malignant minority, but rather something in which we all participate and administer.

With the work of Foucault, on the transformation of sovereign power (2003: 240-241), it can be argued that power is able to control people, not through threats, but because it is feared that without submitting to the systems of power an individual would be abandoned to suffer and die. What we desire is ensconced in the very power that oppresses us. We think that in behaving in line with that situation, this desire should protect us, though we know this to be arbitrary, as this is what gives power its allure. This is what Foucault means when he describes 'the fascism in us all [...] that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us' (in Deleuze and Guattari 2013: xiii). This idea is further echoed in Attali's understanding of the political economy of music. For Attali, music shifted from the representational mode, which lasted from the baroque to the late romantic periods, and focused on 'an

attempt to make people believe in a consensual representation of the world' (1985: 46), to the period of modernity or repetition, which faced the realisation that 'savant consumers' (88) required the pseudo-power of consumption to be contained. This naturalizes the very mechanism that maintains the status quo; the accumulation of capital, as the apparently ultimate display of a rational actor, acting in their own self-interest. In these conditions, the wider context falls a distant second to the imperatives of market exchange. However, despite the fact that they may not be consciously considered, these more global concerns are not beyond the field of perception. We can clearly see this if we consider the concrete realities that underpin modern music consumption.

Production Chains and the Reproduction of Capital.

Many attempts have been made to give a definitive account of globalized capitalism and consumption (Marx 1990, Castells 1996, Moulier-Boutang 2011, Mason 2015). What has been largely missing from such analyses are considerations of the actual, lived consequences of such globalized production. These consequences often seem somewhat removed, but in a few instances, they can be brought into conscious experience. One such method can be to trace back the material origins of contemporary modes of engagement with popular music; the mobile smart phone.

Smart phones, as technical objects, are complex not only in their construction but also in the manner in which they modify and direct behaviour. However, if we stay with their construction for the time being, we can see an intersection of communication, computing, and entertainment technology, combined with a particular set of design demands, many of which are derived from the logic of capital production. This is, of course, a simplification but these devices are the result of an industrial production method. A method that brings certain imperatives to the production process that results in a great deal of avoidable and acute forms exploitation and corruption. In the main, such devices are viewed as little more than a gateway to the relief that can be provided by various forms of cultural production and digital media. One of the most accessed forms of relief is popular music. This exploitation is not only limited to companies such as Apple who use the prison-like conditions of Foxconn factories to cut labour cost but in the very sourcing of materials for manufacture.

In the documentary *Blood in the Mobile* (2010), Frank Poulsen examines the endemic corruption and violence that seems to have always been a part of the production process of the mobile phone industry. The opening of the film states the statistic that in the preceding fifteen years of civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, five million people have been killed. In addition, the United Nations has

reported that the proliferation of the conflict is linked to the rare earth mineral trade (00:43). These minerals are vital for the manufacture of mobile phones and most other consumer electronics. The film goes on to investigate why this is the case.

There are, of course, considerable logistical difficulties for companies in tracing the legitimacy of the sources of these minerals to ensure the ethical nature of their products. However, these difficulties seem less insurmountable than useful for purposes of plausible deniability. The motivating imperative for such behaviour is simple to understand; to keep production costs down and consumer confidence up, and, in doing so, the intention is clearly to maximize the accumulation of capital. That being said, such subterfuge is often unnecessary. As the complex and unclear narrative of the economics and power relations that results in the electronics industry and Western consumers financing all sides in of the Congolese civil war is an immediate impediment that prevents most people from even identifying the issue let alone engaging with it. However, once you get past the numerous impediments to observing this production chain, there are many examples of the horror necessary for the manufacture of such devices. The veracity of this is uncontroversial, this is no conspiracy theory. Among the most conspicuous are the unsafe conditions of the mines in which children are forced, through poverty and violence, to work. Poulsen starkly describes the situation at a mine in Bisie in the DRC '…in this place people die, so we can get mobile phones' (41:27). This didactic but honest assertion describes the mobile phone as a banal technological solution to everyday problems, inconveniences, and desires into a context that is complicit with immense cruelty and murder. He places himself as being as similarly culpable in these atrocities as are the companies that supply his demands.

This recognition of personal responsibility avoids the lack of self-interrogation typical of such campaigning works. 'Kony 2012' serves as a good example of such a campaign wherein this self-interrogation is lacking. It also represents a far more slippery anxiety that can perhaps also be found in Blood in the Mobile. This anxiety is produced by the seeming complexity of the problems and the perceived distance from solutions. This, in turn, can be seen to feed into the constructed alienation of everyday Western life from this painful reality. The reaction is one that is simultaneously able to facilitate the liberal impulse of performing a sympathetic understanding, whilst effectively disengaging from one's culpability.

Documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis refers to this particular form of cognitive dissonance as 'Oh-Dearism' (2010, 00:43). It is a phenomenon that produces a genuine feeling of shame that and requires instant alleviation through disengagement. Curtis takes the Rwandan genocide as an example of the reflexive inactivity that he argues has stagnated the understanding of political issues since the end of the cold war. He argues that when faced with a complex narrative of world events, where moral authority is not

clearly defined, western news audiences have a tendency to disengage, preferring the comfort and certainties of culture industry productions instead. This is shown explicitly in Poulsen's documentary, as he interviews a parade of those in the industry who should hold sway. They repeatedly declared their sympathy but are also quick to assert their powerlessness. These Nokia managers and executives are relatively anonymous in the public discourse of consumer technology. It may well be more than the job is worth for them to take a stand. However, the same sort of statements have also come from the very top and most generally respected individual in the consumer electronics industry; the late Steve Jobs. In response to the concern of a customer about the use of so-called 'conflict minerals' in the iPhone 4 in 2010 Steve Jobs wrote;

> Yes. We require all of our suppliers to certify in writing that they use conflict free materials. But honestly there is no way for them to be sure. Until someone invents a way to chemically trace minerals from the source mine, it's a very difficult problem (Jobs in Chen 2010).

It appears that even the immense financial power of Apple, a company that is so influential that it has reshaped all of our current media, particularly music consumption, is unable to track of the processes by which it produces its hardware. If this is true then how can an individual, variously defined as customer or consumer, be imagined to have sufficient influence to change this reality?

However, Jobs' claim seems to be dubious. With the power and resources that Apple has at its disposal, it is difficult to believe that they are incapable of ensuring that its products are free of conflict minerals and those minerals mined in unnecessarily unsafe conditions. For example, with net profits of $6.9 billion for the third quarter of 2014 alone (Apple press release 2014), Apple could set up their own mining operations that ensured the ethical sourcing of all of its material. However, taking such action would negatively impact the company's profits. Investors could lose confidence and the value of the company could fall. Jobs' comments must be read with this as an implicit caveat. If this were to be made explicit, however, it may disappoint some readers but most would regard this situation as the necessary evil required for a profitable existence. It seems that despite the advances in technology, the newfound popularity of corporations to claim 'social responsibility' for marketing and public relations purposes, violence and exploitation have not ceased to be at the heart of the capitalist system. This is of course, to many, an unremarkable statement.

What is remarkable, however, is how, as such violence and complicity is exposed, the more the agreeable the implicit caveat becomes a company's consumers. As if the danger and violence, experienced mainly by the poor, were justification for the protection of personal wealth accumulation by the same methods that were responsible for the initial violence and danger. Add to this, that it is hard to expect people to look

every day at a device that allows you to send 'loving text messages' (Poulsen 2010, 02:23), keep up with your work and listen to your favourite songs, and realise your complicity with the rape and murder of millions. It is much easier to absorb the excuses of those with whom we are complicit. Ours is a culture in which there are those who have power are aspirational figures and whom we may wish to emulate in order to survive. With such cases, we begin to accept and internalize their caveats as the normal way of the world.

This is perhaps the simplest way to understand our complicity with capitalism. We materially contribute to the reproduction of the conditions of horrific exploitation in the pursuit of our apparent enjoyment and, in theory, to accumulate capital ourselves. This is the result of both coercion and complicity. This seems to present something of an incongruity with how we see ourselves. If we are rational economic actors purporting a mode of being which is argued by the dominant discourse to be mutually beneficial, then how does such suffering continue to happen? If in fact we are coerced into adopting that role are we actually actors, rational or otherwise, at all? Is our behaviour the result of the conditions under which we live? If so, are we willing to change them and perhaps lose some security in the process?

Cruelty & Human Capital.

A particular quality of popular music is its tendency towards intensity. While we can perhaps cite particular obscure bands and artists that push against this generalized trend (Pavement 1994), survival in the contemporary media landscape requires easy and unique definition through identifiable interactions of the intensity of volume, of speed, and of emotion. This is as substantial a hook as any catchy melodic line. We can consider this an example of Lash and Lury's theory of branding, wherein differentiation, through escalating intensity, is vital to the production of value. As has already been established, the ability to produce value is paramount for the continuation of activity in late capitalism; a condition exacerbated in the particularities of neoliberalism. When you add to this crisis of profit and distribution that digital media has undergone as Internet speeds have increased, mainstream popular music has taken on a very particular character. It has become an ever more refined commodity, capable of more effectively chasing on the marketing coup of intensity.

Popular music, as has been established, has use and exchange values. In the previous chapter, a use-value of popular music was defined as the capacity to facilitate the imagination of the world as other-than-it-is in a general sense. In addition to this, however, it is important to remember that this often takes the form of enjoyment. In his recent book, the Lacanian cultural theorist Alfie Bown argues that we also ascribe different value to different types of enjoyment (2015: 4). Bown suggests that within the

"radical thinking" community we tend to view certain forms of enjoyment as in some way resisting capitalism, whereas most others simply help to reproduce it. He claims such a distinction is often false. Often this "radical enjoyment" is simply conformist enjoyment with different content (20).

If we add this perspective of "correct enjoyment", to the use-value of popular music and we can then enter into a discussion about how such a practice of generating intensity functions as a form of human capital. For a working definition of human capital, we can use the work of Michel Feher as the;

> ...set of skills that an individual can acquire thanks to investments in his or her education or training, and its primary purpose was to measure the rates of return that investments in education produce or, to put it simply, the impact on future incomes that can be expected from schooling and other forms of training. (2009, 25)

If this is the case, then it is not hard to see how a society, with the imperatives described by Boltanski and Chiapello, would require individuals to invest in the skills and education that could not be gained from ostensible tasks of employment. Such as society would also need to promote a kind of right thinking under the *employment as network* model (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 70). To put this in terms of our use-value of popular music, when we engage with such music, to imagine the world as other-than-it-is, in a human capital employment network this other-than is required to have some parity with the maintenance and development of the status quo. The investment in this form of human capital is valorised when such an imagination is demonstrated through this vernacular cultural form as discourse.

This is precisely what is depicted in many sections from Bret Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* (2006). Here we find a first person commentary, from the perspective of the psychotic Patrick Bateman, on the merits of contemporary (in the setting of the novel the late 1980s) popular music. He does this with numerous examples including Whitney Houston, U2 and Huey Lewis and the News. Remarking how he never really understood the popular rock band Genesis before the departure of Peter Gabriel but with Phil Collins taking more of a central role;

> ...complex studies of loss became, instead, smashing first rate pop songs that I gratefully embraced. (Ellis 2006, 128)

In this satire, we can see how the reductive understanding of popular music has progressed under the emerging new spirit of capitalism. Ellis' psychotic business executive expresses the need for the music to be immediately useful to him. He has no use for psychological quandaries, what he wants is banal upbeat pop that will not cause any form of psychic or social disturbance. Music is, for Bateman, a commodity in the first instance. Artistic expression is secondary at the earliest if it is to feature at all.

However, this seems to be even more ingrained for Bateman. For him, pop music is pure cultural capital rather than even a pleasing commodity. At least expressing, with no obligation to actually have, the 'correct' opinions on popular music, (as well as political and social issues) is essential for the prosperity of Bateman's social and professional life, and public persona. The use-value of popular music, in this novel, has become even more abstracted from the form of the commodity, to merely its cultural currency, to pure exchange value. The sensations that the music may produce are reduced to signifying the investment potential of the capital.

Interlude: Mumford and Sons (for Patrick Bateman)

Have you ever heard Mumford and Sons? The band burst onto the UK music scene in 2009 with their hit debut full-length LP *Sigh No More* (Island, Glassnote) rocketing up to #2 in the charts with even greater success overseas, including a #1 position on the US Billboard. Though they really didn't come into their own, artistically or commercially, until their 2015 record, *Wilder Mind* (Gentlemen of the Road, Island, Glassnote).

Their early work was a little too folksy for my taste. The band seemed a bit too willing to cash-in on the nostalgia that is the stock-in-trade of UK entertainment industry. Especially on songs like "Little Lion Man" that strain to affect the feel of a well-known song from a country fair, with a conspicuous over-use of archaic phrases like 'my dear'. Or indeed a song like "Winter Wind" where the close mix of brass and vocal just sounded like a rip-off the Arizona band, Beirut, who have themselves moved to a more mainstream sound on recent records. This may be a good tactic for making a splash, which is, of course, a necessary first step in the entertainment industry, but this can risk future earning potential by too narrowly defining one's brand. Still, a song like "The Cave" with its deceptively simple lyrics with just the right amount of apparent depth and a sing-a-long choruses, really mining the "millennial whoop", that you got the sense they wanted to transcend the gimmick.

I was somewhat disappointed with their follow-up 2012's *Babel* (Island, Glassnote, Gentlemen of the Road), as it still clung on to so much of that nostalgic iconography. Songs like the title track "Babel" still leaned hard on the folksy instrumentation and arrangements that seemed speak more to a public domain standard than the original piece of multi-purpose intellectual property that really want the industry demands today. It didn't seem to hurt them commercially, but it did make a concert by them feel a little too close for to a novelty act to really get into. That said, landing an A-list actor like Idris Elba for the video for "Lover of the Light" was a great move for illustrating the potential applications of their sound. Indeed, the song itself is less dependent on its folk production than previous work and by editing out a word here and there like "sanguine" the band were getting closer to a place where they would no longer need the genre crutch.

There are no such mistakes on the band's third album and masterpiece, *Wilder Mind*. With songs like "I Believe" and "The Wolf", the band have mastered the subtle gloss set against an open lyric sung a fragile voice that is just crying out for synchronization with a climactic moment of our present renaissance of television drama. It is not so much that every song has the potential to be a huge hit, as today, in many ways, that can really be a limit to the avenues for revenue. The real stroke of genius though has been the marketing. Having done the cute folksy videos it was going to be tricky to switch gears on the audience. So rather than releasing traditional music video, the synch their new songs to fairly generic, but nonetheless compelling, colliderscopic night-time dashboard camera footage. These were like hitting the reset button on band's image and really opened them up for fans like me to appreciate them.

But more importantly, it opened the band up for other media engagements. The album's cover, an empty bench overlooking an illuminated city scape at night, like the non-videos, declare to the producers of the world "fill our songs with your content". What to say to Wilder Mind dissenters in the long run? Even on traditional metrics, in this day and age, over a million records sold and climbing is something not many can top.

<p align="center">***</p>

This may be a fictional instantiation of the phenomenon, but this is not without an empirical foundation. For example, Curtis White, in the essay "Kid Adorno", summarizes the reaction from many in the rock press to the release of *Kid A* by Radiohead, as; ' "You're supposed to be a pop group [...]" You're supposed to be a commodity, stupid! Just make your money and give us what we expect' (White in Tate 2005, 11). Similarly, but with other important complications, the musicologist and philosopher Robin James cites the harsh critical response to Rihanna's album *Unapologetic*, which many critics read in relation to her experience of an abusive relationship. According to James, the critics were appalled that the work failed to present the experience as some clear narrative of overcoming adversity. One labelled the work 'post ethics' (2015: 142). In James' analysis, this album was considered by neoliberal hegemony to be an inefficient investment of the damage Rihanna had suffered. This a disinvestment and as such unacceptable. However, this is merely at the discursive level, where certain defence systems (reviews in this case) meet those whom deviate from a form of popular music that has the utility of being a vernacular communication mechanism for the ruling ideology, with a defensive suspicion. This does not ultimately stop such seemingly transgressive practices being absorbed into an official narrative of ideology, but this does take time. So perhaps we could suppose that Bateman could have grown to appreciate Peter Gabriel's incarnation of Genesis, if it had been played in the normatively appropriate venues.

This presents a relationship to cultural production that is even more reductive than the one offered by Adorno's analysis of the reified productions of the culture industry. This reification is exemplified in the fetish character of music in which 'the consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the Toscanini concert' (Adorno 2001: 37- 38). Today it could be argued that the situation is even more banal. One can no longer worship their own cultural consumptive power, a Spotify membership and internet connection are too cheap. Rather, this consumptive action is necessitated by a larger project of cultural capital accumulation, and thus is no longer a demonstration of power in itself. The goal of that project is the gathering of resources for the pursuit of a bourgeois lifestyle and its associated security. That is to say, the pursuit to be within the protection of the power structure, to put it into Foucauldian terms. Here, what for Adorno appeared as Marxian alienation through the

commodification of cultural production, is exacerbated when this reductive process of pop music as a mechanism of cultural capital and becomes a necessary part of the reproduction of life.

This should be seen as a reduction or limitation of experience to simple resource accumulation. However, this is also involved in the production of a 'self' whose own existence is predicated on the accumulation of cultural capital at all costs. According to Marcuse, surviving while maintaining such an identity produces individuals that are capable of immense cruelty, both active and passive (2002: 79). This is what he terms repressive desublimation. Some examples of this have already been discussed in this chapter. However, for many, the idea that they are capable of such cruelty is incongruous with the way in which they see themselves in much of their day-to-day behaviour. Without an understanding of how this cruelty comes about, even clear evidence of its existence can become mystifying. It is as if one fighting a phantom evil, which exists in the inaccessible unconscious of the Freudian conception of human subjectivity. What is needed is an understanding of how such cruelty comes about, how it can function at the same time as relative altruism and how it functions in relation to power.

For Deleuze and Guattari suffering, and the cruelty of its infliction is vital to the administration of power, and can be seen in the first stages of the development of civilizations, and as such this behaviour is not unique to capitalism. In their conception, the inclination for cruelty is not an inborn human mode of behaviour, rather it stems from the insertion of production into desire;

> Cruelty has nothing to do with some ill-defined or natural violence that might be commissioned to explain the history of mankind; cruelty is the movement of culture that is realized in bodies and inscribed on them, belaboring them. That is what cruelty means. This culture is not the movement of ideology: on the contrary, it forcibly injected production into desire, and conversely, it forcibly inserts desire into social production and reproduction... (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 169)

As we have previously seen, the conception of desire in the work of these theorists is as something entirely ambivalent. It is merely a behavioural tendency that is capable of being channeled or disrupted by a multitude of factors in a milieu. What brought about this insertion of desire into social production is the motion of territorialisation (168) contingent on the imbalance of power in relation to scarcity (41). For Deleuze and Guattari, it is not merely that ideological commitment simply makes people carry out cruel acts in the service of some power or oppressive force. Instead, they argue that production, forced through desire, creates subjectivities that can desire to inflict cruelty on others in a similar vein to the libidinal investment described by Marcuse (2002: 75). More concretely, the establishment of territory (physical and social) carries with it

productive partial solutions to scarcity. Those that belong within the territory and maintain its productivity can benefit from it in some way, while those outside this cannot be afforded protection. The desire to maintain a territorialized status quo carries with it the desire to see those outside it suffer. This, however, is not yet capitalism, which is the circumstance in which, in Deleuze and Guattari's understanding, produces an Oedipal subject. However, it produces the sort of subjectivities that have led the circumstances in which capitalism is possible. Once under the conditions of capitalism, and bourgeois capitalism, in particular, the behaviour that is related to what has been described as psychological drives, becomes apparent. With this ossification of desire, we end up with the 'ill-defined or natural violence' that makes it difficult to understand how the banalities of cultural production both reveal and require the horrific cruelties in which we are complicit.

The work of Attali provides some resources to move this discussion of cruelty and the production of subjectivity into the field of cultural production and in particular, music. As pointed out by Goodman (2009: 51), the first three periods of music that Attali describes in *Noise* (1985), can be diagrammatically overlaid onto the periods of representation in the third chapter of *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 163). Differing only slightly from Goodman's reading, we can read Attali's descriptions of the periods of music; *Sacrificing, Representing* and *Repeating*, as mapped from Deleuze and Guattari's *Territorial, Imperial* and *Capitalist* periods of historical representations. Attali argues that music is intrinsically linked to violence, even from the earliest examples of its role in society. He writes;

> The operationality of music precedes its entry into the market economy, its transformation into use-value [...] Its primary function does not depend on the quantity of labour expended on it, but on its mysterious appositeness to a code of power, the way in which it participates in the crystallization of social organisation in an order [...] music, prior to all commercial exchange, *creates political order because it is a form of minor sacrifice.* In the space of noise, *it symbolically signifies the channelling of violence and the imaginary, the ritualization of a murder substituted for the general violence, the affirmation that a society is possible if the imaginary of individuals is sublimated.* (1985: 25-26)

Attali argues that under specific historical conditions, facilitated by the relations of a particular political economy, music, as a channelization and constraint of noise, became a channelization of the violence embedded in the society (26). Here noise is a 'simulacrum of murder' and thus, with the immanent relationship of music to noise, music becomes an affirmation of the violent power that makes civilization possible. For Attali, this particular dynamic has been relegated to the distant past. Ritual no longer plays the same role in the administration of violence that it once did. The sacrifice no

longer takes place at the temple but is now the collateral damage in a drone strike or the forced labour at a rare earth mineral mine.

When this is considered alongside a reading of Anti-Oedipus the administration of violence and cruelty through cultural production becomes more complex. While Deleuze and Guattari also maintain that such ritualized physical violence properly belongs to a previous social order, they do note that one of the interesting capacities of capitalism has is the capacity to use archaisms (2013: 276). For Deleuze and Guattari it is clear that the capacity of capitalism to make use of anachronistic modes of oppression is it a systemic strength. However, this is not simply because of the versatility offered by such tactics, rather this points to capitalism's most vexing characteristics. That being, Capitalism has no ideological motivation, its only purpose is the asignifying (Lazzarato 2014: 80) accumulation of capital. Ideology may spring up to justify the specifics of this, but the activity itself does not require ideology in order to continue to operate as it does. What becomes apparent, in what Deleuze refers to as 'control societies' (199) or what Attali thinks of, as the period of repetition, is that these are not the goals of capitalism. Capitalism is a mode of activity that has emerged from particular material conditions that relate only incidentally to human survival or flourishing. It is the subjects forced to live under the conditions that capitalism engenders who enact the cruelty of violence and self-monitoring as the attempt to shape themselves to the arbitrary governing logic of capital. Under such circumstances, it is difficult not to consider yourself, on some level, as a machine for the valorisation of human capital. These are circumstances wherein cultural productions are little more than a means by which to do this.

Where industrially produced popular music fits within this context, is as being constitutive of an atmosphere that champions the hierarchical social order, which one can practically inhale. Capitalism is not an ideology but the constitutive factors of a milieu in which ideology is produced. It is a milieu that not only defines what rational goals are but also, as Deleuze and Guattari observe, forms the desires of the subjects that inhabit it (392-393). With nothing to consider as its core (no despot, no king, no god), capitalism becomes a seemingly impossible entity to combat. Here we can see a parallel to the nature of popular music, as the object of capitalism resists delimitation in a similar way. This absence at the heart of what is called capitalism has provided a space in which the mainstream discourse is able to work. This discourse utilizes the assumption of the existence of 'some ill-defined or natural violence that might be commissioned to explain the history of mankind'. From this perspective, it appears as if capitalist competition and reductionist rationality are able to hold violence in check, albeit through violence.

What *Anti-Oedipus* offers are tools to reconsider certain behaviours, that are generally considered as natural, as merely a particular possible outcome, which has

been facilitated by the milieu. An outcome, which is by is no means the only one, of one of many possible circumstances. In response to this, Deleuze and Guattari argue that desire is the instigator of all social production, which itself is formed through a process of passive synthesis. While desire starts out as an ambivalent and almost infinitely productive force, certain restrictions are placed on it from within the milieu. Restrictions that Deleuze and Guattari argue manifest as what is called 'mental illness'. However, these maladies can also operate at a more macro or collective level. With these tools, one can trace a line from the economic and productive phenomena that result in the experience of popular music, back to a productive concept of desire. However, the restriction that leads to this particular process come with certain specific consequences. Consequences that range from the material exploitation has been discussed so far, to the subjects willing to use, tolerate and indeed reproduce them. One reason this problem seems to be so intractable is that it has the appearance of something innate, which, for Deleuze and Guattari, is anything but the case.

For example, as already discussed Deleuze and Guattari's bête noire; the Oedipal theory psychological development and subjectivity, places restrictions on sexuality and sexual desire, to a normative incestuous pattern (2013a: 88). These restrictions that constitute capitalist production are manifested in the behaviour of human beings and are no more natural or unnatural than those engendered by any other particular set of circumstances. This mode of production creates the condition for the emergence of certain psychological structures. These structures then enforce the protection of the mode of production, which causes suffering for both the exploited and the complicit.

This is reason enough to work against it but doing so is difficult. Those suffering the worst material exploitation are unable to change their circumstance without considerable further sacrifice and suffering. Equally, those who are complicit are also in something of a trap. While their complicity has provided them with pseudo-security, it also produces, not only the traditional neurosis of psychoanalysis but additionally a commitment, that can range from the vague to the fanatical, to the maintenance of the status quo. A status quo that can only offer the reward of entrusting subjects within it with its perpetual maintenance. This requires the constant infliction of cruelty for many, and fleeting moments of pleasant sensation for a few. Restrictions have been placed on their desire to the extent that, in the words that are often attributed to Žižek, they can more easily imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism (Fisher 2009: 2), let alone desire it. This means that when it comes to our interaction with popular music as a resource with which to imagine the world as other-than-it-is, capitalism is a part of this imaginary. Capitalism has become synonymous with the world as a concept. For Deleuze and Guattari such a constriction can only be detrimental and the cause of much suffering.

This is where complicity gives way to reveal a depressive undercurrent. To be complicit is to suffer, but to not be complicit is unimaginable. We live with the anhedonia that is resultant from fulfilling the role of being a productive part of a system that requires the suppression of human flourishing to operate. Thus, we turn to extraordinarily affective cultural productions to maintain a frame of blissful ignorance of our anhedonic conditions. In the case of popular music, we do not even need to turn our heads. Such productions create the images of what our complicity, or even what our reified rebellion can afford us, and these are numbing.

With the alleviation of this pain, we justify our participation in this vacuous pursuit of capital. It is a pursuit responsible for mass suffering and potentially leads the extinction of our species. These productions absolve us and enable us to carry on, without pleasure but also without pain.

Anhedonia and Hip Ennui.

Ultimately, in *American Psycho,* the barbarous acts apparently carried out by Bateman leave him unfulfilled. While for a time he seemed to revel in his transgressions of the social order, he is, by the end of the novel, left wondering whether these actions had any impact at all, or indeed whether they even took place. Bateman can be read as something of a social composite. A combination of the barbarism inherent in global capitalism and its representation in mainstream media and political discourse; it is a veneer of bourgeois societal harmony that conceals the horrors of the means of production through generalized consumption.

Precisely what is at stake becomes evident if we consider this from the perspective of the subjectivity offered by Deleuze and Guattari in Anti-Oedipus. As stated above, the cruelty that inflicts these horrors stems from the forcible injection of production into desire, which necessarily places constrictions on the manner in which desire can be directed or experienced. This is what they argue is witnessed by the psychoanalyst in their examination of neurotics. Not, as the analyst understands it, as the inevitable outcome of an originary Oedipal Id's conflict with the best of all possible (though necessarily still restrictive) civilizations but rather the inverse. The presence of what is called the Oedipus complex is itself resultant from the social restrictions that Freud deemed were necessary to keep the excesses of the ego in check (2004: 103). However, from an anti-Oedipal perspective, the restrictions of civilization were not, as Freud thought, that of law and order, and social morés. Rather, these were the result of the passive synthesis of desire being run through forces of authoritarian and then capitalist production. This, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is where the internalized limit placed on desire can be found(2013: 123). Where the process of passive synthesis is

channeled by the social super-ego of the bourgeois family. Desire under capitalism is understood as always originating from a lack (41). A lack that, paradoxically, cannot be fulfilled while, at the same time, the social imperative is that it must be fulfilled. This produces a society of neurotics, fantasizing about ineffectual their transgression of the social order, while the actions of their everyday lives help to perpetuate and contribute to the widespread suffering that is at once kept at a distance and also immanent.

To consider directly that simply just trying to survive, through the socially prescribed method of the validation of human capital to pursue surplus value in a competitive environment, that is at the same time inflicting suffering upon millions is depressing. Especially, as in the section above, the rewards of these everyday actions are fleeting for the minority who attain them and are out of reach for the majority who cannot.

So far this chapter has examined how the consumption of popular music under contemporary conditions both supports and is productive of complicity with the status quo. This can be viewed as a coping mechanism, wherein suffering under capitalism, both individual and collective, is deferred through diverting and libidinally engaging material. It can then be repurposed through repressive desublimation. However, this mechanism is one of the perpetually diminishing returns, which eventually puts pleasure out of reach, resulting in a state of general anhedonia.

This argument can be found running through Wallace's novel *Infinite Jest*. The claim is made in the novel that underpinning a great deal of the entertainment that contributes to the cultural landscape of the United States is a profound anhedonia. That of being in a state in which pleasure is unattainable from actions or thoughts that would normally induce pleasure. For Wallace, this is a defining characteristic of life at the end of history. The reflections of the central character of the novel, Hal, on the tendency of his tennis academy peer group to identify anhedonia in others, but not in themselves, and leads to this extended examination of the inculcation of anhedonia throughout popular culture;

> It's of some interest that the lively arts of the millennial U.S.A. treat anhedonia and internal emptiness as hip and cool. It's maybe the vestiges of the Romantic glorification of *Weltschmerz,* which means world-weariness or hip ennui. [...] Forget so-called peer-pressure. It's more like *peer-hunger*. No? We enter a spiritual puberty where we snap to the fact that the great transcendent horror is loneliness, excluded encagement in the self. Once we've hit this age, we will now give or take anything, wear any mask, to fit, be part-of, not be Alone, we young. The U.S. arts are our guide to inclusion. A how-to. We are shown how to fashion masks of ennui and jaded irony at a young age where the face is fictile enough to assume the shape of whatever it wears. And then it's stuck there, the weary cynicism that saves us from gooey sentiment and unsophisticated naiveté. Sentiment equals naiveté on this continent. (Wallace 2007: 694)

This illustrates the double motion of anhedonia. On the one hand, it affects a stance of detachment that allows one the knowing-how-the-world-works poise from which to inflict suffering for personal survival, without accepting accountability for it. In so doing one can attain the various pleasures associated with being accepted as a right thinking member of society. On the other hand, this eventually ceases to be an affected stance, but actually becomes a part of who we are, making the acceptance we seek meaningless as, on its own terms, as it cannot be trusted. It is the contingency of what others hope to gain for themselves by accepting you and makes that acceptance an exercise in spinning plates, causing any pleasure to be forever deferred by the next strategic move. The connection is always secondary to whatever it offers the individual parties.

Wallace's main target in his fiction is the solipsism that he sees as so pervasive in late capitalist, and emergent neoliberal, culture (Smith 2009: 269). This may also be thought of as the consequence of a culture that is built upon the notion that the individual is something insoluble. Deleuze and Guattari's critique of a psychoanalysis has a similar motivation, as this mainstream understanding of the individual limits experience. This results in, 'the little ego of each person, related to its father-mother, [becoming] truly the centre of the world' (2013a: 304). What we can see in Wallace's work is an attempt to apply certain sentiments of Deleuze and Guattari's social critique, particularly the element that pertains to psychoanalysis and to cultural production in an even later capitalism.

Many of the characters in Wallace's novel and in the society depicted in general, could be described as anhedonic to varying intensities. The ostensible plot of the novel centres on the pursuit of the master copy of the eponymous film cartridge, produced by Hal's late father. The film was made with the intention of freeing Hal from a persistent anhedonia that he has been suffering from since a childhood accident(Swartz 2009). Little is known about the film's contents, except that all who view it are thrown into a state of inescapable catatonic bliss. According to the literature critic Marshall Boswell, what little is revealed about the contents of the film can be read as an attempt to resolve what Lacan called the mirror stage. This could be described as the 'dialectic between the child and his own image' (Boswell 2005: 129). In this particular school of psychoanalysis this moment of disjunction between self and, though the awareness of how the self is represented eternally, other, is an existential problem. Whether or not that is the case is difficult to say. However, with a Deleuze and Guattarian perspective, it can be argued that this division is exacerbated by the formation of desire in late capitalism.

The film in the novel is intended as a critique of what cultural production has become in late capitalism. It is that of being a poor substitute for the meaningful social bonds, which are precluded by our social conditions. Conditions that we are complicit

in reproducing. Bonds we consider to be psychologically important for our development, but that are also impossible to attain in a rational individualist society. What is more, in Wallace's view, this entertainment-as-substitute is propped upon a psychological theory of subjectivity that may be inadvertently designed to serve and maintain the status quo. We never find out if the film would have worked on its intended audience. However, implicit in Wallace's critique is that it would not. From Boswell's reading it can be surmised that Wallace considers, in a similar vein to Deleuze and Guattari's critique, 'a return to maternal plenitude' (130) as a way to resolve Lacan's dialectic; a seductive but ultimately empty promise, built upon the same limited definition of subjectivity that it attempts to address. Thus it is unable to move beyond the isolation. This shall receive further exploration in the next chapter.

For the time being, if we take these comments on this Lacanian concept with the notion of the internalized limit of Oedipus, that Deleuze and Guattari see as endemic in capitalist societies then it can be argued that Wallace is making a point about the position of cultural production in general. It appears that he is claiming that the culture, while deploying these productions to a great deal of effect for its own reproduction, also attempts to limit their impact on change. Entertainments in the novel, overtly in the case of the film and implicitly for others, offer the illusory freedom of choosing to return to a lost pleasure of infancy, at the expense of being aware of the world around you. This leads to behaviour that, to agree with Fisher, appears as 'depressive headonia' (2009: 21). However, this actually may merely be the appearance of anhedonia that is necessarily concealed to maintain acceptance of the status quo.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in *Capitalist Realism* (2009) Fisher deploys the coinage 'depressive headonia' to refer to the apparent hedonism of consumption that has precluded all other activities, except those that are in the pursuit of pleasure. He sets this against the anhedonia that is usually the experience of depression (22). However, it can be argued that there is something missing in this formulation. To quote Fisher directly;

> Many of the teenage students I encountered seemed to be in a state of what I would call depressive hedonia. Depression is usually characterized as a state of anhedonia, but the condition I'm referring to is constituted not by an inability to get pleasure so much as it by an inability to do anything else *except* pursue pleasure. (ibid)

While this observation is astute, it does not show this to be different from traditional anhedonia, under the student's bluster. Part of what defines pleasure, in its common usage, is that it produces a feeling of satisfaction. If one is unable to attain this, even temporarily then, as Fisher points out, one can become trapped in the pursuit of it. A pursuit that may only ever have the slightest encounters with its quarry. What we are seeing here could be interpreted as anhedonia accompanied with a deferral of the oft-

associated depression. Or, if not a deferral, perhaps it is a suppression; wear the smile for the job you want. In maintaining the motion of the pursuit of pleasure, something amply afforded by atmospheric ubiquitous media, the crushing anhedonic revelation can be perpetually postponed. This chase is thus not for pleasure as such but the pleasant sensations that are proper to pleasure but that do not necessitate it. In maintaining this postponement one must acquiesce to the insertion of production into desire and in doing so, from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, become cruel. This feeling of cruelty pushes the anhedonic cycle further as cultural productions are pursued to numb it. To cleanse a consciousness that is heavy with the inane and banal complexities of a culture that instructs you to think of yourself as a company on the market. There is no space for the full extent of our geopolitical predicament and without satisfaction, there cannot even be pleasure. The very nature of social production under capitalism, particularly neoliberal capitalism, precludes satisfaction, as satisfaction for capitalism is akin to stagnation. Without this, all of the consumption that capitalism can provide is ultimately anhedonic.

This remarkably disturbing revelation is in part maintained by material necessity in order to function as an individual without the crushing burden of certain types of knowledge and in part by the images that are produced by cultural productions. This is field within which popular music is able to atmospherically maintain our complicity. For all the discomfort of anhedonia, there is the promise of some sort of pleasurable release that is contained within the emotionally and affectively intense songs from the suffering that they helped to reproduce, in order to make their own life only slightly less precarious is too alluring.

A Theory-Fiction: **Deleuze and Guattari.**

The *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, comprising of two volumes, *Anti-Oedipus* [1972] and *A Thousand Plateaus* [1980], was a hugely important work of late twentieth-century philosophy. After its translation into English in the late 80s and early 90s, this project lead to an explosion of cultural analysis. One, in particular, was the development of theory-fiction by the CCRU and Nick Land, which in turn lead to the development of sonic fiction by Kodwo Eshun. Despite sharing similar leftist objectives to the Marxist schools that had come before, the critical and theoretical basis of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* represents a break from the Hegelian mechanisms that had dominated leftist critique. Deleuze and Guattari instead grounded their work in a Spinoza conception of the univocity of being and used this to take a more descriptive approach.

This I can be seen particularly in the attempts to show the relationship between the material economy, as defined by Marxist economics, and the libidinal economy derived from Freudian psychology. They attempt to describe (not synthesize) these ideas as already parts one economic system (Seem in Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 4). Beyond this, their project led Deleuze and Guattari to articulate new ontologies and concepts, borne out of the recognition of the rhizomatic nature of existence. Something that previous philosophical, psychological and cultural theories, had always attempted to contain.

It is for these reasons that some consider *Anti-Oedipus* to have been *the* book of the 1968 protest movement (Buchanan 2008: 1), as it was both responding to the remarkable cultural changes that were taking place at the time and perhaps gesture towards others that were to come. This was a point in time when neoliberal ideology was only beginning the process of ossifying as political dogma and the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari, such as radical deterritorialization, have become more applicable, retroactively. Some of the ideas of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project appear to have such an insightful understanding of the workings of capitalism that they may have been overtly adopted by capitalism. Boltanski and Chiapello cite the implementation of 'rhizomorphous' network employment practices in the late twentieth century (2005: 97), as a way to mitigate and obfuscate the concerns of those experiencing the restrictions of capitalism. Key in the development of the conditions of *boring dystopia*. In addition to this, we know with some certainty that the Israeli defence force has used concepts from this project, such as the creation of a 'smooth space' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013b: 411) in the oppression of the Palestinian people (Weizman, 2006).

Here we cannot fully consider the implications of these applications on their theory. What should be stressed though is that the ontology offered in this work is

profoundly ambivalent. While this does offer an opening for something that is emancipatory, it also gives a more granular range over which power may impose its structures or 'trees' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013b: 16). The task is to engage with this work against this tendency of more sophisticated oppression. Put succinctly, the aim of this project was to examine the ways in which the arbitrary structures of power conflict with the tendencies and trajectories that actually constitute reality. And in so doing, critique the way in which these structures inflict suffering upon both subjects and societies, and prevent much of the potential them, nature and the cosmos from being realized.

The first part of this project, *Anti-Oedipus,* is more overtly critical of a particular object. It seeks to challenge the orthodoxies of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and the crass readings of Marxist economics. They give a compelling critique of the structures of psychoanalysis and relate this as complex account of the history of civilisation, where the main antagonism is not class or capital but power. Power in the sense of having the capacity to restrict the capacity to act of others (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 168). Foucault describes this power in his introduction to the book as the "fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us" (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a xii-xiii). *Anti-Oedipus* also introduces a constructive project that they term *Schizoanalysis*; a radically empiricist engagement with psychology and phenomena that does not seek to force the phenomena to conform to prescriptive categories (367). The second part of this project *A Thousand Plateaus,* published in French eight years later, contains an even more constructive ontological project. In this volume, they develop and explore concepts such as the rhizome, the refrain and the body without organs. These, amongst others, become the tools for moving beyond the constraints of previous 'images of thought' (Deleuze 2001: 164) that have so far stymied attempts of emancipation.

These works form the basis of this chapter and provide the resources to sketch the other polarity of the theory's impasse when addressing popular music. What follows is an examination in detail the mechanics of Deleuze and Guattari's conception of desire, as an alternative to the notions of commodity fetishism and the Freudian lack. But before that, it is important to consider the implications of this to the analysis of musical experience as it relates to ontology.

Music and Ontology.

The philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, particularly their ontological work, suggests an aesthetic theory that has particular usefulness when it comes to popular music. Of

course, their understanding of capitalism and subjectivity is thoroughly connected to this ontology. The most direct application of their ontological theory to the field of aesthetics can be found in Goodman's *Sonic Warfare*, which adopts similar formal devices to those practices in *A Thousand Plateaus* to explore vibrational ontology. Similarly, Eshun's *More Brilliant Than the Sun* explores music and theory's relationship as something of a plane of immanence, where these fields are inseparable. More traditionally academic applications can be found in be read in work of Harper and Kassabian and Weheliye, which seek to complicate established modes of cultural analysis. Concepts such as schizoanalysis, the rhizome, the refrain intensity and immanence are often open to application for a wide range of phenomena. This is because Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is a philosophy of difference. Meaning, that it has a certain responsiveness as it is born out of empirical observation rather than transcendental deduction (Marks 1998: 130). Nothing has to be anything, indeed being itself is too limiting, when what is observed is in the process of becoming.

Deleuze and Guattari work out from the Spinozan concept of the univocity of being (81). For Spinoza, this meant that there was no substantial distinction between God and nature, which Deleuze and Guattari take as there being no substantive difference between things, only differences of intensity (2013b: 8). They conceptualize this operation with the notion of the rhizome. The rhizome allows for a perspective of ontology that is open to near infinite possibilities, while at the same time showing that particular understandings of things can be helpful, as long as they are not mistaken as being a universal. The rhizome model (roughly analogous, though certainly not reducible, to a ginger root) of infinite connection, folding, separation and new connection, is set against the hierarchical tree structures Deleuze and Guattari claim to dominate the western philosophical tradition (Deleuze and Guattari 2013b: 3). Psychoanalysis would be such a tree, as would Soviet Communism, Chomsky's linguistics. Capitalism also fits this understanding though it would be a particularly fibrous and dense structure (4).

Against this, they argue that desire, a force of subjective agency, flows rhizomatically. It is able to expand, fold, rupture and conjoin (14). The aforementioned hierarchical structures of thought restrict and deform desire, preventing certain connections from being made and useful lines of flight, or escape, from being discovered (9). Deleuze and Guattari consider arborescent structure to be a form of ossified, territorialized thought, which places arbitrary limitations on desire (16). However, that said this should not be mistaken for a total casting off of such ideas. Such ideas can be productive (17). These territories of thought did, after all, lead to Marxist economics and the discovery of the unconscious. The problem is to stop the process there. Such territorialization is established through the unpicking or the deterritorialization of what went before. This is not dialectics; there is no necessary

reciprocity between these two motions. One does not require the other; a space can remain deterritorialized and only become territory again once something new or external is introduced. All Deleuze and Guattari claim is that in order to discover new "lines of flight" through *what is,* requires an understanding of *what is* as rhizomic. It is upon this rhizome that territory is established, torn apart and remade. However, these are systems that, much like subjectivity, are derived from the environment and are subject to change. These changes are often in line with certain tendencies but such tendencies should not be confused with dialectic law.

We can see this most clearly in their concept of the refrain (ritornello) (362). Here we can use it to see how rhizomic ontology can have a more concrete application. The refrain is a structural device often found in popular songs were similar or near identical material returns and becomes familiar, between other, more distinct, sections. However, each iteration of the refrain is different by virtue of its repetition, meaning that it shifts through different contexts. Deleuze and Guattari use this as a frame to talk about experience and subjectification. They write;

> We would say that the *refrain* is properly musical content, the block of content proper to music. A child comforts itself in the dark or claps its hands or invents a way of walking, adapting it to the cracks in the sidewalk, or chants "Fort-Da" (psychoanalysts deal with the Fort-Da very poorly when they treat it as a phonological opposition or a symbolic component of the language-unconscious, when it is in fact a refrain). Tra la la. A woman sings to herself, "I heard her softly singing a tune to herself under her breath." A bird launches into its refrain. [...] Music is pervaded by every minority, and yet composes an immense power. Children's, women's, ethnic, and territorial refrains, refrains of love and destruction: the birth of rhythm. (349)

They start from the refrain as a musical concept and go on to illustrate how it functions in a wide range of experiences. The claim is that as we move forward into the world, into unfamiliar spaces and arrangements, we are able to bring back something familiar over which we have control; something territorialized. This temporal disjunction allows us to create new conjunctions, which allow us to consider this new experience through a prism of familiarity. This is not done for assimilation but for compatibility.

While the musical refrain and the conceptual refrain are not entirely synonymous, it is worth retaining the notion that there is a strong conceptual link between music and the refrain. In that, both look to territorialize "chaos, the milieu of all milieus" (364) but it must at the same time also relinquish territory to such chaos. Thus, one could think that the qualities of popular music that are similar to the concept of the refrain are not related to the ability of such music to provide comfort, but rather the way in which it courts chaos in the service of maintaining a rigid tree structure, like capitalism, racism or sexism.

In addition to this, Deleuze and Guattari's ontological view provides useful tools to engage with popular music that does not rely on categorical separation to provide a framework for meaning making. This opens the possibilities for analyzing experience not as gesturing towards a Freudian prescription, which would have music as a poor cousin of language grasping for signification. It is instead the affective toolkit to look beyond such mechanistic semiotic chains (Gilbert 2004). For example, we don't need to assume that music has a fixed meaning to uncover, but we are free to consider it as meaningless, as we are implored to do so by Joanna Demers (2011).

However, we are also able to recognize that the process by which meaning is derived is not an automatic one, where perception and sensation activate a system that runs to a set conclusion, but instead a creative process that requires no particular frame. With this, we can appreciate the intimate connection between banal popular song on the radio and the intellectual labour performed at a desk on the computer by the white young man who is far from its stereotypical target audience for the song. This instantiation cannot be understood by reducing people to prejudiced signifiers, it is instead a productive conjunction. This might reveal something of this particular milieu the process of subject formation carries with it the 'traces of affect' referred to by Kassabian. With this way of thinking popular music, to follow the thinking of Kodwo Eshun, popular music is not simply a way to introduce energy into a social setting but a way restructure thought itself, to move it beyond semiotic signification and into affective nebula. These are the tools of univocity.

However, such an ontology of univocity can run the risk of minimizing difference as something superficial. This is inaccurate and something to be avoided. As Professor of African American Studies, Alexander Weheliye, argues in his book, *Phonongraphies: Grooves in Sonic Afro Modernity*, it is not enough to flatten particularities into some problematic universal, as a pseudo-solution to the problems that stem from the ingrained cultural norms of identity (2005: 206-7). Such a process always neglects those elements that do not fit the theory. In doing so, such theories diminish conflict, power dynamic, and oppression to mere social illusions. This is neither true nor helpful. At the same time, however, insisting on the primacy of particularity, Weheliye points out, would 'leave the general discursive architecture untouched' (208). Instead, Weheliye advocates for a thinking of singularity (ibid) as opposed to the enclosing notion of particularity. Singularity looks to those intensities that a cultural practice engages in and at the same time opens it up to the mainstream discourse (208).

The ontology of Deleuze and Guattari should not be thought of as a shortcut through difficulties of oppression and power but merely charting a route of this possibility. Work has to be done along the way. As has been mentioned with Kassabian's understanding of identity, the semantic knowledge of the particularity of

an identity construction—its reference to the arbitrary signification of a particular notion of subjectivity—does not eliminate the 'traces of affect' (2013: xxvii) that are left in a process of subjectification.

This connects to the above discussion, of the capacity of capitalism to appropriate different modes of oppression in the service of its particular goal, which should be understood not as diminishing the impact of these modes of oppression but merely acknowledges the disregard for them within Capitalism. None of this promises that operating on the assumption of empirical univocity is enough to solve the problems currently experienced by so many in neoliberal, late capitalism. Rather this is a starting point, a position to begin work from. As Weheliye states;

> ...[T]he lack of obvious focus and the absence of a conceptual and institutional centre have lead to a retrenchment. Nevertheless, this lack could prove to be the humanities' strongest asset in the current cultural climate, as it presents a chance to leave behind old beliefs in order to invent non disciplinary disciplines that are always in the throes of becoming, where limits are not preset but negotiated within the context of the intellectual project in question. (Weheliye 2005: 200).

This is how we should understand sonic fiction, as an attempt to form something of a "nondisciplinary discipline", through an engagement with sonic fiction that destabilizes the divisions between fields and disciplines and in doing so one perhaps build its own tools to address the problems we face. This is what the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari's theory enables. Adornian theory was not capable of escaping the position from which it criticized cultural production, but it introduced many vital imperatives with which to do so. If these imperatives can be channeled in such a way as to drives the construction of, what Deleuze and Guattari might call, machines of thought there may be a possibility of moving beyond the impasse of these theoretical perspectives. Sonic fiction provides a frame through which to achieve that, although what shall fill that frame requires more attention.

Desiring Machines and Passive Synthesis.

Deleuze and Guattari root their theory of capitalism, power and really all material activity, in their conception of desire. This allows them to remove the perceived separation between psychological and material needs. In addition, this calls into question the key notion of Freudian psychology, that human subjectivity is inherently defined by lack. This is not to suggest that we have all been manipulated by Freudian psychology, but that it describes some persistent ossified norms of social psychology that underpin capitalism.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the image of a society made up of an atomized neurotic individuals is not human nature, but the result of the specific formation of desire in the milieu of bourgeois capitalism. What they term Oedipal subjects, are incapable of desiring outside the manufactured needs of capitalism;

> Lack (*manqué*) is created, planned and organized in and through social production. It is counter-produced as a result of the pressure of anti-production. [...] It is never primary; production is never organized on the basis of pre-existing need or lack. It is lack that infiltrates itself, creates empty spaces or vacuoles, and propagates itself in accordance with the organization of an already existing organization of production. The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of a dominant class. (41)

For Deleuze and Guattari, what is perceived as lack, as something missing from the subject, is, in fact, an inversion of positive a desire; a creative force that has been deformed by the functions of the market economy. This deformation is intentional, in as much as it is necessary for capitalism to continue to produce what is expected or desired. There is no nefarious plot to maintain capitalism for its own sake, but rather the condition of capitalism creates the condition in which the perpetuation of capitalism appears as like a desirable course of action.

Deleuze and Guattari propose the concept of the desiring-machine to challenge the lack based explanation of activity in the world. However, it is not as simple as saying that humans or subjects are desiring-machines, which of course they are, but that each facet, or organ, of the human, is also a desiring machine, which is coupled to many others (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 11). This becomes even more complex, as it is not only people that are desiring machines but animals and objects as well. This would seem an odd conception were it not for their collapsing the concepts of desire and production in the term 'desiring-production' (ibid). This proposes that desire is not something that one has but something that instigates action. Desire has to be thought of as a manifestation of energy and as such always in the process of being transferred and transformed (this will be explained more thoroughly below). Desire makes stuff happen in the material world. This is the first conflict they have with traditional psychoanalysis, which would suggest that desire is productive of the fantasies (41) in the imagination, that if restricted can become the source of neurosis. However, for Deleuze and Guattari desire produces the real (42). The real being the things of the material world that can interact. People produce desire in that they, for example, can desire food and thus become hungry. But the food itself can also be a machine productive of desire, although not consciously experience it. Its appearance, its smell, and taste make wanting it as a thing come into the world. Each of these elements could be a machine themselves.

The pop song is perhaps a desiring machine par excellence. Like all desiring machines, it is comprised of thousands of other machines (perhaps many orders more at a molecular level). Deleuze and Guattari provide conceptual tools that allow us to deconstruct sensory phenomena, such as music, in terms of desire and relate them to the underlying forces that form the world. An example would be the concept of rhythmachine, an idea developed by Eshun (1998: -007), which instantiates structures onto the seemingly homogenous passage of time, allowing it to take on meaningful significance. A significance that a subject living the individualizing milieu of neoliberal capitalism may well desire. At the same time, the ability to produce desire could be said to degrade over time, as within this genre a transient contemporaneity and novelty are imperative. The next big thing is always the goal. When it arrives, it is already becoming passé. However, Deleuze and Guattari's theory does not simply replace lack with desire but instead builds a theory of desire that is radically unrelated to lack. A concept that comes about through a mechanism that can also be shown to shape the process of subject formation.

Articulating exactly what is meant by desire, for Deleuze and Guattari, requires precision. We know, for example, that desire is in some way a process. Their use of the term desiring-production', as a synonym for desire as such, clearly articulates that for them desire is not a static object but a process of production. However, when we try to work out what is being produced it becomes more difficult. According to Buchanan's careful reading of *Anti-Oedipus*, the definition of desire can be found in the functioning of passive synthesis. A term that has its origins in Deleuze's work, *Difference and Repetition* (2001), which as Buchanan points out is a claim made in the opening chapter of *Anti-Oedipus*. Along with the idea, mentioned above, that desire is what produces the real;

> If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality. Desire is the set of *passive syntheses* that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that functions as units of production. The real is the end product, the result of the passive syntheses of desire as autoproduction of the unconscious. (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 39)

This process is undertaken by the unconscious—conceptualized by Deleuze and Guattari as a factory, in opposition to a Freudian theatre. This allows the mind to constitute itself passively, rather than working backwards from an ideal (Buchanan 2008: 51). Passive synthesis can itself be broken down into different stages, which are explored in the second chapter of *Anti-Oedipus*. These are the; connective synthesis (86), disjunctive synthesis (93) and conjunctive synthesis (103). Buchanan summarizes their functioning thusly;

> 1. Connective Synthesis - mobilizes the Libido as withdrawal energy *{energie de prelevemeni}*
> 2. Disjunctive Synthesis - mobilizes the Numen as detachment energy *{energie de detachement}*
> 3. Conjunctive Synthesis - mobilizes Voluptas as residual energy *{energie de residuelle}*. (Buchanan 2008: 54)

To put these in another way would be the synthesis of sexual desire, the synthesis of the spirit and the synthesis of sensual pleasure or sensation. Arguably the conjunctive synthesis is a second order synthesis, given the mythological origins of Voluptas.

The creation of a particular desire by the connective synthesis also creates that which is antithetical to that desire. This can be thought of but is not reducible to, a binary opposition or a category separation. An important side effect of this, according to Buchanan, is the subject's creation of a desiring 'self' that is differentiated from the rest of existence;

> It takes the form of an 'either/or' judgement: am I parent or child? alive or dead? man or woman? (the neurotic's three questions, according to Lacan). But perhaps we could put it another way, more in keeping with the economic model we have been following. The essential question of the capitalist is always 'will it make a profit or not?' In other words, it is not simply a matter of deciding between being a parent or child, alive or dead, or even man or woman, but of determining the surplus value that will accrue to me for deciding correctly. (61)

We can see parallels here with the Lacanian 'mirror stage' of child development (Boswell 2003: 129) but without the symbolic burdens of that particular school of thought. This concept will be discussed in greater detail later, as the distinction between the Lacanian position on subject formation and that of Deleuze and Guattari is something grappled with throughout the sonic fiction section. Here it is important to note that this theory of synthesis allows for a greater degree of granularity than the notion of a rupture between pre and post mirror stage. Rather than occurring at a single point in development, these syntheses between the body and the environment are ongoing. This also feeds into our understanding of subjects' complicity with capitalism, as it does not require routing in a theory of discursive ideology. Once these syntheses (connection and disjunction) have occurred, we reach the final stage in the process of desire/subject formation, the synthesis of conjunction.

In the synthesis of conjunction, the result of pre-subjective free desire, forged, formed, and fixed through the previous two syntheses, results in a tension. This tension can be referred to as the residue This residue, in some sense, could be thought of as a particular formation that we call subjectivity. Within a Western bourgeois post-Freudian culture, this can also be thought of as *the self*. If we read the notion that the conjunctive synthesis 'mobilizes Voluptas as residual energy' with the mythological

source, it is then perhaps possible to illustrate what this might mean. Voluptas was the goddess of sensual pleasure, and the result of the coming together of Cupid (or Eros, the god of desire) and Psyche the goddess of the spirit or soul. The connective synthesis is libidinal, which simultaneously produces the restriction of the noumena in the disjunctive synthesis. What is found in the conjunctive is the residue of these syntheses in conflict, producing a being caught between limitless desire and the structure of obtaining and understanding it.

This complex notion of desire that is immanent to subjectivity, rather than desire as merely a projection of a subject's fantasy, defines the Deleuze and Guattari paradigm. Desire is a bodied response to a milieu. A body with the capacity for a productive unconscious, constrained by the norms with which it comes into contact. It is important here to highlight that this is a passive process, born out of a body's response to *what is*. As such if *what is* was to be different, then the residual subjectivity would also be different. Subject formation is not something that can simply be willed by some core self. For Deleuze and Guattari, no such core exists.

In the sonic fiction of *boring dystopia*, this conception of desire and subject formation complicate the narrator of the in their attempt to uncover what politically and ethically is at stake in the experience of popular music. An understanding of popular music as something rooted in and spiralling out from the synthesis of desire is at once compelling to the narrator and utterly undermines his Adornian inspiration for embarking on this project.

This has implications for how we consider the production of popular music. Deleuze and Guattari would agree that popular music exists under the conditions capitalist production to produce lack. However, that only explains what facilitates its material production not reasons people engage in its production. If popular music is so contingent and the result of positive action, rather than the incorrect approach to filling a lack, then to critique requires a different set of considerations than those simply unpicking ideology. Most troubling perhaps, is that this theory of what motivates this form of enjoyment or, at the very least, its consumption, does not in itself offer up any solutions to thinking beyond the capitalist enjoyment of cultural production, let alone a way to move beyond capitalism.

At the time of the French publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, it may have seemed that Deleuze and Guattari's notion of schizoanalysis, which sought to free desire from the conformist structures of bourgeois life in late capitalism. The containment of the sexuality within strict gender roles, the imperative to own property, fixing your productive capacity solely to generate capital for the firm and purchasing a vast array of commodities.

Today, while no one would claim that any of these issues have been resolved, what we have seen is a modulation in the way in which capitalist societies are

organized, that mitigate critique while at the same time exacerbating some of the conditions that make such critique necessary. The analysis offered by Boltanski and Chiapello, capitalist societies did not fight to retain as intact the social organization that so many, including Deleuze and Guattari protested. Instead, ways were found to incorporate elements of the critique. These include networked employment, precarious work, the expansion of credit (simultaneously debt), with some states making previously deviant sexualities a part of the mainstream. It is not malleability as such or even the simple unleashing desire that is needed if capitalism is to be overcome. This problem is something that preoccupies the narrator of this sonic fiction of *boring dystopia*, as they attempt to progress towards a solution.

On "Bored in the USA" On Letterman On YouTube.

This—Father John Misty, performing "Bored in the USA" on *The Late Show* with David Letterman—happened in November of 2014, and only through a confluence of influences did I even have cause to look it up. So I have arrived at it (along with nearly 470,000 other viewers) once the initial promotional ruckus has subsided. Since I first wrote this sentence the official video has been removed from YouTube; copies abound, however.

I am, to a certain extent, going to talk Father John Misty (Josh Tillman) as a musician/artist/beard-enthusiast/social-commentator, though this is actually to facilitate something else. This is also true of the discussion of the particular mechanics of this performance. What I really want to talk about is this piece of media, as a little piece of cut up T.V. thrown up online and used to promote a becoming-anachronistic media format, and from this, extrapolating to wider discussions about modes of expression, aesthetics, society, politics, ennui, etc. But to get there the media sort of piles up.

This song is from FJM's album *I Love You, Honeybear* (2014) and has been understood to be "satirical" by numerous commentators, largely due to its lyrical content. For example, the chorus;

> I'm just a little bored in the USA,
> Oh just a little bored in the USA,
> Save me white Jesus,
> Bored in the USA,

This is an obvious reference to Springsteen's, wilfully misunderstood, "Born in the U.S.A". But on the third line, he makes a remark that would cause pseudo-agitation for conservative media commentators.

There is also some interesting stuff running throughout the song about marriage and chrono-normativity in relationships and consumerism in the opening verses. This is not, however, ostensibly a comedy song. It does teeter on the edge of becoming one particularly with the line "Can I get my money back", as the song builds before the chorus, and the word "back" expands into stratospheric ornamentation with ascending string accompaniment. And thus the vacuousness of the late capitalist notion of the "consumer as king" has firmly been skewered. Though, like a cultural vapour, late capitalism, and neoliberalism, as notions, are pretty much immune to skewers. It's just sort of like waving the skewer above a boiling kettle; you'll move the team around, but it's still basically steam. Deleuze and Guattari wrote in 1972 that 'Capitalism is

profoundly illiterate', and I think this extends to the subtext resulting from the juxtaposition of form and content. But musical comedy is not to everyone's taste.

Often satire is merely a cathartic release for the already converted. A way in which to confirm your own beliefs, in the company of a like-minded virtual community and simultaneously ridicule your opponents. Adorno thought that catharsis to be a primary mechanism of the culture industry in the reproduction of capitalism, as the 'substitute satisfaction' of catharsis satiated the public's desire to struggle for change. And, for sure, you can certainly get that out of this song, especially on lines like "Save me President Jesus", easy lines to flatter the American left, whatever that is.

But, if this were entirely the case, if satire only serves to relieve suffering, then it would be an extraordinarily conservative and pursuit. However, satire can be constructive if you accept, along with Žižek, that far from irony or cynicism being opposed to sincerity, irony and cynicism allow for the expression of sincerity in the particular conditions of our age.

Tilman, with his hip beard; retro tight fitting clothing; playing music that is sonically influenced by nostalgic Americana; is laden with the baggage of painful earnestness. This could lead an ungenerous listener to dismiss the song as millennial whining, but in the Letterman performance, this gets gradually undercut.

After the first verse, during which Tilman appears to be playing the piano, he turns away from the keyboard and reveals the piano is playing by itself. With this, we get some points for recognizing the artifice of the media event: the artificiality of whatever Letterman represented. However, once we reach the chorus and Tilman are lamenting his boredom, sat atop the piano like a lounge singer, before rising to his knees asking for salvation from "White Jesus", he has included himself as a target of ridicule. The satirical elements of the song are no longer directed solely at Tillman's opponents but, beyond the textual self-loathing of the second verse, he starts to attack his own delivery of the message and the medium by which he is presenting it; the TV performance of the earnest social-comment ballad. This becomes even more complex as the performance moves to the bridge.

> They gave me useless education,
> And a subprime loan,
> On a craftsman home,
> Keep my prescriptions filled,
> And now I can't get off,
> But I can kind of deal,
> Oh deal.

In this section of the recorded version canned laughter is mixed in. Increasing in intensity with each line before becoming rapturous laughter applause as the chorus returns; Bored in the U.S.A. The section becomes a set of one-liners from hack comic.

For whom, Tilman's sincerity becomes the punchline. This allows us to see how the power of these images can be instantly snuffed out by the laughter of an audience hungry for cathartic release.

In other live performances this laughter track is missing but on Letterman, it's there. Regardless of whatever Tillman's original intention for the laughter (perhaps to get-there-first, for cynical or ironic defence), we are able to witness the act of defanging a content-based critique. This laughter is not the Studio audience, you can hear them separately at the end. This is laughter being played to the audience.

Since his first book in English, written in the late 80s, Žižek has been making the argument that canned laughter helps to fulfil the duty of the consumer to laugh at and enjoy the products of late a capitalist entertainment, even if they are too exhausted to open their mouths or don't find them funny. Try watching Friends with the volume on low, so you can't hear the dialogue, just the laugh track. The laughter is almost rhythmic like it fits to a scene based metric rather than the more organic subtleties of performance. It sounds like a twenty minute evening ritual. On "Bored in the U.S.A." however, the laughter is literally rhythmic, drawing attention to its qualities of artifice, consumer duty and supplement.

This gets more interesting on YouTube, as the clip, in this discrete form, contains both the canned laughter and the applause of an audience. The audience we hear is the artefact. When we watch a clip of *The Late Show*, especially one posted officially, we aren't watching *The Late Show*, we are watching a taster intended to promote the idea that it would be great to watch *The Late Show*. Listen to that audience; they're having such a great time. But then we watch FJM play a mimetic form of the audience's own laughter to the audience. We are the audience of that media. An iteration of media that contain a representation of its own mediation.

This is what makes me think that, in the instance of *The Late Show* performance, Tillman has done more than only cover his appearance of naivety and sincerity. Rather, the potential is there for these satirical remarks to perhaps haunt a wider audience, as he beats them to their own ironic response. This isn't going to change the world, but it's kind of interesting to see a subtle device of audience-critique, usually left in the wilderness of the art world, on mainstream late-night TV. What can be seen on this extra medial layer, as trad media institutions have now firmly arrived on the Google owned YouTube, is perhaps the beginnings of the end of the cultural stasis supposedly ushered in by full saturation of mass media and the postmodern condition. This is not to say the Internet will save us all; it is just a tool. A tool that, in this case, allows us to see more in what media institutions produce than they perhaps intended. What we can see here; as the laughter kicks in, and Tillman shrugs and sings with audible sincerity, is the opening up of a space where irony and sincerity can

coexist, adding complexity to a satirical expression that may move beyond a mere cathartic functionality. But I don't know what that will look or sound like yet.

Catharsis.

His last resort: entertainment. Make something so bloody compelling it would reverse thrust on young self's fall into the womb of solipsism, anhedonia, death in life.
(Wallace 2007: 839)

Emotion and Catharsis.

The previous chapter ended with the suggestion that the complicity is both imposed upon and willingly entered into, by the subjects of capitalism. This situation induces physical and psychological strain. That this is the case is not in line with some intention to prevent the progress of civilization to some potentially utopian society, but simply because of what capitalism, and particularly neoliberal capitalism, requires of its subjects. What elements constitute this suffering ranges from the concrete and outrageous practices of exploitation associated with the mining rare earth minerals to the existentially boring, such as cognitarian worker whose behaviour is molded for productivity and whose passions become little more than cultural capital. There is no equivalence to be drawn between these examples, rather it is important to recognize the interconnectedness of both of these forms of suffering. In this chapter it will be asserted that under such conditions cultural production, and therefore popular music, have a very specific role, that of the maintaining the emotional and psychological lives of subjects under capitalism, through enacting catharsis to purify (or heal?) the damage that has accrued under capitalist social relations.

The connection between music and the stimulation of emotional and affective responses has drawn the attention of researchers for centuries from a number of different perspectives. In recent years these have included studies from sociological (DeNora 2000) psychological (Juslin & Sloboda 1982), media and communications (Hesmondhalgh 2013) and musicological (Frith 1981, 1987) points of view. Meanwhile, the work from a cultural studies perspective has tended to focus on the relationship of music to affect (Gilbert 2004). To give a sense of this field's deep history, as noted by

Tia DeNora, in her ethnographic study *Music in Everyday Life* (DeNora 2002: 83), most of the literature, from Aristotle onwards[16], has been devoted to speculation on 'what music may produce which emotion?' (84). This seems like a reasonable question and a reasonable perspective to take when starting to investigate the different roles that music plays in our lives. That the experience of music can make one feel something is likely the main reason that it has retained the power and status it has within society, in spite of powerfully significant developments in media over the millennia. However, despite this being a foundational point of interest in the art form, DeNora laments the relative lack of empirical research that has been carried out into the relationship between music and emotion. This is further complicated for DeNora, as she regards much of the semiotic approach of traditional musicological analysis, which treats pieces of music as textual sources, to be interesting but too reliant on individual interpretation (2000: 25). DeNora also recognizes the difficulty for psychological research any attempts at re-creating laboratory conditions in the real world (and vice-versa) as part of this problem (ibid). For proper scientific psychological research such 'controlled' conditions are a necessary starting point for the validation of data from which trends or conclusions might be drawn. However, such findings have limited applicability to wider cultural trends. If we add to this, as was explored earlier in this thesis, the difficulties in defining what music is and what musical experiences are, the object of research for empirical observation becomes even more elusive.

However, this may be a reason that music and musical experience remain of such interest, and why they might benefit from multiple perspectives from such disparate fields. That being said, even with a defined objects of research, Frith argues that sociological research into any popular music at all did not begin in earnest until towards the end of the 1970s (1980: 4). Thus a great deal of data concerning this ephemeral form that might have been generated prior to this time has been lost. Though, despite these difficulties, there are some fields, outside of the academy that appear to have accumulated an impressive comprehension concerning the relationship between music and emotion. In an oddly duplicitous motion, it could be argued that through the close association of popular music with commercialism and advertising over the last century, as examined in Timothy Taylor's *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture* (2012), the market has carried out its own research into the power of music over emotion and associated these findings with the resultant behaviours, in the pursuit of profit. It appears that to have an acute understanding of the mechanics of this particular capacity of music, can be a very marketable skill.

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[16] See Aristotle 1984: 2128-2129, for observations of the emotional and resultant functional responses to different musical modes.

In this chapter it will be asserted that when one explores the interactions of music, capitalism, and subjectivity, that focusing on how music makes persons feel is, perhaps, to miss the point. The capacity that music, as experienced, has to generate emotion is a complex and rich field that points to a great many questions, which will likely always require further investigation. But to focus on that capacity is perhaps, in the current context, unavoidably similar to conducting market research. The contention of this research is that it is not so important to look to where your attention has been directed (consciously understood as a discursively expressible emotional response) but rather what it has been directed away from. Namely suffering. In this vein we could perhaps see the use of music to generate emotion, not as emotional aesthetic experience for its own sake but rather to stop feeling some other emotional, aesthetic experience. Rather than following the associative chain from the music to perceptible feeling, in this chapter, the focus is instead on how music can control or contain undesired emotion. As DeNora recognizes in her discussion of Gibson's concept of 'affordance', music has the capacity to allow one to forget their suffering;

> ...[I]t would seem to be part of the natural attitude (or, in Adorno's sense, the 'ontological ideology') to 'forget', paraphrasing Marx, that we are oppressed by the things we have helped to produce. This 'forgetting' is the cognitive practice of reification. (DeNora 2000: 40)

This is an interesting notion that the experience of music can be used to forget something else. The term that shall be used here to denote this particular affordance of music is that of *catharsis*. However, as shall be explored in this chapter, catharsis is not a simple term. Additionally, to frame this capacity of music with such a complex term, especially in a discussion of popular music, allows for such a seemingly banal experience to be discussed in connection with substantial traditions of critique across numerous disciplines and in doing so attempt to enrich the field from this perspective.

Engaging with these traditions allows the capacity of music to facilitate to be addressed as something that is already societal rather than, in a limited sense, personal. As much as subjective experience on a small scale is key to the situation of these experiences within the context of larger narratives, in order to maintain a significant political dimension. Otherwise, in our defence of commercially produced cultural production, we may end up placing severe limitations on the capacity of aesthetic experience and expression to affect change. This can be read in Frith's understanding of these issues, in his critique of Marxist criticisms of enjoyment of mass cultural productions such as rock music;

> Cultural commodities may support the contemporary power of capital, but they have their civilising moments, and even as the most effortless background music, rock is a source of vigour and exhilaration and of

the good feelings that are necessary for the next morning's political struggle as for the next day's work. (Frith 1981 264)

This may seem to be in reference to the positive capacity of rock music to create 'good-feelings', rather than the purging of feelings of catharsis. However, it can also be read that a positive capacity generated through music is that by the manner in which it affects a forgetting that 'we are oppressed by the things we have helped to produce,' as noted by DeNora above. This is music as a means of recovery. In this conception, the 'good-feelings' are the purging torrent. A torrent that dissipates once it has run their course. Frith seems to inadvertently suggest a need for the self-administered repression of bad feelings. This may be necessary, to survive in the conditions of capitalism, but if this is all that there is to the aesthetic experience of popular music, then there is no need to expend another word on the subject. Being made to feel better, or merely less bad will not help to address the causes of the bad feelings.

The Problem of Catharsis.

Catharsis is different from the other concepts discussed so far in that it can be held to be inherently problematic. While the concepts explored so far (*Attention* and *Complicity*) were explored to illustrate how they are useful to capitalism, in general, these concepts should be regarded as relatively ambivalent categories of human behaviour. These modes of behaviour are not in and of themselves of use to capitalism. One can be criticized for what they pay attention to and the degree to which they pay attention, but the fact that they have the capacity to pay attention could not be considered a bad thing. Similarly, one can be criticized for what they are complicit with, but one could also be complicit in the formation of an emancipatory society. These behaviours would take place regardless of overarching social structure or ideology. However, it can be contended that catharsis, as a concept, has some more troubling implications. The purifying purgation of corruption requires both a prior corruption and a norm, against which to contrast those who have been corrupted. The effects of undergoing catharsis, however, could be argued to be, if not in themselves detrimental, at least failing to address that which is detrimental.

As a term, catharsis can be somewhat difficult to define precisely. In traditional philosophical discourse, from the writings of Aristotle, catharsis is taken to refer to a process of emotional purging. In his *Poetics,* Aristotle expands a medical metaphor to elucidate how tragic drama 'with incidents arousing pity and fear, were to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions' (Aristotle, 1984: 2320). Although, as is hinted in his *Rhetoric,* he could be making the case for a wide range of artistic practices (comedy,

drama, music) as ways in which to purge a subject of any particular emotion (2128-2129).

From this tradition, an understanding of catharsis has developed and mutated within the instrumental setting of psychological therapy (Freud 1987: 254). In its therapeutic sense, as developed by Freud and his colleague Josef Breuer, catharsis is thought to enable patients, through various methods of regression, to re-live and experience the emotional states of past trauma and in doing so come to some understanding of it (ibid). Interestingly, this implementation adds to the concept of catharsis a clear connection to the notions of closure and resolution. Having appeared to resolve these issues, the subject of such an experience is directed towards a better psychological condition that is free from neurosis, and places these traumas firmly in the past where they are not to be engaged with further.

These definitions, amongst others, have helped to form a more commonplace understanding of catharsis as something that, while not necessarily purging, allows one to come to terms with, and be relieved of, past experiences or emotional states. This terminology is now applied outside of therapeutic settings to describe the method that enabled individuals to carry on, *as they did before*, for the next day and the next week, etcetera, literally maintaining their status quo. This is the implicit problem with Frith's defence of the experience of rock music. Catharsis is a mechanism that allows people to be relieved of perceived and experienced burdens by changing their perspective. Here we find links to Freudian cathartic therapy. This works on the theory that something that was traumatic from the lived perspective of childhood may cause neurosis if the experience becomes the basis of an unresolved dynamic. But the conscious re-experience of these events from the new perspective of adulthood allows the trauma to be overcome. Changing one's perspective allows their burdens to be contextualized differently. Specifically as in not in the same terms that were so distressing previously, to allow an individual to go on unencumbered. In this conception catharsis is a process that, to be directly understood as such, often requires a catalyst, something to instigate and accelerate the cathartic purgation. These catalysts can often be found via engagement with artistic material, as in Aristotle's definition, in a therapeutic setting or in some event that evokes an intense experiential reflection. It should be noted that these ways into a cathartic process are aesthetic; in the sense that in order to purge the bad feelings and thus provide relief from negative emotions, they rely on the sensitivity of a subject to their experience.

A familiar example of this, in relation to non-artistic experience, could be that of bereaved participants on a charity run. Often at the finish line, the idea will be expressed they found the experience to be cathartic. While it is not right to reduce this experience entirely to material factors, there are certain aesthetic elements that are notable. It may be correct to suggest that catharsis in this instance has been instigated

by the individual's sensitivity, to perceive the event in relation to their personal narratives, and to have felt a heightened perception of the experience as a positive unburdening through the endorphin release that is simultaneously resultant from the strenuous physical exertion. These are unlikely to be the only elements that constitute such a rich experience but they are certainly factors. Similarly, the evocative power of popular music, contingent on its multifariously temporally specific ubiquity and atmospheric materiality may help some people to consciously or unconsciously re-experience past events, from perhaps a happier or unhappy time. In such a way this activity may engender a shift in perspective that could be described as cathartic.

This is to say that catharsis is something experiential and relational. It does not reside only in art works or similar experiences but is produced through our relation to them. While numerous examples of such experiences can be cited, that this is the best that can be hoped for, it should be noted that catharsis is only ever a treatment that is effective upon the symptoms of suffering and cannot directly address the causes.

Adorno, Aristotle, Catharsis and Power.

Catharsis can be understood as something oppressive. This is because, as a mechanism for purging or purification, catharsis is only a tool for the management of suffering, and it is ill suited to the prevention the suffering in the first place. Of course, a certain degree of suffering may well be unavoidable, stemming from the limitations of embodied existence and the complexities of social interaction and desire. One could argue that the previous example of charity runners, perhaps running in the service of a cancer charity or stricken loved one, are prime candidates deserving of the cathartic release from this unavoidable suffering. However, if the impulse to be purged and purified of ills is applied broadly and uncritically, then catharsis is something that can be seen as potentially a mode of pacification. This is certainly the view taken in Marxist analysis. In the following quotation, Adorno outlines a critique of Aristotelian catharsis in the conditions of late capitalism, which also calls into question how the work of ancient Greek thinkers has become a resource for modern oppression;

> The purging of the affects in Aristotle's *Poetics* no longer makes equally frank admission of its devotion to ruling interests, yet it supports them all the same in that his ideal of sublimation entrusts art with the task of providing aesthetic semblance as a substitute satisfaction for the bodily satisfaction of the targeted public's instincts and needs: Catharsis is a purging action directed against the affects and an ally of repression. Aristotelian catharsis is part of a superannuated mythology of art and [is] inadequate to the actual effects of art. [...] Art, as a substitute satisfaction, by virtue of the fact that it is spurious, robs sublimation of the dignity for which the whole

> of classicism made propaganda, a classicism that survived for over two thousand years under the protection of Aristotle's authority. The doctrine of catharsis imputes to art the principle that ultimately the culture industry appropriates and administers. (Adorno 2013: 324)

In the first instance, it is necessary to note that Adorno insists on a dignity of sublimation. He may well be referring to the notion of aesthetic, rather than psychoanalytic sublimation, as a mediated (as opposed to immediate) gratification (Marcuse 2002: 75). However, there remains a problematic reliance on a Freudian conception of subjectivity as being fixed to bourgeois norms. Despite this, Adorno's is still an important critique of catharsis. Adorno criticizes the appeal to the necessity of the satisfaction (or relief) provided by catharsis because the satisfaction prevents the analysis of what causes a desire for such satisfaction to exist in the first place. He intimates that this necessity of relief is highly contingent on a particular set of social relations and serves to maintain the stability of those relations. The pursuit of satisfaction, as some sort of merely pleasurable completion, would be problematic enough for Adorno, but additionally, this satisfaction is a 'substitute satisfaction' thus rendered a mere commodity exchange. From Adorno's point of view, actual satisfaction would only be possible if it 'targeted public's instincts and needs' were materially addressed, rather than merely aesthetically sublimated. This would require radical social change, in which the question of satisfaction itself would also radically change its meaning.

As well as being merely a substitute for satisfaction, catharsis also seems to actively prevent the cultivation of resources within people to improve their situations individually or collectively, by limiting the available interpretations of the experience of aesthetic engagement. In relation to the discussion above, while catharsis does induce a shift in perspective and interpretation, this shift is prescribed by the dynamics of the cathartic process, which requires resolution. This prevents other interpretations from developing thus delimiting what is meaningful in experience. This formulation should be considered with the discussion of pleasure and satisfaction in the previous chapters in relation to anhedonia. There it was argued that the anhedonic experience of the cultural productions of late capitalism stemmed from an inability to gain satisfaction from a pursuit of pleasure. While these experiences provided the pleasant sensations that were proper to the experience of pleasure they could not provide the necessary satisfaction. Adorno is working with a different definition of pleasure than this. He considers it in terms of the pleasant sensations alone. That said his argument seems to move along similar lines, that the pursuit of pleasurable relief or satisfaction in catharsis is self-defeating, as it only offers a nullifying substitute.

Adorno states in this critical summary of Aristotle that catharsis is 'purging action directed against the affects'. As mentioned already, the purging motion seems to

be a denial of the experiences that produce a desire for purgation. This may be a reasonable response to the experience of suffering but it carries with it problematic implications. If aesthetic experience is applied to the purgation of affects, both those generated from a particular aesthetic experience and the traces of affect that Kassabian argues constitute identity and personal experience, this would then prevent the richness of these interpretive resources from being experienced. These are the resources that Adorno's contemporary the utopian communist Ernest Bloch cites as being the potential contained music to help to change the world. Bloch's argument is that music can provide 'the best access to the hermeneutics of affects' (Bloch 1985, 208). This means that not only does music generate affective responses but that also it provides us with the tools to interpret and perhaps understand these affective responses.

Some of Bloch's understanding of music as a tool with which to look at situations and experiences differently[17], may seem somewhat naive as a way in which to think of the emancipatory potential of music. However, it is important not to dismiss them outright. This is especially true when it comes to dealing with the pessimism of Adorno. The logic of Adorno's understanding of reification is such that it can even encroach onto the prized affective 'shudder' (Adorno 2013: 116-117), thus, ultimately trapping artistic practices with no room to instigate any sort of resistance against the status quo. Thus Bloch's specific example, of an ambivalent potential in art and specifically music, means that even in a situation that Adorno regards as being, of total mediation (2013: 92), the potential always exists to find something different in an affective experience. While this bears similarities to Adorno's notion that art can provide an ambivalent capacity to imagine the world as other than it is, with Bloch's work, finding a new perspective a subject can assert agency in the formation of this imagination. With Bloch, the emancipatory potential in the affective communication of music straddles the conscious and the unconscious, giving the experience the resources to be interpreted and understood as such. This implies a relational dynamic between the music and the subject that is, if not missing, is somewhat reduced in Adorno.

That said, there are perhaps problematic elements of Bloch's analysis. For example, it could be argued that the use of music for the interpretation of affect resulted in catharsis. Thus purging the subject of the affects that were understood, by a seemingly rational self, to be harmful. However, this can be reconciled if one considers catharsis not as a resolution of interpretation but as a forced cessation of the opportunity for interpretation, which is certainly the case in Adorno's reading of Aristotle.

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[17] For example; 'It's just a matter of finding a vantage point from which to view those utopian lands of meaning which are located in the window of the work, so to speak.' (Bloch 1985: 91)

With this in mind we can begin to see catharsis as a mechanism of control. Wherein, the process of 'lack creation' in market economics is met by the creation of products that offer catharsis. Paradoxically purging the lack while producing more. Such a mechanism would be able to control behaviour by systematically producing and selling the treatment for the condition caused by the same system. The danger of this, when read with the traditional theoretical critiques of Adorno and Bloch, is that this mechanism can reduce the range of acceptable interpretations of aesthetic experience to a sort of palliative medicine, like the drowsiness of a strong pain-killer. To offer only pseudo-resolution of cathartic experience where perhaps no actual resolution yet exists.

If this is the case, and if it were to be consciously acknowledged, then it would be conducive to the project of social control for those with the resources to limit the range of material, or simply the access to such material, that could be productive of interpretations deviant from the maintenance of the status quo. However, in our culture, such conscious acknowledgment is not necessary thanks to the logic of the market. The market has mechanisms built into it that support the production of material for which the greatest numbers of people are willing to pay. Such mechanisms step outside of whichever social groups or whatever norms they deem important. One only need look at the disparity between what critics deem to be interesting and good and what generates the most profit from the largest audience. While this may seem a problematic example, as the critics often come from a particular (upper) class and educational background, not available to the majority of people, this disparity itself points to the problem that is flattened under the guise of consumer choice and human nature.

The link between these mechanisms of audience demand and music that satisfies them has long been understood. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* during a discussion of how different musical modes can be used for the purposes of the purging of different passions, he argues that those of lower social positions should be provided with a lesser music that explicitly links catharsis to the maintenance of a social order;

> The melodies that purge the passions likewise give an innocent pleasure to mankind. Such are the modes and the melodies in which those who perform music at the theatre should be invited to compete. But since the spectators are of two kinds — the one free and educated, and the other a vulgar crowd composed of artisans, labourers, and the like — there ought to be contests and exhibitions as instituted for the relaxation of the second class also. And the music will correspond to their minds; for as their minds have [been] perverted from the natural state, so there are perverted modes and highly-strung and unnaturally coloured melodies. A man receives pleasure from what is natural to him, and therefore professional musicians may be allowed to practice this lower sort of music before an audience of a lower type. (Aristotle, 1984: 2129)

While it goes without saying that our society is very different from that of ancient Greece, in the post-industrial West, many of our social and ideological edifices are based on Greek thought. And seemingly this line of thought in particular (Gilbert 2014: 52). If we take both Aristotle's descriptions of the low music permitted for low people, and (in Adorno's reading) Plato's attempt to use art for 'the support of the status quo' (Adorno 2013: 324), what is suggested herein is a need to radically critique the notion of catharsis as a notion that is deeply enmeshed in the culture as something unambiguously positive.

Clearly, in Adorno's view, the emancipatory potential in a work of art is not that it makes you feel better about your situation. Even if this were to change your perspective and somehow allow you to carry on, this would not be emancipatory as the unencumbered feeling would necessarily be illusory. Thus as you carried on you would become encumbered once again. Nor would such a mechanism provide you with an imagination of the world as other-than-it-is beyond capitalism. Also, for thinkers such as Marcuse (2002: 75), this illusory relief is such that it would make one yet more subservient to capitalist social relations. This is repressive desublimation (ibid). The productions that can be the source of one's relief can also justify their suffering as natural, or indeed good, and thus make one dependent on these productions for relief.

This seems to be the ancient Greek origins of the mechanism that Adorno and Horkheimer claim to see in cultural production, as it exists in the culture industry 1997: 144-145). What they term "pleasure:, or the pleasant sensations proper to pleasure, provides a way in which to 'forget suffering'. That it purports to purge the acknowledgment of suffering and thus much of the passion for changing their situation. For the subjects described by Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis, who are faced with the seeming impossibility of changing the organization of society for the better, this forgetting is necessary to attain freedom from 'the last remaining thoughts of resistance' that only seem to be a further burden. This relief may actually be at the expense of whatever it is that could be seen in popular music as having emancipatory potential; namely, the imagination of a world beyond capitalism.

For Adorno, of course, popular music always lacks emancipatory potential. As he problematically, though not simplistically, argues it perpetuates 'the discourse of bourgeois music' (Gilbert & Pearson 2002). However, for those seeking to find what such music can be understood to offer, as a resource for emancipation, Frith's conception of it as simply something that allows one to be pleasurably rejuvenated for the 'next morning's political struggle', implicitly suggests that this potential has already been defeated. This is not to say that such rejuvenation might not be necessary from time to time, but rather that it is not an argument for engagement with popular music as being in any way emancipatory. If the experience of popular music is to offer anything in the way of emancipation, then we need to understand in greater detail the

nature of the suffering that it helps us to purge. This may allow us to twist this in other more helpful directions.

Psychological Catharsis and Power.

Adorno's position views catharsis in art as an ally of oppression. This is because catharsis fails to address the suffering it relieves and is so readily provided by the mechanisms of oppression. This could also be argued to be the case for a psychological understanding of catharsis in the treatment of mental illness. As mentioned above, catharsis was the goal of many of Freud's analytic techniques. However, the contemporary discourse around mental health faces an impasse when trying to consider the cultural and societal context of the patient and their condition (Berardi 2015a: 3). That being said, to unravel this relationship of therapeutic catharsis requires some understanding of what is sometimes referred to as the cathartic method.

Seemingly, in a psychological sense, the ability to achieve catharsis, with regards to 'release of emotions and tensions' (Strickland 2001: 116), can be considered as a medical treatment. This definition was derived from Freud's work with Breuer in developing the cathartic method. This goal of release appears to be carried from Freud's work as he refers to the therapeutic aim of the cathartic method as;

> [T]o provide that the quota of affect used for maintaining the symptom, which had got on the wrong lines and had [...] become strangulated there, should be directed along the normal path along which it could obtain discharge. (Freud 1989: 13)

Freud uses the term *affect* here. However, he uses this term roughly, and it could easily be replaced with emotion which is understood to be something experienced by a socially defined self, rather than on a 'pre-personal' level. Freud later remarks that in evaluating the method that the results from its deployment with patients were 'excellent'. The only defect was located in the use hypnosis that Breuer had applied to it (ibid), which Freud would later replace with 'free association' (17). The cathartic method, commonly known as the 'talking cure' (Breuer & Freud 1957: 30), would go on to form the basis 'for all later forms of psychotherapy and counselling' (Launer 2005). This could be seen as the formation of the kernel of a cultural norm; *through communicating personal traumas to a person is vested with institutional authority, actual psychological well-being can be restored.*

In many ways this has not been a bad thing, as expressing problems with other people, with or without medical authority, can enable them to help someone whose

problems are perhaps not visible. What is problematic is that the vested authority of a psychology establishment. Even as this establishment has attempted to shed its relationship to Freud, it has worked to define a particular natural state for human mental well-being. Especially the well-being that is conducive to the productive capacity of individuals for the accumulation of capital. The only exceptions to this are those whose brains are physically unable to be made to function in such a way, who are to be managed through other methods. The symptoms to which Freud refers impinge on a subject's ability to function within society but are considered treatable. However, the society in question is not universal but particular. It is neoliberal capitalism that makes some very particular demands of the behaviour of individuals if they are to be considered functional or healthy. The goal of cathartic therapy is to return the subject to a state in which they can fit into the social order. The assumption here is that these individuals are in some way individually deficient and not that the social order has been deficient in facilitating their 'flourishing' (Hesmondhalgh 2013: 17). In Lacanian terms, this is a therapy that is impossible to separate from 'the big Other' (Žižek 2008 102-103).

For the (anti-)psychiatrist R.D. Laing, this was a problematic assumption. It is one that creates profound misunderstandings of the nature of mental illness and how best to treat it. Laing sought to understand mental illness as something that stems from the dynamics of power within society and how these were enmeshed within the individual and their interpersonal relationships (Curtis 2007: 19:34). While Laing would also regard opening up verbal communication as important to helping patients in distress, he was compelled to interrogate his role in the relationship. With the premise and aim of returning the patient to the social situation from which they had come, it seemed to Laing to indicate the unspoken politics within the profession (ibid). It may have been this social situation that had been the origin of the patients' problems. In *The Politics of Experience* (1990 [1967]), Laing argues that psychiatric treatment, as it was practiced at the time, ultimately works to dominate individuals in the service of those in power. He suggested that by limiting the acceptable range of experiences that people were allowed to have to a given situation, those in power could manipulate the way that people behaved;

> All those people who seek to control the behaviour of large numbers of other people work in the experience of other people. Once people can be induced to experience a situation in a similar way, they can be expected to behave in a similar way. Induce people to want the same thing, hate the same thing, feel the same threat, then their behaviour is already captive—you have acquired your consumers or your cannon-fodder. (Laing 1990: 80)

For Laing, any resolution that was offered by catharsis would automatically serve to return people to functioning within the existing social order and context and would be a corrupt and an unjust manipulation of a suffering person. In his discussion of the slippery definition of schizophrenia as used by the psychiatric profession in the 1960s (80), Laing observes that the label has become a 'social fact' (100) and that to be diagnosed as a sufferer of this condition becomes a 'political event' (ibid) because the action taken allowed this diagnosis to be justified in the 'maintenance of civic order' (101). In this rather extreme case, the result is the immediate loss of freedom and the loss of acknowledgment from others that you possess a self. As any self in such a situation would be radically different from a healthy self-exhibited by the subjects of late capitalism as understood through psychoanalysis.

Laing was not attempting to argue that these ailments or conditions do not exist. On the contrary, his position was that the potential for these conditions always already exist within us in the psychic schism between our inner selves and what we project to the world (Laing 2010: 17-18). He argues that we have lost our awareness that what is considered mentally ill, might be the rational response to an experience of the violence or cruelties that are endemic under capitalism. Laing claims that to understand this as a personal deficiency is incorrect in the face of so much in the world that causes such feelings to emerge. As Laing observes;

> We are born into a world where alienation awaits us. We are potentially men, but in an alienated state, and this state is not simply a natural system. Alienation as our present destiny is achieved only by outrageous violence perpetrated by human being on human beings. (Laing 1990: 12)

This position, taken together with Laing's notion of how power tries to limit the acceptable interpretations of experience available to individuals in a society suggests a defensive dynamic of power. This is a defence that treats those who do not conform to the correct interpretations of social events as individual aberrations. We could see similar themes develop out of the discourse on human and cultural capital in the previous chapter. That being a competitive societal system that is predicated on the notional success of a few particular "rugged individuals", which would also suggest the existence of a majority of their opposite, and all states in between. However, the fact that a successful minority necessitates an unsuccessful majority is a view that is often neglected. Instead, the argument runs that if the success of these few is possible under the given social conditions, then it is not the conditions that are to blame if you fail, rather it is you, *as an individual,* that is to blame (Berardi 2015a: 158). It is here, with the need to always be performing at your best to survive, let alone progress, that we can see the cultural imperative for the emotional purgation of the catharsis process.

As was explored in the previous chapter, it appears that in taking personal responsibility for one's own catharsis could be viewed in a similar manner as the appreciation of the culturally constructed 'correct' popular music can be viewed. That is, as a careful investment in human capital for an individual, through the selection of the appropriate aesthetic apparatus, with the appropriate *affordance* (DeNora 2000: 40), one can engage in a practice of catharsis that allows one to continue their individual valorisation. If you reach certain levels of personal distress, this may result at least in mental instability or at worst schizophrenia. If this happens, then there are many undesirable consequences for an individual. Such mental conditions are outside of societal normality. Having such conditions can prohibit you from functioning economically within society which is something you are required to be able to do at all times in order to reproduce your existence and surplus value. However, as functioning within society is 'naturally' distressing, it is important to take charge of personally purging this distress. If this is what is actually taking place, then the motives for the stigmatization and individualization of emotional and affective distress may then be found in what such conditions reveal, rather than in what they inhibit.

Capitalism and Schizophrenia.

Laing's work has significant affinities with the work of Deleuze and Guattari in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project. Indeed they make numerous references to Laing throughout. They do, however, reject of Laing's existentialist position, to enable an examination of 'what is non-human in man' (Seem in Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 6). That said, Laing's work provides a way in which to see how, the actual personal suffering, of those under the particular system of social relations of capitalism, are not to be seen as aberrations but rather as aspects of personalities that are endemic to capitalism. In spite of some of Laing's work pre-dating Deleuze and Guattari's collaboration, it can perhaps be considered as an application of their conceptualization of schizophrenia which places schizophrenia as 'the exterior limit of capitalism itself, or the conclusion of its 'deepest tendency' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 283). That limit being where it is no longer possible to force subjects to produce surplus value, as the schizophrenic subject cannot be so directed. This makes sense for many of the cases that Laing observed (2010: 120). People were made to behave in line with particular contradictory imperatives to retain or fight for bourgeois identity. His work also instantiates a view of mental illness that insists on a political imperative and to consider such problems as always already societal, rather than only or merely as individual deficiencies. With this in mind, we can perhaps open Deleuze and Guattari's

abstract notion of the limits of capitalism and better understand the problem posed by resolving this through catharsis.

The self-conscious capacity of capitalism to recognize its 'exterior limit' in schizophrenia resulted in, what Deleuze and Guattari and Laing see as, the production of systemic techniques to manage this limit and keep it contained within individuals. Such techniques include moving reasonable reactions to the problems of living in the world to the sphere of illness. Thus, the notion that schizophrenia, insanity, depression etcetera, are problems resulting from a person's individual deficiencies is enforced by the stigma of an illness. An illness that is somehow deserved. For example, other than schizophrenia one could consider the stigma around depression or addictions as an attempt to deflect attention away from the influence that the structures of capitalism have over such conditions. This is described in a contemporary context in Berardi's recent book *Heroes* (2015a), which presents the governing principles of neoliberalism as having nearly perfected the mechanism of protecting the exterior limit of capitalism (50).

However, the recognition of this limit alone would not be a problem for capitalism. If the population under capitalism we to realizes that it has a schizophrenic tendency, there would be no ideological embarrassment for capitalism per se; capitalism's 'profound illiter[acy]' has rendered it immune to such representations. Indeed, as was discussed in the previous chapter, capitalism is not existent as an entity. To the extent to which it could be said to exist as a thing, capitalism appears far too elusive to be blamed for anything in particular. Our discourse frames that which is to be blamed is people's individual greed and individual corruption, in the task and the outcome of capital accumulation as a cultural imperative. Capitalism is a protean construct when conceptualized with Deleuze and Guattari; it emerges through particular circumstances at the intersection of the violence, power (or simultaneous submission to it) and the frustrated desires of millions (2013a: 257). So the threat of schizophrenia is not that it represents the evil of the system, rather that in schizophrenia can be found '… not the identity of capitalism, but on the contrary its difference, its divergence, and its death' (283). For Deleuze and Guattari this is because schizophrenia contains the potential to separate desire from the lack that motivates capitalist production.

This is a direct counter to the prevailing method for accumulating capital, the desire that runs alongside the manufactured feeling of lack. A particular lack that can be mitigated through the acquisition of commodities. Thus, in Laing's case studies we encounter the victims of a restrictive normativity that is deployed through the axiomatic nature of capitalism. Capitalism is able to attach to itself anachronistic practices in order to contain the 'tremendous flights of imagination' (Buchanan 2008: 40) in which the "schizo process" may result. As observed by Ian Buchanan;

> Today, this is the role assigned to religions and traditions: the absorption of the deracinated energies capitalism has detached from its body. This is what Deleuze and Guattari mean by reterritorialization: the tying back down of desire. (Buchanan 2008: 115)

Buchanan argues that capitalism's relationship to these methods of controlling desire are not intrinsic. Religious belief and ritual, as far as capitalism is concerned, are simply, methods by which catharsis can be administered. With some religious practices (such as catholic confession) actually making an imperative and a virtue out of the cathartic impulse. Further still, we see in the work of Max Weber, the notion that it is only through engaging in the work of capitalism that we can be offered cathartic relief (2001: 5).

We can see a mutation of this in popular music fandom, particularly the worship of stars as seemingly transcendent figures. Here, we can see the rituals of displaying a particular affiliation to certain celebrities, as a kind of pseudo-religious experience. Sincere devotion to some sort of metaphysical entity is replaced in the fantastic transcendence that fame and fortune offer, in escaping the material realities of the average conditions in which people live. This is a way in which desire is tied down to capitalist production and capitalist social reality.

Beyond this, such devotion also becomes a space for the intergenerational normalization of these rituals. Like those of the '68 generation, whose initial cultural rebellion was such an anathema to the status quo, become parents and grandparents, we see that rebellion take more conformist forms. Here, we can see what Deleuze and Guattari may identify as the dynamics of Oedipalization. Wherein Oedipalization refers to a fixitude of desire that is both in the service of capitalist production and resultant in neurosis and anhedonia, then such analysis is clearly accurate. The intergenerational familial conflict, itself derived from the contingencies of a bourgeois capitalist milieu, has moved to fit other terms, where youth culture is no longer an utter anathema but instead always already becoming shallow and passé and leading to its own odd cultural nostalgia (Fisher 2014: 6).

As has been observed by numerous writers, popular music provides a way in which a generation can assert its difference, and even ambiguous superiority, to the generation that preceded them, particularly that of their parents. In the example of popular music culture, this may take the form of progressive values and openness in regards to race (Frith, 1988: 50), a glorification of 'sexual freedom' (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 63, Frith 1981: 240-241) that is supposedly unencumbered by Freudian dynamics. It could even be a more abstract historical imperative to produce something new and previously unheard (Reynolds 2011: xxxvi). However, on close examination, it becomes apparent that such activities often take place within the confines of capitalist

social norms leading us to find the same anxieties of the Oedipus complex transposed to slightly different context. As in this, something of the individualistic nature of capitalism as the 'narcissistic ego is identical to the Oedipal subject' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 305). For example, it could be said that the lust for newness, that Simon Reynolds laments the loss of, is a clear example of killing the father. Also, what he terms Retromania; an approach to culture facilitated by digital storage and networked distribution (Sterne 2006), can re-enact that same fratricidal Oedipal motion; the modernist father smothered in bricolage.

It is important to recognize that this is not caused by some *innate* unconscious drives, but has instead been constructed, through the life long interaction between the subject and the established milieu, as an interior limit to desire. Where Schizophrenia is the external limit as it decouples desire from production, Oedipal desire and the resultant neurosis keep desire coupled to the extant means of capital production. As Buchanan teases out from the section "Capitalist Representation" of *Anti-Oedipus*;

> The family becomes an object of consumption in the modern system. It is on this terrain that Oedipus can finally take root [...] Its purpose is to neutralize the threat of schizophrenia, the modern capitalist machine's absolute limit, by creating an *interior* limit to the movement of desire that pulls it up short of the *exterior* limit (i.e., schizophrenia). (Buchanan 2008: 116)

We can see certain parallels with the remarks above from Aristotle. For Aristotle, the catharsis of the 'artisans, labourers, and the like' could be granted with low music as their minds have been 'perverted from the natural state'. This notion of nature still haunts the ways in which the dominant discourse understand human behaviour, and in particular, we are haunted by notions inherited from and transmuted through Freudian psychology. Despite the current discursive domination of scientific perspectives on psychology, ideas about a theatrical unconscious, that stands in opposition to the goal of respectable bourgeois life, persist. When we consider bourgeois aspiration as a natural state and unconscious that motivates against this becomes an interior limiting barrier. This tension influences the very act of aesthetic reception. Aristotle's position has become an instrumental tool; a self-serving diagnosis and prescription for those in power to maintain the status quo.

We can see the damage that this has caused revealed in the work of thinkers such as Laing and Deleuze and Guattari. They argue that capitalism has used, not tolerated or operated around, the Oedipal complex to tether desire in a conflict between bourgeois aspiration and the neurosis of a suppressed unconscious, and thus 'neutralize the threat of schizophrenia'. However, even a cursory knowledge of evolutionary biology, anthropology and even Freudian psychology itself would make it

clear that the bourgeois Oedipal subject is far from a 'natural state' of human psychology. Rather, it is the result of a particular social organization. A mode of organization that, according to Berardi, has metastasized intensely and produced not only neurosis but also pathologies (2015a: 3). From a Deleuzian perspective, these pathologies result from desire being contained and channelled either through production or towards cathartic release. So it must be made clear that the seeking of so-called 'low music' is not solving a natural problem; it is a solution produced by the results of living in a capitalist milieu with the neurosis of the particular subjectivities it produces.

Infinite Jest and Cathartic individualism.

Wallace's novel, *Infinite Jest*, can be regarded as an important illustrative tool, in terms of showing what the neurosis of this psycho-social tension looks like as capitalism radically accelerates through neoliberalism. The argument that runs through the novel is that the addictions, be they to drugs, alcohol or entertainment, of this near future American society, are rooted in the frustration and melancholy of a late-capitalism's continuation long after the end of history. There is the material suffering that results from systemic inequality, and at the same time, the only methods available to relieve this suffering are ultimately alienating and vacuous. According to the analysis of Boswell, Wallace has a particular target in this critique of addiction, which could also be understood as a critique of catharsis.

Wallace's novel orbits around the hunt for a film said to be so entertaining that all those who watch it are thrown into a state of catatonic bliss. All the victims want to do is re-watch the film, and without intravenous feeding and other personal care, they will die within days (Wallace 2007: 87). For Boswell, this plot device, and its appended details, clearly targets the Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition and its focus on the unreachable desire of subjects to a 'return to maternal plenitude' (2003: 130). The theory at play in such debilitating entertainment is that of rupture caused by entering what Lacan called the mirror stage.

The mirror stage is believed, by Lacanians, to be the stage in childhood development at which an infant recognizes him or herself as a subject with a self that is distinct from others around it. We can see this concretely exemplified when a child is able to recognize itself in a mirror. As Boswell puts it, 'she acquires a subjectivity but only by becoming alienated from herself' (Boswell 2003: 129). Therefore, it is only by being able to become removed from what you are that you can recognize yourself as a distinct identity. This dialectical understanding of the subject (where you are both internal and external subject) and thus also a '"split subject" internally divided between

self and other' (130). The film *Infinite Jest,* in the novel, quasi-resolves this dialectic, with its particular contents; a baby's eye view perspective, staring into eyes of a beautiful naked and heavily pregnant mother figure, who tells the viewer/infant that she is so sorry, in many insipid variations. Wallace's argument is that the only thing that could come of this is catatonia and an infantile demand never to leave this space.

This device, in and of itself, is not subtle. It reads as a clear Adornian indictment of the sort of enslavement that entertainment can produce. However, its deployment through the novel enables both a real appreciation for the concern of entertainment's infantilizing power and a subtle critique of this simplistic indictment. As the specifics of the film are only ever mentioned by third parties recounting previous reports, because the film's maker is dead and those that have seen it are in no state to provide a response to any question at all, the content of the film is never fully fixed. The sorts of things that might be in it are scattered throughout the novel. This is then set against more concrete episodes in the novel wherein different characters rely on televisual representations of idealized cultural norms. For example, one turns to the community represented in *Cheers!* (834) to allow them to escape their abusive home life as a child, while another character recounts how their father becomes dangerously obsessed with searching for a greater cosmic meaning in *M*A*S*H* (639). These examples are both syndicated situation comedies, which are very much from a previous time, and Wallace is careful to put that temporal distance into his character's relationships to the media.

The film, with its partial definition but concrete effects, inflects the manner in which we consider these familiar pieces of media. In "rational" discourse it can be difficult to articulate the influence media can have on individuals but with this fictional context, it is easier to see a relationship between the suffering that people endure and the dangerous medicine that entertainment can provide. At the same time, Wallace does not present something clear-cut, as he shows those that get what they think they need (return to maternal plenitude), not as recovered functional bourgeois subjects but as vegetables of infantile satisfaction. Indeed, those in power in the novel—the president, secret service, media leaders—are those most worried about the film and the possibility of it being made available to the public. If everyone is satisfied, capitalist civilization is over.

This is discussed in the debate between the secret service agent and the turncoat terrorist, from the group planning to disseminate the film. The Terrorists do not wish to broadcast the film, merely make it available for consumers to choose. The double agent argues that if Americans were not individualistic and pleasure seeking, it would not be a problem to make available such a dangerous film. However, the reluctant concession of those in power is that the U.S.A has formed a population of subjects whose freedom to pursue pleasure all but compels them to see the film. The terrorist remarks; "This appetite to choose death by pleasure if it is available to choose this

appetite of your people unable to choose appetites, this is the death. What you call the death, the collapsing: this will be the formality only" (319). In the end, Wallace is not attacking the media for being seductive but rather he blames us, the gullible citizens of this regime, in that we crave this seduction.

Boswell points out the many particular clues that give an existential explanation for this craving in Wallace's work. He refers particularly to the work of Søren Kierkegaard (2003: 138). However as interesting as these observations are Wallace does not consider this problem to be about the human condition entirely. Indeed, in the scene mentioned above, the terrorist explicitly argues that this problem is more developed in Americans than it is in the Canadians of the novel. This tells us that he is not talking about an absolute human condition but perhaps a formation of desire. In particular, it is a desire not to be alone, or perhaps to be more than one, and a desire that is formed in response to its environment. Wallace finds the desire not to be existentially alone a valid and important one, and he has also seen how that desire can make individuals who are easily manipulated. The conditions brought about by the film are a caricature of what happens when one looks for solace from pain and loneliness in a purely individualized way. This is where the Lacanian split subject is completed; alone in dialectical resolution.

This is catharsis as something that is hermetically sealed, which only serves to maintain the status quo. This may be the case for catharsis as such, as it is a process of purification that requires a defined vessel to be purified. A fixed delineated territory, which is well matched with bourgeois society's notion of the rational individual. This is where an *Anti-Oedipal* reading of the novel becomes useful because it is clear that, for Wallace, turning inward is not how one addresses the suffering produced in the world left at the end of history. Indeed, that place where we may expect to find the most security (the family or home), is instead subject to the very condition that produced the suffering in the first place. It is as Deleuze and Guattari have observed, the mommy-daddy-me triangle of the bourgeois household/unconscious. A cathartic process has, as its goal, a return to the same environment in which the suffering was initially caused with perpetuating suffering.

What this means is that if we follow the critique of popular music, from the level of attention to the complicity that such a formation of attention engenders to the desire for catharsis, the ways in which popular music is oppressive become more apparent. In an environment in which security is both an imperative and a difficult-to-attain market commodity, popular music offers a simulation of this at a much lower cost. There are of course culturally contingent causes of this in the sound, but by far the most substantial is that this limiting relationship has become so much of what we expect from popular music that it is difficult to see this limitation as anything other than benevolence. However, as bell hooks writes on the recent release from Beyoncé, 'to truly be free, we

must choose beyond simply surviving adversity, we must dare to create lives of sustained optimal well-being and joy' (2016). This is where the constructive work begins, to build a relationship to popular music that can help us move beyond the cycle that causes us to use music as a way to return to a home built by the logic of capital.

The Stones.

Standing in Hyde Park, during "Barclaycard's presentation of British Summer-time", I was immersed in the sonic aura of the Rolling Stones. And my ticketless experience of the band, I feel, was perhaps a more vivid one than the gilded cage occupied by the crowd. In the park I was bathed in the sonic aura, an atmosphere, thickened by a Rolling Stones' artwork and free of referent.

Walter Benjamin's notion of the aura of a work of art, expressed in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", has become a standard device for those interested in the culture industry. In the essay, Benjamin argues that the unique here-and-now existence of a work of art gives it a certain aura, which is lost through even the most perfect reproduction. Despite his enthusiasm for the emancipatory potential he sees in works of art that require mechanical reproduction such as film, the original, with its unbroken connection to some sort of originator, is vitally important to Benjamin. This idea seems pretty clear and demonstrable in relation to paintings with their chemical composition changing over time. However, this becomes more complex, firstly in mass cultural productions and then in the format of digital media. If we add to this copyright law and then we have to identify the work produced by the band, who are allowed to be identified and trade under the name The Rolling Stones, as original Rolling Stones' works of art whenever they play together. Even if some of the songwriters are deceased. To this end, it would be possible to regard a performance as an original Rolling Stones artwork. But this is a pretty complex idea under the conditions of postmodernism, especially if we take the concept of aura as having some relation to signification.

The Stones were on stage in Hyde Park on two weekends in July 2013. This, the Stones playing songs on a stage, has happened perhaps thousands of times since their formation in 1962. This means that they have produced tens of thousands of 'authentic' Rolling Stones artworks, but they have also had their images reproduced millions of times from countless sources. During the more-than-half century of Rolling Stones artworks production, they, or at least their industrial framework, have sought to profit from the ephemeral and hard to access nature of this transcendent experience with the quick and easy potential of pop music. The production of numerous concert videos, willing and unwilling photographs and appearances in all forms of commercial media, have been attempting to capture some of the ephemeral transcendence and transform it into discrete commodity forms through reproduction. In short, they are some of the earliest and most enduring examples of a rock and roll mythology that is now a staple of the popular music industry. Manipulated and situated images and sounds, and 50

years of ecstatic anecdotes are now far more pristine referents of the Rolling Stones, than the admittedly impressive swagger of the elderly Mick Jagger.

You know what really stunts this piece? It's the need you feel to touch the correct politically pious points throughout but reveal almost nothing about yourself. You're like an old fashioned anthropologist; disguised as an English hedgerow in the Amazon. You were in love. New, intense, continuing love. That is why it stays in your mind. You had no money, still have no money, but you found a way to have pretty cool experience in London together anyway. Something you both shared and that stayed with you enough for you to try and write about it on at least three different occasions. To the point now where you have had to invent another persona to get out what you should have said from the outset, which itself is still a distancing tactic. I mean you are literally the second person right now. But here it is, music means more if you feel it is adding to the story you tell yourself about yourself. You don't particularly like the Rolling Stones. You like "Sympathy for the Devil" but only because it doesn't really sound like the Rolling Stones. This is not a particularly deep insight, but it could be the start of one. Like, is it a problem that music has come to be a tool to allow you to think you're at the centre of an experience?

When you attend a Rolling Stones concert, the crowd is enormous, and so the fight for position is fierce. For many attendees, some the same age or only a little younger than their idols, this fight is unwinnable. Here even youthful eyes can't make out anything of a discernible swagger. The solution to this has been big screens. A whole industry has come up around this problem-of-your-own-success. Strange time distance sound-speed signal transfer delay types of things aside, the thought seems to be the screen is less an obvious form of mediation, than a magnifying glass. The tiny blur on stage that becomes a close up on Keith Richards rictus as he strikes a chord on his low hung Telecaster. And this projection claims to get you closer to the band while maintaining the high status of these modern deities.

Without paying between £50 and £400 for tickets, you can't experience the Rolling Stones in the creation of Rolling Stones artworks. It can, and no doubt would be, argued that all this goes into the creation of a 'complete concert experience' full of regalia. However, my being born in 1990, to a former hippy, has made the experience of the documentation of the Rolling Stones the way in which I understand their existence. This would be my primary referent for the band; the psychic resource I would use to

understand the experience of seeing and hearing the band before me. Whereas, my father, growing up in Nova Scotia as a teenager in the 1960s had such limited exposure to this media that his reference point was occasional contemporary newsprint reproduction of photographs, album artworks and typography and the way in which a vinyl LP can make the air shake. It seems from this that the Stones are now simulacra; an image without a real world referent. An interesting phenomenon for Deleuze and Guattari, and the end of the world for Baudrillard and Berardi. The postmodern complaint, expressed by David Foster Wallace in his self-critical account of his experience of 9/11, that 'we have seen this before' is a common experience, a foil to the excitement and the standard premise for the construction of commercials, movies, new media, and bands.

This melancholic complaint needn't be the only way to experience such events though. It could actually provide us with the resources to see past the corrupting corporate enterprise that surrounds them. I have never attended a Rolling Stones concert. My argument here is derived from attending other large scale rock acts (Radiohead, The Smashing Pumpkins), who have begun or failed to create very different but similarly dense mythologies around their practice, always though with some reference to what the Stones created. I doubt I'll ever see the Rolling Stones; with their exorbitant ticket prices, they seem determined to keep me away. Even if I attended though I doubt that I'd believe I had seen them. I'm sure I would, as I have done before, attempt to measure my perceptions against the culturally selected images and montages of sound that the media has used for half a century to stand in for the Rolling Stones. So, with the echoing of the concert blurring into the low-frequency distortion as sound emanates over open space, my mind awash with images of over 50 years of pop culture experiments and no immediate article for comparison, I was in the aura of a Rolling Stones artwork. Without the distraction of the bizarre facticity of the event, I listened to the aura of "Sympathy For The Devil" in Hyde Park. Whatever was left of the artwork itself did not get in the way

Home.

One reason why the home of someone whose home has been burglarized feels violated and unclean is that there have probably been drug addicts in there. (Wallace 2007: 55)

Pop Music of the Refrain.

At the end of the previous chapter, it became apparent that the resource often sought through interaction with popular music is catharsis. More interesting still was the particular form of this cathartic process. This process implicitly produced a social and cultural referent to the state in which is to be considered pure. With a myriad of complicating factors, the operation of catharsis as it relates to contemporary popular music relies largely on the power of familiarity. This is not a universal cathartic soothing. It is not simply the case, as Aristotelian catharsis posits, that the simplicity of 'lesser musics' can calm the savagery of the masses. Rather, this sort of familiarity relies on the assumption that it is being attended to by a post-Freudian society, situated not merely in the moments of backlash to Freudian theories (for example the libidinal releases of 70s psychedelic counter culture or the decadent excess of late 80s pop and rock) but in the backlash to the backlash.

In the contemporary paradigm of ubiquitous atmospheric popular music, both production and distribution technology have allowed popular music, as well as other media but arguably to a lesser extent, to take on an atemporality. This has obvious creative advantages, in that there is a greater range of material to make use of, but at the same time, by collapsing any notion of historical progression, it has made it more difficult to make work that sounds distinct; that sounds like the future. While 70s psychedelia, late 80s electro pop and 90s electronic dance music, each in their own ways appeared at the time to be breaking from the present moment to explore some kind of cultural future, from the vantage point of the future they appear as mere reference points that describe the past. This is not simply due to the nature of time,

although that undoubtedly has a role to play. Rather, it is worth considering this transformation as resulting from the intersection of many of the themes that have been discussed so far, namely: the intersection of the individual (as defined by a relation to capital) and the discursive imperative to be a rational actor in almost all areas of life, while the opposite is exacerbated by commercial activity, particularly in the form of ubiquitous computing technology[18]. This could be considered as the deterritorialization of time, as it breaks the hold of biological memory and physical accessibility from the experience of music.

The rejection of Freudian dogma that relates to the structure of the family and gender roles and all human sexuality through the arbitrary templates Oedipus and penis envy is clearly progress. That said, such a rejection, while easy as an intellectual proposition, has a much messier real world application. In previous chapters, there has been some discussion of how Freud's ideas of human nature, rather than describing something universal, actually describe how humans were expected to function in Western bourgeois society. Freud considered the neurosis that resulted from the frustration of these expectations to contain the revelation of some longed-for natural state. However, it is impossible to determine which of these were the result of frustrated natural desire and which were negative reactions to the particularities of the circumstances in which a subject was found. With this in mind, we could say that the descriptions and prescriptions made in Freudian theory are more congealments of thousands of years of cultures that had had to cope with imbalances of power and various biologically framed imperatives. Thus perhaps, the work of Freud actually refers more to the world that made him and the discourse it produced.

Therefore, if we can perhaps take these two rejections; the rejection of the past qua the past and the rejection of the Freudian synecdoche, as moments of deterritorialization. Such deterritorializations are seismic in their impact and as such have far reaching repercussions and consequences. These motions have taken place at the same time that capitalism has been the dominant economic mode, which comes with its own particular operating logics. One such logic is that deterritorialization creates an opportunity for value-producing reterritorialization and producing the imperative that this opportunity must be seized by rational actors. This is not a nefarious conspiracy, but rather it is the manner in which capital operates when it adheres to its own internal logic. What this motion means for the field of popular music is that within capitalist environment our relationship to this material changes as it is appropriated by capital. That which appears to be the future to one generation is transformed into the establishment for the next. This is not merely that you do not find "cool" that which previous generations thought to be "cool", but that capital has been

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[18] The tension produced by this contradiction, far from undermining capitalism, is what allows it to function.

able to fully incorporate "cool" into its operations thereby monetizing generationally both the "cool" and the "un-cool". Setting up the law (of the "cool" and the "un-cool") and commodifying its rupture. Such notions become central to a cultural capacity for self-definition, as capital begins to occupy these defining traits.

We can unpick this idea more if we consider these implications through a critical reading of Buchanan's article "Deleuze and Pop Music" (1997). Here, he advances the argument that popular music can be conceptualized as a refrain. To outline the concept of the refrain Buchanan writes;

> [T]he refrain is composed of three functions. It comforts us by providing a rough sketch of a calming and stabilising [...] centre in the heart of chaos. It is the song the lost child, scared in the dark, sings to find his or her way home. The tune also creates the very home we return to, when our foray into the world grows wearisome. Home is the product of a very particular gesture: one must draw a circle around that uncertain fragile centre one is accustomed to calling home in order to delimit it. (1997)

This a useful summary of the extended explanation given by Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus (Deleuze and Guattari 2013b: 262-263). However, Buchanan adds a certain poetic device to this definition that reveals problems for such an application. Buchanan states that the refrain creates 'the very home we return to when our foray into the world grows wearisome'. It is easy to understand the rationale for this position. Our inherited structures, or territory of familiarity, can provide a safe respite from the suffering that life in capitalism can generate. That being said, a Laingian reading of "home", which views Freudian theory as a synecdoche for social norms congealed by history and power would suggest that the respite home offers may also be the source of the suffering and lack in the first instance. This begs the question, with regards to the treatment of mental illness; who does this sort of relief and recovery serve? If the refrain is just about relieving our weariness with some relief 'back home', this conceptualization would seem to echo the repressive ideas of low music in Aristotle, through to the problematic defence of popular music offered by Frith. In this view popular music becomes little more than a compensation system; a form of rest and relaxation between unwinnable battles.

This is not only a problem if you desire popular music to be more than a consolation but also if you wish to plan any root beyond capitalism. Along with other cultural productions, popular music must be more than a compensation system, as such a relationship has been shown to reproduce capitalist social relations. So long as the primary reason to engage with aesthetic production is to recover through a return to a home territorialized by the logic of capital, post-capitalism (Mason 2015) will remain out of reach. Popular music is vital to this within a paradigm of ubiquitous music, for all the reasons that have been explored here so far. This music has a

vernacular form, a diffuse point of contact with the audience and an ability to foster a wide variety of social bonds. However, if we conceptualize our relationship to it as a way to return home, without a problematized definition of home, we become trapped by these capacities rather than freed.

This notion of the power of the ubiquity of popular music is included in Buchanan's argument, which, while it is easy to be skeptical of the optimism he expresses, it does encapsulate this potential;

> To my mind, it is its very amenability to 'being heard again and again and again', which corroborates the claim that pop music is a refrain, for one of the defining features of the refrain is its inexpressiveness. Deleuze & Guattari say the refrain is pure content that awaits expression. Pop is like that; it too awaits expression. (ibid)

It is important to emphasize that the refrain is not pure repetition, which can be somewhat lost in Buchanan's essay. From a musicological standpoint, not only does the refrain connect one section of a piece of music to another, and, even though the material of the refrain is *returned* to in the song, the content is expressed differently in each iteration. This is true of all repetition in music, and something Deleuze and Guattari recognize with their focus on differentiation (2013a: 393) as something more than simply difference. However, in the understanding proposed by Attali, capitalist societies and the music that they produce require repetition that can appear pure, that does not allow for recognizable differentiation (Attali 1985: 187). We may see what appears as an innovation that breaks the cycle but this is illusory. All it does is infinitesimally purify the repetition of the flows of capital accumulation. What is needed then is a music that can bring attention to the difference and changes in repetition and thus be a source of differentiation. As Buchanan states, in a Deleuzian formulation, '[t]he new is not "the merely different" but differentiating (1997).' This provision would not be enough on its own for popular music to be emancipatory but it does provide us with a place from where a theory can be developed as to how it could be. However, to understand how to do this we must delve deeper into these concepts of home and the refrain.

A refrain, in the sense that Buchanan uses it, literally refers to the reproduction of social reality. Any changes such a refrain may engender would only be to deepen the perceived fixed reality of the status quo. As Franco Berardi argues, and as can be found in the original text, the concrete effect of the refrain is conciliatory;

> The refrain is an obsessive ritual that allows the individual—the conscious organism in the continuous variation—to find identification points, and to territorialize herself and represent herself in relation to the surrounding world. The refrain is the modality of semiotization that allows an individual (a group, a people, a nation, a subculture, a

movement) to receive and project the world in reproducible and communicable formats. (Berardi 2012: 130)

Berardi recognizes that refrain has this comforting property but, unlike Buchanan, he problematizes it from the very beginning. This securing property is attainable only through obsessive ritual, such that it denies a vast wealth of possibility. The ritual forecloses the sort of interpretations of experience that might be useful to change the milieu and in so doing mitigate the environmental causes that perhaps necessitated the ritual in the first instance. This is how refrains in late-capitalism operate. Without limiting experience to the repetitive circuits within the logic of capital accumulation, which also have the capacity to develop in line with that logic, then capitalism would not be able to reproduce itself. Berardi goes onto illustrate how this one can see such a concept plays a part in the discipling of society (the refrain of factory work, the refrain of salary, the refrain of the assembly line. (Berardi 2012: 131)). This repetition of these refrains, repetition that is very near total but for minor differences mimics that of the environment from which it is derived. In so doing, these entirely contingent refrains begin to take on the appearance of a natural environment. This is not more than an issue of representation. It is a congealment not only of the image of life but also of the sensory field, from which much of life, as experienced, is produced. However, Berardi also recognizes that, to a certain extent, any society able to identify itself as such will engage in the activities of the refrain. Consistency is not in and of itself a negative. In Deleuze-Guattarian ontology, it is far from it. Rather, it is a complex field for further exploration.

This is what is problematic in Buchanan's conflation of the refrain with 'home' in reference to popular music is. This conflation fails to interrogate this particular concept's consistency and instead asserts it as a positive. This is not to say that pop music must never be experienced as a way home but that it must not be relegated to this function. The refrain, however, should not be primarily understood as a mechanism for creating, maintaining and returning to *home*. If it is to hold any potential for change, the emphasis must be in the capacity for differentiation. This capacity could present a mode of engagement with popular music, as a refrain, that holds some emancipatory promise. To see how this might be possible we look at the ways popular music is able to deconstruct the concept of *home* through a critical engagement with the troubled notion of *home* presented in the Freudian uncanny.

Pop Music and the Uncanny: FKA Twigs and Miley Cyrus.

As we have discussed so far, the concept of *home*, within a western context of neoliberal capitalism, is something that is difficult to clearly separate from a particular set of

cultural baggage. From a perspective informed by Laing, Deleuze and Guattari, and Berardi, home is entangled with the ideological and psychological structures of the bourgeois family described by Freud. This, in turn, is entangled with the imperatives of capitalism.

With this structure of *home* in place, it becomes possible to frame the struggles of life in a particular way. They become those of a strictly delineated processes that the individual is to overcome in response to their own desires and neuroses. Others become competitors, obstacles and authority figures in this setting, rather than peers. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the Freudian discovery of the unconscious, which they characterize as the family drama repeatedly being enacted on a theatrical stage, was far from a universal. Rather, they suggest that what Freud discovered was an unconscious that is restricted by its milieu (2013a: 69-70). For them, Freud's therapy is designed to mitigate neurosis within a limited and limiting frame. In response, Deleuze and Guattari propose the version of the unconscious as a factory, relentlessly engaged in the production of desire (65). If we apply this way of thinking to the discussion of home, the refrain, and popular music, we begin to see a potential way out of the impasses of a homebound refrain. This is a new line of flight (2013b: 11). If we also accept with Deleuze & Guattari, and Berardi, that the refrain is not merely unavoidable but also a key part of existence, then to attain a greater degree of emancipation, then we must find ways to use it our advantage.

Along these lines, as with the refrain, some sort of return is inevitable and this return would also inevitably hold some sort of familiarity. Thus, with this motion being to a certain extent unavoidable, then the notion of home, a place of often the greatest familiarity, needs to be broken out of its culturally limited conception. That said the conceptualizations that are then theoretically available to the machinic unconscious are virtually limitless. This has liberating potential but also the potential to be traumatic and terrifying.

Rapid deterritorialization is most readily helpful to capital as its connections to the status quo are often asignifying and thus easily abandoned (Lazzarato 2014: 80). This concern for the method of escaping such ensconced cultural norms presents a question of praxis in which popular music will need to play a role. It may be that what is needed is not to abandon the notion of home outright but instead to twist it and expand it. To overcome its restrictions not by simply smashing through them, but by first engaging with and then dismantling this binary inside/outside relationship that such restrictions create

To see how this might work requires a careful examination of the boundaries in question in addition to how music can be said to interact with it. To accomplish this, it

is useful to engage in a *productive misreading*[19] of Freud's notion of the uncanny, in particular, to examine the relation of this concept to the concept of *home*. Freud's description of The Uncanny frames of this experience as something containing elements that disrupt a securing space of home, but as he states it is a little more complex. The original German term for the uncanny is *Das Unheimliche*, which can be literally translated as the unhomely or unhomelike. Freud describes the uncanny as follows;

> [T]his word *heimlich* is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which are not mutually contradictory but are very different from each other — the one relating to what is familiar and comfortable, the other to what is concealed and kept hidden. *Unheimlich* is the antonym of *heimlich* only in the latter's first sense, not its second. On the other hand [...] the term uncanny (*unheimlich*) applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away and has come into the open. (Freud 2003: 132)

Freud goes on in the rest of the essay to relate this understanding to his own theory of psychodynamics. Whereby, the experience of the Uncanny is the experience of that which was once familiar, but has since become repressed, once again emerging to the surface (152). Though he goes on to state that this process is not exclusive to the uncanny. He also states that what is considered to be uncanny in real life would not be so in fiction and that which is uncanny in fiction may not be thought of as so in real life.

For Freud, understanding the uncanny is an aesthetic issue (123). It is an experience derived from experiencing ourselves interacting with sensations from the world. The uncanny is not pure horror but is instead that which is horrifying through a more subtle but nonetheless substantial, distortion of familiarity. This could be because it is the re-emergence of an experience that one had assumed one would not experience again. This assumption was to such a full extent that it was itself unconscious and thus difficult to recognize as a contingent possibility. This is how the unheimlich makes the familiar or commonplace unfamiliar and uncanny. However, it is also important to remember the other definition of heimlich, as being something that is secret and safe. The unheimlich is a rendering un-secret that which had previously been secret. Secrecy can be problematic if it is a state of being that is assumed to be stable or fixed. By evoking this seemingly private, secret and safe space of home to describe a feeling of being ill at ease with one's environment, the uncanny highlights the fragility of such a space that is so strictly defined. If we work with the Deleuze and Guattarian notion of a machinic unconscious, then putting this productive force to the limited task of deforming reality in accordance with the dynamics a multi-camera sit-com conception of the bourgeois family drama creates tension. This notion restricts and constrains in

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[19]This is a term from Žižek's *Organs Without Bodies*, as being key to any sort of theoretical advance (2004: ix).

line with the logic of lack, in that it is derived from a view of humanity as being isolated individuals who can only interact with the connections of exchange. At the same time, as this mode of engagement seems to be the only one that is readily available and able to meet the imperatives of survival, it becomes a site of tremendous personal investment.

It is precisely by investing so heavily in such a limited and fixed notion of what is acceptable that we feel so vulnerable when things begin to go even slightly awry, as they inevitably will do. However, this relies on thinking that the uncanny as something that is not desirable. So, rather than thinking of the uncanny as a negative, perhaps it can be made into or viewed as a positive space of potential. Positive in the sense that it can form the process of desiring-production in such a way as to liberate it from the constraint discussed above, while at the same time not being defined by being in opposition to these constraints.

An interesting element of the uncanny is that it is not something that is arranged as a simple antonym, but rather something with a complex and ambiguous relationship to the experience that produces it. It is the *re*-experience of what was once familiar, which has now been repressed, in the present. A twisted estranged version of the familiarity of the homely. The experience of the uncanny, in the psychoanalytic sense, is meant to produce the question between the analyst and analysand; what caused this repression experience to re-emerge? How can it be contained? Instead, it may be better to ask, with Deleuze and Guattari; why has it been repressed when it had been so familiar? Can the Uncanny not be a place of opportunity? In keeping with the Schizoanalysis project, we can gain awareness of the resources that are being repressed, beyond the incestuously traumatic, to the far more commonplace experiences that are vital to any ethico-aesthetic project, which are simply not allowed in the strictures of bourgeois society.

It is useful to explore this in concrete terms. If we apply this perspective to contrasting examples in contemporary popular music, we might consider a comparison between the recent work of Miley Cyrus and FKA Twigs (the musical act centered around singer/dancer/producer, Tahliah Barnett). These artists are very different. FKA Twigs comes from a dance/art background and starting in the underground EDM scene in London. Cyrus is the heiress of an American music dynasty, working hard to disassociate her present self-presentation from the Disney-controlled version at the start of her career. However, both operate as solo female artists (even though this is not the case) and both engage in explorations of female sexuality in ways that are at odds with culturally received notions of what is acceptable.

Cyrus unveiled, what could be considered to be, her transformation during the 2013 MTV video music awards; a moment that introduced the act of "twerking" to mainstream culture. She performed with Robin Thicke his hit of that year "Blurred

Lines", during which she "twerked" (dance move involving the rhythmic shaking of the bottom while bent over) against Thicke's crotch. Thus introducing a club scene dance move to the mainstream discourse. The stage was then flooded with backing dancers dressed as seemingly unhappy, perhaps intoxicated, teddy bears. This was certainly an attempt to rebrand Miley Cyrus (a burden with which FKA Twigs has not had to contend). This performance could be read as an attempt to use the uncanny, in relation to Cyrus' persona, as a marketing tool. Previous attempts had been made in Cyrus' career to move beyond her child star fame of Disney character Hannah Montana. Albums like *Breakout* (2008) and *Can't Be Tamed* (2010) had attempted to repress things that had once been familiar in her milieu. This was moderately successful but it had limitations. The end result was a persona that seemed to embody a more adult version of what is still a Disney worldview. This was done through repression of both genuine child-like silliness (for a more age appropriate pranky form), and anything but the most 'socially acceptable' forms of sexuality in relation to her previous persona. However, at the 2013 VMA's the Disney identity Cyrus had attempted to leave behind re-emerged but in a traumatic form, drawing attention to the act of her transgression itself rather than the space it could open.

This can be thought of, though not limited to, a moment of jouissance. Jouissance is a complex and paradoxical notion, used in Lacanian psychoanalysis, that describes a sensation of intense joy. It is, however, a particular kind of joy, one that is tinged with the complexity of relations to violence and destruction. It is usually associated with sexuality and the ownership of property, but common to these is an act of transgression. The particular character of this transgression has to do with a confrontation, in Lacanian terms, with the unfathomable Real and the breakdown of the boundaries of the symbolic order. As Žižek explains;

> If we define the Real as such a paradoxical, chimerical entity which, although it does not exist, has a series of properties and can produce a series of effects, it becomes clear that the real par-excellence is *jouissance: jouissance* does not exist, it is impossible, but it produces a number of traumatic effects. The paradoxical nature of *jouissance* also offers us a clue to explaining the fundamental paradox which unfailingly attests the presence of the Real: the fact of a prohibition against something which is already in itself impossible [...] The solution to this paradox [...] lies in the fact that the impossibility relates to the level of existence (it is impossible; that is, it doesn't exist), while prohibition relates to the properties it predicates (jouissance is forbidden because of its properties). (Žižek 2008: 184-185)

With this formulation, jouissance is only able to be said to exist because of prohibitions that relate it its properties. The things that characterize jouissance are known only because the social order has deemed it necessary to its maintenance to structure

incentives against them. In short, the moment of jouissance is negatively defined by the transgression of both symbolic order and the social order that defines it. However, this definite transgression still relies on the existence of its prohibition, which is where problems begin to appear when we think about how to overcome such restrictions.

We can relate this to the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, wherein the restrictions of bourgeois society are considered to stem from the internal limit of the Oedipus complex. The defiance of the normative laws of the culture, which we see in Cyrus' work, is still able to be incorporated by capital because it recognizes the restriction as somehow a valid point of delineation. This explosion of jouissance, which transgression creates, is not inherent to the artwork but instead in a relational space between the performer's identity, the audience and an awareness and acceptance of the normative culture as law. The implication of this in relation to capital can be seen if we compare it to another way of engaging with the uncanny that appears to forgo transgression as such.

Interlude: FKA Twigs EP2; Or Bataille in the age of Xenofeminism[20].

FKA Twigs music puts forth an uncontained eros. Controlled but harnessed deliberately and never arbitrarily (unless it would be more interesting to do so). An eros of the cosmos. Her music is the feedback from a sonar signal that reveals the architecture within moments of desire, sensation, tension, and release. The question is not should it happen? You can only get here through consent. The question is now, how should we go about it? This question is not verbalized. The concerns of puritanism and escaping it are a distant memory. It is far better to play. After all, Georges says this could let us access the infinite.

"How's That?" stretches out the moment, the instant, of physical contact over three and half minutes with each shiver of the shudder enunciated in a syncopated ripple. The digital homunculus melts on the first contact with the down beat and thus time and space, while they still exist, have had the rules of their relationship opened as bodies become topographies. Something is being transgressed that cannot be returned to, as this space is now open. The shudder is different now, (the howl of a star fighter entering the stratosphere) close to pain but not arriving there. No, "that feels good, so so amazing".

The swells that open "Papi Pacify" are synchronized to his fingers slipping down her throat in stark black and white. This image, its light and dark contrast, is something that we have been trained to view with a prurient suspicion. It is violent. Bodies are entered, and the bass note kick is gaining confidence, and a shriek is stifled with a soft fade curve. Again, we are dwelling in moments over the course of minutes. The last remnants of trepidation are cast aside with the line "even if you choke" and the rumble of bass— the open mouthed chant of giant aliens—forms a bridge between the body of the listener and the subject of their voyeurism. This is intensified all the more by FKA Twigs eyes looking into the camera; a stylistic feature shared by music videos and pornography. The sour glissando of the strings lets you know, however, that you are very much somewhere other than the tepid conformism of what passes for transgression in the pornography of capitalism. When you can feel the nerves of another creature—so much like you, but so importantly different—like stars of the

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imaginary sprayed over your skin, what can the petty thrill of the jouissance of property still offer.

Nothing. This is abundantly clear on "Water Me" and song in which the price to make love is both "too much in pound" but simultaneously "free". In fact, it is only after she is asked to "set a fee" that he will not make love to her. She sings "looks like I'm stuck with me", harmonized with pitched up vocals. Her eyes are oversized and grow even more after the bridge. The same is true of her pout. Is this just anime or hentai? The visceral nature of the ticking, brought out in the waves of the high-cut filter, answers; both and neither. It is the otherwise squandered potential of letting the operations of capital structure desire. These attempts to shock a view to attention are boring, so too is your need possess. Oh well, "looks like I'm stuck with me".

There is progress being made on this second person on "Ultraviolet". The opening is safe, lulling. Things are proceeding at a more quotidian pace. "Hold my hand in error" on the second repetition of this line FKA Twigs drags the trepidatious lover from "Water Me" by the hand and wrenches the ego that needed a price to make love from them. It doesn't go quietly, as it attempts to impose structures that have always been so meaningful but that now lack definition. The ego is defeated as a matter of course. They are now step through a wormhole with her and are fully immersed in her universe; in her "ultraviolet rays". Things look very different here.

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The work of FKA Twigs could be said to be forgo transgression as such. In that, it could be argued that she is unconcerned with act or moment of transgression itself and instead plots a different line of flight through a space of previous transgressions that have already opened. If for Cyrus the mass media spectacle is her primary mode of expression for her music, for FKA Twigs it would be the music video. In the video for "Two Weeks" (2014) we see a slow zoom out from FKA Twigs sitting on what seems to be a thrown in full Cleopatraesque royal regalia, singing the lyrics with slow-gesture-based-choreography. As we zoom out, we see that she is surrounded by dozens of miniature versions of herself, dancing in structured improvisations. This fully embraces what could be called the aesthetics of the weird (Fisher 2016: 10). At one point the central FKA Twigs pours what appears to be milk or water from her fingertips over a waiting receptive small Twigs. This is all set in a decadent palace that appears intended to at once to evoke something of ancient Egypt but also something from science fiction. This combination is an explicit exploration of the speculative aesthetic practice of Afrofuturism. This practice requires an initial transgression against the imperialist hegemony and its restrictions on the subjectivity of black people (Eshun 2003: 287-288) to have passed into some sort of cultural unconscious. However, this only needs to be the case if it is to be comprehensible. It could well simply confuse.

On the level of relating this piece to the psychoanalytic theory discussed so far, the song and video seem to make an interesting double motion. In that, they seem to both be inviting a psychoanalytic reading and at the same time suggesting that such a reading would be an irrelevance. The visuals are rife with a controlled sexuality that is clear from the costuming. We can see master/slave or top/bottom dynamics through

the precise and complex dancing, while the lyrics play with an oscillation between control and the embrace of drives. At first, they suggest a certain romantic subtlety ("I know it hurts, You know I'd put you first") before undercutting it with direct statements, semi-hidden in the production ("I can fuck you better than her"). This is a work that invites you to see her attempting to contain something repressed and in the unconscious. At the end of the video, the camera pans down below water of the foregrounded pool, to see another FKA Twigs alone floating supine underwater. With a Žižek-informed Lacanian reading, we could say that this is her touching on the unaccessible Real with all that is above being the symbolic and the imaginary. However, that this reading is so obvious (literally levels of experience governed by a queen), it seems that the transgression of jouissance is beside the point.

Unlike with Cyrus, where we can read theory into the symbols she presents, this piece by FKA Twigs appears to have included a reading in the work itself, with no need for the viewer to deduce it. In so doing, it stands outside the normative laws that themselves stands as an object in a larger field, rather than an actual limit.

This can also be found in the sonic qualities of the song itself. The disciplined use of limited digital instrumentation and textures, the pitched down vocals that function to blur gender and even humanity, signify, in their timbral darkness, a lineage of beat-based electronica. This work evokes a conjunction between a form of artistic practice and the milieu in which it was produced that is densely entangled with the contemporary geopolitical, which is of course also an economic and countercultural. In addition to a sound tool box indebted to the problematically named IDM (Intelligent Dance Music) movements of the late 90s, (which itself was indebted genres such as Detroit techno etcetera) these elements were formed through established genre conventions of music from various diasporic traditions that are particular to south London; namely the tempo and rhythms of dubstep.

While similar narratives could perhaps be argued to be superficially the case for all music, in the confines of this discussion, if we compare this to Cyrus' song 'We Can't Stop' from the *Bangerz* album (2013), we find only appropriative connections rather than more deeply enmeshed conjunctions. For example, we find pitched-down vocal production in both this song and 'Two Weeks', as important textural and structural elements in the work. In 'Two Weeks' they are used to explore the consequences of the processes of abstraction and the manner in which that blurs the fraught concept of identity, whereas in 'We Can't Stop', it could be argued that it is an attempt to appropriate some sort of caricature of black male identity to add a hook to a relatively generic pop song (James 2015: 179).

The music of FKA Twigs is more at home in a small club late at night than in a well-lit TV studio. This is not because of some problematic notion of authenticity, but rather that this kind of exposure places the work before an audience that has the tools

to comprehend it as vernacular. This is an audience that will not miss the transgression but is prevented from enjoying the jouissance by it being thrust into a field that views the transgressed normative law as an object rather than a limit. This causes a response of horror from an unprepared audience.

Cyrus' work, on the other hand, seems to be fighting to generate attention from an audience that craves both the specific excitement of transgression and the homogeneity of this transgression pointing to the power of normative laws. Where, with Cyrus the uncanny is explicitly evoked, her most recent collaboration with The Flaming Lips on *Miley Cyrus & Her Dead Petz* (2015) is no different in this respect, as the figure of Cyrus does, speaks and refers to things that are not in the territory of a Disney star i.e. take drugs, have destructive parties, behave promiscuously, while at the same time drawing attention to her more normative past: stoned teddy bears, Dead Petz etcetera.

However, in the work of FKA Twigs, such experiences are already assumed to be a normal part of adult life and are actually the starting point for further exploration. For example, on the *M3LLI55X* EP (2015), the song "I'm Your Doll", requires an audience that is comfortable with the baseline that an adult human female will have sex of her own volition. This allows the chorus to dig into the complex nature of desire and fetish;

> I'm your doll
> Wind me up
> I'm your doll
> Dress me up
> I'm your doll
> Love me rough
> I'm your doll
> I'm your doll.

The lyrics set up a metaphorical framework (Wind me up/Dress me up) that is ruptured by it removal with the line 'Love me rough/ I'm your doll'. These lyrics are performed in a breathless falsetto that is barely able to surface in its thin production against aggressive bass distortion. Again, it seems like we are listening to an interrogation of the complexities of desire, sexuality, and relationships, rather than being asked to react to the mere fact of the fetishes' existence, as puritans might. The music video adds further complexity to this. The lyrics alone are a declaration of the desire of submission, but the video highlights the manner in which questions of agency are at play in this declaration. In the video, an amorphous computer-generated shape inflates which is revealed to be a sex doll. This is then intercut with a slow zoom in on a slightly overweight white man in a tracksuit. He is perspiring and drooling and looks nervous but excited. Eventually, we see FKA Twigs' head atop the body of the doll,

alternating between moments of opened mouthed inanimacy and frantically looking around the space. We also see, presumably the man's fantasy of the fully animate FKA Twigs dancing before him, before coming to kiss him. Here we have a discussion of the male gaze, the complicity of women in its construction, the restrictions to agency and the desire within patriarchy for all those involved, and the way in which this relates to a sense of self on a psychosocial level. Amongst many other things.

In FKA Twigs' work, the uncanny is part of a field of possible exploration; it is not merely a trigger of traumatic transgression. This may be a far more fruitful exploration, rather than a focusing on how to smash the rigid bourgeois notions of home and the associated behaviour. Instead, it is possible to treat them as what they are; particular fictions produced by the restrictions on desire. With this, they become tools to be manipulated, not merely transgressed, which on its own can only prompt the disciplinary action from a cultural super-ego.

These two artists require different things of their audiences. However, we can perhaps see a point of connection when we compare how they are treated by the mainstream. Cyrus is entirely within a mainstream pop milieu, and so to a certain extent, her particular transgressions are already a part of the rules of that domain. FKA Twigs, while not totally separated from the mainstream, started her career in a discreet corner of it, a corner with more connections to the dance, art and underground music worlds. However, by virtue of Tahliah Barnett's personal relationship with the star of the *Twilight* movies, Robert Pattinson, her work came to the attention of his legions of teenage fans (Rose 2013). The backlash against FKA Twigs, much of it racist and all of it ridiculous, was, of course, is tied to the racist misogyny that still pervades in western culture, though its viciousness and heightened nature, points to other factors to being additionally at play. Some of the disgruntled will have seen a picture of the couple together, or merely heard the news of the relationship, and immediately run to twitter to post abuse. However, others may have attempted to listen to her music to see if it would or could redeem this unknown singer, whatever their prejudices were found to be problematic about her. And what they would have found was something remarkably complex.

Until recently the mainstream discourse in America has been able to tolerate an artist such as Beyoncé, on the condition that her relationship to race is within the bounds of cultural appropriation. This is symptomatic of what the musicologist and philosopher Robin James calls Multi-racial White supremacist Patriarchy (MrWASP) (James 2015: 12), which could also be considered as the mode of political correctness that is common to neoliberalism. Traditional essentialist racism has been found to be a limitation to economic growth, as it necessarily limits the number of available consumers. James argues that this new form of white supremacy operates on the level of discourse and normative behaviour. Wherein, all physical differences are not to be

addressed discursively, on the condition that all subjects modify their behaviour to either be or relate to, the bourgeois white man. More specifically, the entrepreneur becomes the cultures normative and morally superior position. To the degree to which Beyoncé has been able to be accepted in the mainstream, it is has been through her ability to enunciate the version of female blackness that can be appropriated by neoliberalism. James refers to this as the "Look I Overcame" narrative. A narrative of individualistic resilience, and specifically applies this to Beyoncé (107). For Beyoncé, this situation may have become more complex with her recent work, but FKA Twigs has not taken on such a narrative of lived hardship so far in the construction of her public persona. Instead, from James' perspective, we may argue that the work of FKA Twigs is more akin to her notion of Melancholia, developed from Freud's notion of the same, to refer to the unprofitable investment of trauma, that neoliberalism could regard as useful human capital (141). While it may not be entirely correct to characterize the work of FKA Twigs as melancholic, she does invest human capital that is outside the primary areas of investment for neoliberal subjects. These include things like black masculinity, an anathema to neoliberalism in James' analysis (113), or complexly submissive sexuality.

Now we can return to the situation wherein the audience of Miley Cyrus, even those who ostensibly dislike or disapprove of her, come into contact with FKA Twigs via Robert Pattinson. For Cyrus, a negative response can be understood to be built into the media spectacle as a positive one, as she can use the negative response to set the stage for a narrative of resilience. While there is also some desire to shock and disturb in the work of FKA Twigs, it does not fit into the narrative structures of the mainstream. This may explain part of why the racism directed at the artist was so peculiarly antiquated (Rose 2014). The audience found themselves outside the normative laws and so their reaction was far more primitive than is currently normally allowed in the sophisticated world of MrWASP and neoliberalism.

This brings up an important difference between the manner in which each of these artists mobilizes their audiences in a broad sense. When Miley Cyrus transgresses the interior limit of capital, characterized by Deleuze and Guattari as Oedipus, it is productive of energy. An explosion resulting from the release of potential energy produced in the tension of social structures restraining desire. But because this energy is focused entirely on the normative law itself, this energy is, in the most part, used to valorize capital. A minority may move the boundary to slightly better accommodate the flows of desire. However, this is merely incidentally keeping pace with what could be thought of as cultural inflation. The work of FKA Twigs, on the other hand, does not require such a divisive rupture where there is a clear division between that which is outside the law and that, which is inside the law. Here, the tensions that desire restriction are released with more deliberate control than with the violence of

transgression. This is not to say that transgressions do not take place, only that they are not at the centre of the activity. Of course, even this is useful to capital (see for example FKA Twigs' commercials for GAP and Google Glass (Gorton 2014)), but it is not as useful, or as easily investable as transgression qua transgression. FKA Twigs offers quirky branding, Cyrus' transgressions allow for much greater brand recognition and are paradoxically easier for the majority to interpret.

To relate this to the discussion of home, we could think of Cyrus' as a pop music refrain in the sense described by Buchanan. In that, the transgression of her work is a venture out into the world, into the jouissance of coming into contact with the real. The mode of this transgression, however, which attends to the laws it violates, calls attention to the seeming necessity of the law itself and thus produces in her listeners a call to return to the safety of being inside the law. Moreover, this space of inside the law is also readily provided in Cyrus' music itself. Once it is separated from the videos and media spectacles, the sonic qualities of the songs on *Bangerz* (and to some extent *Miley Cyrus and her Dead Petz*) are that of generic pop songs and as such operate comfortably within the normative laws of the culture. In practical terms we can see some of this in the harmony of "Wrecking Ball" and "We Can't Stop". The chorus of "Wrecking Ball" plays a I-V-iv-IV progression, which has humorously been observed to be the basis of a sizeable proportion of hit, western pop songs (The Axis of Awesome 2011). What's more, as this progression repeats it allows for a, IV-I or plagal cadence, which is most commonly found in religious music and provides such an ending to this song (AH-MEN). "We Can't Stop" is slightly more ambiguous, with two minor chords in the middle (I-iii-iv-IV) of its progression. This may be why James, referring to Chris Taylor, suggests that it expresses something about 'the work of human capital production and real subsumption' (James 2015: 179). However, it still provides the quasi-religious cadence of resilience. In short, she always provides the resources for a return to the established notion of home that operates under the various power systems of neoliberal capitalism by referring to established ideas of territorialized sound.

Whereas, if we compare this to the two songs of FKA Twigs that we have been discussing so far ("Two Week" and "I'm Your Doll") the return home is always made more complex. It would be inaccurate to suggest that they do not to some extent perform the same motion as the refrain but it can be argued that here the return is complexified by also producing difference. This is particularly noticeable in the ending of both pieces. Where Cyrus uses the standard chord progressions of contemporary pop, FKA Twigs' work derives its harmony retroactively from an affecting bass line. When we diagram the chords to the chorus of "Two Weeks" it could be seen as two ascending figures (VI v VII7 / i II VII). But these relational positions are far less meaningful, in a traditional sense, than they are for Cyrus' work. While the song may end on the tonic, affirming some relation to the A minor tonality, the final cadence

from an undiminished Vii to I, makes this utterly ambiguous. In fact with those figures in the chorus, one could make the case that the actual centre was the VII at the end of each run, suggesting a Locrian mode but temporally offset. When listening to "I'm Your Doll", the chorus melody's alternation between two inverse chromatic rocking figures exploits a particular slice of diatonic harmony in order to disorient the listener whilst retaining familiar popular music repetition. It is because of this that when the song ends there exists a paradox of both seeming resolved and cut off mid flow.

Building a New Home.

When we think about the repetition and saturation of popular music as a refrain in a simple way, even the attempts to illustrate its securing or rejuvenating potential, we end up falling short of finding the tools to move beyond the cycles of suffering generated by our own society. This is because we put the creative act of listening to the service of recreating the status quo. We listen and interpret in line with training we have received from the culture, which is tied up in oppressive power relationships with co-dependent counter moves. This is not always bad if it can be resisted. At our most charitable we might consider this be a reformist impulse, but as many have argued and as has been illustrated throughout this thesis, reforming capitalism is only possible to a very limited degree. Capitalism is not an alien body snatcher to be tamed but is something that is emergent from the interaction of particular subjects and a particular milieu. It is a mode of survival that can channel desire into production, albeit in some mutated form.

Neoliberal capitalism has a totalising logic that could well be suicidal for humanity (Kline 2014). Therefore, reforming it may create spaces to resist it but over time these too become new venues for exploitation. This rules out a popular music as a respite approach to emancipation, at least on its own. But the case for some sort of nostalgic revolution is incoherent, especially if popular music is to be involved, as there is nothing pre-capitalist for popular music to be returned to that would properly be called popular music. Popular music as we understand it exists in relation to capitalism, either as a tool for it or against it. For those fortunate enough, the comforts of the homes that we can construct in capitalism function simply to cope with capitalism. The very notion of this kind of respite is dependent upon the suffering we experience as being unavoidable. If we were to think such suffering as being avoidable truly, the space of home would not merely be an escape from the horrors of the world but also a creative space of possibility. However, as it is, our defence mechanisms

against the systems of neoliberal capitalism are themselves products of neoliberal capitalism, sold to us for a profit.

Perhaps we can rethink the dissatisfaction expressed in the music of Cobain, and the writing of Wallace, not as a desire to be in some sort prelapsarian world of reduced complexity but, rather as something that points to the insufficiency of our present conditions. This insufficiency could perhaps be the result of a world that produces pseudo-complexity and complication, whist being unable to cope with the actual complexity of subjects in a constant state of becoming and contradiction within a largely indifferent milieu. This could be thought as the key differences between the concepts of connection and conjunction. Popular music can be a sight of intense conjunction. This sensation places one in a vast world that is co-created with you, the artist and everyone who has influenced them etcetera. However, it can also be reduced to an individualized and individualizing connection. This is your music, in your head, on your commute. In short, it is a site that exposes the working of the general intellect, with the term 'intellect' used here in a broad sense. With the price of music coming closer and closer to zero, perhaps the opportunity to split popular music from the logic of capital and move beyond to a logic of sensation. If this can be achieved it could perhaps begin to disseminate understanding of conjunction qua social and cultural imperatives in opposition to the reductive logic of capital and reveal what the sufficiency of post-capitalism could look like.

A Sonic Fiction: **Adorno.**

Theodor Adorno was one of the foremost critics of the cultural consequences of capitalism during the 20th Century. In particular, his work explored how the logic and dynamics of capitalism influenced the creation of art, and in so doing made such art a tool for the reproduction of capitalism as the dominant social system in the west. He also theorized on how such production made those that engaged with artworks into consumers, as opposed to some notion of a complete human subject. For Adorno, this was more than crass or simply propaganda, but something essential in the way that artworks, made under and adhering to, the logic of capitalism and its social relations, served to make such lifestyles, hierarchies and commodity fetishism appear natural and rational. For Adorno, this appearance was an act of deception. A deception that is so complex that even criticism of the deception may have only resulted in contributing to its service.

Adorno's critique of popular music and culture is motivated by the goal of radical emancipation. While it may be problematic, it is not some pointless conservative critique of mass-culture, decrying the taste of the masses but ultimately desiring the maintenance of the status quo. For Adorno, what he considered 'authentically' proletarian pastimes and entertainment were something to be celebrated because they were a space of humanity outside of the relations of capital (Adorno 202: 129). What he railed against was the way such works were being pushed aside by the productions of the culture industry. Productions that had pretensions of artistry but were actually only following the framework of industrial production and capital accumulation.

Adorno was a member of an influential group of German Marxist intellectuals displaced to the United States of America during World War Two and would come to be known as the Frankfurt School. They sought to expand the critique of capitalism, developed by Marx, beyond the economic sphere and in doing so, would make it distinct from existing Soviet communism (Jameson in Adorno et al. 2007: 208). Key to this was the school's exploration of the psychological theories of Freud in relation Marxist economic analysis. While it would not be precisely correct to say that Adorno was a Freudian, he did seriously engage with Freud's ideas. In particular, he was concerned with the political importance of the unconscious and sublimation. In essays such as *Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda* (Adorno 1991:132) and his unfinished work *Aesthetic Theory* (2013: 13), provide critical discussions of the implications of Freud's thought to a project of cultural and social change[21].

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[21] Though it is perhaps another Frankfurt School member, Herbert Marcuse, that made the most significant critical developments on this psychological perspective.

The criticism of popular music as a part of the radical political project owe a large debt to Adorno. However, his work, in some respects, has not aged well. That being said, the cultural moment and its related philosophical theory, in which sonic fiction came into being, it was perhaps easier to dismiss the work of Adorno as too tainted by outdated prejudice and thinking (Taylor 2012: 5). It was, at that point, particularly in the field of dance music, becoming obvious that popular music had much to offer when it came to escaping capitalism. Today, however, much of that promise has withered, and the themes that Adorno grappled with have begun to take on new relevance. Though we should not simply return to Adorno, as of the original critique of his work still stands. However, if we can use the tools of sonic fiction to extract that which is still of value, we can perhaps rehabilitate Adorno as inadvertently writing a sonic fiction of the culture industry. Wherein, certain connections were intensified at the expense of unimpeachable accuracy in a comprehensive account of reality. That is what will be attempted in the following chapter, with a particular focus on his concept of the culture industry, and the emancipatory power of the artwork.

The Culture Industry.

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1997) [1948], Adorno, in collaboration with his friend the Frankfurt School philosopher, Max Horkheimer, makes the case that the set of claim of what constitutes knowledge that referred to as the enlightenment—the stage saw the freeing of the subject from the superstition of religion and allowing reason to make human life better, based on a particular conception of individual liberty—constituent, in part, a teleological narrative of civilisation and modernity. The enlightenment, rather than being the culmination of human potential, is actually a dialectic, riddled with contradictions (3). Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the advances of modernity, such as industrialism, have indeed resulted in a lot of improvements to the lives of many, but that organizing such practices around the logic of capitalism has also produced great suffering and oppression (167). They also go on to argue that such alienated citizens, influenced by mass communication technology, can easily be united against an arbitrarily defined other to nefarious ends, such as the fascist anti-Semitism of the Nazis (168).

A central point in the argument of the Dialectic of Enlightenment is the notion of the culture industry. This is something these authors understand, as is made clear in the subtitle, as enlightenment as a tool of mass deception (1997: 120). Adorno and Horkheimer consider the culture industry to be something that has emerged out of a particular set of historical conditions. Meaning that without the scientific advances, facilitated by the enlightenment, the potential democratizing power of mass

communication, broadcast and reproduction would not have been possible (121). At the same time, the uses of these technologies have been limited and directed by the logic of capitalism to become little more than instruments of amusement, distraction, and control (ibid). However, for these thinkers, it is not simply that when one is watching a movie—produced by a Hollywood studio—after a day of exploitative labour that this amusement makes one distracted from the important work of planning the revolution or from one's Marxist reading and discussion circle. Nor is it that one internalizes anti-Communist or anti-socialist propaganda. Instead, it is the case that this amusement changes the nature of people, causing them to identify affirmatively and positively with the very powers that subjugate and oppress them (127).

The concept of the culture industry provides the tools to conceptualize the expansion of the commodity fetish into the aesthetic and ephemeral. Defined by Marx, the commodity fetish is produced when things take on the commodity form (Marx 1990: 163). They take on this form when produced under the abstracting and alienating conditions of capitalist production. Capitalist production requires that the power of labour be abstracted from the labourer, alienating the person performing labour from the things that they produce (716). Additionally, the world produced under capitalism is characterized by an immense production and collection of commodities. This then begins to appear natural (125). The appearance is so convincing that it seems to preclude the possibility of human life outside of capitalism. The fetish is the shift that these conditions produce in the thinking of subjects. Whereby, things that used to have a value that was subjective and personal, connected to their use (use-value), are now defined by their supposedly objective economic value, the amount that they can be sold for (exchange-value) thus limiting our understanding of the world to a reductive hierarchical rationality.

With the concept of the culture industry, Adorno and Horkheimer were able to show how this way of thinking has expanded into the field of aesthetic experience. What may have previously been considered to a be a space outside of the concerns of capital has, for Adorno and Horkheimer, been reified and transformed into a commodity, which inherently reinforces the "natural" appearance of capitalism. This process forms an inexorable loop (Adorno 1997: 123), wherein cultural productions, produced to be economically valuable, reduce their audience to statistical data. Under these conditions, the size of an audience, in relation to its ability to produce value, becomes the only meaningful measure of the quality of a work. These become the common artefacts with which the culture can identify itself. The audience then begins to want things that are like what was produced before, with which they can identify. This narrows the statistical record of income and defines what qualifies as a culturally valid artistic production. This limitation of ideas is a seed for the great pessimism in Adorno's work, as even the artworks he admires are mutated and changed by the

culture industry (Adorno 1991: 37). It is not so much that the culture industry prevents social change seeming possible, but rather that it is sometimes productive of such images of social change or liberation (149). What this does instead is it makes these emancipatory ideas appear akin to fantasy.

Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis is complex. It is not simply that in paying attention to the productions of the culture industry that the people are distracted from what should be their goal of building an emancipated society, but that it changes who they are. It constructs a different subjectivity, defined as distinct individuals capable engaging in exchange operating with perfect information. They argue that these cultural productions are forced upon those in the society, and the need to pay attention to them becomes an imperative. A palpable need. This does not, in most instances, happen through overt coercion. Rather, the conditions of capitalism damage and exhaust people into a state of relative malleability. This transforms what we called free time into recovery time, or, put another way, merely the time allotted for the valorisation of capitalist productions (Adorno 1991: 192). This means that our consumption of seemingly restorative entertainments merely works to ensure our continued subjugation. Thus, by engaging with these productions, the power that oppresses you, is also given access for the domination of your consciousness;

> The might of industrial society is lodged in men's minds. The entertainments manufacturers know that their products will be consumed with alertness even when the customer is distraught, for each of them is a model of the huge economic machinery which has always sustained the masses, whether at work or at leisure—which is akin to work. (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997:127)

For Adorno and Horkheimer, it is the way in which the subsumption of cultural production into an industrial mode of production eliminates spaces that could be thought to be free of the totalizing power of capital that results in oppression. That is what is at stake in the productions of the culture industry. At the time of writing the above remark, referring the immense scale and consumption of resources for industrial production is represented by the power of the 'rational capitalist society', was describing some novel that was becoming the norm. The use of this representation was inextricably linked to, and buoyed by, the repressive power of capital and the state. The power present in the productions of the culture industry. In the face of this seemingly unassailable and rational mode of production, Adorno and Horkheimer conceptualize this oppression as a kind of hypnosis based on the scale of a replicability that pointed to a homogenized way of life.

Today, with numerous diverse media outlets, shifts in the mode of production in general and distribution regarding cultural content, it would be easy to suggest that times are now fundamentally different. That in this difference our subjectivity is not so

easily enthralled to the spectacle production of the culture industry. That in this difference an application of these ideas about our susceptibility to a dominant discourse does not hold water within a contemporary context. There is some truth to this assertion, however, it is possible to overstate the differences. While the internet was reputed to herald a new democratic mode of cultural production, vast swathes of the content online still bear the marks of an institutionalized professionalism that fall in line with industrial standards (Toop 222: 2004). Indeed, as has been shown in recent years, it is easy to argue that, from the point of view of oppression, the internet is a far greater tool than those offered by the mass media of the mid twentieth-century culture industry (Fuller & Goffey 2012: 1). Adorno and Horkheimer saw in the culture industry that which was a supplanting of imaginations with the images and affects of society and consciousness overwhelmed by production;

> The stunting of the mass-media consumer's powers of imagination and spontaneity does not have be traced back to any psychological mechanism; he must ascribe the loss of these attributes to the objective nature of the products themselves… They are so designed that quickness, powers of observation, and experience are needed to apprehend them at all; yet sustained thought is out of the question if the spectator is not to miss the relentless rush of facts (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, 126-127).

This is an interesting remark because it suggests a mechanism by which power controls individuals and the ways in which it can change them to wish to be controlled. Adorno's work, with and without Horkheimer is so often characterized as having a simplistic view of power that presses from the top down. But here it appears to be more complex. It appears that we become willing participants, gifting our time and attention to the productions of the culture industry. However, to get to grips with the complexity of how such an intricate mode of oppression works it is necessary to look more closely at the manner in which Adorno relates art to emancipation.

The Artwork and Emancipation.

Adorno considers the cultural artefacts around us as a key to our ability to move beyond capitalism. Adorno's is not a simple base/superstructure Marxism. To put this another way, it is not merely a matter of swallowing ideology and buying into the propositions of propaganda, there was something more fundamental at stake. While ideology could perhaps explain a great deal of what he considered as oppression his philosophical outlook positioned this as closely related to the field of ontology. The question for Adorno was; what sort of world is actually possible? Oppression cannot rely purely on the masses running each proposition through an ideological algorithmic procedure, nor is it strictly about suppressing all hope. Rather, oppression shifts the

terms of the debate, so that hope for something better would not stray beyond a world delimited by capital. Like his friend, the philosopher, and musicologist, Ernst Bloch, Adorno thought art could allow one to rupture the boundaries of this totalizing power and understand it as something superior in every way beyond it. However, unlike Bloch, Adorno's thorough methodology and its underlying assumptions lead him to the most pessimistic conclusions.

Adorno, as a classically trained composer, was particularly troubled by the emergence of popular music, which he saw as inherently regressive. This was not merely because popular music is relatively harmonically simple, Adorno wrote in praise of what he considered to be simple pleasures, such as in folk music. These were practices that he considered to be at least a genuine expressions, if not the highest aspiration, of humanity. His objections stem from what he saw as the transformation of many of these things into the commodity form. He regarded this as the 'intellectualisation of amusement' (Adorno & Horkheimer 1997: 143). This process transformed amusement into an ideal (ibid) and thus provided justification for the status quo. Amusement becomes the fetishized commodity, and thus a vehicle through which to worship your economic activity. Or rather, your own exploitation. This seemed to be particularly painful for Adorno with music, perhaps due to his recognition of the power music could wield by operating beyond semantic meaning and providing more readily available access to what he refers to as the 'shudder' (Adorno 2013: 111). But even more than mere amusement, this most important sphere of aesthetic experience can be confined to the commodity form.

> That 'values' are consumed and draw feelings to themselves, without their specific qualities being reached by the consciousness of the consumer, is a later expression of their commodity character. For all contemporary musical life is dominated by the commodity form [...] Music, with all the attributes of the ethereal and sublime which are generously accorded it, serves in America today as an advertisement for other commodities which one must acquire in order to hear music [...] Marx defines the fetish character of the commodity as the veneration of things made by oneself which, as exchange–value, simultaneously alienates itself from producer to consumer [...] the consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the Toscanni concert. (Adorno 2001: 37- 38)

Putting aside an unfortunate nostalgia that permeates Adorno's analysis, the application of a Marxist economic understanding of behaviour, to such a seemingly benign activity as going to a concert, is valuable. It is reasonable to suggest, as Adorno does, that one will interact with something that is formed as a commodity in a different way to something that is not. It is the case that this change in behaviour and interactions with the productions of the world around us will produce different effects upon us and upon our interactions with each other. Marx's own analysis argued

extensively in favour of such an understanding (Marx 1990: 165). That said Adorno is hampered both by pessimism and a closed logical system that seems make this system inescapable.

However, these limitations of Adorno's perspective must also be discussed if the imperative behind his work is to be retained. One such limitation becomes clear if we more closely examine the conceptual framework of Adorno's understanding of cultural productions and commodities. Adorno reasonably asserts that the culture and recording industry present a teleological understanding of music. Music, as a commodity, is a means to the goal of the valorisation of capital. This reduced the activity of the production of music to a goal that must be achieved rationally—rather than say understanding music as a field or form of expression to be explored to its own ends. This consumption need not be specific; it could come through viral media or the hit parade. This function is what is required of music in the commodity form. For Adorno, it is a category shift to understand something as a commodity. This is a qualitative change. The object (in this case music) has a function, extrinsic to itself, to be valorised, as an investment of capital. Adorno cannot listen beyond, through or with this. This functionality irreparably distorts any aesthetic value the commodity may purport to have. The reasoning for this is complex, as it is not simply that when something is called a commodity that becomes a commodity. To understand this, however, requires unpacking what it is that Adorno considers to be the constituent elements of art.

For Adorno, a piece of art can be broken down into two parts; the form, which can also encompass things like style, and the content [*inhalt*] of the work; what it is about. In his understanding forms and styles are temporally and culturally specific. If an artist lives in a particular time or place, then they will only have certain ways of putting a work together that can be accepted by their peers as a piece of comprehensible cultural production. Even more than this, Adorno would also argue that it is impossible for the creator of artworks to fully look outside the form/styles of their contemporary moment. The artist may be able to look slightly beyond these conventions, but they will inevitably rely on an existing shared expressive vocabulary and grammar.

If form can be thought of as the dialectical *thesis* of the artwork, then the *antithesis* can be found in the content. Simplifying in the extreme, content is what the artwork is about. This content is the abstract ideas, emotions or psychological states expressed, but not the expression itself. One can attempt to articulate these abstract notions directly, through, for instance, a dense philosophical or political treatise. However, for Adorno, such a direct articulation could not be an artwork and artworks that attempt this produced only 'discursive barbarism' (Adorno 2013: 40). Instead, the artwork is produced in the dialectical tension between the ideas the artist wants to

express and the impossibility to fully articulate this in the given forms or styles. It is in this tension that the possibility of moving beyond the social relations of the given moment becomes comprehensible, and thus where the potential for emancipation can be said to exist.

Commodities do not normally have such a tension for Adorno. The only ideas that are permitted to be expressed, in the culture industry are those that are readily expressed by the available forms of the time. Adorno would argue, for example, that the idea of love that is presented in a popular love song can be sufficiently articulated but this form. As this concept has only superficial depth and its actual simplicity would be adequately reflected in the strophic song form. However, the concept of love as such, even narrowed to a temporally and culturally specific form, with its contradiction and complications, could not adequately be expressed in such a song, as the form could be said preclude such complications. This is the categorical definition of a commodity of cultural production; a product that has the superficial appearance of an artwork but that lacks the dialectical tension that would make it so (Adorno 1997: 129-130).

Adorno's analytic weakness is not that his understanding of art is prescriptive, this can at times be useful, but that for all the subtlety used in the development of this theory, there is a lack of subtlety in his application. Adorno consigns huge swathes of cultural production to a historical waste heap fit only for the vampiric inhuman productions of capital. This then requires the deployment of some complex theoretical acrobatics, wherein works that appear to challenge the formal conventions of the time, are dismissed on increasingly abstruse criteria. Films like those of Orson Welles, for example, may seem to be valid candidates for Adorno's art definition. However, Adorno argues they fall foul;

> Whenever Orson Welles offends against the tricks of the trade, he is forgiven because his departures from the norm are regarded as calculated mutations which serve all the more strongly to confirm the validity of the system. The constraint of the technically-conditioned idiom which stars and directors have to produce as "nature" so that the people can appropriate it, extends to such fine nuances that they almost attain the subtlety of the devices of an avant-garde work as against those of truth. (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997: 129)

While this is a lucid argument, and it certainly could also be made today in the context of a historical perspective that canonizes Welles, at the same time it seems contrived. The same is true of his understanding of jazz. What jazz musicians were doing to expand the vocabulary and grammar of musical expression appears to Adorno as an involuntary adherence to merely a new set of laws that have emerged serve the status quo (128). It is reminiscent of a moment in the Woody Allen movie *Manhattan* (2000 [1979]), in which the protagonist meets a woman at a party who tells him that she had finally had an orgasm for the first time in her life, only for her therapist to tell her it was

the wrong kind. In his attempt to escape the totalizing logic of capital Adorno has constructed his own. The fact that something can come into being under capitalism seems to make it necessarily subservient to it. This makes the justification seem, to many, to be there only in service of the conclusion rather than the mechanism by which the conclusion was reached

Adorno worked from a Kantian philosophical perspective, despite being critical of the enlightenment project, he still measured experience against an ever-elusive ideal. (Gilbert & Pearson 1999, 42). As Gilbert and Pearson point out;

> Adorno replicates precisely the terms shared by Rousseau and Kant, his derided 'mere "culinary enjoyment"' equating to Kant's 'pleasure rather than... beauty' and Rousseau's 'sounds only considered as having effects on the nerves'. In all cases aesthetic cognition is distinguished from and declared superior to mere sensory pleasure. (ibid)

Aesthetic cognition is what provides access to the ideal, which is that of the Hegelian dialectic, a movement towards a greater rationality through semantic meaning. For Adorno, this is a categorical distinction. The capacity of a work to lend itself to intellectualisation should generally be placed as being superior to those that produce pleasure in the service of the valorization of capital. What is particularly despicable for Adorno is that the productions of the culture industry often have a pretence of intellectual significance but actually are only intended to produce pleasure. This is also what is at stake in the aforementioned critique of Orson Welles and Jazz, whatever appears as intellectually exciting is merely "calculated mutations which serve all the more strongly to confirm the validity of the system".

Where this falls short of an effective critique of capitalism, let alone of music, according to Gilbert and Pearson, is that this view merely reproduces the hegemonic discourse of capitalist society itself. As they argue, such idealized intellectualisation of experience is the cornerstone of the bourgeois notion of the individual, who understands human beings to be 'hermetically sealed units, irreducible and unitary individuals, rational agents' (Gilbert and Pearson 1999:152). Without an understanding of subjects as discrete rational actors, the idea of private property ceases to properly function. While striving for such a situation, Adorno is failing to see beyond the world as it is. A world made up subject positions that would be meaningless in the kind of society his politics would produce. However, without being able to bridge this gap, all potential avenues for escape create their own insurmountable obstacles. This perhaps explains why whatever Adorno, from his particular subjective position, disapproves of cannot meet the criteria for art, if art is defined by containing an emancipatory potential. Furthermore, the art that Adorno approves of cannot be of a form that is

easily accessible to the majority of people living under capitalism. Failure is built into this perspective if it is taken as a whole.

This *sonic fiction of boring dystopia* comes both after Adorno (DeNora 2002) but also after the backlash. It recognizes the validity of much of the critique while still seeing in Adorno's work a perspective worth retaining. What is clear to today, from decades of scholarship and development is that music, as an art form, is so riddled with contradictions that a clear position of championing or admonishment would be nonsensical. A conclusion that retains some resonance with Adorno's understanding that music betrays all art (Adorno 2013: 309).

One key relational insight of Adorno's work, is that of a tendency for cultural production, under capitalism, to relegate aesthetic experience to the function of catharsis. While to some, for example, the popular philosophers Alain De Botton & John Armstrong (2013), the idea that an artwork should serve some therapeutic function may seem innocuous enough, Adorno considered this to not merely be reductive but in itself repressive. As is noted in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* "The culture industry reveals the truth about catharsis as it did about style" (144). Just like with style, which Adorno considers to be at once a necessary component for comprehension, but its nature is also unavoidable shaped by the ruling power structure, the cynical production of material for cathartic purgation in the culture industry reveals the role of catharsis in oppression. This insight of Adorno's has been overlooked by many during the establishment of popular music studies. While they have rightly fought to put a focus on the restorative effects of music scholars of popular music, have, at times, framed these as a purely positive trait. Thus, this discipline has often ignored Adorno's notion that simply being made to feel better is not in itself a good and it may, in fact, be the opposite.

This sonic fiction of *boring dystopia* is itself a manifestation of the argument that one' engagement with music must be creative rather than restorative. This is what can be gained from a generous engagement with Adorno's work as a form of sonic fiction itself, which argues that there is always more to do. The achievements of any particular expression are always in some way undermined by the form in which they exist. It is this kind of negativity that allows us to critically engage with the developments in the field of popular music and cultural analysis.

<div align="center">***</div>

Taking Adorno at face value has led to many siding with the productions of the culture industry against him. Today, his work can seem not merely outdated but to take on a parodic tone. Indeed, it is often appreciated as such. For some, there is no need to caricature the figure of the out-of-touch academic revolutionary quote Adorno's attacks

on Jazz.

That said, this very fact may point to a possibility of his works salvation and allow the insights of his critique to perhaps be heard more clearly. Adorno, the theorist, narrates his critique as a character in a sonic fiction. This character is an astute observer with an erudite voice. He has a force of passion and a rich intellect. But the circumstances of the acquisition of this characteristics, alongside the relationship their particular form has given him to his field of inquiry has warped his perspective. It is ultimately this flaw that gives his analysis its sense of pessimism and tragedy.

He is, however, keenly aware of the complexities involved in the mechanisms of oppression, what art is capable of facilitating and what we are willing to give up for relief. This is a character we need in *A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia*.

One of Two: Carly Simon's New Boyfriend.

I sit, and I write about a feeling I had when I was younger. But it takes some time for me to go far enough back. The teenage years are the obstacle as this was a time when the discursive structures that surrounded me were becoming more evident in my limited social circles. Structures that I could attach myself to, structures that could be communicated to others. But the origin of these structures, or at least my understanding of them, could best be called shapes. The shapes that referred to feelings I had had years before when the records playing in my house were without context and without my curations. They were near pure sensations shot through with possibility in the sodden, quickly solidifying projection of what I understood to be real. A real that is always all around and always far away.

So I arrive at this project, a thesis to make sense of it all and to put these sensations in a political frame. But I am still blocked by the initial entrance into the discursive structure. The jargon of authenticity that "white noise" thrives on flows out to many tributaries. I should make clear here that I am not trying to claim so sort of psychological repression, or that it is only in childhood innocence that such feelings can be accessed. So many similar sensations can be reached in so many ways, music has only ever been one infinite set among an infinity of others. What I try to do over thousands of redrafted, rearranged, referenced and rejected words is break through to the sensation without the discursive crutches that so quickly transform into disappointment. Limitations so quickly spring up in the act of description. Each detail I add takes away as it communicates.

I go back as far as I can remember to my first memory of being powerfully affected by music. There is an image of me dancing around the living room, only a little older than a toddler. I think part of why this memory is clear is perhaps because some this was filmed on VHS tape, but I think I remember some points of view that weren't on tape. I don't know the name of the song or the artist, but I remember it was a woman singing and from my present vantage point I know the song was rife with the generic conventions of American 1980s pop. But I also remember the chorus. I type it into Google, but it is a common phrase for searches.

It turns out this formative memory was inspired by the song "My New Boyfriend" by Carly Simon. I don't think I have heard this song for 20 years and it was ten years old then. The song's video is at the top of the search results and I, of course, clicked to

watch it just before writing this sentence. At that moment I have never seen it before, but as the video begins, I am instantly made aware of why this particular song has not made its way into the narratives of our pop cultural history. The music is ok, and I recognize those elements that have been so heightened in my memory, and I try to work out if I can rationalize their defence, cliché ridden as they are. The lyrics would likely be considered problematic if the song had retained cultural relevance. But the main reason this song has not made its way into the media packages that have done so much to ossify our ideas of our recent cultural history is that much of the video is racist. Not racist in the sort of spectacular way but more as the result of a sort of pathetic negligence that is characteristic of so much media.

This is all an act of wilful corruption on my part. As I use the skills of listening I have developed over the decades since I last listened to the song, what was once a mystery is revealed to be something eminently solvable. The power of what I felt to be so many voices I can now identify as the product of the burgeoning art of studio wizardry. I hear the echo on the drums not as unknowable rhythmic thunder but as production cliché. I hear where were once thrilling alien textures as the mere result of performing a sampled instrument with the volume envelope of a keyboard. Most unfortunate of all the lead vocal, lyrics aside, are stripped of their previous excitement, as the sensibility of my present day ear hears a singer of such competence that this song allows nothing to be at stake. The shapes of the melodic lines imply a dramatic potential that cannot manifest itself as the peaks are well within Simon's capabilities. The safety of everything in this song could be a synecdoche for an Adornian manifesto of all that is wrong with pop.

To be confronted with all this is in some ways disappointing. And this disappointment was only ever a few well-placed search terms away. But this is the trap of nostalgia; what memory can do to sense data and what reality can do to memory. There is the temptation here is to dwell in this disappointment and claim that the view of this work offered to me by the knowledge and faculties I have cultivated over the years is the superior position. After all, this view offers ready access to discursive truth content, which is what places me among peers. At the same time, the nostalgist would hold that the place that the experience of this song holds in my personal narrative is to be prized above all else and that only empty pain awaits the rational and knowledge bound.

I cannot find a reason to honour either position, however. One appears to want too much of the song and the other too little. And on different criteria vice versa. The problem is that these positions are a part of structures that serve something else. Something outside of the experience or the memory of the experience. This is not bad

in and of itself. What is bad is to mistake it for a description of the final analysis of reality, rather than what it is, a description of processes of perception. This not to say judgment is impossible, only that it to some extent betrays another position. In addressing this song, I may have to betray these positions.

Conjunction.

Marathe's A.F.R. superiors believe he only is pretending to betray them in order to secure advanced U.S. cardiac-prosthetic technology for his wife; but that in fact he really is betraying them... (Wallace 2007: 995, n42)

A Point of Conjunction.

In the previous chapters, it has been argued that popular music in itself cannot be considered a force for emancipatory revolution. From a practical point of view, it can be argued that each artefact that constitutes the phenomena known as popular music is so totally entangled in the mechanisms of oppression that the continued production of this form is in part responsible for this oppression. This can be seen most clearly in the discussion of *Attention* and *Complicity*. Additionally, from an ontological point of view, contra the lamentations of the likes of Adorno, placing the art object at the centre of the emancipatory aesthetic experience reproduces the same lack that capitalism requires to function. This was demonstrated in the discussions of *Catharsis*. Art objects that promise one the ability to feel whole or fulfilled, as opposed to in dire lack, cannot move beyond the status of cultural paracetamol, that is to say, a commodity. This problematic dynamic still persists in more relational understandings of how popular music functions. As was discussed in the chapter *Home*, to think of popular music as a way to facilitate a simple return to a predefined notion of home without problematizing that notion also risks maintaining the status quo. However, that act of problematizing is not a simple task. Mere transgression serves only to illustrate the power of normative cultural laws, while more sophisticated work, which explores the space beyond transgression, risks being incomprehensible and thus understood as mere undifferentiated transgression.

That said, when considering works such as those of FKA Twigs discussed in the previous chapter, which attempts to operate in a field that contains the act of transgression within it as an object amongst others, rather than a firm final barrier to be ruptured, one can perhaps see some oblique potential. This potential, however, cannot be regarded as residing in the sound of the work itself, nor is it simply in its

relation to the audience, but the possibility for conjunction that this encounter enables. In this chapter, it shall be argued that it is in the concept of conjunction that popular music is most able to lend itself to some sort of emancipatory project. This means more than tracing the influences of songs to form some sketch of the general intellect. It also means more than simply recognizing the subjective variations in reception that are inherent to the multitude that makes up an audience. We can trace at the moments of encounter with popular music as a dense fibrous web that may allow for a diagrammatic understanding of the forces of power, desire, production and the political fictions that allow them to appear natural. In so doing we should be able to create new fictions that would require us to change the relationships between these forces and hopefully engender greater emancipation.

And And And...

First, it is necessary to define what is meant by conjunction. We find this term used in relation to the production of desire by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (2013a: 103). Here, it is in the form of a synthesis, the last of a series of three that allows a subject to produce desire. Before the conjunctive synthesis comes the connective synthesis, where the body becomes aware of things with which it can interact, and the disjunctive synthesis, where the body becomes aware (similarly to the Lacanian mirror stage) of what it is not. These two phases create an awareness of desire via the realization of the desiring subject's own capacity to address its desires through things, and a negatively defined conception of identity that allows self-definition through recognition of what it is not, respectively. However, these two syntheses also create a tension. The connective synthesis allows for the experience of desire as something infinite that is only temporally limited by the number of things that one can engage with at a time. The disjunctive synthesis, on the other hand, limits this desire by asserting the separation of the subject from others and other things. This tension is processed through the conjunctive synthesis that produces a residue, comprised of both eros (desire) and psyche (subjective separation). This residue is the desiring subject. In Deleuze and Guattari's formulation the subject is not some authentic creature of unrestricted connective desire, nor are they totally cut off from the desire as something bodily, but these contradictions are conjoined. It is not 'either or' but 'both and' (2013b: 116).

Deleuze and Guattari take this understanding beyond the definition of the subject, to the level of ontology with the concept of the rhizome. They argue that most systems of knowledge that relate to the experience of reality are attempts to force reality to conform to existing prejudices and arrangements of power. Instead, they

propose a radically interconnected and non-hierarchical framework with which to understand reality. Within this space ruptures and hierarchies can exist but they are not innate to the framework itself. They write;

> A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and. . . and.. . and. . ." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be." [And to] establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings. (Deleuze and Guattari 2013b: 26)

It is with this quote that Berardi begins his most recent philosophical work *And: Phenomenology of the End* (2015b). In this book, it is claimed that there has been a cultural shift away from 'conjunctive concatenation to a model of connective concatenation' (11). This has significant effects on the production of aesthetic experience and ultimately ethical and political activity (11). As can be seen in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, both connection and conjunction (as well as disjunction) are important to the production of subjectivity, however, this is a slightly different application of these concepts. For Berardi, they can be understood in terms of semiosis and its relation to meaning, which he expresses through the figures of the artist, the engineer and the economist. He considers the first two of these to be the figures that comprise the contemporary general intellect. He writes;

> The artist is the creator of new concepts and percepts, disclosing new possible horizons of social experience. The artist speaks the language of conjunction. In artistic creation, the relation between sign and meaning is not conventionally fixed but pragmatically displaced and constantly renegotiated. The engineer is the mast of technology, the intellectual who transforms concepts into projects, and projects into algorithms. The engineer speaks the language of connection. The relation between sign and meaning is conventionally inscribed in the engineer... (196)

Neither of these particular approaches is incorrect, but instead, they provide different intellectual resources to culture. The engineer can use the language of connection to create technology that, in Berardi's terms, facilitates the refusal to work that is the precondition for the development of human intelligence (192). The role of the artist is to reap the benefit provided by this facilitation of the refusal to work and in so doing, use the language of conjunction to expand the field of the possible. To diagram new potential meaning on a field that cannot be readily reduced to signifier/signified. This feeds back to the engineer who can then uncover the new connections that further allow for 'the liberation of time from work [...] for maximum social usefulness' (198).

Berardi's enemy in this formulation is the economist, 'a fake scientist and the real economist who has been charged to reduce the combined power of the artist and the engineer into the established rules of capitalist accumulation' (196). For Berardi, it is more proper to think of economists as the priests of capitalism, rather than the status they claim as scientists (ibid). They perform a task for the management of feudalism in the time of problematic enlightenment. Their role is to discipline the general intellect in line with the teleology of capitalism. Thus economists make imperatives that serve the interests of capital and cast the conjunctions of the artist off as meaningless.

The figure of the pop musician could be said to said to be all these figures in one and as such she perhaps represents a conduit, through which we may find new lines of flight out of capitalism. This is not to say that the answer lies in some vague and mystical power of a piece of music, but that our relationship to this work may be configured in such a way as to help to disentangle us from the machinations of Berardi's economist. If we can achieve this we may be able to open new possibilities. It is not enough, however, that a select few achieve this. Thus, it is important to find this resource in the kind of material that constitutes our cultural atmosphere.

Lemonade.

There is few artist in popular music who have or have had, the prominence or as much influence and commercial success as Beyoncé. Since her rise to prominence in the late 1990s with the girl group Destiny's Child, Beyoncé (the stage name/public persona of the person Beyoncé Knowles) has transcended the limitations merely being defined as a musician, to occupy a space more akin to the role of an (inter)national treasure. In addition to a string of hugely successful solo records, viral music videos and coinages entering the popular lexicon (e.g., bootylicious, is now a term that the Google Docs spell check can recognize), Beyoncé is also one half a music industry power couple with her husband the Hip Hop artist and entrepreneur, Jay Z. At the same time, Beyoncé has built a brand beyond music, attaching her image to various product endorsements and clothing lines. In many ways, she could be seen as a clear example of the American dream and is perhaps even the central narrative of neoliberalism. Indeed, by operating in so many fields, she is able to make full use of the mechanisms of pre-emptive branding discussed in the chapter on Attention. As her images move closer to the state of simulacra the easier it is to separate the production of desire from phenomenological experience.

Of course, as James points out, Beyoncé's persona and work are resistant to simple explanations (James 2015: 115). While there are certain points in Beyoncé's career that could be pointed to as being in support of the racist patriarchal power

structure of American capitalism, for example here song "video phone" with Lady Gaga (ibid)) and her recent clothing line[22], her recent work has been disruptive to this simplistic understanding.

In the first half of 2016 Beyoncé release the single "Formation", which caused controversy relating to its lyrical content, the accompanying music video and her performance at during the halftime show of *Super Bowl 50*. However, this was merely a teaser for the release of her visual album *Lemonade* in late April of the same year. The elements that made this work controversial could perhaps be characterized, in the terms suggested by James, as an engagement with the 'bad investment' in *black masculinity*. However, it could also be argued that Lemonade unpacks this notion of *black masculinity*, exposing it to be a synecdoche. A coded defense of the current neoliberal ideology that allows capitalism to function, which relies on the hegemony of bourgeois white masculinity as the norm. At the same time, however, this figure of bourgeois white masculinity is anxious to illustrate their liberal credentials and so celebrate those of other non-white ethnicities who work to adopt the norms of bourgeois white masculinity as a precondition for entrepreneurial endeavours. This also plays an important role in the practice of cultural appropriation. The normative culture, which James calls MrWASP (multi-racial white supremacist patriarchy) is keen, not only to let others who conform to it, but also to appropriate certain practices of 'the other', in such a way as they no longer threaten the status-quo. As suggested above, the ability to walk this line of cultural elements that are at once suitable for appropriation, but also close enough to unsuitability as to present a novelty, has been one of the important elements of Beyoncé's success.

Interlude: Beyoncé's "Formation".

"Beyoncé's "Formation" is a battle cry", says a fan's blog, probably. A right-wing blog, which has never mentioned her before, calls it a declaration of war. History looks different to some. Has the war started yet or is this another battle. Perhaps this right-wing blog may have mentioned Beyoncé before. If they have, it would have been to connect Beyoncé to the illuminati. In the first line of the song she addresses this blogger directly; "Y'all haters corny with that illuminati mess", from a the top of a police cruiser sinking into a flooded New Orleans. The flooded suburb is an arresting image, but it also looks like an elaborate magazine spread and less a stagnant pool of death resulting institutional neglect.

This sample is not pop and it is not stopping. It's a guitar filtered through a creepy cartoon, broadcast late at night on some obscure cable channel in the 90s and now available all day online. "My daddy Alabama, My ma Louisiana, You mix that negro with that creol make--a-Te-x-a-s--Ba-maaaa." The event of her birth have literally shifted the flow of time. The creepy sample goes on just as steady but at a new rate. But with all this change it is becoming more familiar. Against this, bass stumbles but intentionally; always righted again by its rounded form. There is something about

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[22] Which while it has been shown to be the paying some of the highest wages for sweatshop labour, employs sweatshop labour (Oppenhiem 2016).

the world outside this song that that makes this motion seem to be an impossibility. But we can hear it.

This is, of course, a sales pitch; a teaser trailer.This does, of course, *slay*. This does, of course, take him to Red Lobster. She just might be a black Bill Gates in the making. Meaning, this will be played in every home with an internet connection this year. Odd then to see police as a force monopolizing violence. Next to Southern gothic from which we are to infer the subtext. We see retro 90s denim cool. And the face of Martin Luther King. Beats didn't sound like this when this VHS blurr like this was the only option. Beyoncé exist outside of time or maybe she owns time? "I work hard/ I grind 'till I own it".

She sings; "Ok Ladies, now let's get in formation".

She sings; "Ok Ladies, now let's get in formation".

The last line she sings; "Always stay gracious, the best revenge is your paper" and the video/song opens with a sample: "What happened after New Orleans?" The subversion of this juxtaposition can be missed because this is, of course, a sales pitch. What seems like a crazy collage is actually trying to mobilize something. Does the little black boy dancing in front of the police defeat them or buy himself time? Should you fight if losing is, for the time being, a certainty. Perhaps it will help to change something. It will make her richer and the best revenge is your paper. Is this self-serving or just a way to avoid absolute defeat? There is a mug in my kitchen cupboard in Copenhagen that reads; "What would Beyoncé do?"

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Lemonade transgresses the boundary material ready for profitable appropriation. However, as we saw in the previous chapter on FKA Twigs, the transgression itself is not the point. In fact, the transgression, like with FKA Twigs, is only noticeable to those without the cultural vocabulary to interpret the conjunctive significations that it unfurls. To them, a lyric such as this example from the song "Don't Hurt Yourself", is nothing more than a grammatical error followed by a clear message to young girls to 'use sex as a weapon to possess and to gain revenge' (Walsh 2016);

> Who the fuck do you think I is?
> You ain't married to no average bitch boy
> You can watch my fat ass twist boy
> As I bounce to the next dick boy
> And keep your money, I got my own
> (Beyoncé 2016)

While of course, this is the case on one level, to insist that this all that is going on is a position that mostly displays the ignorance of its holder on this subject. Indeed, to frame it as advice reveals how much of contemporary discourse is restricted to a mere semiotic connection. This is the story that is told by the economist. One can blame pop singers for their influence on young people but to make such conservative critique at the very least coherent, the view must be broadened to incorporate the individualistic hero worship inherent to the contemporary ideological framing of capitalism.

The semiotics of conjunction tells a different story, however. Although, one that cannot be completed by a single reading. *Lemonade* is widely considered to be a

concept album building from a supposed affair had by Beyoncé's husband, and spiralling out to encompass an exploration of struggle in general and in particular for black American women (Bale 2016). The truth of the initial kernel is both unknowable and unimportant, and this is the first move towards being able to engage with conjunctive semiotics. With this conceptual frame, the lyrics above can be viewed as a part of a narrative construction, which outlines some of the qualities of a character in a situation. This distance can be heard in the first line of the work as the first person becomes the third person ('I is'). The album is not, as even some of its most ardent fans would argue, a set of instructions for how to react to betrayal but an exploration of the experience of betrayal when placed in a larger context. The listener is confronted by a definite claim that turnabout is fair play. It is the established sexist ideas that do not consider women, unlike men, to actually be agents in their lives and in the world, let alone sexual beings, that makes this notion of a woman possessing a multifaceted sexuality so confronting.

It is difficult to find much in the way of serious conservative critique of Beyoncé, so here we are forced to make do with contemporary clickbait journalism (in this case from the conservative commentator Matt Walsh, but another prominent and similar example can be found in the journalist Piers Morgan (2016)). Such positions are so clearly intellectually vacuous that the debates that they set up can often be dismissed on their premises alone. Here these positions are used with to illustrate a mode in which popular music, as affective experience, ossifies as discourse. These views also highlight an under explored schism of the conservative right between it neoliberal and traditionalist aspirations, and also a convergence with elements of the radical left. This is in fact how I came across Walsh's critique. A friend of a friend on Facebook posted the piece quoted above from a conservative website. Their intention was to voice an arguable point of radical feminist indignation at what they saw as the uncritical celebration of a problematic mainstream work. *Lemonade* is viewed, in this instance, as a work that can be interpreted as one that promotes the weaponization of sex and the pursuit of material wealth. Such was their frustration with the celebration of Lemonade that they reposted the piece without noting that the author assumes that young women (in particular though we could assume he holds this view in general) are completely lacking in agency. Indeed, these women only exist in relation to a (presumably male) parent, as the title reflects; *Beyoncé is Destroying Your Daughter, Not Empowering Her* (Walsh 2016). Here in lies a problem for both the political right and elements of the left. For the right, the traditional alignment of capital with established power has been coming unravelled with the advance of neoliberalism. Examples of this can be found in the split on the UK's membership of the EU in the British conservative party. This is what Deleuze and Guattari would describe as capital's capacity to deterritorialize power relations, only to reterritorialize them in forms more conducive

to the flow of capital (2013b: 345). For the political conservative, who needs to believe that wealth is connected to some notion of natural law and moral virtue (Novak 1992), this poses a problem when they see such virtue is clearly absent from images now associated with the valorisation of capital.

Similarly, the argument can be made that a tendency exists in the left, to reject any of the freedoms that capital produces as being tainted and in so doing abandon the project of modernity in favour of an imagined past, in which such freedoms were somehow pure. While of course, it is right to be wary of any freedom produced through the mechanisms of capital, to reject them en mass outright would stand in direct opposition to any notion that historical progress has occurred. While this impulse has its merits, it is important to recognize that being alive today is preferable to being alive even 70 years ago. Such a view casts capital as evil incarnate, rather than recognizing it as an ambivalent mechanism that is entangled in a complex web of power and desire.

That being said, *Lemonade* should not be confused with a leftist project. The last line of the of the example above hints at a theme that runs throughout the album, Beyoncé's capacity to make her own money in large amounts in order to attain power. This is further explored in the lyrics to the song "6 Inch Heels". The song features a long bridge that appears to tell the story of a persona whose narrative seems to line up closely to Beyoncé's own personal history and is performed by her in the accompanying video;

> Stars in her eyes
> She fights for the power, keeping time
> She grinds day and night
> She grinds from Monday to Friday
> Works from Friday to Sunday
> She gon' slang
> She too smart to crave material things
> She pushing herself day and night
> She grinds from Monday to Friday
> Works from Friday to Sunday
> Oh, stars in her eyes
> She fights and she sweats those sleepless nights…
> (2016)

Here, beyond any need for economic activity for material survival, we have the lionization of hard work for economic gain as the path to personal fulfilment. This is a seven-day a week grind of sleepless nights, which she is not only entering into of her own free will but, it appears, as a source of possible libidinal pleasure and investment. More pleasure than any material commodity, the goal here is the power afforded by capital. So on one level, this is a neoliberal fairy-tale in which hard work and force of will can raise anyone above the circumstance of alienation. However, this fairy-tale must always disavow the unavoidable fact that for this to be possible for some, it must

not be possible for others, who comprise the vast majority. But this too is a mere connective reading.

One could argue that the response of the theorist, bell hooks, to *Lemonade* exhibits the sort of complex conjunction that one needs in order to explore the work in a way that is productive of more points of connection, rather than boxing it into a category of thought. Although, it is of course incomplete. hooks, opens her analysis by noting that this is 'capitalist money making at its best (hooks 2016). Some have seen this remark as a pointed barb, and to an extent it is, but it is also a Marxian recognition of capitalism fulfilling its potential in an effective way. For the case in point; hooks refers to the visual album's opening, which sees Beyoncé in a designer hoodie. The 'the controversial hoodie' (ibid), as hooks calls it, is a complex symbol. Taken with the scene later in film, of female relatives of black men murdered by the police sitting holding photographs of the dead, this appears to be a gesture of solidarity and perhaps even defiance. hooks immediately undercuts this in the parenthetical statement '[s]peaking of commodification, in the real life frame Beyoncé's new line of sportswear, *Ivy Park*, is in the process of being marketed right now' (ibid). This is a complicated intersection because, as hooks is quick to remind us, 'Beyoncé's audience is the world and that world of business and money-making has no color' (ibid). Thus wearing this hoodie can be seen as a statement of solidarity with the recent increase in social and racial justice militancy. At the same time this hoodie, with its zip over the top is conspicuously a commodity in search of its USP. However, it could be argued that in the complex assemblages of images and sonics of which 'Beyoncé and her creative collaborators make use of the powerful voice and words of Malcolm X emphasize the lack of respect for black womanhood' (ibid), as, indeed, hooks does.

In the USA (and indeed much of the West) black women have been, and indeed continue to be, in general, greatly marginalized both in terms of representation and material power. At the same time, this is also a group who often have a great deal of economic responsibility and little support. As hooks notes, representation that recognizes that this is worthy of celebration. At the same time, however, hooks asserts that the version of intersectional feminism that Beyoncé represents is a fantasy because it suggests that liberation is possible simply by surviving the adversities of economic, racial and gender inequality, rather than by moving beyond them. If mere survival is put forth as the highest goal, all we can do is maintain the conditions of suffering and inequality. It is possible to escape certain facets of oppression through achieving material wealth. However, to attain this wealth, which is something that bears no relation to any scheme of ethical justice, means maintaining a system of inequality. It is a system of inequality that is built upon racism and sexism and is still willing to deploy these modes of oppression whenever it can facilitate the act of accumulation (James 2015: 12).

From this perspective, hooks parallels what we have seen in previous chapters (i.e. she relates to music in such a way as to facilitate your continued participation in the status quo by requiring it to provide the missing to complete the subject rendered incomplete or damaged by capital), rather than considering the relationship between music and listener as the site of potential. This is not only insufficient for emancipation, but that is might contrarily actually work against it. hooks' position appears to be that while it is laudable to expand the mass media representation of black women, the work overall continues to be little more than the valorisation of capital, which is a banal observation of a piece of mainstream popular music.

However, this point view, while more nuanced, still fails to give Beyoncé the licence that is extended to other songwriters. That being that there is not a 1:1:1 correlation between what it is that is sung, who it is that is communicating, and what it is that is received. To put this another way, what is being expressed and who is engaging in that expression and who performs the interpretation of that expression? While certain artists make the gaps between these concepts overt (for example Father John Misty (2015) uses his real name in the title of the song "The Night Josh Tillman Came to our Apt."), Beyoncé is playing more closely to some notion of traditional authenticity in spite of her vast popularity. That having been said, many critical perspectives seem to suggest that there is no mediated distance between the person, the artistic expression and audience reception; that the expression is their idea of a manifesto rather than a presentation of ideas.

 For example, the song "Pray You Catch Me", co-written with the James Blake, invites interpretation of internal subjective multiplicity. The opening, comprised of syncopated vocal layering, forces the main vocal to appear as a momentary coalescence rather than a fixed or defined individual. In addition to this the jazz inflected harmonies of the synthetic keys are, on one level a signature of Blake's song writing practice, and on another level, the introduction to a type of dissonance that is out of keeping with much of the Beyoncé's best-known work. Whereas the dissonance in songs like "Diva" from *I am... Sasha Fierce* (2008) works to assert something consistent and aggressive. These chords seem to point to something insidious and destabilizing. This is not to say it is uncontrolled, but rather it is suggestive of a subject position that is using these mechanisms for control in conflict with something alien to it. This plays into the interestingly self-destructive subject matter of "Pray You Catch Me", wishing to be caught eavesdropping on a lovers betrayal, rather than say discovering the betrayal in a more confrontational manner. This is an expression of a momentary or even persistent but temporary feeling. This is not the depiction of an inherently wronged subject, who is actively sketching the project of the revolution but of the sensation themselves as they are experienced from a particular subject position. In short numerous critiques and celebrations of *Lemonade* commit the fallacies of, in

the first instance, conflating the artist with what is communicated by the artwork and in the second instance, conflating whatever can be concretely said to be communicated with their reception of it.

None of this is to say that piece of music should not be analyzed and the facticity of what they contain combed over, rather that this is not a process of uncovering what is truly there but rather one of creation based on assumptions that may or may not have validity or resonance. This can even be the creation of previously unavailable perspectives. This is at the heart of sociologist Zandria Robinson's celebration of Beyoncé's recent output. Following the release of "Formation", in February 2016, Robinson published a celebratory analysis on her blog. The reason she gives for this positive perspective is that she considers the work to be;

> ...a different kind of resistance practice, one rooted in the epistemology of (and sometimes only visible/detectable to) folks on the margins of blackness. [...] Formation, then, is a metaphor, a black feminist, black queer, and black queer feminist theory of community organizing and resistance. It is a recognition of one another at the blackness margins–woman, queer, genderqueer, trans, poor, disabled, undocumented, immigrant–before an overt action. For the black southern majorettes, across gender formulations, formation is the alignment, the stillness, the readying, the quiet, before the twerk, the turn-up, the (social) movement. (Robinson 2016)

For Robinson, it is the initial step of expanding the understanding of what constitutes knowledge for her audience that makes Beyoncé's recent work important. This is not a first step, but it is nonetheless a necessary one. However, at the same time, as we read in hooks, such a step is always partial and incomplete, compromised and limited. The work put forth in *Lemonade*, both the semantic meaning of the lyrics and the musical lineages it references, are not the means by which we will be able to emancipate ourselves from the oppression of capital. Instead, *Lemonade* offers a point of aesthetic conjunction to those with patience to decode it, with much of the work already done as this expression has been stated in a vernacular form. Robinson is correct when she asserts that its contribution is epistemic in that it articulates a very contemporary form of, W.E.B Du Bois notion, double consciousness as being definitional to African American experience (Gilroy 2007: 126). This term originally referred to the way in which a black American, during the era of Jim Crow, would be aware both of themselves as individuals but also as being *other* to the white hegemony. *Lemonade* draws attention to this bifurcation as an important tool for capital by at once criticizing it and playing the same game with modified rules.

In an age where, as Lury and Lash pointed out, branding rather than the branded commodities, has become the source of value, the novelty of that which is seemingly outside of capital has the greatest potential for valorization. This is an example of desiring-production that may be just out ahead of that formed as *lack* in

Goodman and Parisi's conception of pre-emptive power in branding. A compelling account could be given of how the appropriation of black culture is key to the capacity of the music industry to valorize capital. However, *Lemonade* can be seen to highlight another facet of this.

The wide range of black female attributes, praised by hooks are the tools of epistemic resistance that Robinson celebrates. Many careers of mainstream black female musicians are controlled by their industrial structure to present blackness as a limited and exotic deviation from a white norm. This could also be a description of much of Beyoncé's earlier career. This is not as hooks' may believe, a complete appropriation *the black struggle*, but rather a risky investment in the space beyond the current norms of appropriation. This could perhaps be seen as a double consciousness that applies the deterritorializing capacity of capital. Throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries, the need for capital to expand its consumer base has caused the deterritorialization of many communities for whom overt racism had been the norm as the basis of identity. This has not eliminated racism but instead, has caused it to occupy new territory. It is new territory that in some cases could be argued to be the unconscious thrill of exotic novelty branding. This process, up to the limit of the already appropriated or readily appropriable, has exhausted itself today. With a vast amount of the cultural production of the last century readily accessible and reproducible the rate of appropriation has accelerated to such an extent that only the areas still deemed risky investments, in the sense used by James, remain novel. The reasons for this can be found in both the rapid cultural saturation and the shifting business models, of media consumption and communication. So, in order to valourize her capital, Beyoncé has turned to the space of epistemic resistance. This is a space that is not yet ready for appropriation on a wide scale. Here, the acceleration of capital has enabled the potential deterritorialization of some small part of its own normative identity; the white bourgeois man.

We should have no illusions about this. It is a problematic compromise. It is fantasy feminism, and fantasy anti-racism as hooks describes it. But if artworks themselves are not to be the source of emancipatory potential, or merely a healing salve, what they can provide are a point of conjunction in the cultural milieu that allows us to uncover the structures of connection and disjunction that are usually hidden. This form of epistemic resistance cannot be pure because we need the knowledge that it provides to complexify our understanding of ourselves and of the world. It is this complexity that is the source of ethical conflict and ambiguity but also a position capable of understanding conjunctive significations. This may be, however, the only position from which things can be changed.

It is impossible to know if Beyoncé's supposed involvement with feminism and the fight against racial discrimination is genuine or not. To suppose it is, will rightly seem to some as naive. To suppose it is not is difficult to do without some level of cynical speculation. The methodology of dialectics would synthesize resolution that would rely on the existence of abstract categories, in which music is reduced to the role of the dissemination. However, music provides more than this. While not being the locus of emancipation or the pure expression of authorial intent, it is an energetic force that amplifies the conjunctions often denied by the dominant discourse. Perhaps it is not that we are to resolve this contradiction at all, but that we are to break down the constituents of its construction and draw out some new resonance.

In I*nfinite Jest*, Wallace suggests to us that cynicism and naivety are not mutually exclusive, and he goes on to demonstrate this in ways that are often heartbreaking. This is particularly true in the story of the reformed burglar and recovering addict, Don Gately. Aside from his abusive childhood, we also see an unresolvable contradiction in the ways in which he engages with the rituals of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), the only thing that is presently allowing him to keep going. In particular the task of relinquishing his will to that of a higher power. Gately does not believe in any sort of god, in fact, he finds the notion ridiculous, but every day he is one his knees asking the ceiling to relieve him of his will (Wallace 2007: 467). Such moments of knowing and cynical surrender to the naive notions are presented as being in some way necessary to the crocodiles, the older members of AA. They have a standard answer to a question they are frequently asked by the new members; when someone asks how AA works, they say 'just fine' (350). None of this is to say we ought to buy into the quasi-mysticism of this approach. All it is to say is that *knowledge* of is not enough. This is why conjunction is powerful. This is also why it is right to see popular music in terms of conjunction. Music, as a point conjunction, allows the contradiction to be explored not as something in need of resolution but as the development of an ethics of an internal tension.

These are, on one level, deeply unsatisfying responses to the problems they attempt to address. In truth, AA makes a dubious claim regarding its effectiveness (Grey 2012) and Beyoncé has enriched herself greatly in part through her association with a recent upsurge in media interest in social justice. But still, the problem persists. Naivety would leave the problems these projects present unaddressed. However, at the same time cynicism cannot recognize the possibilities stemming from actionable approaches. Similar to the discussion that has run throughout the proceeding chapters, both responses appear to be too negatively defined by the structures that they want to resist. Naivety is too willing to accept that some things produced knowingly by the

system of power are somehow a threat to that system of power, and cynicism is hopeless as it tacitly accepts the immovability of the system and indeed looks to benefit from it (Zizek 2008: 25).

Throughout much of his work, Wallace struggles with these positions. Knowledge and intelligence seem to lend themselves to a default cynical stance that is simultaneously insufficient. For this reason, he is at times too uncritical of the need to adopt the naive position, which can often be the denial of the knowledge necessary for life to function. However, a way through this can perhaps be found if we attempt to disentangle his use of the terms cynicism and irony. Wallace has a habit of using these terms interchangeably when critiquing the postmodern condition found in the media landscape after the end of history. However, Berardi argues such a conflation is a mistake, and the distinction between these terms is vital to overcoming our present predicament with regards to a larger program of emancipation. He writes;

> The common starting point is that both the ironist and the cynic suspend belief in the moral content of truth (and also in the true content of morality). They know that the True and the Good do not exist in God's mind, nor in history, and they know that human behaviour is not based on respect for any law, but on empathy and shared pleasure [...]. The cynical person bends to the law while mocking its values as false and hypocritical, while the ironic person escapes the law and creates a linguistic space where the law has no effectiveness. The cynic is someone who wants to be on the side of power but does not believe in its righteousness. The ironist simply refuses the game, and recreates the word as an effect of a linguistic enunciation. (Berardi 2012: 20)

We saw this motion at play to some extent in the works discussed in the previous chapter. Within this frame, one could say that while Miley Cyrus represents the cynical position (a breaking of the law that illustrates its power) and FKA Twigs the more ironic (an ignoring of the law). That being said, irony is not a virtuous position because such virtue would require a system that is capable of bestowing virtue on it. In actuality, in contrast to many systems, these positions may be correctly considered as evil for its apparent complicity with the system. Indeed, the manner of resistance, necessary to over come our present impasse, may well not be pure. That said, it need not be cynical. What such resistances illustrate is the manner in which the system strives to compensate for that which it has not yet been able to appropriate. This is why FKA Twigs is offered the opportunity to sell *Google Glass* and why establishment figures like Michelle Obama rush to celebrate *Lemonade* (Young 2016). What is needed is to find ways to use these contradictions productively rather than simply considering them to be abject betrayals.

In the conclusion of *And: The Phenomenology of the End*, Berardi explores the quasi-mythical figure of La Malinche (2015b: 331). La Malinche was an Aztec woman,

sold as a slave to the Mayans shortly before the arrival of Cortés and the early Spanish colonizers. With her knowledge of the language of these two native cultures, she was employed by Cortés as a translator and later became his lover. Many considered her to be a traitor to her people both the Aztecs who sold her and the Mayans that enslaved her. Berardi argues that she owed these people nothing, but does recognize that in this act of translation, a betrayal does occur. He uses this story to illustrate how 'a world ends when the signs proceeding from the semiotic meta-machine grow indecipherable for a cultural community that perceives itself as a world' (ibid). He argues that the translations provided by La Malinche enabled the destruction of the semiotic systems that enabled the Mayan and Aztec worlds to exist. Parallels are then drawn between this destruction and the destruction of conjunctive codes by the automaton's connective worldview (336). He asks if it is possible for humans to find new means of conjunctive language in our new technological paradigm. His conclusion is that there is something in the process of betrayal in which La Malinche engaged from which we must learn if we are to survive the transition from the present semiotic paradigm.

While there is a troubling nostalgia that runs through this particular section of Berardi's work the need to embrace a complexity that cannot be pure is an exciting area of potential. The type of knowledge that can be derived from popular music communicates something of the very nature of our actual conjunctive reality. It is a rhizomatic reality that, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, is concealed within the tree structures of connective semiotics and dissemination. At the moment of its enunciation, the networks of capital, technology, culture, history, and libido are filtered by the waveform of popular music, which in turn reveals to the listener the artificiality of the reality they inhabit. Even so, it is still difficult to interpret this information. Perhaps this is because of the technology of connection that as Berardi argues, suffuses this experience just as it does many others. However, it could be that the problem stems from the nature of conjunctive experience itself. The connective signification of mainstream discourse is easily comprehended by those able to function within it. It is how a system speaks about itself that allows for an ease of literacy.

Conjunctive experience relies on indirect signification. In fact, it has no fixed system of signification to rely upon and thus, therefore, requires a creative act on the part of the receiver for interpretation. So, not only is it more difficult but its outcome is, in practice, uncertain. Indeed, what is certain is that the practice will reveal, and perhaps actually enact the corruption of any project of emancipation. It is a simple statement of fact that, at this historical moment, the route out of racial oppression that is pursued by Beyoncé is not available to the majority of those suffering it. Such an approach is not sufficient to spread a workable understanding of the critique of capital. Beyoncé may enunciate the desire for black female emancipation, and all the while perpetuate a conservative notion of gender roles and profits from a system that has

helped to restrict this project. AA will tell you to renounce yourself and your will to a higher plane to get sober but declares that it is you, the individual that is to blame when this fails.

Popular music, of the most vapid and banal sort, can transport you to the mechanism of economic control over that oppression, through the means that have been created to inspire enjoyment and even libidinal investment. It is not the job of a theoretical text such as this to redeem popular music. It is irredeemable and also not in need of redemption. It was never a missing piece misshapen by capital but a point of convergence, through which we have the possibility to integrate or not. There is no point in giving Beyoncé notes on how to improve her feminist anti-racism. There is only an opportunity to uncover previously unknown deficiencies that the apparent corruptions of others reveal. These corruptions create new conjunctive networks as we continue on this infinite task. As Robinson argues, what is needed is a resistance rooted in epistemology, but this cannot come from Beyoncé, rather it could come from Beyoncé converging with Robinson. That being the moment when Robinson finds the expression of something in "Formation" that has belied her previous attempts to articulate that which at that moment of aural stimulation appears to be possible.

What we tend to call empathy, if it is to mean anything more than simply being understanding of the situation of the other, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, could be thought of as becoming other. Berardi argues that 'conjunction is the pleasure of becoming other, and the pleasure of knowledge is born out of that pleasure' (Berardi 2015b: 14). It has often been said that music and particularly popular music can help to facilitate community. However, this suggests something more substantial. If we insist that the highest goal is simply the cohabitation of indivisible individuals, it is difficult to see how capitalism can ever be overcome or replaced. So long as entirely discrete entities are understood to be the foundational level upon which society is based, then the dynamics of capital can come into play. This has been a pillar of post '68 French theory and is indeed a theme of non-western conceptions of subjectivity. If there is to be a move beyond capitalism, it goes without saying that our understanding of subjectivity must also shift to recognize its distributed and interwoven nature. Though at the same time, thinkers like Weheliye are right to remind us that this should not be done in the misguided attempt to eliminate difference, as heterogeneity is a necessary component of emancipation (Weheliye 2005: 206). Indeed any empathetic experience is stripped of meaning if there is no distinction between the parties involved. This would place becoming in the past tense.

That having been said, it has become clearer that the potential to generate a profound of experience of subjectivity becoming an open system, rather than the definition of the individual, is where the potential in popular music resides. However, this is a particular slice of the existing thinking on the subject. As has been mentioned

previously, Kassabian understands the experience of music to be a clear representation, and that it is indeed the enaction of distributed subjectivity. This is difficult to articulate but can perhaps be thought in terms of a subject being produced through an interaction of inward and outward pressures acting simultaneously, rather than an individual insisting itself upon the world. Thus, the individual does not assess musical artifacts that happen to exist, but instead, the network of distributed subjectivity produces a field of which popular music is a part. However, that such music operates under capitalism perhaps offers a sketch of how this mechanism operates. Popular music plays on a precarious edge that is common to the dependence, in late capitalism, on brands over commodities; the mass production of things to be experienced as unique. To the extent that this can be contained within a notion of individuals sharing an experience, it does not reach the external (schizo) limit of capitalism. However, when it spills over into a recognition of the essentially blurred nature of subjectivity— and thus into the inadequacy of capitalism to organize a society, and indeed a world that is constituted by this subjectivity—then it must be aggressively contained[23].

The particular opportunity that popular music presents is for the audience to experience this complex conjunction as something visceral and personal. That it is something that may require immediate action. This may only be an internal shift of perspective and can also pass by unnoticed. Popular music is a resource produced between people. It can produce a space of potential that can facilitate epistemic resistance. However, it is a resource that does not contain agency of its own. It can be said to perhaps tend towards a certain trajectory, but the fibrous nature of conjunction means it could be directed along other courses. The extent that this redirection is restricted into existing structures of power is perhaps unremarkable. What it more interesting is to explore what these restrictions reveal as this music reproduces them.

Popular music can introduce an ordering energy into a system that tends towards entropy and expenditure. That it is able to continue being produced even after the majority revenue streams that have previously justified its existence have dried up, points to a capacity that it has to exist both inside and outside of capital. We are now a good distance from the conditions that formed the original instantiation of the culture industry. Conditions that created have numerous art forms that ambivalent in its relationship to capital. What enables it to appear as if it is a tool of oppression is the manner in which the conjunctive network that constitutes the sound is channelled as it comes into contact with both the listener and the listening situation. This appearance stems from an initial mistake in the way we relate to art in general and popular music in particular. It is not that music is instrumental but that we instrumentalize it.

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[23]This is how Gilbert and Pearson interpret the draconian in the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. (1999: 152).

If we are to gain anything emancipatory from popular music it will not come from direct instrumentalization or even the interpretation of the instrumentalization of other subjective intentions. Instead, we should treat the waveform of the sounds itself, and its complex indirect chains of signification through the extra-sonic content that it represents, as the imposition of a filter upon the received interpretations of reality. A filter that exposes some of the structural weaknesses of these interpretations and the production of potential resonances with fields that exist beyond the structures that reinforce them. This notion has a certain similarity with the ideas of Adorno's contemporary Bloch, who was discussed earlier. However, there is one important difference, this vision is not utopian. Any role popular music can play in the move towards an emancipation from the oppressions of capitalism will not lead to the resolution of all suffering. Indeed it is in the nature of any epistemic resistance that some pain will result as betrayal will be necessitated. The hope is that this pain will be less arbitrary, and more conducive to emancipation from pain that is unnecessary or restrictive. That having been said, the desire to operate in a way that is both cynical and naive, what Berardi may term as ironic, is a desire for cautious optimism, something that capitalism moves to foreclose through the culture industry. The ironic moment is that in the attempt of this foreclosure, capitalism created the condition in which popular music could emerge. And in doing so, it allowed the sort of contact with the infinite (Deleuze & Guattari 2011: 181) that had previously been the preserve of a patrician elite, to become an everyday experience for almost everyone. An experience that contains with it the very imperative to move beyond the status quo, just as it did in the enlightenment before a previous different foreclosure. The task now is to bring it out in the mix.

Two of Two: On Xiu Xiu and Mixing.

Before I learnt to play guitar, I often did not know what I was hearing when listening to music and there are many occasions when I miss this particular capacity for ignorance. I recognize some of this stems from nostalgia, but I believe there is something else to it. It was an ability to experience sound, not absent of signification but not filled with the conventions of established signifying chains.

A long time after having learnt to play and record, I was pretty good at mixing for about a year. In the creation of pieces of music from recorded and sampled material I arrived at an aesthetic sensibility and developed the capacity to technically manifest it. I have since allowed this to atrophy, though I don't think it would take more than a little practice to get some of the feels for this back.

When I was mixing at my best, it captured something of my younger self's ignorance. It brought mystery back to music. In the sensibility, I was cultivating it was not so much a case of bringing out the sonorous qualities of instruments but detaching these qualities from instruments. An adjective used to describe what I had stumbled into could be blurry, though if it went so far as to become a wash I had gone too far for my technique to hold the piece together. For me, the goal seemed to be that everything would have its place but there would be no way to identify a point of separation between them. It would be in a someway understandable but also an utter mystery.

My relation to genre had similar qualities. My work was not so original that it defied genre convention, it was gloomy noisy guitar music, but the idea of knowing in advance what qualities were required to articulate genre convention, prior to writing the song, repelled me. On some level, it still makes me uncomfortable. Each instance of recording seemed so variable regarding outcome that to know how to cope with this in advance, when the material could; if only on a micro level; be so indeterminate, seemed a painful limitation. As was, of course, fumbling around to find new ways to cope with these new samples. This was a paralytic that in part lead to me losing my touch, such as it was.

Despite clinging to particular artefacts in my practice, that for someone like me charted routes of signification so trodden they lead directly to cliché, the notion that I should direct my work in line with particular conventions frustrated my ego. The goal was to make something the moved past conventional frames of understanding, where a sound was an instrument that had a lineage of signification. However, unlike many other

forms of expression, in music making this desire is frustratingly attainable. Therefore, at the same time, I had no desire to enter the realm of abstraction that had been expanded by modernism. This abstraction came with its own particular signifying networks, which also held little interest to me.

What I wanted to make, if I were to give it a firm comparison after the fact, was the music of Xiu Xiu. A California indie-noise-art-rock band, built around the multi-instrumentalist, singer and songwriter Jamie Stewart. This band had provided a sensibility that was haunted the development of my practice. I first came into contact with them when I was 16 or 17, on the list of music preferences on the MySpace page of a girl that I had found compelling when I had met her at a party. When her profile page opened the automatic music player loaded and so began the song *"Boy Soprano"*. The song opens aggressive irregular hits of a shrieking distorted, maybe, organ, before a pause and then dropping into something else; at once guitar music and 8 bit and cohesively organic. However, when Stewart's voice enters through, breathy and fragile yet aggressive, the world this song has produced crack along its tectonics;

> Look at me nothing bad is ever,
> Going to happen to you again,
> Although you are a solid pile of hate,
> You're still pretty like a cake,
> Pulling out a bat at the Kill Me Court,
> Slaps me that I can't handle you,
> But yes no yes no yes,
> Tell me how to live,

I had no idea what this was. Even with the internet at that point, the world of my small town music community was structured on binary definitions. Music was pop or rock, serious or comedic. But the confluence of elements at play here in the construction of some jet black humour started to swirl in such a way as to produce contradictions that seemingly both resisted and did not require resolution. In short, I was, although I didn't know it, listening to an expression of the ironic in the terms laid out by Berardi. A way of engaging with the complexities of existence and experience that did not succumb to the logics of existing power structures, which would attempt to limit them.

Instinctively this spoke to me, but within the scenes of exchange that I lived then and for the years that followed I could not communicate why, so my attention drifted. Years later, with some grasp of a variety of theoretical tools, I can label elements of this experience, but this is still insufficient. I can produce thousands of words that attempt to articulate an experience of connection, disjunction, and conjunction that is radically

at odds with so many others and so many other ways of talking about it but still, this sensation has not been reached.

I didn't listen to Xiu Xiu again for almost a decade. This was not a conscious choice but rather the upshot not knowing how to incorporate their work among the vast majority of experiences that were more readily comprehensible and communicable. All the while, however, blindfolded I chased this incomprehensible, incommunicable sensation that I felt could produce difference. I pursued it with my ears on through the computer, attempting to train unruly sound sources in such a way as not to bring out their origin but to transform them into something new.

I came into contact with Xiu Xiu again recently, which is what shapes the confluence I am now attempting to describe. It was at a festival in The Hague; the tickets were a gift from my girlfriend. She did not know the band, and I was surprised to see that they were headlining. They closed the final night of the festival in a gothic cathedral performing their interpretation of the soundtrack to 'Twin Peaks'. Few combinations of established artworks and practitioners could work so well in combination. Regarding expression, 'Twin Peaks' could be thought of the inverse of Xiu Xiu as both produce an uncanny combination of the darkness and absurdity that motivate so much of human action, which is disavowed by society at large, but they balance them in different proportions. Importantly common to both is that they dwell in this space beyond the boundary. They investigate its contours, its edges, and surfaces, the constituents of its atmosphere and present it back to the structures that would disavow it.

In the final piece of the performance, after a spoken word performance by the band's keyboard player, Shayna Dunkelman, who gave a haunting reading from the character, Laura Palmer's, diary, in which she to cope with and, perhaps, the normalize the abuse she has suffered, Stewart breaks, without a microphone, into the song 'Mairzy Doats', the nonsense novelty song that Palmer's father and abuser sings once he has recovered from the shock of his daughter's murder. Again, I feel the plates shifting as things that appeared to be something particular are revealed to be becoming something else. Again I feel everything has its own particular place but I cannot tell where one end and one begins.

Conclusion.

Cultural critique can be reductive. This criticism comes both from those with specialist knowledge of the field and those without it. This is one of the problems that this thesis has attempted to address. The impasse, as it has been laid out, is only as it is because, the Adornian and the Deleuze/Guattarian perspectives, exclude certain things in their operation. This can be found in Adorno's ontological perspective, that separates out the commodity as a distinct entity. And while the work of Deleuze and Guattari appears to have overcome some of these problems, certain limitations persist as it transitions to real-world application. In spite of the problematic elements of reduction, it is an unavoidable part of the process through which we produce meaning from experience as subjects. Reduction is both physically and temporally necessitated. Thus, the question becomes how should this reduction be carried out and what can be done to mitigate the problems that this process causes?

To address this issue, one cannot simply oppose reduction, as some reduction is necessary. Rather, something needs to happen to the information that remains, if a cultural critique is to produce a meaningful analysis. This can be addressed through the notion of intensification, and sonic fiction can provide such intensification.

Intensification is a possibility, but by no means is it a necessary side effect, of reduction. With reduced information, it can be easier to attend with a greater appreciation of the detail and complexity that comprises what remains. However, this is a particular outcome. Intensification is a multifarious concept that is able to operate in different modes. The findings of this thesis could suggest that sonic fiction is a particular kind of intensifier; an amplifier.

If it can be said that human interaction with music is in some way political, for this statement to be significant, it cannot be limited to discursive political messages. Far more interesting are the micro-relationships of political oscillations that are entwined within music and the experience of it at all levels. This includes the lyrical content, the way certain sounds, rhythms, textures, and styles enter into complex networks of signification and political economy in which music plays many direct and indirect roles. These elements, entangled in the affective experience of music, could be said to constitute the micropolitics of popular music. What sonic fiction can do is amplify relationships between musical and other elements, rendering them audible and observable in ways that were not previously accessible.

To develop this further, having engaged with both the practice of sonic fiction and the work of Adorno, sonic fiction provides a way by which one can detach those elements of astute critique in Adorno's analysis, from its problematic foundation. Sonic

fiction provides the tools that allow us to shift our interpretive apparatus. In a sense, Adorno's work is, like sonic fiction, both a reduction and an intensification. Problems, however, present themselves when, after this process of intensification and reduction, the outcomes are presented as if they were to reveal some kind of underlying truth. This fundamentally misunderstands what it is that takes place in the process of cultural critique and what it is that constitutes the object of analysis. To use the metaphor of amplification, as a subset of intensification, one requires the information, signal or object to undergo a process through an additional device. The device in this thesis could be called a process of sonic fictionalization. In Adorno's writing, it is the historical and negative dialectics. There are many differences between these methods but the primary difference is that Adorno's approach claims truth while sonic fiction cannot make this claim.

This is not to say that fiction is the opposite of truth or that some form of theory-fiction is the only way to produce a cultural critique. Rather, the critique that a fictionalizing device can produce is of a particular consistency. A consistency that arguably better reflects the epistemic problems presented in the analysis of the experiences of others and yourself in experiencing popular music.

If we treat Adorno's work not as making truth claims but rather through a sonic fictional process, as a persona who presumes to make truth claims, his work appears more favourably, because the distortion changes in consistency. No longer is it a tirade, albeit a rigorously constructed one, against an object-in-the-world that the author barely understands but rather a series of amplifiers that make visible relationships of power that were otherwise obscure and difficult to see. However, such is the nature of amplifiers that, along with increasing the audibility of this micro-political oscillation, they also distort the information. This is not in itself a problem, as distortion can be productive of new relationships and resonances that were not evident prior to amplification. Hidden in the acoustics. In addition to this, amplification comes in an infinite range of variations and tends to be unique to the particular device that produces it. Each attempt to produce sonic fiction could be considered a different amplifier. With this in mind, the production of the distortions can be considered akin to the traces of affect that, when studied, can reveal something about the subjectivity that produced the particular amplification device. The problem comes when we mistake these distorted, but empirically-derived, views for truth. If this position holds and it allows us to understand Adorno's distortions more clearly, then we can use the same process to consider the distortions of the other positions discussed in this thesis; those of Wallace and Deleuze and Guattari.

Once we consider the position of Deleuze and Guattari as a persona, it becomes evident that the device that they use to amplify the disintegration of a multitude of structures and hierarchies is one that is inflected with the justifiable and deep-rooted

desire to see these structures destroyed. This is where a problematic distortion becomes evident. That distortion being that arbitrary structures are viewed as somehow in opposition to the rhizome when they are in fact merely strata that lay upon it. Deleuze and Guattari attempt to point this out in recognizing the strategic importance of trees but the distortion persists. Thus, when it comes time to apply these notions to music and cultural production, the notion of disintegrating barriers in favour of inter-(or distributed) subjectivity is put forth as being essential to overcoming the alienating conditions of capitalism. To a certain extent, this is the case. Having said that, not enough attention is paid to the trauma that the entailed dissolution of fixed individual subjectivity inspires in many individuals living under capitalism, both for those who are uninitiated in a project of anti-capitalism and those who are fully engaged in one.

In a similar way to Berardi's analysis of the story of La Malinche, this transition poses for even the committed anti-capitalist the prospect of a complete transformation of the semiotic codes that structure their lives and with this the end of the world. This has produced impediments for the application of this theory for emancipatory ends. At the same time, as we see in the work of Boltanski and Chiapello, the asignifying inhuman flows of capital have been able to incorporate this theory into their operation.

Wallace's mode of amplifications was one coloured by depression. This is not meant as a diagnosis of the flesh and blood writer but of the persona of a young author writing both after the end of history and at the dawn of a new capitalist technological revolution. If Adorno was writing about a code that he did not grasp and if Deleuze and Guattari had failed to understand the trauma of removing such codes then Wallace's amplification devices were comprised of the traumatic experience of the shift of codes itself. The distortion here is found in the construction of an inexorable trap that is both suspicious and naively accepting of the old and the new simultaneously. The strength is that this work comes from its presentation as fiction, thus presenting a persona who is striving for truth, rather than the presenting truth itself. Thus, these contradictions, while still troubling, are not fatal flaws for Wallace as they are for Adorno. Instead, we can navigate between them. This is, however, not an easy task.

What we can do from here is aggregate these fictions. Add them together and subtract the remainders. However, these three will not produce truth, nor would five or fifty sonic fictional amplifiers. Perhaps with 30 million, we might start to form a workable trajectory. This may seem a difficult task to undertake, and it is, but it is essential in order to further this research. That said, any intention to arrive at a final truth is not the point. The point is to engage in the practice and allow it to shape the process of producing meaning from experience, not to represent that meaning in some final fixed form that will inevitably crumble.

In developing the tools to produce *A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia,* the impasse between these theoretical strains had to be overcome. Whereas sonic fiction

was originally content to dismiss the limited nature of critique found in traditional critical theory, such a dismissal was no longer fit for purpose. The use of more inclusive affect oriented theory had allowed sonic fiction to see part the arbitrary nature of the mechanisms of power in policing the experience of music. At the same time, however, it did not account for the possibility that power could incorporate this more open perspective. These desperate positions had much in that could strengthen one another, but their combination at the level of pure theory would not make sense. This is where the practice of sonic fiction itself, injected with the science fictional resource of *Infinite Jest*, which provides an uncanny frame for our times of *boring dystopia*, allowed a new perspective on these theoretical schools to be played out. This allowed these schools of thought to be played out as descriptive engines or amplifiers and indeed, so too could their apparent contradictions. This way of working also provides new insights into the role of the cultural critic and what the drive of such a practice should be. The question is then; how has amplification affected *A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia*? What elements should be added into the process of aggregation?

The opening of *A Sonic Fiction of Boring Dystopia*, after an essay on Wallace's science fiction, gives an account of Jessie J's performance at the closing of the 2012 Olympic Games in London. This, in many ways, is more revealing about the author than the subject of his writing. Here we see someone in a state of pseudo-certainty becoming increasingly confused by the complexity that he hopes to understand. He leans to another writer, with a similar background, in Wallace, in search of a way to cope with this confusing confluence of information. This leads him to his first conceptual point of investigation with the chapter *Attention*. However, the time spent here reveals that focusing on this element of engagement is not only superficial but has certain dangerously essentialist and patronizing implications.

To resist this implies the necessity of dealing with the fraught notion of the *Complicity* of subjects under capitalism. As is explored in the story of buskers on the London Underground, the ever-constrained world of neoliberalism is something that is built out of the desires and aspirations of the population, otherwise referred to as 'consumer demand', as much as it is enforced by those in power. Popular music here simply becomes a barometer by which one can see complicity and desire as they flow. However, as this complicity is explored further its motivations become clearer. The conditions of capitalism are damaging in the very way that Deleuze and Guattari describe them; they manufacture lack. Again the author's understanding of his object of research shifts. Popular music is no longer simply an epiphenomenon of complicity but it is also an attempt to create a space for recovery.

After an account of the theory-fictional influence of Deleuze and Guattari, a reflection on a performance of Father John Misty (FJM) reveals a vain refuge of the author. That being the hope that this music, that in some way speaks to him, with

semantic content that addresses the particularities of the problems of our time, would be enough to shift the culture away from the myopia that helps perpetuate capitalism. However, FJM's performance skewers this idyll, revealing it to be little more than a search for a cathartic release that is no different from less "socially conscious" works. Through the chapter *Catharsis*, the role that popular music plays is shown to be often limited to the addressing of the experience of the lack that is produced by capitalism. While this may be necessary for survival it does, unsurprisingly, do very little for any project of post-capitalist emancipation.

As the author attempts to frame his experience of The Rolling Stones in Hyde Park through theory, his position as the observer ruptures and reveals something of his own subjective frailty whilst simultaneously outlining the state that the cathartic process is intended to return to those who undergo it. This leads into the chapter *Home*. In this chapter, the potential for popular music to be more than simply a mode of complicity or recovery begins to evolve. By engaging in a comparative analysis of FKA Twigs and Miley Cyrus, alongside the notion of the uncanny, the capacity of popular music to transcend transgression and bring forth a space beyond established structures becomes evident and hopeful. However, this is not akin to Bloch's utopianism but rather something more complex and accessible if, perhaps, less satisfying. This the moment at which the notion that Adorno should be read as sonic fiction allows the author the freedom to overcome the theoretical impasse in producing a sonic fiction of *boring dystopia*.

In the first of two related experiential pieces, the author illustrates the complexity of accessing this space beyond through an account of the profound impact had on him by Carly Simon's song "My New Boyfriend". Despite this song being the most banal of popular music, the depth to which it has shaped his position is significant. This leads him to the chapter *Conjunction*, which attempts to use conjunction, as a philosophical concept, to form a new relationship to the art works of popular music. He then attempts to use this new relationship to better understand Beyoncé's album *Lemonade* as something with both political potential and social limitations. He concludes that popular music acts as a 'filter upon reality' that draws out particular resonances and frequencies between the listener and the work. However, ultimately the emancipatory potential in this relies on the cultivation of skills that are akin to mixing.

In the second experiential piece, the author attempts to expound something of his sensibility with regard to mixing, related to the discussion of *Conjunction*, however, this leads to a reflection on the work of the relatively obscure band Xiu Xiu. In turn, these reflections highlight something from the very end of *Conjunction*. It is that the apparent contradiction between the cynical and the naive, a notion grappled with by both Wallace and Berardi, is illusory, or rather, they are not mutually exclusive.

Instead, the frame of the contradiction is in itself an engine for the production of lack. Opposed to this, the space within this frame can become a source of human potential that exceeds lack. However, this is dangerous as well as exciting.

The distortion that runs through this piece, although it eventually begins to mellow, is derived from his being convinced of his capacity to 'solve' popular music, as it relates to capitalism as if it were a finite and fixable problem. Throughout the sonic fiction, the "gain" of this distortion is gradually filtered and brought to resonate in a new mix. This allows for the reality that popular music is simultaneously enmeshed in capitalism and the activity of emancipation, to be recognized in such a way as to allow the object of research to be more fruitfully addressed. While an apparent contradiction persists, the impulse that it be resolved, an impulse that can also be found in the Adornian line of thought, is itself in-line with the logic of lack and capitalist subjectivity that it seeks to address. The contradiction simply becomes a niche in the market; a lack to be filled. However, without this motivation, as can be the case for some who take a Deleuzian approach that spins out to non-human cosmic ontology, the prospect of popular music playing an emancipatory role in moving beyond capitalism cannot be articulated.

By running these perspectives together through the depressed optimism of thinkers such as Wallace and Berardi, and in coming to recognize through a process of sonic fiction that popular music is not simply "explainable", the impasse between these approaches can be reframed. One can demand more from popular music in the pursuit of post-capitalist emancipation if at the same time the contradictions inherent within popular music at the present moment do not become an absolute barrier. In a similar mechanism to the manner in which FKA Twigs relates to transgression, the contradictory operations of popular music with regard to capitalism are but one location, defined by the tendencies of motion of micro-political oscillations, within a vast field of experience.

This is highly abstracted, but it has consequences for the practice of criticism. In short, this means addressing the contradictions present in popular music, neither as evidence of some inherent insufficiency or merely to give the appearance of balance to an argument, which results in a foregone conclusion. Instead, these contradictions should be recognized as both a constituent aspect of the object and, as that object only exists in the experience of subjects, as constituent aspects of the activity of critique itself.

The task of the critic, who is unavoidably a constructed persona, cannot merely be the unremarkable identification of contradiction. This simply implies that the critic has the intellectual capacity to unravel the discourse that surrounds capitalism. This is necessary but insufficient. Rather the task is to address the manner in which we can chart and communicate a route beyond the easily identified contradictions, barriers,

and impasses. This is not a project of reparation or a project of pure fulfilment and construction. It is destructive as well. In a similar way to Berardi's "phenomenology of the end", (2015b: 10) it is an "infinite task". In this way, it exceeds the limits of capital and the present paradigm of popular music but it does so by helping the individual subject to exceed itself.

Appendix.

Summary of *Infinite Jest*.

The novel's narrative is resistant to summary. However, in order to use the ideas in this text, it is necessary to give some background and outline some other major elements that make up the diegesis, the characters and setting. The novel is set primarily in a near future (though at the time of writing this could now be slipping into the recent past) in what can be succinctly described as a late-capitalist "boring" dystopia. The North American continent (united as the Organisation of North American Nations (O.N.A.N) made up of Mexico, Canada and the United States of America) is caught in a state of perpetual ecological crisis, caused by the vast production of waste. For the U.S. this problem has been quasi-resolved by the 'experialist' seeding of a large amount the U.S.A's north-eastern territory to Canada, on the condition that the U.S. can dump its waste there by catapult. Canada is not happy about this but most of the anglophone provinces have largely acquiesced (with some minor exceptions), while Quebec is home to numerous resistance factions. To fund this 'experiealist' ecological policy the ONAN has developed the concept of subsidised time. This allows companies buy the right to name the year ("The Year of the Whopper" for example or, "The Year of the Depend Adult Undergarment", when much of the novel takes place). But this is all in the background it serves as an atmosphere that facilitates the action or inaction of the characters. This setting provides certain parallels to our current real-life geopolitical situation, where global imperialism and inequality have lead to a constant state of asymmetric warfare, with the general population somehow at once terrified and apathetic.

On this diegetic framework the novel has three main narrative threads that run throughout and intermingle. Two could be considered major threads and the other one is perhaps minor that is perhaps more closely related to the diegetic political context. The first follows Hal Incandenza a seventeen-year-old student at the Enfield Tennis Academy. He is a prodigious talent in both tennis (though second in the rankings at ETA) and academics, particularly lexicography. He is the youngest son of the Academy's founder Jim Incandenza, a former competitive tennis player who made a fortune with military optics technology and spent the later part of his life, before committing suicide prior to the novel's present, producing art films. One of these films, his last, was called *Infinite Jest V*, which scholars presume to be lost but is rumoured to be so entertaining that it puts all who watch it into a state of permanent catatonic bliss. The film is also referred to as the *Samizdat* or simply *The Entertainment*. It is also

rumoured to be in the possession of terrorist cells that mean to do harm to the United States, but for various ethical and logistical reasons it has yet to be deployed. Hal has been suffering, unbeknownst to himself, from chronic anhedonia since he was a child, which he has been inadvertently self-medicating with a secret marijuana habit. This condition has caused Hal to feel as if he is unable to genuinely communicate with anyone else. In fact in the opening of the novel that is set one year after the events of the body of the book, Hal's condition is so severe he literally cannot be understood. When he talks people react with abject terror from what he thinks is mild acceptable parlance. This scene has a certain similar to the barrier to communication faced by the metamorphosed Gregor in Kafka's short story (2007: 97).

The Academy is currently managed by the highly qualified administrator Charles Tavis, the half, or perhaps step, brother of Hal's Quebecois mother, and academic grammarian, Dr. Avril Mondragon Tavis Incandenza, Ed.D., Ph.D. (often referred to as *The Moms*), who is the head of the academy's academic programs. It is strongly hinted that Tavis (C.T.) may well be the father of Hal's kind, well-liked and severely disabled brother, Mario. Clearly emergent here (especially in the Hamlet references in both title and plot points) are themes of incest and the psychodynamics of the bourgeois family structure, as well questions of success and the good life in late capitalism.

Down the hill from the academy is the *Ennet House Drug and Alcohol Recovery House (sic)*, which is where we find another protagonist Donald Gatley, a reformed burglar the 'size of a young dinosaur' (55). Gatley has gotten clean from an oral narcotics habit after a burglary went bad in the previous year. He is now employed at the halfway house as a live-in staffer, helping new residents at the beginning their recoveries while at the same time looking over his shoulder as the consequences of his previous digressions role on. One new resident is the veiled Joelle Van Dyne, who comes to the house after attempting suicide by freebasing cocaine to overdose. She had been deeply involved in the film projects of Jim Incandenza under the pseudonym Madame Psychosis, and had a serious relationship with Hal's eldest brother, a professional football punter and misogynistic serial seducer Orin[24]. The veil she wears has been issued to her by the Union for the Hideously and Improbably Deformed (U.H.I.D.). Prior to an incident, involving the flinging of acid at the discovery of historic incestuous desires of her father, Joelle, a film scholar, was considered by seemingly everyone to have been a great beauty. The exact nature of her 'deformity' is never revealed. What is known, however, is that her unveiled face is, after the acid incident, the subject at the centre of J. Incandenza's final film. These sections of the novel, at Ennet House, delve in great depth, both sympathetically and critically, into the method

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[24]Whose particular fetish; the seduction of married women who are the mothers of young children, is another angle through which the novel explores the connections between incest and bourgeois aspiration. (899)

of the addiction therapy practiced in A.A. and groups like it. The experience of these characters raise interesting questions of desire, agency and the limits of logical traditional intellectual thought and enlightenment values.

The minor strand connects the characters to the novel's setting and each of the previous strands together. It is principally comprised of interruptions where—months before the majority of the narrative takes place—on a plateau above Tucson, Arizona, a meeting is held between Hugh Steeply from the U.S government agency the Office for Unspecified Services (O.U.S) and a senior member of the Quebecois terrorist cell Les Assassins des Fauteuils Roulants (AFR) Rémy Marathe. Marathe is a double agent who has agreed to help the O.U.S prevent his organisation from obtaining the master copy of The Entertainment, which, if they were to obtain it, would resolve the logistical difficulties regarding its nefarious distribution. These two act as a sounding board for different debates of political philosophy. They debate the merits of the personal freedom in the pursuit of happiness, that Steeply argues he protects, and the ability to work for something greater than yourself that Marathe thinks is of greater value. The irony being that Marathe has betrayed his comrades in order for his comatose wife to receive U.S. medical treatment and is thus acting out of self interest against the collective 'good'. At the same time Steeply has sacrifice his personal freedom and gender identity to protect a particular way of life. In short, something greater than himself.

This debate eventually leads to a discussion of personal desire and choice. It becomes apparent that AFR's intentions are not to force the citizens of the U.S.A to watch *The Entertainment* but merely make it available to them on their home entertainment systems. It will be them that decide to watch it or not. Marathe finds it interesting that the OUS has so little faith in the U.S. population's self discipline that they will not allow them to make this consumer choice for themselves. (Wallace 1997: 320)

The world presented in *Infinite Jest* is one wherein the future, as something progressive, seems no longer to be imaginable let alone possible. While technology will continue to advance, it does so in line with the market niches created by the insecurities of subjects operating under near total market conditions. The clearest example of this in the novel is the section on the diminishing popularity of videophone technology. After users were confronted with the terrifying reality of being able to see how they appear to others in real time, the industry around the videophone came up with all kinds of 'ingenious disadvantage–compensations [that] seem all too often to undercut the original hi-tech advance' (150). However, this resulted in diminishing returns. Similarly, the "InterLace" entertainment network, with its 'post Web Dissemination grid' (620) has obvious parallels today with the likes of Netflix and other commercial streaming services, which have certain unintended regressive consequences. While this

technology does not appear to be helping anyone feel better, Wallace's narrator is quick to make clear that it is also not entirely to blame;

> Saying this is bad is like saying traffic is bad [...] nobody but Ludditic granola-crunching freaks would call bad what no one can imagine being without.
>   But so very much private watching of customized screens behind drawn curtains in the dreamy familiarity of home. A floating no-space world of personal spectation. Whole new millennia! era, under Gentle and Lace-Forche. Total freedom, privacy, choice. (ibid)

The entertainment systems in *Infinite Jest* work from the premise that the consumer is not only king but it also places limits on that regal power. The authority to make choices is limited to your own personal head space. The idea that media could be something collective rather than a field to exercise individual choice, simply does not make sense if we operate, as the society on the novel does, on the crass utilitarian assumption that the progressive goal of society it to maximise pleasure from moment to moment. This is something that the market place can appear to do well but without a long term or larger perspective such pleasure becomes isolating, infantilizing, and dangerous even before we introduce a film that can result in bliss induced comas when viewed.

With these elements Wallace spends time dwelling on a disappointment deficit, produced by the distance between the images facilitated by technology and the culture that shapes them, and the lived experience of everyday life. This enables an in depth interrogation of the role cultural production plays in the function of a society from the perspective of subjective experience.The way these different elements are brought together makes this novel a rich resource for thinking through media and sonic fiction in the contemporary paradigm.

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