Newcastle University

School of Arts and Cultures

**British Independent Record Labels, Memory and Mediation –
Situating Music Objects in Physical and Digital Contexts**

Elodie Amandine Roy
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of PhD
May 2014

Abstract

This thesis examines the changing relationship between the material culture of music (in the form of recorded music objects) and memory (as it is sedimented in, and mediated by, the work of a selection of British independent record labels). The principal aim of this work is to explore the significant but often-overlooked material paradigm of recorded music, from Edison's invention of the phonograph in 1877 up until the early twenty-first century, increasingly characterised by the digital archiving, collecting and consumption of music. Drawing from a broad range of cultural theorists (including Benjamin, Straw, Sterne, Kittler, Gitelman and Huyssen), this research seeks to situate recorded sound within broader discourses on memory and mediation, technology and cultural transmission. The thesis is structured around the analyses of several British independent record labels from the recent past and the present: Sarah Records (1987-1995), Ghost Box Records (2004-) and reissue record labels, including Finders Keepers (2004-). By focusing on specific record labels and situated configurations of the material culture of music, both physical and digital, I identify and map various aspects of the music object and clarify the particular socio-technological contexts within which such configurations arise.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Ian Biddle for his pragmatic approach to the research process and reading suggestions. Dr. Richard Elliott has been an inspiring mentor even since we first met in the Spring of 2010; he did not spare his encouragements, advice, or time despite being far away.

Dr. Adam Hansen and Dr. Rachel Carroll offered me the opportunity to present a paper at the LitPop Conference at Northumbria University in June 2011, and edited my book chapter on Sarah Records. I am grateful to their suggestions.

My most heartfelt thanks goes to Benjamin E. Belinska for his unconditional support, patience, and enthusiasm; even in difficult times, he read all of my drafts with a critical eye.

Stephen Maughan has generously shared with me his fanzine archive and memories of the 'independent' 1980s. I have also benefited from conversations with my colleagues Gary Jenkins, Thomas Astley and João Da Silva, the team of Radical Musicology, as well as my friends Nicholas Brignell and Daniel Koczy, who organised a monthly reading group.

I am indebted to the Whittaker Scholarship, which I was awarded for the academic year 2012-2013, and which allowed me to finish writing my thesis in more serene conditions.

None of this research could have been written without the tireless and trustful support of my parents, Brigitte and William Roy.

Table of Contents

Introduction

According to Auslander, '[t]o look at the progression of the material forms of music media – from shellac or vinyl discs to CDs to direct downloading from the Internet or the Celestial Jukebox – is to witness the progressive dematerialization of the musical object' (2001: 82). It is this progression (which might not be so obvious or linear as Auslander suggests) that I wish to address in this thesis, approaching the varying meanings and mediations of materiality in several contexts. My aim is to see how materiality and graspability of recorded sound (notably in the form of records and record collections or archives) might be less of an accidental *aspect* of music (induced by capitalism) than a way of stabilising or freezing, at least momentarily, the flow of time. Most of all, questioning the materiality of music leads one to consider how music has been varyingly embedded and situated within larger networks of dissemination, and transmitted across space as well as time. The thesis is structured around the analyses of several British independent record labels from the recent past and the present: Sarah Records (1987-1995), Ghost Box Records (2004-) and reissue record labels, including Finders Keepers (2004-). The analyses of these record labels, distributed across the first three chapters, are complemented by a chapter on the new 'digital' materialities of recorded sound. Each chapter deals with specific aspects of the material culture of music, offering narratives of diverse (historically-situated) relationships between memory and music objects. Bristol-based Sarah Records can be seen as a pre-internet record label, which existed at a moment of technological transition (witnessing the coexistence of tapes, vinyl records, flexi-discs and compact discs). The two founders of the label expressed the relentless wish to release 'one hundred perfect releases' (Haynes and Wadd 1995) before disappearing. The set of artefacts, each of them carefully designed and closely connected, form a material story and memory of Bristol, inscribing the city on an alternative map. The Ghost Box and Finders Keepers labels – my two other examples – clearly intersect with the digital age, and yet both their emphases are on the production of tangible music objects. The two record labels have professed an indefectible interest in the materiality of recorded sound, releasing music on vinyl records and compact-discs, and exploring materiality as a legitimate and necessary dimension of musical culture. Whilst Ghost Box questions and encompasses surviving materialities of sound (in the form of ghosts and remaining traces of past

phonographical moments), contemporary reissue record labels seek to remediate and re-release past musical cultures, as their founder-collectors tirelessly hunt down marginal recordings, thus excavating and reviving past material cultures of music.

The tangibility of music has been regularly under-represented in academic discourses, possibly because such a tangibility may be dismissed as an external (almost accidental) aspect of recorded sound. Tangibility may be seen as not belonging with music but being only its gratuitous and momentary correlative: a shell or an 'incarnation'. Straw notes that '[t]he question of music's materiality comes accompanied by a set of contradictions or paradoxes. Long considered one of the most ethereal and abstract of cultural forms, music is arguably the one most embedded in the material infrastructures of our daily lives' (2011: 227). This strong paradox seems to be at the core of recorded sound. On the one hand, recorded sound evokes the fleeting, ungraspable ghost, the voice freed from the mortal body (Young 2006). Recorded music, which effectively exists in graspable, commodified and collectible objects, ceaselessly vanishes as it is played. On the other hand, recorded sound is clearly embodied or 're-materialised' in a format; it is unquestionably an eminently tangible and visual reality (the record). For music is both what is contained, engraved and inscribed within the grooves, written analogically or digitally, and what exceeds the format, what is mediated and what ultimately presents itself as it disappears. In one of her diary entries of 1948, the young, enthused Susan Sontag wrote, as she reported her impressions on a Vivaldi concerto, that music was 'the most abstract, the most perfect, the most pure' of all the arts (Sontag 2008: 10). The adjectives 'abstract' and 'perfect' (that is to say self-contained and autonomous) have been used at length to describe music. The general trend then in music discourses is to embrace music as a non-tangible form as Tim Anderson (2006), and also John Corbett (1994), point out:

> The characterization of music as an abstract, autonomous entity is extremely pervasive, appearing as historical assertion in the popular music press from *Rolling Stone* to *Option*, as categorization in music guidebooks from *the Illustrated Encyclopedia of Rock* to the *Da Capo Guide to Contemporary African Music*, and in the form of 'music cultures and subcultures' in academic music criticism by George Lipsitz and Larry Grossberg. (Corbett 1994: 36)

The romantic 'immaterial' conception of music is partially due to its invisibility (music is heard but not seen), and to the fact that music-listening may trigger (as the young Sontag sensed) invisible, elusive feelings of elation or melancholy, thus revealing intimate, hitherto hidden dimensions of the self. However, I argue that the immaterial approach to music can be complemented with an exploration of the music object as a *memory* object. With the development of phonography in the late nineteenth century (and the rapid expansion of the record industry from the early twentieth century onwards), music was increasingly considered as a three-dimensional product which was exchanged and mass-distributed as any other capitalist commodity: recordings '[gave] listeners opportunities to browse, to sample, to investigate masses of music of all periods' [and, increasingly, of all parts of the world] (Day 2000: 216). To this list we could add that the recording gave opportunities to collect and archive music, and to relate to it not only as an aural reality but also as a visual and three-dimensional reality, perhaps even as a materialised (yet fragile) biography. As underlined by Anderson in his study of post-war American recordings,

> [r]ecords are hardly simple objects. Inside these sides are grooves, the common spaces, the topoi, of many aesthetic renditions and offerings. They can be flipped, spun backward, scratched; they can gather dust, be traded, sampled, and sold. Records record history and can be historical objects. They can act as objects of great passion. In a sense, with every record purchased and played comes an unspoken guarantee of connection and common spaces, for when we play a record we avail ourselves to the possibilities of a common experience, even if the distances of generations or cultures separate us from one another. (2006: 179)

Indeed, through the process of recording, music has been increasingly constructed and apprehended as an artificial creation surviving in an object or a trace (Katz 2010). Music objects cannot be strictly separated from the grounds where they are produced, manipulated, exchanged and disseminated. Then, a major aspect of this work is both the place within which music objects are embedded, and the space they create, through the material objects which are released into the world. The first three chapters of this thesis focus on British independent record labels from the recent phonographic past (some of

them still operating). The first two chapters of this thesis deal respectively with Sarah Records (1987-1995; Chapter 1) and Ghost Box Records (2004-; Chapter 2). The third chapter is more loosely tied to a record label (Finders Keepers, 2004-) and examines the practice of reissuing and collecting records. Chapter 4 is an open reflection on the shifting materialities of recorded sound in the digital age; it proposes a larger discussion on issues of cultural transmission and archiving in a de-materialised environment. The analyses provided in each chapter should thereby be seen as the analyses of *sites* (where each site contains in turn smaller fragments in the form of the objects produced and disseminated by the respective record labels). Such sites are as much material sites of enquiry as they are sites of theorisation, where theorising should be understood as 'doing theory' and 'thinking through material culture' (to borrow a phrase from Knappett 2005).

My approach has been primarily informed by thinkers of material culture, media and memory and by music theorists. In the following sections of this introduction ('Music objects', 'Record labels', 'Mediated materialities', 'Archaeologies', 'Haunted, open archives'), I contextualise and clarify the main theoretical questions underpinning and shaping my research. Though the research question is made more actual by the core chapters, it is important to address the terms which compose it in a more direct way than in the chapters (where they are sometimes dealt with in a more oblique manner, to suit the movement and imperatives of the discussion). This introduction can be considered as a succinct presentation of the main themes developed in the thesis. As such, the following sections may be read on their own terms – as autonomous fragments to be contextualised anew. This introduction mainly revolves around the concept of *archaeologies* (subdivided as follows: 'memory traces', 'archaeology as praxis', 'archaeology of the everyday', 'phono-archaeology', 'media archaeology'). The term helps in connecting three crucial aspects of the thesis: material culture, memory and mediation. The archaeological framework is an implicit subtext throughout the thesis, and is woven more discretely into the material of the different chapters. The introduction is a reflection of the thesis to come as well as an instrumental part of it. It aims at clarifying a broader cultural context and at illuminating the questions from which the thesis derives, and which inspired it in the first place.

Music objects

As noted by Csikszentmihalyi in a paper entitled 'Why we need things', 'we are slowly being buried under towering mounds of artefacts' (1993: 20). This seemingly indefinite accumulation of objects seems to conversely indicate a proliferation of memories, what Huyssen defines as a 'hypertrophy of memory' (2003: 3). Objects seem to metonymically represent the omnipresence of the past in the present. Lowenthal writes that:

> The past is everywhere. All around us lie features which, like ourselves and our thoughts, have more or less recognizable antecedents. Relics, histories, memories suffuse human experience… Whether it is celebrated or rejected, attended to or ignored, the past is omnipresent. (1985: xv)

Though Lowenthal is primarily concerned with the past as it is indexed and inscribed in buildings, monuments and other large-scale spaces, it can also be said that the past is indexed in more discrete material entities and remainders, especially in human-made artefacts which indicate former socio-technological ages. Over the course of time, and notably since the advent of mass-production and mass-distribution, the quantity of objects in human societies has kept increasing. This proliferation of objects is accompanied by an obsession with storage and preservation, which is perhaps the most visible in the institution of the museum (and, to a lesser extent, in individual collecting and personal archiving): '[o]ne reason for the newfound strength of the museum and the monument in the public sphere may have something to do with the fact that both offer something that television denies: the material quality of the object' (Huyssen 1995: 255).

The notion of proliferation can be easily applied to the realm of recorded music objects, though it is only recently (and notably in conjuncture with projects of digital archiving) that these surplus objects have begun to receive attention in academic discourse. Record collectors, however, have long been rummaging through the vast, quasi-instantaneous archive of recorded sound, as they aggregate in second-hand record shops, flea markets and, since the mid-1990s, on digital platforms (Juno and Vale 1993; Taylor 2001). Recorded music objects have been consistently produced throughout the twentieth-century (being mostly incorporated to the capitalist structure of production and distribution). As their vestiges inescapably haunt humans spaces, they alternately appear as 'exhausted commodities' (Straw 2000), or dead or 'residual media' (Acland

2006) which may either be redeemed and re-mediated (Bolter and Grusin 1999) or sink into deeper layers of oblivion, forming strata of cultural 'waste'. It is partly because of their (if not aural, at least visual) presence that music objects are likely to be 'saved' and to enter new life-cycles, through marginal and sometimes informal networks of distribution (a form of shadow capitalism, realised in second-hand markets or the economy of giving or swapping).

Record labels

The logic of music in the twentieth century is the logic of the record, simultaneously a logic of the object (the commodity) and of reading, of 'playing' back, of decoding. The record is simultaneously, indefatigably, what stays and what returns. It belongs to a culture of the trace, and has to be linked to *archival memory* (Nora 1989). The survival of visual and aural traces also indicate, and anticipate, ways of remembering. In order to analyse the material culture of music, I have chosen to adopt a narrow and selective approach, concentrating on a range of British independent record labels from the recent past or the present. These record labels can be seen as sites where the relationship between objects, mediation and memory is being negotiated and performed. A discussion of materiality should include the contemporary dematerialisation of the music object, which occurs in direct relation to the increasing role of the internet in the dissemination and construction of culture and cultural heritage.

In this thesis, three record labels are looked at: Sarah Records (Chapter 1), Ghost Box Records (Chapter 2) and reissue record labels (Chapter 3), followed by a discussion on cultural transmission in the digital age (Chapter 4). Through the chapters, which taken together form a thematic rather than chronological narrative to the material culture of music, I aim to show how tangible music objects can be

- A means of constructing an alternative lived environment and a nearly autonomous, independent 'story' within the biggest continuum of the record industry. Music objects released by the Sarah label are all interdependent and can be seen as forming a material story of Bristol in the late 1980s, constituting at once an archive of the city and the dissolution and fragmentation of the city through the dissemination of singular artefacts (Chapter 1).

- A means to reflect upon phonographic mediation and related technologies of telepresence, as the material survival of recorded sound can also be seen as participating into a haunted culture (where, through technological mediation and structures of reproduction and dissemination, the audio and visual past keeps coming back). This chapter focuses on Ghost Box Records (Chapter 2).

- A means to operate an archaeology of music objects and formats, in order to excavate, redeem and redistribute what had hitherto been buried or forgotten. This chapter focuses on reissue record labels (Chapter 3).

- A means to think about erasure and disappearance, as objects decay, but are also increasingly 'dematerialised' through processes of digitalisation and the creation of institutional and informal digital archives (in the form of video repository websites for instance), which are themselves likely to decay and disappear in turn (Chapter 4).

It should be noted that the record labels under study are exemplary. It means that they all have distinct *modus operandi* – though they may epitomise and radicalise an external and broader tendency. For instance, Sarah Records, whilst being different in its scope and aims, is representative of other micro record labels of the same period such as Subway Organisation, Tea Time Records, 53rd & 3rd , whilst some aspects of Finders Keepers can be used to clarify the practices of other reissue record labels. Each record label enlightens an aspect of the relationship between materiality, mediation and memory. Each can be seen as a phonographic moment, that is to say a moment in the history of recorded sound, and a specific appropriation of phonography in a given spatiotemporal framework. They also represent, sometimes problematically, the articulation between music, capitalism and cultural memory. These record labels all qualify as small or micro independent record labels. Their founders have released objects into the world, and deliberately worked with and within a Western culture of objects and commodities. As such they have been, at their own pace and scale, part of the making of a musical material world.

      The role of small record labels, which are often overlooked and amalgamated under the generic name of 'the independents', may be more than anecdotal. Day, in his innovative and meticulous study of early classical recordings, reminds us that throughout the twentieth century, and especially in the mid-twentieth century, a myriad of small European independent record labels (such as the English Argo or Nixa labels,

or the France-based Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre, founded in 1932 by Louise Hanson-Dyer) helped to enlarge the repertory, as they proceeded to the recording and distributing of hitherto-buried pieces which only existed as obscure sheet music (Day 2000: 85). Day also mentions that 'in America there were literally dozens of small companies which began operating in the early 1950s, some, in the beginning at least, with only local distribution, some starting out as subscription mail order business and only later being made available to the general retail market' (2000: 94). The same remarks could similarly be applied to early blues independent labels (such as Okeh Records). The continuance of independent record labels (covering between them a very large musical spectrum) throughout the history of recorded sound, many of them short-lived and now forgotten, some well-documented and others still obscure, should help us get a measure of their necessity, significance and cultural weight. If, individually, their input and impact may be discarded as marginal or negligible, when they are taken and understood collectively independent record labels represent an important shaping force for the history of recorded sound and its archiving.

Day's analysis can be linked to Negus' observations (in the field of popular culture) on the dynamic relationship between majors and independents where the independents are conceived of as pioneers, 'finding, recording, producing and selling new types of music' thus 'gaining popularity and generating new audiences' (Negus 1996: 42), threatening the majors who ultimately absorb them. For Negus, independent record labels are always transitory formations. But the process he describes is exclusively applicable to *successful* independent record labels (one can think of Factory Records or Creation Records, started as an independent and later sold to Sony Records; see Cavanagh 2001). It might be that small, micro independent record labels, as they are not commercially successful or even viable, were not approached by majors. Furthermore the independent strand is often one of defiance towards the record industry: an independent record label might define itself against the majors, without ever soliciting or accepting an alliance with them (such was the case of Sarah Records, amongst others). An analysis of independent record labels principally focused on their relationship with majors seems insufficient, and only makes sense in the context of a flourishing record industry. In the contemporary context of the disintegration of the record industry such an analysis is mostly invalid and inoperative, and fails to encompass an important fringe of surviving minor independent record labels, net-labels, or non-profit record labels whose aims are not primarily commercial.

In the course of the thesis, I do not expand upon the ways in which micro record labels interact with the 'majors'. Their commercial stature, their economic success or failure are thereby not directly addressed. This is not only because micro record labels are less commercial ventures than artistic ones. In fact, it is undeniable that a commercial strategy can be observed in Sarah Records, Ghost Box and Finders Keepers. But the more traditional analytical frame proposed by Negus (1996) and favoured by popular music theorists does not enable one to think of the more durable cultural role of record labels, notably their role in the transmission of culture and cultural objects, or their influence as they negotiate (in the case of reissue record labels) the 'flexible boundary between value and nonvalue' or 'cultural waste and cultural archive' (Assmann 2002: 79). The thesis is based on the assumption that each of the record labels under study illustrates a way of mediating and organising cultural memory through matter. As it is the case with Benjamin's example of the collector Eduard Fuchs (1937), the founders of independent record labels – even before any idea of commerce or entrepreneurship – may be seen as historians and collectors. Eisenberg notices that 'there is a bit of the survivalist in every record collector. [...] But the motive is not wholly selfish. The collector wishes to preserve history while escaping it – to save history from itself' (2005: 35). I see record labels as implicit and important archives of recorded sound, through the cataloguing and setting of the carefully numbered and situated objects they produce. I seek to understand how the material objects they produce and release into the world express and consolidate (and in some cases monumentalise) both temporality and spatiality.

Mediated materialities

References

A major influence of this work is to be found in Walter Benjamin, who provided throughout his writings the basis for a poetics of sites and things, and assiduously evidenced, notably through his vivid autobiographical fragments, their formidable weight and power of evocation (but also of revelation), as well as their force as historical fragments. Benjamin's writings, tinged with images and metaphors, seem an affirmation that speculative or hypothetical thinking, if and when it is critically and seriously carried out, may be a tool to comprehend in a firmer way the visible and

sensible world. Benjamin's commentators and followers such as Susan Stewart, and her close analysis of collecting in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (1993), have proven crucial to this work. Benjamin's thinking on archive, space and media can be further augmented, and questioned, by the works of Bachelard, Huyssen, Boym, Kittler, Ernst, Gitelman, Agacinski, Debray – to cite but my main sources. Debord and the Situationists, as well as De Certeau in the *Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), have especially enlightened the difficult tension between the direct experience of life and the archive (or document), and praised cities and the art of anonymous dérive ('drift') or flânerie, itself so cherished by Benjamin. In terms of directly music-related sources, Eisenberg's *Recording Angel* (1987), which presents original and incisive thinking about recorded objects, mediation and collections, is an early model and has helped open up the notion of what 'the musical' is; similarly the works of Chanan and Sterne on phonography and Juno and Vale on music-collecting have contributed to a recognition of the technological and cultural frameworks of musical mediation. Through my analyses of record labels I have also made use of artefacts and have described music objects. These 'evocative objects', possibly made unfamiliar by theory, familiarised theory (Turkle 2007: 307). That is to say descriptions of recorded artefacts, rather than being retroactive or gratuitous illustrations of a theory, both justify and support the adoption of specific theoretical approaches.

The question of music as thing (which reappears sporadically notably in the works of Corbett, Katz, Sterne and Straw) needs to be posed: not in order to reach a certain, dogmatic and definitive answer, but rather to maintain and sustain the ambiguity of the music object. It can be argued that the question of music as a thing anticipates a range of related questions which may prove even more fertile: if music is a thing, what kind of thing is it? Is it always the same thing? Against an essentialist and trans-historical approach I propose the simple, yet decisive idea that music can be envisioned as a multiplicity of things and that, in place of one single, schematic 'material culture of music', one should envision broader material *cultures* of music. The earlier wax-cylinders or discs were often disdained and humorously dismissed as 'canned music' (the phrase has been credited to the German conductor Bruno Walter; see Day 2000: 40). The music objects were containers, mysterious yet vulgar repositories of sound. They effectively captured sound but could not entirely encompass the musical experience; acoustic recordings were mere pale substitutes for the concert

hall or blurry 'sound photographs' or 'extremely fuzzy snapshots, blurred round the edges, in parts indistinct and out of focus because of the limitations in playing the sounds back' (Day 2000: 33). Unsurprisingly, such poorly-recorded objects would only be capable of alluding to the event without possibly replacing it. They would merely represent music (Milner 2009: 12). It is only well into the twentieth-century, notably through improvements in recording techniques (electrical recording became possible in 1925) and growing familiarity with the recorded object, that the record began to be regarded as a dedicated site of music, and '[a]t the end of the twentieth century it was almost impossible not to listen to, or at least to hear, recorded music' (Day 2000: 199). In other words, the representation of music *became* music (Milner 2009: 12). The recorded object was progressively woven into everyday practices, thus becoming a sonic as well as tangible and visual reality. It could thereby be performed and negotiated in multiple directions: as music but also as an object, a three-dimensional artefact which could be collected and archived, and onto which symbolic meaning could be attached. As noted by Straw, '[m]usic arrives in our lives propped up by multiple forms of material culture: instruments, scores, recordings, media technologies, concert halls, bodies, electronic gadgets, and so on' (Straw 2011: 227).

Irremediably entwined with the notion of the material music object is the notion of the music (media) format. Théberge (1997), Day (2000), Milner (2009) and Katz (2010) – examining classical and contemporary genres of music including computer-generated and sample-based forms – have dedicated themselves to the study of the influence of recordings on the performance of music but also on the way music is being played and constructed in the everyday. Théberge is especially insistent upon the fact that music (from the inception of the recording industry in the early twentieth-century) depends on capitalist 'modes of production and distribution' (1997: 20). Changes in recording formats are themselves dictated by technological innovations and their industrial co-optation. It is notably because of this involvement of recorded sound with capitalism (and the incessant fabrication and distribution of 'new' objects and technologies) that obsolete media or 'exhausted commodities' (Straw 2000) now saturate tangible and online second-hand markets. New technologies may simplistically be conceived of as replacing, continuing and improving upon, previous technologies (the way for example the CD format offered a corrective to vinyl records, allowing for music to be delivered without surface noise and with a greater manipulability and

portability). However, it should also be said that every new technology may impact and inform music (as it influences for instance the way it has been recorded, the way it has been played back, the way it has been stored, archived and disseminated). The form of the music object may therefore not be totally incidental or gratuitous, but may help determine what music means, either for individuals or for groups of individuals. The 'sound' of music differs depending on which format it is played back on, so does the experience of listening to music. Different experiences or practices of listening to music often coexist within one person. Each might possibly be sedimented in specific aesthetic and practical, bodily memories which 'have an effect upon the world which the individual inhabits' (Jones 2007: 11). Indeed, as noted by Joanne Garde-Hansen, reminiscing over a long disused collection of audiocassettes from the 1980s:

> I could search iTunes and buy some of the rare mixes for an iPod or MP3 player but I cannot entirely recreate the collection in digital format. As audio recordings on cassette, transferability is limited if not impossible and playability is becoming difficult. This is not the point though, as it is not the content I nostalgically mourn, as the Internet will provide me with digitised replacements. It is the remembered practice of physically handling the cassettes, reading the handwritten titles, pushing in and ejecting from the stereo and impatiently waiting for the track I love to come round again. (Garde-Hansen 2011: 63)

This passage firmly suggests that something inexorably exceeds music (conceived of as purely invisible, ungraspable sound): what exceeds music is the experience of music as it is crystallised in a specific object or format. It may be argued that each time music migrates to a new or different format the aesthetic and practical experience of listening is being, if not drastically modified, at least partially changed (the same goes for the experience of composing). The migration of music to digital platforms can be regarded as having important implications in music-listening and music-collecting, since the internet can potentially, and effectively, become a vast 'memory bank' of sounds (Duckworth 2005: 135). Digital music collections and memories are organised in a qualitatively (as well as quantitatively) different manner than tangible collections. Different music objects also age differently. The analogue vinyl record degrades each time it is played, incorporating external noises which may one day completely mask the

recorded sound. The disc may be bent if it has been stored at too high a temperature. The sleeve itself, most generally made of unprotected cardboard, may become crumpled with humidity, or acquire a yellow tint if it has been directly exposed to the light of day for too long. So that, even if (at the time of their production) two vinyl records were exactly the same, their appearance would vary over the course of time. They would probably end up looking and sounding different depending on how they were stored and manipulated by their owners, and whether they were regularly played or not. A compact-disc may also be scratched, though the scratch will indicate a place where music cannot be read (causing the CD to 'jump'). The compact disc, however, 'suggests a sort of inflexible durability with aspirations to the monumental' (DeMarinis 2011: 223). These words may seem a bit exaggerated, for CDs are still subjected to the influence of time and are sometimes rumoured to have a shorter life-span than records. And yet a recording on CD will not degrade after repetitive listening; the sound will normally not alter. As for entirely digital and dematerialised (or 'micromaterialised', Sterne 2012) formats, they will not be directly threatened by the passing of time. Their life and accessibility closely depends upon playback and storage devices and they can be erased if the storage medium fails (for example, with a failure of a hard disk). Their life is more closely linked with the interface with which they are decoded, because they generally take the form of the playback devices which are also their storage device (for example, the hard disk of a computer or a MP3 player). The characteristics of different formats also anticipate a way (for the listener) to deal with music. Garde-Hansen, as she laments the 'loss' of the cassette experience, suggests that there cannot be equivalence between formats, if only because an original aesthetic and bodily experience cannot be replicated but only partially emulated. Listening to a cassette on a Walkman may indeed share many similarities with listening to digital files on an iPod (both offering mobility or portability of music) and yet the cassette cannot randomise the access to music, and certainly contains less music than a digital playlist. The cassette gives itself as a limited, self-enclosed unity of music (in the case of the mixtape, it has been carefully selected and organised), characterised by hiss and noise surface. The digital playlist is generally more flexible and can be duplicated and disseminated very quickly. The differences in music listening may be even more marked if one compares the experience of listening to a vinyl record to the experience of streaming music online (Duckworth 2005: 124).

Archaeologies

Memory traces

The use of the spatial or archaeological metaphor is constant throughout the thesis. It should not be taken as a simple and ornamental metaphor, but as a productive or pragmatic image which evokes but also provokes meaning. Indeed, the spatial metaphor aptly conveys the notion of memory as a site, a notion which is expressed throughout the work of Benjamin (after Bergson and Proust). In 'Excavation and Memory' (1932), Benjamin insightfully unfolded the links between materiality and autobiographical memory:

> He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth […]. (Benjamin 2005: 576)

The past can be simultaneously apprehended as a territory and as a territory of things and signs. In another passage, Benjamin expressed his impossible desire to 'map' his past: 'I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out the sphere of life – bios – graphically on a map' (2000: 303). As remarked by Eagleton, 'Benjamin's imagery of excavation is out to deconstruct the homogeneity of history' (Eagleton 2009: 56). The idea of excavation operates on a vertical level, which is the level of genealogy and superposition, rather than a horizontal and linear model (which would be the cause-consequence dialectic). It furthermore allows one to think of the past as a fragmented *topos* rather than a monolithic continuity. Such ideas are central to the writings of Nora who developed the idea of realms of (collective) memory, and conceived of the French past as constellated across specific sites and material practices, realised and encountered in the everyday as crystallised and petrified sites of memory. The topographical metaphor effectively opens a vast, perhaps even limitless, conceptual domain. Such a domain evidently stretches much beyond the limits of one thesis and is not homogeneous, but infinitely mixed. Rather than thinking of record labels as 'realms of memory' (which would have been another project), I think more precisely of record

labels as producers of the territory and history of recorded sound, as producers of memory traces, to be deciphered and rearticulated today. Indeed, objects may be considered as 'forms of memory traces' (Jones 2007: 26) which 'index past experience and act as a form of 'material citation'; the past is simultaneously referenced and reiterated' (Jones 2007: 61).

In his phenomenological study on memory, Edward S. Casey offers complementary thoughts on place memory and object memory (which he subsumes under the category of space memory), arguing that there is a 'topology of the remembered' (1990: 184). Such a topology, he says, has been 'pervasively overlooked' (1990: 184) because memory studies mostly focus on time. He underlined the crucial character of places and things which act as cues for remembering and, as they persist in time, certain places '*held the past in place*' (1990: 187). Benjamin's argument is that the past in its totality may be apprehended and experienced as a place. Casey more cautiously thinks of spatial memory as another, complementary form of memory, which allows for memories to be stabilised and made perennial for '[b]y its very immobility – through the solid concreteness of things set within pathways and horizons – place acts to contain time itself' (1990: 214). It is precisely against the mutability of memories that Benjamin writes: the past is seized momentarily as an arrested image (in a 'flash') and yet the arrested image itself is caught within, and dependent upon, the course of time. The revelation is relative to the moment in which it takes place. It is situated and gives only a present perspective or vista of the past. In *A Berlin Chronicle*, the early draft of his *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, Benjamin writes that

> [t]his vista would indeed be delusive if it did not make visible the medium in which alone such images take form, assuming a transparency… The present in which the writer lives is this medium. And, dwelling in it, he now cuts another section through the sequences of his experiences. (quoted in Martens 2011: 166)

It follows that the experience of the past through material culture is not immutable. It is frayed with imperfections, for places and objects do not exist autonomously from time. Objects but also, importantly, subjects change over time. Thus 'new encounters with old objects overwrite the original memory and undermine its integrity' (Martens 2011: 65). Furthermore, what is experienced is a decontextualized

remainder, sometimes a literal ruin, for the object encountered in the present has undergone the passage of time and the influence of its owners. As such, it is no longer inserted within the exact society which produced it, neither is it surrounded with objects contemporary to its production, but is seized as a singular fragment, a prompt to more or less distant memories, and an ultimate symbol of the continuously 'present' yet continuously irretrievable past: the commonality which might arise from the aesthetic re-experience of an object from the past does not provide an exact recovering of the past. Eagleton writes, in relation to Benjamin, that:

> the trace is […] what marks an object's historicity, the scars it has accumulated at the hands of its users, the visible imprint of its variable functions. The traces inscribed on an object's body are the web that undoes its self-identity, the mesh of consumptional modes in which it has been variously caught. The erasure, preservation or revivals of traces, then, is a political practice that depends on the nature of the traces and contexts in question: the object may need to be treated as a palimpsest, its existent traces expunged by an overwriting, or it may secrete blurred traces that can be productively retrieved. (2009: 32)

Through the trace which is imprinted upon it and its tangibility, it is possible that the object gives the illusion of presence (that is, the presence of the past). However, what survives in and of it may be a distorted and possibly strongly evocative image of the past rather than a direct, unmediated way into the past. As a matter of fact, theorists of memory such as Bergson underline that 'we are constantly revising our memories in the service of our present interests' (Martens 2011: 48). The perceived distance between the past object and its present interpretation ultimately indicates the effective absence of the past. This lack may provide at once the room and the trigger for nostalgic or critical sentiments. Most importantly, such a distance suggests that time strata, which are superposed one above the other, cannot be superimposed: they exist together at the same time and yet, the fact that they do not occupy exactly the same site means that what is seized of them is primarily their otherness and difference, possibly their 'strangeness'. Everyday recorded objects from the past for example now form an 'incredibly strange music', to use the subtitle of a book about collecting vintage records (Vale and Juno 1993). Even very familiar objects, for example one's record or tape

collection, may become with time a rather uncanny repository, rendered almost unreadable and unfamiliar by the physical degradation of the medium and the contrast it offers with more current music objects (such as micromaterial digital files). What formerly constituted an everyday standard is affected, and possibly threatened, by more recent technology, and the decay of previous storage technologies. In 'Noise into Silence', Paul Rooney says of his audiocassette collection that

> When I play my old cassettes in my room, I get nostalgic. Though it's difficult to hear some of the songs above the hiss. Over all the years the tapes have been degrading very slowly. Eventually they will be far too brittle to even play. […] My favourite songs are all on these old tapes that one day will all perish to nothing, and some of the oldest have already been chewed up, noise into silence. (2003: 53)

Rooney insists upon the degradation of media, which eventually becomes an exhausted or 'dead media': the media is not only dead because its use has progressively fallen into disuse, but because it also internally degrades and becomes progressively silenced, as music is covered in surface noise (an equivalent to rust for tin boxes for example). There is indeed, for every recorded object, one point when it might become inaudible or mute, layered with surface noise, scratches, interferences and dust; this point also corresponds to the moment when the original music might get buried under parasite sounds and become inaccessible. The progressive 'corruption' of analogue-recorded music by time can be likened to the process of layering in painting. Touffic notes that '[i]n the paintings of Frank Auerbach (and those of Leon Kosoff) there is a […] production of a burial of the world, partly through a particular thick layering of the paint. How many times have Juliet Yardley Mills (J.Y.M.) and Stella West (E.O.W.) been buried while posing for Auerbach?'(1999: 13). Then, the process of layering (that is to say of saturating a space with additional layers of sounds or colours) is concomitant to the process of burying (that is to say of dissimulating and effacing). As years go by, the recorded object is likely to become, on the one hand, noisier, and on the other hand, more 'mute'. There seems to be a double-movement from music to noise and from music to silence. Silence as well as noise can be thought of as reductions of meaning to nothing, namely to the very moment when it stops making sense. One might go as far as to say that both noise and silence indicate *death*. Indeed the more a

recording is played the more it is likely to be damaged (certain formats such as the flexi-disc are especially sensitive and get destroyed as they are played, tying with the aesthetics of the 'throwavay' or instant pop song). In an anthropomorphist observation, Pearce underlines that 'objects, like ourselves have a finite life-span, although their lives are frequently much longer than ours are. […] As it moves through time, it acquires (to a greater or lesser extent) a history of its own, passing from one possessor to another, perhaps from one kind of use to another, and from one place to another' (1998: 16).

In other words, the material object registers the passing of time. This can be effectively illustrated by another example borrowed from the world of painting. In his series of self-portraits or *portraits of time* which he started in 1965, and which was stopped by the event of his death in 2011, the painter Roman Opalka worked against time; he painted an open series of white numbers against a grey background to record the passing of time; from 1972, for each new painting he made, he added one percent more white paint to the background of his paintings. He also took complementary photographs of himself at regular intervals. These recorded the changes in the painter's physiognomy, whilst the paintings suggested the ineluctable movement of time and life (colours are more and more diluted and numbers become less and less legible). The final painting of the series, which should have been totally white, was not: Opalka died before he could achieve the total anti-self-portrait (nothing, no-body on the canvas). This example strongly suggests that the past is a re-presentation; memories are the results of myriad metamorphoses, and to some extent memories might be understood not in terms of extra layers but in terms of layers gone, one by one: the work of forgetting is translated into matter and conversely can only be fought through matter.

Archaeology as praxis

It can be argued that recorded music objects derive their meaning, at least partially, from a retrospective decoding of memory traces (as they are embodied on past recorded objects); these phonographic traces are inexorably understood and contextualised within the moment they are encountered or rediscovered. In other words, the territory of recorded sound cannot be conceived of as static, but as dynamic, for it is ceaselessly augmented and thereby modified by these new additions, new rediscoveries and interpretations. That is also to say that there is an openness and unpredictability to it: in

the words of Benjamin, 'the present becomes a battleground for the past. The past is not dead and buried, fixed for all time, but rather remains open and contestable' (cited in Gilloch 1996: 114). For Benjamin, the buried past needs to be dug out, and as one digs he or she upturns the soil: to dig is, to an extent, to destroy an apparent homogeneous stratum in order to reveal, locate and isolate one singular element within the stratum. It follows that the act of digging (or remembering) inevitably creates disorder or chaos. Similarly to locate old recordings or to think through old recorded objects one needs to extract them from an apparently linear narrative of recorded music. Once they are torn out from the past they enter a new context and a new narrative. By drawing the attention on specific record labels, that is to say by choosing where to dig, I have implicitly and inevitably silenced others. But the thesis does not claim that these choices are objective. Rather they should be seen as points of entry into of a bigger reflection. They were not gratuitously selected but represent aspects of the question of the material culture of music. They constitute sites to the extent that they produce and are produced by a set of recorded objects, each of them belonging to a preformed collection (sometimes a collection in the making) and being released into the material world from a given place and time. The aspects represented by the respective record labels are often complementary. However these sites are also fragmentary and scattered, for records, though they are mass produced, are in most cases individually disseminated, thus following 'personal' and unique routes, that of their owners. If they are to remain ownerless, they wait as if in the antechamber of ownership, a process extensively commented upon by Benjamin in his analyses of collecting (see Benjamin 1973). Against a dismissal of all material possession and a total, indiscriminate (and idealist) rejection of consumption (notably capitalist consumption), Benjamin implicitly defends the idea that the experiences of self, and of the self in time, are deeply embedded within the world of objects, which can act as a passage to the immaterial and mystical world. Materiality is the first stage towards hidden truths which can be revealed through the relentless decoding of the object (for Benjamin this does not go without a certain religious mysticism). Such a thesis resonates with Bachelard's decoding of lived spaces such as houses in the *Poetics of Space* (1964). These approaches can be usefully coupled with a 'soft' archaeological reading of things, if archaeology is comprehended as a dynamic process of unveiling, and of making meaning out of the materiality which surrounds us. Latour writes that:

> Even in our grandmothers' attics, in the flea market, in town dumps, in scrap heaps, in rusted factories, in the Smithsonian Institution, objects still appear quite full of use, of memories, of instructions. A few steps away there is always someone who can take possession of them to pad those whitened bones with flesh. (1991: 10)

But Latour does not mean to describe a static accumulation of things but rather to demonstrate that those things, once they are unearthed, are ready to be appropriated and interpreted, their meaning lying with an active and meticulous work of deciphering. Latour eventually dismisses the strict notion of autonomous and detached 'object', arguing that

> as soon as they [archaeologists] grasp in their hands these poor fossilised or dusty objects, these relics immediately cease to be objects and rejoin the world of people […]. The slightly more resistant part of a chain of practices cannot be called an 'object' except at the time it is still under the ground, unknown, thrown away, subjected, covered, ignored, invisible, in itself. In other words, there are no visible objects and there never have been. The only objects are invisible and fossilised ones. (1991: 10-11)

Objects, though they are generally solid and tangible, are dissolved in and by practice. Materiality is therefore a moment of a certain practice, and objects are porous realities, which may simultaneously be remainders or traces of past human action and suggestive of other practices. For Latour, the mere fact that a previously unknown object has been brought to the light again constitutes a negation of its 'objectivity': the object becomes entwined again with human practices, that is to say it is subjectively perceived and manipulated, simultaneously as a physical object and as its associated mental or emotional image. The object first enters human consciousness through its visibility or visuality. What is more, as Jones points out, 'although the material world provides a framework for remembrance, it is the social practice in which artefacts are engaged which determines how remembrance is socially experienced and mapped out' (Jones 2007: 225). To excavate and to remember is a human action which takes place in the present: 'people and objects are conjoined through practice and causation (the seat of

action) is distributed between people and objects […], then both people *and* objects are engaged in the process of remembering. This is not to say that objects *experience*, *contain*, or *store* memory; it is simply that objects provide the ground for humans to experience memory' (Jones 2007: 22). From this we may determine that objects, in interrelation with people, perform memory. The archaeology of recorded objects (and their recommodification and remediation) seems less a recent phenomenon than a staple in the history of recorded sound (which is riddled with anthologies).

Archaeology of the everyday

The archaeological method can be partially applied to recorded objects which, once they have been produced and released into the world, add themselves to pre-existing artefacts like layers and can, in turn, be understood and experienced as traces from the past. As we have earlier suggested, archaeology, which refers to the past, is also the moment of a practice which inevitably unfolds *a posteriori* (that is to say after the original event) and addresses the past in the form of present traces. It thus addresses what has remained, and the objects from the past which can only be seized in and for the present are therefore also perceived in the context of the present, after their early, original context of existence has collapsed. And yet objects, as they embody and displace temporality, may offer a glimpse into cultural history, imperfectly transporting with them bygone realities. There is a certain ambiguity in applying the archaeological method to recently produced objects. An archaeology of recorded sound is unavoidably an archaeology of the recent past (or of the contemporary past; see Buchli and Lucas 2001) and, one may add, of the everyday and the popular. Rather than being a strict, 'hard' archaeology, such an approach shares affinities with André Breton (who described the joyous, accidental pleasures offered by flea-markets in *L'Amour Fou [Mad Love],* 1937) or Georges Perec and his sometimes bemused, sometimes worried readings of consumers' society (*Les Choses*, published in 1965), or still with Annie Ernaux' more recent *Les Années* (2008), a 'socio-biographical' novel where she describes memories as enmeshed with and triggered by the objects of her youth which, once mass-produced, have now become scarce and extra-ordinary. In *The Gleaners and I* (2000), the film-maker Agnès Varda has concentrated on the life-cycle of waste and surplus objects which are continuously produced by capitalist societies, and which may be 'gleaned' by individuals and appropriated as possible means of resisting capitalism (and, often,

surviving it). Varda has interviewed dozens of gleaners whose common point is not what they salvage, but their critical engagement with capitalism. The same issues were theorised in *Waste-Site Stories – The Recycling of Memory*, a collection of essays edited by Neville and Villeneuve in 2002. In her edited anthology of essays on everyday objects, Turkle notes that

> [t]he acknowledgement of objects has not come easy. Behind the reticence to examine objects as centrepieces of emotional life was perhaps the sense that one was studying materialism, disparaged as excess, or collecting, disparaged as hobbyism, or fetishism, disparaged as perversion. Behind the reticence to examine objects as centrepieces of thought was the value placed, at least within the Western tradition, on formal, propositional ways of knowing. (2007: 7)

And yet, it seems logical, and crucial, that a growing awareness of the pervasiveness of material culture should lead to a proportional intellectual engagement, either expressed through academic or non-academic literature and other cultural forms. It is rather interesting to realise that, as one thinks about objects, he or she produces other objects in the forms of books, articles, films or concepts – as if to show that, in every way, 'life is the accommodation of matter' and that matter itself is a product of life (Grosz 2001: 125). In France the 'études de la culture matérielle' are mainly embedded within the sociological field (Julien and Warnier 1999, Latour), and have been notably prompted by Baudrillard's studies on consumer society in the late 1960s and 1970s (*The System of Objects, The Consumer Society, Symbolic Exchange and Death).* In the United Kingdom and the United States, the expression 'material culture' also resonates with the fields of archaeology and museum studies (Prown, Pearce, Miller), though it also has been thought of in relation to literature, for example in Bill Brown's edited anthology *Things* (2004). In April 1993, a conference entitled 'History from Things' was held at the Smithsonian Institution. The conference figured as one of the first attempts to gather traditional and popular archaeologists in order to think and grasp the diverse functions and meanings of things in the everyday. Material culture can sometimes be perceived of as a form of anthropology through things, a proposition which can seem to be paradoxical if one naively thinks of things as precisely what is outside the human. However the distinction between human and non-human proves

impossible to make, not because there is no difference between a human and a thing but because the human and the non-human appear to be inextricably and inexhaustibly enmeshed. Grosz gives an account of this continuous, daily, interpenetration between the human and the non-human:

> The thing poses questions to us, questions about our needs and desires, questions above all action: the thing is our provocation to action and is itself the result of our action. But more significantly, while the thing functions as fundamental provocation – as that which, in the virtuality of the past and the immediacy of the present cannot be ignored – it also functions as a *promise*, as that which, in the future, in retrospect, yields a destination or effect, another thing. The thing is the precondition of the living and the human, their means of survival, and the consequence or product of life and its practical needs. The thing is the point of intersection of space and time, the locus of the temporal narrowing and spatial localization that constitutes specificity or singularity. (2001: 125)

The thing frames human life but this frame itself is mostly the result of human action. Things which surround us are also means of thinking the world and inhabiting it, ways of manipulating our direct environment and ways of escaping it. The notion of the archaeological, understood as the relentless *questioning* of things, may be enlarged to the realm of the everyday. An 'archaeology of the everyday' may offer no less puzzling encounters than a traditional archaeology concerned with more buried and ancient spatiotemporal sites. And yet, it is unable to provide a total clarification of the past as it necessarily proceeds by fragments and dedicated ruins: the archaeology of the everyday is indeed only 'an' archaeology amidst other possible archaeologies. In 1994, Svetlana Boym set out to write an archaeology of the everyday life of Soviet Russia in the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on her memories of youth, she tries to uncover the shared practices (common places and common grounds) and beliefs which, at that time, made a Soviet culture. She is aware that her work, however, can only be a version – for in order to access certain buried zones one, it seems, frequently passes over other zones and perhaps unintentionally destroys them through neglect. Boym's constant questioning of her own project, expressed in a metanarrative of the book in the making, is especially enlightening.

> The archaeology of the everyday can offer neither a complete
> reconstruction of the past nor a single authorial explanation for it. It only
> helps to interpret material ruins […]. Such ruins suggest incomplete
> narratives, poetic allegories, twisted plots of history; they never point to
> one single, straightforward script of events. (Boym 1994: 10)

If objects give themselves as *questions*, it is quite possible that they also elicit many different responses, each of them tied to a subjective and singular perspective or interpretative work. Interpretation itself largely depends upon a transposition and accommodation of several fields. In *Thinking through Material Culture* (2005), Knappett has proposed a daring redefinition and 'interdisciplinarisation' of the archaeological process, recommending notably its application to mundane artefacts. Such an interdisciplinary approach is not without posing practical problems and frictions as it 'demands a process of hybridization, whereby connections are created between two seemingly different fields to form a common ground' (Knappett 2005: 2). In the thesis, I have sought to reconcile music with its ordinary, mundane presentations in the form of recorded objects (such as vinyl LPs, compact-discs, tapes or MP3s). This means that, to understand the material culture of music I have relied on the field of material culture studies, and also (but not only) on that of memory studies, media theory and phonography, in order to address the different layers in which recorded sound is embedded. Music objects can indeed be seen as lasting, three-dimensional objects with specific visual aspects and physical properties, but they are also that which can be played or 'opened', revealing invisible, ungraspable realms (possibly clouded with parasites as the object has aged); their form has varied over the course of time and they exist in relationship to diverse playback technologies. Cutting across the fields of material culture studies, memory studies, media theory and phonography is that of history and more precisely of history-writing (or historiography). Objects seem especially suited as instruments of writing and endless rewriting: upon their excavation, they may be organised, reorganised and interpreted, thus prompting a possible corrective to an otherwise monolithic narrative of the past. And yet the everyday itself may escape the historical, for it seems to designate routines and ordinary, regular realities; however there is a certain historicity to the everyday if it is understood as that which is partially framed by specific objects and technologies, and routines which

unfold within a specific material culture. Perhaps it is that, in the words of Debord, '[e]veryday life had until now resisted the historical' (cited in Osborne 1995: 160); and yet the everyday, though it may give the appearance of a timeless, trans-historical fixity, is 'lived in the medium of cultural form' (Osborne 1995: 197) and may therefore be addressed through and from the sedimented remainders of the cultural form (as attempted by Boym), which itself is historically-bound. What is uncovered through the cultural form (or its ruins) is not immediately the past cultural practice, but first and foremost it might produce a notion of the aesthetic discontinuity or distance between the past and the present. It is this initial, uninformed notion which deserves to be clarified and deepened. It can also be said that an unveiling of the past through matter enlightens the present context of excavation as much as it enlightens the past. For Benjamin, '[h]istory is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time' (Benjamin 2003: 395). It follows that, in the Benjaminian conception of history (or 'materialist historiography') history is encountered and experienced through brief fragments, monads or surviving debris which provide the basis for what can be seen simultaneously as a present reconstruction and a reconstruction of the present (Benjamin 2003: 396). Fragments of past everyday life can be encountered through the medium of second-hand markets and reveal histories from the past: '[i]n the repositories of cultural waste which fill the institutions of second-hand commerce, we find the immobile physical artefacts on which these histories are inscribed' (Straw 2000).

Phono-archaeology

Recorded objects require a specific type of 'archaeology' – for each type of object calls forward a physically and conceptually different handling. In fact, as noted by John Dixon Hunt in the conclusion to an early collection of essays on material culture, 'the huge variety of objects and the huge discrepancies in how they are contextualised […] mean that a plurality of approaches will be inevitable and […] essential' (Hunt 1993: 293). One fertile approach to recorded music objects is that of vinyl archaeology or phono-archaeology. Vinyl archaeology – or 'crate-digging', as coined by artists – rather simply refers to the practice of 'hunting' rare recordings, for example in flea markets or second-hand shops, but also through personal contacts, a practice which is that of the collector *per se*, and, as shown by Benjamin in his essay about book-

collecting (1931), directly connects the collector to geography – collecting is itself a way of establishing a map, drawing various points together, accumulating forgotten artefacts in order to form an often marginal and alternative (his)story of recorded sound (one which focuses on existing niches or retrospectively creates them). Collecting is a practice which anticipates a narrative and a discourse: what is collected is mostly meant to be recollected, notably through a display and 'story' of the collection. Samuel writes that '[w]e live […] in an expanding historical culture, in which the work of inquiry and retrieval is being progressively extended into all kinds of spheres that would have been thought unworthy of notice in the past […]' (1994: 25) and insists that 'reference would need to be made to the legions of bargain-hunters who through the medium of the flea-market and the car-boot sale have created whole new classes of collectables, or made archives of the future out of the ephemera of the everyday' (1994: 27). An example of these collectors and 'do-it-yourself curators' (Samuel 1994: 27) is Mickey McGowan, an American collector of neglected cultural artefacts (including records) since the late 1960s, who displays his collection in the form of an 'Unknown Museum' (Juno and Vale 1993: 98), thus delivering a visual, tactile and aural narrative of the recent American past through different types of objects gathered in one specific site. McGowan's home museum resonates with the (fictive) museum set up by the Flaubertian characters Bouvard and Pécuchet (1881), who, personifying the collecting mania of the late nineteenth century, set out to compose a domestic museum of the banal. If '*particular materialities are associated with a specific conception of memory*' (Jones 2007: 161), it may also be that particular materialities trigger specific memories. McGowan argues that

> The memory cells will always be there, and at any moment they can be stirred up and accessed by the proper cue or artwork. And that's what I'm after: to stir up those thoughts. There's a multilayered effect caused by thousands of items hitting you within the space of an hour, and that includes the sound – a very important aspect of the experience. (1993: 101)

The vinyl archaeologist is a music collector who especially seeks out old, obscure recordings and 'marvels' (possibly released on lost formats such as 78-rpm records; see Chapter 3). The two American volumes *Incredibly Strange Music* (1993) have offered

colourful portraits of vinyl archaeologists (or vinyl anthropologists; see Taylor 2001: 101). They were published in a pre-internet age, a time in which seeking old records was perhaps a more demanding and time-consuming practice (today's vinyl archaeologist may be more of an armchair archaeologist, hunting specialised MP3 blogs for 'lost' musical nuggets). In Chapter 3, I have examined the politics of reissuing practices (as they are undertaken by vinyl archaeologists) and the possible meanings of the displaced recorded past. I have also been interested in the mediation and potential re-mediation of the past, as it occurs for instance through restored, rearranged and 'repackaged' versions of old recordings. One of the most meticulous reissuing projects in the late twentieth century has been undertaken by the American record label Yazoo, which released (on compact-discs) an eight–volume collection of early ethnic recordings (the collection, entitled *Secret Museum of Mankind,* was edited by the country musician Pat Conte and released between 1995 and 1998). The practice of compiling and reissuing is reminiscent of earlier compilations such as Percy Scholes' didactic *Columbia History of Music Through Ear and Eye* (released between 1930 and 1939) or the French *l'Anthologie Sonore* (Day 2000: 79). To the specific term vinyl archaeology, I prefer the broader term of phono-archaeology, for it is given that it is also possible to unearth other types of sound recordings (such as audiocassettes, flexi-discs), and proceed to digital excavations.

Media archaeology

In his liner notes to *the Secret Museum of Mankind* (1995), Conte celebrates phono-archaeology as a means to rediscover buried words miraculously preserved on cylinders or discs. He wonders about one-hundred-year old voices 'once enshrined in shellac with magic technology' and notes with overt alacrity that 'those once-stilled sounds can be summoned anew through one of the greatest miracles of invention, that is, the gramophone' (Conte 1995: 4). As he proceeded to locate and remediate (notably through techniques of digitisation and remastering) wax cylinders and 78rpm shellac records, Conte did not only practice a phono-archaeology but also a media archaeology. Media archaeology, though still under-theorised in the context of sound recordings, is an indispensable complement to the notion of phono-archaeology. The term has appeared in the wake of Kittler's media theory and has been mostly theorised by thinkers such as Ernst, Huhtamo and Parikka (2011). Media archaeology seeks to

examine the persistence and relevance of dead media and sound carriers (such as phonograph records, vinyl records, flexi-discs or cassette tapes) in the present. The media-archaeological project recognises Walter Benjamin as an early, indefectible influence. For Huhtamo and Parikka,

> media archaeologists have challenged the rejection of history by modern media culture and theory alike by pointing out hitherto unnoticed continuities and ruptures. […] On the basis of their discoveries, media archaeologists have begun to construct alternate histories of suppressed, neglected, and forgotten media […]. (2011: 3)

Objects unearthed by media archaeologists may include 78rpm records, 8-track cassettes, flexi-discs and their associated playback devices. Science fiction writer Bruce Sterling has created an online repository of archaic twentieth-century media and delivery technologies, including for instance Edison's wax cylinders or Beta tapes (Jenkins 2008: 13). Indeed Huhtamo and Parikka further explain that '[m]edia archaeology rummages textual, visual, and auditory archives as well as collections of artifacts, emphasizing both the discursive and the material manifestations of culture' (Huhtamo and Parikka 2011: 3). It follows that media archaeology has no strict method, and remains, partly because of its young age (Parikka traces its early theorisation to the 1980s and New Film History; see Parikka 2012: 39), a speculative and undisciplined (as well as interdisciplinary) approach to instruments of mediation and objects, and the way media form, or transform, the experience of lived time. A main aspect of media archaeology is the physical engagement with 'dead media'; media archaeology, as archaeology itself (which is, however, a much more codified discipline), is realised in practice, and understood from the present time for, according to Ernst, 'archaeology [...] refers to what is actually there: what has remained from the past in the present like archaeological layers, operatively embedded in technologies' (2011: 241). It is not so much an effort of historical reconstitution as a way of understanding the shaping, and in some instances the *possible* shaping, of culture by technology (notably through the analysis of imaginary inventions which were never realised such as the 'ghost box', dreamt by Edison in 1920 and which became, more than eighty years later, the inspiration for the Ghost Box record label; see Milner 2009: 47).

Media archaeology attaches itself to the original context of reception of a new media, as Gitelman did for example in her comparative study between the early days of phonography and the internet (Gitelman 2008) – but only to see a possible common ground between the past and the present, and examine resonances. Of course the work of comparison may seem an abolishing, or flattening, of history. Firstly, it is because media archaeology seems less concerned with the historical singularity of 'new' media than with the fact that media may indeed be, as Gitelman (2008) points out, 'always already new' (the same remark was made by Marvin in *When Old Technologies Were New* (1988), a pioneering research into electricity and the birth of the telephone). The media-archaeological project is concerned with the cyclical and the 'relativity of the new' as a means to question its hegemony (Parikka 2012: 11). Secondly, the 'flattening' of history is also partly due to the fact that media archaeologists believe, after Kittler, that media disturb the temporal continuum and exist in, and project, a 'temporal regime different from that of historical time' (Ernst 2011: 250). What this means is that the temporal regime within which media operate is not anthropocentric but machine-centric. Every media can be associated with an autonomous way of performing time, a way which is free from subjective experience. They allow for 'time-axis manipulation' (Kittler 2010: 190), and can introduce micro-temporalities, 'accidents' and anachronisms within the perception of the present (thus destroying all possible historical linearity). The idea can be seen as a continuation, within the technological realm, of Bergson's work on memory, where memory is conceived of as free from the remembering subject: as if media were their own regime of memory and could bear, for example in the form of noise, the over-written traces of involuntary, accidental memories. As such, though media may candidly be regarded as time-machines, it is also certain that, these time-machines may degrade (as is the case with other material objects). For example, playing 78rpm phonograph records is still possible today, and though the experience might be that of a 'revealing' of the recorded past, understood as 'a form of delayed presence, preserved in a technological memory' (Ernst 2011: 250), the machine may yet stutter or 'hesitate' as it plays. This experience of a stuttering past is precisely where the interest of media archaeologists lies; they search for ghosts in the aural or visual 'citations' of the past, which only appears as blurry and altered images, riddled with parasites. At this point, it is important to underline that the media-archaeological approach is a way to address, in metaphor and in practice, the shifting dynamics of memory (as matter in motion). The record label Ghost Box professes a

similar interest in the ghosts or parasites that riddle old media, as they try to migrate them to new recordings (notably through the use of samples).

Media archaeology, which is 'fascinated with objects, apparatuses and remnants of past media cultures' (Parikka 2012: 64), may be criticised for its dismissal of the subject. On the one hand, it is possible that machines represent and perform their own exclusive memory regime. On the other, the technological temporal regime can also be read in complement with the anthropocentric or historical-temporal regime, if it is regarded as a means of experiencing time. Memory machines may not speak without anyone to listen, interpret and incorporate (or memorise) their meaning. The fact that media archaeologists are concerned with the 'restoration' or Benjaminian 'redemption' of dead media should indicate a certain level of engagement with cultural history: '[i]n the phonographic archives, frozen voices, confined to analogue and long-forgotten storage media, wait for their (digital) unfreezing, their "redemption"' (Ernst 2011: 248). What is at stake is the migration of contents to other, more recent sound carriers (making wax cylinder recordings digital for example), without sacrificing the unusual 'haunted' dimension of the original recordings – in the digital version of a wax cylinder recording the noise ('the wax cylinder scratch and groove') exists along with the message (the originally recorded music) (Ernst 2011: 250).

Essentially, the archaeological needs to be linked to the archival: 'media archaeology starts with the archive' (Parikka 2012: 113), that is primarily with concrete traces. French historian Pierre Nora proposes that

> Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image. What began as writing ends as high fidelity and tape recording. The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs – hence the obsession with the archive that marks our age, attempting at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past. (1989: 13)

Nora is concerned with the lingering presence and apparent immediacy of the past in the present. Today, obsession with the archive can certainly be witnessed with the internet,

which, as it continually archives itself, functions less as a discriminate and autonomous archive than as an endless, all-encompassing (but also reversible) archive, where the trivial and the crucial are accidentally assembled together in a digital 'crazy patchwork'. The Internet Archive, a non-profit organisation based in San Francisco which began to archive the internet in 1996 (one year after it became widely available to individuals), offer through the Internet Archive Wayback Machine the means to travel back and navigate earlier versions of the internet, conjuring up for example the phantoms of long-extinct webpages. The goal of the Internet Archive is 'to prevent the Internet - a new medium with major historical significance - and other "born-digital" materials from disappearing into the past'. The internet itself can be processed 'media-archaeologically'. In 2002, Michael Kaufmann's experimental band Therefore have created *Fossil/Residue*, a project where they performed buried digital sound archives. Duckworth relates the experiment as follows:

> The score consists of a list of various URLs, some 121 in all, which bookmark active sonic sites, and serve as the "instruments" for Therefore's real-time performance of the piece. Kaufmann said the idea occurred to him when he realized how "high and thick" latent sound on the Internet is being "piled" and wondered whimsically if it was possible for sound to fossilize. He decided he wanted to make a piece in the form of an excavation project, much the way "a DJ excavates histories of music from vinyl". (2005: 133)

Haunted, open archives

We have suggested that recorded objects form a tangible territory, thus enabling 'archaeological' approaches. However the materiality of the recorded object should not be taken for granted, but rather carefully and cautiously negotiated, as the object irremediably shifts between the material and the immaterial, and its materiality is an aspect, sometimes overshadowed and taken over by its immaterial aspect. Nora's archival memory and the notion of a culture of (hyper) telepresence (which ultimately proceeds to conjuring up ghosts) can be productively combined to theorise recorded objects. Indeed, recordings, when they are played again, seem to project effortlessly the sound and grain of the past into the present, just as old footage or photographs may

offer an uncannily re-presencing of the past. This thesis was largely explored by Derrida who, in his analysis of television, affirms that a structure of reproduction (for example of visual reproduction, though it also applies to sound reproduction) inexorably leads to a creation, multiplication and dissemination of ghosts in the present. The material world, it seems, cannot be disjointed from the immaterial world of phantasms and quasi-hallucinations. Kittler himself, as he examines technologies of telepresence in the nineteenth and twentieth century, affirms that we live amidst technically reproduced (or mediated) ghosts: for Kittler as for Derrida, audio-visual technologies of recording and playback lead to the inescapable and quasi-threatening proliferation of images and sounds, an idea even more apt in the light of the internet and digital dissemination. In Chapter 2, the notion of haunting and hauntology is developed in relation to the Ghost Box record label. Presently I would like to examine how the archive is simultaneously what is present and what escapes, what may be effaced or written over as it being used. The physical archive is a decaying environment, and objects are not exempt from change, degradation and loss. It can be said that material culture preserves and archives itself as long as it is readable and accessible. Thus record labels, as long as their catalogue has not been deleted and is likely to be stumbled upon in the physical or online world, constitute a site of memory, a territory of sounds, images and words that can ideally be revisited at will. This is a rather dizzying perspective, for one is surrounded by old artefacts and, if each of them is given a legitimate place, being rewritten and redeemed into history, soon everything is considered worth preserving. This is the problem that Huyssen (but also Nora) identified when he spoke about the hypertrophy, or omnipresence, of memory. The twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been marked by a saturation of archival traces, all the more visible as the capacities for storage and access have drastically increased with the popularisation of the internet in the mid-1990s. In Chapter 4, I address some of the issues raised by digital archives and the seemingly endless possibilities they may offer.

The thesis could have slipped out of control, or become too vast, preoccupied with more themes, more sites and scenes. This is the reason why it is strictly organised by case studies and themes. The material, however, is always excessive; the never-ending flow of objects and distractions which surround contemporary audiences in their everyday lives has also, in its casual, mundane way, threatened to infiltrate the thesis. I have sought to be as precise and focused as possible. However it should be kept in mind that to write about objects is both to write about the exteriority of objects (in which soil,

discourse or practice they are embedded) and their interiority (what they may contain and mean, though meaning may remain, after all, partially subjective and untranslatable). Throughout his works, Bachelard has observed with a formidable energy and patience the duality and 'foldability' of things and spaces: what inhabits the world is simultaneously inhabited, and perhaps there should be no strict difference between the outside and the inside, both being inseparable modalities of existence, engaged in a permanent dialogue. It is this dialogue which I believe is worth seeking out, and hearing, if only partially.

Chapter 1. Sarah Records (1987-1995) and the Everyday

> 'Sarah' is the name of a record label. (Haynes and Wadd 1995)

> everything is given, without provoking the desire for or even the possibility of a rhetorical expansion. […] we might (we must) speak of an intense immobility, linked to a detail (to a detonation), an explosion makes a little star on the pane of the text or of the photographer: neither the Haiku nor the Photograph makes us "dream". (Barthes 1981: 49)

> Originally the haikai must have been a game of chain-rhymes begun by one player and continued by the next. (Huizinga 1980: 124)

Introduction

Traces of Sarah Records

In 1987, Matt Haynes co-founded with Clare Wadd the record label Sarah Records (1987-1995). The Bristol-based non-profit independent record label was run from the domestic, everyday setting of a Bristol 'tiny basement apartment' (Alborn 1988). The record label spawned from Matt Haynes' previous engagement with self-publication (as editor of the fanzine *Are You Scared To Get Happy?,* 1985-1987) and self-released and self-distributed, home-recorded music. During the existence of the Sarah label, the two founders duly produced, as they had planned, '100 perfect releases' (Wadd and Haynes 1995) thus realising a tangible, self-referential story of the label. It is this material story, realised in music objects as diverse as vinyl records, flexi-discs, fanzines but also a board game (the Saropoly), that I wish to examine in this chapter. Objects but also the everyday, material space of the city which informed them were central to the aesthetics and politics of Sarah Records. As such, the artefacts released by the label may be perceived as miniature representations or fragments of the city, offering memory prompts notably in the form of photographs incorporated into the artworks and fanzines

or autobiographical texts, as if to echo Benjamin's dream of 'setting out the sphere of life – bios – graphically on a map' (Benjamin 2000: 303). Through the objects they created the two founders of the label sought to promote and record their own, lived version of Bristol. It may be argued that Sarah Records existed as a multiple venture with literary, musical and iconographic ambitions amongst others. Even though these intentions were subsumed under the generic name 'Sarah' and were thought of as complementary, one may suggest that Sarah Records can be, if not complete, at least decipherable without, for instance, its aural element. The liner notes accompanying the music releases, written indifferently by Haynes or Wadd, would be referred to by the label founders as their own (silent, written) 'singles'. These typewritten cut-ups borrowed the aesthetics of diary entries or personal letters and were addressed to the fans of the label. The same 'cut and paste' aesthetics would also be prevalent in the Sarah fanzines and newsletters, and were often copied, in reverent homage, by fans of the label in their own fanzines. Sarah Records may be approached as an *iconoclastic* label, realised in tangible fragments.

The emphasis on the relentless production of carefully crafted artefacts is what makes Sarah Records an especially apt entry point into the material culture of music in the late twentieth century. A heteroclite collection of artefacts were produced and disseminated during the label's lifetime: these included ephemeras (such as fanzines, flexi-discs, postcards, pamphlets, posters, newsletters) and more durable objects (in the form of 7-inch, 10-inch and 12-inch vinyl records, cassettes, compact-discs). These artefacts will be my main focus point throughout the chapter; the analysis, however, will by no means be limited to them but will rather encompass their context of production and dissemination as well as their reception. By using the term 'artefact', instead of the more neutral 'object' for instance, I will insist on a conception of the thing as that which is 'made' (Glassie 1999: 85). An emphasis on another term – for instance 'good' or 'commodity' – will lead to a conception of the thing as primarily that which is 'traded and possessed' (Glassie 1999: 85). Throughout this chapter, the emphasis will shift and hover between artefacts and goods, which represent not two irreconcilable realities but two interrelated dimensions of material culture and its study:

> All things are artifacts, all are goods, and material culture study needs both orientations. The student of artifacts engages them as creations, blendings of nature and will, and slights use and commerce, avoiding the moral issues raised

during contemplation of economic systems. The students of goods encounters

things as commercial cyphers, slighting creators and avoiding the moral issues

raised through consideration of systems of production. (Glassie 1995: 85)

Throughout the chapter I will rely on the artefacts produced by the Sarah label and complementary material sources (such as music fanzines of the same era, which directly refer to Sarah Records and whose existence was arguably prompted by the label). I will especially focus on the visual and tactile aspects of the material culture of music, examining the ways in which tangible artefacts may capture and solidify the everyday, thus allowing for its further material and oral dissemination. However, it should be noted that, unlike the material culture embraced by Glassie (which largely focuses on bygone handicrafts), '[t]he material culture of the everyday is largely unexplored territory because it lies too close at hand to intrigue, there is nothing tantalisingly exotic about the quotidian' (Attfield 2000: 174). Yet, the passing of time defamiliarises the everyday, and the (relatively) chronologically distant material culture of Sarah Records, characterised by disused formats and aesthetics (signified by typewritten texts, xerox photocopies, handwritten letters), has now been endowed with a form of exoticism which at the time was nearly imperceptible or indiscernible from contemporary productions.

For instance, the fanzine *Are You Scared To Get Happy?*, written by Haynes in the years 1985-1987, was initially an original, yet technically unremarkable, contribution to the fanzine production of the time (see Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix). On browsing the pages of the thin, A5-sized publications of the fanzine one is struck by their bright colours – the pages were photocopied in blue, red and green inks. The Xerox machine muddied the texts and the photographs, though beneath the colour noise, miniaturised reproductions of everyday documents and photographs can be recognised (issue number 6, written in May 1987, contains duplications of a Bristol map and a used bus ticket dated '17: 15 01NOV86' as well of photographs of Bristol's Brandon Hill Park and railway tracks). Type-written and handwritten strips of text are disorderly pasted upon the images. The articles of the fanzine typically deal with now-forgotten short-lived bands (such as The Bridge, Valerie, The Wildhouse, Whirl or Remember Fun), intercalated with more general pieces about music, and melancholic depictions of Bristol. Throughout the pages, Haynes also reproduces fragments from personal letters he receives. Readers were encouraged to write to him at 'Garden Flat, 46 Upper

Belgrave Road, Bristol BS8 2XN', notably to exchange music. Haynes' fanzines would come with flexi-disc 7-inch records. The flexi-disc is an explicit materialisation of the fierce, do-it-yourself ethics expressed in the pages of the fanzine:

> We want NOTHING to do with the 'real' record industry, this is our own pure personal POP vision […]. We distribute BY HAND too. It'd be nice – easier for us, certainly – to go through The Cartel, but that'd mean increasing the price and it'd just be the first step towards absorption in THE SYSTEM… (Haynes 1987)

The typewritten artefact is a clear indication of bygone, pre-digital writing technologies and the presence of Haynes' postal address points to now marginalised modes of communication (as letter-writing has been largely replaced with e-mailing (Adams 2007: 185-199) and exchange of music is today realised online, notably through peer-to-peer websites). The production of Xerox photocopy machines has now been discontinued, as digital photocopiers replaced them, whilst personal computers have supplanted typewriters in the daily process of writing. The flexi-disc itself may be retrospectively seized as a technological vestige whose handling is likely to provoke, amongst younger audiences especially, a feeling of perplexity and wonder. This can be related to Benjamin's perception of everyday, mechanically-produced objects as susceptible to becoming extraordinary with the passing of time. Thus,

> Benjamin proposed that everyday objects of industrial culture, particularly those entering a kind of twilight age in terms of their usefulness or attractiveness, could be rediscovered and rendered useful again in what he envisaged as a project of remembering and understanding the dynamics of the moment of their creation. (McRobbie 1993: 90)

Benjamin's argument can productively be extended to the realm of past technologies. Then, vinyl records and fanzines function as formerly common objects which, upon rediscovery, trigger critical questioning. A salvaged copy of *Are You Scared To Get Happy?*, which encapsulates past technological realities, provides a tactile, visual and aural connection with the past. It seems that grasping (literally and figuratively) the everyday, or what makes the everyday, becomes possible the moment a former incarnation of the everyday has vanished or been transformed, thus existing as a

detached form, as it were, available for observation. It is to the extent that the material culture of Sarah Records is no longer ordinary (as it has been detached from its context of creation, the record label does not exist anymore, the network which distributed it has collapsed, the internet privileges a culture of dematerialised objects over material artefacts) that it becomes easier to distinguish and reflect upon it. In other words, transient objects such as written artefacts or flexi-discs, should they have been preserved by collectors, may enter the category of durable objects. In his pioneering study of marginal materialities, Thompson has notably theorised the shift of status, which occurs in time, from neglected artefacts (or 'rubbish') to collectors' items (1979). As shown by Thompson, the shift of status is largely anchored in discourse: redemption begins with words of redemption.

Furthermore, it may be argued that objects, in order to be legible, need to be thought of and articulated in the context of a more immaterial or untraceable practice. Sarah Records should thereby be approached as both a material and enduring reality and as a transient, open-ended story. The record label can benefit from being related to, and examined in relationship to, earlier artistic ventures such as Paris-based Situationism (1957-1972), with which it shares certain affinities. Situationism was notably characterised by ceaseless explorations and reinventions of the city and the making of new cartographies of the city, revealed through the dérive ('drift') or the art of being lost. If the Situationists (contrary to the founders of Sarah Records) rejected *a priori* the notions of material traces, revelling in being idle, free and untraceable 'lost children', they also constantly produced self-released and self-distributed newsletters, journals and pamphlets. This important production clearly contradicts their aspirations to be invisible and forgotten. The Situationists, who ceaselessly professed the will to be forgotten and anonymous, found in Guy Debord a name and a most memorable incarnation. The quantity of artefacts they produced prevented against the oblivion and complete disaggregation of the movement. Similarly, the Sarah label existed both as an impalpable, fluid story and as a tangible territory of objects, as if to show that, in the words of Benjamin, 'to live is to *leave traces'* (1973: 29, my emphasis). The most iconic trace of the Sarah label was the last Sarah newsletter (entitled 'A Day for Destroying Things'), which was reproduced in the advertisement pages of two music magazines (*Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express*) in August 1995. 'A Day for Destroying Things' offers strong textual and aesthetic resonances with Situationist ideas, as it incited fans of the label to forget Sarah and 'erase the traces' of the label.

The example of Sarah Records, as well as Situationism, draws our attention to the paradox between living and producing traces or documents.

Aims and chapter outline

The aim of the chapter is to examine the relationship between Sarah Records and the everyday, as it is momentarily sedimented and 'lived in the medium of cultural form' (Osborne 1995: 197). The study of the everyday and its transient materiality will encompass several scales and aspects with an emphasis on urban environment and geography (which unarguably provides the first, most immediate incarnation of material culture). First of all, Sarah Records will be envisioned as a fluid and transient practice through the operative metaphor of the Saropoly game: the record label will be regarded as a practice of playing, that is to say of inhabiting (through diversions) a given space and time (Bristol in the late 1980s-early 1990s). I will open a discursive space between popular music theorists such as Hesmondhalgh, Reynolds and Borthwick and Moy and thinkers of the everyday (De Certeau, Lefebvre), notably by linking the do-it-yourself ethos to De Certeau's notion of making do and sabotage. This initial macro-analysis of Sarah Records as a mundane practice of playing will be complemented by a closer focus on the artefacts released by the label. The way Sarah Records both literally and figuratively mapped the territory of the everyday will be a central concern of the chapter. Thus I will especially examine the status of Bristol within the economy of the record label to show how an alternative cartography of the city was designed through specific artefacts and gestures of appropriation (in techniques as diverse as photographing, writing and borrowing pre-existing names and symbols). Finally I will emphasise on the archival aspects of Sarah Records and propose that the record label fashioned a coherent spatiotemporal site, likely to be revisited and, as it were, available for future excavation. The material culture of the record label will be considered as that which helped in (paradoxically) creating, sustaining and disseminating a more immaterial narrative or myth of Sarah Records.

Throughout the chapter, objects will be thereby envisioned as part of a broader system of circulation and transmission, both in the physical world and in the world of language. The entwinement of practice and objects, which may ultimately lead to their effacing (for example, when objects become the prompts for the intangible telling of a story), is what makes them especially difficult to grasp and define. One way of avoiding

such an aporia is to consider the material and immaterial as co-producers of meaning. If, on the one hand, the thing may effectively be a reification of action, on the other hand, the thing is also what triggers further ideas or actions. As correctly pointed out by Attfield in her study of the material culture of everyday life,

> it is not the 'thing' in itself which is of prime interest […] even though it is positioned as the central point of focus. The material object is posited as the vehicle through which to explore the object/subject relationship, a condition that hovers between the physical presence and the visual image, between the reality of the inherent properties of materials and the myth of fantasy, and between empirical materiality and theoretical representation. (Attfield 2000: 11)

Playing the Sarah label: a practice of the everyday

The Saropoly game: a metaphor for the Sarah label

In September 1991, Sarah 050 was released and distributed via the Cartel. The artefact however was not a record or a music fanzine. Sarah 050 was a game, a 'Saropoly' (a portmanteau word for Sarah and Monopoly) parodying the well-known board game designed by the Parker Brothers in 1934. The city miniaturised and represented on the Saropoly board was not London (as in the official British version of the game) but Bristol. Fanzine-writer Alistair Fitchett remembers that the 'Saropoly was a board game in which you pretended to be a record company mogul dashing around a 'virtual' city of Bristol [...] collecting all the items essential to make a [...] Sarah 7" single in a plastic bag' (Fitchett 1997). In the pamphlet *Les Lèvres Nues #8*, published in May 1956, Debord and Wolman distinguished between two main categories of détournement, namely 'minor détournement' ('the détournement of something which has no importance in itself and which thus draws all its meaning from the new context in which it has been placed') and 'deceptive détournement' ('the détournement of an intrinsically significant element, which derives a different scope from the new context'). The Saropoly game has to be thought of as a deceptive détournement. I will take the Saropoly game as an operative metaphor of the label. As Tilley remarks, '[m]etaphor provides a way of mediating between concrete and abstract thoughts' (Tilley 1999: 8): the game of the Saropoly may be envisioned as an invitation to a physical practice

(playing) as well as a more intellectual game, consisting in making meaning of the material. Several levels of understanding may be derived from this metaphor. First, the Saropoly, as a *détournement*, may be read as a critique of what Monopoly represents in Western culture. Secondly, as a game, it presupposes the practice of playing, and ties Sarah with the unproductive world of childhood (in Greek the most used word for 'play', παιδια, means 'of or pertaining to the child'; see Huizinga 1980: 30). Thirdly, the Saropoly is obviously an attempt to miniaturize and fragment the city of Bristol. This may be linked to other techniques used by the label (for example, postcards of the city and photographs usually accompanied the releases) to make a new map and microcosm of Bristol, implicitly criticizing the centrality of London in the record industry. These three aspects will now be examined in turn.

The space of Monopoly may directly be read as symbolic of capitalism. The goals of the Monopoly are rather easy to understand: one must play in order to get richer by buying (and in order to buy) more terrain and being able to 'tax' the other players. The game relies on individual performance though it cannot be played alone. The Monopoly game can be seen as the exemplary symbol of bourgeois culture. In the film *In Girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978), Guy Debord uses images of a bourgeois couple and their children, who can be perceived as 'mirror images' of the spectators, playing Monopoly in their living-room. Saropoly may be seen as the *détournement* of the actual board game, and further as a *détournement* of the function, of the rules of the game: it is a comment on power relationships and subversion of values. The release of the game should not be dismissed as a charming, albeit anecdotic, gesture but as the exact *expression* of the label's ethos and as the way *into* the complexity of the label, as well as its defiance towards other independent record labels. It can be productively thought of as a tangible declaration of independence from other independent record labels, but also as an invitation for fans to 'do it themselves', that is to start their own record label, their own publishing house or their own band.

Do-it-yourself ethos

The do-it-yourself ethos (whose beginning may not be traceable, for it is part and parcel of the everyday) was especially vibrant in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s, and is to be linked to the punk movement which triggered the quick proliferation of non-profit

artistic ventures. Punk is especially responsible for the deconstruction of the figure of the gifted and elected 'musician', which it replaced with that of the amateur or self-appointed musician or artist (music thus becoming anything the amateur, the 'man without qualities', to paraphrase Musil, may produce). Sarah Records itself, a non-profit record label run by two amateurs of music (amateurs in the first sense of the word, referring to the art lover), can be seen as belonging to the do-it-yourself ethos. Sarah Records was realised in the ordinary and ever-elusive space of the everyday, that which, in the words of Svetlana Boym, is 'the most difficult to map and to frame, whether by art, by theory, or by history' (Boym 1994: 20). Lefebvre notices that, for all its transience, the everyday is that which forms the ground for creative practice:

> it is in everyday life and starting from everyday life that genuine *creations* are achieved, those creations which produce the human and which men produce as part of the process of becoming human: works of creativity. (1961: 31)

For the Situationists, 'artistic activity had always been alone in conveying the clandestine problems of everyday life' (Knabb 1995: 73). Another thinker of the everyday, De Certeau, has celebrated the spaces and interstices of possibilities which riddle its fabric: for De Certeau, the everyday is as much lived as it is imagined and (re-)invented, throughout the simple acts of walking, speaking, making do. It can be argued that the 'do-it-yourself' ethos is a realisation of what De Certeau calls 'making do' (Strachan 2003), which suggests the appropriation or recuperation (poaching) by people of the materials and technologies which surround them, including the technologies of reproduction. Photocopy art or xerography was developed in the 1980s and 'became a crucial tool in the creative process of many artists' (Walker 2001: 140). Walker reflected upon the impact of technologies of mass-production upon creative processes and insisted on the new routes these technologies, if and when used imaginatively, may constitute a critical response to 'the mass media's deluge of images' (Walker 2001: 143). Fanzines are a good example of 'making do'. They are typically produced in small quantity, and are totally reliant on photocopying (a fanzine may even be photocopied by its reader and distributed again) and the recycling of pre-existing images or photographs. The Sarah Records fanzines, inserts and newsletters were often printed in one colour and featured photocopied photographs or found images, cut up from other publications and recontextualised in 'minor detournement'. For Walker,

the artistic potential of the technology depends upon ways of exploiting it that stretch its normal operations and go beyond its commercial applications. Because this form of art is based on mechanical reproduction and because copying machines are widely distributed it has a high democratic potential, in the sense that people without artistic training can make examples for small sums of money. (2001: 141)

Duncombe, reflecting upon the American fanzine culture of the early 1990s, likened fanzine-making to an act of sabotage, where the photocopy-machine may be used for purposes unrelated to office work (2005: 223). The expression 'making do' implies an anonymous and everyday practice rather than a nominal and exceptional one. This means that the self may be absorbed in a broader and collective practice which participates into what Reynolds called, in a 1986 article ('Younger than Yesterday: Indiepop's Cult of Innocence'), a 'rootless communality'. Such a rootless communality, represented by anonymous fanzine-writers, micro-independent record labels or bands across the United Kingdom, is 'without geography' and 'expressed through the media' (Reynolds 2007: 19). For Reynolds, the DIY practice traverses places and is produced anonymously and ubiquitously through record-making, distribution networks but also radio shows, underground literature, independent charts (Lazell 1997). Playing the Saropoly itself, as it is distributed to fans across space, may be a rootless activity. However, such a notion of 'rootlessness' needs to be cautiously questioned. 'Rootlessness' firmly suggests a negation of situated places in favour of a dynamic, fluid network. On the one hand, it is undisputable that exchange and cross-pollinating were of crucial importance for the development of the independent network (as the Cartel shows). Furthermore, a certain sense of community, of *political philia* would unite the 'actors' of the network (as represented by the proliferation of fan literature). Yet, on the other hand, we may recall that 'political decentralization, dispersion, and decentering of sovereignty calls, paradoxically, for the existence of a capital, a center of usurpation' (Derrida 1976: 302). It may also be argued that the notion of exchange has meaning only to the extent that it is related to at least two points, one point of *departure* and one of *arrival* (in a different terminology, of emitter and of receiver- but one may find other points, other intermediaries). In pessimistic analyses of the 'liquid' modern city, Bauman articulates the concept of rootlessness ('the space of flows') and reaches

the conclusion that the 'space of flows *needs* its ostensible adversary – the 'space of places' – to cater for human needs it is incapable of meeting on its own' and that the 'space of places *needs* its admitted adversary – the 'space of flows' – to pull, absorb and retain the continuous influx of human passions' (2003: 22). It might not be necessary for us to establish such a strong dichotomy between flows and places to see that, for micro-structures, operating on a small scale and often relying on affective/gift economies (*potlatch*), places and flows remain strongly interdependent. The Sarah artefacts were distributed by mail-order and through the distribution network of the Cartel, which we will now examine.

Sarah Records in context: independent distribution networks in the UK – a short overview

Sarah Records shared with other independent record labels the distribution network of the Cartel. The following section is intended as a 'definition' and description of the independent distribution network in the United Kingdom from 1978 onwards. It especially questions the notion of 'independence' in the field of popular music, and briefly outlines the main principles and moments of independence. Independent record labels (as opposed to mainstream or majors, Negus 1996: 42) existed from the advent of rock'n'roll, and even preceded it (Larkin 1992: 6), though it should be underlined that independent distribution was not realized in the United Kingdom until 1978. Before that the record had to satisfy the aesthetic or ideological expectations of a major to be distributed, broadcast, bought and heard. This meant not everything could be released and consequently not everything was recorded. The early phases of the punk movement (1976-1978) marked a first moment of emancipation from the majors, marked by two self-released and self-distributed records (Buzzcocks' *Spiral Scratch EP* and Desperate Bicycles' *Smokescreen/Handlebars*). In the wake of the punk movement, Bristol began to develop an original music scene and '[t]he first attempts to crystallize a specific Bristol music scene were made in 1978 with the formation of a label called 'Heartbeat Records'' (Webb 2004: 75). Heartbeat Records federated the local acts, notably through the release of the *Avon Calling* long-playing record (1979). With the founding of the independent distribution network of the Cartel, instigated by Geoff Travis (founder of the London-based Rough Trade record shop and label) in 1978, independence became a more tangible reality (though other independent distributors such as Sparta had existed

beforehand but were not efficient and were unable to survive). The Cartel resulted from the association of seven independent record shops in the United Kingdom (Fast Forward in Edinburgh, Revolver in Bristol, Probe in Liverpool, Rough Trade in London, 9 Mile in Leamington Spa, Blacks in Norwich, Red Rhino in York) (Fonarow 2006). Reynolds, writing about the dissemination of post-punk records in the late 1970s, insists that

> without effective distribution, the do-it-yourself ethos was just shouting into the void. Rough Trade's greatest achievement was organizing the Cartel, an independent distribution network built around the alliance of London-based Rough Trade and Small Wonder with its regional counterparts Probe, Revolver and Red Rhino. Nationwide distribution for small labels and self-released records held out the possibility for real communication: reaching a scattered audience of like-minded individuals, recouping your costs, carrying on. [...] the Cartel network provided the infrastructure for a genuinely alternative structure. (2005: 106)

The Cartel directly encouraged and enabled the creation of 'several hundred' (Cavanagh 2000: 29) small, local independent record labels as well as the propagation of the 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) ethos (Strachan 2003). Then, on a first level of interpretation, it could be argued that 'independence' is the moment of transition from mainstream distribution to independent distribution. Hesmondhalgh remarks that 'no music genre had ever before taken its name from the mode of production of its recordings' (Hesmondhalgh in Strachan 2003: 38). As pointed out by Lazell, who was responsible for the establishing of the first independent charts (1980-1989):

> indie is not a musical or artistic definition, though it has grown to be one in the music press of the 90s. To have indie status, a record – or the label on which it was released – had to be one which was independently distributed: produced, manufactured, marketed and put into the shops without recourse to the corporate framework of the major record companies which have traditionally controlled all aspects of the music industry' (Lazell 1997: 2)

Hesmondhalgh and Lazell already indicate that independent music is almost a movement beyond and after music. Then, it is crucial to notice that the notion of

independence is also linked to that of a broader political will of emancipation from London (traditional monopoly of the music business). Music journalist Keith Cameron points out that 'the most important [independent] labels emerged in areas that were traditional strongholds of the Labour Party and organised trade unionism: Postcard from Scotland, which also begat the London-based Creation; Factory from Manchester; Zoo from Liverpool; Rough Trade from inner-London. [...] Britain was divided along philosophical as well as political lines' (Cameron 2008). The Cartel therefore may be considered as the founding moment of independence that is to say the moment of its 'real' political articulation. The organisation collapsed in 1991 for a number of economical and ideological reasons which are explained at lengths in various accounts (Reynolds 2005; Cavanagh 2001; Fonarow 2006). When Sarah Records was created by Matt Haynes and Clare Wadd in 1987, independence had developed in Bristol and there were hundreds of micro independent record labels across the country (see Strachan 2003 for a consistent, yet non-exhaustive, list of micro-record labels). Borthwick and Moy, in their typology of independent record labels see the Sarah label as part of 'a second generation of post-punk indie labels' which they describe as sharing 'a different musical aesthetics' (from previous independent record labels) while 'remaining largely independent from the major record corporations' (Borthwick and Moy 2004: 176).

An invisible and unclassifiable practice – The game as subversion

On the rare occasions that the Sarah Records label has been theorized it has been in terms of its relationship to the British independent distribution network of the late eighties (Reynolds 2005; Fonarow 2006), its relationship to neighbour independent record labels (Borthwick and Moy 2004), or in terms of *genre* and scene (Larkin 1992). These analyses, though necessary to understand the functioning of the label, fail to account satisfactorily and fully for the specifics of Sarah Records. For instance, despite having a catalogue number and being situated in the story of the record label (as well as being distributed in record shops), 'Sarah 050' is unclassifiable (that is, uncommon) and could almost be considered as a literally 'ob-scene' artefact. The Saropoly destabilises the conception of what a record label is and seems to suggest that Sarah Records can be simultaneously (and perhaps not only) a game, a practice of the game, a text, and an image. In this section I will move from the artefact of the Saropoly to the consideration of the whole of Sarah Records as the playing of a game. I would like to emphasise the

practice of the record label as an act of *playing*, and notably the playing of a text as it is reinterpreted by the 'readers' of Sarah Records. Barthes explains that:

> the text itself plays twice over, playing the Text as one plays a game, looking for a practice which reproduces it, but, in order that that practice not be reduced to a passive, inner *mimesis* (the Text is precisely that which resists such a reduction), also playing the Text in the musical sense of the term. (1971: 162)

For Barthes, the Text (opposed to the Work) is revealed by the individual practice of reading and thus cannot be bound. The unpredictability of the text also implies that no text or no moment ever happens twice: practice, which relies on a set of unwritten habits, is also made different (even slightly) every time it takes place. Play should be understood here as "free play" (Derrida). Ryan, in her comment on Derrida's 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' (1967), states that

> To the self-contained structure of games, in which movement is limited to the specific slots determined by rigid rules, Derrida opposes a "free play" (*jeu libre*) of elements in a decentered, self-transforming, fluid organization. One of the meanings of *jeu* (play), in French, is the space between two pieces that occurs when one of them is not properly tightened up. This space, which allows movement, can be taken to represent the lack of fit between language and the instability of linguistic sign. (2001: 189)

When the game is played, a variation between the rule and their application occurs (in the above passage, such a variation is seen analogically as the difference between language and speech act). As a result, the text and the further playing generate other modes of existence – playing implies variation and the performance is bound to modify the text. What both Barthes and Derrida suggest is that the game, though it relies on rules, is also inevitably left open, functioning as a terrain for the reader to repeat, misread, create and interpret as he or she *performs* it. By extension this suggests playing a text is impossible unless the text has been previously fixed or recorded. The game is thus always already between life and the document, what is ephemeral and what is captured. This paradox inhabits the core of Sarah Records, both an immaterial practice

and a tangible reality: but perhaps it is not such a paradox that an immaterial practice should rely on the tangibility of everyday, material life.

I will now see to which extent Sarah Records can additionally be apprehended as a subversive practice. The word 'subversion' should not necessarily be associated with the idea of violent rewriting, rather it may be understood, more literally, as a subterranean version or a subtle, more indecipherable practice. Subversion can be understood as a writing *under* or writing *over* a given story or given discourse (here: the given story, the given message is that of activity, of producing and reproducing the material means to 'continue' a society). I will now contextualise the notion of playing in contemporary culture, and insist on what may constitute it as a subversive practice.

In his philosophical opus *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre described the game, which escapes all laws of measurable exchange, as the only moment when one may achieve his or her uncorrupted freedom (Jameson 1971: 306). Sartre thought of playing as a work without product, a work which produced no trace other than the fleeting, transient pleasure of the game. This also suggests that playing is an unfixable or untraceable mode of being, and by extension a gesture of subversion because nothing documents or remembers the game. This understanding of the game is clearly informed by an ethics of resistance to capitalism. It follows that playing denies working, thus opposing the production and consumption-oriented capitalist society. De Certeau, examining the status of old people, notes that 'in our society, the absence of work is non-sense; it is necessary to eliminate it in order for the discourse that tirelessly articulates tasks and constructs the Occidental story of "There's always something to do" to continue' (De Certeau 1988: 191). This remark can also be applied to children and those who play (as those who play do not work), as they exist as it were outside paramount reality which Cohen and Taylor, in their study of the resistance to the everyday, posit as 'a world of timetables, routines, duties, responsibilities, fixed times, fixed places' (Cohen and Taylor 1992: 156).

The subversive aspect of the game is largely due to the fact that playing, which generally pertains to children or 'inactive' social categories, is not fixed and leaves no traces, for it consumes and cancels itself as it is played (an initial proposition that we will challenge shortly). A specific match is never to be played again or reproduced and therefore becomes an unreadable and incommunicable moment. This moment, which is a moment of life in its most fluid form, resists all exchange and commodification because of its very unrecordeability. It thus carries with it an inner principle of

destruction: the absolute dissolution of its own memory, for every match is being effaced so that it may 'start again' (see Huizinga 1980 [1949]). Playing therefore is simultaneously an act of inscribing (creating) and of effacing (destroying). However, it may ultimately be impossible, and irrelevant, to draw a clear line between 'playing' and 'working', for the game after all has its function in 'society', serving social purposes, and may well be integrated already to the fabric of the everyday (Huizinga). Playing and working may overlap, and one may (and will) unavoidably lend himself to *sources* of entertainment. It may be incorrect to state that those who play, because they are unproductive, lay outside of the realm of production and by extension of society. For instance, the activity of a record label nurtures economic links with the country it is rooted in and has to rely on certain economical notions to survive. Sarah Records produced commodities which were sold in record shops. Similarly, 'making do' is a strategy aimed at inhabiting and adapting what may be felt as an alienating environment. Ultimately 'making do' has to be conceived of as a way of accepting the everyday rather than entirely subverting it, which would make it an impossible place to live. The poacher is not entirely a thief and knows where and when to stop before his or her conduct is socially acceptable (and therefore legally condemned). It follows that the implicit aim of everyday poaching is essentially to maintain the everyday by making it bearable. An intensive and extreme poaching would lead to the alienation and destruction of the everyday: it would become extraordinary and unsustainable as an everyday practice. Sarah Records was a non-profit record label which still had to fill certain conventions (for example, selling its material production) in order to exist *day after day*, thus reflecting the quotidian work or 'necessary business' of its founders (Larkin 1992: 243). The label existed in the capitalist environment of the city, which may have ensured its viability (without a strong local record shop member of the Cartel, Revolver, the impact of Sarah Records may have been less). The description of Bristol provided by Webb in 2004 can help us visualise or imagine the environment from which Sarah Records spawned two decades earlier:

> Moving away from the centre to the west of the city you find Park Street, the trendy shopping area. It boasts many clothing stores, cafés, bookstores and a number of record stores. […] The top of Park Street is dominated by the Gothic architecture of the University of Bristol's main buildings and the city's museum. This area used to be the location of Bristol's main early independent record shop, Revolver. […]

Beyond the relative calm of Park Street and around the outskirts of Bristol there is a wide variety of working-class areas such as St Pauls, Bedminster, Knowle West, Hartcliffe, Southmead, Fishponds, Kingswood and Barton Hill, to name a few. (Webb 2004: 72)

Documents

The fragmentary, shattered geographies of love

In the Saropoly game, the streets are detached from the city they belong to and become fragments to be exchanged, commented upon and passed on. It is to the extent that the streets become material fragments that they can be passed on. The real city of Bristol is broken into a succession of zones and areas, of colours. Such a fragmentation undermines the representation of a city as a whole, denying it any unity or monotonous, self-contained meaning. The city becomes a minute material space likely to be reorganised and reassembled, that is to say that its geography is not defined by fixed places but by their potential playful combinations. As such there is not one but a myriad of possible jigsaws of the city. The fragmentation of the city is reminiscent of the 'renovated cartography for immediate utilization' (Knabb 1995: 7) devised by the Situationists. The Situationists drew several subjective maps of a scattered Paris where some selected *quartiers* were represented by photographs and linked by hand-drawn arrows. Their maps (such as the 'Naked City', drawn by Debord) may be seen as imaginary maps of dreams or love. They lay out the basis for a 'psychogeography' of the city, which was defined, in a paradoxical way, as 'the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals' (quoted in Knabb 1995: 5).

The Situationist maps as well as the Saropoly operated a selective reduction of the city which 'was reconstructed in the imagination, piecing together an experience of space that was actually terrestrial, fragmented, subjective, temporal and cultural' (Sadler 1998: 82). In a similar manner, the art of strolling the city (*flânerie*), which was notably defined by Baudelaire or the Surrealist group and theorised by Walter Benjamin, leads to a deconstruction of the city in disparate, irreconcilable elements: flânerie produces transient, unrepeatable drifts. And yet, flânerie may be paradoxically recorded. The Situationists, as they drew maps of their drift, provided 'guides' to Paris and imposed a

vision and a route. Haynes and Wadd, through the Saropoly, gave their own map of Bristol: by means of representation and objectification, they were able to keep the city under relative control. The map constitutes a coherent and 'readable' ensemble of references, with its idiosyncrasies, symbols and keys. The map, a tangible object, also allows for the manipulation (from a distance) of the much larger reality it represents. As noted in cartographical studies, '[i]nsofar as maps were used in colonial promotion, and lands claimed on paper before they were effectively occupied, maps anticipated desire' (Harley 2001: 57). But, as maps anticipate desire, they also restrain and delimitate it: it might be that the map is also, in its own right, a legitimate object of desire.

By analogy, on a larger scale, each artefact of the Sarah label can be seen as a fragment of a Sarah territory. This is because each artefact constitutes a fragment of the Sarah record catalogue, and can be understood as referring and relating to the whole of Sarah Records (or the Sarah Collection). Of the nine compilations the Sarah label released, all of them are named after streets and (imaginary or real) places in Bristol: *Shadow Factory* (1989), *Temple Cloud* (1990), *Air Balloon Road* (1990), *Glass Arcade* (1991), *Fountain Island* (1992), *Engine Common* (1994), *Gaol Ferry Bridge* (1994), *Battery Point* (1995), *There And Back Again Lane* (1995). The naming of the compilations strongly suggests that parts of the city are being treated as parts of the label and are materialised. Bristol is reduced to a corpus of references, numbers and names (see Figures 8 and 9 in Appendix). The sleeves of the compilations all show photographs of Bristol (photographs of Bristol were also systematically used as background images for the central label of the records and in the fanzines). The photographs as well as the names, which are torn from their former, everyday territory, participate in a dream topography of Bristol. The records feature bright, monochromatic photographs of Bristol. Often these photographs are devoid of human presence and seem to be plain, undated and undatable documents. Photographs become timeless places. The category of time seems to be replaced with that of space, as if temporal linearity or chronology were abandoned in favour of spatial dispersion and fragmentation. The city is emptied, thus potentially becoming more available to daydreams. Not only is the photograph empty of people, also it is devoid of any unique or fixed meaning as it were. In the words of Soulages (quoted in Scott 2007: 33),

> Photography is the art of the imaginary par excellence, much more than the
> cinema, perhaps because it is silent, motionless, cut off from the future, a pure

piece of non-sense which requires an imaginary sense-giving on the part of the receiver.

For instance, the picture of Bristol's Glass Arcade, appearing on the compilation of the same title is a surprisingly empty, motionless representation of the arcade. As is often the case with the pictures printed on the Sarah artefacts, the photography is a monochromatic reproduction of the original photograph. The fragment of Bristol is presented in one colour – green – which further alienates it from its reality. The arcade appears as an empty passage, deprived of any flâneur or any crowd. It can be perceived as a record of absence and incompleteness, triggering feelings of nostalgia. As pointed out in recent research in cultural geography, landscapes and humanised environments may not present themselves as whole to the viewer but may evoke what, or who, is missing. This is especially true of some photographs or representations of landscapes. Wylie (2009) has developed the idea of 'geographies of love', a notion which is to be linked to that of psychogeography for it takes into account the subject's emotional response in the understanding of places. Wylie, refuting the phenomenological notion of fusion between the self and the landscape, proposes that 'the geographies of love might instead describe a separation or rupture – another articulation of distance, absence, dispersal' (Wylie 2009: 284). He further underlines that 'the gap, fracture or absence that is their origin equally and always entails an openness, an originary exposure to the self to externality and alterity' (284). This seems to reinforce the idea that totality is always already shattered as soon as the (incomplete, desiring) subject is present.

Miniaturisation of Bristol

What is especially crucial is that topophilia (the love of a place) more readily manifests itself in lacunary ventures. Topophilia is itself realised in the production of fragments (such as Benjamin's *Arcades Project* or the dispersed artefacts produced by the Sarah label). Indeed, material objects already appear to be – notably because of their self-contained form – fragments: they inevitably give themselves as *pieces*. The records released on Sarah Records are mostly 7-inches. The wish to favour the smaller record over the 'bigger' format may be seen as a movement towards reduction and miniaturisation. Similarly, the pop songs they contain can be seen as perfect, self-enclosed moments. In an interview given to the Glasgow-based *Simply Thrilled* fanzine,

a member of Sarah band Sea Urchins notices: 'Pop music is transient but still so treasurable, so everlasting. The trouble with Throwavay pop is that it's so instantly lovable' (*Simply Thrilled #4*). One characteristic of perfection is formal reduction and brevity; it lies in what can be held, what can be carried, treasured and remembered. It might be no coincidence that '[m]emory always sees the loved one smaller' (Benjamin 2000: 77). It is useful to point out that the fragment, being either, or simultaneously, the miniaturisation of something bigger (in the case of photography for example) or a part of a whole (the photograph of a precise place in a city), suggests completeness through *enlargement*. The fragment is an invitation to resorb (or repair) a distance. Bachelard was the first to articulate a consistent dialectic relationship between the miniature and the gigantic (his work was later augmented by Susan Stewart in *On Longing*). A miniature is first and foremost a form of reproduction, but it is also that which permits manipulation and control. Bachelard states that 'the minuscule, a narrow gate, opens up an entire world. The details of a thing can be the sign of a new world which, like all worlds, contains the attributes of greatness' (Bachelard 1994: 155). For him, the apparent incompatibility between the fragment and the whole is resolved by means of *imagination*. Imagination is therefore conceived as a passage from smallness to greatness. It has an operative value. The holistic belief expressed by Bachelard (the idea of one world) may be idealistic. Derrida, in a sharp aphorism, proposes that 'There is no world, there are only islands' (cited in Wylie 2009: 285). This implies that the isolated fragment, though it might be linked or collated to another fragment, is unlikely to achieve a perfect unity. Collage or reunion will be operated rather than fusion. In any case, and whether one believes in 'one world' or in 'several worlds', the fragment presupposes an active practice of interpretation. As such, it cannot be understood or potentially completed without the intervention of the subject. Wylie notices that 'the depth and richness of memory-places and memory-objects demands in turn the attentive empathy of the researcher' (2009: 279). Thus, it may be that the photographs of Bristol reproduced on the Sarah Records compilations suggest 'the telling of [a] story' (Stewart 2007: 138), for without a narrative to accompany them the photographs are silent, without a meaning.

Through the production of objects the founders of the label re-organised and re-membered the city, almost in a physiological sense. The practice of the record label may be contrasted with the strategy of spatial occupation developed by the Manchester-based independent record label Factory Records (1978-1992). Factory Records materially and

directly occupied the city – notably through posters or dedicated buildings and venues – while Sarah Records favoured a discrete occupation from a distance. As such, naming or photographing, that is to say lifting pre-existing aspects of the environment, do not directly interfere with the built environment. Both are ways of holding without inscribing. The photography can be seen as a process of making icons. Because of its reproducibility, and effective reproduction, it also anticipates a dissemination and de-historicization of the city, which can almost be thought of as undifferentiated. Stewart, reminiscing over old photographs, writes:

> Without marking, all ancestors become abstractions, losing their proper names; all family trips become the same trip – the formal garden, the waterfall, the picnic site, and the undifferentiated sea become attributes of every country. (2007: 138)

On looking at the sleeve of *Glass Arcade*, the arcade appears to be an example of an arcade rather than a specific place: it may indeed remind the spectator of another arcade, perhaps in a different country. The photograph of Clifton Suspension Bridge, appearing on the *There and Back Again Lane* LP record (Sarah 100) certainly is emblematic of Bristol's skyline, which is 'dominated by the engineering and architectural work of Isambard Kingdom Brunel' (Webb 2004: 70). Yet the bridge, multiplied by means of printing, also acquires a dimension of generality. Ultimately it can be thought of as identifying Sarah Records rather than (or as well as) Bristol: the image, an artwork designed after the city, becomes the symbol of a world within the world. In the late 1980s, the street artist Banksy began to interact with the built environment of Bristol through graffitis, but Haynes and Wadd related to it in a more clandestine and indirect way. One could think of the photograph as a graffiti in reverse, if and when 'graffiti' is understood as 'any appropriation of the surfaces of buildings for graphic purposes' (Scott 2007: 187). Photographing thus functions as an act of appropriation where only the eyes and the film of the camera appropriate the object: the inscription on the wall is an inscription made from a distance, with the eye and the light rather than with the hand – photographing makes an invisible inscription on the walls of the city. In 1999, the multimedia installation *Invisible Geographies* (held simultaneously at Bristol's Watershed Media Centre and London's ICA), overtly referring to Situationist theories, represented Bristol in 'four alternative digital maps […], consisting of images, sounds

and texts, devised by Mongrel in collaboration with local artists and residents', thus 'prompt[ing] users to explore 'hidden histories, personal readings of the city, demographics of class, race and gender and disregarded stories'' (Walker 2001: 173). The space of representation offered by the map is abstract, but by no means inflexible – the map can be appropriated and fashioned from a distance, and may allow for the symbolic location of the self in public space. The 'invisible geographies' are simultaneously the lived, everyday geographies experienced individually: 'People live in different worlds even though they share the same locality: *there is no single community or quarter*' (Wright 1985: 237)

Freezing the transport lines

The emphasis on the geographical rather than the chronological can be further observed in the cataloguing system adopted by the founders of Sarah Records. Whilst usual systems of cataloguing records favour chronological progression, Sarah made a map of Bristol through the catalogue system, inscribing the record not in a temporal continuum but in a geographical, mobile, one. Twenty of the Sarah Records catalogue numbers correspond to the numbers of the pre-existing local bus and tramway lines (see Figure 7 in Appendix). The central labels of singles 21 to 30 feature pictures of the ten tramway stations whilst singles 61 to 70 contained postcards which, put together, made a map of the Bristol coach terminus. A conception of geography as 'a science of military origin, an art of occupation and mobility' (Kaufmann 2006: 103) may lead us to understand every release of the Sarah label as a flag or landmark on the large-scale of the city. As a matter of fact, the mapping and marking of Bristol suggests that Bristol is available, a free terrain which may be conquered by the producers of the Sarah releases, but also by the consumers or fans of the label. Sontag underlines that record-collecting, book-hunting or drifting participate into a 'geography of pleasure' (2009: 121) which hardly coincides with a geography of work. The 'geography of pleasure', which should be understood as the hazardous geography of the encounter, implies the hunt and the quest, though it may have more to do with the process of hunting than with its end. However 'perdition demands a science of place, it *is* a science of place as much as of transience' (Sadler 1998: 101). This suggests that perdition, as well as minor acts of subversion, rely on a previous and intimate knowledge of the city and of the lines which traverse it. Such lines are for example the 'written' lines constituted by the public transport

network. The celebration of the bus and tramway lines in the context of the label is interesting when public transports are more readily associated with oppressive routines:

> Every weekday evening, millions of workers in our major cities climb aboard cars or trains to make the claustrophobic journey out to their suburban homes. […] The uniformity and predictability of it all might seem to induce an unshakeable sense of routine, a soul-destroying impression of the unmalleability of paramount reality. (Cohen and Taylor 1992 [1976]: 53)

Public transports are to be associated with the notion of the anonymous, ordinary commuter, who uses them to go to work. 'Commuting time', noticed Le Corbusier, is also a 'surplus labour' (cited in Knabb 1995: 57), which constitutes a lost time of the day (a time when one is already at work as it were, or anticipating work). This lost time frames the workday. The bus or the tramway themselves may be seen as 'margins' for they are disconnected from any localised 'task' or 'place' and exist between the places. The bus and tram routes are used to discipline, fraction and control the urban space. As Harley remarks,

> maps impinged invisibly on the daily lives of ordinary people. Just as the clock, as a graphic symbol of centralized political authority, brought "time discipline" into the rhythms of industrial workers, so too the lines on maps, dictators of a new agrarian topography, introduced a dimension of "space discipline". (2001: 62)

Cataloguing the bus and tram lines may be seen as a creative gesture, which helps to organise and modify, symbolically, the perception of 'paramount reality'. Furthermore, by using the bus numbers to catalogue their records, one might say that Haynes and Wadd create new, invisible, lines as they insert the pre-existing numbers in another economy, that of the record label (the catalogue numbers also help distribute the artefacts, notably via the Cartel network). In the words of De Certeau, they insinuate and adopt a 'practice' which by essence is de-viant (that is to say they 'misuse' and misread the transport lines). The bus and tramway lines function as privatised lines, constituting the foundations of other, unwritten purposes. In privatising or personalising the public space of the transport line they symbolically reconquer the time of traveling,

which may cease to be a lost time and might become a time of creative activity or *productive daydream*. Not only the poetical aspect, but also the political aspect of appropriating the transport network lines needs to be underlined. Virilio noted the strategical importance of travel and stated that 'the reduction of distances has become a strategic reality bearing incalculable economic and political consequences, since it corresponds to the negation of space' (1986: 133). This seems to echo the Situationist's stance: 'Too much street, and especially too much speed in the street, […] makes the street disappear, while the Situationists, by contrast, dream […] of introducing the street even into places of residence' (Kaufmann 1997: 64). Travel may therefore become a form of dis-course or discursivity. In reconquering or spatialising the time of the travel one may be reconquering one's autonomy that is to say one's *distance* in relation to the city; one's independence (the very distance that Park and Burgess (1925) denied as they saw men as unmovable, immediate *parts* of the city). In the next section, I will further insist on the symbolic appropriation of urban space through Sarah's appropriation of pre-existing proper names.

Place-names

'Cataloguing' the transient transport lines means, paradoxically, freezing what is otherwise subject to an on-going process of change in the life of a city. Gracq, in his autobiographical account of his youth in Nantes wrote, after Baudelaire, that '[t]he shape of a city, as we all know, changes more quickly than the heart of a mortal' (Gracq 1985: 1). That is to say the city, characterised by activity, the relentless passage or traffic of people and of things, is mostly an ephemeral construction. However, the transient and the dynamic, when they are catalogued, may become stable and materialised 'references' (these references may then enter another system of exchange). Materialisation is a means of postponing the ineluctable transience of time. The city and its networks, once they are reified, become more permanent. They no longer pass away. Cataloguing the transport lines may indicate a moment of transition from *metaphorai* (etymologically 'means of transport') to *topos* (place). In other words, the journey or the transport becomes a place in itself. It follows that the topos designates the reference, the name, the citation which, as it is multiplied by means of reproduction (printing, photocopying, etc.), becomes an autonomous reference or a symbol (a catalogue number). Though they can originally reinforce a geographically situated discourse,

those references are also divorced from their original environment and context and become functional in the context and economy of the Sarah label. This resonates with the way in which the names of the nine Sarah compilations themselves invoke images and dreams, inexorably cut from the 'reality' or the experience of the city. It can be argued that the place names possibly appear even more remote and magical to fans who live outside of Bristol and who consequently only experience the city through a series of fragmented citations. This can be related to the remarks of De Certeau on proper names which

> make themselves available to the diverse meanings given by passers-by, they detach themselves from the places they were supposed to define and serve as imaginary meeting-points or itineraries which, as metaphors, they determine for reasons that are foreign to their original value but may be recognized or not by passers-by. […] They seem to be carried as emblems by the travellers they direct and simultaneously decorate. (De Certeau 1988: 104)

What is emphasised here is the notion (which I will return to in the section on story-telling) of exchange, of *link*: language is seen as an original pass-word. Indeed, De Certeau's quick transition from the immaterial 'imaginary meeting-points or itineraries' to concrete 'emblems' is extremely revealing (De Certeau 1988: 104). It seems to betray or sustain a porosity between the abstract names and the materiality of what they represent, of the artefact. This confusion is constantly at work in the functioning of Sarah Records: Bristol becomes a series of records. Material objects and names seem to circulate in complementary ways as objects of exchange, and a name refers to both a tangible object and the imaginative space it opens up. Another example of this resignifying of proper names is to be found in the Saropoly. Reusing proper names or band names as 'meeting-points' permits the reorganising of everyday life, or at least the establishing of a new relationship between the signified and the signifier. But this remotivation of names is mainly operated within (and perhaps for) the small circle of Sarah fans or initiates. The new status of the proper names can only be understood by the community of fans; the name 'Sarah' itself bearing 'magical' properties to those who know the label and may incorporate it in their daily lives. It may be argued that Haynes and Wadd made Bristol an inhabitable, if imaginary, place for listeners and fans to live in. The blurring of the frontier, the confusion between reality and fiction,

between pre-existing material and fabrication, is at the core of Sarah Records. De Certeau notices that one may dwell in the text like 'in a rented apartment' (1988: XXI) whilst Barthes, in his analysis of photography, expresses the wish to *live* in some photographs, rather than dream upon them (1981: 40). The paradox between habitable and fiction is also the paradox between myth and everyday reality.

An archive of the everyday

Memory boxes

The appropriation of place names and existing geographical references is especially visible in the literature of the label. Thus, Clare Wadd in a 1989 fanzine (*Sunstroke*, SARAH 32) writes:

> I […] still have the ticket from the first time I saw [Sarah's] the Orchids, a blue cloakroom ticket with a number 3 on it. And my travelcard from the day 'Emma's House' [a song by Sarah's the Field Mice] was recorded. And a Midland Red Bus ticket from hitching up to Birmingham for the mixing of 'Pristine Christine' [by the Orchids]. I keep all these things in a box labelled 'Box' along with twenty-three different postcards of the Clifton Suspension Bridge. (Wadd 1989)

Wadd has minutely archived her journey. Names are collected and accumulated as biographical landmarks or keepsakes, all subsumed under the more generic name of Sarah. Ultimately, all names are locked in a box with pictures of Bristol, torn out of context. Each image of the city acts as a biographical fragment. Bristol is constantly reconstructed and reassembled as an imaginary city. This city, one may argue, is metonymically kept in a box or a *memory box*. It is important to underline that the transformation of existing places into fragmentary and mobile signs has ultimately led to a slow erosion of geography. What remains is not so much a map than prompts to an ever-changing narrative of Bristol: Wadd's box may offer resonances with the box constructions composed by the American artist and collector Joseph Cornell (1903-1972) in the 1930s and the 1940s. In his box constructions, Cornell collected ordinary trinkets and ephemeras, juxtaposing them in boxes or, sometimes, wooden frames.

These repositories of 'a distant childhood' (Scanlan 2005: 92) functioned as means of controlling and organising the remainders of the past, perhaps in the hope that time, by being embodied in objects, may be retained, narrated anew and more easily mastered. This archiving of the everyday has been described by Cocteau in his novel *Les Enfants Terribles* (1929), where a brother and a sister dedicatedly make a 'treasure' out of mundane and transient objects:

> she emptied his pockets of their miscellaneous contents: item, an ink-stained handkerchief; item, come bait; item, a few lozenges stuck together with fluff. All these she threw on the floor; the rest of the hoard, consisting of a miniature hand in ivory, a marble, the cap of a fountain-pen, she deposited in one of the drawers of the wardrobe.
> Here was the treasure, a treasure impossible to describe because the miscellaneous objects in the drawer had been so far stripped of their original function, so charged with symbolism, that what remained looked merely like old junk–empty aspirin bottles, metal rings, keys, curling-pins; all worthless rubbish, save to the eye of the initiate. (Cocteau 2011: 24)

The everyday objects which constitute 'the treasure' become spiritual or magical, for each of them is associated with a specific memory or adventure. As these objects are aggregated and kept in a single place, sheltered from their everyday use, they acquire extraordinary qualities and become prompts for the telling of vivid tales. The examples of 'the treasure' as well as of Wadd's box show how objects may belong both to the everyday and to the legend. The constant confusion between imagination and reality, materiality and idealism, as well as their relentless interpenetration, is a notable characteristic of Sarah Records. In *Cold/Lemonade – A lie* (1989), a fanzine divided in chapters and written like a novel, Clare Wadd writes of Bristol as 'daubed in photocopy and wax crayon' (1989): the metaphorical language expresses the porosity between the real and imaginary city (see Figures 3 and 4 in Appendix). It is in written and tangible evidences that the story of Sarah Records is being confirmed. In other words, the material document may validate life. Yet, as it provides an evidence of life, the document also removes the spontaneity of life and therefore offers a remaining monument or homage rather than an immediate access to life. That is to say that the

artefacts mediate and monumentalise the fleeting existences of the label's founders. It is useful here to underline that

> [a]rtifacts help objectify the self in at least three major ways. They do so first by demonstrating the owner's power, vital erotic energy, and place in the social hierarchy. Second, objects reveal the continuity of the self through time, by providing foci of involvement in the present, mementos and souvenirs of the past, and signposts to future goals. Third, objects give concrete evidence of one's place in a social network as symbols (literally, the joining together) of valued relationships. In these three ways things stabilize our sense of who we are; they give a permanent shape to our views of ourselves that otherwise would quickly dissolve in the flux of consciousness. (Csikszentmihalyi 1993: 23)

In the above passage, Csikszentmihalyi especially refers to the objectification of the self through artefacts which are owned or consumed. It can be argued that the same three ways described by Csikszentmihalyi may be valid for artefacts which are produced (as their production allows for the localisation and the stabilisation of the self through frozen forms). Sarah Records can be seen as the concrete story or self-production of its founders. Haynes wrote in one of his early fanzines: 'We want nothing to do with the 'real' record industry, this is our own personal POP vision' (Haynes 1987). This stance is highly reminiscent of Debord and the Situationists' absolute will to create 'immediately a legend of [their] own' (Kaufmann 2006: 12). The appropriation of the everyday, and its transformation into a material story, may be understood as a deliberate act of isolating oneself from the 'real' world, or even a strategy for escaping its routines and constraints. In *Escape Attempts* (1992), Cohen and Taylor have pointed out that the way of escaping the everyday is to transform, or seek to transform, life into a total work of art: art, thus ceasing to be an enclave (or marginal dimension of everyday life) 'becomes life' (Cohen and Taylor 1992: 190). The deliberate act of aesthetisation of life may conversely be understood as the only mode of comprehending and organising the everyday (and therefore of living it). Marshall, drawing on Freud, underlined the dialectics between life and fiction and noted that 'a fiction becomes the focal point around which are ordered the events of a life' (Marshall 1977: 11). Haynes and Wadd meant to produce an organised story of their life notably, this is why Bristol has been of vital importance for the making of the record label.

Love-letters to Bristol: Historicising the everyday

In many ways Sarah records is an emotional venture. Many of the releases can be thought of as love-letters to Bristol. As such, each becomes in turn a divestment and a possession ritual, where the city is simultaneously held and set free. The necessary fragmentation of the catalogue, as well as the fragmented texts written in the Sarah fanzines and newsletters, resemble the broken language of love and memory. The last Sarah newsletter, 'A Day for Destroying Things' (which was printed in the pages of the *Melody Maker* and the *New Musical Express*), features a background picture of Clifton Suspension Bridge and can be read as ending a metaphorical love affair (see Figure 6 in Appendix). Its most expressive statements are: 'Nothing should be forever', 'Sarah Records […] is ours to create and destroy how we want and we don't do encores' and 'the first act of revolution is destruction and the first thing to destroy is the past'. The ending itself is simultaneously a manifestation, a materialisation and a recollection of the story. The will to destroy the story the very moment it is being written, to efface the moves of the game as it is being played, can be deciphered as the ultimate sign of life. 'It reminds us we're alive' was, unsurprisingly, the last line of the obituary. The final sabotage of the record label is also the clear indication that life and writing (or documenting) cannot fully merge. For Baudrillard, '[d]esire is always the desire for that alien perfection, at the same time as it is the desire perhaps to shatter it, to break it down. You get aroused only for things whose perfection and impunity you want both to share and to shatter' (1996: 87). This also means that destruction is inseparable from perfection; for to be perfect (that is, self-contained), something needs to be over, or liquidated. 'A day for destroying things' is a collage of sharp, vivid formulas, the most striking being: 'The first act of revolution is destruction […] and the first thing to destroy is the past'. Paradoxically, the Sarah obituary became a 'memorable' document of the past in its own right. Such a paradox can remind us of the Situationist discourse and Debord's insistence on the 'total destruction of corpses and similar reminders: no ashes, no traces' (cited in Kaufmann 2006: 8). It is obvious though that the very act of writing, then of printing, is precisely that which prevents destruction, that which leaves traces and inscriptions. However Derrida underlines that writing is also itself an act of violence and of destruction, for imperfect representation shatters what it represents and cannot rejoice any 'essence':

> writing is dangerous from the moment that representation there claims to be presence and the sign of the thing itself. And there is a fatal necessity, inscribed in the very functioning of the sign, that the substitute makes one forget the vicariousness of its own function and makes itself pass for the plenitude of a speech it nevertheless only supplements. (Derrida 1997: 144).

What is meant here is that the writing or the recording is always an aftermath, or an afterlife, of life itself (a supplement). It comes as little surprise that Debord would declare himself against techniques of recordings (the phonograph) or technologies such as the telephone or television for they participated into a more general commodification and exchangeability of everyday life and led the spectator into a passive absorption of a never-ending 'spectacle' which would prevent him from being *really* alive (Knabb 1998: 15-16). Haynes and Wadd expressed the (perhaps insincere) will to be utterly forgotten, yet they ceaselessly wrote. They created perfect documents not to live them but to establish retrospectively a historical site. Like-minded Kevin Pearce had written in 1985 in his fanzine *Hungry Beat*:

> Imagine if "Hungry Beat" were the only pop documentation to survive the ravages of time... but no, not THIS, rather a truly realised "Hungry Beat". A pure reference book. See... between the covers all of the exemplary pop moments, exponents... preserved for prosperity. Somebody has to do this... it's the one thing we owe to pop and its history. Scattered small valuable moments of immense importance. These moments must never be lost. (Pearce 1985)

Hanif Kureishi, the co-editor of *The Faber Book of Pop* (1995) – a pure reference book in its own right, which gathers disparate magazine articles – remarks that 'it's strange how long the disposable can last and how often it may return. Funny, too, how much it can tell us about a particular period, as if it's the easily forgotten things that we most need to recover' (Kureishi 1995: XX). Pop music, an art and form of the ephemeral *par excellence*, is paradoxically made perennial by a process of documentation and of conservation, which may correspond to the end, through reification, of music itself.

What remains is a written or visual record of sound – after the music. This may be linked to Barthes' writing about love in *Fragments d' un Discours Amoureux* [*Fragments of a Lover's Discourse*] (1977). For Barthes, love is not so much a whole as the scattered *remainders* of love such as love letters. That is to say love is in what is left, especially in the form of objects.

The Sarah letters can be experienced as personal letters. The status of the (pseudo) personal letter is important to comment upon, for in the context of the record label the personal letter is made public by means of duplication. The obituary, as well as the other Sarah newsletters and fanzines communications, are characterized by the same intimate tone, which triggers a sense of communion and closeness between the record label and its fans. But letters also record a gap or absence, a distance between the writer and the receiver which may be negotiated and remediated by the very means of the 'physical materiality of the letter' (Adams 2007: 188), for 'letters as objects have a physical presence; they are semi-permanent documents that represent a private representation of a moment in time' (Adams 2007: 189). By being semi-permanent documents, it can be said that letters transcend and survive the moment in time they describe. They can be understood as containing fragments of life which lose their actuality the further the letter travels from the moment it was written. What this means is that such fragments of life are eventually bound to become fossilised and inactual versions of life.

> Letters are unique as a genre of mediated interpersonal communication in that they paradoxically result from absence and yet retain presence by negotiating gaps in space and time. Letters are unlike most other relational communication in that the sender and receiver are separated by both geographical and temporal distance. (Adams 2007: 186)

Story-telling: the Sarah myth and its circulation

An archive for sale

If the actual practice of playing as of telling leaves no material trace (it belongs to a transient moment of time), playing and telling rely on the manipulation and organisation

of material objects. The record label, functioning as an everyday practice, is also the locus of production of a vast material culture, which is subsequently disseminated. The everyday practice is therefore duplicated by a material repertory of memory traces. These memory traces, however, are rendered ambiguous by their mass-reproduction and distribution. Sarah Records can be regarded simultaneously as a potential total or monumental archive (that of its founders, represented by the catalogue) and as an archive for sale, likely to be scattered and fragmented (every artefact is simultaneously an autonomous commodity and enters the rules of capitalist exchange). As such, an important consequence of the mass-production and commercialisation of the Sarah artefacts is the tension between the intentions of the label founders and the actual reception and interpretation of the label by the public. Sekula notes (in relation to photographic archives) that:

> Archives […] constitute a *territory of images*; the unity of an archive is first and foremost that imposed by ownership. Whether or not the photographs in a particular archive are offered for sale, the general condition of archives involves the subordination of use to the logic of exchange. Thus, not only are the pictures in archives often *literally* for sale, but their meanings are up for grabs. New owners are invited, new interpretations are promised. […] This *semantic availability* of pictures in archives exhibits the same abstract logic as that which characterizes goods on the market place. (Sekula 1983: 116)

The Sarah artefacts, which can be read as a territory of objects, are commercially available and, more importantly, anticipate a work of interpretation, which is to be realised by their owners. Upon acquisition, the artefacts leave their original (physical and emotional) ground to become part of the lives of their owners, thus flourishing in remote circles where they may form the bases for new practices (we have already seen that Sarah Records can function as an invitation for fans to 'do it themselves'). The territory of Sarah Records may simultaneously be regarded as a space of story-telling. For Wadd and Haynes, the narrators, Sarah Records bears strong biographical, and therefore dated, implications. Every release may correspond to a lived moment which cannot be superimposed and imposed upon the life of the unknown future owners. Yet it is inevitable that the reproduction of the artefact, anticipating its transmission and circulation, undermines its existence as a singular, unique and univocal fragment. In

Camera Lucida, Barthes notices the deep ambiguity of the photographic medium which artificially 'reproduces to infinity' something that 'has occurred only once', repeating 'what could never be repeated existentially' (Barthes 1981: 4). The medium of the photocopy, itself based on photography, reproduced what otherwise existed as an original or 'master's copy'. The recorded, the document retrospectively founds the enduring existence and repeatability of the moment it documents and therefore allows for the existence of alternative versions, which retrospectively undermine original intentions.

Passing on objects and stories

Drawing on the above section, I would like to see Sarah Records as the establishing of a myth which, in order to exist, be passed on and survive, relies on the material culture of the record label. In this context, 'myth' should be understood, quite simply, as an imaginary construction or story passed on both materially (by means of objects) and in language. In the words of Nancy,

> A private myth is as rare as a strictly idiomatic language. Myth arises only for a community and from it: they engender one another, infinitely and immediately. Nothing is more common, nothing is more absolutely common than myth. […] It is myth that arranges the spaces, and/or symbolizes. […] Neither dialogue nor monologue, myth is the unique speech of the many, who come thereby to recognize one another, who communicate and commune in myth. (1991: 50)

It is possible to argue that the objects produced by the label function as both evidences of the myth and prompts for its future retelling. They are therefore both what founds the myth and what ensures its further life or its continuation. Each artefact of the record label, though it may function autonomously from the rest of the catalogue, is also a debris or fragment from the Sarah catalogue or collection. For instance, as we mentioned earlier, the singles 61 to 70 contained postcards which, put together, formed a map of the Bristol coach terminus. The fragments invites to reconstructing the whole. The postcards of the coach terminus incite the Sarah fans to see it as a dismantled or broken reality, which may only be remediated or repaired through means of collecting. In *The System of Objects* (1968), Baudrillard points out that

> [e]very object […] has two functions – to be put to us and to be possessed. […] At one extreme, the strictly practical object acquires a social status: this is the case with the machine. At the opposite extreme, the pure object, devoid of any function or completely abstracted from its use, takes on a strictly subjective status: it becomes part of a collection. (2005: 91)

The distinction between the two alleged functions of objects – objects of use and objects of fetishism or contemplation – may appear, in the context of collectible records or fanzines, too marked. Indeed, it can be argued that a Sarah artefact, upon entering a private collection, can still be used or played and still function at the same time as detached fetishes. Another contestable point is that Baudrillard implicitly posits collecting as an asocial (or even antisocial) practice which creates as it were a private world (that of the collection) within the world. It may be argued that collecting is not entirely devoid of a social aspect, notably because it relies on actively seeking out artefacts, and exchanging information about them with other collectors or attending record fairs (the same can be said of other types of popular collectors: Martin gives the example of a spoon collector who found the most pleasure in gathering information about the artefacts she collected; see Martin 1999: 82). As remarked by Davies in his essay about vinyl collectors or 'vinylphiles',

> learning about records, and about where to find them, requires engagement in interpersonal and mediated communication. Word-of-mouth communication is a key component of social action among vinylphiles, a practice that not only spreads knowledge about records and music but also enables acquisition of records. (2007: 230)

There can be a collective aspect to the collection, which reflects and articulates (in the age of mass-production), rather than the collector's own miniature, personal world, an external and shared mythical world (or a desire for sharing such a world). The Sarah collectors for instance all collect the same artefacts, thus reinforcing one myth. It might be that a totally private collection may be as rare as a totally private myth.

The collective nature of the Sarah myth is to be seen notably in the abundance of the fan literature which surrounds the record label. The fanzines dedicated to Sarah

Records can be considered as the places where the Sarah myth has been consolidated and circulated. The fanzines, which are material objects, add weight as it were to the initial sum of the label. Such fanzines, which were mostly contemporary to the label and originated from the United Kingdom but also the United States and France, knew a proliferation similar to the proliferation of micro-record labels (which they shared with the Cartel distribution network). These ephemeras have now more or less vanished from the cultural landscape. However, they still may be localised through a work of excavation (which is generally also a social work, as if to show that collecting cannot occur outside of social interaction). Worn-out copies of *Hungry Beat* (Kent), *Simply Thrilled* (Glasgow), *This Almighty Pop* (County Durham), *Incite* (USA), or *Fairy Tales* (France) can thus be sourced today. In a 1988 copy of the free fanzine *Incite*, fanzine-writer Tim Alborn recounts a trip he took from his hometown of Cambridge, Massachusetts to Bristol in order to visit the founders of the Sarah label, which he introduces as simultaneously playwrights and actors of their own drama (see Figure 5 in Appendix):

> Clare Wadd and Matt Haynes, two idealists in charge of Sarah Records, who release only 7-inch EPs and build castles in the summer sky; and myself, posing as a fanzine editor and thinking that just maybe this isn't a play at all – certainly the other characters think it's all quite serious and real. (Alborn 1988)

Nearer to us, the myth of Sarah Records is circulated and celebrated in discourse (in the music press) or in practice (through the rereleases of Sarah artefacts). In 2009, *Magic*, a French music magazine, printed a 24-page feature about Sarah Records which included interviews with contemporary art personalities (musicians, record-label owners, fans), both French and non-French. The same year, the French songwriter Dominique A penned 'Sarah, Bristol', a song based on his formative listening in the early 1990s of the records released by the Sarah label. In the United Kingdom, two Bristol-based filmmakers are currently making a documentary about the record label whilst a Canadian music journalist, Michael White, has compiled material and proceeded with interviews in 2012, in the hope of writing a book about Sarah Records. It seems that '[w]ith myth, the passing of time takes shape, its ceaseless passing is fixed in an exemplary place of showing and revealing' (Nancy 1991: 45). To this it should be added that the exemplary place of showing and revealing are themselves not fixed: they

are also conditioned by the specific technological structure within which the telling of the myth takes place. During the existence of Sarah Records, the Sarah myth was told in three-dimensional fanzines while it is now also, and principally, disseminated digitally (see Chapter 4). Benjamin remarks that:

> The storytelling that thrives for a long time in the milieu of work—the rural, the maritime, and the urban— is itself an artisan form of communication, as it were. It does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel. (1973: 91-92)

Similarly, the way the story of Sarah Records is being passed on bears the mark of its narrators. And the story, for instance when it takes the form of a song (Dominique A), is inescapably enmeshed with memories which did not belong to it in the first place. The material object which may prompt the story is also being modified and marked by the way the object has been experienced and used in practice.

A material artefact can function as a link between the past and the present, if and when it is accompanied by an effective process of telling or actualising the memory. It can further be argued that the act of exchange, of passing on these documents or artefacts, along with stories, is one of creating what Lacan, speaking about the Word, refers to as *tessera* (link) or pass-word (Lacan cited in Bloom 1997: 67). The term *tessera* resonates with the Latin *texere* ('to weave'); it is in the texture that the wholeness or the (spiritual) communion is to be found – that is to say in the act of interweaving, of 'webbing' (this image is especially apt in relation to the presence of Sarah Records online). *Texere* 'refers not to any specific material as such, but to its woven state, the web or texture of the materials' (McKenzie 1999: 13). Therefore, the network of scattered material artefacts may serve ritualistic, framing purposes as the artefacts become combined within the unifying pattern of a story or of a narrative. It almost seems that their meanings emerge as they interlace and interpenetrate; as if the collection was a way of computing the disparate into a coherent whole or self-referential fiction.

In her attempt at capturing the meaning of 'bibliography' today, McKenzie underlines that *texere* 'was not restricted to the weaving of textiles, but might be applied

equally well to the interlacing or entwining of any kind of material' (McKenzie 1999: 12-13). McKenzie also extends the definition of bibliography and says that it 'unites us as collectors, editors, librarians, historians, makers, and readers of books' (1999: 16). We may follow in her path and suggest a definition of music as a collective practice and, maybe, mode of being which links listeners, fans, collectors, objects which are all simultaneously weavers, weaving and being 'woven' in (united in the act of forming or continuing a never-ending story). This operation can also be linked to what De Certeau calls a practice of the space in reference to a way of finding new routes in the much-travelled city, thus inventing new, personal spaces. De Certeau refers to the individual passer-by or the wanderer, though the practice of story-telling, a literal netmaking, suggests a more collective activity. It may come as no surprise that, technically, 'much of the work of making a net is repetition of forming a new mesh by knotting it to the bottom of a previous mesh' (Blandford 1986: 30). The Sarah myth derives from the engagement of fans and collectors who, as they gather objects and information about these objects, maintain the myth in life if only because they lend it their own lives. For Benjamin, ownership or possession is perhaps 'the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them' (1973: 67).

Conclusion

From its very outset, Sarah Records was less a music label than an everyday venture. Whilst the strategy of Sarah Records undeniably relies on common and canonical independent principles (independent distribution through the Cartel, belief in the 'do-it-yourself' ethos, distrust of capitalism and indifference towards profit-making), it also importantly distances itself from those principles. The label was informed by the nearly-obsessive will and need of its founders to create a holistic body of work and a 'perfection' within the disordered space of the everyday; in other words to close space and time by bringing into the world a limited set of tangible artefacts. Such artefacts would be linked through symbols and numbers and acquire the status of 'magical objects' or talismans. One hundred records were made before the owners decided to stop the record label 'for reasons of perfection' (Haynes cited in Strachan 2003: 240). The will of the label-owners was primitively to create a story or 'legend' of their own, and to materialise and mediate it through various types of objects.

Through the circulation of artefacts, the image of Bristol enters houses. The city becomes truly domestic. Records can be recomposed and aggregated in a sort of portative monument. By monument I mean that the city is durably, if partially, remembered and saved. Thus Bristol returns to the world as an imaginary city or an object. This city is only valid and comprehensible within the paradigm of Sarah Records. It is fragmented. But the fragments may, by metonymy, stand for the totality. One may think of records as souvenirs from Bristol. Susan Stewart defined souvenirs as 'magical objects'. Souvenirs are the material links between a real or imaginary experience and the present memory of it. Records in many ways function as souvenirs: they signify the passing of time, but also its extraordinary preservation. A complementary metaphor would be that of the relic. The Sarah artefacts have now become traces of Bristol in the late 1980s-early 1990s. They have archived and documented a part of the city life, when this city has kept changing through years. The bus lines and tramway lines have long changed, the catalogue numbers now correspond to past, obsolete realities. Also, it should be underlined that the relic and the souvenir are likely to enter the collection.

Although Sarah was not the only independent, or micro-independent record label of the period (the Subway Organization (1985-1989) or Tea Time Records (1988-1990) were two other Bristol-based record labels), Sarah is certainly the micro-independent record label which proved to be the most enduring. By focusing on the material culture of the record label, we have been able to provide a corrective to too general or stereotypical perceptions of what an independent record label is or may be, as well as showing how the production of a record label may be disseminated across time and space. At a basic level, it may be argued that the constant, deliberate production of traces effectively prevented the Sarah artefacts from slipping into oblivion. Similarly, these traces still allow for the record label to be periodically unearthed in the music press, but also by collectors (who notably digitise the records and upload them on the internet; see Chapter 4) or by reissue record labels. Some of the Sarah artefacts, such as albums by the Field Mice or the Orchids, were re-released in 2005 by LTM Recordings, a record label originally founded in Edinburgh in 1983 and now dedicated to reissues (especially of late 1970s and 1980s British and European independent music).

There remains of course a certain difficulty, even a paradox, in trying to observe the invisible, everyday practice or 'game' of a record label. Yet such a practice as it was embedded and embodied in objects allowed for us to partially retrace the steps or moves

of the Sarah game. This retracing however is bound to be limited. As a result, the reconstruction of Sarah Records through objects, rather than being an 'objective' reconstruction, should be understood as a reconstruction from a certain spatial, temporal and emotional distance. It may be argued that, upon seizing the material culture of the past in the present, one inevitably explains it *from* the present context, thus delivering an understanding which is both situated and relative, in the manner of the Benjaminian story-teller. I have nonetheless deliberately tried to situate the Sarah artefacts in their context of creation, without denying the fact that objects, as they circulate and survive, passing from hand to hand, also gather layers of meaning which retrospectively inform the original object. Sarah Records existed in relationship to a historical context, to a technological moment (the transition from vinyl and tapes to CDs), to a geographical environment (Bristol), only to be emancipated and become, in turn, a context in its own right. The Sarah label still plays an active part in contemporary popular cultures, long after its official 'end' in 1995 and after the collapse of independent distribution networks.

On the one hand, Sarah's existence is more opaque, more inaccessible or 'mythical' today than it was twenty years ago. As the founders of the label humbly pointed out, 'Sarah is the name of a record label'. Sarah is also the story of the effective dissemination of this name. On the other hand, the existence of the label has acquired almost more tangibility, as it has been consolidated and legitimized by external, additional bodies of work. The label may be perceived as a broader, continually open text which is as much the product of its 'authors' (Matt Haynes and Clare Wadd) as of its fans, collectors and more general unreliable storytellers. It therefore appeared as a mixed, heterogeneous narrative which was transmitted, and is still transmitted today, in a multi-mediated way (through oral and printed testimonies, and written, aural or visual channels). It is fruitful to consider, in addition to the original set of Sarah artefacts, secondary sources which continued and reinforced the material culture of the record label.

Chapter 2. Ghost Box Records (2004-): Materiality, Technological Mediation and the Birth of Ghosts

> Spectrality [...], far from being reduced by the rationality of modern technology, found itself, on the contrary, amplified, as if this medium (photocinematography, teleperception, teleproduction, telecommunication) was the very site, the proper element of [....] a fantastical phantomaticity [...]. The revenant is not confined to the culture of the manor house or to the spiritualism and fantastic literature from the last century. Every culture has its phantoms and the spectrality that is conditioned by its technology. (Derrida 2010: 39)

Introduction

Aims and chapter outline

In Chapter 1, my emphasis was on the visual and tangible culture of recorded sound. Music objects were mainly embraced as three-dimensional landmarks, whose materiality allowed for a monumentalising and transmitting of the self in everyday life. Chapter 2 encompasses a further aspect of the material culture of music and the consequences of its survival across time and space. It focuses on music objects as 'objects that mediate' that is, in the definition given by Dant, objects whose main function is to 'mediat[e] messages from other humans removed from the receiver in space and time' (1999: 154; see also Kwint 1999: 15). Records both mediate sound and memory; more precisely, they permit the transmission of the memory of sound (visually inscribed in the grooves, possibly altered and damaged) but also, perhaps more ambiguously, the memory of an era: whilst the material object may allude (through a certain range of physical properties such as size, visual aspect, material used) to a past socio-technological moment, the sound it 'contains' may itself evoke more or less precise soundscapes from long-gone eras. The inherent paradox of recording technology is that it allows, through the physical objects it creates, to materialise or petrify the most

immaterial phenomenon – sound. That which was perceived and theorised as a vanishing, ungraspable reality ('Prior to 1877, all sounds died' [Peters 2004: 177]) is reproduced and made reproducible at will. Eisenberg aphoristically sums up such a paradox when he compares record-listening to 'a séance where we get to choose our ghosts' (2005: 47).

In order to explore the conflicting relationship between materiality, memory and ghosts, I use the case of London-based independent record label Ghost Box (2004-). The two founders and sound artists of Ghost Box – Julian House and Jim Jupp – indefatigably use the means of recorded sound to illustrate the spectral centrality of the past in the present, whilst trying to redeem and rearticulate bygone soundscapes, notably through the means of sampling (especially of old television shows such as children's programmes or Public Information Films) or the use of analogue synthesisers from past decades. Ghost Box was initially conceived as an outlet to release House and Jupp's music, under the respective names of the Focus Group and Belbury Poly. It later became the roster for a small number of like-minded British sound artists such as the Advisory Circle, Broadcast and Mount Vernon Arts Lab. The emphasis on the material culture of the past is notably expressed in the design of the Ghost Box artefacts, which all constitute meticulous homages to past realms, such as that of the British publishing industry of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (with record sleeves resembling Penguin pocket books from these decades). Ghost Box may, from this viewpoint, be seen as a discrete 'heritage' site (see Wright 1985; Samuel 1994) or as gathering around itself an 'alternative heritage' (Sexton 2012).

From its very name, the record label inscribes itself in a continuum between past and present phonographic ventures: the 'Ghost Box' was the name Edison gave to the imaginary medium he dreamt of fashioning in the early 1920s (Kluitenberg 2011: 59). The machine, which can be seen as some sort of ultimate phonograph, would allow not only to record and replay the voices of the living, but also it would permit to capture the voices of the dead, thus becoming an über-instrument of telepresence. Edison was then an ageing man, both preoccupied and fascinated with the idea of immortality through recording technologies – an idea which very much betrayed his enduring attachment to the Victorian dream of spirit communication. The ghost box remained, of course, an imaginary, unrealised and arguably impossible medium; though it certainly helped in nurturing ideas of radio communications with past aural traces (in the form of Electronic Voice Phenomena). The record label under study might share more than a

name with Edison's imaginary machine. Indeed, similar concerns with memory-keeping and the recursive nature of memories can be found in the work of the label. I will consider Ghost Box as an example of *present phonography*, suggesting that the music released by the label can be understood as a comment on phonography and the status of recorded sound, always past and present. The label can thus be grasped as a connector between diverse temporalities, but also, through the practice of linking or mediating those times it operates, as a constant centre of organisation or of harmonisation (perhaps even of synthesis or 'totalisation') of these disparate times.

In this chapter, I see how the British record label Ghost Box (whose releases include elements such as found and rearranged sound samples, old photographs and traces of past phonographical moments) is both the place of return and invention. I will think of Ghost Box as a specific moment within the tradition of recorded sound, as well as a critical, and possibly ideological, rereading of such a tradition. The first part of this chapter (constituted of the sections 'Ghost Box in situation', 'Mediating the past' and 'Hearing ghosts') is organized around the crucial questions raised by recording technology. I reflect upon the relationship between sound recording technology and the Derridean notion of hauntology or spectrality, that is to say between materiality and medium. Having assessed the ways in which recording technology allows for the past to continually inhabit and reshape the present, I shift (in the second part of this chapter) to an analysis of the Ghost Box label as a situated, and eminently present, cultural venture ('The archive and the monument', 'Between nostalgia and utopia', ''Present past''). The relationship between Ghost Box Records – a venture marked by both nostalgia and utopia – and the contemporary context of production, circulation and reception of the recordings is notably examined.

An important characteristic of the record label under study is that its existence is contemporaneous to my writing. A label such as Sarah Records now appears as a historical and fossilized record label. It existed from 1987 to 1995 and now returns in the form of a story to be told; the story is dated and fixed in time, though it can be retrieved and recounted in many ways. However, the concrete elements which make this story – the '100 perfect records' (Haynes 1995) – are not likely to be supplemented with any new releases. This is different in the case of a record label in progress. I do not suggest that the Ghost Box label has no story of its own yet, rather that the story of Ghost Box (which each new release momentarily closes or concludes) is not yet

complete. It may be that the main difference between Sarah Records and Ghost Box Records, apart from obvious aesthetic differences for instance, is of a temporal and perceptual type. That is to say that one *looks back* at Sarah Records, but one *looks forward* to a 'new' Ghost Box release. On the one hand, Sarah Records is a relatively predictable label precisely because it has been entirely told or revealed; on the other hand, Ghost Box Records is still riddled with uncertainty and as such is not entirely decipherable yet. However, it is possible to decipher the borrowed stories or previous voices which inform the Ghost Box label and to recognize the influences which shape it.

My theoretical approach springs from a conception of records as mediating or communicating objects, rather than of records as purely autonomous or detached sound objects. As such, this chapter draws from theorists who, though they share an acute interest in sound, always already examine it in relation to broader social, media and technological realms (Kittler, Derrida, Agacinski), and more specifically in relation to the vast field of phonography (Chanan, Sterne), where phonography is understood as the writing and storing of sound. Sound is thereby perceived as a cultural element, not the least because it enables through its recording to hold information about a culture at a given moment, than because it is techno-culturally constructed, mediated and transmitted as well as culturally received and interpreted (an aspect which will be theorised in this chapter with a discussion of the 'haunted ear'). Complementarily, the ways in which sound is mediated and materialised can allow us to reflect upon the ways in which memory is performed in a given cultural sphere at a given moment. For Kwint,

> human memory has undergone a mutual evolution with the objects that inform it; […] the relationship between them is dialectical. Not only does the material environment influence the structure and contents of the mind, but the environment must also have been shaped along the lines of what persists in the mind's eye. (1999: 4)

The impact of mediating objects on cultural transmission is also extensively developed by Debray in his mediological writings, where he closely analyses modes of storing cultural information and the influence of these various modes on the transmission of patrimony (see Debray 1996; 2000) – a point which will be further attended in Chapter 4.

Ghost Box Records in situation

One artefact from the Ghost Box catalogue: Belbury Poly's 'Farmer's Angle'

The Ghost Box label has released, so far, a small range of vinyl records, compact-discs and printed ephemera as well as digital versions of its catalogue. Between 2004 and 2011, a rather small collection of nineteen musical works were released. For the purposes of this chapter, I focus on an emblematic release of the record label, namely Belbury Poly's *Farmer's Angle (revised edition)*(see Figures 12 and 13 in the Appendix). The band Belbury Poly is an early core (if not primitive) component of Ghost Box, for it was created by Jim Jupp one year before he co-founded the label (the band might be considered as one of the reasons which prompted him to start a record label). Whilst my observations are peculiar to this record, they are liable to be generalised to the rest of the works on Ghost Box. In effect, the whole Ghost Box catalogue is underpinned by strong, distinctive aesthetical codes which give a sense of uniformity, and even monotony, to the artefacts (see Figures 10-15 in the Appendix). As would be the case for a book series, the records all look similar, bearing identical general layouts and designs. The logo and the name Ghost Box systematically appears at the top of the front sleeve; the title of the work and the 'author' come just below. Generally one dominant, primary colour is used for each record sleeve; arcane symbols or plain geometrical shapes, such as circles or triangles, may be imposed on this bright background. Other times a photograph (predominantly black and white) is used. A subdivision of the Ghost Box 'publishing house' is to be found in 'The Study Series', a collection of 7-inches singles. Each of them has a bright monochromatic sleeve, and a negative photograph appears in the middle, in a circle.

  Farmer's Angle (revised edition) (GBX014) was released in 2010; it is the fourteenth release on the Ghost Box label. It is an especially interesting example because it is a reissue of the first Ghost Box release (2004) and can as such be legibly viewed as a rewriting or revision of the debut Ghost Box record (*Farmer's Angle*, GBX001). However, both the tracklisting and the artwork of the new edition slightly differ from the original record (justifying the 'revised edition' warning). Whilst the new record comprises six tracks ('Farmer's Angle', 'Wildspot', 'the Eleventh House' (on Side One) and 'Warm Air', 'Your Stories', 'Hither and Yon' (on Side Two), the initial record only had four tracks ('Warm Air', a track performed and produced by the

Advisory Circle, replaces the original Belbury Poly's 'Cool Air'). *Farmer's Angle (revised edition)* was released on a 10-inch vinyl, though digital and compact-disc versions were also made available. The 10-inch format is somehow even more 'forgotten' than the more traditional 12-inch or 7-inch vinyl formats. It was traditionally used for 'extended singles' or long dance tracks (Rietveld 2007), though in the specific context of this album, the 10-inch record may be seen as a miniature of a 12-inch record. *Farmer's Angle (Revised Version)* is a 'mini' album both in the literal and figurative sense. The initial album was a 3-inch CD.

The front of the record is bright yellow and is crossed by the title, typewritten in black on a strip of white. The name of the band, Belbury Poly, is somehow invisible, written in white, diminutive letters, difficult to distinguish as they merge with the yellow background. The name of the record label is clearer, almost more important, written above the title of the record, in black letters. The logo of the label is on the left-hand side. It is a superimposition of three globes (two of which are black, the central one is white), eclipsing each other; it is strongly reminiscent both of op-art and of the Scotch Video Home System tape logo, introduced in the late 1970s. A bigger version of the logo is to be found on the central label of the record. However, the whole impression of the front sleeve is more that of a book cover than of a videotape sleeve. One might be reminded of the Penguin 'orange' paperbacks from the 1960s and 1970s. The illustration occupies the bottom two-thirds of the sleeve. It is seemingly a slightly blurry picture of a model village – a few miniature houses lie scattered at the bottom of an artificial valley, surrounded by fields and woods. The original release (*Farmer's Angle*) only showed the top of this picture, where no house was to be seen. The back of the sleeve is white; the writing is printed in black. It is a rather simple, straightforward layout: if the title appears again, the name of the band this time is omitted. Two paragraphs 'describe' the content of the record: 'Hello and welcome to Farmer's Angle where in addition to all the latest agricultural news and weather we'll be taking a new look at some ancient rite. This week's forecast comes to us courtesy of the Advisory Circle.' *Farmer's Angle* is therefore introduced as a place, or a village: the listener is welcomed, one might say summoned, into the record as a tourist or guest. The text, which is highly metaphorical, refers less to the music than to the atmosphere it might magically produce. It can be argued that the phrase 'new look at some ancient rites' might even describe the whole modus operandi of the record label, where the new almost seamlessly emerges from the old. In the paragraph, the sound artists are

presented as humble artisans (makers) or peasants, who patiently turn over the ground or the earth to reveal its simple treasures. A small, maladroit drawing (apparently drawn in pencil) follows the introductory paragraph.

Looking at the record provides both too little and too much information: the object remains mysterious and mute, offering no clue as to how it will sound. The artwork relies on no explicit code and, although the titles function as narrative devices (one might read them as chapters on a table of contents), they are by no means descriptive or, if they are, they only depict an imagined (and unimaginable) quality of the tracks. On listening, what strikes the listener most is the apparent homogeneity of the tracks. Though they are different and original, the whole impression is that of an easy continuity between them. The third track, 'The Eleventh House' is especially worth commenting upon; for it seems to comprehend and resume the main sonic textures of the first side of the record. The first sound to be heard is that of a distant, delayed male voice, uttering the word 'echo' indefinitely. A synthesised (?) flute can be heard next; it is well-tempered, quick and joyous. The main melody is played by the flute and 'echoed' by the other instruments (synthesisers, harpsichord) through the whole piece. The track ends in a blur of distant feminine voices, whose words are indistinct; the voices are sparse and yet the general feeling is that of a crowd, of an ensemble of people speaking at the same time. The listener meets with other voices in the song, which are heavily-reverberated and delayed. The whole track has undertones of reggae, because of its loping, off-beat bass line. And yet the whole piece (as is often the case with Ghost Box) is more akin to a 'lounge' or easy-listening track; it seems that one could hear it in an airport waiting room. The track is a collage of diverse elements, which are usually apart in space as well as time. If there is a familiarity to it, it is to be found in the particular, singular elements rather than in the whole: in other words, what can be heard is a quick succession of vignettes or of clichés. The track offers a sonic equivalent to a television zapping, when several audiovisual extracts are visualised, without any apparent chronology or logic. The title of the track is certainly intended as a reference to the American jazz fusion group The Eleventh House, which was formed in the early 1970s. The term 'fusion' might even be used here to describe a certain way of patching up diverse influences.

The second side of the record presents us with more childish, and perhaps less expected, sounds. 'Your Stories', the second and middle track on the side, is very short (lasting under one minute) and functions as a playful interlude between two longer,

more complex tracks. It could be an introduction to an imaginary, or misremembered, children's television programme: it unfolds like a lost theme tune, reminiscent of the televisual realms of *The Magic Roundabout*, *Rainbow*, *Thomas the Tank Engine* and *Noddy*, amongst others (all of which were created and broadcast in the United Kingdom between the 1970s and the 1990s). The lead melody is played on a synthesised flute. It is interrupted by isolated sounds and samples, for example the ludic moo of a cow and the meow of a cat, a car horn or a little bell. There is also percussion which could be the sound of someone playing the spoons. One has the feeling of hearing a soundtrack: to make perfect sense, the sound would need completion through vision. On its own, the track seems curiously displaced or incomplete; the images are missing. The title 'Your Stories' might indicate that there is a (memory) gap to be filled, possibly by the listener – a narrative thread needs to be unrolled and passed from track to track, in order to make sense of the piece. It is this conceptualised narrative which the chapter aims to provide, with a focus on the record as a material mediator (or decipherable trace) of past times. My definition of trace is borrowed from Debray, for who a trace means 'any setting down of a record and recording. The minimal object of archiving' (1996: 177). The term 'trace' can refer to a range of media such as recorded sound, artwork, printed images and text, which all store an information and all store time. 'Trace' can also refer, on a larger scale, to entire artefacts which constitute the material and multi-mediated memory of the structure and activities of the record label in question.

Phonography as writing and storing of sound

The Ghost Box label is simultaneously a remainder and a part of the history of recorded sound, in the sense that, although it is indisputably a phonographical venture, it can be situated at what seems to be the far-end of the history of tangible music objects. The material production of the record label is released on compact-discs and vinyl records; it is arguably purchased by vinyl collectors who, in the words of Davies, display a 'unique orientation to the past' (2007: 228). In other words,

> The various symbolic elements of the record, from the music to the form
> of the record to its packaging and the practices involved in playing it, can
> resurrect elements of the past that are either personally important, like an
> album of family photographs, or culturally significant, like a

documentary film. […] For other collectors, vinyl is associated with some larger historical sense as an authentic artefact of the times or as a symbol of a past not experienced directly. (Davies 2007: 208)

In the context of the Ghost Box label, the vinyl collector acquires newly-pressed records. However, if on the one hand these are externally unmarked, on the other hand they contain characteristic samples from the past. Their shape itself is clearly referential. We shall attend to these ambiguities in the second part of this chapter, but might already hypothesise that it is impossible for a vinyl record to be entirely 'new', for it irremediably carries with it a cultural weight and tradition, rendered especially palpable in the wake of its obsolescence.

To clearly establish and analyse the relationship between recording and the 'capturing' and mediating of the past, it is necessary to retrace a succinct, yet sufficiently detailed, account of phonography. When Edison invented the phonograph in 1877, he was convinced, and convinced the reviewers of *Scientific American*, that 'speech [had] become, as it were, immortal' (quoted in Kittler 1999: 21). The 'immortality' of speech, enabled through the mechanical process of recording, was to be later complemented with the electrical *reproducibility* of speech, made possible as early as 1894 (Chanan 2000: 27). Edison's cylinder phonograph was indeed 'the first system ever devised for both storing and replaying any chosen sound or sequence of sounds. It involved a special storage medium on which the recording could be permanently retained' (Davies 1996: 1). The phonograph, in its initial form, was a recording device which progressively became an instrument of play back. As techniques of reproduction were developed by Berliner, it became possible to multiply and disseminate voices across space. As such, it was feasible (at least from a theoretical point of view) to play records in different spaces and different times. In reality, this was not often the case because, due to the extreme fragility of the recording medium (wax), the recording might be destroyed as soon as it left the machine (Sterne 2003: 298).

Where phonography is concerned there is a seemingly continual dichotomy between its archival possibilities on the one hand, and its commercial possibilities on the other. Sterne has examined, in *The Audible Past* (2003), the cultural emergence of sound-reproduction. He notes that 'from the moment of its public introduction, sound recording was understood to have great possibilities as an archival medium' but that it paradoxically 'did as much to promote ephemerality as it did to promote permanence in

auditory life' (2003: 288). LeMahieu similarly notices that 'for commercial culture the wonder of this new technology [the gramophone] lay not in historic preservation but in mass reproduction' (quoted in Sterne 2003: 288). It is possible to say that phonography is ambiguous from its very inception. There are at least two processes at work in phonography. First, the recording process systematises, archives and solidifies, through material production, the transience of voices and of sounds. Secondly, the reproduction process allows for the dissemination of recorded sound. This dichotomy is also a tension between phonography as a temporal reality (a means to store history or time) and as a spatial one (a means to pervade spaces or markets). Whilst phonography may be a writing and a saving of history (where records disseminate time), it can simultaneously, and complementarily, be seen as a diffusion of space.

If we think of phonography as the act of *writing* sound, as suggested by the etymology of the word, then we may be entitled to consider it as a grammatology or 'a science of writing' (Derrida 1997: 4). For Derrida, grammatology is 'all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice: cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural "writing"' (1997: 9). He further proposes that 'writing has the function of reaching subjects who are not only distant but outside of the entire field of vision and beyond earshot' (1997: 281). This is exactly what phonography does: the record indicates both the distance (it is a fragment from another time or a 'memory') and the presence (it needs to be played in order to actualise or perform the memory). It follows that 'recording not only conquers geographical space but bridges the distance of years which previously kept certain works from finding their audience' (Chanan 2000: 95). Phonography then is a grammatology to the extent that it permits the storage of time and sound in order for them to be re-enacted at a later point. In the Derridean terminology, to record is to *differ* and *defer* time: the time of the recording and the time of the playback are two distinct, different moments, which are distant both in time and in space (Derrida 2004: 10). Although the moment of the initial recording is repeated when the record is played, this repetition is imperfect and, precisely because it is a re-production, retrospectively deprives the moment of its (unique, unrepeatable) origin. In the more complex terms of Derrida, 'a certain iterability (difference in repetition) ensures that what comes back nevertheless remains a wholly other event. A phantom's return is, each time, another, different return, on a different stage, in new conditions' (Derrida 2002: 24). One must pay attention to the fact that the dynamic return of (aural)

ghosts is based on the initial reification of sound: in other words, the record stores life by means of petrification, '[absorbing] into itself [...] the very life that would otherwise vanish' (Adorno 1990: 33) and, each time it is played, might release a new 'life'.

Mediating the past

Hauntology and phonography as mediation of the spectral

In a 2006 article for the British music magazine *The Wire*, Simon Reynolds described the heterogeneous, sample-based genre of music developed by the Ghost Box artists as 'hauntological', a term he borrowed from Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (1993). Reynolds extensively commented upon the pervasiveness of the spectral in the everyday, notably evidenced by the ceaseless return and recycling of past soundscapes. Such a phenomenon was also examined by Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren in an edited volume on contemporary haunting, which puts forward the argument that 'ghosts now appear as part of the mainstream, invading the everyday realm and, in doing so, providing a cultural commentary on its increasingly spectral construction' (2010: xiii). It initially seems an important terminological leap to apply the concept of hauntology to a style of music; Derrida was not primarily concerned with cultural productions and, when he developed the concept of hauntology in *Spectres of Marx* (a text based on a lecture he gave in April 1993 at an American colloquium about the status, and future, of Marxism after 1991) his preoccupation lay with the futures of Europe after the dismantlement of the Soviet Union. Insisting upon the haunted origins of Europe, he affirmed that 'Marx had his ghosts, we have ours, but memories no longer recognize such borders; by definition, they pass through walls, these *revenants*, day and night, they trick consciousness and skip generations' (1994: 30). Here, the notion of ghosts is akin to that of historical memory and its cyclical, repetitive aspect, which Marx was aware of when he wrote that 'the tradition of all the dead generations' (his words in *the Eighteenth Bruaire of Louis Bonaparte*), weighing 'like a nightmare on the brain of the living' (cited in Derrida 1994: 108). To live, for Derrida, primarily means to inherit such a 'nightmare' in the form of a common language. But it is only when this primitive, inherited language is rendered invisible, disappearing behind new forms and appropriations, that one may really begin to live or enter history (1994: 110), that is to say start creating a 'new' history. And yet newness and change are inextricably

entwined with inheritance and the memory, or the survival, of the past. Derrida especially considered the history of Europe as a history of haunting and of being haunted by past, idealised political revolutions, announcing revolutions to come. As such, hauntological primarily refers to the in-between or 'torn' status of Europe, inhabited by remembrance and revolutionary hope, and the tension which may exist between the past and the future.

However, we can understand Derrida's text in broader terms. If we do so, it becomes obvious that language, history and culture endlessly intermingle, forming a dense fabric or network repetitively traversed by the same ghosts. As a result, in its broader acceptance, the concept of hauntology is 'haunted' itself, echoing for instance with Malraux's idea that 'every young man's heart is a graveyard in which are inscribed the names of a thousand dead artists but whose only actual denizens are a few mighty, often antagonistic, ghosts' (cited in Bloom 1997: 26), or with Yeats' belief that: 'The living can assist the imagination of the dead' (quoted in Sinclair 1975: I). Yet, if Derrida did not 'invent' the idea of haunting, he proposed the novel notion of haunting and inheriting as a collective, dynamic and cultural process, opening it (or giving it back) to the people (whilst Malraux and Yeats were solely concerned with the marginal category of haunted artists) (see Derrida 2002: 26). It is in a different set of texts (those dealing with the media, and television and photography in particular), most of which were written after *Spectres of Marx*, that Derrida reflected upon the more precise mechanics of everyday, popular haunting. By suggesting that haunting can be amplified and accelerated by material supports and modern means of reproduction which store and replicate time (see Derrida and Stiegler 2002; Derrida 2010), he provided the theoretical tools with which to interpret technologies of telepresence and the complementary advents of mechanically-reproduced music and its distribution (radiophony, television, new media). Derrida asserted that the experience of ghosts is not to be confined to 'the culture of the manor house or to the spiritualism and fantastic literature from the last century' (2010: 39) but is, on the contrary, eminently modern. In an interview on the 1983 British film *Ghostdance*, in which he played a central part, he affirmed that 'when the very *first* perception of an image is linked to a structure of reproduction, then we are dealing with the realm of phantoms' (Derrida 1989: 61). That is to say that to watch a film or to play music means, at least partially, to watch and to hear what is no longer. Piles correspondingly notes that 'haunting ought to be antithetical to modernity, yet

ghosts seem to claw at the heels of the living, of modernity' and he argues that 'haunting lies at the heart and soul of modernity' (Pile 2005: 136).

The idea of the survival and return of the dead, through recording and reproduction technology, has received attention from many cultural theorists and philosophers throughout the twentieth century (Derrida, Kittler, Agacinski). In different yet compatible ways, they have underlined the instability and heterogeneity of modern times, likely to be visited by the aural, filmic or photographic ghosts of the past. Ghosts are channelled by new media whose origins are to be found in the nineteenth century. It might be no surprise that phonography, but also telephony, photography and telegraphy, all emerged in the nineteenth century (McKenzie 1999: 63), which led the French philosopher Sylviane Agacinski to speak of modernity as 'the era of phantoms', as instruments of telepresence permit the building of a material memory of movements, which is to say they record and allow us to replay the passing of time (Agacinski 2000: 99). Before the advent of technologies of telepresence, 'The material support, the forms of inscription were preserved but no "living" or supposedly living trace of the writer' (Derrida 2002: 38). This is to be linked to the fact that a record stores time differently than a text does. Phonography does not rely on a writing system 'whose time is [...] symbolic', that is which 'memorizes itself' (Kittler 1999: 4). Rather, phonography stores the exact stream or movement of time, which can be reproduced with the adequate playback device. When one reads one controls the speed of the reading, and progressively infuses the words with a meaning, but when one listens one immediately witnesses a determined portion of time unrolling (though of course selected sections of the recording can be accessed by the listener, and the record can be 'decomposed' and played in an order which differs from the one initially intended by the artist). A record has a given duration whilst a book has a given length: the two do not coincide.

The 'life' of the recorded sound can be compared to Barthes' distinction between the Text and the Work (1977). For Barthes, the Work is a unity, a materially set reality, a finished whole, whilst the Text can be thought of as the indefatigable opening and unfolding of the Work by the reader. To put it differently, the Work is a static product whilst the Text is the dynamic process of deciphering or of *producing* the text: '*The Text is experienced only in an activity of production*' (Barthes 1977: 157). Work and Text are thus closely intertwined – here, the reader is the medium between the two. In the case of phonography, one may argue that at least two mediums or two

filters may be identified: the first one being the phonograph or the machine used to play the record, and the second one being the listener. This double-mediation of music, first through the impersonal device of the machine (in the largest sense of the word), and secondly through the subjective interpretation of a listener, leads us to think that there is not one but a plurality of possible ways of listening. Each listening can actualise one or several of these ways. The plurality of possible listening draws our attention to the fact that listening – which is a way of 'making present' or actualising a recording – is an unstable activity, precisely because contexts and conditions of listening change.

Performing the past – Anonymous voices, samples, pastiche and surface noises

The emergence of 'new' storage media in the late nineteenth century (such as film or record) allows for an iconoclastic or fragmentary *experience* of the past to take place; they also allow one to conceive of the past as iconoclastic itself (rather than linear). Sterne says that recordings may be both 'artifacts left from the past' and 'fragments of everyday life' (2003: 350). The idea of the fragment, of the sample or of the quote, presents sound recordings as incomplete and partial: they do not bring the totality of the past into life but only a momentary, decontextualized aspect of it. Furthermore, as the past is encountered through the medium of the technology of tele-presence – where the 'tele' stands for 'distance, lag, or delay' – it paradoxically 'continu[es] to stay alive' (Derrida 2002: 38). When it comes to phonography, it is tempting to say, with Eisenberg, that

> with records [...] we experience the immortality of others: of the human musicians whose spirits we invoke. […] Record listening is a séance where we get to choose our ghosts. The voices we hear come from another world. […] Many recording artists are dead, and all eventually will be. Even when they are alive, their submission to waxing (to use the old term) or to entombment to vinyl or polyvinyl chloride is an intimation of immortality, and therefore of mortality. (2005: 47)

For Eisenberg, it is the two-fold technological process of recording and pressing records which creates ghosts. But perhaps ghosts, in the largest sense of remaining presences, are prior to the recording process. They may always already be *incorporated* in voices

and bodies, and passed on – notably in the form of a genetic code – within generations of the same family. In such a case, the ghost is what lingers of those who preceded us (both intimate and foreign); the 'presence' of predecessors is more or less discretely inscribed on our bodies. Benjamin proposed that the past is momentarily recognizable, if not palpable, in the present, for one can establish a sensual contact with it. He wonders: 'In the voices we hear, isn't there an echo of now silent ones?' (2003: 390). It can be argued that the recording process does not necessarily create ghosts, rather it may render the voices from the past more systematically visible and accessible by facilitating their archiving and playback. At the same time, these voices are split from the bodies which they originally came from: they exist as fragments or traces, suggestive of loss and absence. Recordings do not evoke the body but its lingering traces. On the one hand 'phonography wrested the voice from the throat and embedded it, like an echo, in a mechanical memory' (Chanan 1995: 137), on the other hand, by means of recording and inscribing on a support (for instance the vinyl), voices are 'rematerialised' or given a new body. Therefore the body, despite its invisibility, is not totally expunged from the recordings, thus suggesting resistant or persistent materiality and vitality. For Benjamin and De Certeau, whose arguments do not primarily relate to mechanical memory but to bodily memory, echoes of the past continually merge with the present:

> through the legends and phantoms whose audible citations continue to haunt everyday life, one can maintain a tradition of the body, which is heard but not seen. […] Incised into the prose of the passage from day to day, without any possible commentary or translation, the poetic sounds of quoted fragments remain. […] These contextless voice-gaps, these "obscene" citations of bodies, these sounds waiting for a language, seem to certify […] that there is something else, something other. But at the same time, they narrate interminably […] the expectation of an impossible presence that transforms into its own body the traces it has left behind. (De Certeau 1988: 163-164)

It is possible to argue that in musical compositions the use of samples, that is to say of sections from previous recordings (especially vinyl records and even wax cylinders), betrays a nostalgia for the body. The deliberate sampling of the past, as it occurs for

instance on Belbury's Poly's 'Insect Prospectus' (on *The Willows* album, released in 2004) which is buried under surface noise, or on 'Caermon' (on the same album) 'which uses a 1908 cylinder recording made by the song collector Percy Grainger of one Joseph Taylor. Jupp did more than sample the tune, "Bold William Taylor", he "changed the speed and pitch and reconstructed it to make a different melody with unintelligible lyrics"' (Reynolds 2006a: 31). Surface noise (indicating the decay of the vinyl medium), when it is sampled, artificially restores or 'hallucinates' the record and the record player whilst simultaneously erasing their presence. The presence of the sample indicates that a new technology of digital sound reproduction has been used, a technology which effaces the need for the actual tangible record to exist (see Day 2000: 23). The sample of white noise is less a reconstruction of the past than a trace or a sign of historicity.

Although they indefatigably evoke the past, the sonic vignettes produced by Ghost Box artists prove impossible to date. In *Capturing Sound*, Katz provides an apt and insightful demonstration of how every new recording technology redefines and reinforces the relationship of the musician to his/her music as well as to past recording technologies, thus suggesting that nostalgia is an ingrained principle of music-making. Katz underlines that the past is implicitly contained within the present technology of recording. He globally refers to a 'phonograph effect' to describe that which is 'a palpable manifestation of recording's influence' (2010: 155). Additionally the phonograph effect is to be found in the way new recording technologies, such as digital recordings, can imitate old recording technologies. For instance, the characteristic noise of a vinyl record is often featured as a sample in the music released on Ghost Box (for instance on Belbury Poly's 2004 album *The Willows*). Such an effect has become quite banal, especially in post-hip hop and electronic genres (Katz develops the example of Fatboy Slim's 1998 Big Beat hit, 'Praise You'). Indeed its banality (notably in areas such as television and advertisement music) is such that the phonograph effect is commonly used to refer to the undetermined, untimely 'past'. As Katz suggests,

> This noise, real or digitally simulated, is now firmly part of our modern
> sonic vocabulary and can be powerfully evocative to listeners. It was
> long deemed by both the industry and the listeners an unwanted addition
> to the phonographic experience, but ironically became a valued and
> meaningful sound when digital technology finally eliminated it. In the

age of noiseless digital recordings, this sonic patina prompts nostalgia, transporting listeners to days gone by (whether of their own or some generalized past) […]. (2010: 155)

This understanding of the sample is correct but may be expanded. Though the sample, or quotation, has been often regarded as ironic by the postmodern theorists (Guffey 2006: 159), it should also be said that irony can simultaneously be a tool of criticism. It can be seen as a comment on current recording technologies and by extension a comment on the culture they belong to. Sampling, however, is not the only means of connecting to past musical realms. The material released on the Ghost Box label also presents crucial elements of pastiche – both in visual and aural terms. Soundscapes from the past are meticulously (though not exactly) imitated and carefully reconstructed 'live' without reusing any direct elements from past recordings: the pastiche is made available through the use of specific instruments, most particularly vintage analogue keyboards. A leading influence for the founders of the label is library music from the 1960s and 1970s, a semi-invisible subgenre best described as 'well-produced and economic music for TV, film, advertising and radio' (Skinner 2010: 1). Library records remained unheard for the most part, as they 'w[ere] never commercially available' (Skinner 2010: 1), only catering for a small professional market. Today, library records exist as a sought-after cultural currency, and have acquired a cult status (as shown by the re-releases of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop series for instance). But the particularity of the Ghost Box material is that it evokes the past rather than accurately representing it (see p. 100 for a discussion on reinventing versus reissuing the musical past).

Samples, as well as imitating, may prompt auditory nostalgia, evoking real or artificial memories of vinyl records spinning on record-players, but what they also implicitly do is create an awareness: they underline the distance between past and present technological formats and instruments (vinyl records for instance have ceased to be the most common way of playing music). Ultimately, they suggest that the past and the present might after all exist simultaneously (it is a phonograph effect, that is a ghost effect: an experience of the past in the present, what Eisenberg refers to as a spiritual séance). Ernst, a pioneer of Media Archaeology (a field which developed in the early 2000s in the wake of Kittler's media theory), has defined how media machines, which embody a temporality of their own, disrupt and undermine linear chronologies. In other words, a record played on a record-player literally replays the past in the present (for the

moment of playing back inexorably belongs to the present). The record-player, says Kenney (borrowing Pierre Nora's terminology) is a 'memory machine' or '*instrument de la mémoire*' (Kenney 1999: 4) through which 'memories can be stirred, stimulating recollections that arrest the process of forgetting, that immortalise the dead, and that reintroduce into the present powerful emotions concerning past experiences' (Kenney 1999: 4). It is clear that the phonograph and the record are always already linked with memory and the romantic will to manipulate time. The media-archaeological approach is reminiscent of the Benjamian idea that the past is a recurring theme or pattern of the present. Taken in its most extreme form, this idea suggests that the past always already collapses the present and that no separation can be made between different temporalities: '[a]s long as media are not mistaken for their mass-media content, they turn out to be nondiscursive entities, belonging to a different temporal regime' (Ernst 2013: 56). The greatest irony of media archaeology is that it shows that the past cannot be envisioned as an autonomous monument: the archaeological method is therefore not directly or strictly applicable, but should be understood as a metaphorical method: digging through the audio-visual objects of the past, and recognizing their persistence and influence in the present.

For instance, the fact that most of the Ghost Box catalogue is pressed on vinyl record (even though they may be digitally recorded) clearly indicates the possible coexistence of different time zones. It does not simply illustrate a retro tendency but a more complex relationship to materiality and to the tangibility of the recorded object, commonly threatened by digitization (such appropriation of old formats has occasionally been termed 'technonostalgia'; see Bijsterveld and van Dijck 2009). The music released on Ghost Box simultaneously indicates presence (this type of music, characterised by digital sampling, is very much of the twenty-first century) and absence (this type of music is as it were out of date, or without a date) of the present. Ultimately it constructs an ambiguous temporal zone. When Belbury Poly use the characteristic sound of an organ to evoke the soundscape of a children's television programme from the 1970s, they manipulate the listeners' memories and falsify their images, precisely before they cut the sound from said images. Indeed, Ghost Box operates a narration or invention of the past, through the medium of the record. Each record can be seen and heard, starting with the very record sleeve, as a tale. The Ghost Box records, which resemble books, can also be approached as books. They invite, notably the carefully crafted artwork, to 'go beyond the auditory threshold, to hear with our imagination'

(Bachelard 1994: 166). Bachelard said of visual tales that they were 'duplicated by [...] a miniature of sound' and were 'at home in the space of an ear' (Bachelard 1994: 166). The aesthetic of the vignette is central to Ghost Box, and made explicit in a title such as Belbury Poly's 'Adventures in a Miniature Landscape' (on 2009 album *From an Ancient Star*). Sampling is not so much an operation of addition than of subtraction and selection. Instead of contextualizing and monumentalizing sounds in time, samples permit their manipulation in space, transfering them from one medium to another. Chanan observed that 'sampling produces the effect that existing pieces are no longer fixed nor clearly authored; nor is sample music notated. Added to the practice of multiple mixes for different formats and media, sampling thus brings the manipulated echo of previous records, as if the new is simply another possible version of the old' (Chanan 1995: 162). The other possible version of the old is a smaller, shorter version. Sampling allows the miniaturisation of the past, perhaps in the hope of comprehending it: for Bachelard, to miniaturize the world means to possess it (Bachelard 1994: 150) but also to manipulate and re-invent it.

Ghost Box makes use of samples from the past; this means the sound artists use samples or citations provided by the immense data base of recorded sound or 'dead music' (Cutler 1993: 138). Most of the voice samples are anonymous, indistinct and without origin as it were. They lack identity and as such fail to be identified or authenticated. Ziarek, in her analysis of the politics of quoting in modern literature, affirms that 'the quotation of the unknown voice is by no means identical with the work of memory' (1996: 176). She uses the example of Beckett's novel *How It Is* (1964) – emerging from a juxtaposition of fragments and truncated sentences, with no origin or apparent destination – to explain that the unknown voice, or voices, alone cannot communicate the past (for they intimately and purely belong to it) unless they set out to *narrate* or *explain* it. For her, the past is exterior or external (1996: 176). It follows that what the unknown voice restores is a temporal alterity or otherness. The voice gives a sense of the difference, that is to say of the irreconcilability between the past and the present. It materialises a temporal lapse. There is no synchronicity between the recorded past and the moment of playback (Derrida 2002: 38). The survival of sound links the former to the latter, yet what links them is also what keeps them apart. Similarly, it may be said that the haunting quality of the sample is scarcely due to the fact that the listener hears again (re-cognises) the voice of a loved one. Rather, as we have already pointed

out, what can be heard in and through them is their undifferentiated, impersonal *pastness* or *lateness* but perhaps also *past otherness*. It is not the content of the message which matters but the unfamiliarity (or 'unhomely' aspect) of the message: the scratches, the echoes, the interferences, which denote traces of past phonographies. The core material for the music released on Ghost Box is not the repertoire of the past, much rather the medium of the past. It follows that the ghosts owe their existence to the survival, and decay, of the medium. They can only exist to the extent that the vinyl record has been used and has 'aged'. The figures of ghosts can first be understood as remaining presences or traces – that is, for Ricoeur, of 'new connectors' (Ricoeur 1978: 66). They can also be seen as the *accidental inscriptions* which owe more to the works of time than to human agency. As such, Ghost Box can be thought of as an observation on cultural survival and an active work of translation. What I mean by translation is a literal idea of both spatiotemporal displacement and transformation (what Latour, in the context of the relationship between agents, calls 'displacement, drift, invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some degrees modifies two elements or agents', Latour 1994: 32). The samples of the past penetrate the present and help in revealing and measuring the distance between past and present phonography. For Ghost Box records there is an accumulation of samples: the very *raison d'être* of the record label lies in the reanimation of 'dead' material (this material is not dead but awaiting redemption as it were). What they reveal or repair is therefore unclear and immeasurable itself. They deliver an unreadable, mixed account of the past, where 'to recapture the past is to tear it apart' (O'Brien 2004: 27).

Ghost Box has a historiographic aspect to it: as if the knowledge of the history of phonography was a way to make music, to know how to make use of a vast library of recorded sounds. Indeed, Cutler points out the analogy between sampling (borrowing) and renewing: 'It is almost as if sampling had recreated the gramophone record as a craft instrument, an analogue, expressive voice, made authentic by nostalgia' (1993: 151). Using past soundscapes is not a way of resurrecting or restoring the past; it is a way of renewing the past, by ensuring that it has a continuing life. The quote or the sample can be the basis for a new origin.

Hearing ghosts

It can be suggested that phonography belongs to and impacts on various timescapes. It links, if not the living and the dead, at least the past and the present in the renewed, and performative, practice of listening to and playing back records. It is obvious that a record is bound to be played after the original event of recording, and most likely in a different place, at another time. As a result, it may contain and perform, at least partially, the time and the place in which it was recorded. In other words each record contains the ghosts or traces of past phonographies and past soundscapes. One goes back to a record; one plays it again, plays it back, thus 'restoring' it. It is thereby possible to consider records, in the broader definition of the word (not simply vinyl but also other mediating objects, including dematerialised ones such as digital files), as the inanimate places where memory (the past) lies imperfectly imprisoned. In the words of Clarence, a compulsive record collector interviewed by Eisenberg, 'records are inanimate until you put the needle in the groove, and then they come to life' (2005: 3). However, the notion of 'life' should be handled cautiously. It is doubtful that records alone, without any human intervention, without the physical, cerebral and sensual engagement of the listening subject, can embody and perform time. It is clear that they cannot live independent lives from the listener. And yet the object, here the record, should be understood in a phenomenological relationship between the subject and the object. It seems obvious that a record will not 'remember' even if it has 'recorded' or 'registered' information. Records derive their 'life' from us. As a result records, in terms of recollection, can only make sense when a listener is able to discernibly recognise or remember them: the listener is also a *witness*. It is not the needle in the groove which makes them come to life, though this is an indispensable prerequisite, but the fact that someone decides to put the needle in the groove, and stays to listen to the music.

In addition to this, Sterne remarks that 'far from being a transparent echo of the past, its perfectly preserved remainder, the process of preservation and the historicity of the medium itself [...] shape the history that remains audible after the fact' (2003: 326). As such, when one plays a record, he or she cannot or should not expect to hear the exact reproduction of a past phonographic event or moment, simply because the moment has *lost* its origin. In other words, playing the record back is itself a different event than being there at the moment when it was recorded. Every repetition is simultaneously a loss and a new origin. What is likely to be heard is the history of the survival of the event. How does a past recording 'age'? How is it displaced? What do

we hear when we hear it? First and foremost we hear that which frames, bounds, traverses the music. In the case of the Ghost Box artists, who use samples and material from the past as well as new digital techniques of recording (in combination with the old analogue ones), one does not even hear a glimpse of 'the past', rather an insight into its numerous potentialities.

The relationship between materiality, performance and memory is uneasy. Huyssen, in his study on the 'present past' wrote about objects, and especially old objects used by diverse artists in 'memory sculpture' ('a kind of sculpture that is not centered on spatial configuration alone; but that powerfully inscribes a dimension of localizable, even corporeal memory into the work', 2003: 110). He notably analyses a sculpture partially made from a found wooden table, noticing that 'it dramatizes its material […]. It embodies an expanded temporality, and as object it performs the process of memory' (2003: 113). This description, though it is compelling, is problematic in its anthropomorphism. It seems to endow objects with human powers (embodiment, performance, memory) which they do not have, but are to be found outside of them, in the human being who might manipulate them both physically and mentally, lending them *meanings*. The record, because it is also a container or a storage medium as well as an 'object that mediates' (Dant 1999: 154), is a much more complex object than Huyssen's wooden table. There are several layers embedded within a record and several temporalities to it. Yet, those multiple layers and temporalities only come to life when the records are 'performed' by a human being. Objects are inanimate places which become alive in practice and discourse. They need to be manipulated, understood and configured by a human being. Drawing from an interview with House, Reynolds reports that:

> Delia Derbyshire, David Cain, Paddy Kingsland and the rest of the Radiophonic crew are key figures for Ghost Box. "There's a particular feel that you get from their older stuff, where they've used a concrete sound source or a sine wave, then endlessly dubbed it on to tape, until what you're listening to, the music itself, is the reverb of a reverb of a reverb," says House. "It's like ghost music, made from the traces, memories of an object." He and Jupp belong to a generation that was exposed to weird electronic sounds at a formative age thanks to the Workshop's work for children's television. (Reynolds 2006a: 30)

It can be proposed that Jupp and House are more interested in the fantasised space between the recorded object and its becoming than in the actual 'pristine' and supposedly neutral recording. This can also explain their acknowledged fascination for the television as a medium, that is to say, in the very first sense of the word, a 'go-between' or, etymologically, something in a middle position. Television is between the eyes of the spectator and the image; the phonograph is between their ears and sound. The phonograph 'reads' the music written on the grooves of the record – and its reading may, depending on the quality of the written traces and on their conservation, be inaccurate, trunked, disturbed. It is the inaccuracy of reading, the actualisation of reading, which is of importance for Ghost Box Records. Thus we may feel entitled to say that the label is trying to reflect on the distance or difference between the written text and its later actualisation or 'performance' (which coincides with the moment of listening).

The haunted ear

As a first remark, it can be said that a record seems to exceed a piece of music or a song, as well as its material form. It contains more than sounds, and more than music. The listener chooses to play a song, but when he or she plays the song he or she also hears, for example, the surface noise, the limits or the limitations of the medium, the dust gathered by the vinyl which has become part of the 'original' recording. The listener is also situated in space and exposed to a range of external information: visual or textual, tangible or not. Records are mixed mediums and cannot be limited to the music they 'contain' only, but can be comprehended in terms of that which frames the music: for instance the artwork, the sleeve notes, the titles, the dates or the more general materiality of the record. Blake (1997) underlines the fact that one never 'simply' listens to music but that all music is constructed and approached through textual devices. He refers to two main textual devices, without distinguishing them from one another, as 'speech and writing'. In other words, Blake explains that there are several levels of music mediation, and insists that

> The texts of music have always guarded against, and in many cases prevented, the radical implications of the listening. They have mediated the biological

> action of the human body's and mind's responses to pressure changes registered by the ears (and the gut, if they are powerful enough) as sound. They have prepared the listener before the experience of listening, guided the listener during that experience, or enlightened (or consoled) him or her after the event, thereby helping to structure that listening, taking it from the 'natural' physicality of sound to the 'cultural' state of sounds endowed with human being. (1997: 7)

Blake could also have referred to the frequent iconographic devices (expressed in the design and artworks accompanying the musical works) which may frame the listening experience, transforming it into an audio-visual event. His thesis carries with it the fantasy of a natural or 'authentic' listening. He underlines a material/mental division, the biological and the cultural aspect of listening, confusing indiscriminate hearing with intentional listening, which he compares to an intellectual, guided trajectory: as if texts taught us how to listen to music and what to listen for. However if there is an 'experience of listening', then there is necessarily a remembrance, for to experience is also to remember, to rationalise, to discriminate, to recognise. Listening cannot be direct or immediate, but intentional and situated and maybe, most of all, cultural. Indeed it may be argued that phonography – and most of today's music is of the phonographical type – may not exist outside the text or the recording; that is to say it is inscribed within a Western, written *tradition*.

The ear knows how to listen and knows what it listens for. This selective listening is also what permits musicians to manipulate sounds and reorganise them in a critical or imaginative way. In the experience of listening, there may be – even outside of material 'texts' or strict referential frames – an aspect comparable to that of searching. This aspect can be translated by the notion of 'listening for'. Distinguishing 'hearing' from 'listening', Jean-Luc Nancy proposes that 'when one is listening, one is on a lookout for a subject, something (itself) that identifies *itself* by resonating from self to self, in itself and for itself, hence outside of itself, at once the same as and other than itself, one in the echo of the other, and this echo is like the very sound of its sense' (2007: 9). Nancy sees listening as a self-defining albeit open and non-solipsistic activity, as if the text was both an external and internal one, which the listener would keep trying to decipher and comprehend; as if music was both to be found outside and inside the subject. It is important to underline that for Nancy, who is a Christian philosopher, the 'other' and the 'same' one listens for is always God. His theory of

listening is deeply embedded within a Christian theology. However, in spite of its premises (or perhaps because of them), Nancy's work may help us consider listening as a constructed and multi-faceted, rather than natural, activity whose dependence upon more or less visible sets of cultural assumptions is to be carefully examined. Furthermore, his position raises many crucial questions (outside of the initial Christian context from which they sprung), the most salient being: is it possible to listen without being directed, without searching, without expectations and in total autonomy or indifference? In other words, one may wonder whether it is possible to listen without *being there* or without knowing we are listening. It may be argued that what is listened to is the original piece of recording as well as the encoded memory, that is to say simultaneously at least two recordings (one 'real' or fixed and the other more subjective) are heard, as if the work of listening was inseparable from that of interpreting or decoding but also of imagining. Bachelard suggested that:

> Petit Poucet [*Tom Thumb*] is at home in the space of an ear, at the entrance of the natural sound cavity. He is an ear within an ear. Thus the tale figured by visual representations is duplicated by what [...] I should call a miniature of sound. As a matter of fact, as we follow the tale, we are invited to go beyond the auditory threshold, to hear with our imagination. (1994: 166)

It is the notion of porosity (the magic threshold) which paradoxically holds Bachelard's tale together. But the tale also corresponds to the miniaturization of the place and its demultiplication in brief fragments or musical monads. The compositions are haunted by several voices and we may be haunted ourselves – listening occurs between the experience of discovery (the new) and an experience of recognition (identifying the old). I propose to shift Reynold's definition of Ghost Box as haunted or hauntological music to a more subject-centred definition of a haunted ear. The notion of a haunted ear permits us to emphasise the crucial power of memory, especially cultural memory, in music listening. It also allows us to underline the idea of a situated listening; which notably depends on history and collective and/or personal memory. There can only be phantoms if there are *witnessing bodies*. This means that phantoms cannot be perceived or identified outside of the realm of the living. Phantoms recall bodies reciprocally. A consequence of this is that certain genres of music may be country-specific or could not

emerge anywhere else exactly in the same form. Ghost Box is a British record label and it partly or entirely corresponds to a historically-situated feeling or sensibility in Great-Britain. The record label is very intimately, texturally and culturally linked to the country it springs from and may ultimately perform a purely British form of nostalgia. In other words, the record label may be understood very differently by British and non-British listeners; as a result, the ghosts may or not be perceived. For instance, the echoes of British television children's programmes or Public Information Films (another audio-visual reference for the label's founders), but also the pictural clues scattered across the catalogue, only make sense in a given context of reception, and therefore will only 'speak' to a given group of listeners who are able to identify the traces as traces and, in turn, contextualise them within their own living memory. What this seems to suggest is that the ear of the listener functions as a criterion or a referential point. The music is haunted because a specific audience – an audience who remembers – can effectively hear the past in the recordings. What is distributed across the various Ghost Box artefacts is a situated cultural memory, an aspect which Reynolds was prompt to examine and which he bemusedly analysed in his 2006 article under the heading 'This is My England' (2006a). Reynolds relates his first experience of listening to Ghost Box Records, emphasising on the immediate sense of familiarity which the listening experience provided:

> When I heard the first transmissions from Ghost Box, I felt like their music was like an emanation from Michael Bracewell's id, the dark dub version of his book *England Is Mine* (an examination of English identity as refracted through pop music and 20th Century fiction). If that Meek/Radiophonic lineage represents a homespun/homegrown English equivalent to the dub wizards, the array of reference points invoked by Ghost Box truly are my "roots 'n' culture". My earliest aesthetic experiences are precisely things like *Doctor Who*'s Daleks and hair-raising theme music, all those strange post-psychedelic yet terribly-English animations like the Postgate oeuvre of *Pogle's Wood/The Clangers/ Bagpuss*, kids s.f. series like *The Tomorrow Peopl*e, and, hovering in the background and at the limit of my child's comprehension, Radio 4 afternoon plays, games shows, and comedies. (2006a: 30)

The idea of a haunted listening may be thought of as an aural *déjà vu*. The idea of the *déjà vu* was presented by Benjamin in the autobiographical context of *Berlin Childhood around 1900* (1938), as he was trying to understand or grasp the ever-slipping nature of memories. It is through a personal process of reminiscing that Benjamin seeks to coin broader concepts on the nature of memories. For Benjamin, only the performance of writing, and especially writing about himself (for example about his childhood in Berlin at the turn of the twentieth century), can lead to the production of a more impersonal and replicable theory. Perhaps inspired by Proust and the little sonata of Vinteuil, which works for the character Swann as a mnemotechnic cue, he writes:

> The *déjà vu* effect has often been described. But I wonder whether the term is actually well chosen, and whether the metaphor appropriate to the process would not be far better taken from the realm of acoustics. One ought to speak of events that reach us like an echo awakened by a call, a sound that seems to have been heard somewhere in the darkness of past life. Accordingly, if we are not mistaken, the shock with which moments enter consciousness as if already lived usually strikes us in the form of a sound. It is a word, tapping, or a rustling that is endowed with the magic power to transport us into the cool tomb of long ago, from the vault of which the present seems to return only as an echo. (1979: 345)

This passage or fragment is a monad which, in keeping with Benjamin's aphoristic style, contains a broader theory of history and memory which are both seen as utterly alive in the present. Then the relationship between the past and the present is an artificial one, as Benjamin considers the past not as a part or consequence of the present but rather as an anticipation of the present. This thought profoundly informs his conception of culture: for example he wrote, in *The Arcades Project*, that 'every epoch dreams its successor' (cited in Leslie 2007: 158). It also seems to imply that modernity is not new but always already contained in the past, as a sign.

The archive and the monument

Ghost Box as an imagined archive

If the archive is strictly defined as a static means of storing and retrieving information from the past, one may wonder to which extent Ghost Box is an effective archive of sounds. For there to be an archive there needs to be a place, possibly protected, at least definite and finished. There also needs to be a clear referencing system or traceability of the sounds or of the samples. Sterne sees similarities between official archives (such as the Archive of American Folk Song, established by the Library of Congress in 1928) and 'the musicians who use turntables and samplers to construct a musical present from the twentieth century's vast archive of recorded music' (2003: 350). And yet, most often the sources for Ghost Box are obscure, and, most importantly, frequently unclassified, unreferenced and irretrievable. The samples, though strongly evocative, are also vague, providing a persistent yet unformed memory or, perhaps, a totally unrecognizable moment of the recorded past (as seen in Reynolds's description of Belbury Poly's 'Caermon'; 2006a: 31).

As such, the record label might be best described as an encounter between the archive and the imagination – or as an imagined archive, where the artefacts, rather than being genuine documents, appear as falsified, and ever-changing or 'ever-practised', testimonies: in this case, 'the act of remembering and forgetting are performed by material practices, not imprinted in material objects' (Jones 2007: 40-41). As Ghost Box artists endlessly borrow and interpret the library of recorded sound without explicitly consecrating or conserving it, they do not show or display the past, but their own artistic engagement with it. When the work of the label may be defined as nostalgic or passéist, it is useful to think of Svetlana Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia (Boym 2001: XVIII). For Boym, restorative nostalgia indicates a striving to return to a perfectly reconstructed past; whilst reflective or critical nostalgia indicates a perception of the past as finished but likely to be restaged and replayed, albeit in a present and different way. Through the production, release and dissemination of new sound artefacts, the Ghost Box label adds to the pre-existing material culture of music. However, it does so in a critical way, as specific fragments and eras from the archive of recorded sound are selected; the label founders make use of 'the signs of historical time – patina, ruins, cracks, imperfection' (Boym 2001: 45; see the earlier discussion on samples and white noise). The approach adopted by the Ghost Box label can be contrasted to that of reissuing record labels (as examined in Chapter 3), which seek to

restore the original, 'pristine' sound of given recordings, expunging them from signs of wear and aging (thus aligning themselves with Boym's notion of restorative nostalgia).

Writing about the revival of space-age pop, Taylor notably sees a rupture between the non-musician collectors and the collectors who are also musicians; whilst the former seek to locate and preserve an 'accurate' version of the past in the music they collect, the musicians tend to 'bring back the sounds, the styles, the instruments, graphics, modes of presentation in liner notes' (Taylor 2001: 107) in a creative and personal configuration. One may see the works realised by the Ghost Box musicians as an archaeology or as the process of exploring, revisiting and rearranging, through new forms of phonographic display, the past. More than a strict or hard archaeology, which would be associated with a carefully-informed and conformist display of the past (such as it can exist in frozen cultural archives), it is indeed a more active process which is at work in the record label. Such a form of archaeology could be referred to as an archive of the possible. For instance, through the inclusion of surface noise or the accidental grain of history, the artists try to seize the past in a multitude of unfinished, mobile and eminently present, versions. They operate on a complex archaeological level, in the sense which Foucault gave to the word in *The Order of Things*, a work where 'In attempting to uncover the deepest strata of Western culture, [he is] restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws; and it is the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet' (2002: xxvi).

Besides, the process of collage signifies a reinvention of the past object, as every artefact made 'from' the past can be approached as a facet or a comment on the past. Not only the contradictions and possibilities of the past are revealed and revived, but also new, present layers and levels of understanding are added to it (in the form for instance of digital signals). In such a case, time is considered as a spatial, materialised category. In the words of Bachelard, 'The finest specimens of fossilized duration concretized as a result of a long sojourn are to be found in and through space' (1994: 9). Bachelard is concerned with places of memory and considers memory as motionless, that is to say situated and anchored in a destroyed duration, never to be relived. However, Bachelard assumes the persistence of memories in the form of objects and of tales associated with such objects. The tale implicitly inscribes the object in a new duration, namely that of the story-telling. It is in this light that we may understand De Certeau's assumption that 'memory is a sort of antimuseum; it is not localizable' (quoted in Boym 2001: 80). Memory is thus related to the ever-changing moment of

remembering or story-telling; it 'resides in moving, traversing, cutting through place, taking detours' (Boym 2001: 80). Again the example of white noise illustrates this movement; in being displaced from one medium to another the past becomes alive and retold, but through the narrative and technological structures of present times. If the past may possibly be seen as a territory, it is likely to be revisited, explored and, most of all, apprehended in a limitless number of routes or combinations. Bachelard metaphorically speaks of the past as a house, which shelters a multitude of superimposed houses in the forms of narratives or tales, influenced by past, present and future times (1994: 6). By analogy, a piece of music is a multi-layered space where what is unwritten and silent (and exists only, for individual listeners, in the fluid form of spontaneous reminiscences and associations) may matter as much as what is written, audible and manifested.

In keeping with this prospect, Ghost Box artists incorporate the past materiality and matter of sound into their works. Surface noise, which is accidental, becomes a topical and characteristic sound. What was primarily thought of as an anti-musical occurrence becomes an element of music; what was disturbing the coherence of the music becomes a new place or characteristic of it. Therefore, the imagination of the past is operated on another level, for not only the 'material' of the past is being reflected upon but also the mediation of the past. In other words, the label is less an archive of past material than an archive of the technologies which allowed the material and sound to be transmitted to contemporary listeners. As a result, House and Jupp propose a reflection on the phonographic medium and the history of recorded sound, whilst drawing our attention to the changing status of recorded sound. For example, when soundscapes reminiscent of a television show are created and integrated into a track, what until then had been background or illustrative music *becomes* music, which can be listened to independently from its visual accompaniment (but is nevertheless haunted by vision), and remediated by means of imagination. Kittler famously, though perhaps erroneously, described technologies of telepresence as responsible for the loss of imagination. He argues that phonography and television may notably have replaced the works of the imagining or dreaming mind with the instantaneous shock of perception. It is quite possible that when a sound is reproduced there is no need to imagine it. A written testimony, on the other hand, prompts its reader to retrieve and restore the content of the book, by means of memory and imagination (or anticipation); but a record does not leave room for imagination, for it gives itself as an instant memory. According to Kittler,

> Once storage media can accommodate optical and acoustic date, human memory capacity is bound to dwindle. Its "liberation" is its end. [...] Once memories and dreams, the dead and ghosts, become technically reproducible, readers and writers no longer need the power of hallucination. Our realm of the dead has withdrawn from the books in which it resided so long. (1999: 10).

Yet, as suggested previously, sound is never neutrally given or received: what is listened to is also actively processed and interpreted.

Ghost Box as a monument

We have argued that Ghost Box constitutes an open and imaginary archive; however, imagination may paradoxically be a way of closing the archive for it leads to the creation of a strong thematic, aural and visual environment. Though diverse in their respective contents, the records of Ghost Box all look alike and bear little difference at first sight. The record label may be perceived as an architectonic wholeness, that is to say a *synthesis* of recordings, images, and words which are meant to form a coherent whole or world (a parallel can be drawn here with Sarah Records; see Chapter 1). It is important to notice that the founders of the label defend themselves against the fragmentation allegedly induced by postmodernity. In the words of co-founder Jim Jupp, Ghost Box is conceived of as 'not just a record label but an imaginary world' (Jupp cited in Petridis 2009). Sound collage is used to show the possible continuity between the pieces rather than their unbridgeable difference. The possibilities of the past are transformed into a readable account, or a collection of readable accounts. Furthermore, by means of sound reproduction, such accounts are preserved and accessible; the records operate an enclosure of the past which, once it has been neatly delimitated, narrated and *recorded*, also becomes a safe or aestheticised territory. The objects produced by Ghost Box are uniform and standardised. Recorded sound, as it bounds sound, simultaneously reduces it to a certain soundscape, that is to say to a delimited aural territory: a piece, a record. Recorded sound is organised, both temporally and spatially, and the music object offers a fragment, both a selection and a limitation. For Eisenberg 'a record is a world', and 'every disc is a microcosm, a

twelve-inch or four-and-three-quarter inch world. A shelf of records is a row of possible worlds' (2005: 205). One can read in these words echoes of Bachelard: as we have already proposed, the record might be a miniature or a reduction, whose size allows for an organisation and arrangement of the world to take place, through the ordering of a collection.

The fact that Ghost Box artefacts should be released into the world, and therefore chronologically organised, may be a way to eventually order time and regain a sense of continuity. Each object belongs to a specific series (seven-inch Study Series or Album), identified with strong trademarks (bright, colourful sleeves, complemented by black and white photographs). The visual continuity between the sleeves of the records, each of them designed by Jupp from start to finish, betrays a strong centralisation and will to organise, rather than simply acknowledge, the diversity of aural and visual memories. Through the organisation of memories, the formerly heterogeneous material can become a text and a story. Agacinski, drawing on Aristotle and Ricoeur, insists that all history is a composition, that is to say a collection and assemblage of given traces (2000: 60). It follows that a collection of records can be addressed as a coherent assemblage, if only because each record is defined by its belonging to the same, unique collection. There is a Ghost Box 'style' or 'brand'. In addition to this, the Ghost Box collection is deeply ideological, in the etymological sense of the word (one of the meanings of the Ancient Greek word *eidos* is 'image'). Ideology, which can be understood as a totally organised *vision*, is always already linked with an end or a *telos*. The Ghost Box label can be seen as a monument.

In its broader sense, a monument is that which stands and remembers, representing a situated, material embodiment of memory. The notion of the monument 'in our postmodern times' is problematic as, according to Huyssen, it 'has migrated from the real into the image, from the material into the immaterial, and ultimately into the digitized computer bank' (2003: 47). In the case of Ghost Box, the monument is not achieved through music but through the visual culture (or iconography) of music. The territory of Ghost Box is first and foremost that of the icon, both tangible and immaterial. As such, the image of Ghost Box, and its dissemination, increasingly occurs through the internet (one may give the example of Jupp's retro-looking Belbury Poly Parish Magazine, published exclusively online). It is interesting to notice that the image of Ghost Box circulates through intangible music blogs and online articles, for it may suggest that Ghost Box indicates simultaneously the *monument* and its impossibility

(the internet, as a visual and fluid space, may only offer 'liquid' monuments). It can be argued that what circulates digitally is actually the intangible aura ('light' in Hebrew) of the record label and its releases, what Boym calls, after Benjamin, 'an experience of distance, a mist of nostalgia that does not allow for possession of the object of desire' (2001: 45). It follows that the image of the record is intangible, though the music object may be rematerialized and remediated through digital means (see Chapter 4). Therefore, if there is a construction or an architecture, it is an invisible, impalpable one: the monument becomes a dream of the monument, realised in the form of a virtual construction. Parallel to the production and release of the music object into the material world is the dissemination of its image in digital space. Ultimately, Ghost Box may appear as an invisible or clandestine record label, whose estrangement from the record industry is best illustrated by a small yet unmistakeable sign: none of the artefacts bear any barcode. Ghost Box records may belong to a larger continuum of invisible or 'disappearing' culture. The record label has been created at a critical time in the history of recorded sound – a time marked by the general collapse of the record market and of independent record shops (as shown by the 2011 documentary *Sound It Out*, surveying the last surviving independent record shop in Stokton-on-Tees, Teeside). The records are for sale, yet sales themselves are processed immaterially through online markets, and money itself, it can be argued, has a spectral aspect to it. Only a few independent record shops store the productions of the label to this date, and one may argue that in the future most transactions will take place through online channels (see Chapter 4).

Between nostalgia and utopia

The utopia is, etymologically, both that which is nowhere (the non-place or ou-topia) and that which is a better place (the eu-topia). As such, it generally expresses, in a more or less elaborated manner, the hopes for a better future. In a more subtle argument, Stewart considers nostalgia (longing for the past) as related to utopia in the sense that nostalgia may denote a utopia in the past (the belief that the past was a better place, and may be resurrected to release its myriad possibilities or futures). She writes:

> Nostalgia […] is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack. Hostile to history and its invisible origins, and yet longing

for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin, nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future-past, a past which has only ideological reality. This point of desire which the nostalgic seeks is in fact the absence that is the very generating mechanism of desires… nostalgia is the desire for desire. (Stewart 2003: 23)

Through recording and playback technologies, which allow for the musical past to be stored and potentially revisited, one may argue that recorded music always already contains elements of nostalgia (or, at least, carries with itself the possibility of nostalgia). In effect, quite simply, the moment a musical event is captured and objectified also coincides with the moment when such an event has gone. As years and decades elapse, we may assume that the surviving recorded object becomes further and further divorced from its point of origin, and can thus be partially understood as a residual 'sound photograph' from the past, whose lingering presence may provoke feelings of longing or wonder for the past. The material presence of the sound photograph may inspire (or impose) nostalgic sentiments, but it may also inspire more dynamic and creative strategies of appropriation, whereby the material of the past is placed into a vision of the future. However, this vision never existed in the past, and only exists in the present as a fantasised construction, or a science-fiction. In *Sonata For Jukebox*, an autobiography riddled with musical reminiscences, O'Brien underlines the utopian nature of memories:

The age of recording is necessarily an age of nostalgia – when was the past so hauntingly accessible? – but its bitterest insight is the incapacity of even the most perfectly captured sound to restore the moment of its first inscribing. That world is no longer there. On closer listening, it probably never was […]. (2004: 16)

It may be argued that the Ghost Box label establishes a narrative of the past as a utopia or imaginary, ever-shifting place and simultaneously offers, through the medium of music objects, access to such a place. Music itself can be compared to an 'imaginative means of transportation' where listeners 'occupy all frames of reference, shifting into and out of all the delegated personae that the storyteller offers. Through fiction, *ego, hic, nunc* may be shifted, may become other personae, in other places, at

other times' (Latour 19994: 40). As noted by the Canadian film artist Douglas, whose work notably incorporates archive footage, 'obsolete forms of communication become an index of an understanding of the world' and that using these forms is a means to 'address moments when history could have gone one way or another. We live in the residue of such moments, and for better or worse their potential is not yet spent' (quoted in Foster 2002: 140). Because of its reliance on mediation and narrative devices, we can see the label as a battle against *topos*, that is to say against situated memories or common (mnemonic) places. Through their compositions, the sound artists resist the idea of the past as a finished and frozen place and embrace it as an endless movement and moment, offering a reflection on mediation and travel, as well as on the way technology simultaneously remembers and forgets, saves and destroys, locates and displaces. The label offers at the same time a reflection on various media or writings.

At another level, the record label in its entirety may be considered as a utopia or non-place. In the previous section, we have explored the idea of Ghost Box as a monument or monumentalizing attempt, whilst acknowledging the fact that, because of its semi-clandestine character, the record label belongs to 'the catacombs of visible culture', the terms in which Debord described the Situationists in 'The Adventure', a key text of Situationist literature (1960: 60). However, contrary to the Situationists, I do not believe that the Ghost Box founders deliberately seek to occupy a subcultural or marginal position. In fact, their position of relative invisibility might be linked to the fact that their concerns are anachronistic and perhaps at odds with those of the contemporary and overarching themes of retro-consumption and revival (Reynolds 2011). Whilst musical revivals can be defined in terms of circular return (in the form of exact re-releases for instance, see Chapter 3), the Ghost Box label recycles but does not repeat the past. Despite its relative discretion, it is important to notice that Ghost Box is part of a loose, secret network of contemporary independent record labels such as Café Kaput (founded by The Advisory Circle's Jon Brooks), Oggum Records (UK), Old English Spelling Bee (New York, USA) or Ghostly (Ann Arbor, USA). The record label is also to be linked to the activities of English Heretic, an officious organisation which parodies the National Trust (Reynolds 2006a), releases music and focuses on supposedly 'haunted' British sites.

The systematic intertextuality and self-referentiality at work in Ghost Box is suggestive of a strong historical consciousness. In her 1967 essay '"Thinking about oneself": reflections on Cioran' (Sontag 1969), Susan Sontag anxiously commented

upon the increased 'embrace of consciousness', or 'historicizing' which, she argued, prevented men from understanding the times in which they lived. She commented that 'more and more, the shrewdest thinkers and artists are precocious archaeologists of these ruins in-the-making' (1969: 75), or 'ruins of history'. For her, there is one point when 'history usurped nature as the decisive fragment for human experience' and when 'man began to think historically about his experience' (1969: 76). The Ghost Box label can be regarded as a comment upon the history of recorded sound and a making use of its ruins. And yet the historical consciousness, that is to say the acute, perhaps anxious, knowledge of belonging to a certain time and certain place in history, is simultaneously accompanied by a parody or subversion of history. It follows that the Ghost Box label presents a playful myth of the past rather than an attentive analysis or critique. Because of its fragmentary nature, sound is apt to conjure up the Benjaminian 'flashing image' of the past, but such an image is given outside of discourse and outside of context as it were. It generates a new self-referential discourse and feeds into the myth of Ghost Box records. Indeed, it can be argued that the monumentalising aspiration is seconded by a process of falsification and of mystification, whereby the past is reduced and abstracted. Spivak, in her 'Essay in Reading the Archives', warns us against 'enthusiastic and uncritical 'archivism'' (Spivak 1985/99: 165), and aligns herself with La Capra's view that

> when it is fetichized, the archive is more than a repository of traces of the past which may be used in its inferential reconstruction. It is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the thing itself – an experience that is always open to question when one deals with writing and other inscriptions. (cited by Spivak 1985/99: 165)

We have already questioned the authenticity of Ghost Box's relationship to the past and shown that the loose archive assembled by the record label might bear little or no connection with the past; it seeks to create a fiction rather than document 'seriously' and exhaustively the popular history of Great Britain in the twentieth century. In other words, the apparent historical consciousness is twinned with historical oblivion (in the form of utopia). This oblivion may be perceived, in turn, as an escape attempt or a way out of history, expressed in an uncritical glorification of the modern past. In 1985, Wright set out to examine the nature and status of 'the national past in contemporary

Britain'. His study, written in a very precise socio-historical context and moment (Thatcherism), is still relevant to our understanding of Great Britain today. Wright's most noticeable achievement is his reading of the nation as haunted by the very recent past and its cultural forms (an argument resonating both with Huyssen's observation that 'since the 1980s […] the focus has shifted from present futures to present pasts' [Huyssen 2003: 11] and the writings of Raphael Samuel). For Wright, 'the national past is above all a modern past and, as the events of recent years have indicated very clearly, it is defined not just in relation to the general disappointment of earlier historical expectation, but also and more pointedly around the leading tensions of the contemporary political situation' (1985: 2). He further notes that 'the modern past often has that idealised air of the golden age: it is formed according to the well-developed perspective of a romantic orientation which responds to modernity by asserting that the true potentialities of human development must be seen in the light of traditional [...] and deeply settled communities that have already been destroyed' (1985: 21). The past is idealised only to the extent that the present is disappointing, and the recent past is attractive because it is (more or less correctly) remembered. Scattered across the different releases of the Ghost Box label one can find allusions to the recent, 'modern' past, with thematic emphases on phonography, science fiction, folk tales, and television shows from the 1970s. One can read every name or listen to every sound as a sign or an echo that is to say a clue. For example, the name Belbury Poly refers to CS Lewis's novel *That Hideous Strength* (1945) where Belbury is a fictional English town, and Poly was added because 'the Polytechnics represent to [Jim Jupp] the notion of a bolder, more democratic and socialist education system rooted in an idealised pre-punk era' (Jupp, quoted in Reynolds 2006b). The different sources of inspiration for the label are disparate, though all spring from the same strongly utopian soil. Levitas notices that 'utopia refers not simply to a past state, but to the past as immanent in the present' (2010: 218). The utopian discourse can thus be seen as dynamically articulating a critique of the present through a longing for a previous (personal) golden age. In the case of the Ghost Box label, such a golden age can be broadly situated in the 1970s; Ghost Box's imaginary world is linked to a lived, albeit lost, world: that of the childhood of its founders (who both grew up in the 1970s). Wright posits that 'one perceives and seeks to manipulate the world into which one is born in a perspective which takes oneself as its origin' (1985: 9). In other words, no u-topia is made or dreamt from 'nowhere'. One does not mourn the general, imprecise totality of the past

but particular moments of the past, and it may be argued that one characteristic of nostalgia is to move along those who experience it. The Ghost Box founders, longing for the 1970s, may partially represent or embody the nostalgic sentiments of a given generation, though each different generation may be looking back on different eras. The music of Belbury Poly, for all its naïve, upbeat aspects, is not addressed to contemporary British children but to grown-ups. It may 'speak' only to those who are old enough to remember, and possibly embellish, the scapes of their formative years. Writing about the jazz scenes of the 1950s in a special 'Nostalgia number' of the British weekly *Punch* magazine (dated 21/12/1977-03/01/1978), journalist Miles Kington asserts that:

> We are not nostalgic about music for its own sake […] but about its associations. […] Nostalgia, in fact, is nothing to do with the quality of the thing remembered (or only incidentally) and everything to do with the quality of the way it is remembered. It is by now a cliche that people remember things that happened in their youth better than what happened yesterday, and it is only a simple step from there to conclude that people are more attached to the music of their formative period than any other. (1977: 1221)

Kington's contribution is one amongst many, and the lingering existence of the magazine (which has now become in turn a trace of the cultural past) indicates that concerns with nostalgia might not be the exclusive trademark of hyper-contemporary discourses. The different contributions spread across the magazine allows us to revisit some British-based nostalgic visions and constructions of the past, including forms of 'auditory nostalgia' (Bijsterveld and van Dijck 2009: 18). However, as previously suggested, nostalgia is not so much a state of helpless longing than a manner of critically engaging with the present. Simon Reynolds wrote that the record label '[flashes] back to a bygone England' (Reynolds 2005), depicting Ghost Box as an art and craft venture existing autonomously from mainstream distribution channels, and feeding on the indefatigable energy of its two 'inventors'. Yet, if the use of lost crafts and obsolete resources (vinyl records for instance) may indeed suggest that 'life was better in the past', perhaps it also indicates that the past can be used to make today's life better. In a context of increased dematerialisation, where tangible objects and the forms of sociability they enable are challenged or even erased, the emphasis on material

artefacts can be seen as a way of 'refurnishing' the digital age with the vitality or 'vibrant matter' of things (Bennett 2010). For Bennett, the vibrant world of objects is never passive, but has a power to inform the poetics as well as the praxis of the everyday. Different types of objects render possible (more or less directly) varying 'versions' of the everyday and of the self in the everyday; the choice of artefacts which surround individuals, and with which individuals more or less freely chose to surround themselves and to consume, also impacts upon their mood, their behaviour and their actions (Julien and Warnier 1999; Jones 2007: 19). For instance, it could be argued that no strict equivalence can be drawn between digital and tangible music objects, inasmuch as digital music objects enable and encourage ranges of practices which can confirm, but most often deviate from, practices enabled by tangible music objects. The consumption of certain artefacts can be indicative of specific visions or conceptions of the world, but artefacts do not necessarily disappear in the consumptive practice: rather, their presence lingers, constituting and impacting on everyday frames of existence. Bennett even tentatively suggests that 'moments of sensuous enchantment with the everyday world – with nature but also with commodities and other cultural products – might augment the motivational energy needed to move selves from the endorsement of ethical principles to the actual practice of ethical behaviors' (2012: xi).

'Present past'

In this last section, whose title is adapted from Andreas Huyssen's *Present Pasts* (2003), I would like to reiterate the idea that the Ghost Box label, although it points to a past, pre-digital cultural age, may only be theorised for and from the present. This is for two main reasons. First, the Ghost Box artefacts are accessible today (they did not exist beforehand). Secondly, the existence of Ghost Box is conditioned by the contemporary context of musical abundance and of advanced technical means which allow for the physical, critical and intellectual manipulation of such a vast archive of recordings. Ghost Box Records, a contemporary record label, offers situated and subjective visions of the past. By deciphering such visions, one may be given access to the anxieties characterising a given present rather than an insight into the past. It follows that the cultural form (here, the artefacts produced by the record label) can be simultaneously considered as a sedimented sign of time. The vinyl record for instance may indicate a Luddite resistance to digitisation whilst being paradoxically revived by digital markets

and platforms, which accelerate its dissemination and its recycling, as well as disseminating knowledge about them (see Chapter 4). The vinyl record is thereby simultaneously a sign of the past and of the present; as it contains various layers of cultural meaning, it mainly represents the entwinement of past and present cultural ages. The vinyl record today has different cultural and emotional charges than it had in the 1970s (when it was the most common music format). It also has different implications and connections with popular culture. Yet, the vinyl formal still impacts on contemporary popular culture and still means something to contemporary audiences, even (or perhaps especially) to those who reject it as an obsolete medium. The vinyl record is recognized as a cultural landmark, and inhabits the active category of things remembered rather than the confusing realm of 'things we cannot name, could not use and cannot make sense of; very new things, very old things or things that come from other cultures' (Dant 1999: 153). Though the vinyl record can be perceived as an archaic icon or a symbol of past everyday scapes, it has not lost its relevance: it still functions in language as a memory, existing in the 'reserve' of the cultural past, where it can still be regularly or ritually accessed. For Osborne, drawing on Benjamin:

> the after-life of the object in remembrance has a quite different ontological significance from that conveyed by the idea of repetition, since the after is precisely *not* the 'again'. Rather, the 'after' is constitutive of the ontology of the object in a way which reduces the 'again' to an *illusion* of retrospection. […] The 'after' of the afterlife marks a temporal difference across which the object must be produced anew in the present, through the destruction of the illusion of its continuity with the past; on the basis of the present itself. (Osborne 1995: 179)

The cultural form can be embraced as a sign of history; yet as long as it is embraced, used or theorised, the cultural form changes: it becomes (or remains) an unstable sign of history. Haunting indicates less the return or recurrence of history than the ever-shifting appearance of the return. In other words, the afterlife of the cultural form is part of its life or 'constitutive of the object' (Osborne 1995: 179) and cannot be easily controlled.

The cultural form is predominantly (but not always) a cultural product or a commodity. For Adorno, 'commodification equals forgetting' (cited in Huyssen 2003:

21) and the commodification or 'industrialisation of memory' (Stiegler 2009) is a sure sign of historical loss. For Huyssen (2003), building on Adorno's remark, the consumption of the past may lead to the total disappearance of the past in the present, as the past is made entirely present. Most of all, such a consumption leads to the erosion and flattening of historical memory. These concerns resonate with those articulated by Reynolds in *Retromania* (2011), a book surveying the weight of the cultural past in contemporary creative practices. Reynolds expresses the fear of 'running out of past', as if the past could be considered as a limited set or repertoire of music objects which, once consumed, would entirely disappear. But the reasoning which might be applied to perishable or non-renewable reserves (which effectively disappear after being consumed) does not easily sit with cultural objects. The type of ecology they entail is different, as cultural objects do not 'disappear' after they are consumed – rather, their status is intimately linked to repeated, everyday use and, most of all, mediation. The cultural past cannot be forcefully and fully integrated into the present without being mediated or *narrated*. Commodification itself is a form of narration, where the product from the past is renewed and redeemed, notably to answer the needs of the present. Against the argument that the commodification of memory signifies its demise, it may be argued that to consume is also to transform or recycle memory, and that the recycling process cannot be exhausted (see Neville and Villeneuve 2002). Memory cannot be seen as an exact replication of the past, but as its inevitable deformation. With the example of the Ghost Box label, it has been shown that the past can be mediated and restored in all its ambiguity and instability. As such, even though the founders claim they are making an 'imaginary world', the label cannot be fully, or only, assimilated to a petrified myth. The myth, because it is self-referential and self-sufficient, formalises, reifies and ultimately excludes time: it is the place where 'the passing of time takes shape; its ceaseless passing is fixed in an exemplary place of showing and revealing' (Nancy 1991: 45). The Ghost Box label does not produce a myth but a reflection on the continuous flow of time. Though it could be argued that the recorded object is a suspended, timeless moment of 'showing and revealing', with a delimited visual and tactile materiality, the recorded object is also likely to decay, as time exists outside as well as inside music objects. Accordingly, as previously suggested, the content of the artefact results from the assemblage of diverse temporalities, and as such is not stable.

In *Design And Crimes (and Other Diatribes)* (2002), Hal Foster gives a survey of design (and art in general) in the twentieth and early twenty-first century. He

particularly examines the relationship of contemporary art to technologies and to time, insisting that it can be perceived as a form of 'living-on', which he describes as 'traumatic', 'spectral, 'nonsynchronous' and 'incongruent' (Foster 2002: 130). On a basic level, Foster argues that every art form, even avant-garde, is to be defined in relationship to a chronological continuum or to a tradition (a thought which informs, at varying levels, the critical writings of Baudelaire, Malraux, Harold Bloom and Walter Benjamin). In other words, art projects are not entirely new but represent the sites and stages of a return, or of a haunting. The 'living-on' suggests impossible closure; it is 'traumatic' and 'nonsynchronous' to the extent that it allows no control over the past or the future. To 'live-on' is to be constantly torn between, and deformed, by retrospection and anticipation. Ghost Box is an unarguable case of 'living-on'. It is made of past moments and textures, but it actualises and changes those moments as soon as it recalls or narrates them. Edison's ghost box was initially dreamt of as a means to connect the living with the dead, shattering time and space. The aims of the contemporary Ghost Box label are more modest, yet in its own way and within its own means the record label releases memory or memories, as if to show that not only 'every epoch dreams its successor' (Benjamin quoted in Leslie 2007: 158) but also that *every epoch dreams its predecessor.*

Concluding remarks

With Ghost Box, the past comes back to haunt the listener through various channels, various forms (notably visual) and various materialities. Ghost Box, a heteroclite and multimedia venture, may illustrate the multiple forms of memory (auditory, visual, tactile), whilst imitating its dynamic, unpredictable structure. The past is literally re-mediated and re-presented, in a fashion which is both repetitive and codified (subscribing to the aesthetics of a genre, hauntology), atypical and a-topical (the past is without a place; it solely resides in a record catalogue). What is re-mediated might also be redeemed, that is to say salvaged from oblivion: this music, made of reminiscences, comes to signify a fiction of the past. This fiction can itself be understood as a critical or sub-versive reading of the past – sub-versive to the extent that it suggests that the past is a *changing* country (to paraphrase L.P. Hartley): as such, the nostalgia for this country can accordingly take multiple shapes. In the end, the work of interpretation is left to the listener, rather than imposed upon him or her: it requires an individual, emotional

engagement with the material. Through music, the inescapability of the past and the ways in which it corrodes the present is affirmed, but also conversely the ways in which the past is corroded or liquidated by the present.

On one level, the example of Ghost Box Records has enabled us to approach the material culture of the past as that which physically and palpably inhabits the present. On another level, the phantoms ceaselessly carried by recorded sound have been seen as inseparable from recording technology, and records have been articulated as open places of haunting, inhabited by voices and aural fragments from the past. If recording technology and phonography (as a strategy of telepresence) effectively store 'ghosts' and allow for their potential return or repetition, we have insisted that it is only in the (unstable, subjective present) experience of listening that ghosts may be mediated back into life. A conception of the music object as a mediating or communicating object has helped us understand how the music object can connect various spatiotemporal sites as well as fashion or retro-fashion fantasised visions of the past. As such, the Ghost Box label has been conceived of as a 'laboratory' of the past, where a vast repertoire of aural, visual and tactile elements is mixed and endlessly reassembled. Central to our understanding of the Ghost Box label is the idea that, although the music object of the past can be accessed and 'rematerialised' (but also shattered) in a new cultural object, what the new cultural object reveals is a situated and mostly utopian vision of the past which, as it momentarily answers the needs of the present age and potentially reifies its hopes and anxieties, is itself likely to be shattered and refashioned in the future.

Chapter 3. Collecting and Reissuing the Recorded Past: Finders Keepers (2004-) and Reissue Record Labels

A more generous definition of the historical profession might […] include that great army of collectors who […] have so often anticipated the directions which scholarship was later to take. (Samuel 1994: 19)

What is it about that childhood discovery of the parents' record collection? Of sneaking around in a musty back cupboard, piles of multicolored paper sleeves stacked this way and that […]. I find one paper sleeve, all white, how curious! Inside it a large black plastic disc, with nodes—concentric rings inscribed onto its surface. At the center of the black disc, a circular label with green-apple icon. The form of the object I hold in my hands seems indicative of its mode of playback, and there have been times when I have observed my parents playing these discs before. I check over my shoulder—all quiet, nobody else seems to be around. So I take the record out of its sleeve, carefully set the disc's center hole through the pin, and line up the player needle to the outer grooves of the black disc. I press the play button, and watch the record begin to spin—slowly at first, now circling faster until out of the spinning grooves in the plastic come singing voices direct and immediate, filling the living room with sound. The voices that emanate from the disc are gnarly and harmonizing, accompanied by jangling guitars and loping drums. The songs seem at once familiar and far away. Small dents in the grooves produce periodic incursions of rasp and jitter:

> I can hear the grain of the voice, and the grain of the
> material itself, the LP record. (Young 2006: 82)

Introduction

Aims and chapter outline

In 'Unpacking my Library – A talk about Book Collecting', an essay originally published in 1931, Walter Benjamin uncovers the mechanisms of collecting (1973: 59-68). He extensively draws from his own experience as a passionate book collector. Yet he carefully explains that his intention is not to lead his readers through the labyrinth of his own collection or recollections – an enterprise which he deems too self-centred and personal, and thus too incommunicable, to be exposed. Rather, he attempts to uncover the more general forces and motives which led him to collect, and shows how collecting combines elements of space and of time, where each book of the collection corresponds to a special memory-vignette or biographical moment (referring for example to a certain journey, a certain city, a certain year). Through the collection of books, which form a materialised story of his life, Benjamin is able to reflect back on himself. The collection of objects performs his memory (it is a 'form of practical memory', Benjamin 1999: 204) whilst indicating at the same time the more impersonal past of remote places and times. In the same fashion, tangible music objects may help constitute a narrative of the past and of the self in the past, where 'music, like souvenirs and collected objects, serves as 'a personal time calendar'' (Martin 1999: 115). Young (2006), describing records in an intimate and engaged manner, interweaves the description of the real, solid music object with immaterial flashes of personal memories. Through the act of writing, she is trying to resurrect a ritual, childhood scene – that of listening secretly to her parents' record collection. The records that Young evoke function as 'souvenirs' or 'sound souvenirs' (to borrow the title of Bijsterveld and van Dijck's edited essays [2009]), where souvenirs can be understood, in the words of Stewart, as 'the '"second-hand" experience[s] of [their] possessors/owner'' (1993: 135).

The aim of this chapter is to critically engage with contemporary practices of collecting, recollecting and reissuing music objects. Starting from the premises that practices of collecting and reissuing are means of remediating and recycling past material cultures of music (as well as, more broadly, allowing for a possible revision of the cultural past), the chapter attends to a set of core questions: What is the role of the collector/vinyl archaeologist in the preservation and transmission of recorded musical cultures? Complementarily, how do reissue record labels relate to a historically and geographically situated 'culture of the trace' (Nora 1989)? How do reissue record labels allow for the recorded past to be rearticulated? All of these questions derive from the initial proposition that some collectors, because of their intense and critical engagement with cultural objects from the past, can be perceived as historians or popular historians (as proposed by Benjamin 1973; Samuel 1994; Martin 1999; Martin and Pearce 2002); the questions outlined above also find their basis in the assumption that the material persistence of the music object can enable – for those who can effectively access it – a cultural archaeology, which takes place in the physical world (the collector is conversely a traveller) and increasingly so in the digital realm (see Chapter 4). On the one hand, innumerable leftovers of the (commodified) aural past may slowly sink into oblivion; on the other hand, they may be granted a revised status and new auratic presence, if and when they benefit from a collector's gesture of redemption (Benjamin 1973).

Throughout the chapter, a number of semi-commercial, independent reissue record labels from the second half of the twentieth century are examined. The main focus is on the British reissue record label Finders Keepers (2004-), which owes its existence to three music enthusiasts and vinyl archaeologists: Andy Votel, Doug Shipton and Dom Thomas. The Finders Keepers label can be contrasted with the case of Ghost Box (see Chapter 2) in a productive way, for each of the two record labels proposes a distinct (yet not necessarily incompatible) strategy of engaging with and 'renewing the old world' (Benjamin 1973: 61). If, as proposed by Samuel, the assiduous work of collectors help '[to enlarge] the notion of the historical' (1994: 152), reissuing the material which has been collected may also be a way of rewriting and reworking the recorded past into the present: as cultural objects of the past are 'transplanted' into the contemporary era, the historical is (somewhat crudely) made actual. Whilst the founders of Ghost Box interpret, recreate, and possibly subvert, past recordings and ambiances, Finders Keepers – a label named after a short-lived British

collectors' magazine published in the early 1980s – is engaged in the literal and seemingly unimaginative reissuing of material which has so far remained vastly ignored by Western audiences (mainly because it was not distributed outside of its country of origin or, notably in the case of film soundtracks, was never commercially released). For instance, one of the core genres of the label is Czech New Wave. Between 2006 and 2010, several soundtracks from late 1960s and 1970s Czech films (some of them censored at the time) have been rediscovered and reissued, including *Daisies, Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* and *Saxana The Girl on a Broomstick* (which were released in 1966, 1970 and 1972 respectively). McKenzie, commenting upon the links which tie books to their readers across time, ascertains that 'every society rewrites its past, every reader rewrites its texts and, if they have any continuing life at all, at some point every printer redesigns them' (1999: 25). The same frequently happens with reissued music, which is ceaselessly being reshaped and repackaged (notably every time it is transferred from one media format to the other), in a complementary recycling of both material and memory (Neville and Villeneuve 2002).

As pointed out by Bohlman, the themes of reissuing and collecting irresistibly raise

> a number of issues having to do with mediation: between collector and collected, between those unable to represent themselves and those with the economic and technological capital to do so; between scholars and lay people; between private practice and public display; between humanistic fascination and exotic fantasy. (2001: 27)

Bohlman's first concerns lie with the question of access to and ownership of the recorded past; he is markedly preoccupied with the ways in which Western collectors, replicating their own ideological biases, frame, colonise and even pillage the recorded past (a concern shared with other contemporary ethnomusicologists such as Taylor, Keil and Feld; see Taylor 2001; Keil and Feld 2005). What Bohlman calls 'mediation' can be understood in terms of irrevocable 'tension'. It should be noted that the desire to access and amass recordings of the past may be a cultural trait (the collectors depicted by Benjamin, Samuel, Martin as well as others all live in the Western world): firstly, such a desire is underpinned by economic and techno-cultural capital; secondly, it presupposes a specific relationship to the past and history. The mediation which is examined in the

context of the thesis is the mediation between past and present realms by means of a tangible music object, and its cultural weight and signification. In this chapter, I seek to foster a dialogue between theoretical works on collecting (as carried out by Benjamin, Samuel, Baudrillard, Stewart) and the history of recorded sound (Day, Chanan, Sterne), through the prism of Finders Keepers and other reissue record labels. I especially focus on the collecting and reissuing of marginal or leftover recordings, which met with little success, or publicity, at the time of their release. Throughout the chapter, reissuing is thought of, in close conjunction with collecting, as a way of salvaging and articulating the recorded heritage across time and space, and of exploring it through its vestiges and traces. My analysis is based on the broad notion of collecting as opposed to the specific notion of the collector. Accordingly, I will deliberately provide basic rather than extensive biographical information about the founders of the record labels under study. I will think of the record labels in the context of the recorded world that is situated in the 'politics of time', rather than in the biographical context of their founders.

The chapter is outlined as follows: I start with a description of a specific set of Finders Keepers artefacts, released in the Czech New Wave Series, and situate Finders Keepers in a broader continuum of reissue record labels ('Finders Keepers and reissue record labels'). The next section ('Collecting the past') provides a contextualised and historically-informed approach to collecting practices, with a particular emphasis on record collecting as mnemonic collecting. My analysis then turns to the ways in which the past is alternately constructed as a fetish, an image and a medium ('Vinylphilia: the desire for the past') in the complementary practices of record collecting and reissuing. I especially insist upon the crucial role of naming and labelling, as detained by a reissue record label, as a means to recycle, and possibly reinvent, the recorded past ('Naming, labelling and the creation of desire'). Finally, I return to the long-standing theme of (music-)collecting as map-making (see Clifford 1988: 215-251) and survey some of the connections between geography, collecting and recorded sound. I consider the new, 'marvellous' topography of the recorded past as it is articulated within the collection ('Collecting as imaginary map-making') before offering some concluding remarks

Finders Keepers and reissue record labels

Between 2006 and 2010, the British reissue record label Finders Keepers (2004-) released five soundtracks of 'lost', or little known, Czech New Wave movies (see Figures 17-19 in the Appendix). These films, though different and diverse in plot as well as in form, share common points: all are light, experimental comedies with subtly subversive undertones. Whilst they were not overtly directed against the Communist Government, they ingeniously opposed it by dismissing the standards of Socialist Realist cinema, whose purposes were to celebrate the State. The filmmakers' sources of inspiration included the colourful, iconoclastic aesthetics of Dadaism and Surrealism. *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* is an adaptation of a 1945 novel by Czech surrealist writer Vitezslav Nezval. It comes as no surprise that the New Wave films were frequently censored. *Daisies* was banned until the fall of Communism. It was not until the weakening of the Soviet yoke, and the subsequent democratic transition which begun in 1989, that Czech New Wave movies experienced a wider and better diffusion, thus becoming more familiar to Western European audiences. However the scale of distribution of the films remained relatively limited. If some imported VHS tapes effectively reached small, specialised West-European cinema clubs, one can safely say that these movies were little known and little watched outside of Czechoslovakia. *Valerie and her Week of Wonders* was not released in England or in the United States until 2004. *Daisies* has been available in the United States since 2002 and in the United Kingdom since 2009, whilst *Saxana* was still unreleased in 2012. What remains of these movies is first and foremost their soundtracks. If the soundtracks are known today it is through the enthusiasm and persistence of the collector Andy Votel, one of the three founding members of Finders Keepers (along with Doug Shipton and Dom Thomas).

On listening, the soundtracks are very different from each other, ranging from the classical, and somehow grandiloquent, orchestration of the prolific composer Luboš Fišer (1935-1999) for *Valerie and her Week of Wonders*, to musique concrète pieces, featuring sound effects of typewriters, scissors or clock pendulums as well as extracts borrowed from Western art music (*Daisies*). These disparate sound worlds, however, are not without connections. Divorced from the corresponding images, they reveal their strangeness and otherworldly properties. The *Valerie and her Week of Wonders* soundtrack is especially uncommon. Its delicate, interwoven fabric of harpsichords, dissonant bells and female voices, joining in choirs sung in Latin, seem like a dream vision. The soundtrack casts its quiet, yet irresistible, spell on the listener. The impression of distance and otherness is reinforced by the accompanying artworks. The

iconographic documents, which include stills from the movie, seem to invite the listener into a secret world. The drawing of a daisy on the cover, with blood dripping from its core, is an uncommon image. For a listener unfamiliar with the plot of the movie, it acts as a symbol to a universe yet unknown but already fascinating. The liner notes were written by Finders Keepers co-founder Andy Votel (who describes his first encounter with the movie) and Peter Hames (a film scholar specialised in Czech and Slovak cinema). But what is promoted through the images and, to a lesser extent, the liner notes is not so much the names of the composers as of the record label. The names of the composers do not even appear on the front sleeve. This indirectly evokes the first thirty years of the recording industry when 'the artist – whether performer or sideman, musician, or vocalist – was secondary, at least in terms of packaging, to the company or the founder' (Steffen 2005: 159). Indeed, the emphasis is on Finders Keepers, a British label that advertises itself, amongst other denominations, as 'always Czech' (the term appears in the advertisement in the booklet of *Saxana,* FKR039CD)(see Figure 16 in the Appendix). The adjective 'Czech', however, is not defined or contextualised and functions as a slightly patronising promise of otherness and exoticism. It can be understood as a synecdoche for the notion of Communism. It may even be argued that Czechoslovakia, a former part of the Eastern Bloc – distant in space as well as in time, emotionally and physically remote for most Western Europeans – has now become a somewhat imprecise icon of a past historical era. On a basic level, what this also means is that 'Czech' is being appropriated in a process where 'the question "Whose music?" is submerged, supplanted, and subverted by the assertion "Our/my music"' (Feld 2005: 238). The soundtracks described above, now divorced from their interpreters and from their films, as well as from the places and contexts where they were made, have become self-referential. Although they are reissues, they appear to be new to Western European and North American audiences, for who they may either turn into simple, transient 'items of cultural consumption' (Seabrook 2004: 46) or items of creative consumption, endowed with novel meanings by the 'aural tourists' – to adapt a phrase coined by Taylor (1997: 19) – who discover them. As such, these reissues – aimed at niche audiences of music collectors – may conversely prompt a deeper engagement with the material. The liner notes and diverse paratexts accompanying the releases may notably provide a theoretical or narrative space to begin thinking about a specific music genre, its implications and entanglements with situated socio-historical realities. It is indisputable that the hope of 'reclaiming the local' (and in the case of the Finders

Keepers Czech soundtracks, the local is already, in its original form, a commercial, 'mixed' product) is inexorably tinged with the knowledge that, as it is a commodified cultural product, the 'local' also ceaselessly circulates on a more global scale (Seabrook 2004: 11). The Czech New Wave series is but a small part of the Finders Keepers catalogue of reissues and compilations, which also includes music from Poland, England, France, India or Thailand, amongst others. These reissues are also released in a range of formats such as CDs, vinyl LPs and MP3s.

The label Finders Keepers is a sub-division of London-based Cherry Red Records, a broader British reissue record label founded in 1978. Other similar archival record labels include Magpie Records (founded in 1976), Document Records (founded in 1986), Trunk Records (founded in 1995), Soul Jazz (founded in the early 1990s), Revenant Records (founded in 1996), Dust-To-Digital (founded in 1999), Numero Group (founded in 2003), Sublime Frequencies (founded in 2003), all of which were influenced by a series of earlier reissue record labels such as Folkways (founded in 1948) and Yazoo (founded in 1967). The main difference between contemporary reissue record labels and their predecessors is that most of them now rely exclusively on the collecting of recorded traces rather than field recordings (with the exception of Sublime Frequencies), thus engaging with inanimate objects rather than people.

Collecting the past

An extensive literature on the topic of collecting and collection can be found both in popular and academic literature (see Martin 1999: 12), most saliently in the field of museum studies (Pearce and Martin), material culture (Belk), sociology (Baudrillard), cultural studies (Benjamin, Stewart), ethnography (Clifford), ethnomusicology (Bohlman) and psychology (Muensterberger). Popular music collectors have notably drawn the attention of Juno and Vale (1993), Straw (1997), Taylor (2001) and Katz (2010). The notion of collecting cuts across fields; what is meant by 'collecting' may take on myriad meanings; indeed, what is collected (for a collection is always already a collection of 'something') usually informs the way in which collecting is approached, theorised and constructed, and collecting itself is a situated cultural practice. I see record collecting as a specific type of collecting, which nevertheless shares deep similarities with other types of collecting, a practice which I broadly define, in the

words of Muensterberger, as '*the selecting, gathering and keeping of objects of subjective value*' (Muensterberger 1994: 4). This definition is supported from the etymology of the word collecting, which derives 'from the Latin *colligere* (to select and assemble)' (Baudrillard 1968: 22). However, while it can be defined in simple terms, collecting cannot be considered as a simple, absolute and trans-historical notion: it needs to be thought of as a contextualised practice. As Muensterberger correctly points out in his psychological account on collecting,

> the type and style of selecting and collecting is effectively guided by the prevailing culture pattern, the mood and values of the time. Indeed, many collections in all their diversities are a visible testimony to the substance and standards of the particular era, even though the sentiment of one generation may not simply fade away during the next. (1994: 165)

In this chapter, the emphasis is particularly laid on mnemonic collecting, which Eisenberg refers to as a means of capturing the past whilst 'mak[ing] beauty and pleasure permanent' (cited in Steffen 2005: 40). Collecting thereby appears to be a way of preserving the past, be it an individual and biographical past (the story of one's life) or a more collective one (the history of recorded sound, for example).

As argued by Muensterberg, the passion for collecting – and especially collecting the past – is historically situated. The advent of the Second World War and its aftermath, up until and including the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, decidedly marked the beginning of a more systematic or radical saving and archiving of the cultural past by institutions and individuals. In European countries (especially France, Great-Britain and Germany), this was materialised through the unanimous creation of archives, of museums (including *living museums*) and by vivid discussions on notions of inheritance (Derrida 1994), heritage or *patrimoine* (Nora 1997). Such archival ventures were arguably rendered possible by improved technological tools (mostly computers) and, in the late twentieth century, the internet provided quasi-unlimited supplies of storage space (see Chapter 4), and was partly responsible, along with mass media, for the transformation of memory into information (Stiegler 2009). In Germany, a growing nostalgia for the Eastern Bloc has fed into diverse projects such as the Centre for the Documentation of Everyday Life, or the Open Depot, where everyday artefacts of the GDR are scrupulously gathered and displayed (Scribner 2004). Parallel to the salvage of

material objects from the past, the preservation of intangible musical cultures also became a preoccupation of governmental and supra-governmental institutions. After the Second World War, the UNESCO launched a recording project called the UNESCO World Music Collection, meant to preserve endangered traditional styles of music (Bohlman 2004: 34). The horror of destruction, but also the palpable acceleration and (for certain authors) the 'end' or realisation of history, that is, of capitalism (Virilio 1986; Fukuyama 1989; Augé 1992), may have fostered (or renewed) a need to preserve tangible traces and documents from the past. New expressions such as 'boom in memory' or 'hypertrophy of memory' (Huyssen 2003) were thus coined by cultural theorists and historians to describe the new situation. Pierre Nora notes that 'the 'acceleration of history' impacted heavily on memory. It actually led to:

> a kind of *stockpiling*, bound up with this feeling of loss and responsible for the exaggerated importance now attached to memory and the proliferation of institutions and instruments that relate to it: museums, archives, libraries, collections, digitalized inventories, data-banks, chronologies, and so forth. (Nora 2002: 5)

It is evident however that the need for preserving and archiving human knowledge and cultures predates the Second World War, and the passing on of the past to new generations has long been a crucial trait of human life. Collecting itself is a millenary practice, and Belk (after Neal) reports that 'a collection of interesting pebbles found in an 80,000-year-old cave in France may mark the beginning of collecting' (2001: 2).

The written document is, if not the oldest, one of the most common storage formats. One may also rightfully consider art and monuments, as well as tangible objects and humanised landscapes as ways of archiving time through matter (Jones 2007). As shown in Chapter 2, from the nineteenth century onwards, a range of new 'writing' machines, such as the camera or the phonograph, has permitted the preservation of a mechanical and seemingly 'exact' memory or trace of the past. Sterne underlines that 'from the moment of its public introduction, sound recording was understood to have great possibilities as an archival medium. Its potential to preserve sound indefinitely into the future was immediately grasped by users and publicists alike' (2003: 288). Yet, he furthers points out that 'the first archives existed not for purposes of preserving history or communing with the not yet living; but rather for very

basic commercial purposes: keeping the prototype of a product at hand' (2003: 327); this was the case, for instance, of the Columbia Phonograph Company, whose archive was established in 1890, one year after the foundation of the company and satisfied less the need for a repository of the past than a practical need. The archival instinct as it is now understood effectively emerged more vividly after World War II, so that the post-war culture of archiving and 'industrialisation of memory' (Stiegler 2009) cannot be compared, either in terms of scale, intensity or impact, to the former Victorian culture of preservation.

From the academic song collector to the popular collector: music-collecting in context

Furthering the idea that collecting is a historically situated practice, I will now briefly survey the practice of music-collecting from the eighteenth century onwards, in the face of changing technological and economical tools. This will allow me to situate the Finders Keepers record label within a larger history of 'collectors' of the 'audible past' (Sterne 2003) and to offer reflections on the rise of music objects as objects of consumption.

The early academic 'song collectors' or transcribers of folk songs, such as the American Francis James Child (1825-1896), the German Achim von Arnim (1781-1831) and Clemens Brentano (1778-1842), all devoted themselves to fix an oral tradition by means of notation in order to ensure its conservation and transmission. In doing so, they helped to establish a paradoxically unalterable and authoritative canon. Herder before them had transcribed folk songs from all over the world, which were compiled in two volumes (*Stimmen del Völker in Lieder* and *Volkslieder*, published in 1778 and 1779 respectively). These examples mostly denote a romantic view of music as the universal language of the 'people', and as a means towards mutual enlightenment (Bohlman 2002: 38). With the advent of recording technology, song collectors (including Béla Bartók, Frances Densmore, Louis Pinck or Erich Moritz von Hornbostel) began to use wax-cylinder recorders during their sessions. At this point, the phonographic recording played a role comparable to the written or printed transcriptions of folk songs as in both cases there would be a 'fixation' and stabilisation of the music. The earlier musical recordings were made by the American Jesse Walter Fewkes, who recorded Passamaquoddy Indians in 1890. For Sterne, 'early recordings enthusiasts

praised sound recording for its preservative promise' (2003: 311) and they would use Edison's machine to 'preserve the voices of dying *cultures'* (2003: 311). Dying worlds were therefore immortalised before they disappeared altogether. In this case, recordings (as the written notation of folk songs before them) were done for research and preservation purposes. The phonograph itself was merely a tool or an aid, and mechanical collecting was mainly celebrated by the collector because it allowed him or her to 'note down leisurely and unhurriedly' (Grainger 1908-1909: 149). Milner insists that 'of the few song collectors who had tried making wax recordings in the field, many were so wed to the idea that songs were best preserved on paper that they had simply used the records to help them make musical notations, then shaved the wax so that the cylinder could be reused' (2009: 84). At the turn of the nineteenth century, folk songs were still largely considered as '"literature" rather than sounds' (Milner 2009: 83). Academic collectors, as they privileged 'textual analysis' (Milner 2009: 83), would spend 'more time in libraries than out in the fields' and 'weren't typically interested in making recordings' (Milner 2009: 83). It took collectors such as John Lomax (1867-1948) to realise the potential of Edison cylinders; the phonograph provided possibilities for archiving 'tune and words […] for study by future generations' (Grainger 2008: 150) and wax cylinders were used as primary research documents. As such, the first cylinders produced by ethnomusicologists were generally unique, if only because they were not easily reproduced; popular demand for them was totally inexistent. What would be later termed 'world music' had not yet become an entertainment; recordings were sparse, non-commodified and reserved to specialists.

Sound-reproduction became possible in 1887 with Berliner's invention of the gramophone and the introduction of lacquer discs instead of wax cylinders. This was to change, in the long term, the perception and the diffusion of music. For Young,

> the gramophone's introduction (1887) signifies a moment in which the audio industry became commodified: where, instead of consumers engaging in direct creative practices with the sound technology (as was initially the case), disc records were commercially produced for the new gramophone for the sole purpose of personal consumption and home entertainment. From these conditions emerged a critical new phenomenon that came to characterize the record production/consumption process. (2008: 86)

The introduction of the gramophone was a definitive, historical turning point. It allowed for music to become fixed or reified ('a thing', see Eisenberg 2005; Sterne 2012), that is permanently inscribed in space (though of course, one may argue that music sheets and later player piano rolls were also part of a broader material network of music; see Gitelman 2004). The phonographic inscription of music, that is to say of *real, live music* (music which can be directly heard through sound-reproduction technology; as opposed to sheet music which needs to be read and played) enabled (but did not fully determine) its commodification and increasing popularity, in a context of vivid capitalist ventures where the figure of the consumer was progressively fashioned. As Steffen notices, 'once the 1890s-1900s consumers had made their investment in a phonograph, they wanted – or felt compelled – to own more recordings' (2005: 66). It became superfluous for consumers of recorded sound to know how to play an instrument or go to the concert hall in order to enjoy music. This may explain why one feels entitled to believe that the collector of records was more likely to be an amateur collector who, in the words Belk, can be described as a 'non connoisseur', 'a perfect examplar of consumer culture', or again 'a passionate subjective consumer' (1995: 45). The early song collector and the later record collector are two different figures; if the former had an interest in collecting the knowledge of the world, the latter might have been more inclined to collect the entertaining object, the representation and reproduction of the world, which is simultaneously the emblem of the industry. In 'The Form of the Phonograph Record' (1934), Adorno delivers an unemotional, impersonal description of a record:

> One does not want to accord it any form other than the one it itself exhibits: a black pane made of a composite mass which these days no longer has its honest name any more than automobile fuel is called benzine; fragile like tablets, with a circular label in the middle that still looks most authentic when adorned with a prewar terrier hearkening to his master's voice; at the very center, a little hole that is at times so n arrow that one has to redrill it wider so that the record can be laid upon the platter. It is covered with curves, a delicately scribbled, utterly illegible writing, which here and there forms more plastic figures for reasons that remain obscure to the layman upon listening; structured like a spiral, it ends somewhere in the vicinity of the title label, to which it is

sometimes connected by a lead-out groove so that the needle can comfortably finish its trajectory. In terms of its 'form', this is all that it will reveal. (1990: 56)

But the form of the record is simultaneously *only* a form and *more* than a form; in effect, the record is shaped and 'deformed' by listeners and users, who can lend it, if not magical properties, at least personal meanings, as well as integrate it into private routines. As reminded by Taylor, 'at the moment of its invention, any technological artefact does not yet have a social history or use, even though it was produced in a social setting. That is, the social production of technology is quite different from its subsequent social uses' (Taylor 2001: 15). The perception and reception of phonographic recordings was not to be foreseen by those who devised techniques of sound-reproduction. In Russia for example the phonograph was associated with the new Soviet middle class, 'with their gramophone records, lace curtains, rubber plants, porcelain elephants and portraits of Marx in crimson frames', which were depicted and mocked in the poems of Mayakovsky (Boym 1994: 8-9). One may safely propose that the same mass-produced record is different to different persons and social groups; even a description of a record is bound to vary from one person to another, depending on their degree of involvement with the object. The ambiguity of the music object (which we have underlined in Chapter 2) notably owes to the fact that the record is not a neutral means to music or a simple repository; rather, the recorded object is a mediating object as well as an object through which the self might be mediated. For instance, it may trigger fetishistic behaviours or 'gramomania' (Katz 2010), thus giving way to private interpretations and passions. Feld, a fierce advocator that music is not, cannot and should not be a thing, has nevertheless recognised the power of the material music object. Reflecting upon the status of music objects as cultural forms, he states that 'the physicality and commodity of grooves is related to the experience of grooves' and muses that there may be a 'unity of materiality and pleasure' (Feld 2005: 17).

It is no surprise that collecting, a pre-capitalist practice (Belk 1995: 2), should have been affected and possibly accelerated by the strategic, never-ending apparition of new products and their availability. Drawing from Belk's discussion on the interpenetration and interdependence of collecting and consumer culture, it can be argued that record-collecting is synchronic to the rise of capitalist consumption, a true example of 'collecting in a consumer society' (Belk 1995). He insists that 'it is […]

natural, if not inevitable, that the things we collect and exhibit […] should […] increasingly come from the consumer culture in which we are embedded' (1995: 139). The same idea is supported by Martin (1999) who draws a portrait of the 'popular collector' as an individual whose interest lies in 'obtainable, affordable and appealing' objects and not, as it was previously the case with bourgeois collectors, in 'the rarefied world of antiques or fine arts' (Martin 1999: 1). As such, if no collector exists outside a certain spatio-temporal site, then one can also safely say that the figure of the record collector unarguably, and quite logically, emerged with the increased profusion of records 'to be desired, acquired, savored, and possessed' (Belk 1995: 1). The sudden flow of records might have triggered a record collecting fever, for 'there has to be a more or less continuous flow of objects to collect. It is this flow that helps sustain the collector's captivation' (Muensterberger 1994: 36). In 1904, one million people purchased the recordings Caruso made in Milan (Chanan 1995: 5); he was the first artist to be avidly and massively collected. The figure of Caruso made it obvious that mass consumption was, and still is, determined by 'mass production, mass distribution, and mass communication' (Belk 1995: 15). Steffen similarly notices that 'mass production enabled mass consumption. From sales of about 500,000 records in 1897 [in the USA], numbers skyrocketed to 2.8 million in just two years. Recordings had clearly begun their evolution into a mass-market' (2005: 50). Once objectified, music became a good likely to be exchanged, marketed and increasingly fetishized and fantasised.

It should be emphasised that no music and, for that matter, no manufactured product can be marketed outside of the realm of names and labels. The advent of recorded music implied a precise and systematic classification of music into genres, and specialist or niche labels appeared in the wake of the phonographical industry (Steffen 2005). Reissue record labels are today one of the many illustrations of the hyper-specialisation and fragmentation of music into genres. It is crucial to note that the tag 'reissue' relates less to the type of musical contents released by the label than to its broader agenda (the Finders Keepers label is striking for its apparently indiscriminate reissuing of heteroclite contents). Contemporary reissue culture has roots in the North-American ventures of the 1950s and 1960s outlined earlier in the chapter (with 'ethnic' reissue labels Folkways and Yazoo Records). However, the particular reissue culture of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century is more narrowly connected to hip hop culture. In the 1980s, North-American hip-hop crate-diggers contributed to the rise of the 'popular collector' (Martin 1999). As they trailed second-hand shops and

carboot sales – depositories of unwanted capitalist surplus – diggers were bound to encounter realms of mainstream, mass-produced LP records now fallen out of grace and fashion. They primarily used them as raw material, seeking to create beats out of them. But crate-digging also constitutes a larger binding element in the hip-hop community. As explained by Schloss in his study *Making Beats: the Art of Sample-Based Hip-hop*:

> in addition to its practical value in providing the raw material or sample-based hip-hop, digging serves a number of other purposes such as manifesting ties to hip-hop deejaying tradition, 'paying dues', educating producers about various forms of music, and serving as a form of socialization between producers. (Schloss 2004: 79)

DJs would seek to '[excavate] histories of music from vinyl' (Duckworth 2005: 133). The trajectory of Finders Keepers' crate-digger Andy Votel is particularly relevant here, as Votel's story combines elements of DJ culture and of reissue culture. Where the crate-digger may look to find extraordinary aural gems and grooves in the most ordinary records, the reissue record labels under study in this thesis mainly focus on releasing the rare and the obscure. They act as curators of the vast archive of recorded sound, operating as hyper-specialised, taste-making niches. But the individual crate-digger and the curator share a particular understanding of record collecting as a form of redemption. Ultimately, record-collecting can be understood as constituting a form of subjectivity which is articulated through specific objects, and the reordering and repurposing of cultural waste. Collecting leads to the creation, as will be outlined below, of an eminently personal and idiosyncratic narrative of the self in society (Martin 1999). Such a narrative generally contradicts the capitalist discourse of consumption, where newer cultural products are expected to replace old ones *ad vitam*.

Mnemonic collecting and souvenir-objects

> Epic and rhapsodic in the strictest sense, genuine memory must therefore yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which its findings originate, but also gives an account of the strata which first had to be broken through. (Benjamin 2005: 576)

The most striking quality of collecting may be its lack of fixed quality. Collecting is neither a purely commercial and capitalist activity nor a purely original and subversive one. Collecting varies from one era to another, from one person to another; it is a complex, multi-layered practice. As Bohlman points out, collecting may alternately belong to the realm of research and/or to that of pleasure (2002: 27). Besides, collecting remains different from:

> most other types of consumption because it involves forming what is seen to be a set of things – the collection. In order for these things to be perceived as comprising a set there must be boundaries distinguishing what is and is not appropriate for inclusion in the collection. (Belk 1995: 66).

Ultimately, the decision to include a piece in a collection is made by the collector. He or she thereby concretizes through selected objects a certain discourse or statement. For a record label, the term 'collection' is equivalent to 'catalogue'. In the case of Finders Keepers, the catalogue is made from pre-existing recordings collected by the label founders. As such, the 'new' music objects released on Finders Keepers duplicate the privately-owned and privately-collected records of the label founders. On the one hand, what is amassed is the label owners' interests, and the Finders Keepers catalogue might provide an insight into their selves. On the other hand, it can be argued that the collection ceases to be personal the moment it is made widely available through means of reproduction and distribution, and labelled as a 'Finders Keepers' record. It follows that, every time a Finders Keepers record is collected by an individual, it both enters another collection and another symbolic system, where it is made to signify and represent something different. As Muensterberger points out, 'each single item in a collection usually has a distinct meaning for the owner' (1994: 7). What happens is akin to a dissemination and a fragmentation of an otherwise 'complete' and coherent body of recordings that were subjectively assembled and selected. Every reissued record is likely to participate into the record collections of other individuals, which may prompt us to consider the Finders Keepers collection as personal and collective, compact and fragmented, owned and ownerless. It can be likened metaphorically to a liquid or fluid museum with no fixed emplacement or boundaries, as it gathers recordings across

borders, containing reissues from four of the five continents (Africa, India, Europe, America), and is potentially available worldwide. As suggested, there are at least two levels of collecting discernible in the label: the work of collection achieved by the owners of the label, and the collection of the Finders Keepers artefacts by the individual customers. The Finders Keepers collection may be seen, in turn, as the unique collection of original recordings or the collection of duplicates.

The label's catalogue of reissues corresponds to a specific construction of the recorded past. For Martin, collecting (and one may add to this releasing a collection of music objects) is a form of *writing* or a construction. If it is agreed that 'what constitutes a text is not the presence of linguistic arguments but the act of construction' (McKenzie 1999: 43), then collecting may be considered as a text, while the practice of collecting is the 'writing' of this text. The collection is a collection of objects or signifiers which may form an alternative discourse on the world, informing or altering its perception. Reissue record labels implicitly claim that some recorded material should be retained and retrievable at any given time. As such, reissuing appears to be a way of counteracting transience, disappearance and oblivion. I will argue that reissuing, when it is instigated by private collectors, is perhaps best problematised as a ceaseless reshaping and reinventing, complete with a romantic fetishisation, of the (recorded) past, and particularly of its lesser-known or supposedly marginal, 'marvellous' parts; reissuing is a gesture of revival. In reference to the excavation of discarded musical genres by collectors, Taylor proposes that

> The revival of this music is, in some sense, about consumption, it's about today's listeners not buying, not wanting to buy, what the increasingly consolidated music industry tries to sell them. Perhaps as the industry – all industries – get better at targeting demographic groups and niche marketing, listeners are getting more and more desperate to escape and confound the marketers. The industry tries to locate the cool, then sell it, or it tries to fabricate the cool and then sell it. Exotica/lounge/space-age pop is about the uncool, the unhip, the cheesy, the passé. (2001: 103)

Reissuing is a revisionist and critical practice to the extent that it can be considered as a partial historicizing and shaping of the recorded past. It is also a place where the world is simultaneously fragmented and reassembled or rearticulated, literally *re-membered* in

a very specific narrative. The music object corresponds to a well-delimited and quasi-corporeal section of time, at least symbolically, and 'it is as if the new owner is reliving old, hidden, and either actual or perhaps illusory sensations of former times, and, in doing so, ascribes to his objects a life and history of their own' (Muensterberger 1994: 14). It is possible to replace 'objects' with 'records' in this passage. The expression 'sensations of former times' translates well the sensual and sensory relationship between the collector and the record, a relationship which may culminate in a Benjaminian 'shock of recognition'. The past is therefore experienced and lived through the cultural form; it is consumed as a material, three-dimensional reality. In *Sound Souvenirs*, Bijsterveld and van Dijck ascertain that people may make use of audio technologies 'to elicit, reconstruct, celebrate, and manage their memories, or even a past in which they did not participate' (2009: 11). The record, in its material permanence, is likely to be revisited and reconstructed at will. It can be argued that places such as personal music collections as well as record shops or sound archives participate into the spatial anchorage of music, guaranteeing, at least ideally, against its destruction and forgetting.

The practice of unearthing old recordings, for example at flea markets or in second-hand record shops, is known as 'crate-digging'. The term is most specifically used in relation to hip hop culture where crate-digging 'constitutes an almost ritualistic connection to hip-hop history' (Schloss 2004: 92). The critical terminology for this practice includes expressions such as 'vinyl anthropology' (Taylor 2001: 101), 'phono-archeology' or 'vinyl archaeology'. All of these terms – either vernacular or academic – bring to mind Benjamin's words, where (in the wake of Proust) he conceptualised memory as 'excavation' (Benjamin 2005: 576). Jones explains that:

> one of the prevailing models of the way memory is stored in the mind adopts the metaphor of depth to explain the way in which memories lie buried beneath strata of experience. This 'poetics of depth' […] has attracted thinkers in a diversity of disciplines to adopt an archaeological metaphor for memory and the mind; we see discussion of layers of memories analogous to layers of soil or strata, to the excavation of artefacts as akin to the 'retrieval of memories'. (2007: 27-28)

The reissue record label can be considered as the site of a specific story and return, where the recorded past is simultaneously excavated and reinvented. Samuel says of collectors that '[s]cavenging among what others are busily engaged in throwing out or consigning to the incinerator; they have been the true architects of our libraries, galleries and museums, and, if only at second or third remove, the Svengalis of historical research' (1994: 20). It is unsurprising that the first English reissue label, which was run from London by the Australian blues collector Tony Standish and which existed from 1959 to 1961, should have been called 'Heritage'. The term 'heritage' seems to crystallise best the complementary notions of saving, in accordance to a specific system of collecting, and 'passing over' a selected body of cultural works. As such, the need for preserving a culture is often linked to a need to preserve an identity, and thus often takes place in a national, and perhaps nationalistic, framework. In the United States, the Library of Congress, supplemented with a sound archive in 1928 ('The Archive of American Folk Song'), was established in order to solidify as well as authenticate the young American culture. Institutional collecting is a way of remembering and of transmitting a *patrimoine* or 'heritage' to a given collectivity. In Latin, the word for 'to transmit' or 'pass over' is '*tradere*': one transmits in order to maintain a tradition, and the place of transmission (for example, the museum or the library) helps to enforce the tradition. However, institutional collecting is not the only type of collecting. What is collected through non-institutional collecting (individual or popular collecting) may be what exceeds and threatens, or simply what is neglected by, the institutional framework. The non-institutional collector can be seen as a filtering agent or, in the terms of Samuel, a popular (and alternative) 'historian'.

Yet, the ambitions of the historian and of the collector do not strictly coincide, though the latter may effectively assist the former in the gathering of research material. The role of the collector can be crucial in the shaping of the popular past. Those who excavate and locate music objects (a cultural form often neglected by institutions) can chose what they source and what they reject. In doing so, they act as traders or 'intermediaries or knowledge brokers who can manipulate the perceived value of a commodity' (Gregson and Crewe 2003: 132). Yet the collector mostly tears the object from its original context in order to situate it within his or her own collection (Eisenberg 2005; Stewart 1993), where it may begin to function as an autobiographical landmark or 'souvenir-object' (Stiegler 2002: 163). If the value of the souvenir lies in the particular

lived experience it is associated with, the souvenir is not necessarily unique itself. A mass-produced and mass-distributed object such as a record or a book can be a souvenir.

At least two types of memory may be identified in the music object: the memory of the listener and the memory of the mediating technology, of the art form, of the commodity. According to Bijsterveld and van Dijck,

> it is not merely through words that people either consciously or involuntarily recall past events and emotions, but also through sound and music. These memories of past events include the sensory experiences of having listened to particular recordings and interacted and tinkered materially with the devices that play them. Audio technologies allow people to reopen such experiences. (2009: 11)

This means that a recorded object, even though it can effectively take the listener back to a specific souvenir, also refers back to the more impersonal history of recorded sound. From the moment a record has been released into the world, it situates itself (more or less discretely) in the vast history and repertoire of recorded music. Even though objects in a collection refer to one another 'they admit within their orbit the external dimension of social and human intercourse' (1968: 22). What is here termed an 'external dimension' might convertibly be a core dimension; it is the inescapable social or historical dimension which makes the collection meaningful not only for or in itself but also for and in the world. This dimension may make the physical record a representation or a part of the world in which it emerged. The collected object can be understood as the visible, punctual manifestation of the broader history in which it was produced. Norm Cohen, discussing Paul Oliver's *Songsters & Saints: Vocal Traditions on Race Records* (1984), affirms that American non-blues material (i.e. commercial recordings) from the mid to late 1920s, '[teaches] us about American history and folk culture' (1986: 241). In the example discussed by Cohen, the commercial music of past time (that is the popular and supposedly perishable music manufactured by the music industry) helps the researcher in his attempt to uncover a specific temporal site. The music object potentially carries with it both individual, dated memories and general memories (it is part of a larger 'social history'; see Appadurai 2001: 36).

Vinylphilia: the desire for the past

The past as a fetish and an image

The practice of vinyl archaeology or crate-digging, where the 'found object' constitutes a possible treasure, indicates that the past is effectively approached as an available set of things or residues, much in the manner of Lowenthal's conception of history:

> The past is everywhere. All around us lie features which, like ourselves and our thoughts, have more or less recognizable antecedents. Relics, histories, memories suffuse human experience… Whether it is celebrated or rejected, attended to or ignored, the past is omnipresent. (1985: xv)

For the collector, history constitutes itself as a reservoir of material and offers the past as a fetish or, perhaps, a caricature – but the immaterial set of intentions which animated it may be left unexamined, or overlooked. For Pietz (1985), 'the fetish is always a meaningful fixation of a singular event, it is above all a "historical object", the enduring form and force of a singular event. This object is "territorialized" in material space (an earthly matrix)' (cited in Jones 2007: 39). This singular event is necessarily a past event. However, the notion of the fetish, which seems to be positive in the words of Pietz, is deeply problematic. How can the fetish be a durable fixation of the past, if it is not delivered with a 'living memory', that is to say within a narrative? Stewart, writing about nostalgia and longing for the past in late capitalism, is adamant that 'culture itself becomes reified and fetishistic so that we both play with it in gleeful, cynical abandon and stand in dread of its power to seduce consciousness and empty life' (Stewart 1988: 231). Her arguments resonate with many critiques of capitalism, most notably with Guy Debord, who harshly criticised the idea of a fetishized and commodified culture, where objects function as substitutes for the 'real time' of life and experience (which, for Debord, cannot and should not be materialised; see Wollen 1989: 74). But the fetish, when it is conceived as a materialisation of time and culture, might be inseparable from culture itself. It is partly through the fashioning and transmission of material objects that a cultural past can be 'passed over' and retrospectively engaged with. As such, when music became (at least partially) a 'thing' and circulated as such, it simultaneously became an object of attention, which permitted one to reflect upon musical cultures

from the past or from distant parts of the world, thus participating into a larger material patrimony.

The founders of Finders Keepers, as they launched a series of Czech New Wave soundtracks, created fetishes. In other words, they built a solid monument to what had been so far a loose and disparate, barely formulated, eminently impalpable, musical heritage. The series is the place where avant-garde film music from the late 1960s/early 1970s is both given a form and, as it were, a uniform. Indeed, every release of the series undergoes a comparable aesthetic treatment, where the stylistic identity and the 'spirit' of the record label help to solidify and authenticate the music as a fetish. The example of *Daisies* (FKR013CD; 2007) allows one to see how the music has been made into a 'meaningful fixation'. As a first comment, it has to be underlined that a film soundtrack deprived of its filmic element evidently ceases to refer to any precise set of images. The soundtrack for *Daisies* (FKR013CD; 2007) is composed of brief samples or sonic snapshots, none of them exceeding one minute and a half. Amidst them one listens to the sounds produced by a typewriter ('Man with a typewriter (Phone call 2)'), to extracts from a Brahms requiem ('Selig Sind Die Toten' in *Ein deutsches Requiem*, opus 45), or to an anonymous 'unknown Eastern Germanic military fanfare'. The last track of the compact-disc compilation is loosely described as an 'original beat composition'. Every track has been given a name, in English, which corresponds to the episodes of the film, permitting to follow, from a distance and with sound only, its general structure. The titles of the tracks provide a loose narrative structure, which remains impenetrable to a listener unfamiliar with the film. On listening one has the sensation of hearing an incoherent assemblage or collage of tunes, devoid of any pattern. Without a written context, the music is at once timeless and placeless. It does not betray its origins and as such fails to convey any solid sense of history or geography. However, if the listener refers back to the accompanying booklet he or she is able to make sense of the collage. The reissue record label, whose intention is to present the recording as a bounded document from the past, has to provide listeners with written and visual interpretative tools in the form of liners notes and visual cues. These tools or paratexts are ways of anchoring the music in space and time, and in such a case the material culture surrounding the actual music functions as an integral and necessary part of it. Benjamin writes that 'for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopaedia whose quintessence is the fate of his object' (1973:

60). What is preserved through a reissuing practice is not only the recording itself but also the layers in which it was found. These layers are explored for example in the extensive liner notes which accompany most reissue records. The booklets for the Finders Keepers artefacts systematically include abundant reproductions of original artworks (such as posters and ephemera which accompanied the release of the movies in Czechoslovakia), which function as tangible, albeit flat and one-dimensional, 'surrogate[s] or carrier[s] of memory' (Jones 2007: 31). The reproduced documents, which include vintage 7-inch sleeves, sepia-tinted posters, black and white photographs, help contextualise the music and authenticate it (at least on a superficial, purely visual level) as an effective part of the past:

> And who can deny the magic of certain album jackets, those visual artefacts that almost always contextualize a piece of music in some way or other? The liner notes offer biographical and musical data, as well as celebrity or scholar testimonials, which allow us to read, listen, and think about the music simultaneously. (Pearson 1992: 216)

'The past', as it is accessed, collected, experienced and consumed through the artefact, is less the past than its image. The words of Pearson quoted above resonate with Martin's argument that 'imagery, the optical aspect, is the first cognitive step towards collecting, whether internally or externally perceived. The ideas created or suggested by the material surrounding us seemingly act as a stimulus to the collecting instinct' (1999: 12). This is to be related to Samuel's proposition that 'the appetite for the visual [is] nowhere more apparent than in commodity design' and reminds us that in the 1960s 'record covers, which had previously been a visual blank, serving the purely utilitarian end of keeping off dust, were replaced by eye-catching, high-gloss sleeves' (1994: 340). The artefact becomes an attractive site and sight, where the look of authenticity is actually more crucial to the collector than the effective authenticity of the object. It should not be forgotten that the inseparable notions of authenticity and imitation have inhabited the core of collecting discourses for centuries. Clunas (1991) writes that in the seventeenth century, in Edo Japan and Ming China, 'forgers put very little effort into producing good imitations of artwork and much effort and skill into producing good seals and inscriptions, since these were precisely the sorts of reassurances sought by nouveau-riche purchasers' (cited in Belk 1995: 27).

The relationship between copying (or reproducing) and the past is difficult to assess. As an initial remark, it can be said that copying or reproducing are not to be taken as synonyms for restoring. Indeed, restoring is utterly indebted to an original copy (it is a work from and with the original object), whilst copying or reproducing are a re-creation from a distance, and have no direct material relationship to the original. Copying or reproducing can be thought of as forms of 'retrochic', where the past is paradoxically and illusorily replicated by means of new technologies. Samuel, who analyses the phenomenon since its apparition in the 1960s, differentiates 'retrochic' from other forms of revival. He insists that 'retrochic' utterly relies on innovative technological tools, such as 'litho printing' (in the 1960s) or 'colour photocopying' (Samuel 1994: 183). The duplication of artefacts entirely relies on technological progress; the past is accessed through the technological means of the present. Replication is a way to avoid restoration; it both protects and repairs, at least visually, the original. New technologies, and today these also include scanning or file-sharing, make it possible for a facsimile culture or 'culture of the copy' (Schwartz 1996) to emerge. If Samuel's idea is to be taken further, then digital replication or digitisation is the logical, and most definitive step, of 'retrochic'. For instance, digitising dematerialises the original tangible object whilst saving its appearance. Recent years have seen the advent of digital palaeography, where ancient manuscripts are digitally reproduced and stored; the digital copies are used for research purposes, whilst the originals are definitively removed from human sight. If this reflects an understandable will to protect such rare, ancient and fragile objects, it also artificially stops their 'aging', by confining them into an extemporal digital space. The reissue of vinyl records bears common features with the digital replication of manuscripts. The reissue presupposes that access to the original is impossible or even useless. Renewing or reissuing the past simultaneously means burying the past, as the image of the archive survives the actual archive; the new music object (such as the new compact-disc or vinyl) may render the original object obsolete, as new 'copies' of the past begin to circulate.

Experiencing the past through the vinyl medium

The reissuing practice is hardly surprising in itself; when the first compact-discs appeared (in the early 1980s) it has been held amongst sound archivists and listeners

that 'the sound is more important than the medium' (Ward 1990: 109), an assertion which clearly betrays the idea that changes in music formats are of a peripheral and unimportant nature. Discussing the boom of blues reissuing on compact-discs in the early 1990s, Pearson ascertains that:

> Of course, reissuing past recordings is a common commercial practice amidst major record companies. It is closely linked to the successive changes in recording formats and is necessary in order to keep the company's catalogue available. But major record companies also recycle and remarket their back catalogues and historically, it's […] interesting to think of a global business community in which the Sony Corporation sells us back our musical heritage at a price we can afford [….]. […] with the exception of the field-recorded materials, supposedly non-commercial in intent, we see from the '60s on many of the same artists rediscovered and rediscovered for a different audience. (1992: 225-226)

Finders Keepers does not escape this ambiguity between reissuing as a commercial venture and as an artistic gesture. However, a particularity of the record label is that its reissuing practice is not dependent on the succession of recording formats imposed by the industry. The Finders Keepers catalogue is distributed in three formats: vinyl record, compact disc and digital file. The resurrection of a residual sound carrier (in this case, the vinyl, though other contemporary record labels specialise in tape cassettes) is a contemporary phenomenon in the reissuing practice. It may illustrate the will to salvage bygone sounds along with the medium in which they were originally brought to the world. It can be argued that, through the material properties of the medium, the listener or 'vinylphile' (Davies 2007) seeks to experience bygone aural emotions or sensations, for perhaps 'the medium persists in flavouring our perception of the message' (Cohen 1986: 241). In such an instance, what is at stake is less the democratisation or broadened accessibility to past musical material – as was initiated for example by Folkways Records and Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* (1952), a collection of pre-war folk and blues 78-rpm records which were released on commonly used 33-rpm records to ensure a better accessibility – than the exclusive and excluding experience of the past through the old medium, reserved to a privileged audience.

For Davies (2007), the vinylphile nostalgically and romantically constructs the vinyl record as a literal, direct way into the past. Yet, the emotional connection one may form with the surviving media may be less 'immediate' than learned and framed by the vinylphile's knowledge that the music format he or she listens to has been shaped by a long history of use and users. The emotion is therefore combined to a more intellectual or 'cultural' understanding of the object. As pointed out by Morris-Suzuki, in her study of the intricated relationship between media, memory and history, 'each medium has its own history, its own conventions and its own store of memories' (2005: 17-18). It can complementarily be argued that each medium allows for a specific articulation of memory to be performed, and each type of recording technology may be seen as a specific moment in the articulation of human memory (see Chapter 2). More simply, 'technological and format changes affect the way we listen' (Pearson 1992: 216). It is possible that the *perceived obsolescence* of the vinyl format – for it has ceased to be mass-produced and therefore to be unconditionally accepted as a banal, unquestioned everyday object – historicizes the listening experience (the same could be said of any particular, dated, recording format, for instance the tape cassette or flexi-disc, amidst many others). Gregson and Crowe conceptualise forms of second-hand or 'retro-' consumption as follows:

> it is the imagined memories trapped within the commodity that create value; and the consumer's work […] involves recapturing these former traces of ownership in order to […] produce meaning. (2003: 144)

One does not immediately conjure up the past when he or she plays a record. The experience of listening is doubly-mediated, first by the actual medium, and secondly by the awareness that this medium belongs to another (yet still relatively recent) socio-technological age. The span of time which separates the emergence of the vinyl format from the present day cannot be erased or forgotten. As Derrida (2002) argued in his writings on audio-visual media (where he analyses ways in which the spectator receives entire visual and/or aural scenes from the past), what happened at one point in the past cannot be replayed, if only because a first time cannot occur twice. Thus the repetition or reproduction of a live recording consolidates, retrospectively, the first time as well as separates (or distances) it from the present, for the past does not fully 'correspond' to the present, even though a past recording is exactly replayed. In other words, while the

past and the present coexist in the playing back of the recording, they never fully merge. It may be argued that the vinyl format is the material sign of the difference or fissure between times. For Huyssen, what is being salvaged is not the past but the awareness of the past, made palpable in the reflexive (and ever-displaced) act of remembering:

> the past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. […] The temporal status of any act of memory is always the present and not, as some naïve epistemology might have it, the past itself, even though all memory in some ineradicable sense is dependent on some past event or experience. (1995: 3)

As such, the obsolete format can be seized as an articulation of the past, that is to say a memory or a representation; such a representation (or re-presenting) of the object from the past is particularly underpinned by the creation of new names and new labels.

Naming, labelling and the creation of desire

In *A Century of Recorded Music – Listening to Musical History* (2000), Day focuses on the much-overlooked material culture of classical music, and notably illuminates the role of private music collectors as patrons of the arts (he cites amongst them Louise Hanson-Dyer who founded of the Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre in Paris). Referring to L'Oiseau-Lyre, who first began to publish records in 1938, he describes 'a small independent label creating a name and a niche in the market by specialization, often by concentrating on less familiar repertory' (2000: 85) and further adds that 'the dramatic expansion of the repertory was to a great extent the result of the creation of a multitude of new labels produced by a host of small companies' (2000: 93). The above descriptions would not be displaced in a commentary on contemporary reissuing record labels whose concerns can be seen as similar to that of earlier independent labels, in that they are initiated by music collectors and seek to gather audiences around novel auditory niches (as seen for instance with Finders Keepers' 'Czech New Wave' series), thus encouraging and renewing, with every new release, collecting instincts (for

neologism – the literal creation of a name – simultaneously creates a desire for the product it designates).

As underlined earlier, the practice of naming is inseparable from the commodification, but also construction, of music. From the very early stages of the recording industry, 'many of the styles (genres) of music that the public [embraced] had names, some of them enduring through the first century of recording to remain in the lexicon' (Steffen 2005: 74). Similarly, reissue record labels of the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century have often coined names and uncovered forgotten genres. It might be argued that those 'genres', for lack of a precise definition and because they existed 'between categories' (Juno and Vale 1993: 3), previously failed to find a market. By means of naming and labelling, reissue record labels enable these genres to either emerge (and in such a case naming is a *performative* gesture which creates a genre) or re-emerge. Furthermore, by reissuing past material, the labels may be creating a genre of their own, under the tag of 'reissue' or 'lost'. Naming and labelling are first and foremost ways of articulating and marketing products to a contemporary audience. It is generally held that 'the norm of the music industry is to apply a descriptive label, any label, to all new music' and that 'every new song, new recording, and new performance is categorized, quantified, classified, and pigeonholed' (Steffen 2005: 84).

The label Finders Keepers prides itself in bringing to the world 'Japanese choreography records, space-age Turkish protest songs, Czechoslovakian vampire soundtracks, Welsh rare-beats, bubblegum folk, drugsploitation operatics, banned British crime thrillers and celebrity Gallic Martini adverts' – the list is a juxtaposition of rather obscure and seemingly arbitrary denominations, which were unfamiliar to those who listened to the recordings at the moment they were produced. The names transform the recorded past into an endless and somehow confused wonderland, rather than clarifying it. The names listed above are self-referential, anachronistic and fashionable. One may argue that reissue labels, as they endow old recordings with novel names, retrospectively create and shape the recorded past. Neglected recordings, which were originally nameless, start to exist for the music industry and audiences once they are named. An awareness is created which is akin to putting forgotten, and often disparate musics, on a map. The metaphor of the map is useful, if one considers that traditionally 'maps were used to legitimize the reality of conquest and empire. They helped create myths which would assist in the maintenance of the territorial status quo' (Harley 2005: 57). It follows that naming, as it is a process of delimitation and definition, is the first

step towards controlling. Names are the indispensable basis for a new construction of meaning. But these names do not necessarily have to be neologisms; above all they have to be free from strong connotations, and likely to be recoded or re-signified. One of the mottos of the Finders Keepers label – 'Always Czech – the label' – is a good example of this. The motto is notably used for advertising purpose (see *Saxana*, FKR039CD) and is simultaneously a self-referential pun: one has to 'check the label' to authenticate a Finders Keepers release. In keeping with a capitalistic fashion, authenticity is construed as the authenticity of the label, the logo or the stamp rather than of the contents. Furthermore, to an averagely-educated Western European audience, 'Czech' may be associated with a few vague, sedimented images, ranging from the 'Eastern Bloc' in general, to the Prague Spring, Milan Kundera or even Antonín Dvořák – the network is loose, the narrative fragmented and incomplete. When it peremptorily, and perhaps ironically, affirms itself as 'always Czech', Finders Keepers romantically redefines what 'Czech' means, and reduces it down to the ambiguous notion of collectible 'Czech New Wave' (see Figure 16 in the Appendix). 'Czech' becomes part of a series to be consumed, and mostly makes sense in the context of the back catalogue of the label; it is a reminder and a hint at previous reissues. In their research on collector's habits, Elsner and Cardinal underline that

> customers who invest in publishers' 'collections' […] get so carried away that they continue to acquire titles which hold no interest for them. A book's distinctive position within the series is sufficient to create a formal interest where no intrinsic interest exists. What motivates the purchase is the pure imperative of association. (1994: 23)

On one level, it may be that the Finders Keepers record label, by making up genres and names, quite cynically and artificially creates a lack, and a subsequent desire for music, appealing to collectors' mentalities. It seems that the possibilities for naming and creating niches are limitless. As such, the new names do not claim to be historically accurate. They appeal to, and are addressed to, the imagination (perhaps also to the prejudices) of the listener. Through naming, legends and romances are created, allowing for both a new image and a new, fictive map of the recorded past to emerge. What takes place is an 'imaginary history-making', potentially 'based around romantic and fantasized visions of the lives and times of imagined others, rather than the

authenticated excavations associated with the reconstructionnists' (Gregson and Crewe 2003: 147; see also Boym's discussion on restorative nostalgia; Boym 2001: XVIII).

New names give old music objects the aura and mystery they might have formerly lacked. In the case of Finders Keepers, the aura is less built-in the new object than provided by the associated literature (names, liner notes, articles) which frame it. Such an aura is what gives the Czech New Wave Series its coherence. Moreover, names seem to create the possibility for nostalgia, and the desire for ownership. It is difficult to miss or wish to possess something with no name; but names generate, perhaps partly independently of what they designate (which can remain imaginary), the weight of existence and the possibility of phantasm. The notion of collecting is inseparable from that of fantasying, inventing or mystifying. The collector may be attracted to the 'incredibly strange music' (Juno and Vale 1993) and some music objects may be the 'repositories of strangeness, whose attraction is their absence of familiarity' (Bohlman 2001: 27). There is a useful comparison to be drawn between the work of vinyl archaeologists and collectors, who travel the world's flea-markets and online platforms (such as Discogs, GEMM or eBay) in order to locate old recordings, and that of earlier self-styled and self-titled European archaeologists. Rose Macaulay (1953), in her study of the ruin and the pleasures of ruin-seekers, has narrated the trips taken, from the eighteenth century onwards, by wealthy, Western 'tourists', visiting Crete, Greece or other Oriental countries in search of tangible remainders and treasures of 'a stupendous past'. The material object functions as a souvenir, a trace of the past. Real or counterfeited, this souvenir is both a fragment and a miniature of the place where it has been 'found'. The souvenir belongs to the realm of symbols, and is articulated linguistically. A souvenir is both a reminder and a remainder of an original lived experience. Stewart writes about souvenirs as 'magical objects', which are the material links and testimonies of a transformation between the past lived experience and the present memory or retrieval of it (Stewart 1993: 151). As such, the souvenir is both the subtract and the substance of the narrative which the owner attaches to it: the first memory is retrospectively validated and strengthened by the story and nostalgia which it triggers. Such a nostalgia expresses a longing for the vague past, the desire for a legend or a tale rather than for historical authenticity. It is realised in hunting, and in renarrating the found object in the present context of its discovery (notably in the form of liner notes and neologisms).

Reissue record labels function as organs of representation, as they mediate and inform the past, and especially an exotic, otherworldly past, through linguistic devices and paratexts. However, the very act of naming and cataloguing undermines the relationship to the material and the way listeners relate to it. The listener may indeed become a curious tourist, enticed to visit the recorded past. As Culler (1981) notes on tourism and its semiotics:

> The paradox, the dilemma of authenticity, is that to be experienced as authentic it must be marked as authentic, but when it is marked as authentic it is mediated, a sign of itself, and hence not authentic in the sense of unspoiled. (cited in Frow 1997: 73)

On the one hand, giving names allows for some genres to become visible (such as the Czech New Wave film). On the other hand, it only uncovers and invents a chosen, and extremely narrow, strip of knowledge. It plunges everything else into obscurity, simultaneously showing and hiding, as well as making alternative, fantasist and limited maps of the recorded past. Indeed, a reissue record catalogue offers only a small selection of music objects from the past. Such objects have been salvaged from the flux of time (the continuous stream of history), and cannot substitute themselves for the whole of history or of geography.

Collecting as imaginary map-making

Reissuing can primarily be understood as an *anachronism*, an event which may overthrow the received idea that 'we appear to live by order, moving from network to cable television; from vinyl records to compact discs, from natural gas to microwave, along the market timelines of consumer society' (Cohen and Leslie 1992: 49). In other words, the practice of reissuing (or resurrecting) a music object from the past challenges and disturbs the established, mono-directional narrative of 'progress', especially in cases where the music object is reissued on the (discarded) format in which it was originally released. Finders Keepers' compilation *The Sound of Wonder* (FKR023LP/FKR023CD), released in 2009, gathers songs recorded for the Pakistani film industry between 1973 and 1980, featuring the popular Pakistani singer Nahid Akhtar; the songs were initially released as 7'' mini LPs by the Pakistani branch of EMI

(now dismantled) (see Figure 20 in the Appendix). But the Finders Keepers compilation is not so much an anachronism – a collection of songs presented to the Western world as new when they have long been part of a familiar repertoire in Pakistan – as it is an ana-topism (upsetting the chronological as well as spatial continuum). It must be noted that *The Sound of Wonder* has not been released or distributed in the country where it was originally recorded (though of course it can be accessed in a digital form) and is aimed mostly at Western European or North American audiences (Finders Keepers is disseminated in the United Kingdom and in the United States through the distribution network B-Music), thus offering a common example of globalisation or cultural colonialism (one of the mottos of the record label is, incidentally, 'making global sound local'). The phenomenon of global music, and particularly the appropriation, commodification and consumption of world (music) cultures by Western countries, was bitterly indicted by Seabrook (2004), and most extensively scrutinised by Taylor (1997), in the form of 'sonic tourism', and Bohlman (2002). The latter offers a nuanced, rather than dramatic, stance on globalisation, as he reservedly points out that:

> at the beginning of the 21st century it is impossible to define world music without slipping down a tautological slope. World music is that music we encounter […] everywhere in the world. World music can be folk music, art music or popular music. […] World music is inseparable from another equally difficult phenomenon of our age, globalization. (Bohlman 2002: I).

It is possible to suggest that displacement, if not globalisation, has long been a core aspect and mode of capitalist production. Though globalisation was more markedly intensified in the second half of the twentieth century, Gitelman suggests that it nevertheless haunted the first age of capitalism. She notably explains that, in the turn of the twentieth century, the manufacture of shellac records depended on resources from many places in the world (2008: 16). The recorded object simultaneously enters and circulates the world as a commercial and as a cultural object (two dimensions which cannot be dissociated), that is to say as a marker of industry and a marker of culture. As a cultural object, it can productively be deciphered as a container for multiple aural fragments of the world.

Indeed, on a first level, collections have routinely been described as the constitution of a miniature world within the world, the literal making of a space which the collector cautiously controls and organises. For Belk,

> the collector as the creator of the collection assumes the role of possessor, controller, and sometimes saviour of the objects collected. For while consumers can almost always control what they own and possess, collectors who possess an interrelated set of objects control a "little world". (1995: 70)

On another level, song collecting, as practised by early ethnomusicologists, is indeed a compilation of the world at a given time. Erich Moritz von Hornbostel (1877-1935), who can be seen as the precursor to modern reissue record labels, was the first to gather an anthology of actual recordings (as opposed to previous anthologies of folk music constituted of written notations). He notably worked for the Berliner Phonogrammarchiv, the oldest audiovisual archive in the world (it was started in 1899). The latter has a collection of 'over 3000 research recordings [made] in many countries of the world up to 1930' with the aid of the Wiener Archivphonograf (Ward 1990: 138). Hornbostel compiled two anthologies of world music, *Demonstration Collection* (released by Folkways in 1963) and *Music of the Orient* (1979, orig. 1934), who drew the attention of European audiences to African musics. Hornbostel possessed, as other collectors of folk song before him (Herder, Brentano, Sousa…), an 'anthological impulse', which Bohlman describes as the will to '[gather] together diversity on record in order to represent world music in a holistic way' (2001: 26). And yet it may be that representing world music 'in a holistic way' is less and less possible, for the archive of world music has constantly been augmented by new recordings through the twentieth century, and its constant expansion of the material archive of music objects, coupled with the growing availability of recordings on the internet (see Chapter 4), makes it an impossible endeavour. The collection is an operation of reduction rather than inclusion.

In other words, the collection might best be seen as a limited representation of the world rather than an accurate map. The anthologies gathered by Finders Keepers differ from Hornbostel's early holistic attempt in many ways. Their aims are less academic-oriented and didactic, and more entertaining; the releases provide 'colourful'

entry points into the vastness of world musics (Feld 2004: 263). In such cases, the representation of the world provided by the anthologies is undisciplined and non-scientific as 'the collection is a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context' (Stewart 1993: 151). This is because, 'to give pleasure, the collector's object of desire must implicitly refer to a series. […] the series must always be open, for lack is the guarantee of life' (Schor 1994: 258). The series, thus open, exists as an *expanding* world within the world. It deforms the actual world by substituting its 'accurate' map for a mythical map or dream topology; every collection, therefore, may be considered as the on-going, unfinished fantasy of the collector. Collecting is akin to the making of a secret, personal geography of the world. The representation is partial and can only provide a private puzzle of the world. J.H. Smith, who wrote a guide to postcard collecting (1989), poetically conceived of the world as 'a mosaic with each piece of the puzzle having its postcard representation' (cited in Schor 1994: 258). This was to say that the word was a completely closed entity to which corresponded an equally complete set of postcards. But the collection is by definition never finished, for it relies on the hunt or the quest, providing a 'reason for strolling about in the world' (Sontag 2009: 121), both literally and figuratively.

Locating the marvel

'Are you ready for funky progressive rock from communist-era Hungary? How about film soundtracks recorded in Lahore during the golden age of Pakistani cinema? Or maybe 1970s psychedelic Turkish protest songs?', asked a BBC reporter in an article about Finders Keepers and Trunk Records (Plummer 2009). These questions do not only playfully emphasise the geographical scope of the releases; they are also ways of promoting the recordings through the prism of their supposedly novel, extra-ordinary, marvellous or magic qualities. The promotional rhetoric surrounding 'foreign' music objects in the early twenty-first century is reminiscent of primitive marketing strategies. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, traders would bring back to Europe 'hitherto unknown objects from other continents', and promote them with great assiduity to art collectors of the time, seemingly triggering a 'comparatively sudden wave of collecting' (Muensterberger 1994: 189). And, three centuries before this, in the wake of Marco

Polo and subsequent expeditions to China, European art collectors were fascinated with the 'marvel' (Belk 1995: 11), which can be defined in the eight following points:

- Novelty or rarity.
- The foreign or exotic.
- The strange and bizarre.
- The unusually large and the unusually small.
- Demonstrations of supreme technical skill or virtuosity; the triumph over difficult problems and the achievement of the seemingly impossible.
- Vividness and verisimilitude.
- The transcendent and the sublime.
- The surprising and unexpected. (Kenneth cited in Belk 1995: 11)

The 'marvel' qualifies less a specific and situated object than the way in which such an object is received and rated by a determined group of individuals (here, wealthy European collectors). It follows that most of the points listed above (with the exception of numbers 4 and 6), though they initially refer to the marvel at a certain point in space and time, could be used to describe a category of 'exotic', sought-after musical objects. Indeed, the narrative of the marvel or the 'lost gem' is deeply embedded within the discourse of the music collector. It has also remained a powerful commercial tool. What is commodified and collected by world reissue record labels is a special form of otherness and difference, tailored to the public and, in the end, appropriated (see Feld 2005: 238).

The liner notes accompanying the various Finders Keepers releases, complete with the pictures, do not only act as evidences which provide the artefact with a narrative of origin and a life story: they also allow for the objects to be made familiar and ordinary. Redemption of lost recordings is mainly a redemption through the commonality of discourse and language (Votel addresses himself to Anglophone communities and the titles of the compositions are given in English and not in their original languages). The music object 'speaks' through the voice of his or her finder. For instance, Andy Votel's liner notes to *Valerie and her Week of Wonder* (2006) read as an autobiographical and self-centred account, in which Votel depicts his first (accidental) encounter with Luboš Fišer's soundtrack, and the feverish ten-year quest for it which followed. This hunting of the original object is clearly an operation of

conquest where the vinyl-archeologist is both an explorer and a hero, filtering the music; what had remained remote and foreign until then is made personal. As such, the liner notes deliver the recording along with a past context, already endowed and encoded with biographical data. The souvenir becomes part of the music. It authenticates the past (Stewart 1993: 151). On reading the liner notes, the listener internalises and appropriates the souvenir, albeit imperfectly and partially. The function of the liner notes is comparable to that of labels in museums, and the phono-archeologist enjoys a type of authority and publicity similar to that of the museum curator, as he or she explicitly indicates that a recorded object is worth preserving, hailing it as a marvel, and as an exceptional finding whilst taming it at the same time by means of the collecting gesture, which can be likened to a colonializing gesture.

This is mainly because the collection or catalogue assembled by the record label is the space of a selection and control. The selection of non-English music released by Finders Keepers feeds a niche, and becomes the trademark of the record label. It can be argued that the practice of reissuing music from different parts of the world under the same indifferent banner – 'a Finders Keepers record' – implicitly flattens the original diversity of the recordings. One may wonder to which extent, for instance, Czech New Wave film music from the 1960s and 1970s relates to the teenager Welsh-language pop music of the group Galwad Y Mynydd (both released by Finders Keepers). It is equally difficult to identify a vein running from the works of the French composer Jean-Claude Vannier to the film score *Sitting Target* by Stanley Myers (1972), also released by Finders Keepers. The unity of Finders Keepers is first and foremost an aesthetic and linguistic unity (the recordings are similar in their format and presentation), and is underpinned by a continuing obsession with the bizarre, in all its forms. As such, there is no Finders Keepers speciality or sound, no strong coherence to the record label, although one may say that the undisciplined eclecticism of the label is perhaps its most distinctive and consistent feature. Finders Keepers becomes a 'genre', an assemblage of found sonic objects or vignettes, representing lost, arcane moments of the recorded past. The musical marvel – repackaged for, distributed to and aimed at a certain type of consumer – is progressively made familiar as it is labelled and catalogued. Such an appropriation and marketing of world musics by a reissue record label remains ambiguous. One the one hand, it seems to correspond to a genuine will to rescue recordings from distant times and spaces from inexorable oblivion; on the other hand, it Westernises, actualises and perhaps trivialises these recordings, which are not

distributed in the countries where they were originally made, but in English-speaking countries. Yet the characteristic eclecticism of Finders Keepers (a trait which is also recognizable in many other past and present reissue record labels) might express and revive the hybrid ambivalence of the recorded object – which can alternatively and concurrently be (amongst other things) a product and a cultural form; a potential biographical or 'personal fetish' (Clifford 1988: 216) and a datable commercial artefact; an object salvaged from a distant spatiotemporal site and an eminently actual, present reality; a marvel and an everyday object.

Conclusion

Though collecting *per se* can seldom be seen as a novel human activity, record-collecting may be understood as partially resulting from the advent of the recording industry, that is of the mass production and mass-distribution of recordings. Thus, at a first level, the emergence of the record collector is not easily separable from that of capitalism and consumer society, a point which Belk (1995), as well as Martin (1999), solidly and extensively demonstrate in their respective studies of the contemporary collector (whose attention is most especially directed towards popular artefacts from the recent past). The effective production, distribution and mediation of music objects are, however, insufficient to explain the formidable intensity of collecting practices in the twentieth century. Additional elements, notably the historical element – manifested in the anxious wish to preserve, monumentalise and momentarily immobilise a culture in the form of a stable cultural form – may enlighten our understanding of gestures of collecting and reissuing. The reissuing of a record could be metaphorically likened to a way of capturing, by means of material resurrection, the past. A 'lost' or forgotten record is found and elected by the collector to be brought back into the current field of music. Yet it is certain that, owing to the omnipresence and apparent inexhaustibility of recorded sources, one only resurrects a partial, and inevitably marginal, aspect of the recorded past. Complementarily, the process of resurrecting relies on hazardous parameters: the persisting quest and the chance encounter equally determine the inclusion of a given piece in a collection of reissues. Some recordings may be 'remembered' the very moment they are found. Indeed, it can be safely argued that these recordings held no specific form of interest to contemporaneous listeners at the time of their release, as they sat uneasily with the tastes of the general public at the time

(thus receiving little or no critical attention) and therefore failed, in a context of increasing cultural output, to compete with more standard cultural products (see Taylor 2001 on the phenomenon of space-age bachelor pad music). The enduring existence of this capitalist debris, which has principally survived because of its material properties, is sanctioned by a present witness whose role is to (commercially) mediate the past anew. In the early twenty-first century, as the traditional music industry experiences a general and historical dismantlement, small reissue record labels may appear as both a footnote and homage to a golden age of the recording industry. They exist at a particular time in the music industry and entirely rely on pre-existing sound sources, which were most generally gathered and released by previous record labels. Reissuing allows for the reanimation and rearticulation of bygone moments of the recording culture, or their creation by means of imagination (for instance by giving new names to anonymous genres of the past). Reissuing clearly participates into the making and maintaining of a 'second-hand culture' (Crewe and Gregson 2003), relying for the most part on the enduring presence of objects from the past in the present.

It can be further added that, in the late twentieth century – marked by an abundance of available recordings and the consequent vibrancy of second-hand markets – the individual record collector, in conjunction with reissue record labels, actively embrace the detritus of capitalism in the form of rejected, non-standard or 'strange' music objects (most often from remote and lesser known parts of the world). Many discussions have recently addressed the cultural significance and vibrant potentialities of leftovers in Western societies (Neville and Villeneuve 2002), as if to underline that 'a flexible boundary between value and nonvalue runs between cultural waste and cultural archive; and it is a constant topic of discussion and renegociation' (Assmann 2002: 79). The status of cultural leftovers is therefore always transitory, as they hover between meaning and illegibility. The editors of the series *Incredibly Strange Music*, who interviewed collectors of neglected or forgotten ephemeral music genres in the USA, argued that some types of music 'never had a defined place in musical "history"' and 'existed in a shadowy area between categories' (Juno and Vale 1993: 3). On the one hand, leftovers may prompt a reshaping or revision of a given history of recorded sound which would otherwise slip into total oblivion. On the other hand, the value of the salvaged artefact may be extrinsic to the actual music (Juno and Vale 1993: 3), especially as 'the record industry has stimulated the formation of an enormous sector of trite ephemera' (Chanan 2000: 151). The value or meaning of the salvaged artefact is

eventually given by revisionist practices; it is quite possible that 'salvage from the deep has only the value that those who recover it accord' (Neville and Villeneuve 2002: 9). The collection proposed by a reissue record label, characterised by a rigorous classification, labelling and focus, provides a system and a way to make the past meaningful. Yet the collection assembled by a reissue record label is an unstable representation of history, for it is itself entangled in the course of time and the (commercial) rhetoric of novelty.

It may be said of a reissuing or recycling culture that it ironically replicates and performs mechanisms of forgetting. For instance, each new re-release precipitates earlier re-releases in a deeper oblivion. This is the paradox of a living archive which is simultaneously (as proven with Finders Keepers) a commercial, and therefore transient and perishable, venture. When a re-release has sold out, it is not reprinted, and the gaps in the Finders Keepers catalogue are also gaps in the archive. The reissue record label uses the typical collector's (but also consumer's) anxiety and fear of 'missing' a recording as a commercial strategy. In this sense, Finders Keepers is truly aimed at collecting mentalities, which it both flatters and manipulates. The implicit promise of reissuing as an altruistic and democratic practice is thus broken, as the superficial archiving mission recedes into the background and is replaced with the marketing mission. In addition, every object or document produced by the record label will in time disappear, absorbed within the continual flow of time and of cultural production. As such, a reissue record label cannot constitute itself as a solid, durable or trustworthy archive of the past, even though it may emulate the form and discourse of the traditional archive. Rather it offers the representation and evidence of a past forever passing, realised in a simulacra or travesty of the archive. As it brings into existence a forgotten and commodified image of the past, the record label equally triggers an inescapable process of degradation which is ingrained in the very production of the music object. The re-released copy of a 'lost' record will inexorably wear away and become lost again. This is not to say that the archiving venture is an impossible one. The archive globally undergoes what each of its individual, tangible components undergoes: progressive destruction.

Dust-to-Digital – the name of a reissue record label contemporary to Finders Keepers – explicitly suggests that the transformation of transient, friable music objects into intangible formats may be a way of achieving a form of sonic immortality. Dematerialised music formats, which do not 'age' in the way material objects do, may

trigger the archivist's (and collector's) hope that nothing will disappear, endlessly postponing the threat of destruction – as if the fragile archive could be displaced into the (fantasised) realm of the eternal.

Chapter 4. Music Objects in the Digital Context: the Internet and the Future of Phonography

> No new technology since the invention of photography and the phonograph captured the human imagination as much as the computer did. (Draaisma 2000: 138)

> Digitization accomplishes many of the same things as the gramophone: music storage and retrieval is greatly facilitated, though this time it is not simply music as sounds, but music as bits – combinations of zeros and ones. (Taylor 2001: 3-4)

> Just as the Internet has renewed the economic value of innumerable cultural artifacts from the past […], so it has hastened their convergence in the realm of the visible. In the realm of the visible they come to be adorned with textual commentary and forms of graphic display that have become the basis of their public presence. On the Internet, aural, tactile, and other forms move toward the visual as the manner of their self-announcement. […]
> The visual has become the mode of public presence of cultural forms in their commodity or memorial state. (Straw 2007: 13)

Introduction

Aims and chapter outline

Whilst the first three Chapters of the thesis embrace specific and relatively rooted sites of the material culture of music, focusing on a selection of independent record labels, Chapter 4 aims to introduce a broader discussion on music objects, their becoming and possible futures, as they transit to and become routinely integrated into digital networks.

Some of the key terms and themes developed across the three previous chapters are revisited and critically re-assessed in this chapter. These include issues of materiality, collection, dissemination and cultural transmission, whose respective *modi operandi* are unsettled, challenged and redefined by novel socio-technological conditions. The chapter will especially focus on the internet as a possible *archival medium*, given that 'everything that can be digitized can be stored' (Poster 2001: 141). I will question what 'happens' of collecting, remembering and transmitting in the digital world. I will think of the tension (but also the possible fusion) between material music objects and immaterial ones. It will be underlined throughout the chapter that, in order to be resonant, a reflection on transmission and dissemination has to be a study of the medium and of the delivery technology. My intention is not to oppose here the pre-digital and digital realms (or tangible and intangible objects), as they evidently coexist, and keep influencing each other. One does not eradicate the other. Rather, they constantly and consistently act upon each other.

In the light of the previous chapters of the thesis, it can be argued that the construction of music as a 'product' which can be 'owned', circulated and collected is historical. The invention of sound recording technologies, and the subsequent emergence and durable implementation of the record industry (at the beginning of the twentieth century) allowed for the establishing and disseminating of a material culture of music. The construction of music as a 'product' thereby emerged from an ingenious, if not lucky, combination of venture capitalism and technological invention. Throughout the twentieth century, the art of recorded sound was experienced in a quantity of forms and invested with myriad meanings. It came to represent and embody different realities for a large spectrum of users (consumers/listeners and makers of recorded sound). It also episodically separated itself from the more commercial aspects, in order to become a site of resistance or a means for political activism. For instance, in the United Kingdom, independent record labels from the late 1970s onwards persistently sought to challenge and question the capitalist logic of the record industry. Their owners tried – and sometimes failed - to build a more meaningful, more transparent relationship between music and its products. The 'do-it-yourself' ethos they embraced notably led to the creation of an independent distribution network (see Chapter 1; Fonarow 2006). And yet the art of the record mostly presupposes the culture industry – even an 'independent record label' is inextricably bound by the pre-existing mainstream structure. It is

difficult, if not impossible, to consider the music object without embracing its circles of production, reception or distribution. Any music object, it seems, is embedded within technological, social and economical frameworks – such frameworks, however, are far from being stable. Changes and revisions continually reshape them, the passing and pressures of time progressively transform them. This is because every new technology shapes, to a greater or lesser extent, a given society or social group. Every new technology thus influences conditions of existence, informing everyday practices and beliefs. In a few words, 'socio-genesis recapitulates techno-genesis' (Stiegler 2009 [1996]: 2): the interdependence between the social and the technological realms is inescapable, even though the accord between the two might be far from total or perfect (rather, the social and the technological realms may be understood as co-constitutive). The tension between society and technique is then likely to be crystallised in critical resistance (nostalgia for a previous technological realm being one of them). The progressive weaving of the internet into everyday practices (even since its popularisation in 1995) may partially be an example of how a technological change can involve a transformation of the social fabric. Such a transformation is not necessarily abrupt or violent. It affects a culture at different levels and scales. Linked with the expansion of the online realm is the increasing digitisation (and dematerialisation) of cultural products such as books and records. It might be that the changes digitisation introduces in a given culture are not strictly anecdotal. For example, Milner points out that the debates surrounding 'the analog-versus-digital divide' have a significance 'that [extends] far beyond music' (Milner 2009: 195). What he suggests is that the case of recorded music (and the progressive dematerialisation of the tangible music object) is perhaps metonymical of a broader cultural process.

The internet, envisioned as a massive, and perhaps indiscriminate, repository of recorded sound (in the form of audio *data*) challenges (and may ultimately dissolve) the logic and status of tangible music objects and situated archives. This is notably because tangible music objects inextricably exist in time and space. They may function as personal or collective memory objects, offering material links between the past and the present. They may be worn out and passed on, given or sold, destroyed or restored, forgotten or stumbled upon. Records, tapes or compact discs are tactile, aural and visual objects. They enter temporality and age in varying manners, progressively incorporating the grain of history and the traces of their users. One may argue that not only the

immaterial sound, but also its material shell or container, is mnemonic. Perhaps the physical record collection, which occupies a determined physical space, simultaneously maps out and freezes history. It is an external accumulation, situated in the three-dimensional world. As such it may survive itself and symbolise, as a monument would, the passing of time. In the previous chapters, I have seen that tangible objects have been crucial in the shaping of some record labels. The founders of Sarah Records have notably built a material memory of Bristol through an intricate set of objects and photographs. The artefacts of Ghost Box rely on pre-existing phonographic traces, and indicate the way in which culture is literally haunted by past materialities. Similarly, reissue record labels redeem and reclaim forgotten records, re-circulating them in the material world. But the paradigm of the physical music object is challenged by the internet. The digital object (the audio file) cannot be directly accessed. It is not tactile, and thereby borrows the tactility of the playback device or hardware (either the computer or the portable music device). Music is transported in time and in space by means of an immaterial digital network. It can be argued that the context of encounter, of preservation, of transmission of music is thereby modified. In other words, the culture of recorded sound may no longer be a culture of things.

In this chapter, I ask what becomes of the tangible culture and archiving of music in the digital age, notably characterised by a dematerialisation, or 'micromaterialization' (Sterne 2012) of the sound carrier, as well as the prevalence of the digital network of distribution (the internet). I see how digitisation affects traditional archiving and collecting of recorded sound, as well as cultural transmission. I try to understand the changing materiality of recorded sound, arguing that a new materiality, that is a new construction of materiality, may be achieved within the digital paradigm. The structure of this chapter unfolds as follows: first, a set of initial remarks about the dematerialisation and digitisation of the music object and its historical nature is given ('Dematerialised music'), so as to provide a situated entry point into the discussion. The internet is considered as the current sociocultural and technological framework of Western societies ('The internet as a cultural framework'), notably in terms of the memory. The notion of the internet as an apparently unlimited storage place for music data – a potential realm for '*all the memory of the world*' (to borrow the title that Alain Resnais gave to his 1957 documentary on the French Bibliothèque Nationale) – is questioned and challenged (''*Toute la mémoire du monde*': the archive in a digital

environment'). Departing from the frequent and potentially misleading (pre-)conception of the internet as a traditional archive, I examine the archival particularities of the video repository YouTube and posit it as an unstable, popular and accidental archive ('Popular Collecting: YouTube as an unstable music archive'), focusing more particularly on the online presence of Sarah Records. The video platform YouTube as well as the online auction site eBay are considered as important revisions to traditional archiving and collecting, as well as providing spaces of remediation for the traditional recorded object ('Remediating the phonographic medium'). After surveying issues of the life and survival of the micromaterial music object ('E-collecting and the life of digital files'), I consider the different consumptive practices entailed and enabled by the fluidity of the digital music object, measuring the digital collector against the figure of Benjamin's infamous collector (see Chapter 3). Rather than being seen as a legible archive, the internet is theorised as an endless, self-generating, and constantly reshaping labyrinth opened up to digital *flânerie* or drifting ('Second-hand markets: the digital flâneur'). Lastly, a few points on the future of the internet, already palpable in the idea of a Semantic Web – where the internet is conceived of as a totally organised (and total) database – are delivered ('The Semantic Web and the database'). In my conclusion, I see that the notion of the internet as a prosthetic memory (the archive) is to be examined alongside the violence inexorably inscribed within any form of archive (Derrida). For all the world's forgetting may be contained, or predicted, in 'all the memory of the world' ('Conclusion: the lost web'). Throughout the chapter, the works of Walter Benjamin, Lisa Gitelman, Régis Debray (and the French School of Mediology) and Bernard Stiegler inform my understanding of technology, mediation and memory – and the intricate ways in which they relentlessly shape and colour each other.

Methodological remarks

In order to measure, or at least evaluate, the impact of digitisation and the internet on the culture of recorded sound, it is crucial to situate the approach within a historical (yet not necessarily simple or linear) framework. This is primarily because 'the Internet does not mark the first reshuffling of the basic conditions of cultural formation' (Poster 2001: 5) (these conditions had for instance been dramatically affected by writing, and the subsequent advent of printing, see Frow 1997: 139). Secondly, recorded music already has a history of its own, shot through with several metamorphoses. The history of

recorded sound (which is inexorably bound up with commercial interests) is riddled with what the industry eagerly called technological 'revolutions'. Technologies of storage and retrieval have consistently changed, with new formats regularly succeeding each other, catering for new markets and allowing for different modes of storing. If one is to understand changing relationships (between music and materiality, music and the recorded object, music and the collection) then one has to understand what these relationships have previously been. Furthermore, the history of communication technologies itself does not start with the internet. It would indeed be potentially sterile, and even dangerous, to divorce New Media (the internet/digital music) from the broader history and genesis of communication technologies. For Rabinovitz and Geil (2009), ahistoricism too often characterises current discussions about digital culture; and 'such ahistoricism is problematic because it tends to reproduce at the level of scholarship what is one of the hallmarks of digital culture – its rhetoric of newness' (Rabinovitz and Geil 2004: 1). But one has to remember that in fact 'all media and technology have been at one time new' (Creeber and Martin 2009: 1; see also Marvin 1988: 3; Taylor 2001: 6; Chun 2011: 184). Perhaps, as Castells notices, 'information technology is the present-day equivalent of electricity in the industrial era' (Castells 2001: 1). It is only through a comparative and reasoned approach to new technologies that one may develop a better understanding of the ambiguities and challenges entailed by a 'digital revolution'. Poster, one of the earliest cultural theorists of the internet, has correctly underlined the necessity and ambiguities of historical framing. He explains that:

> The question of the new requires a historical problematic, a temporal and stadial framework in which there are risks of setting up the new as a culmination, telos, or fulfilment of the old; or as the onset of utopia or dystopia. The conceptual problem is to enable a historical differentiation of old and new without initiating a totalizing narrative. (Poster 2001: 12-13)

A cautious and solid comparative work has notably been undertaken by Lisa Gitelman in *Always Already New* (2008), which offers a comparison between the emergence of phonography and the circulation of records with the emergence of the World Wide Web and the circulation of documents. The approach outlined by Gitelman should be kept in mind. Both Gitelman and Debray, though distinct in many ways (the former is primarily establishing a comparative genealogy of media, determining their shared functions and

meanings, whilst the latter is more directly preoccupied with the linear transmission of culture), strongly underline the central function of media in the shaping and passing on of a given culture. Gitelman (2008) insists that media do not neutrally represent the world: they also give new sites and frames to the 'ongoing and vernacular experience of representation as such' (Gitelman 2008: 4). In other words, a delivery technology is not a neutral messenger: the idea that each medium has its own properties was first elaborated by McLuhan in *Understanding Media* (1964). The medium is not a transparent means of transmission. What is transmitted is therefore coloured by the medium it traverses. How a thing is passed on has an impact on what is actually transmitted. It follows that the medium does not only act as a medium of *communication*: it also functions as a medium of *cultural transmission*. It may be argued that media will therefore also shape what is passed on to future generations. The French school of Mediology, instigated by sociologist and media theorist Régis Debray in 1991, dedicates itself to understanding how media transmit culture. Mediology derives from the need and will to 'historicise' and 'materialise' culture through the study of its media (Debray 2000: 141). The two following statements are useful in comprehending the crucial distinction between communication and transmission:

Communiquer est le moment d'un processus plus long et le fragment d'un ensemble plus vaste, que nous nommerons […] transmission. (Debray 2000: 3)

[*The moment of communicating is part of a longer process, and the fragment of a broader ensemble, which we will call [...] transmitting.*]

communiquer consiste à *transporter une information dans l'espace*, à l'intérieur d'une même sphère spatio-temporelle, et transmettre, *à transporter une information dans le temps*, entre des sphères spatio-temporelles différentes. (Debray 2000: 3)

[communicating means *transporting an information in space*, inside the same spatio-temporal sphere, whilst transmitting means *transporting an information in time*, between different spatio-temporal spheres.]

Mediology will be an implicit referential and theoretical tool throughout this chapter. I propose, after Debray, that different media have different implications in the transmission of culture. Gitelman defines media as

> socially realized structures of communication, where structures include both technological forms and their associated protocols, and where communication is a cultural practice, a ritualized collocation of different people on the same mental map, sharing or engaged with popular ontologies of representation. (Gitelman 2006: 7)

It follows that media, for Gitelman, are truly *realised* (materialised, incorporated) when they have been co-opted by users, that is validated in everyday practices. Media formats help communicate representations of the world, acting as delivery technologies, but they also help to shape visions of the world, providing new materials or technical tools and options to retrospectively construct the world. Then a musical culture stored and accessed through the internet will be qualitatively and, one may argue, quantitatively *different* from a solid, tangible musical archive (as the internet potentially allows for a novel, large-scale preservation of cultural archives). This difference in turn may indicate that the notions of 'transmission' and of 'culture' are unstable and relative, as they are partially determined by the technological means of a culture at a specific time.

Dematerialised music

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the record industry has known a rapid and unprecedented demise, mainly due to the (first unofficial, then established and seemingly irreversible) role of internet networks in the dissemination of dematerialised recorded music (mainly in the form of 'free' MP3 files). As noted by Hesmondhalgh (2009), 'the music business is the first major sector of cultural production to confront the challenges and opportunities offered by the internet' (Hesmondhalgh 2009: 58). The music business has been challenged in different ways. The most important change may lie with the unprecedented scale of the network of distribution, which reduces, or even possibly neutralises, the distance between different geographical points around the world. All music, it can be argued, may be available all the time. Another crucial aspect is the potential 'decommodification' (Hesmondhalgh 2009: 70) of music, which can be

(illegally) accessed for free through peer-to-peer networks or torrents. It is only through dematerialisation (or, more accurately, micromaterialisation) of the sound-carrier that music can become decommodified. The miniaturised size of the music object has periodically allowed it to escape, as it were, the industrial net.

The MP3 file challenged and certainly undermined the music *object* as it had previously and variously been constructed by the record industry (as a vinyl record, a cassette tape, a compact-disc). Indeed, the MP3 file, an 'immaterial' delivery technology officially created in 1992 (Milner 2009: 359), allowed for sound to be wrested from its physical 'shell' (be it the vinyl record, the tape or the compact disc). This, of course, does not mean that all materiality disappears: the MP3 file, in order to be read, relies on various softwares and the more general materiality of computers or portative devices (such as MP3 players and mobile phones). The digital format, as opposed to analogue, is 'easily transferable across distinctly different media platforms, it is easily manipulated and stored and remotely accessed and distributed' (Creeber and Martin 2009: 2). The digitisation of music had been paradoxically made possible through previous technological changes, exemplified by the introduction of the compact disc in 1981. It was because music had been digitised and distributed on compact disc that it became possible to transfer files into computers, and from there encode it as MP3 files (Kusek and Leonhard 2005: 4). From a technical point of view, digitisation means that sound can be 'translated into separate bytes consisting of strings of ones and zeros' and be 'stored on digital data carriers and retrieved from them in virtually unlimited amounts and at virtually unlimited speed' (van Dijk 2006: 191). The advent of digital sound marks the emancipation of recorded sound from the sound carrier. What this implies may not be simply, as Jenkins (2008) suggests, that 'delivery systems are simply and only technologies' which 'come and go all the time' (Jenkins 2008: 14). Rather I would argue that the medium of recorded sound is affected by the change of delivery technologies. Delivery technologies are not transparent, but also help inform the identity of both recorded sound and of the music listener or music collector, for a change of delivery technology almost inevitably involves a modification of existing listening habits and cultural practices. It may also affect the 'sound' of music itself. Thus the advent of portable music devices, and particularly the invention and consumption of the Walkman in 1979, has affected the nature of recorded sound (see du Gay et al. 1997). Music, as it was miniaturised by the new technology, became portable and consequently lost, in some cases, its primary connection with the house or indoors

space as prime locus of consumption (see Bull 2006: 146 about the domestic use of Apple iPods). At this point, we should remind ourselves that 'the dreams [of miniaturisation, transportability, access] associated with MP3 players are old dreams' (Sterne 2012: 11). As such, the impact or newness of digital technologies on the management of music in everyday life should not be overstated: digital technologies can be considered as an evolution, rather than a 'revolution'.

However I will maintain that even a slight change of technology, such as the digitisation of recorded sound, may entail a domino effect (to a lesser or bigger extent). A change of technology may thereby impact on the meaning and *politics* of recorded sound, and by extension recorded musical culture in its entirety. An obvious example is that the digitisation of recorded sound implies the *relocation* of recorded music. Digital music no longer requires a material space in order to be sold or stored. It follows that the internet can act as a limitless storage space for music, thus 'challenging existing market structures' (Gitelman 2008: 18). Conversely, the internet, as a virtual, boundless space, renders possible new structures and practices such as file-sharing (through peer-to-peer networks) or streaming, simultaneously redefining existing music-centred practices and creating others. These changes occur in relationship to machines and it may be that digital systems ultimately 'erase the very distinction between human and machine' (Gitelman 2008: 93). One may argue, however, that such a distinction is artificial in the first place – for the mechanical and technological worlds exist in continuation of the human world. Machines, which are conceived and built by human beings, are also used, appropriated, and often repurposed by them. It is worth noting that the internet was not primarily conceived as a medium for recorded sound (perhaps because the internet 'is not confined to one particular area of cultural expression' and may 'cut through all of them', Castells 2001: 200). It was only through the inventiveness of users that the prevalence of the internet in the distribution and dissemination of recorded sound was established. Napster, co-created by Shawn Fanning in 1999, was the first peer-to-peer network for recorded sound; widely-used by 2000 (Hesmondhalgh 2009: 60; Katz 2010: 180), it contributed to and 'signalled a major transformation in the way music was bought, sold, and shared worldwide.' (Duckworth 2005: 135). The peer-to-peer network was invented by two college students, who cannot be strictly considered as capitalist 'inventors' in the Edisonian sense. Indeed Napster contributed to financial losses in the record industry; and one may wonder to what extent it was profitable for its founders (Shawn Fanning was taken

to court and sued). Napster seems to emulate the ideal of a 'free' culture, a vibrant example of 'the hacker mentality of early [internet] users' (Poster 2001: 45).

The internet as a cultural framework

It may be said that every new medium brings with it a new reality, that is a new framework to experience the real. Every new medium may therefore partially define how a given society and culture exist, but also how cultures 'save themselves' and transmit themselves. Heidegger, in the 'Question Concerning Technology' (1954), elaborates on this point and explains that any vision, and thereby any future, destiny or pre-vision, of the world is determined by the means through which the world is apprehended. If one experiences primarily through the senses, secondly technologies come as prostheses for them. This extension of the senses through technologies is at the same time a re-vision of the world; but it is also a revelation. Furthermore what is revealed of the world through the technological frame (Heidegger calls this moment that of *Enframing*) violently determines what is hidden, that which remains unseen, 'un-felt' and 'un-sensed', and may become potentially dangerous. Even though Heidegger refers to mechanical machines and technologies (which, contrary to information or media machines, had direct effect upon matter rather than upon symbols), his thoughts can be applied to the realm of media machines. In the late 1970s, the advent of portable music devices notably created vivid debates amongst music scholars and cultural theorists (see Hosokawa 1984). Portable music devices exemplify how technologies do not only extend the senses but also alter the perception of space and time, allowing for different musical layers or colours to be 'superimposed' onto a given environment. Today's audio players (such as MP3 players or iPods) can be read as continuities of the Sony Walkman and other forms of personal stereos (Bull 2006: 131-149). They similarly allow for music to be deterritorialised, or released from a frozen site of listening (such as the domestic realm), and reorganised in a new geographical configuration, potentially allowing for 'a transformation and control of the user's everyday experience' (Bull 2006: 137). Portative music devices allow for listening to become a potentially 'ubiquitous' experience (Kassabian 2013). As there is a 'Walkman Effect' there is, one may argue, an 'iPod Effect' or an 'Internet Effect'. But effect might be too weak, or too strong, a word to describe changes which the previous advent of portable audio devices already anticipated.

It is safe to argue that a culture, with its core set of values and customs, is always dependent on a specific technological framework. Thus the internet and associated new media are the technological frameworks of the Western World. A culture is both delimited and limited by the technologies which make it possible. It determines something of a cultural essence which is not a technological essence (as the essence of technologies, for Heidegger, is to be found in their use and appropriation by human-beings). It determines both the relationship between human-beings and their spatio-temporal environments – past, present and future – and between human-beings themselves. However, even though each new technology induces new ways of perceiving the world, it should be underlined that not every new technology impacts dramatically or drastically on the way the world is perceived. There are varying degrees. What is more, the respective histories of each technology are themselves riddled with changes, each of them offering a more or less serious revision of the technology in question. It follows that, in the case of the medium of recorded sound, a delivery technology will certainly impact on the medium and the perception of sound as a whole – but it will impact in a subtle way. For the invention of the phonograph was the very first shock – changes in delivery technologies which followed were only new, diminished tremors. In other words, the possibility of recording, delivering and duplicating *sound* really signifies a change of perceptual framework. The subsequent changes in recording technologies are smaller variations. They have a more discrete impact. I will not propose a classification of technologies depending on their respective impacts and implications in the way human beings construct the world. I will simply insist on the imperative of nuance. Phonography, telephony, radiophony, photography or cinematography all simultaneously invent and reveal, in their own ways and through their own means, a hitherto unheard, unseen or unperceived aspect of the world (thus radically changing the perception and complementary representation of the world). Within each category, improvements and progresses matter but do not affect the initial 'revelation'. As such they do not threaten the paradigm of recorded sound, image or film. However I would argue that the internet precisely questions these paradigms. It may offer a new paradigm, or perceptual framework. In its turn the internet thereby becomes a tool for experiencing the world. But the most interesting aspect is that it does not render previous technologies obsolete. For example, it exists alongside phonography – but it impacts back on the phonographic tradition. It relentlessly infiltrates such a tradition, uncovering for example new futures for pre-internet recordings. It therefore

also exists as a continuation of the tradition of recorded sound, redefining and redeploying it, if only because it partially releases it from the constraints of space and time, and may offer a model of (possible) total dissemination. With the advent of the digital realm the adage that sound may survive space and time is strengthened. A new mode of enframing space and time is coined, that is to say that the politics of memory in the digital realm are different than in the 'material' realm.

'Toute la mémoire du monde' : the archive in a digital environment

Internet as an archive?

> two parameters in particular have a bearing on the archive: memory and transmission speed. Memory capacity is growing ever vaster and cheaper […]. As production capacities grow, so too does our ability to hold the massive amounts of data that are being produced. (Uricchio 2009: 139)

Departing from Uricchio's comment, one can safely say that one of the most striking aspects of the internet is its incomparable vastness and relative accessibility. Sexton notes 'we are living in an era of musical 'abundance', in which both historical and contemporary recording are increasingly accessible' (Sexton 2009: 99). As a repository and distribution system of information, the internet surpasses every archival medium which came before it. It is because it is not strictly or directly bound by material limits – even though there is a materiality of the technology, of the bandwidth, which requires an increasing compression of formats (hence the MP3 file for example). The apparently endless possibilities of the internet as a storage medium feed the (impossible) dream that all recorded sound will one day be available online. It might be that 'the long-awaited dream of a universal media distribution system is here, albeit in a perfectible form' (Prelinger 2007: 116). Sexton reminds us that 'since the advent of recording technology, the 'archive' of music recordings has continued to grow' (Sexton 2009: 99). A similar comment could be made concerning the internet, which allows for the global music archive to grow consistently and continually, and be accessed through dedicated databases or portals, either official or informal, commercial or institutional. Then, peer-to-peer networks, streaming websites, music video repositories, sound libraries, digital record labels, MP3 blogs, digital music retailers are all likely to store recorded sound.

The internet is an open-ended archive. It mirrors and anticipates the ceaseless stream of information, or live data, which characterises the early twenty-first century. Furthermore, to upload information on the internet means to save it: in other words the archive is constantly produced. Navigating the web is itself a systematically monitored and archived practice. The notions of information and memory, as shown by Stiegler (2009 [1996]) are inextricably bound, and even undifferentiated. Both information and memory borrow the same network of communication. As it is inscribed (written on a medium), information becomes memory.

When Castell speaks of 'information explosion' (2001: 90), he is indisputably close to Huyssen's perception of current times as a 'memory boom' (2003: 1). The notion of memory boom can be read in the light of Nora's idea that 'modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image' (1989: 13). For Nora, memory is essentially an external inscription. And perhaps the internet today embodies the ideal of archival memory, where every trace is *systematically* or automatically saved and potentially accessible (accessibility however does not mean that the trace is really accessed in practice). It seems that the idea of the internet as a museum is in itself a variation upon the dream that all human knowledge may be contained within an archive. This idea is not new and echoes past works of fiction (including in some of Borgès' fiction; see the short story 'The Library of Babel', 1941). In 1957, Resnais' documentary *Toute la mémoire du monde* [*All the memory of the world*] presented the Bibliothèque Nationale as an exemplary archive, overflowing with all the memory of humanity in the form of books. Resnais' library is a chaos of major and minor ideas, an irresolute intermingling of thoughts, facts and dust. The archive is an oppressive nightmare, a place where nothing is erased, and which is continually haunted by the past. But the internet takes further the idea of archiving all the memory of the world: it offers the idea of a *total and continual archive*. There are virtually no material limits to the internet, whereas the library inexorably depends on storage space: la Bibliothèque Nationale itself, which was initially conceived in the fifteenth century by Louis XI, was continually moved to bigger storage sites. What this notably means is that all information can be preserved in real time, without loss or decay. Furthermore this information is not only textual but also audio and visual. The internet does not only challenge the traditional archive: it can also represent, in its own rights, a new embodiment of knowledge and therefore new archiving and collecting practices. But as it comes to signify a new relationship to

knowledge it also impacts on the very conditions of our relationship, and access, to culture and to the past.

In an essay about the changing relationship between new media and traditional museums, Nina Simon formulates the idea of 'the Web as a history museum' (Simon 2011: 18). Such a museum would be permanently open, and contain immense, and immensely varied, collections. But Simon's fiction is after all a widespread idea, and may altogether be a reasonable projection. The Internet can be perceived as a vast, ever-growing repository of information or a database (see van Dijk 2006: 15; Castells 2001: 90). What we call 'information' can be defined both as content and media, the two being irresistibly intertwined. That is, information is equally recorded sound, images and video as it is immaterial 'knowledge'. There are no strict boundaries between contents; rather they can be all subsumed under the name 'information', if information is understood as that which travels through the network (in the form of strings and dots). Besides, whilst it may imitate and fulfil the functions of all delivery systems, from the record-player to the telephone, the internet also erases all differences between media. What I mean is that all media, recorded sound or film, even if they retain their respective formats, become information and borrow the same routes. They may all be accessed via several delivery systems such as the computer or the mobile phone. The logic of the internet differs from that of a traditional object to the extent that the internet is a total object (one apprehends it as an unbreakable block or stream rather than a selected, autonomous fragment). But the total object continually reforms and renews itself, as if mirroring its individual user. Then, as in the traditional library, every internet user borrows his or her own paths and uses the online archive to cater for his or her specific needs. And yet, the internet is also characterised by its continual expansion: it seems, at first sight, an inexhaustible resource, where one may experience the weight of the past, and where every passing minute, as it is instantaneously archived, adds to such a weight. In this sense, the internet functions as 'a self-archiving phenomenon' (Garde-Hansen 2011: 72)

The place of the internet

With the internet, traditional sites, or realms, of memory (such as the library or the museum) may progressively be displaced or dislocated, losing their specific traditions

of 'collection, curation, display and preservation' (Hartley 2012: 158). It is obvious that the logic, dynamics and politics, as well as the imperatives, of an online realm of memory are different than those of a physical one. The digitisation of information marks an erasure of a certain materiality, and therefore emplacement and material fixity of the *archive*, which can be understood, metaphorically but also literally as a place or a house. Steedman, after Derrida's 'Archive Fever' (1994), reminds us that the archive (*arkhe*) is, in the Greek city state, the place where the magistrate (*arkon*) resides and exercises power over the official documents of the city (Steedman 2001: 1). The archive, then, starts in and with the domestic space. It is located. But this definition, however accurate and resonant with the practice of libraries or museums, fails to take into account the particularities of the internet. Such particularities have been widely discussed, both in terms of theoretical and practical aspects, by contemporary archivists and scholars. The impact and relative accessibility, in the Western World, of the network has caused both enthusiastic and distressed discussions amongst the professional archivists, and the vividness of the debate is but another manifestation of the prevailing ambivalence towards the internet. Prelinger underlines that 'the twenty-first century archive faces the necessity of reinventing itself without pandering to the fashions of the moment. […] It must critically and tactically embrace emerging technologies that can be both friend and enemy and will likely continue to be disruptive' (Prelinger 2007: 118). In a similar vein, British Library's sound archivist Will Prentice insists that the notion of audio heritage should be reconsidered in the light of the internet (2012: 22). The British Library currently holds '25,000 recordings freely accessible online' and 'a further 25,000 recordings available to the UK higher and further education sectors' (2012: 22). Prentice notes that the role of professional archivists in the digital realm is yet to be defined. He suggests that the massive availability of sound recordings online may undermine the role and relevance of professional archives. Yet Prentice also ascertains that the function of the professional archivist resides in his or her expertise, that is to say his or her authority (knowledge). The professional archivist is still considered as an influent filter and culture-maker. But one may argue that the authority and knowledge of professional archivists may be influenced by, or completed with, user-generated knowledge.

In this regard, the idea of the modern archive, as it appeared in the nineteenth century (and was represented by libraries and museums), appears to be insufficient. It

cannot exactly or fully encompass a contemporary meaning. It may be that the archive itself, which is rapidly 'fleeing' from libraries, museums, and fixed geographies, is no longer what it used to be. The current attempts to organise some library or museums online as if they were only a transposition of the museum may indicate a nostalgia for the traditional archive. Music repositories and streaming music websites (such as Spotify, Deezer or Grooveshark) are also organised as albums, which act as visual and emotional reminders of the former delivery format. Thus the user is not estranged, but recognises, in the digital environment, typical and familiar patterns of representation. Bolter and Grusin note that 'since the electronic version justifies itself by granting access to the older medium, it wants to be transparent. The digital medium wants to erase itself, so that the viewer stands in the same relationship to the content as [she/he] would be if [she/he] were confronting the original medium' (2000: 45). It follows that the new medium gives itself as an illusion of the old medium. This might only be because of the period of transition and uncertainty which precedes the adoption of a new medium. But in the case of the internet, the resemblance between the old and the new medium is mainly an aesthetical and relatively shallow resonance, for a new technology '[defines] itself in relationship to earlier technologies of representation' (Bolter and Grusin 2000: 28). It can be argued that each new technology becomes, in contact with its users, what it is and what it means. Its meaning is never given but always formed and revealed in practice, 'worked out in a process of negotiations and interpretations, which happen in the specific context in which the technology is bought and used' (Hine 2000: 29). And yet, one should be careful and humble when dealing with the supposed novelty of digital archives. In effect, the claim of total newness (either inspired by fear or irrepressible hope) is striated with a certain violence. The assumption that the internet is both 'placeless' and permanent – thus existing in radical opposition to the traditional, situated archive exposed to the destructive work of time and bound to perish – are inexact. Internet archives are indeed situated and located, accessed at a certain URL, via a homepage, and via dedicated hardware. Internet archives, just as their material counterparts, are also potentially subject to abandon and neglect (either the neglect of the visitor or of the spontaneous 'curator'). These often impermanent and unreliable archives are likely to disappear (for example if the domain name is no longer paid for) or to remain nearly inaccessible (if it is poorly referenced in search engines). Boym insists on the uneasy relationship between new media and memory, claiming that new media might create amnesia: '[on] the blue screen two

scenarios of memory are possible: a total recall of undigested information bytes or an equally total amnesia that could occur in a heartbeat with a sudden technical failure' (Boym 2001: 347). For Boym, the digital archive is both too vast to be comprehended by the human mind, and too fragile. This is because the internet itself has its own fragile materiality and geography. Castells, rejecting the notion of internet as a placeless and purely immaterial realm, explains that

> the Internet has a geography of its own, a geography made of networks and nodes that process information flows generated and managed from places. The unit is the network, so the architecture and dynamics of multiple networks are the sources of meaning and function for each place. The resulting space of flows is a new form of space, characteristic of the Information Age, but it is not placeless: it links places by telecommunicated computer networks and computerized transportation systems. It redefines distance but does not cancel geography. (Castells 2001: 207)

Castells' argument is simple, yet extremely useful. The digital (that is, in most cases, *digitised*) archives are indeed 'generated and managed from places'. In most cases a digital archive originally relies on material sources. Digital archives might further face problems similar to those encountered by 'classical' archives, albeit in slightly different forms and configurations (in terms of electronic storage place or potential corruption of the files for example). In other words, both traditional and digital archives often coexist (as it is the case with British Libraries whose sound recordings are held both physically in the Library and on the dedicated website). The archives can further be supplemented by users. The British Library for example has an official website, as well as a channel on the online video repository YouTube (where some of the sound archive material is being posted). The video website engages users to post their own comments and cross-reference the videos, and a YouTube video can also be duplicated and embedded on websites and blogs.

It might be tempting to read institutional archiving against the grain of extremely recent, popular and spontaneous forms of 'archives' such as YouTube. It might be more prudent and more realistic, however, to read institutional archiving in conjunction with spontaneous, non-professional archiving. In their joint analysis of YouTube, Burgess

and Green note that 'this idea of YouTube as an archive has significance for the prospect of widespread popular co-creation of cultural heritage supplementing the more specifically purposeful and highly specialized practices of state-based cultural archiving institutions like public libraries and museums' (2009: 88). Of course, 'archive' is used here in a rather loose meaning. If the traditional archive aims at rigor and selectivity, I will see that YouTube, which is an accidental archive, is based on very different grounds.

The tension between professional archivists and popular, untrained 'archivists' is palpable, yet the two types are far from irreconcilable – if only because they do not systematically deal with the same type of material: 'YouTube functions as a media archive where amateur curators scan the media environment, searching for meaningful bits of content, and bringing them to a larger public (through legal and illegal means)' where 'collectors are sharing vintage materials' (Jenkins 2008: 275). Jenkins also thinks of the early twnty-first century culture as a 'convergence culture'. This suggests that the frontiers between archiving institutions and popular archives may increasingly be blurred, with institutions and individual users sharing the same platforms. The video repository YouTube may be a significant turning point in the notion of 'archiving'. The term 'video' should not strictly be understood as film media – rather, it has been extended by users so that YouTube may be a place where popular, institutional and commercial practices coexist, their differences subtly eroded as YouTube is also a uniform interface (Hartley 2012: 58). My interest lies particularly in the popular and informal collections. In the next section, I will think about the ways in which YouTube, as a repository of digitised music objects, redefines and revives the materiality of the music record.

Popular collecting: YouTube as an unstable music archive

Collecting Sarah Records online

The video repository website YouTube, launched in June 2005, may exemplify the emergence of a new trend in popular collecting practices. YouTube, which was not primarily intended as an archival website, has been conceived by a fringe of users as a place for sharing music, through official or homemade music videos. In 2011, YouTube had become 'the third most visited site after Google and Facebook' (Garde-Hansen

2011: 80). Uploading videos can be seen as an example of popular collecting. 'Collecting' here is used in a loose and primitive sense, that is of putting together or gathering material. 'Collection' will be used as that which 'materialises memory', thus being 'a prosthetic medium, supplementing the human brain's limited capacity for storage' (Kieckhefer 20??: §5). If YouTube has become, amongst other things, a 'default media-archive interface' (Garde-Hansen 2011: 80), it is essentially due to its malleable, porous and unfiltered interface aimed at individuals, institutions and corporations alike. YouTube is now the strict 'product' of its users; it is an unstable and unreliable space which undergoes changes of size and quality every minute. The website can be understood as a 'massive', 'heterogeneous', 'accidental' and 'disordered' archive (Burgess and Green 2009: 88) of material, mainly (but not exclusively) uploaded by individuals.

Because it is as yet free to upload content, some users create an archive of the forgotten, of the neglected – using their personal vinyl collections in order to resurrect bygone phonographic moments. It is extremely difficult to quantify such a phenomenon. A general search with 'Sarah Records' as a keyword displays a bit less than 3000 results (accessed on the 17/10/2012). This is a rather modest total if one believes, as advertised by the website, that every day about forty-eight hours of videos are uploaded by users.

An American Sarah Records' fan has a YouTube channel mainly dedicated to his record collections (each of his videos presents itself as a 'Vinyl Update'). He posted a seven-minute long video about Sarah Records on the 10/05/2011 (<http: //www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSC3SRDiPJo>), which has received so far the attention of more than one thousand users (a relatively low number). The video primarily features the fan delivering a personal story of Sarah Records, using records as visual and aural props (see Figures 21 and 22 in the Appendix). He is filmed against rows of shelves, stacked with what appears to be thousands of vinyl LPs. Also visible is a reel-to-reel tape recorder (see Figure 23 in the Appendix). The amassed records, along with the vintage tape recorder, help contextualise the fan, as they personify knowledge and expertise (the quantity of records, in a rather simplistic equation, may be seen as representing the extent of his knowledge). As the fan speaks, one can hear music released on the Sarah label playing in the background. He speaks, undisturbed, over the music (explicitly suggesting that his voice is more worthy of attention than the actual

music) and starts his video with an address to his viewers, encouraging them to leave feedback on his videos. Early in the video, the fan asserts in a modest tone that he does not own many Sarah products, though he later displays in front of the camera a rather impressive collection of vinyl records (including the second 7-inch released on the Sarah label), memorabilia (newsletters, posters) and a few CDs. This display is accompanied by the constant use of the verbal expression 'I have' (uttered fifteen times in eight minutes) – which duplicates, in language, the ownership of the object. Rather simple comments on the music are also given (following the pattern 'I like'/'I love'/'this is good'). The collector also provides quick words of description, contextualisation and personal information; the records evidently act as biographical landmarks (the name of a record shop he used to go to is referenced as well as former music-listening habits). Another video of a similar type can be found at the URL <http: //www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5tlq1M4OyY>. This video looks much more amateur than the previous one: the framing is awkward, probably because the video was filmed with a webcam. The fan's face remains invisible – it is off screen – and his torso is hidden by a stack of LPs (see Figure 24 in the Appendix). His hands quickly go through the vinyl records numbered Sarah 21 to Sarah 30, in their order of release, as he comments, sometimes humorously (Brighter is 'gentle to the point of somnolence'), upon each of them. Surprisingly, no music accompanies the video. What is displayed is the sheer visual trace of the owned records. This suggests that it is not so much the music than the fan which is being broadcast here (in accordance to the motto of YouTube: 'Broadcast yourself'). Furthermore, the video is inwardly-faced. Other videos posted by the two users discussed above mostly relate to their record collections, which are staged and literally 'acted' in front of a camera. YouTube, in these cases, functions as a means of authenticating the assiduous and early fan; it gives an evidence of both existence and ownership, for the images of the records act as proofs. The words of Baudrillard (1968) on collectors illustrate such practice: the collector ultimately collects and reifies himself, capturing his image in film as he captures the images of his belongings.

The videos show how Sarah Records has belonged, and still belongs, to a culture of images, and is realised in images (both the diverse images of Sarah Records owned by the collectors in the form of objects, and the actual images of the collectors themselves). The images of the record sleeves, their photographs, are embedded in the flow of the video. Barthes, in his writings on photography, asserted that '[w]hen we

define the Photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not *emerge*, do not *leave*: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies' (1981: 57). The comparison with the butterflies is helpful in the record-collecting context, where the images of the records resemble the motionless butterflies held in display cabinets. The photographs on the record sleeves are similarly preserved through time, and the act of filming them simultaneously captures them again in an enduring manner. One feels entitled to argue that the videos are used to fixate or reveal a mythology (which can be a mythology in the making). They validate a rumour or a legend, that is to say they make visible and clearly audible what might only have been heard of, and never actually visually encountered. On the one hand, the videos present the non-fans with a documented introduction to Sarah Records. On the other hand, they reinforce the status of existing fans, allowing for them to exchange impressions and memories with each other (through cross-posted videos and comments). It has to be underlined that no other micro-record label of the era benefits from the same exposure on YouTube as Sarah Records (for example, nothing or very little can be found concerning related or similar labels such as the Bristol-based Subway Organization and Tea Time Records, or even the bigger Newcastle-based Kitchenware).

The presence of Sarah Records on the internet is further established through a dedicated, authoritative website, seemingly started by one of the label's founders (accessible at <http://home.clara.net/koogy/sarah/>), which provides extensive information about all the Sarah Records releases (see Figure 25 in the Appendix). There is also a Sarah Records wikipedia page, related pages to individual Sarah bands as well as countless blog posts (some of them allow their users to illegally download the official Sarah material). This digital presence of an eminently analogue record label seems to indicate that Sarah Records has been constantly informed by the indefectible enthusiasm of fans. Fans' fidelity to Sarah Records has exceeded the label's lifespan. More than twenty-five years after its creation, new fans of the label are continually recruited amongst younger audiences (as the label's catalogue has benefited from CD reissues and is widely available in a digital format, and the audio can be streamed on dedicated, legal or illegal, websites such as Spotify or Grooveshark). The internet has helped in gathering and structuring the community of long-time and new fans. YouTube and other websites (especially blogs) are important means of redeeming and singling out obsolete objects which otherwise might have remained buried in scattered, inaccessible record

collections around the world, and 'the language of mining, free-content scavenging, sifting, discovering rich seams of information, digging and hidden gems permeates [or continues to permeate] how the past is viewed from a digital culture perspective' (Garde-Hansen 2011: 79). The online presence of the label makes it somewhat less of a 'secret', though it can paradoxically also reinforce its cult value, as it establishes hierarchies between fans (evidencing early fans who 'own' the now hard to locate material).

It may be argued that YouTube fills the same function (though it is different in practice) than earlier fan forums. Previous ways of linking fans have included the original Sarah newsletters (1987-1995), contemporary fanzines, the first electronic mailing list (Shalala, 1998-2000), and several dedicated online discussion boards. All of these spaces have encouraged informal discussions about the Sarah label, its bands and its catalogue. They have also often been places where fans traded their material. YouTube should therefore be understood as an extension of these former platforms of expression; its current dynamism mainly shows the durable proactivity of the Sarah fans (ever since the early days of the label). However, as we have seen, YouTube simultaneously offers additional possibilities, mainly because the exchange of material is no longer limited to written material but can also be aural and visual. It is nevertheless possible (and even probable) that the central role currently occupied by the video repository website is of a transitory nature. Fan interaction and engagement has proven to be quite permanent in the last twenty-five years, yet the forms and technological infrastructure which support them have continuously varied over the course of time.

Remediating the phonographic medium

The Sarah Records example is telling enough of a practice of *remediation*, that is of 'heal[ing]' and 'restor[ing] to health' (Grusin and Bolter 2000: 59). At least three cultural practices, each associated to its own technology, are woven into the final video, e.g. that of video-recording (the digital camera or mobile phone), record-playing (the HI-FI system) and uploading (the computer). This is resonant and consistent with the words of McLuhan in *Understanding Media* (1964): 'the 'content' of a medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph' (cited in Bolter and Grusing

2000: 45). What is at stake here is a complex inter-relation between several types of media, each embedded within the other. On YouTube, the content of the music video is the medium of recorded sound, and the medium of the image (the vinyl record is a visual representation of recorded sound). Simultaneously the content of the internet cuts across platforms and is a variety of media, acting as a zone of convergence (Jenkins 2008) for otherwise distinct types of media. It is because 'the computer can simulate all kinds of classical mechanical machines and media, such as a typewriter, a sound recorder, or a device for the montage of images' but 'it has some unique medium-specific characteristics that justify the claim that it represents a new stage in the development of media' (de Mul 2009: 99). The example of YouTube is an excellent example of remediating, fulfilling a lack. It first remediates the medium of the television, allowing users to selectively broadcast their own 'quotes' from the pre-existing audiovisual culture, arranging them according to their own taste, allowing for them to write sequels, or combine different quotes into one final product. But when YouTube is used in combination with other media, such as recorded sound, it also allows for a repairing of the visual lack implied by phonography. Filming a record-player implicitly signifies that the record-player has to be looked at. It becomes a visual landmark and not simply a sound-reproducing device. Grusin and Bolter insist that 'each new medium is justified because it fills a lack or repairs a fault in its predecessor, because it fulfils the unkept promise of an older medium' (2000: 80).

Bolter and Grusing have theorised all New Media as spaces of remediation. Expanding on McLuhan's idea that 'the 'content' of a medium is always another medium', Bolter and Grusin explain that a new medium is the place where the older medium is being revived, or revised: 'each medium promises to reform its predecessors by offering a more immediate or authentic experience' (Bolter and Grusing 2000: 19). The concept of remediation is useful to measure the diverse changes which affected sound formats, as well as the common features shared between these formats. MP3 files can be seen as logical successors to compact discs, which – as they already contained digital information – allowed for another step towards further sound compression and miniaturisation. Compact discs themselves had previously provided listeners with the experience of a 'clean sound', unspoilt by the accidental surface noises which characterised previous analogue formats. Compact discs aimed at perfect sound reproduction, that is *high fidelity*. The theory of remediation almost too easily sits with

the myth (arguably coined by the phonographic industry) that each new recording technology is 'better', and thereby more desirable, than the former one. In reality, and from a purely aural viewpoint, MP3 files are not an audiophile format. If 'compressed recordings, technologically speaking, are a step backward' (Milner 2009: 354), then high fidelity is almost an outdated, or old fashioned, notion in the light of compressed recordings. Digitisation is essentially an exercise in reduction and discarding. It follows that a digital file made from a compact disc, whilst it seeks to give the illusion of fidelity, discards between 80 and 90 percent of the music which was contained on the original CD (Sterne 2009: 357). And yet, compressed audio files also allow for a better manipulation and mobility of sound recordings. The case of the MP3 file shows how a less sophisticated sound reproduction technology can paradoxically command and enable a wider range of uses.

On a primary level, Bolter and Grusing rather simplistically argue for a *genealogy*, and lineage, of media, each medium engendering a new medium. One can almost perceive technological Darwinist undertones in the idea; for it seems that only the 'fittest' media survives and gets improved. For Bolter and Grusing, 'media' and 'delivery technologies' are two interchangeable terms. Their definition of what a medium is remains ambiguous (they call medium, alternately, the technology of representation and the representation itself, recorded sound and its container). Theirs is a porous, dynamic genealogy of media which suggests, much in the McLuhan fashion, that media are neither technological tools or content, but rather a hybrid between machine and meaning, means and message. The richness, and broader applicability, of the concept of remediation is paradoxically enabled by rather blurry and unstable definitions. In other words, Bolter and Grusing create a flexible space of interpretation.

It is indisputable that the notion of remediation is notably too systematic and too wide to truly encompass hybrid (but important) media. As pointed out by Rabinovitz and Geil, it then excludes a variety of hybrid media (such as film) because it cannot recognize their 'intersection' with other media, including radiophonic ones (Rabinovitz and Geil 2004: 3). Remediation produces 'a linear history of transitions from cinema to television to hypermedia, the World Wide Web, and virtual reality' (Rabinovitz and Geil 2004: 3). It gives an illusion of logical evolution and progress, and more or less inscribes itself as 'a teleological history of the media' (Rabinovitz and Geil 2004: 4). Remediation may propose itself as a historical fiction or construction of the past. It

poses the past as a smooth, unproblematic space. But isn't it in the nature of media to 'muddy the map' (Gitelman 2008: 4), that is to *remain*? A transformation implies that something of the past medium still striates the new medium. Remediation does not sit well with the idea of coexistence of different media, constructing them as autonomous but vertically interdependent (genealogy) rather than mixed and horizontally interdependent (a rhyzomatic approach). A way to correct this would be to think of media as simultaneously vertically linked (improving on each other) but also as existing in a horizontal relationship (one 'borrows' properties from another). For example, the MP3 walkman can be conceived of as a direct descendant of the cassette walkman, borrowing its small size, functions and attributes, but also as a 'neighbour' of computer technologies (the MP3 walkman contains digital data, and the device has to be connected to a computer for music to be uploaded). Then, for each medium, there are at least two affiliations: one to the past media, and another to contemporary media. An archaeology of media cannot be complete without a geography of media. Each medium adds a new layer to the history of recorded sound, but every medium simultaneously exists on a technological map. In practice this means that old media are still accessible, and liable to be excavated and used.

As pointed out by Gitelman: 'like old art, old media remain meaningful' (2008: 4). But an old media, even if it can still function in the present, cannot perform accurately the 'job of representation' (Gitelman 2008: 4) which is expected from it. What this means for Gitelman is that old media (she gives the example of acoustic analogue recordings) are simply useless today. They do not satisfy the needs of the times. However old media, especially if they are largely considered as obsolete by society, can still be reclaimed and made meaningful. Sexton insists that 'the ascendance of digital has not eliminated analogue; rather, it has shifted the ways in which some cultural actors value and interpret analogue equipment as it takes a minority position within the contemporary audioscape' (2009: 100). In such a case, there is indeed a 'remediation' but the remediation is not of the medium *per se* but of the meaning. The distinction is important: to reclaim the meaning of the medium is to reclaim not a simple technological 'form' but a more complex and more immaterial ideology and praxis. This is to say that the technique, which embodies a past historical moment, can be used as a critical tool against the present technological paradigm. Gitelman understands media as direct, material ways into the past. She argues that 'media are […] historical because they are functionally integral to a sense of pastness. Not only do people

regularly learn about the past by means of media representations – books, films, and so on – using media also involves implicit encounters with the past that produced the representations in question' (Gitelman 2008: 5). In this sense, using a record player or listening to records in the digital age can be seen as a direct comment on digitality. Nostalgia for old media is not necessarily, or not simply, retrograde: it can also be understood as a form of critical nostalgia. It expresses the difficult tension between analogue and digital, past and present sites of representation, past and present representations. It also underlines that the past can still live in the present, and 'represent' it; even if what it represents, through the old technological device, is the present seen from the vantage point of the past – thus underlining the incommensurable distance between past and present (the strange incompatibility between the two). This distance is also a gap or a divide: a space where critical discourses are formed and crystallise.

The idea of remediation, for all its flaws, is a rich, multi-layered proposition. It should be read not for its technical assumption (which claims that the new medium systematically represents its predecessors), but rather for the speculative space it opens up. In a way, a remediation is also a *redemption*. It is entwined with the romantic belief that the past may appear, in a Benjaminian sense, in a retroactive flash of signification. Remediation offers the dream that the old delivery technologies are likely to recast the past in the present, not as a still image, but as a dynamic one. And there might be, in the old playback technologies, revelations of the future. The obsolete or semi-obsolete delivery technology, such as the vinyl record, has now acquired an auratic dimension. Benjamin defines aura as '[a] strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close it may be' (Benjamin 1999: 159). In the early stage of its life, the record - a mechanically reproduced form – lacked an aura of originality. It was merely another mass produced object, another symbol and symptom of a capitalist industry. And yet it may now be that, as digital reproduction is progressively replacing mechanical reproduction, the record has become an auratic object. Mechanical reproduction, which corresponds to a specific, previous stage of the industry, is a signifier of history. It indicates that which has disappeared; and the vinyl record performs an era and an age which can only be retrospectively seized as *original*. It is because the aura is apprehended visually that the video format is its most efficient carrier. The video, for all its closeness, is untouchable. It translates absolute distance.

Random images and found music objects

One can find various examples of YouTube videos, realised by amateurs, showing a 7-inch or LP record released on the Sarah label, spinning. The record is being filmed and the sound is recorded from a personal camera, thus incorporating not only the music itself but also the sound of the room in which it is being filmed, and perhaps that of the user too (his or her voice introducing the record). The video is an essentially visual means, which restores a 'lost' relationship between the aural and the visual. Corbett actually suggests that the invisibility of music is what makes it an object of fetishism. He then affirms that 'lack of visual, endemic to recorded sound […] initiates desire in relation to the popular music object' (1994: 37). Corbett is concerned with the strategies developed by the music industry in order to bridge the (real or perceived) gap between image and sound (1994: 38). He thinks of the record sleeve as an adjunct to invisible music, for music relentlessly produces, as it is played, its 'own visual lack' (1994: 37) which needs compensating. He further insists on the crucial centrality of the physical record shop, where 'records are generally arranged to engage the consumer sensually: in order to find the desired object one does not just read the titles on their spines but must look through and touch many others' (1994: 39). In physical record-collecting, a sense of the visual is important: for example, one can assert the condition of a vinyl record by looking at the microgrooves, in order to detect possible marks or scratches. The defects of the record may be understood as 'the vestiges of the image in sound' (Corbett 1994: 41). Corbett's analysis has to be taken cautiously, and may only correspond to a specific mode and specific historical moment of music consumption amongst collectors. Moreover, music which, according to Corbett, produces its 'own visual lack' may also produce its own images, and listening may become a filmic experience where the listener *imagines* music, literally transforming sounds into images (Eisenberg 2005: 206). However Corbett's assumption may be partially founded; and can explain the commercial success in the mid-1990s of music television channels such as MTV, a strategy for 'resolving the basic audio/visual tension' (Corbett 1994: 39). It may be argued that YouTube, because it can be used in a personal, non-commercial way, allows its users to revisit and reinvent the paradigm of the music video. With YouTube, an older structure of displaying (the still image) is combined with the more innovative practice of filming. A personal video is an address to future viewers and a

memory sign, both existing in the projection (the future viewers) and a memory (as the time of recording is always past).

Sobchack (2004), in her writing about the digital video-player QuickTime, has explored at length the analogy between the small video box, house for the QuickTime 'movies' (fragmentary, stuttering videos created by users, which were widespread in the very first years of the twenty-first century), and "memory boxes", a term she borrows from the sculptor Joseph Cornell, used to define his random-access 'boxed relics' (Sobchack 2004: 306). Of course one has to keep in mind that many degrees of intention separate the unique work of art from the digitally-reproduced amateur videos (which, in the case of YouTube, are primarily envisioned as practical means of sharing music rather than artistic manifestations). And yet, as Sobchack insists, video boxes, accessed randomly, are also 'memory possibilities'. Then, one may adequately liken the video database to 'a vast and boundless maze of images and sounds, dreams, and visions in which one follows, backtracks, veers off, loses oneself in the multiple trajectories, all the time weaving tenuous threads of association in the logically endless teleology and texture of desire' (Sobchack 2004: 311). Such a language is that of the collector, yearning or longing, as in the words of Susan Stewart (1993), for undefined objects of desire, or that of the flâneur strolling the (digital) avenues of the flea market (as epitomised in André Breton's *Mad Love* [1937]), looking for images and objects he or she does not yet *desire*, but will recognise at first sight. YouTube in such an instance can function as an immaterial flea market or gigantic display cabinet (of music), each video opening as one drawer, its contents being displayed by a mouse click and accordingly 'viewed', and streamed. A YouTube video can also be accessed, perhaps even more randomly, through a link on a website or as an embedded video on a website. Two main modes of accessing a YouTube video seem to exist side by side: either one knows what he or she is looking for, and YouTube acts as a 'find engine', or one drifts from one video to the other, using the 'related videos' search engine. In the first case, one may be unsuccessful in his or her initial research: the coveted video may not have been uploaded, or it might have been removed (due to copyright infringement). An embedded video might in turn display nothing but a black and mute screen, or a static message from YouTube (such as 'This video has been removed because of a copyright claim made by a third party' or 'This video has been removed by the user'). A strong sense of improbability and chance are involved in the pursuit of a video. The keyword 'Sarah Records' is sufficiently vague to allow for unforeseen associations, unknown

content and rare songs. YouTube may therefore elicit and systemise involuntary or accidental memories. It is the realm of the found objects, those objects which – as described by Breton – differ from what was pictured in imagination, but are nevertheless *recognised* in the accidental encounter. Found objects, according to Breton, give flesh and reality to fantasies, dreams and desires. An archive of found objects is an archive in the making, yet to be uncovered.

In more prosaic terms, one can think of the video website (and other similar video websites) as an eminently unreliable archive of *possibilities* or an 'accidental archive' (Burgess and Green 2009: 87). Hartley (2012) is adamant that a new framework has to be conceived in the light of new technologies of storage and retrieval. The previous models, as embodied in the 'modern archives' of the nineteenth century (the museums or the libraries) and 'post-modern archives' of the twentieth century (broadcast television systems) do not function anymore; they are challenged (and possibly remediated by) a third model which Hartley calls the 'global network system' (2012: 159). Whilst the modern archive (or 'essence archives') were centered around the idea of 'objectivity', sustaining 'a *mechanical* relation between the real and its representation' in the physical space of the museum or the gallery (Hartley 2012: 159), 'networks archives' or 'probability archives' (such as YouTube and the Internet) are

> organized around the concept of *probability*. They are digital, contain virtual objects, and propose an *uncertain* relation between what you see and what you get. The *user* co-creates content that may or may not be real. The archives aims for universally accessible and (re-) usable content. (Hartley 2012: 160)

As well as a probability archive, organised around 'found objects' (Hartley 2002: 166), YouTube may be deciphered as an inter-subjective archive, assembled cooperatively and with complete disregard (or ignorance) of professional archiving principles. It conflicts with, and revises, aspects of the archive understood as a place and space 'made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there' (Steedman 2001: 68). The second part of the definition provided by Steedman, that is the accidental 'mad fragmentations' from the past, could actually describe YouTube contents. But the first part, where an archive contains a selected and frozen number of documents, does not correspond to the digital archive. The probability archive is forever

changing. The users are not passive readers or researchers, but also creators of data. The archive is exclusively made of 'mad fragmentations', which Burgess and Green correctly identify as 'quotes' (2009: 49). The content of YouTube is fragmentary and relies on citations of pre-existing cultural artefacts (a song, for example, or a scene from a film as opposed to a whole album or a whole film). However one can also find whole albums or films on YouTube. It may be argued though that YouTube primarily encourages browsing and quick passage from one video to the other, each video being framed by other 'related' videos (or the website as a whole) rather than by the album which was its original context of existence.

The material screen of the computer or the mobile phone separates the visitor or 'user' from the fetish of the tangible record (being understood as a visual object). It can actually be said that the initial fetishism for the recorded music object shifts to a fetishism for the hardware (phone, computer, portable music device) instead, and the storage space they may contain (as clearly shown in advertising for portable music devices). Thus what is embraced is the *possibility to archive* rather than the actual archive or, in the case of YouTube, the number of music videos, their interrelationships (or intertextuality). However, for all its 'newness' the probability archive shares characteristics with more traditional forms of display and fetishism. For example, the screen which separates the audiovisual object from the viewer operates a role similar to that of the glass which, in display cabinets, allows the individual to see the object without touching it. Furthermore, images also tie in the most typical rhetoric of collecting, which is that of display. For example it is frequent to find pictures of collectors photographed in front of their collections (or, alternately, holding a particularly valued item from the collection). Many examples of such photographs can be found in *Incredibly Strange Music (Volume I)*, a 1993 book dedicated to American music collectors. The music video, identified and 'signed' by a username, is also a self-promotion tool.

The use of audiovisual websites as archiving media is too recent to be considered as a solidly established or rooted practice. However it may be seen as the initial flicker towards a specific form of 'e-archiving' or 'e-collecting'. It is impossible to predict the future and longevity of YouTube, which is primarily a commercial enterprise, and, because it was not intended as a public archive, has strictly no

responsibility or obligation towards the preserving of the data uploaded on the website. Indeed,

> Most of the comprehensive online video sites are also controlled by large corporations […]. It is quite likely that the ownership and content profiles of major online video sites will soon mirror the corporate taxonomy of the entertainment industry. This means that the quasi-archival functions fulfilled by online video sites today may be regarded as temporary. (Prelinger 2007: 116)

The archive is precarious, deleted and created on a daily basis. The content of YouTube is controlled and videos which breech copyright are removed (YouTube has very strict rules and terms of use). It is, as Garde-Hansen notices, the duality at the core of YouTube which makes it such an unreliable archive. On the one hand, YouTube serves the users, as it 'provide[s] cheap data storage and ease in terms of searching, retrieving and turning data into new representations to be uploaded' (Garde-Hansen 2011: 105), giving them the opportunity to express themselves in an apparently unconditional and sympathetic (or 'friendly') way. On the other hand, YouTube limits and severely restricts its users, as it can 'entrap them in legal issues they never encountered with the old media' (Garde-Hansen 2011: 105), caused by the dissatisfaction of record, film and television companies (however, copyright infringement is arguably as old as copyright itself, and both the music and the audiovisual industries have a long history of bootlegs and unofficial releases). It is worthwhile noting that the YouTube user is encouraged to act as a YouTube moderator or 'police', 'flagging' videos which are against YouTube policy and thus serving, for free, the legal and economical interests of the website. YouTube may even become, in the long term, more surveyed and controlled as the number of its users (and potential 'spies') increases. The YouTube user serves the interest of YouTube in a number of other ways. For example, he or she may promote and consolidate official videos (posting or cross-posting them, in a viral fashion), unknowingly increasing both the material profits of a business and its immaterial influence. Archival media footage is under a permanent threat – not only because it may infringe copyrights and may be removed, but also because it is likely to be lost amidst a sea of non-archival, commercial material (such as trailers for new films, or mere advertisements). YouTube appears as a confused, almost undecided or undefined, space which may metaphorically remind one of the disorganised cabinets of curiosities of the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These cabinets, which have often been hailed as the ancestors of museums, were actually far removed from them. They offered no order whatsoever, but functioned as aggregates of 'stuff' or accidental treasure troves, providing disparate visual wonders (Pels 1998: 104).

Looking at music

The internet, as it is 'accessed' through the medium of a screen (be it a computer or a mobile phone's screen), is primarily a *visual* space, a place where texts and images are appropriated through vision rather than through touch (van Dijk 2006). This prevalence of the screen – which resonates with Baudrillard's understanding of contemporary culture as 'a culture of the screen' (Poster 2001: 135) – should not necessarily impact on music listening. Sound is by essence a volatile and invisible medium. And yet, as we have previously mentioned, the advent of recorded sound and its various storing formats transformed music into an object one could visually and tactilely possess. The case of music-collecting evidences how music can be constructed as an object-based practice and amassed in a unique, physical archive: the personal collection. On the one hand, phonographic technology allowed for music to become a tangible object. On the other hand, digital technology made music into an even more elusive object. Digital music, though it can still be owned, bought and amassed, is resolutely impalpable (money as well as music can be considered as a virtual good, which nevertheless can be owned and earned, lost and spent). In other words, the late twentieth century has witnessed a clear shift from a physical representation of music to an ungraspable representation (mainly visual and accessed through a screen) – it should not be forgotten, however, that in both cases the representation is 'only' a representation, music lying before or beyond the representation, steadily escaping its fixed boundaries. Digitisation has divorced sound from the object, thus breaking down the capitalist analogy where an album was both a graspable object (for example a vinyl LP) and a set of fleeting songs. The graspable object had its own properties. Material such as paper or cardboard would impose creative limits, and determine the size and shape of artworks. A record could be a visual and textual space as well as an audio one. A collection of records would take room, and a collector had to live *with* and *around* his or her collection, sharing the same physical space on a daily basis.

The MP3 in comparison is a weightless format. It is compressed to the point where it is barely material, and barely takes any room. However, digitisation does not strictly remove the image and the text from the sound. It can simply offer a digital reproduction of the original artwork, a practice which is visible in websites for streaming music. One may think that artworks will remain an important feature of digitally distributed music (precisely because of the visual nature of the internet and of advertising; see Straw 2007: 13). Gitelman compares users of the World Wide Web to 'the students in an art history lecture who sit facing a screen and consuming slides of prints of paintings as if they were the actual painting themselves. Students know they are not seeing real paintings, of course; but the habitual contexts of display suggest otherwise' (2008: 126). Perhaps the same could be said of users who stream albums online, absorbing the images of artworks. But the comparison is too superficial and little of it survives a deeper analysis. Where the art object Gitelman refers to is by essence unique in space as well as time, music artworks are always already reproductions. Through mechanical reproduction artworks exist at a large-scale. Digitisation then is only a *different* form of reproduction. As such digital artwork does not replace 'real' or authentic work: a digitisation of artwork is another degree of copying. What it copies however is the experience and notion of an album as a tangible object or self-contained entity. Nevertheless, the *appearance* of a record on a computer screen is not to be compared with an encounter with a three-dimensional object, even though the 'contexts of display' are similar. Gitelman's words carry with them echoes of Walter Benjamin – the nostalgia of Benjamin for the aura of unique, irreproducible objects which one '[confronts] in [their] immobility in an act of contemplative respect' (Poster 2001: 64). Her discourse is historically situated, and one may argue that the 'habitual contexts of display' will soon vanish and be replaced with a new set of 'habitual contexts'. Similarly listening to traditional music objects may be a disappearing or marginal practice; whilst listening to music online may become a widespread and dominant practice. The internet influences practices of listening. The digitisation of music initiates a change in the reception of music. The disappearance of tangible objects simultaneously impacts on other aspects of music-centred practices. What is the relationship of the digital music object to temporality? What does it say about history? What is collected in a digital music collection?

E-collecting and the life of digital files

It is difficult to believe that a digital file, which is a fluid and elusive object, enters history and temporality. No layers of dust or patina are added to the digital object, no cracks alter its invisible surface. In his article about digital music collecting, McCourt claims that 'through their immateriality, digital files cannot contain their own history. Unless they are burned onto a CD, they have no physical manifestation. No history is encoded on their surfaces, since they have no surfaces' (2005: 250). The prevalent idea is that of MP3 files as indestructible, *perfect copies forever*, existing in the eternally new digital environment. In reality, MP3 files also age and change with time: they are likely to break down, fail and become illegible (Sterne 2012: 235). MP3 files *do* enter temporality. However they may not be able to (symbolically) structure and represent their owners' lives as traditional material music objects do: they cannot act as personal landmarks or external signs of the passing of time. It is notably because digital objects do not immediately bear the traces of their users and owners. Digital objects are not damaged after repetitive listening. The parasites and dust which corrode them are not physical. The MP3 file is barely personal or exclusive and a corrupted copy can be easily replaced.

Hesmondhalgh has underlined 'the relative accuracy and ease with which digital recordings can be copied and circulated' (2009: 59). The fluidity of the digital file encourages its proliferation. The digital file circulates in a logic of speed and virality. It can be duplicated indefinitely, existing simultaneously on millions of connected computers. An MP3 file is not unique, but always a copy with no original as it were, as 'digital data is easier to manipulate [than analogue data], and the end result can be reproduced indefinitely without any loss of quality' (Creeber and Martin 2009: 2; see also Katz 2010: 184). The regime of digital proliferation has implications in music-collecting: 'because virtual music files take up far less physical space than previous formats, it is easier for consumers to collect more music than previously, a process hastened by those who have taken advantage of the amount of 'free' music obtainable through the Internet' (Sexton 2009: 100).

It might be argued that what was collected and treasured in a pre-digital environment was the specific record, the object, the *fetish* of music – and the personal narrative the collector would attach to each finding. Furthermore, the object, a tangible item made at a certain point in history, would immediately enter and translate temporality through progressive, but ineluctable, decay. An already owned object, for

example a vintage vinyl record, would bear the physical traces of the passing of time. Eisenberg said of records that they contain musical as well as historical time (2005: 37); the patina, aging, and aura of decay of the recorded object can be seen as an evidence of its life. The record collector bears many resemblances with Benjamin's book collector, finding in old objects traces of former owners – perhaps a name written on the inside cover or on the central label – seeking for past worlds encapsulated within the microgrooves. For the vinyl record (which contains the sound of music) also contains, in every hiss, bleep or scratch written on the surface of the vinyl, the grain of time. The MP3 file offers no trace of a former user. The idea of a second-hand market for digital music seems slightly incongruous. Indeed, the digital file either 'works' or does not 'work': it does not age progressively. It is worth noticing, however, that a USA-based commercial website, ReDigi, allows its users to resell their MP3s for a discounted price – a case which has led to many debates about the 'nature' of digital objects. It is evident that a digital object does not enter temporality or space in the same manner as a three-dimensional object does. A digital object, it may be argued, does not *gradually* change. The MP3 file can be erased in one second, or may be made obsolete by a new format.

The emergence of digital audio files impacts on the politics of collecting, and its correlative, that of *owning*. I am using the term 'owning' independently of its monetary or commercial implications, for audio files may illegally be appropriated and collected for free (Sterne 2012: 214). Benjamin has written that 'ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects' (1973: 69). A special link is therefore formed between the owner and the object. In this reciprocal bound of possession, the object is physically possessed to the extent that it (psychically or emotionally) possesses its owner. Benjamin depicts collecting as an obsession and an act of self-construction. But traditional discourses on collecting are no longer fully valid in the digital realm, primarily because collecting no longer relies on the physical existence of an object in the world. It is interesting to read pre-digital accounts on collecting, for they show us that the figure of the 'collector' varies across time and is entwined with a technological and historical framework. It might be suggested that each phase of the capitalist development is dominated by certain types of consumptive, and thereby of collecting practices. There have already been changes in collecting practices, from the early twentieth century bourgeois collectors depicted by Benjamin (a type which for Benjamin was disappearing) to the popular collector (Martin 1999), up to the 'digital' or

'electronic' collector. The latter may no longer seek to redeem history. However one figure should not be too abruptly read against the other. Contrasts in collecting styles and practices partially depend on changes in technologies (for example, the popular collector becomes prominent with the mass-production of objects). Furthermore it is obvious that these types may survive, and coexist. However I would argue that each type of collecting tells of a specific relationship to memory and culture, and the technological means that enable and formalise such a relationship. Cardinal wrote that:

> To collect is to launch individual desire across the intertext of an environment and history. Every acquisition whether crucial or trivial, marks an unrepeatable conjuncture of object, place and moment. In its sequential evolution, the collection encodes an intimate narrative. (1994: 68)

Online collecting collapses the traditional context of encounter and acquisition. This is because the online realm constitutes a new spatiotemporal framework for human experience. Contrary to cities (and physical places of consumption), which are regulated by the fixed rhythm of night and day, the internet knows neither. It is continually accessible, and therefore encountered and experienced as a flow rather than a fixed environment. Online collecting also collapses the specificity and irreplaceable quality of the items contained in the collection. Digital music objects are files, easily duplicable and easily accessed. A narrative might be preserved and might underpin the digital collection, although the collection is 'not […] beholden to the autobiographies of individualised artefacts' (Fletcher 2009: §26). However it is not necessarily a narrative of the particular finding but of the general encounter with a file-sharing network for example. It follows that the 'sequential evolution' which characterizes the collecting process is replaced with an immediate, and rapid, accumulation of digital objects. The collecting process is thereby accelerated and, one may say, neutralised or normalised through technological means. For the audio file has no characteristics of its own. Audio files which have been accumulated through peer-to-peer networks or online music shops are not differentiated but rather formally identical. They are singularised by a name, but made identical by a presentation, a context of display and of playback (every file is part of a list or a playlist, and is identified by the extension '.mp3'). The notion that a music collection is absolutely unique and unrepeatable no longer holds. First of all, the digital music collection is entirely constituted of 'pristine' copies. Secondly, the collection

itself can be duplicated, and reconstituted, at any given time (providing that one remembers what it contained). It can exist on several interfaces simultaneously (for example, a hard drive and a portable music player). Collecting music in the digital realm then is not a place-based activity in the traditional sense. It does not necessarily involve relentless hunting. In the most developed countries, it is not necessarily limited by spending power either (as audio files can be illegally accessed for free). Rather, what is fetishised in the digital collecting process, is not the uniqueness of the object, let alone the thrill of ownership, but perhaps the mere accumulation, the flux, the 'speed with which [audio files] travel from their corporate origins to [computers]' (Dibbell 2004: 287; see also McCourt 2005: 250). This fetishisation of speed is in itself a central feature of contemporary everyday structures; it is largely embodied in other areas (including fast transport systems, fast-foods or supermarkets). As such it predates the internet. Corbett, as he pondered about the meaning of compact discs, had already noticed the primordial role of speed in digital technology. Drawing from Virilio, he writes:

> With the CD, there is no "here" or "there", no material space, only digits [...]. As the increased speed of the spinning disc blurs its materiality (already concealed), so the instantaneousness of access erases the last metaphor of travel and territory. The technology that allows for the mass standardization of noise-free playback involves a shift in the status of the operative playback object, now immaterial and virtually invisible. (Corbett 1994: 42-43)

In many ways, the compact-disc anticipated MP3 files, a format which is even further removed from the eyes of the listener, and even more ungraspable. The age of the compact-disc can be seen as the age of transition between the material music object (the vinyl record or the tape) and the immaterial one (the MP3 file). It embodies the moment of 'transformation from analog to digital' (Kusek and Leohnard 2005: 4). The digital format does not offer a valorisation or visualisation of history. What is enhanced is rather the present moment of access, the immediacy of it. And it is worth noticing that speed cannot be 'owned' or fixed; it carries music with it. It is a stream rather than a fixed section. One may argue that the collector of speed then values music as a flow (a *stream* or *a torrent*) and not as a thing. In such a case, access to music replaces ownership (Kusek and Leonhard 2005: 4). It has even been suggested that 'collecting

without exclusivity, without ideality and perhaps without ownership is both the utopian dream and feverish nightmare written within the material paradox of digital music' (Fletcher 2009: §26). Implicit in Fletcher's formulation is the idea that the collector may be erased from the collection, his or her personality and autobiography effaced from it (in other words, the collection is no longer a means to 'collect oneself'). And yet a collection deprived of its owner might be, as Benjamin suggests, without a meaning or a frame: a mere accumulation of unreadable, unorganised data. I suggest that digital collecting does not necessarily eradicate more traditional collecting practice. Indeed the internet might even paradoxically reinforce object-based collecting practices. On the one hand, it enables the digitisation of pre-existing material music objects. On the other hand, it enables the circulation and re-dissemination of the material culture of music, notably through online second-hand markets. It can thus reinforce place-based and object-centred collecting practices (see Hines 2000: 144). As such, digitisation does not suspend the circulation of material objects in the world. The success of eBay – arguably the 'world's largest online market' (Hillis, Petit and Epley 2006) – attests to this attachment to three-dimensional objects. The immaterial or digital flea market that eBay constitutes contains real objects, seized through photographs and textual descriptions.

> One irony of the eBay community […] is that this "no place" created for exchange revolves around the trade of material goods that are contextualized and given meaning within actual geographic places and communities. Thus, eBay is a virtual community predicated on recirculation and reconfiguration of the material objects that form part of and signify place-based communities. (Lillie 2006: 95)

Second-hand markets: the digital flâneur

Immateriality is indisputably constructed in relationship with materiality – *meaning* lies in the tension between the two. As Gitelman writes:

> unlike the once startling power to capture, to materialize and differently commodify sound, what often seems so startling about digitization and distributed networks is their supposed power to *de*materialize and differently commodify information. But like invisibility, dematerialization exists only in

keeping with its opposite. Any putative dematerialization […] can only be experienced in relation to a preexisting sense of matter and materialization. (2008: 86)

On another basis, the Internet is not a 'placeless' place. It is, of course, intangible. But it relies on layers of materiality and of geography, as Castells (2001) underlines:

The […] space of flows is a new form of space, characteristic of the Information Age, but it is not placeless: it links places by telecommunicated computer networks and computerized transportation systems. It redefines distance but does not cancel geography. New territorial configurations emerge from simultaneous processes of spatial concentration, decentralization, and connection, relentlessly labored by the variable geometry of global information flows. (Castells 2001: 207)

Castells especially analyses the importance of online commerce – but the study could be extended to include online institutions – which generate traffic and hold information or goods, either for sale or not. In the case of electronic commerce the goods, which appear as two-dimensional images on a screen, are meant to reintegrate the material world. They are only seized for a short amount of time in a 'image' form, before being brought back into the world, through a process of exchange. I will focus on the example of the auction website eBay to underderstand how the Internet increases the *flux* of materiality rather than dissolves it. I will see how eBay as a place of digital drift or flânerie (to use a Benjaminian term). I will also see the website as a transient archive, and a place where the lives of formerly mass-produced recorded objects are recycled and recovered. From there I will understand eBay as a synecdoche for a largest second-hand culture (Crewe and Gregson 2003) which encourages a certain type of music-making and research practice. The eBay paradigm operates a blurring between memory and materiality, as they are embodied and entwined in the capitalist commodity. It comes as no surprise that eBay should be frequented by music collectors. Even since 1901, the record industry has continually marketed a flow of new recordings and new objects, creating what can be appear to be an immense memory – in the form of a material repertoire – of music. The record industry created an immense *material culture* of music, now ossified in myriad 'kitsch' objects (Benjamin 1927) which litter online

and physical second-hand markets of the early twenty-first century. Old records, without an owner, may be redeemed or totally forgotten, left to decay entirely. Benjamin was certain that old, discarded objects – embodied memories of earlier eras and technological ages - could be redeemed and resignified through a new ownership. This clearly appears in an advertising campaign for eBay, whose caption was 'What is nothing was ever forgotten?' (Hillis, Petit and Scott-Epley 2006). What if no music was ever forgotten, but constantly in the process of being found or encountered in the course of a *digital drift*?

The internet can be used as a place for nearly infinite drift or flânerie. It is, in its current state, a disorderly space where contents are scattered, search engines unreliable and databases themselves possibly incomplete. It is also a place of erasure and disappearance, of expired webpages and 'broken' weblinks, impromptu connections, hazardous linking. I believe that there is a particular practice and use of the internet which is reminiscent of the Benjaminian *flânerie* or Debordian *dérive* – a mode of losing oneself, endlessly, in hypnotic contemplation. One gazes at the screen, and may follow links with no necessary logic, only for the pleasure of being lost. One accidentally stumbles upon content. A song may lead to a video which may itself lead to a text. On the internet information is continually side by side, the trivial as well as the essential – sometimes assembled randomly by the capricious fantasy of a search engine. And users, with or without willing it, may experience the internet as a maze. *Flânerie* is encouraged by the infrastructure of the network: it seems to be an in-built characteristic. Some commercial websites such as YouTube or the auction website eBay, which was founded in 1995 (and launched under the name 'Auction Web'), incorporate the aesthetics and politics of the search engine in their interfaces. They encourage users to find what they are not looking for. But whatever the initial keyword entered into the search bar is, one is bound to find something else. One may even chose to browse categories or randomly wander from link to link. Linking possibly helps in constituting the internet as a revised material space. Wandering from image to image, from soundclip to soundclip, that is, experiencing music visually as well as aurally, paradoxically reinforces or suggests the pre-existence of an object. The material object is referenced, and condensed, within the picture of a record sleeve (similarly, the e-book continues to explicitly contain the book).

Digital wastelands

The market for second-hand records itself is only possible because of the commodification of music in the form of objects throughout the twentieth century, which led to the present saturation of recordings (Milner 2009: 12). It may be said that the massive availability of second-hand records encourages the production of 'second-hand music' – music made increasingly from sampling, recycling, rearranging the existing repertoire of recorded sound. This is furthermore encouraged by digital recording technologies, arguably easier to access and to manipulate. Sexton notices that:

> Contrasted to traditional skills involved in playing a musical instrument, the creativity of many electronic music producers often lies in their ability to find, imagine and then skilfully *rearrange* existing cultural artefacts. (2009: 93-94).

The making of 'second-hand music', that is to say music relying on existing sources, cannot be fully understood in terms of nostalgia. Rather, it may derive from an impulse to save and preserve the available material, by transforming it into something else. The logic is therefore not that of displaying but of 'playing' the past, until the past is so buried that it becomes perfectly inaudible and unrecognizable. Playing the past is also a form of possession or appropriation ritual. It inscribes or re-inscribes a sense of ownership over an object or a set of objects. In their study of second-hand cultures, Gregson and Crew (2003) have elaborated on the ways in which individual relate to second-hand goods. They distinguish between three forms of possession (recovery ritual, divestment ritual, transformative ritual). Whilst a recovery ritual aims at recapturing a perfect image of the past and a divestment ritual seeks to erase the past from the good, a transformative ritual is a 'process of alteration or repair, which quite literally make a commodity one's own' (Gregson and Crew 2003: 144). Sample-based music can be understood as a rewriting and modifying of the original record, which nevertheless remains 'heard' or felt beneath and beyond the transformation.

The 'vinyl archaeologist' or 'crate digger' is best understood then as a rag-picker or gleaner rather than a historian. This implies that he or she looks for what is useful, and sonically relevant to a given personal project. Historical value is a secondary concern, if it is a concern at all. The rag-picker, who relentlessly gathers remainders, scraps and leftovers, is not a new figure in the history of capitalism. Walter Benjamin had recognised him in the figure of the poet Baudelaire – haunting the streets of big

cities in order to find, in the vestiges of capitalism, a 'gold nugget'. I argue that the record-collector similarly reviews the commercial throwaways in the hope of finding pieces to recover, reuse and reinvest with meaning. The romance of collecting is therefore not silenced but revived by eBay. The difference is that the collector does not wander the streets of a city but of a digital city. The rag-picker now haunts a virtual megalopolis, occupying digital flea markets rather than physical record shops. Indeed it is worth noticing that, because of the failure of the record industry to adapt to the digital realm and the increasing availability of 'free' recordings, the record shop is increasingly digitised. Many record shops which had previously existed in cities can now only be browsed online.

However not every record collector makes music with collected records. Collectors collect for different reasons. One of these reasons can be historical interest, for the history materialised and evidenced in records might 'subvert' canonical or official constructions of musical history. eBay is as much a celebration of capitalism as it is a revision and reviewing of capitalism and its redundant leftovers: 'binding together otherwise isolated interests, [the Internet] reconstitutes viable markets from market fragments' (Straw 2007: 3). eBay is also an archive of the unwanted and the neglected, which are likely to find new users, as the website targets micro-markets and caters for extremely diverse consumer demands. eBay may locally be a waste-site, offering for sale the useless or outfashioned material production of more than a century of capitalism. The auction website literally renders visible (through its structure of display) minor historical seams, obsolete trends or forgotten moments, in the form of discarded artefacts from the past. In an argument echoing with Straw's notion of 'exhausted commodities' (2000), Trodd stresses that:

> junk becomes a counterhistory, a potentiality. eBay […] can be a site of alternate history-making. Its shifting and dynamic archive is a storied store that renews the old cabinet of curiosities' archival tradition and rewrites the nineteenth-century gendered polititics of the archive. (2006: 88)

On the one hand, eBay function as an archive where contents can be quickly 'scanned', before disappearing – for the history that eBay displays through objects for sale is only transient and renewable, eminently accidental (Trodd 2006: 88). Content is constantly being renewed, removed and effaced. On the other hand, eBay paradoxically

materialises the forgotten, the trivial, the debris and bric-à-brac of capitalism. One may even think of eBay as a means through which the past and present flows of capitalist goods are negotiated. The auction website is, ironically, another embodiment of capitalism. Hillis explains its success in the following words:

> the West fetishizes the exteriorization of memory onto objects, and the kind of culture of collection that eBay supports also depends upon the importance of objects to memory processes, of objects as traces of the past or the material real that help buttress a claim to personal authenticity and a sense of self that endures over time. (2007: 170)

What this implies is that eBay is only possible because of a pre-existing commercial infrastructure of memory, which Stiegler refers to as a 'industrialization of memory' (2009: 99).

Armchair collectors

In his article about collecting and eBay, Neely (2008) similarly celebrates the new paths opened by eBay in localising material for research. Neely, a scholar and collector of Jamaican *mento*, explains that

> Because a breadth of otherwise "lost" historical artifacts began appearing online, my research and collecting habits changed dramatically. Materials that once were scarce slowly became available in quantities commensurate with the scale upon which I had suspected they were originally mass-produced. My collection of mento music grew quickly and cheaply because I could dig from any computer terminal without having to spend the time and energy working through flea markets and stores. (2008: 101)

If travelling, in the pre-digital era, has traditionally been an integral part of collection-building (see Chapter 3), the advent of digital music marketplaces such as GEMM (founded in 1994) and of auction websites has drastically challenged the notion of the collector as a geographer; it has in the same way undermined the physical traveling of the ethnographer for '[v]isiting the Internet focuses on experiential rather than physical

displacement' (Hine 2000: 45). eBay for instance both repeats and replaces, or 'overwrites', the experience of the traditional flea market – one can effortlessly lose oneself whilst browsing objects without having to engage with the physicality or geography of the flea market. It is therefore likely to suppress direct, physical encounters and reduce social interaction as it translates primarily social acts into individual, isolated ones. However a certain degree of sociability might be retained in online record collecting where:

> the vinyl collector, armed with a personal computer and access to the Web, can pursue the targets of their interest in a global marketplace drawing on an informal network of vinyl hunters who search for their prey in the dense jungles of secondhand pop culture artifacts. (Davies 2007: 223)

 It may be argued that rare material, such as *mento* or niche recordings from distant spatiotemporal sites, may now primarily be localised and acquired through specialised online platforms (including marketplaces, auction websites or less corporate trade lists) rather than flea markets or physical record fairs. This is mainly due to the relentless decline of offline independent record shops. In such a context, the online marketplace seems an easier and quicker way of acquiring rare material – providing that one is ready to pay the high price for it. In effect, as the internet has made the material more available, it has also made more accessible the value of some recordings, and it has probably been involved in a general levelling out of the prices for some records. A good example of this is the website popsike.com which, acting as an archive of past auctions, provides auction results for more than four million record auctions conducted on eBay since 2004. Popsike.com may (often implicitly and informally) be used by both online and physical record sellers to decide which price to ask for some of their second-hand records (AbeBooks fills the same function for second-hand booksellers, who refer to the website in order to price some of their printed material). On the internet, the rarest recording may indeed feel less rare and less remote, as one can enter its title in a search engine and be, in some cases, gratified with a list of corresponding items. The website Discogs for example functions as a super-record shop for it gathers, as eBay does, a variety of worldwide sellers (see Figure 27 in the Appendix). Discogs, founded in 2000, is exclusively dedicated to the sale of music objects and paraphernalia (one of its section is also dedicated to digital downloads in the form of MP3 and WAV files). A

search for Sarah Records material (on the 21/01/2013) immediately offers more than five hundred items for sale, mainly vinyl records (375 items) and compact-discs and even one flexi-disc, whose prices range from £5 (for a copy of the Orchids' *Unholy Soul* album on CD, released in 1991) to £300 (for the Sea Urchins' 'Pristine Christine' seven-inch record, which has, in its quality of first release on the Sarah label, acquired a cult status). Sarah Records material is unsurprisingly sold from the United Kingdom, but also Italy, France, Germany, Japan or the USA. The suggestion that online commerce reduces or suspends social interaction is balanced by the structure of the website. In most cases, the customer has to email his or her address to the seller to finalise a transaction. As a matter of fact, Discogs (as many other marketplaces) is simultaneously a social network, which allows its members (music collectors) to upload lists of their record collections and encouraged them to review their music or trade their items (Discogs is potentially international, yet it is in practice dominated by English-speaking users). As notified on the website, 'the heart of Discogs is a user-built database of music. More than 140,000 people have contributed some piece of knowledge, to build up a catalog of more than 3.5 million recordings and 2.5 million artists' (<www.discogs.com/about>, accessed 21/01/2013)(see Figure 26 in the Appendix). Websites such as Discogs (these also include eBay or GEMM, an American website launched in 1994 as a music marketplace) displace but do not radically modify the experience of music collecting, as one continues to browse records (even though they are images on a screen), acquires them through mail-order and, upon reception, duly unwraps them as one would do with a record purchased in a more usual way (it may be argued however that online commerce is becoming, in developed, digitally-literate countries, no less usual than off-line commerce). The presence of relatively active online music shops indicates that ways of interacting with real objects have been multiplied rather than reduced by the internet. Discogs and similar music-centred marketplaces simultaneously allow users to take, at least visually, a measure of the immense diversity of past music releases, and offer consistent back catalogues for thousands of record labels. What is for sale or sold is at the same time archived.

Commenting upon online consumptive practices at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Hine observed that '[r]ather than displacing the sale of books the Internet is helping their distribution to thrive and the revolution of the Internet has turned, for the time being, into a new kind of mail order' (2000: 3). The model described by Hine

remains valid and resonates with the recirculation of tangible music objects through online markets (a recirculation which parallels their circulation as digital files). The vibrancy of online commerce may indicate that the dematerialisation of music creates an increased need for material music, and not simply in the form of portable music players and associated hardware. Whether this tendency is likely to disappear or not is impossible to assess. One may suggest that to an extent the hypervisuality of the internet only imperfectly makes up for the loss of three-dimensionality. Less romantically, online commerce might also be due to a persistent capitalist and fetishist mindset, that of *buying* material goods, including cultural goods, in order to furnish or fill one's physical or mental scape. Indeed, even if ultimately three-dimensional music objects cease to be exchanged, one can safely assume that money will not. Hesmondhalgh writes that the dream of dematerialised music coincides with a dream of demonetized music and that it 'can be seen as a partial decommodification of music' (2009: 70) – and yet he is also deeply aware that '[d]igitalisation and other recent developments have brought about a further proliferation of ways in which wealthier and time-rich consumers can experience music' (2009: 70). He also connects dematerialised music with new ways of re-commodifying music. One may think for instance of the (legal) online music platforms such as Apple's iTunes, where one can purchase digital music files – a dematerialised commodity. In addition to this, the digital flânerie itself is after all an anomaly or side effect, provoked by the relative lack of organisation and coherence of the internet as it is now. Digital flânerie might be made impossible with a revision of the internet structure, and disappear as an eminently accidental practice. It is understood that the life of a medium cannot be predicted. However it can be interpreted. It is worth noting the general trend towards a more organised and structured internet, in the form of a semantic web (or Web 3.0).

The Semantic Web and the database

The Semantic Web can be simply defined as a better organised, and thus more relevant, internet, offering an easier accessibility to information through 'cleverer' or more predictive search engines: 'the Semantic Web offers huge amounts of structured and linked data about various different kinds of resources' (Baumann, Schirru and Streit 2010: 1). The Semantic Web relies on a uniform system of metadata (data encoded invisibly in every file and webpage) to allow for the precise localisation of information,

and the interlinking or harmonisation of these metadata across different datasets. What this suggests is that accidental or spontaneous archives may be only a phase, or moment, of the internet. As explained by Abburu,

> Getting the required songs from voluminous collection with good recall and precision depends on good annotation, indexing and retrieval techniques. Among this annotation plays a vital role in developing an efficient and effective retrieval system. Tag bases annotation or the low level feature based annotations retrieval systems performance is very poor, though the processing is very simple. Semantic concept based annotation, indexing and retrieval techniques are trying to fill the gap between the machine understanding and the human preferences. (Abburu 2012: 8)

The Semantic Web may have impact and implications in digital music-collecting. Metadata can contain very precise indications. Other than the expected names of the performer/track/label, additional metadata can include the instruments played, 'mood' of the track, the city where it was recorded, the date when it was first published. It will be possible to find almost instantaneously the track one is looking for. But a semantic web also encourages not a retrospective collecting (one collects what he or she knows), but a predictive collecting, based on sophisticated computer-generated 'recommendations' (and already seen on websites such as LastFm). It is not impossible to picture a collecting practice entirely dependent on carefully-organised online content. The model of Semantic Web reinforces and radicalises the definition of the internet as a database, and of music as data:

> To make the Semantic Web function, it is necessary that computers have access to structured collections of information as well as sets of inference rules that can be exploited for automated reasoning. A fundamental technology for developing the Semantic Web is the Resource Description Framework (RDF). (Baumann, Schirru and Sreit 2010: 4)

Indeed, 'with the advent of the "Semantic Web' which is forecast to organize vast amounts of data through the internet, a number of closely monitored and protected

independent web databases appear to be taking shape' (Kieckhefer 20??: §11). The database, which exists as an external repository of information, also signifies the threat of loss, and the fragility of prosthetic memory. Derrida (1995) has famously described the 'archive fever' as a simultaneous urge to destroy, erase and forget. It may be argued that loss is always already embedded in a systemic and systematic organisation of information. Another concern is that classification excludes or evacuates that which cannot be classified, the way writing (defined by a norm and a grammar) systematically erases the stutters of language.

Conclusion: the lost web

> The history of emergent media […] is partly the history of history, of what (and who) gets preserved – written down, printed up, recorded, filmed, taped, or scanned – and why. (Gitelman 2008: 26).

There is a crucial paradox between the archiving possibilities of the internet and its permanently changing structure. Each new available information or data modifies and redefines the internet both in terms of its content and of its 'size'. But a saving system such as the internet can also be a system of lost and misplaced data. First, it is because such a mass of information cannot be processed by the individual user. It cannot be grasped, and the quality of available search engines and tools is, so far, insufficient. There are then vast, asleep repositories of information that are not accessed, but lie in the depths of the 'opaque' or 'invisible' web. In order to be located, content needs to be indexed properly. Furthermore a lot of information simply disappears, when for example the URL of a website is no longer secured and paid for. The online archive can be, or threaten to become, a place of ghosts, when the website falls into abandon or oblivion. It may be argued that the internet will become, with the passing of years, littered with inaccessible information, unusable formats, trivial, irrelevant documents – an immense cemetery which echoes, albeit in an immaterial form, the material cemeteries of capitalist production. The Western world, now saturated with objects, might be simultaneously saturated with digital files and data, as information are being produced permanently ('we are in the midst of an information explosion', wrote Castells fifteen years after the use of the internet had become widespread, 2001: 90). In a context where speed is crucial, the internet has become the ultimate repository for information

which is no longer identified by specific, autonomous points, but by a flow or a flux which circulates quickly, continually and almost effortlessly, and may reach a far broader audience than any previous communication media. The internet is clearly a technology of mass communication (Castells 2001: 5) and it was born in an information-driven context. However, drawing from Debray's distinction, it is possible to think about it as a technology of transmission and not simply as one of communication. The place it occupies in everyday life enables us to consider the digital realm as a crucial place where knowledge, power and memory are negotiated. In many ways, informatic technology is also a mnemo-technology, for it allows memory to be 'technically synthesized', and thereby objectified (Stiegler 2009 [1996]: 97). It allows memory to traverse time and space through technological means.

In other words, informatic technology can be seen as a specific mode and form of writing (Stiegler 2009 [1996]: 108), that is of externalising memory in order to displace it in both time and space. However only what is effectively preserved can be transmitted. And, paradoxically, only what is effectively preserved can be effectively erased and forgotten. Drawing on Derrida, Kieckhefer points out that there is

> a structural problem with the use of any medium as a prosthetic: its use carries the price of atrophy in the organ it supplements. Because the "artificial memory" of archive material is mediated – because it is not immediately accessible – it tends to represent at the same time an extension of memory and a reification of forgetting. (Kieckhefer 20??: §9)

How can preservation of digital content be guaranteed through years? The concern does not lie with material preservation but with maintenance of the digital archive. And, as a file is likely to be erased after a failure of the system, online archives are not exempt from being 'deleted'. The discourse of newness attached with the development of the internet tends to mask a more history-orientated discourse. It would be necessary to also think of the internet as a place of the past, or for the past. It has become evident that the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century culture is increasingly saving itself online. The internet thereby can be compared to other mnemonic machines; it contains and preserves material for further access. The question of access is however a crucial and complex one, for it is strictly bound up with the commercial nature of the internet. Furthermore, in order to be decoded or unpacked,

digital information needs specific softwares and a certain level of computer literacy. What would need preserving is both the software and the format. This means that the MP3 file is useless without the associated device to play it back. As Sterne (2012) has noticed in his study dedicated to the MP3 format, digital audio files are not protected against the course of time. They are likely to disintegrate and be lost to future listeners, for they require a playback mechanism. Without such a mechanism, they 'simply cease to exist as audio' (Sterne 2012: 229) and become mere shells for dead, irretrievable information. Real Audio files for example, a widespread format in the mid-1990s, are now utterly obsolete. Of course, one may argue that this is the case for any music format. It is obvious that a vinyl record or a tape cannot be read without the associated retrieval technologies. The main issue with digital playback devices is their extremely short life cycle (Sterne 2012).

Linked to the potential loss of MP3 files, another concern is that the internet, a fast-changing technological environment, is only sporadically conceived of as a place where human memory can be stored and preserved. This is especially valid in the case of popular music preservation. There is still some reluctance from archival institutions to embrace and formalise popular (mass) culture in a consistent archive, and it may be argued that the 'popular collector' (as defined by Martin 1999; see Chapter 3) is not equipped with sufficient archiving knowledge or tools to preserve his/her collection in the long run. Sterne has speculated about the life and future of MP3 files, only to draw relatively pessimistic conclusions. He predicts that:

> There may one day exist an MP3-based music archive; but for now the best hope that anyone's collection will be audible in ten, twenty, or fifty years is that for whatever succeeds the MP3, backward-compatible hardware and software continue to be available. The collections themselves will also disappear over time from neglect, since hard drives fail easily if they are not used for a few years, and everyday users are not nearly as careful as archivists in their backup practices. (Sterne 2012: 230).

The MP3 file is a temporary, replaceable format, better suited for the everyday consumption of music (notably via portable music-players) rather than for its preservation. It is a practical, miniature and interoperable format which participates into

the logic of communication rather than that of transmission. Within Debray's mediological framework (2000), the horizon of transmission is the distant future whereas communication leaves no traces, only ever impacts on a near future, and only exists in the immediate situation of communication. In other words, transmission denotes a historical concern whereas communication is a preoccupation of, and for, the present. It is yet too early to draw conclusions, but the MP3 format may be partially unsuited, in its current form, for cultural transmission. The digital world contains its own manner of transience and ephemerality, best exemplified with the relatively short lifespan of web documents. It is correct to underline that 'change […] is a paradoxically consistent feature of the World Wide Web. And that causes particular difficulty for the various users and uses of electronic documents' (Gitelman 2008: 132). With digitisation, some problems of traditional archiving are definitely solved (for example, problems of storage place or of the degradation and erosion of material objects) – but new problems emerge, linked with digital storage place, the possible and 'in-built' failure of retrieval software, and the more general transience of the internet. As a system, the internet is still broadly defined by its possible futures. Whilst predictions are impossible to make, it might be worth summing up two major trends: the complementary poles of permanence and loss woven into the fabric of the internet.

On the one hand, the internet can be deciphered as the ultimate mnemonic technology: it makes it possible to save virtually anything and could become the means to archive, catalogue and disseminate 'all of the world's music, all of the world's recorded sound' (Sterne 2012: 230). This does not mean that such archiving ventures do not exist. Where relatively recent recordings are concerned, however, there is no systematic preservation: they are solely, and increasingly, uploaded and 'rescued' by popular archivists, who use commercial platforms such as YouTube. The lack of archiving by institutions is notably due to more complex copyright issues, and the commercial, industrial underpinnings of music production in the course of the twentieth century.

On the other hand, this means that the internet, as a prosthetic memory, also signifies the risk of forgetting, of effacing. It might be no surprise that one of the digital archivist's concern is to avoid 'rewriting' over files. Derrida has shown how writing, the primitive externalisation of memory, simultaneously supplements human memory and threatens it, as what is written does not need to be remembered. Writing is in turn a poison and a remedy: a *pharmakon* which cures the disease of forgetting, as it

formalises it. In other words once an information becomes universally saved and captured in an external form, it ceases to be privately owned and subjectively experienced. Obviously one can say that there is a permanent and fruitful tension between remembering and forgetting: the omnipresence of computers and other memory machines does not automatically trigger general amnesia. For ultimately memory aids are used by human beings, and appropriated by them. The main problem would therefore lie with the way computers are used rather than with any in-built default. The presence of vast collections of information online may dispense from learning such information. What is more, 'the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event' (Derrida 1995: 17). What this means is that only a certain type of information is retained on the internet, precisely that which the internet determines: online contents may be visual, written or audio, but they remain two-dimensional objects. Material memory objects, however, exceed digital space.

Conclusion. The Afterlife of Music Objects

> Most of the information we have acquired in our relatively short presence here has fallen into oblivion. Not only documents turn to ashes and buildings into ruins, but most previous cultures have hardly left a trace. (Flusser 1999: 203)

> In the disappearance of small things, I read the tokens of my own dislocation, of my own transiency. (Aciman 1999: 22)

> One day or another, it is true, dust, supposing it persists, will probably begin to gain the upper hand over domestics, invading the immense ruins of abandoned buildings, deserted dockyards; and, at that distant epoch, nothing will remain to ward off night terrors, for lack of which we have become such great book-keepers… (Bataille 1929: 31)

The main aim of this research, interdisciplinary from the outset and drawing from a broad range of music, media and cultural theorists, has been to situate recorded sound within broader contemporary discourses on memory and mediation, technology and cultural transmission. I have sought to clarify and explore the links between tangible and digital music objects, collections and recollections as well as the particular socio-technological contexts within which such questions arise. By examining specific record labels and specific time-bound configurations or constructions of material culture within the history of recorded sound, I have been able to map various aspects of the music object in the course of time.

In this concluding chapter, I provide contextualised conclusions as well as more general conclusions, outlining complementary areas where the ideas developed in this thesis may find further applications. As such, the question of music objects in the museum (which was briefly touched upon in Chapters 3 and 4) is more directly addressed to revisit the issues of cultural memory, archiving and mediation raised in the

thesis. Pervading the entire thesis, though, is the awareness that the music object and its materialities are ceaselessly changing, thus resisting easy categorisation and localisation. On the one hand, the music object inhabits myriad places of memory: it may be found in carefully-built personal collections, representing a particular item in a record label catalogue, or encountered in physical and digital sound archives or museums where it functions as a cultural memory trace. On the other hand, it may be lingering anonymously in forgotten places, existing as a debris of capitalist production caught in defunct markets. But the music object is by no means irreversibly attached to the site it occupies at a given moment: it is likely to slip from one category (or one stratum) to another. One may turn again to the Benjaminian analogy of memory as digging to reiterate the point that objects and memories are embedded within layers from which, through an intense work or practice, they may ultimately be redeemed. It might even be argued that what distinguishes the neglected music object from the displayed and sought-after music object is, in some cases, a minute difference: the latter has been recalled or redeemed to the surface, whilst the former is still buried in the ground. Furthermore, as correctly noted by Mitchell,

> when new objects appear in the world, they also bring with them new orders of temporality, new dialectical images that interfere with and complicate one another. Just when we think that things are safely dead, fossilized, petrified, and consigned to the past, they rise from their graves of natural extinction and cultural obsolescence. (2004: 243)

Throughout the thesis, music objects have been consistently thought of as that which may reify as well as mediate space and time, thus allowing for their dissemination, recycling and redeploying in further (physical or digital) spatiotemporal sites. By examining a range of historically and spatially-situated record labels and their various tangible productions, I have articulated the music object as both a means and a place of remembering, and endeavoured to explore how some specific artefacts literally map, relate to, and impact upon, the open-ended territory of recorded sound. Each chapter of the thesis can be considered as a delimited site of its own. These sites however remain open, mutually informing and colouring each other. Chapter 1 offered an emphasis on the tangible, visual and everyday aspects of the material culture of music through the study of Sarah Records. In Chapter 2, the material culture of music

was considered from the viewpoint of its aural remainders, focusing on the persistence of the past within the present and on the survival and reassembling of phonographic traces. Chapter 3 offered insights into reissuing and collecting practices, made possible by the tangibility of recorded sound. In Chapter 4, the visual, aural and tangible aspects explored in the first three chapters were revisited and recontextualised in order to question the notion of materiality in the digital age. The core chapters thus provided a narrative of the material culture of music, from hyper-materiality to dematerialisation.

I have argued that our understanding of music (and especially of music as a mnemonic object) can be enlightened by the exploration of the embodiment of music or its tangible traces, made ubiquitous in the twentieth century with the establishing of the record industry. The thesis has provided both a tool and an experimental space to begin thinking about (and partially amending) the important research gap or bias commented upon by Straw in 'Music and Material Culture'. Straw claims that although research on material culture has seen a significant expansion since the 1980s, affecting notably the fields of sociology, memory studies, art and design studies, the 'material turn' has only occasionally (and somewhat sketchily) affected the study of music. And yet, he continues:

> What is special about the "material turn," perhaps, is that it allows us to explore a range of questions with particular pertinence to the analysis of music. Some of these have to do with the "thing" status of music itself—with whether music itself might be considered material or immaterial, object-like or ethereal. Others are concerned with the range of material forms (the objects and technologies) through which music is performed, received, collected and rendered mobile. Put differently, one set of approaches moves "backwards" from music, to consider the material substances of which music might be constituted. Another moves "forward" from music, to examine the material supports which enable music to assume its social and cultural existence. (Straw 2011: 229)

The work of analysis and theoretical framing developed across the thesis has shown that the reification of music into an object initially derives from the necessity of writing and storing music (where the phonographic inscription works both as a memory process and

a process of materialisation). Conversely, music objects become cultural and everyday objects; which may be given status of souvenirs by users (especially by collectors). It may be said that music objects, which exist because of the music, actively rather than passively participate into the understanding of the music which they mediate; they can also sometimes be emancipated from the music which justified their presence in the world in the first place, as their form and facture index a bygone technological age.

Phonographic ruins

It has become apparent throughout the thesis that issues of materiality and embodiment are inexorably bound up with transformation, decay and death, which they anticipate; to say that the ruin is inscribed within the object is a commonplace. As painfully experienced and related by Aciman (1999) in an autobiographical essay on being an exile in New York in the late 1920s, the transience of the material resonates with (and in some instances predicts) the transience of human existence, to the extent that cultural archives themselves, despite claims of durability, are likely to turn to dust. The music object, produced at one point in time, is bound to be carried and transformed by the ebb and flow of years, slowly decomposing into residual matter. Ward (1990) integrated striking photographs of ill-preserved lacquer discs (used as masters) into his *Manual of Sound Archive Administration* (1990: 151). Even though such images (where music objects appear in advanced stages of decomposition) are relatively uncommon, they may help us visualise the effective, and irresistible, tendency of things towards destruction and invisibility. In this concluding chapter, I would like to provide a likewise 'image' of the particular afterlife of tangible and digital music objects by focusing on the question of music in museums, which provide unsurprising yet ambiguous 'homes' for aging music objects (this is especially because, on the one hand, including music objects in museums often leads to the negation of their tactile and sonic properties; and on the other hand, the museum divorces the object from its life-cycle by paradoxically prolonging it). Indeed, speaking about material culture without speaking of material culture *in the course of time* (that is to say in relation to times, past, present and future) is an unrealistic undertaking, for material culture is always already physically and temporally located.

Matter does not and cannot resist the laws of nature; it is bound, sooner or later, to disintegrate, to pass (Scanlan 2005: 33). The process of material decay is

complemented with a process of (immaterial) commercial decay as the commodity gradually becomes unwanted. In his article 'Exhausted Commodities' (2000), Straw reflects upon the accumulation of artefacts and their relegation to second-hand markets through which they travel, awaiting (sometimes for decades) a new individual or institutional owner. Straw explains that 'objects do not simply disappear, giving way to a future which will unfold without them, but persist and circulate throughout the commercial markets of contemporary life' (2000). Thus, before disappearing completely, the object is still alive. There is a lingering and unstable space between life and death, when the object is still caught within the present time (as that which is materially present and can be used and made meaningful) whilst appearing simultaneously out of place and out of date, a symbol for what used to be. The vinyl record for instance can be seen as a bridge between the past and the present, though it is an incomplete, imperfect and fragile bridge. In a tone reminiscent of Edison, Katz tells us that:

> Records are impossible objects – they hold what has disappeared. Stare long enough at the grooves inscribed on the reflective black surface of an LP and one can have a mystical experience contemplating the immortality […] of those whose traces are contained within. (2010: 64)

The shape of the record indicates by metonymy the past, yet the record may ultimately be less the container of the past than an undifferentiated extract from the past, almost a memorabilia which hardly allows for the full restitution of its past context. It is possible that handling and playing vinyl records only gives the fugitive illusion of the past. It can even be argued that the contemporary vinyl collector described in Chapter 3 may be the counterpart of Adorno's inhabitant of a 'genuine, but purchased, period-style house' who 'embalms himself alive' (Adorno 2010: 38). It is simply because one cannot go back: the illusion of being transported back into the past, by means of material artefacts, cannot last. In other words, the material world of the past, if it can be renewed and recycled, is not to be repeated. A certain configuration of the material world, certain arrangements and interpenetrations of objects, technologies and practices can only happen once before they are undone by time. It is only in the context of museums of everyday life or living museums that bygone moments of the past may be (unnaturally) encountered and restored, though by no means resurrected. In Europe, the Märkisches

Museum (Berlin) and the Museum of Science and Industry (Manchester) notably offer insights into past material cultures of music – the two museums shelter collections of music playback devices across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from pianolas, phonographs and automats (Berlin) to digital music players (Manchester). But the devices, which are displayed side by side and poorly contextualised, lack evocative power. Apart from the first start of surprise and wonder one may feel on hearing and seeing the automats (for example), the devices fail to conjure up the past: at best they give the sense and the measure of its loss.

In the first part of the conclusion, I summarize the findings of the thesis, before attending to the complementary question of the mnemonic music object in the context of the museum. This departure from specific case studies to a broader cultural framework allows me to confirm and enlarge (but also nuance) the initial findings of the thesis. I finally draw some concluding thoughts on the unreliability of mediated memories and pose the open question of music after materiality.

Findings

On a first level, specific findings relate to the exemplary record labels under study, and the particular ways in which they have articulated the music object. The first three chapters have provided understandings of Sarah Records, Ghost Box Records and reissue record labels as places where the music object is shaped and given particular meanings in the broader continuum of recorded music. With Sarah Records, we have seen how music objects can articulate the time and space of the everyday. Ghost Box records showed the infiltration and return (in the form of a haunting) of the past into the present through technological mediation. The chapter on reissue record labels has also emphasised the idea of return through residual and resisting material (the excavation of forgotten artefacts), but has also allowed us to see how the temporality and topography of the recorded past may be reorganised, reordered and renarrated in the form of new assemblages. The last chapter on digitisation and recorded sound has enabled me to observe how tangible music objects, which form a category in transition, may be remediated in a digital context and also how born-digital music objects have a materiality of their own, anticipating in turn certain consumptive and collecting practices. These findings are closely yet not exclusively tied to the material which

prompted them. It may be argued that the fragmentation of the thesis across different record labels and the thematic division which it demanded is, by design and necessity, artificial. Limits were drawn in order to organise a clear narrative, focusing on crucial phases and aspects of tangible music objects in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

In the end, in a non-academic context, these artificial boundaries collapse. Quite obviously, different recorded objects, originating from different spatiotemporal sites, coexist in the heterogeneous and multidimensional space of the personal music collection, so that, for instance, releases on Sarah Records share shelf space with Ghost Box Records, and that both of them exist digitally and may be accessed and manipulated through the interface of a computer. As noted by Eisenberg: 'Every disc is a microcosm, a twelve-inch or four-and-three-quarter inch world. A shelf of records is a row of possible worlds' (2005: 205). The metaphor of the disc as a miniature world suggests that the material existence of the record might be one of its most complex, richest, and sometimes resistant, aspects. The record might be a world, yet it is only when it is considered as a world within the world (or a microcosm within the macrocosm), shaped by what surrounds it, that it begins to unfold its myriad semantic and pragmatic possibilities.

It follows that, on another level, the work undertaken in the thesis has led to the uncovering of more general aspects of music objects. I should like to reiterate five crucial points which have been extensively discussed in the thesis and can be summarised as follows:

1. Material culture is unstable and occupies an in-between position; as it moves along time, it is transformed and challenged. It is mediated by specific technological formats, so that different formats lead to different materialities and therefore different ways of producing, consuming, collecting and circulating music. However, the differences between technological formats is more or less marked; it can be argued that digitisation and 'dematerialised' formats have especially challenged the status of tangible music objects as well as ways in which cultural transmission and archiving are envisioned, whilst analogue formats seem to share a more similar logic (as such, it can be contended that there may be fewer differences between vinyl records, tapes and compact-discs than between any of these formats and a digital file). The differences are less

intrinsic to these formats than extrinsic: users retroactively shape them and enact their possibilities.

2. The materiality of music is what ensures its durability and circulation across different spatiotemporal sites, as well as its archiving and preservation (music becomes a three-dimensional cultural product which can be simultaneously commodified). The tangibility of music, which allows for its future excavation and redemption, is itself always already haunted by past temporalities and moments. The original moment of recording, and the subsequent replaying of the record, allows us to think of the record as that which literally gives birth to ghosts (Kittler 1999; Agacinski 2000; Derrida 2010). Media artefacts are both the place and the instrument of a return.

3. Materialisation is a way of archiving and organising temporality. Thus the music object may function as a mnemonic object – if it is reminiscent of a given socio-technological age, it also gives itself as a possible autobiographical landmark. Transient aspects of a social group or an individual are likely to be frozen and monumentalised through objects.

4. Subsequently, the materiality of music invites us to think of recorded sound as a territory and as a terrain whose layers can be archaeologically or media-archaeologically investigated. The figure of the collector shares affinities with that of the phono-archaeologist, both at a poetic and pragmatic level. Phono-archaeologists explore several types of milieux which, though they continue to coexist, are associated with different moments of the twentieth century: the physical milieu (mainly constituted of traditional record shops and retailers, second-hand shops, flea-markets as well as archives such as the library or the museum) and digital ones (online record-shops, music blogs, dematerialised audio-visual archives). Each of these two broadly defined milieux requires the use of specific tools and expertise, leading to various models of collecting. They generate particular constructions and conceptions of the past, and consequently of the self in the present.

5. If the tangibility of recorded objects is the initial condition for the recycling and recovering of the recorded past, tangibility alone is insufficient. To recycle and recover presuppose a dynamic practice of retelling and remembering; the object is inserted within a cultural practice and needs to be mediated through actual,

human mediators or links. As a result, one object cannot elicit one single or authoritative narrative.

In this thesis I have sought to demonstrate that the music object mediates several materialities, including visual, aural and tactile materialities. Whilst I have acknowledged that music artefacts can form an archive and be understood as material remainders of past spatiotemporal sites, I have also underlined that such an understanding is not exclusive, but rather inclusive (for the music object needs to be complemented by a living memory in order to become a fully realised memory object). Then, the music object should be considered in relation to the physical and immaterial (or linguistic) networks through which it circulates, and in relation to a practice. The material-cultural approach adopted throughout this research can complement pre-existing approaches to music and memory in everyday life, such as the one carried out by Tia De Nora in her ethnographical study *Music in Everyday Life* (2000). De Nora has convincingly uncovered the ways in which music can function as a technology of the self, a tool to organise and regulate emotions, memories, and most generally to help in situating oneself in time. She thinks of music as that which anchors identity and that which may, through repetitive listening for instance, reinforce a sense of the self. De Nora's study questions and quietly subverts, in its own way, the supposed autonomy and immateriality of music. Indeed, it offers an understanding of music as inseparable from the listener and as that which makes sense to the extent that it makes sense of the self at a given space and time:

> Music is a device or resource to which people turn in order to regulate themselves as aesthetic agents, as feeling, thinking and acting beings in their day-to-day lives. Achieving this regulation requires a high degree of reflexivity; the perceived 'need' for regulation described by our respondents emerges with reference to the exigencies and situational 'demands' made upon them in and through their interactions with others. Such reflexivity can also be seen in relation to music's role as a building material of self-identity. (De Nora 2000: 62)

In the work of De Nora, materiality is mainly understood and explored as a synonym for material practice: it primarily refers to the daily negotiation of the individual with lived

spaces (such as the house or the workplace). I believe that such an approach – which focuses on individuals as opposed to objects – can benefit from being coupled with a nuanced reflection on how music objects themselves, and their varying formats ('hard' records, digital files) may influence and enhance a certain type of relationship between the self and the world, for music objects operate as mediating agents between the physical world and the ideal world, the animate and the inanimate. Furthermore, music objects entertain a multi-levelled relationship to memory: they are that which allows both for the mediation of the individual in time (acting as biographical objects) as well as the more general passing on of a culture and heritage (or patrimony).

Music objects in the museums – Voicing objects and creating memories

The material culture of music, understood as part of the cultural patrimony of nations, is increasingly to be found in museums. It comes as no surprise that music objects have been largely embraced and celebrated by European and worldwide museums, notably in exhibitions at la Cité de la Musique in Paris, at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (which notably shelters a collection of Rock and Pop costumes), the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University (where 'The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl' exhibition was held in 2010), or the Chamsori Gramophone & Edison Science Museum (in South Korea). The staging of music formats and playback devices in museums makes it clear that music, in such instances, is unambiguously theorised as that which can be grasped, seen, amassed and subsequently displayed. Recorded sound is understood from (or for) the standpoint of its visual and tactile reality. As a result, the displays and exhibitions (though they often include sound extracts or 'soundtracks' which accompany the visitor throughout his or her viewing) are based on the traditional model of any exhibition of artefacts or antiques. The music object thus exposed (possibly complemented by photographic archives) is rubbed out of its singularity as a sound object and is apprehended first and foremost as mute memorabilia (most generally a fetish of a bygone industrial or socio-technological age) left untouched. This can betray the somewhat naïve assumption that material culture alone is enough to mediate (or pass on) various layers of memories and meanings, or counterbalance the belief that objects 'speak'. In other words, there might be no direct or diachronical 'truth' or authenticity of matter, and matter alone might not be capable of carrying its own truth across time, contrary to Prown's views that 'our senses make affective contact

with senses of the past' (Prown 2001: 64). The ambiguous question and concept of the 'memory object' will now be addressed, in order to attend to some of the issues raised by the material culture of music in the museum.

The 'memory object'

The uneasy relationship between objects and memory has been a central theme of the literary work of Paul Auster. In the autobiographical pages of *The Invention of Solitude*, Auster mourns the passing of his father; alone in his late father's house, the writer restlessly rummages through the objects of the dead, in the hope they will elicit memories. Yet Auster, who remained on unfamiliar terms with his father all his life, is met with the hostile silence of objects. It is arguably because he knew little of his father that he is unable to interpret the objects his father left behind. Auster writes:

> There is nothing more terrible, I learned, than having to face the objects of a dead man. Things are inert: they have meaning only in function of the life that makes use of them. When that life ends, the things change, even though they remain the same. They are there and yet not there: tangible ghosts, condemned to survive in a world they no longer belong to. (1988: 10)

Auster further elaborated on the evocative powers of objects in the novel *Moon Palace*. Marco Fogg, the main protagonist of the novel, is unable to sell or give away the clarinet which belonged to the beloved uncle who raised him: 'The clarinet was my last link to Uncle Victor, and because it was the last, because there were no other traces of him, it carried out the entire force of his soul within it' (Auster 1990: 42). In the first example, objects are silent and inert because there is no previous memory or record of seeing them, or of seeing his father using them. Whilst in the second case the clarinet is saturated with memories, so much so that the loss of the instrument would certainly revive something of the pain provoked by the death of the loved relative, as if letting go of the clarinet meant losing the loved relative a second time.

The two contrasting examples given by Auster make it clear that not every object is a memory object. Rather, the term memory (or mnemonic) object should be only cautiously used in relation to a certain category of objects, those we form

emotional bounds with and which actually trigger memories and invite to their subsequent retrieval. The category of 'memory objects' is non-exclusive, for the term only defines a partial aspect of the object: a memory object for instance can simultaneously be a useful object (the clarinet can be played). As such, the 'memory object' is a specific or special object, even though the term 'memory object' fails to fully account for an object, whose life-story consists of the thick entwinement of numerous sequences and threads, stretching across several sites and times. For Kopytoff, not only human beings but also things have a biography, that is to say they contain several layers of meaning and therefore several biographies:

> We accept that every person has many biographies – psychological, professional, familial, political, economic and so forth – each of which selects some aspects of the life history and discards others. Biography of things cannot but be similarly partial. (Kopytoff 1986: 68)

And yet, as they accumulate and aggregate in second-hand and digital markets such as eBay (a process described in Chapter 4), things may constitute a paradoxical negation of meaning (precisely because, released from their owner, they may suddenly mean anything). Their various biographies do not necessarily communicate themselves or cannot be immediately deciphered, as if to suggest that material culture may ultimately resist total interpretation. As the personal collection loses its meaning when it loses its owner (Benjamin 1973: 67), second-hand music objects mostly fail to speak of their previous life (although it can be registered informally in the form of cracks on the record, damaged or torn sleeves, handwritten fragments). What survives of them is their everydayness and banality. Their survival indicates less a narrative of individuality than the interchangeable story of a social group at a given time, an argument which Appadurai developed in his introductory essay to *The Social Life of Things* (1986). He insists that

> there are important differences between the *cultural biography* and the *social history* of things. The differences have to do with two kinds of temporality, two forms of class identity and two levels of social scale. The cultural biography perspective, formulated by Kopytoff, is appropriate to *specific* things, as they move through different hands,

contexts, and uses, thus accumulating a specific biography, or set of biographies. When we look at classes or types of thing, however, it is important to look at longer-term shifts […] and larger-scale dynamics that transcend the biographies of that class or type. (2001: 34)

The Record

Following on from Appadurai's assessment of the cultural biography (or biographies) and social history of objects, it can be said that vinyl records exhibited in museums notably function as cultural and historical artefacts, symbols of past socio-technological realms, but also as that which could return and be wrenched from the past by individual collectors (as seen in Chapter 3). As such, repositories of sound can gain new meanings from new contexts of display and playback, thus shaping novel memories. As Acland notes, '[t]he detritus of capital and commodity serve the dual purpose of announcing their own historicity and residing as standing reserve […] for conversion into subsequent artifacts, memories, and stories' (2007: xvii). The exhibition 'The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl', held at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in 2010, is an apt example of the transformative process described by Acland. What was shown was not a collection of original vinyl records protected by glass panels or framed (as is expected in most music exhibitions): rather, 'the first museum exhibition to explore the culture of vinyl records within the history of contemporary art' (Rorschach 2010: 9) displayed ways in which old commodities had been and could be used and reintegrated into novel art projects. In the course of the exhibition (which covered the time span 1965-2010), vinyl was used as a raw material which, for example, allowed for it to be melted in order to create small objects. The conversion of discarded vinyl records into drastically new objects is one way of expanding their lifespan (though it has to be noted that the music object loses its 'music' in the recycling process). The exhibition 'The Record' was extensively documented by a book published in the year of the event: through the written medium, the records and the works they inspired were performed in a new, purely silent and visual, form. A collection of essays on records and record collecting complemented the photographs of the artefacts. Such a book can be easily conceived of as a starting point or 'standing reserve' for new stories: records can mutate into art installations which themselves may mutate into books. The material properties of music objects allow for a series of rematerialisations, transformations and

transfers to take place, not the least because '[t]hings are naturally shifty, and part of how we think about them should involve the processes of recognition and framing which govern their placing, their point, their uptake' (Frow 2004: 354) but also because the narratives which are attached to them are themselves largely unstable. What this means is that objects are likely to slip into new areas and be used in different ways at different moments in time: vinyl records are no longer played but used as raw material for sculptures or installations, prompting various second-hand narratives.

In the case briefly outlined above, the objects displayed in museums are not only transformed materially but they also help to shape novel narratives. This is partly because the former biography of the records is erased or written over in a process which can be likened to a 'divestment ritual' where 'there is too much trace of previous ownership, traces that need to be expunged, removed' (Gregson and Crewe 2003: 144). Every time its initial purpose is being modified or subverted, the music object ceases to be a medium through which music is played or a support through which it is disseminated; it becomes both a new and unfamiliar object, whose meaning has been partly reinvented by a new ownership. It therefore comes to represent new memories, as suggested by the artist Chris Dorsett. In his practice, Dorsett has converted his father's alien and unplayable collection of shellac records into photographs in the hope of giving them a meaning (see Dorsett 2008: 121); the photographs become mnemonic devices, reviving shellac records and personalising them at the same time so that, despite their silence, they are not lost altogether.

In Eisenhüttenstadt (Germany), the Centre for the Documentation of Everyday Life (also referred to as the Open Depot) gathers some 50,000 tokens of everyday life in the former GDR (these notably include portable radios and music playback devices), along with the narratives of their donors; upon the acquisition of new objects, the donors are interviewed by the Centre's curators and questions are posed 'not only about the provenance of the objects but also about the owners' memories of the way they once lived with them or among them' (Scribner 2004: 337). Central to the curatorial practice is the idea that the memories which the collection of objects triggers help mediate their meanings and thus benefit from being included in museums of material culture. Steps might be taken by curators in order to fully do justice to the myriad meanings and materialities of music objects, thus allowing for their life-cycle not to be abruptly interrupted but prolonged in a creative and meaningful way. Brabazon and Mallinder, in their study of British 'pop museums', exemplified by Sheffield's National Centre for

Popular Music and Preston's National Football Museum, have insisted upon the necessity of a careful work of contextualisation:

> Museums not only display past objects but also past thoughts. The reason for the preservation of some items – without their context – is often inappropriate, particularly in a postcolonial environment. Debates about museums are arguments about cultural value and the selection of historical facts and interpretations. When the objects from the past are displayed in the present, the challenge is to ensure that the original contexts for these objects are summoned not merely as a means for passive nostalgia, but as the beginning of a discussion about how these concepts, images and sounds have been challenged through history. Popular culture, because of its ephemeral nature, is a delicate source in museum discourse because it encourages nostalgia but requires curatorial work to bring the critique and questioning into the visitor's vista. (Brabazon and Mallinder 2006: 98-99)

One may argue that the biographies of music objects remain partially irretrievable unless such biographies are passed along with the objects, primarily in the form of stories. The life of a music object is therefore articulated in language and largely depends upon the narrative delivered by the persons who appropriate it. Materiality and memory, in order to enlighten each other, need to be articulated through and accommodated by a third term: narration. This means that there is no strict equivalence between matter and memory – matter requires an interpreter or a translator in order to become memory. It is partly because neither matter nor memory are static; they both change and degrade over time; their relationship is reactivated by the act of telling, and it might be that the telling (or retelling) is always different, depending on the context, on the quality of the audience, on the subjectivity of the storyteller, and so forth (in the manner of Benjamin's storyteller; Benjamin 1973: 83-110). Born complementarily remarks that 'The art object has a kind of career; it changes not only via its changing interpretation in performance and reception, but it can change even in its very physical form' (2005: 16). In his poem 'The Hunter's Purse' Donaghy expressed the life-cycle or career of a shellac record; the tangible object is being salvaged through writing and remembering (Donaghy 2000: 77). That is to say that the poem functions as

a keepsake and a cue: upon its reading or reciting, the shellac record may be revived and retrieved (albeit in an immaterial and imaginary form). Memory, which is necessarily mediated, is therefore always unstable.

Further reflections on mediated memories – Between forgetting and remediating

Assimilating re-presentation with the moment of interpretation, as if to show that presence can only be seized through a (necessarily differed) act of making the past present, Huyssen observes that:

> Human memory may well be an anthropological given, but closely tied as it is to the ways a culture constructs and lives its temporality, the forms memory will take are invariably contingent and subject to change. [...] [A]ll representation – whether in language, narrative, image, or recorded sound – is based on memory. *Re*-presentation always comes after, even though some media will try to provide us with the delusion of pure presence. (1995: 2)

To this it might be added that for Huyssen there is no presence but only representation, and to another extent there might be no original memory or past but only subsequent versions of them, uncovered in the experience of mediation (hence the importance and influence of varying technologies of telepresence on the construction of the past). What Huyssen consistently suggests is that memories are mediated and that the moment of mediation also corresponds to a moment of displacement or translation of the past. In *Metaphors of Memory* (2000) Draaisma pointed out that the way memory is conceptualised relies on what technologies of memory are available. Then, memory has for instance been compared to a photograph (in the wake of photography), a tape recording (after World War II) or a network (in the wake of computer theory and the internet). There is no clear or fixed agreement upon what memory is and how it works. But these 'metaphors of memories' are neither decorative nor anecdotal figures of speech: they also actively determine the way memory and memory dysfunctions are effectively conceptualised and addressed (notably in scientific research). Huyssen also believes that technologies of memory determine the construction of the self in everyday life (one can think of the importance of mass-media in shaping shared memories), but

also organise the broader field of cultural transmission, indicating both how and what people remember, but also what a society passes over through specific apparatuses (one of them being the museum). Similarly archives themselves, which are places of mediation, also function as places where memory is organised. Increasing storage space, as is possible with digital technologies, does not only mean that more can be 'saved' and possibly transmitted to future generations. It also favours the transmission of a certain type of content, which is mostly visual (and audio-visual) and dematerialised. Memory is then mediated not in the form of tangible monuments or architectural realisations (though of course these are still possible) but is more likely to take the form of a digital archive (as shown in Chapter 4). It needs to be underlined that several forms of memory sites may coexist or even coincide (the physical museum can be duplicated in the digital museum), though, as Huyssen remarks, the forms of memory are historical and one will certainly be favoured over others at a given time. Furthermore, the proliferation of memory sites themselves does not systematically correspond to active, effective remembrance. Nora, in the year of the reunification of Germany, wrote that:

> Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn – but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory. (1989: 7)

To mediate memory might also be to dilute memory which, as it is displaced within specific and situated forms such as institutions, does not need to be 'practiced'. There seems to be a concomitant 'hypertrophy of memory' and 'hyper-amnesia': '[t]he more memory stored on the data banks and image tracks, the less of our culture's willingness and ability to engage in active remembrance, or so it seems' (Huyssen 1995: 249). Huyssen's pessimistic argument resonates with Plato's dismissal of writing in *Phaedrus* (the ambiguities of writing as *pharmakon*, both poison and revival, were further discussed by Derrida (1976) in 'Plato's Pharmacy'): what is stored in writing constitutes an external memory which, because it is easily accessible, does not need to be stored by

the mind. Yet accessibility cannot effectively be seen as the equivalent of memory, and one might forget all the more easily that which was never intimately known and memorised. Official and unofficial, public and private 'archives' of digitised music coexist online (one may think of the carefully organised British Library Sound Archive or of King's Sound Archive, as well as of new forms of spontaneous – and often copyright-breaching – user-generated archives on websites such as YouTube). It may be argued that the content of the internet expands continually, notably every time a sequence of music is made digital and uploaded online. And yet the quantity of information – resulting from the 'industrialization of memory' (Stiegler 2009: 107) does not necessarily equate with an active relationship with, and knowledge of, this information. Huyssen situates the advent of 'hyper-amnesia' in the late twentieth century, and sees it as linked with the proliferation of information or data ('the synchronicity of the archive', Huyssen 1995: 7), which has transformed our relationship to temporality and history. But similar concerns can be traced back to the nineteenth century, which was, as Martens notes, permeated with a fear of loss:

> Accompanying the technological innovations and social upheavals that changed patterns of life in the nineteenth century, nostalgia became a generalized cultural phenomenon. Many people clutched at the things and places of childhood in particular as things and places that had disappeared, were in the process of disappearing, or were likely to disappear. (Martens 2011: 190)

Technological changes – as represented for example by the progressive inception of technologies of telepresence in the nineteenth century or the advent of new media in the late twentieth century – are also embedded in, and accompanied by, conflicting discourses about the technologies in question. Periods of technological change can be conceived of as vibrant periods of tension between the past and the future, for they inevitably combine the old and the new, and it might not be surprising that nostalgia for a vanishing past should coexist with hope in the future. These hybrid periods however should not be read too simplistically. Rather it may be that technology brings forward a reinterpretation or remediation (Bolter and Grusin 1999) of the old and that, rather than operating in a linear, autonomous fashion, technologies are embedded within each other, thus being defined by, and not triggering, hybridity. Thus nostalgia itself can be

technology-led, as shown with the example of retrochic, which reproduces cultural artefacts from the past through high-tech technology (Samuel 1994: 83).

The advent of the internet, which I discussed in depth in Chapter 4, gives an interesting illustration of the co-incidence of old and new practices. On the one hand, digital music distribution can be understood as directly (though not exclusively) responsible for the collapse of the record industry and of the traditional record-shop, as well as impacting on practices of collecting and archiving sound. On the other hand, in reaction to the standardisation and wide circulation of digital music there has been a resurgence of obsolete formats such as vinyl records and audio cassettes. The internet has also allowed for the recirculation of tangible music objects through dedicated websites such as Discogs, eBay or GEMM. It has also provided a platform for discussion on dead media and/or forgotten formats, and has allowed for neglected or scarce material to be digitised and disseminated, for example through specialised web logs or audio-visual channels.

Indeed, contemporary research into material culture is represented by two main trends: a vivid discussion surrounding digital materialities (van den Boomen et al 2009) and a complementary reflection on the status and future of tangible objects, as they are not necessarily, or not completely, assimilated by digital culture. Tangible objects remain central to practices of retro or revival, as demonstrated by Reynolds in *Retromania* (2011). The detritus of recorded sound and the ways in which it is reused, re-appropriated and re-commodified (notably by reissue record labels) form a core component of contemporary musical culture. For Boym, cultural products may signify a means of taming (through reification) nostalgia, which finds a momentary cure in retro-consumption. It follows that '[t]he sheer overabundance of nostalgic artifacts marketed by the entertainment industry, most of them sweet ready-mades, reflects a fear of untameable longing and noncommodified time. Oversaturation in this case, underscores nostalgia's fundamental insatiability' (Boym 2001: XVII). Metaphorically, it could be said that a first layer (composed of authentic artefacts from the past) might be further covered by imitative or derivative artefacts, which can reinforce the past or act as a comment upon it, ultimately impacting on the first fossilised layer. It is not infrequent for the past to be remade into a new form, and integrated (through its remaining fragments or samples) into a new work. The samples, woven into a new work, displaced and reorganised, may suggest and signify 'alternative pasts'. The releases of the record-label Ghost Box (which was discussed in Chapter 2) incorporate citations from the

cultural audio-visual past. The material of the past is manipulated, translated and transposed, and thereby becomes an imaginary and distorted scape, an open-ended remediation of the past.

Music after materiality: an opening

For the philosopher Paul Virilio, the lack of space – and thereby the disappearance of distance and the impossibility of movement – represents an effective danger and threat to culture and cultural memory. He states that 'the reduction of distances has become a strategic reality bearing incalculable economic and political consequences, since it corresponds to the negation of space' (Virilio 1986: 33). This strongly suggests that a total dissolution of matter, best represented by new media and the internet, renders the world 'immediate' and 'immaterial' but also prevents individuals from engaging with it by means of direct appropriation. Virilio's fearful warning can be linked to the concerns expressed by Hannah Arendt in *Between Past and Future* (1954). In a world dominated by immateriality, no self-reflection is possible: human-beings are not able to recognize themselves in visual, external landmarks. Renunciation of the material world, and total, uncritical submission to the immaterial, also suggests that individuals, as they no longer leave traces and marks, are unable to retrospectively and critically reflect on themselves and their past. If 'the material reality anticipate[s] the concept and it is from the creation of the artefacts that the symbolic relationship between signified and signifier emerges' (Sofaer 2007: 2), one feels entitled to wonder what happens to these relationships when material, three-dimensional reality is challenged. The (partial) disappearance of physical music artefacts raises important questions in terms of transmission and conservation of the past and implies significant changes in what is and what makes a culture. If new fetishized, tangible objects have appeared from the year 2000 onwards (the first version of the iPod, for example, was launched in 2001) one may observe that these objects do not *archive* or *fix* music but simply *mediate* it. However, it should be noted that the dematerialisation of the music object does not strictly or directly correspond to the loss of cultural memory. Digital archives, though still imperfect and relatively unreliable (in the case of user-generated archives), store almost unquantifiable collections of made-digital and born-digital music objects. In addition to this, digital and immaterial networks enable the material culture of the past to be translated or reformulated. Straw thinks of the internet in positive terms, theorising it as a means through which the past

can be given a greater coherence, weight and visibility 'through the gathering together of disparate artefacts into sets or collections, and through commentary and annotation that cluster around such agglomerations, made possible in part by high-capacity storage mechanisms' (Straw 2007: 4).

In the last chapter of the thesis, I have shown that the 'coherence' of online archives is far from accomplished, and can be measured against traditional physical archives. The dematerialisation or 'decommoditizing' of music challenges a certain notion of what cultural memory is and means in an age of technological transition; it is too early yet to predict the long-term implications of the internet and new media on the mediation of cultural memory, yet one can acknowledge the hopes and anxieties which they raise. Flusser for instance, speculating on electronic memories, delivers a utopian vision which is in great contrast with that of Straw. Whilst the latter insists on processes of digital remediation and continuity, with a focus on cultural consumption, the former is especially interested in the impact of the internet on creative processes:

> Electronic memories can receive information more easily than brains can and they have a much larger storage capacity. They are better at preserving information and can recall individual items more easily. It is also not difficult to transmit information from one electronic memory to another. All these (and other) advantages mean that acquired information (data) will no longer be stored in brains but in electronic memories. As a consequence, brains will be free to adopt other functions. People will no longer have to memorize facts but learn how to store, recall, and vary data expediently. They will no longer need to learn systems' repertoires but instead their structure. Data processing of this kind – which had been checked by the need to lean facts – is called "creativity"; hence, we can now reckon with a true burst of human creativity. (Flusser 1999: 205)

Flusser imagines the achievements of individuals who, released from the task of remembering, would be able to fully dedicate themselves to the act of creating. The notion that remembering prevents creation is both contentious and thought-provoking (Flusser's article reads and has been deliberately constructed as a combative manifesto), for it challenges the traditional idea that creating relies on remembering. In fact, works of art have routinely been seen as influencing one another (Bloom 1973) or considered

on the model of a mnemonic network, as expressed in the adage attributed to the philosopher Alain: 'Tous les arts se souviennent' ['*All the arts remember*']. Flusser, for the purposes of his manifesto, all too quickly dismisses the dialectical relationship which seems to unite creation to memory, a theme which has also been central to certain writings of Derrida, most especially in *Memoires for Paul De Man*, where he affirms that a memory 'without anteriority' can neither 'recall' or 'promise' anything (1989: 85), for, deprived of both a past and a future, it keeps reinventing itself in the present; Flusser's electonic memory is, conversely, a paradoxical instant memory. It also seems contradictory to recall 'data' when and if one does not know what to recall. As such, if knowledge about music can be efficiently stored on computer servers for example, this does not guarantee that they will be accessed, let alone used. One also needs to memorise where to access the archive, and to anticipate, even imperfectly, its contents.

The interrelation between electronic memories and creating has perhaps been more realistically theorised by Born in the article 'On musical mediation: Ontology, technology and creativity' (2005), in which Born developed the idea of a 'relayed creativity' to tie together the notion of open creation made possible by the abundance of digital artefacts which can be sampled, redistributed and almost interminably reused.

> Digital music media both extend these potentials and afford entirely new modes of collaborative authorship. Through their capacity to 'decompose' aural and visual objects into basic binary representations, digital media re-open creative agency. They do this by rendering musical, photographic and filmic objects, in the immaterial form of code, open to re-formation, to repeated re-creation. That is, digital media supersede the capacity of material artefacts to stop the flow of re-creation. Music shows this remarkably well: digitized music, distributed via MP3s, CDs and the internet, is continually, immanently open to re-creation. Distributed across space, time and persons, music can become an object of recurrent decomposition, composition and re-composition by a series of creative agents. We need a new term for this capacity: I suggest relayed creativity. (Born 2005: 26)

The thesis has led to findings which, though they are modest and preliminary, could certainly benefit from being integrated into further research, especially in the area

of media and museum studies, with an emphasis on issues of music and archiving, music in the museum, and the history of music consumption. This thesis has formed links between the fields of material culture and that of music, connecting two areas which have long been kept apart (somehow artificially). Music objects mediate music but also memory and past temporalities, whilst allowing for the individual to project himself or herself into the future. It has to be underlined that collecting the past in the form of artefacts is a form of anticipation, where the past is envisioned as a project, a practice and a production. Similarly, to question the future of the material music object is always already to question its relationship to the past and to the broader making and transmission of a culture. As such, the material music object is simultaneously an object of negotiation: the question of matter, and its potential loss and redemption, lies at the suture of the personal and the political, the everyday and the historical.

Appendix. Selection of Visual Sources

Illustrations to Chapter 1

I. *Fanzines and ephemera*

Figure 1. *Are You Scared To Get Happy? #6*. **Fanzine by Matt Haynes, published in 1987.**
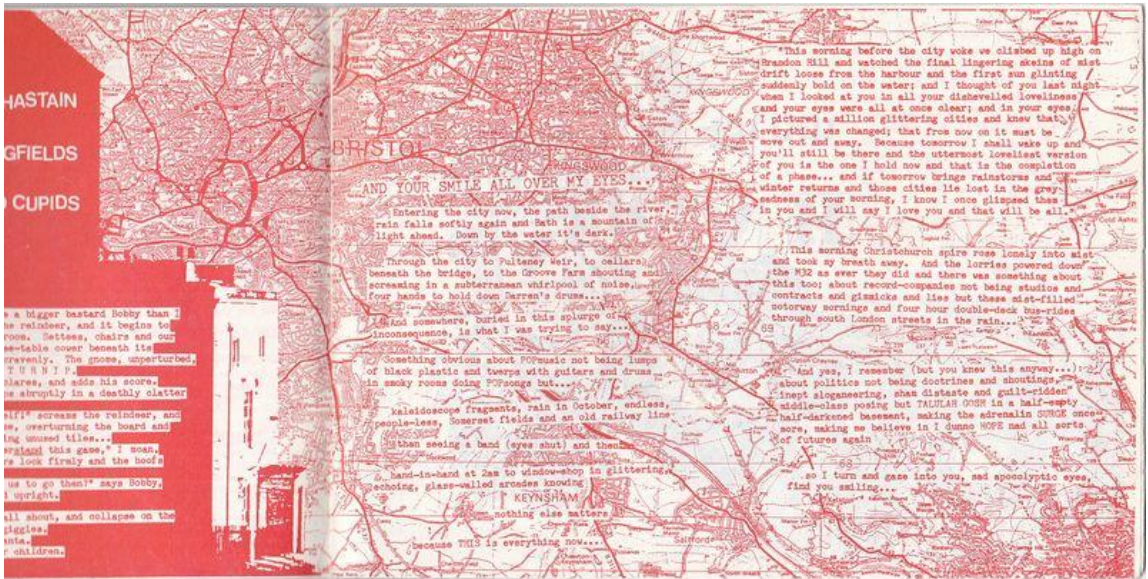
Figure 2. Extract from the fanzine *Are You Scared To Get Happy? #6*. **Published in 1987.**
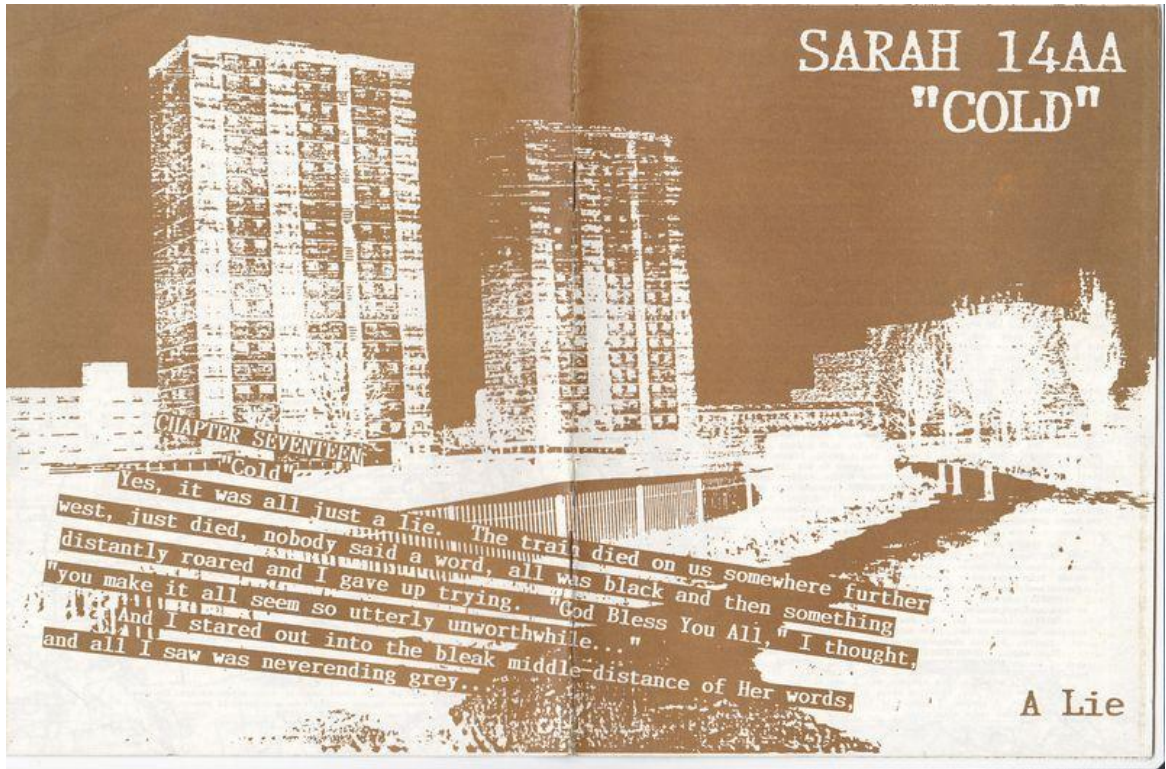
Figure 3. Front of the Sarah fanzine *Cold/Lemonade – A Lie* (Sarah 014). Published in 1989.
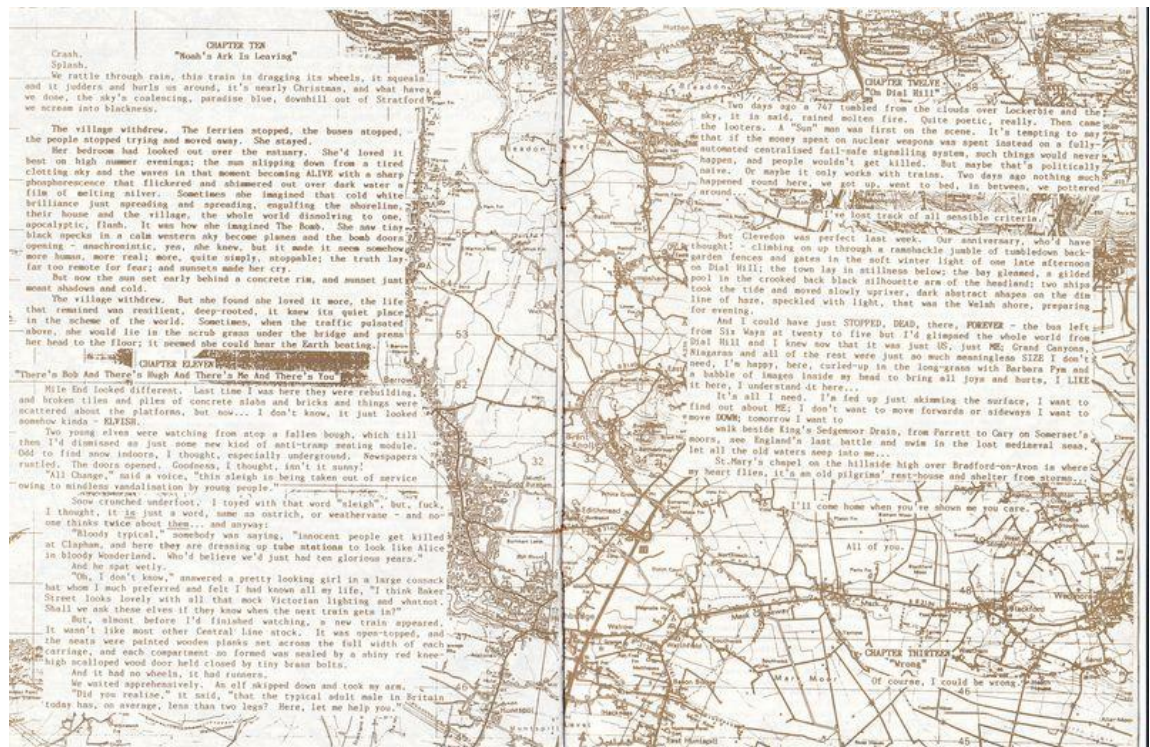
Figure 4. Extract from the Sarah fanzine *Cold/Lemonade – A Lie* (Sarah 014). Published in 1989.

My trip to Bristol

Act three, scene two
of the history of punk rock

(In my program notes, act three started in 1986 when, after a bit of intermission entertainment by the Pastels, the Shop Assistants, the Soup Dragons and all their buddies revived the pop music scene with an excitement and sincerity which hadn't been seen in England for ten years. As the first scene lurched to a close, most of the "class of '86" had either "sold out," broken up, or both. Scene two opens in Bristol, a relatively quiet big city next door to Wales, where two independent record labels sit poised on the frayed future of British pop music. This scene features a cast of four: Martin Whitehead at the Subway Organization, who put out the first singles by both Shop Assistants and Soup Dragons, and now hopes to catapult his own band, the Flatmates, into the Top 40; Clare Wadd and Matt Haynes, two idealists in charge of Sarah Records, who release only 7-inch EPs and build castles in the summer sky; and myself, posing as a fanzine editor and thinking that just *maybe* this isn't a play at all — certainly the other characters think it's all quite serious and real.)

THE CAST

Martin Twenty four years old, with a face full of plastic-rimmed glasses and charisma. He went to college outside of London for a year before moving to the big city to start a record label. For two years he put out some cassettes and random fanzines, then spotted the Shop Assistants and the Subway Organization was born. Three years later, he divides his time between running Subway and playing guitar in the Flatmates, now his label's biggest-selling artist.

Clare Twenty years old, and she looks just like a great friend of mind from high school except she talks with a British accent. Four years ago she started doing a fan/political zine called *Kvatch*, in Harrogate. Now she majors in economics at the University of Bristol and lives in a tiny basement apartment with Matt.

Matt Formerly an editor of the fanzine *Are You Scared to Get Happy* and a partner in the Sha-la-la Flexidisc label, he is now a "fulltime record company director and cook," keeping accounts for Sarah, and preparing vegetarian meals for himself and Clare. He makes his living off a small government grant for people starting their own business, which amounts to £20/week more than the dole, and which will run out by the end of the year.

SCENE TWO

On one side of Bristol, at the top of Blackboy Hill in a garden flat next to a field, Clare and Matt answer mail, listen to demo tapes, and worry for a bit about what the kids will think of the new Sarah Records they've just sent off to the stores. On another side of Bristol, just across the Avon River at the top of a block lined tightly with spoiled Victorian houses, Martin does the same sort of thing, except his label is called the Subway Organization. These two labels on two sides of Bristol have made a pretty fair impact on the British pop scene over the last three years, and they also serve as an adequate target for those (such as certain editors at the NME) who wish to write off the whole independent pop movement as too small for their britches. Sarah and Subway represent two sides of the same coin, united by their music and their enemies, but seldom in agreement about the best way to beat the bad guys in the music industry at their own game.

The night I stayed in Bristol, Clare and Matt let me sleep in a hallway lined by Sha-la-la flexi sleeves and huge detail maps of England, fed me vegetables and played me all the records on Sarah I could stomach. Martin took me out that night to a neighborhood pub, bought me two pints of Fosters and blustered about his pragmatic philosophy of alternative music. The next morning I had toast and jam with Matt after Clare had gone to work, and then went out for a cheese and cucumber sandwich and a comic book with Martin in downtown Bristol. In both cases I felt like I had shown up three years late at a dinner party, in which everyone had the same menu but nobody could bring themselves to agree about the rules of etiquette. As I talked to my sincerely gracious hosts, I tried to figure out at least some of the rules for loving and hating in the mixed-up British pop scene, and for doing both at the same time.

Starting out with starting out, the similarities and differences between Subway and Sarah are already apparent. Both love pop music -- this is their main reason for starting to do record labels. But compared to Martin, who fulfilled a single-minded desire to start a label when he signed the Shop Assistants, one gets the impression that Sarah almost grudgingly evolved out of Clare and Matt's other activities involving flexidiscs, fanzines, and their own unique version of musical politics. To this day Martin speaks of Subway as an end in itself, certainly a noble end but not an offshoot of anything higher. Not so with Clare and Matt.

MARTIN. I'd been looking for about two years for the right band to start the label off on, and when I heard the Shop Assistants I thought they were the band I wanted. The first record had to work, since the plan was to get Revolver to finance the record. And I guess it worked — I was looking at selling a thousand copies, and it ended up selling eleven thousand. Then the Shop Assistants actually said, "Oh, there's a really good band up in Glasgow called the Soup Dragons," so I got straight in touch with them and I liked them, and put them out.

CLARE. In Harrogate I did six issues of a fanzine called *Kvatch*. It was a mix of fairly straight music and in a sense political articles -- not party political but going on about Greenpeace and vegetarianism.

MATT. With *Are You Scared to Get Happy* I always put the emphasis very much on the fan part of the fanzine. I was just writing about things that excited me personally, because you get a lot of fanzines which seem to think they've got to review of every record that comes out and every gig they go to, whether they liked it or not. I just can't see the point of that, since the music press does that over here.

Then there were the flexis: In 1987 Matt combined with three other fanzine editors to release eight flexidiscs on the Sha-la-la label, which they sold for 50p each in runs of 2500.

MATT. The idea of doing flexis seemed an appropriate gesture at the time.

CLARE. It was a sort of odd political statement.

MATT. Yes, it was. We always saw everything we did with Sha-la-la and *Are You Scared to Get Happy* as political. It was not subtle, but it appealed to what people actually understood. We thought they could go into their local record shop, and stop and think, "I can't afford to buy these records --why can't I afford to buy these records?"

Toward the end of the Sha-la-la experiment, Clare got the idea of doing a Sea Urchins flexi, and turned to Matt for advice a year ago last Easter. Hence the birth of a record label, which combined their complimentary political rantings and ravings... which has yet to release a record costing more than £2 (and which has yet

Figure 5. Extract from an article on Sarah Records published in the American fanzine Incite! #11. Written by Tim Alborn. Summer 1988.
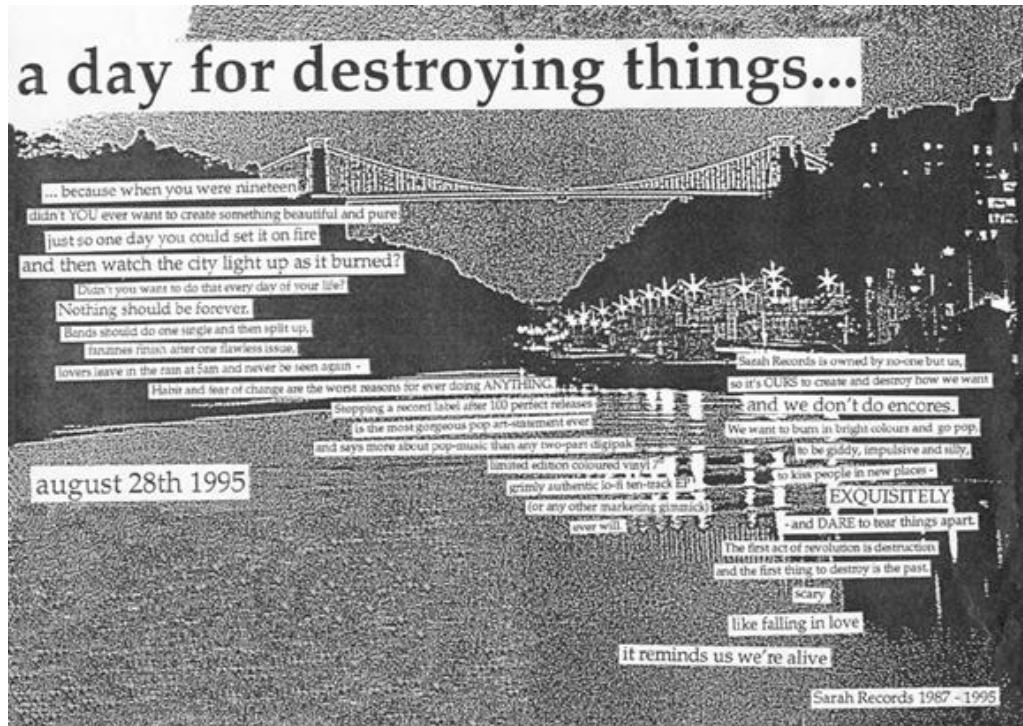

Figure 6.
A Day For Destroying Things. Advertisement published by Matt Haynes and Clare Wadd in the pages of the New Musical Express and the Melody Maker, announcing the end of Sarah Records. August 1995.
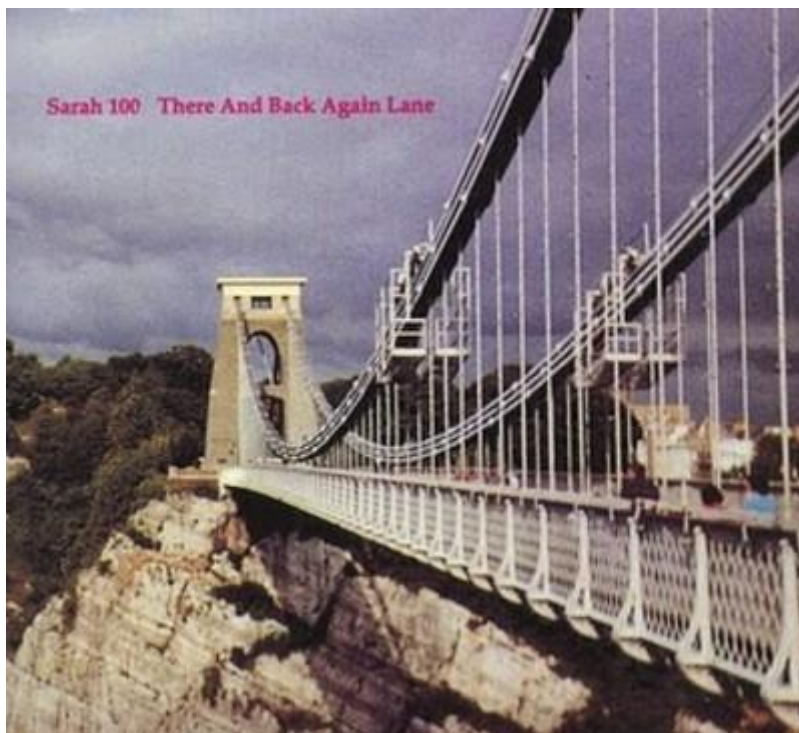
II. Vinyl records and compact-discs

Figure 7. Central label of East River Pipe's *Helmet On* 7-inch record (Sarah 75), released in 1993.

Figure 8. Back sleeve of the *Shadow Factory* compilation LP (Sarah 587). Released in 1988.

Figure 9. Front sleeve of the compilation CD *There And Back Again Lane* (Sarah 100). Released in 1995.
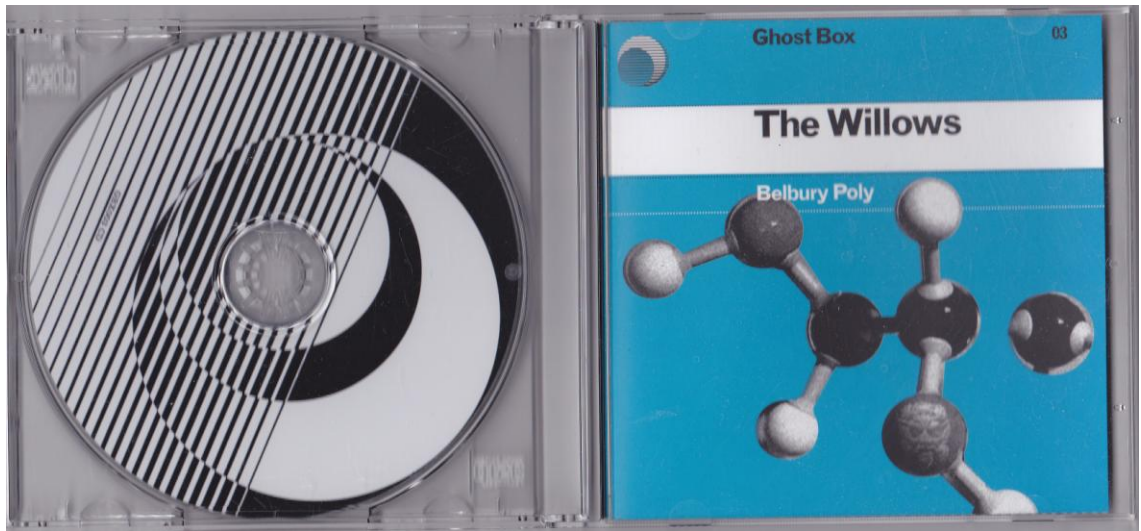
Illustrations to Chapter 2

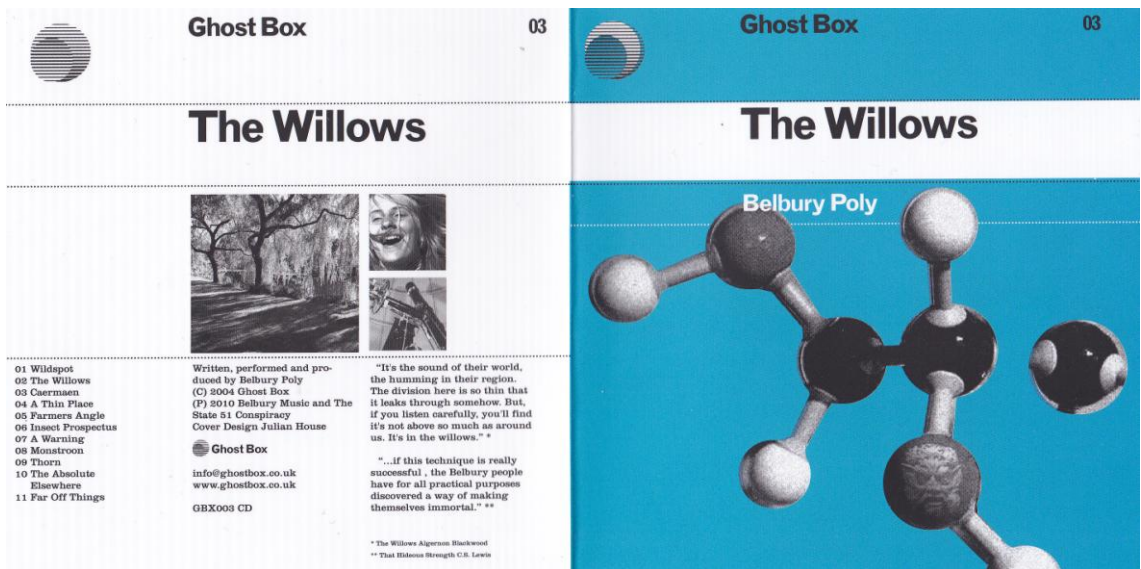**Figure 10. Artwork for Belbury Poly's *The Willows* CD (GBX003). Released in 2004.**

.

Figure 11. Back and front artwork of Belbury Poly's *The Willows* (GBX003). Released in 2004.
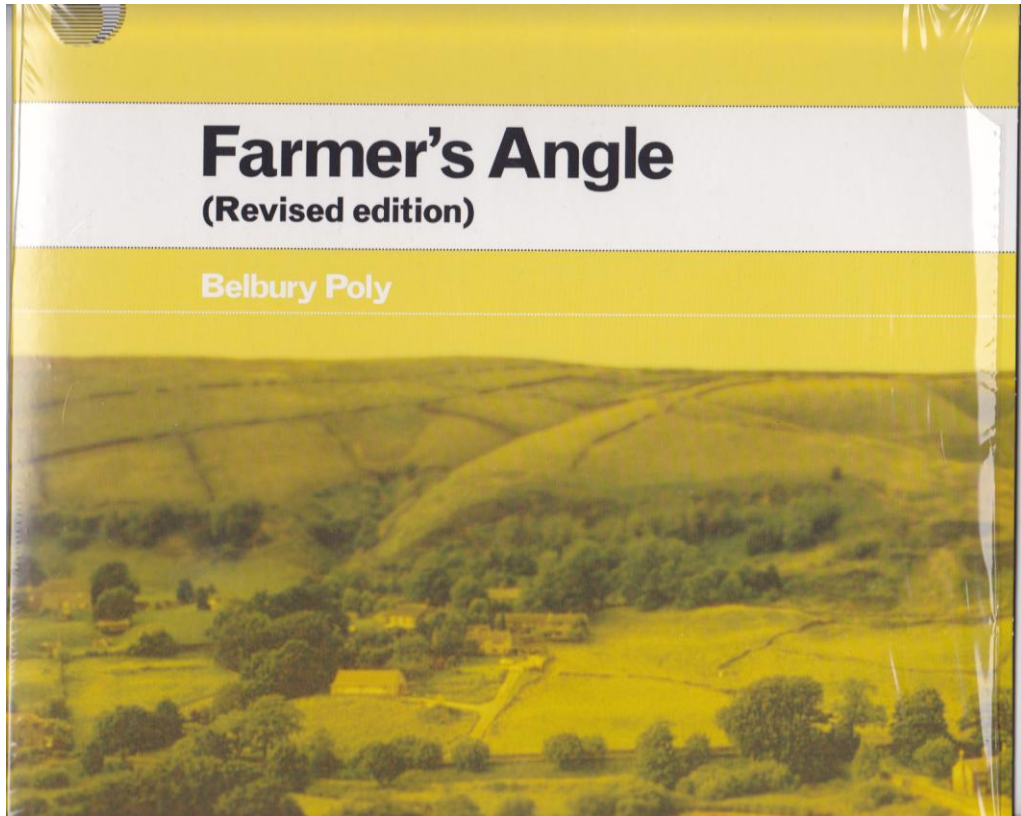
Figure 12. Front artwork of Belbury Poly's *Farmer's Angle (Revised edition)* 10-inch vinyl EP (GBX14). Released in 2010.
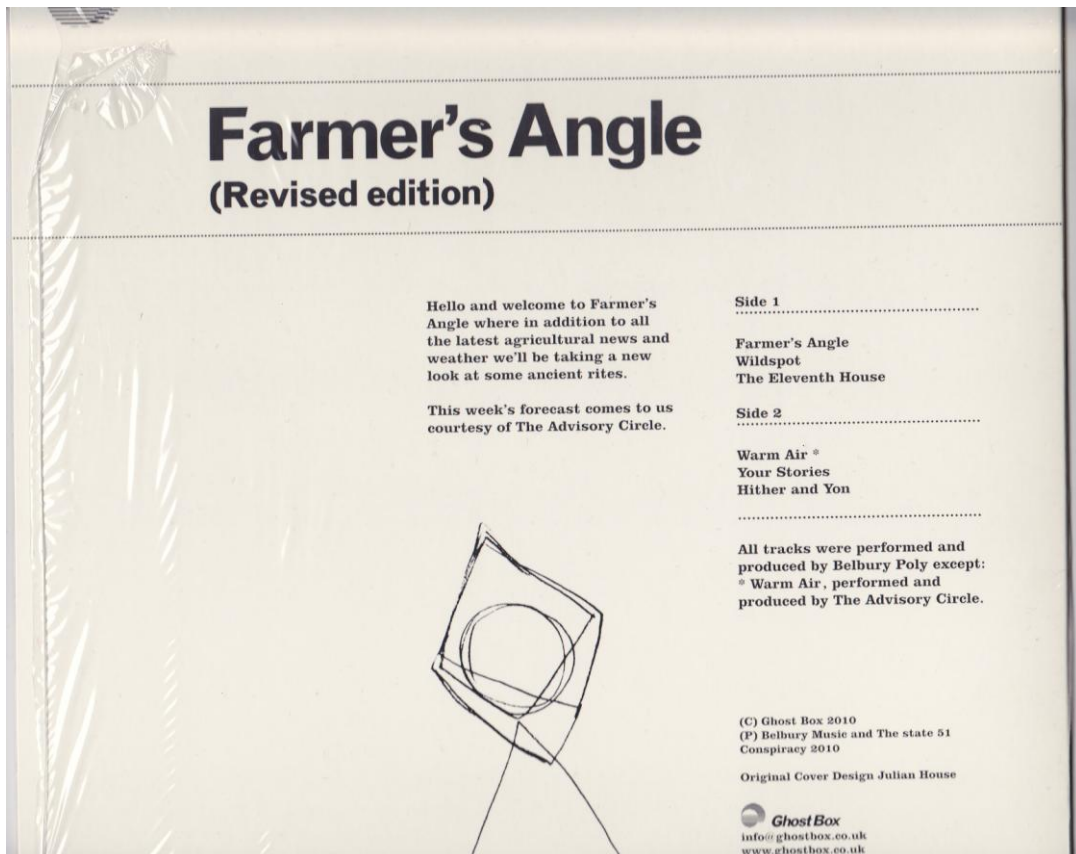
Figure 13. Back sleeve of Belbury Poly's *Farmer's Angle (Revised edition)* (GBX14). Released in 2010.
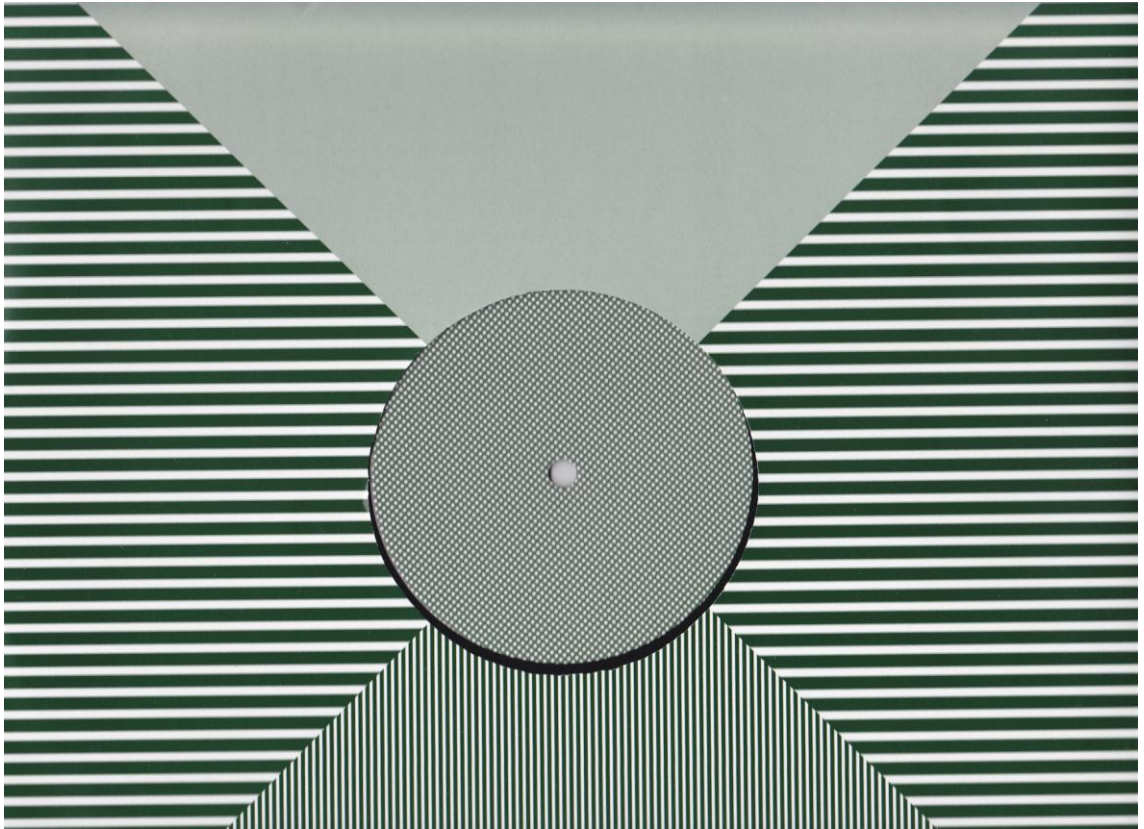
Figure 14. Typical insert of a Ghost Box record.
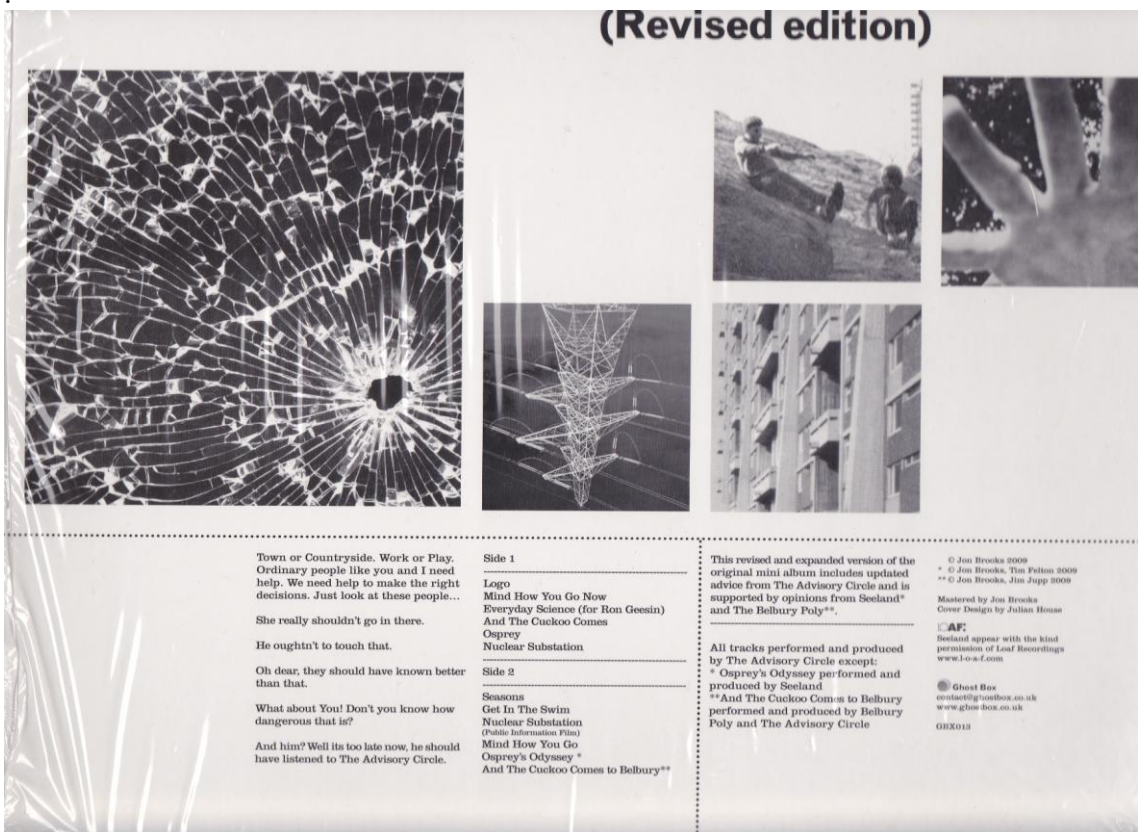
Figure 15. Back sleeve of The Advisory Circle's *Mind How You Go (Revised edition)* vinyl LP (GBx013). Released in 2010.

Illustrations to Chapter 3

I.   Advertisement

Figure 16. *Always Czech… The Label.* **Advertisement for Finders Keepers Records, reproduced in the insert sleeve of the** *Saxana The Girl on a Broomstick* **soundtrack (FKR039CD/LP, 2010). The logo 'Making Global Sound Local' can be seen in the bottom right-hand side corner.**

II. The Czech New Wave Series

Figure 17. Front sleeve of *Valerie and Her Week of Wonder* (FKR009CD/LP). Released in 2006.

Figure 18. Front sleeve of *Daisies* (FKR013LP / FKR013CD). Released in 2007.
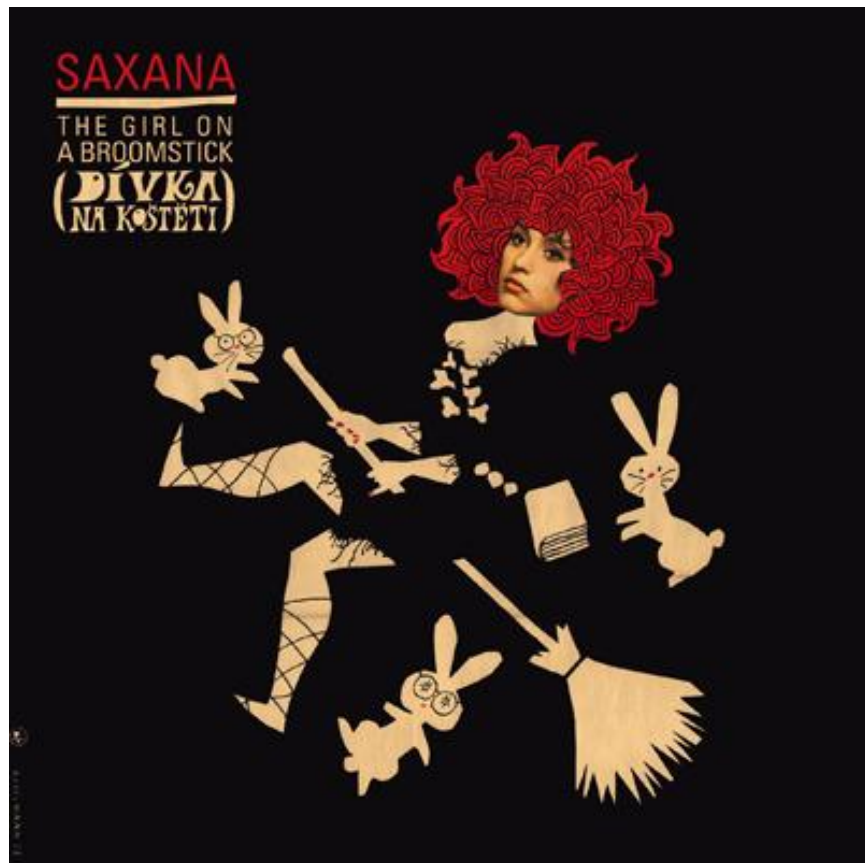
Figure 19. Front sleeve of *Saxana The Girl on A Broomstick* (FKR039CD/LP). Released in 2010.

III. The Sound of Wonder

Figure 20. Front sleeve of *The Sound Of Wonder* (FKR023LP / FKR023CDR). Compilation released in 2009.

Illustrations to Chapter 4

I. *Sarah Records on YouTube*

- *Vinyl Update #25: Sarah Records*, YouTube video published on the 10/05/2011. Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSC3SRDiPJo>

The following pictures are stills taken from the *Vinyl Update #25: Sarah Records* YouTube videos. The record collector presents a selection of Sarah Records artefacts from his personal collection. Below, a vinyl 7-inch record from The Orchids (*I've Got a Habit*, Sarah Records 002, released in 1988) (Figure 21) and the accompanying insert, a lyric sheet poster (Figure 22). The context of display plays a crucial part in the construction of the video; both collection and the collector are staged, appearing against a background of shelves filled with records which demonstrate, both literally and figuratively, the weight of the collector's knowledge. There is also a clear emphasis on the collector's playback devices (Figure 23).

Figure 21
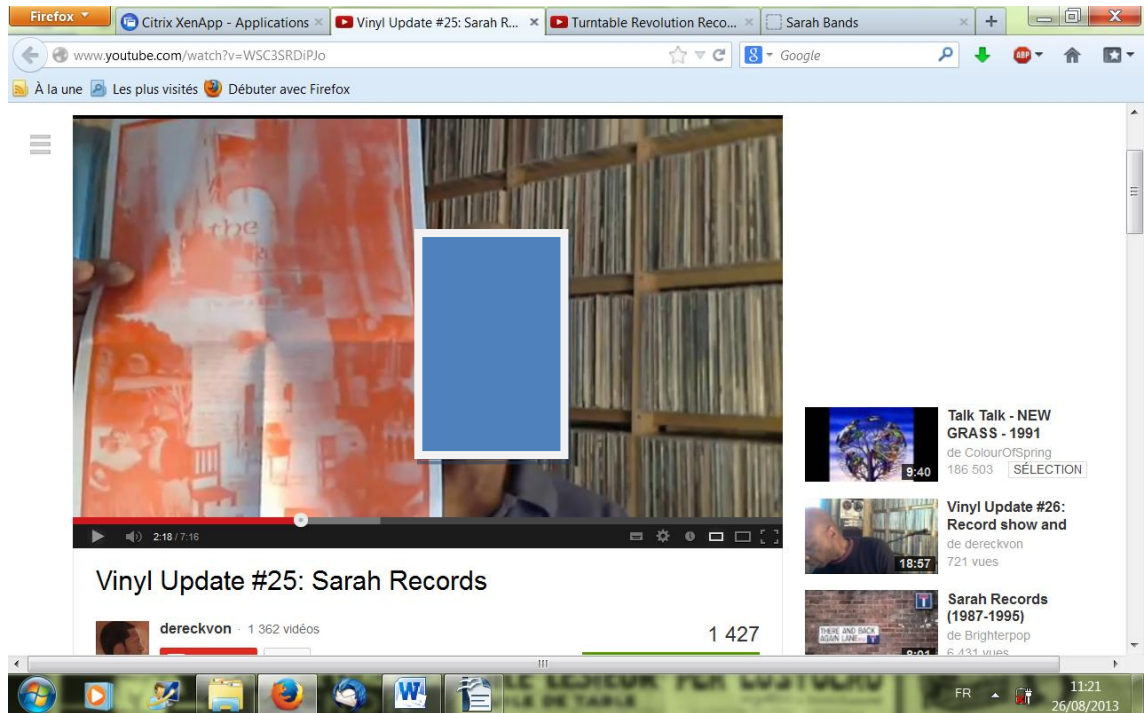
Figure 22

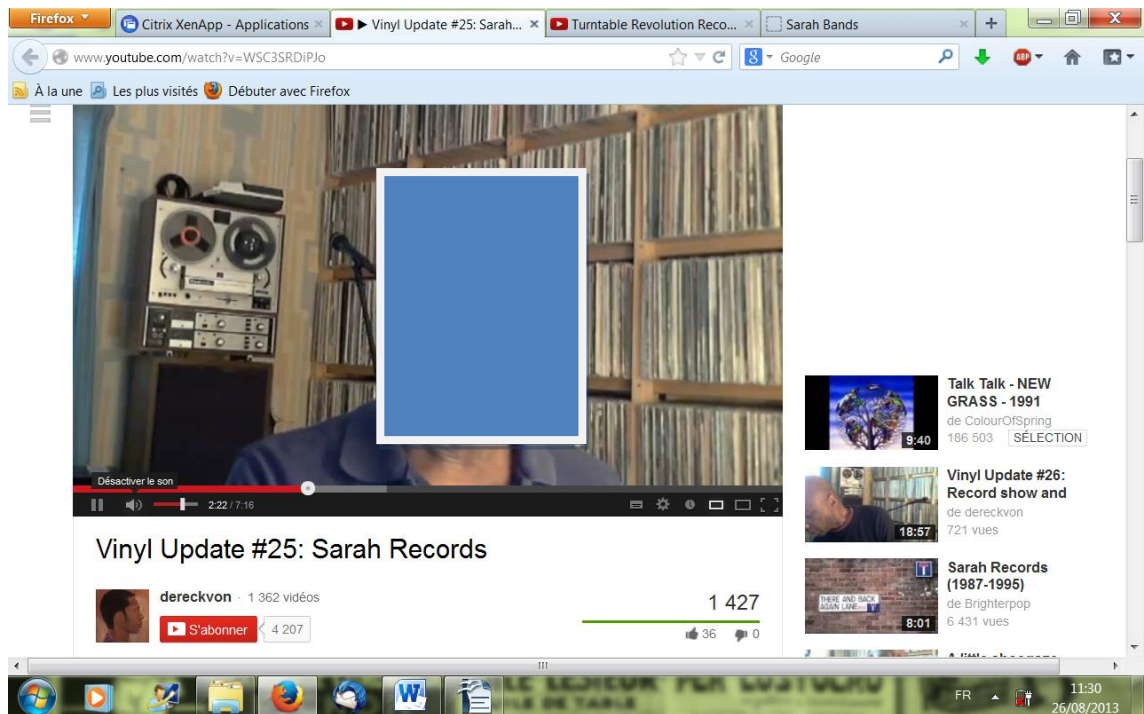**Figure 23**

- *Turntable Revolution Record Collection 26*, YouTube video published on the 20/07/2009. Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5tlq1M4OyY>

The following still, taken from the YouTube video *Turntable Revolution Record Collection 26*, shows another approach to the display of the collection. The collector is

visually absent from the images, though he provides a commentary for each of the Sarah records he shows. The photograph below shows the sleeve of the 7-inch vinyl *You Should All Be Murdered*, by the band Another Sunny Day (Sarah 022, released in 1989).
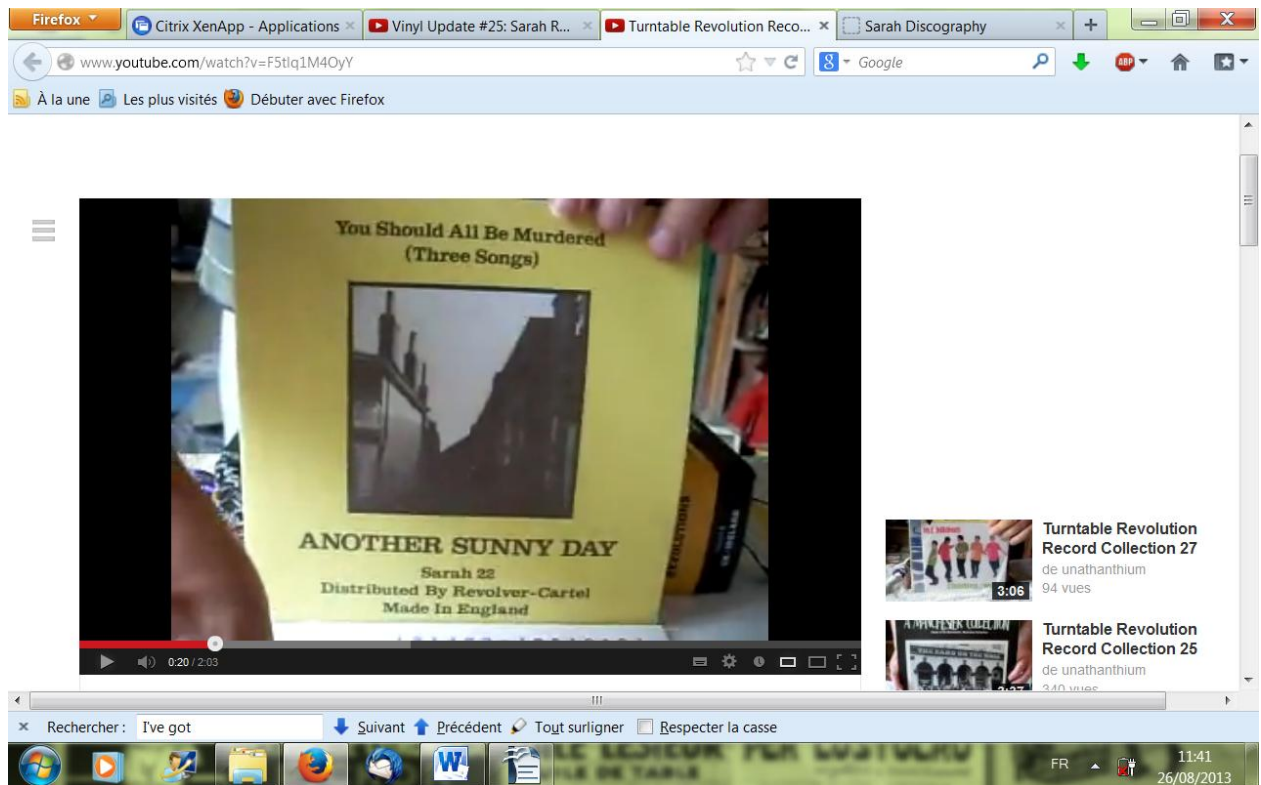
Figure 24

II. ***Sarah Records Singles Covers, as appearing on the Sarah Records website.***

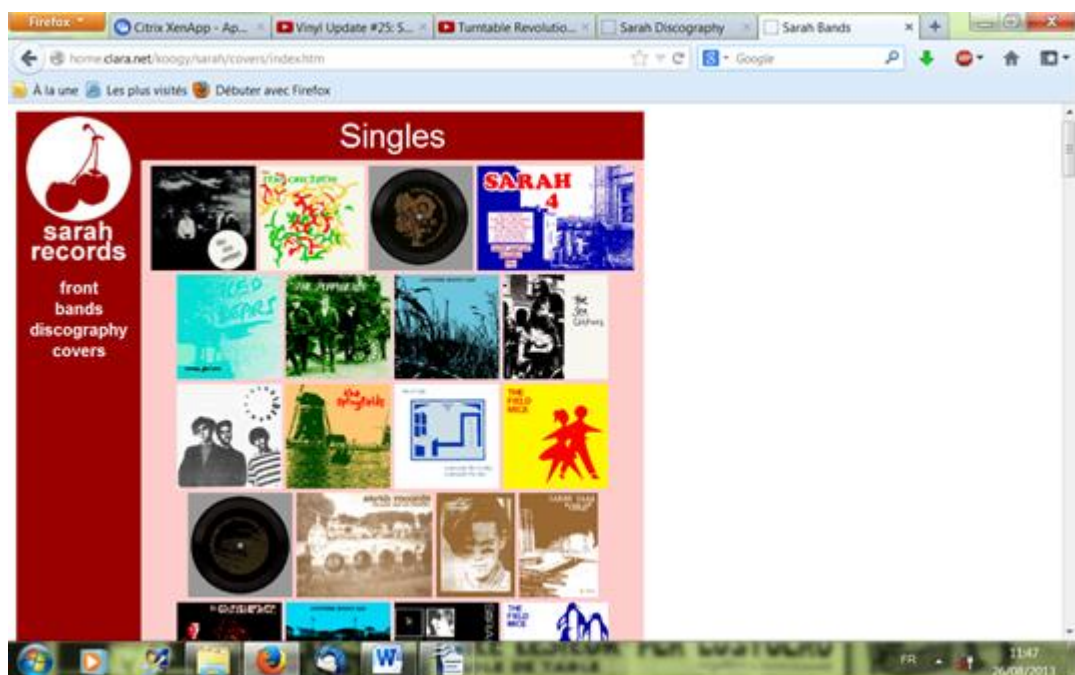***Visible at: <*** http://home.clara.net/koogy/sarah/covers/index.htm ***>***

Figure 25

III. Sarah Records on online record shops: the example of Discogs (Figures 6 and

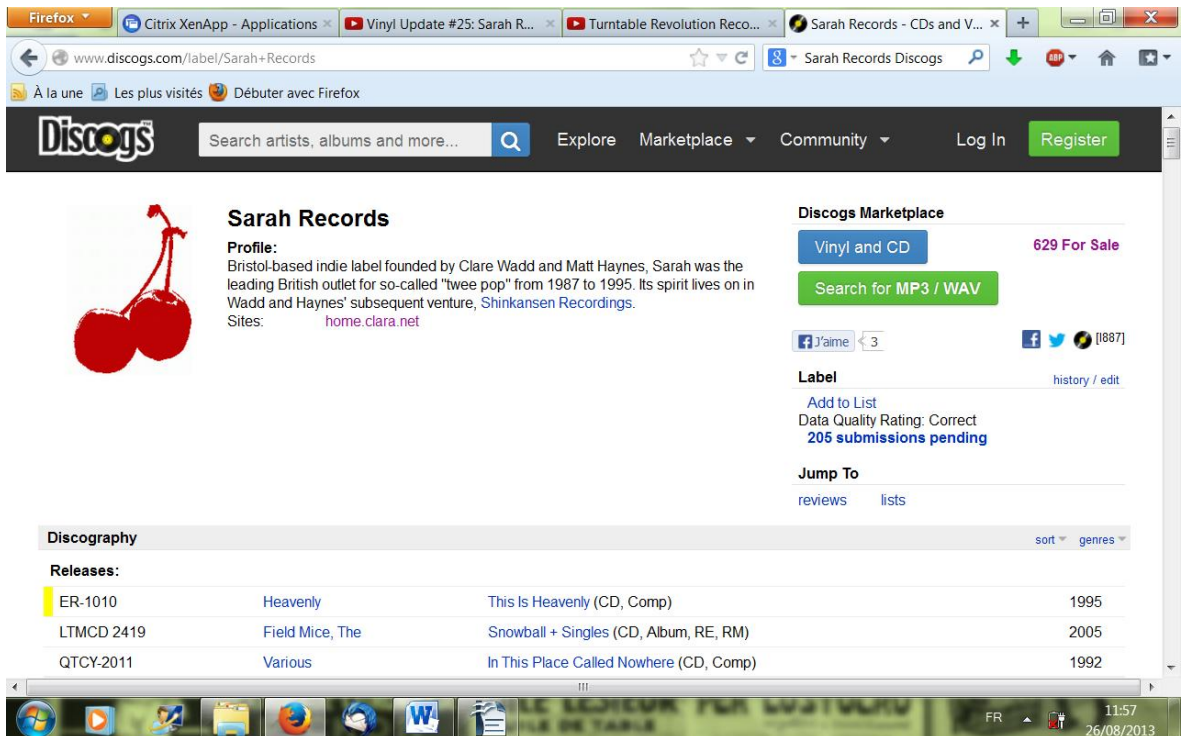*7) [<http://www.discogs.com/label/Sarah+Records>]*

Figure 26. The main 'Sarah Records' page provides a profile of the record label, as well as discographic information generated by the website users and sellers.
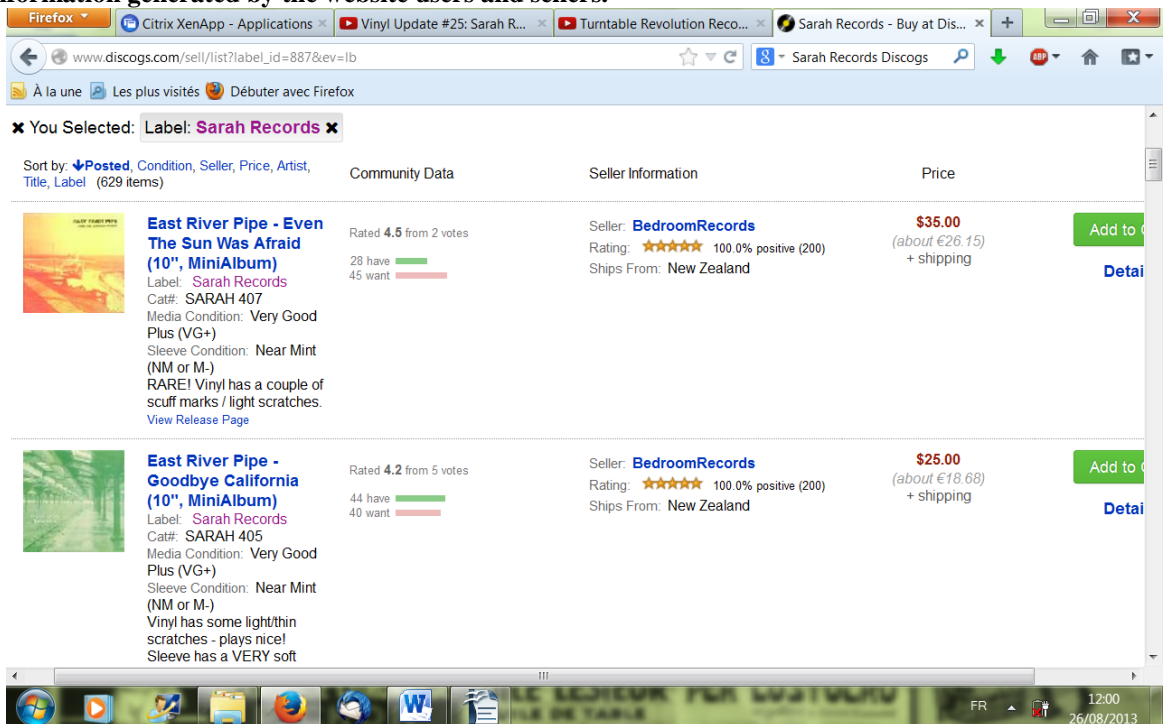

Figure 27. Detail of the Discogs list of Sarah Records artefacts available for sale.

References

Abburu, S. (2012) Knowledge based Semantic Annotation Generation of Music. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 47 (8), pp. 8-12.

Aciman, A. (1999) Shadow Cities. *In*: Aciman, A., ed. 1999. *Letters of Transit – Five Authors Reflecting on Exile, Identity, Language and Loss*. New York: New Press, pp. 15-34.

Acland, C. R., ed. (2007) *Residual Media.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Adair, B., Filene, B. and Koloski, L., eds.(2011) *Letting go? – Sharing Authority in a user-generated World.* Philadelphia: Left Coast Press.

Adams, J. (2007) Recovering a Trashed Communication Genre: Letters as Memory, Art, and Collectible. *In:* C. R. Acland, ed. 2007. *Residual Media.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 185-199.

Adorno, T. (2010) *Minima Moralia.* London: Verso.

_____. (2001) *The Culture Industry.* London/New York: Routledge.

_____. (1990) The Curves of the Needle. *October*, 55, pp. 48-55.

_____. (1990) The Form of the Phonograph Record. *October*, 55, pp. 56-61.

Agacinski, S. (2000) *Le passeur de Temps - Modernité et Nostalgie*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

Alborn, T. (1988) *Incite.* Number 11, Summer 1988, Cambridge, Massachusetts: self-published.

Allen, G. (2000) *Intertextuality.* London/New York: Routledge.

Anderson, T. (2006) *Making Easy Listening – Material Culture and Postwar American Recording.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Appadurai, A., ed. (2001)[1986] *The Social Life of Things – Commodities in Cultural Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Arendt, H. (1954) *Between Past and Future – Six Exercises in Political Thought.* London: Faber and Faber.

Assmann, A. (2002) Beyond the Archive. *In:* B. Neville and J. Villeneuve, eds. 2002. *Waste-Site Stories – The Recycling of Memory.* Albany: State University Of New York Press, pp. 71-84.

Attfield, J. (2000) *Wild Things – The Material Culture of Everyday Life.* Oxford, New York: Berg.

Atton, C. (1996) *Alternative Literature - A Practical Guide for Librarians.* Aldershot, Brookfield: Gowen.

Augé, M. (1992) *Non-Lieux – Introduction à une Anthropologie de la Surmodernité.* Paris: Seuil.

Auster, P. (1990) *Moon Palace.* London: Penguin.

_____. (1988) *The Invention of Solitude.* London: Faber & Faber.

Bachelard, G. (1994) [1964] *The Poetics of Space.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Bacon, J. (2008) *Arkive City.* Belfast: Interface University of Ulster & Locus+.

Barthes, R. (1981) *Camera Lucida – Reflections on Photography.* New York: Hill and Wang.

_____. (1977) *Fragments d'un Discours Amoureux*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

_____. (1977) *Image Music Text.* London: Fontana Press.

Bataille, G. (1929) Dust. *In:* B. Dillon, ed. 2011. *Ruins (Documents of Contemporary Art).* London/Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Gallery/MIT Press, p. 31.

Baudrillard, J. (2005) [1968] *The System of Objects*. London/New York: Verso.

_____. (1970) *La Société de Consommation.* Paris: Denoël.

_____. (1996) *The Perfect Crime.* London/New York: Verso.

_____. (1990) *Cool Memories*. London/New York: Verso.

_____. (1976) *L'échange Symbolique et la Mort.* Paris: Gallimard.

_____. (1968) The System of Collecting. *In*: J. Elsner and R. Cardinal, eds. 1994. *The Cultures of Collecting.* London: Reaktion Books, pp. 7-24.

Bauman, Z. (2003) *City of Fears, City of Hopes*. London: Goldsmiths College.

Baumann, S., Schirru, R. and Streit, B. (2010) Towards a Storytelling Approach for Novel Artists Recommendations. *In*: M. Detyniecki, P. Knees, A. Nürnberger, M. Schedl, S. Stober, eds. 2012. *Adaptive Multimedia Retrieval – Context, Exploration and Fusion.* pp. 1-15.

Beil, R., ed. (2006) *Boltanski: Time.* Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz: Institut Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt.

Belbury Poly (2010) *Farmer's Angle (Revised edition)* [LP]. Ghost Box.
_____ (2004) *The Willows* [CD]. Ghost Box.

Belk, R. (2001) [1995] *Collecting in a Consumer Society.* London and New York: Routledge.

Bell, D. and Hollows, J., eds. (2005) *Ordinary Lifestyles – Popular Media, Consumption and Taste.* Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press.

Benjamin, W. (2008) *Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media.* Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press.

_____. (2000) [1979] *One-way Street.* London: Verso.

_____. (1999) *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934.* Cambridge, Mass./London, England: Harvard University Press.

_____. (2006) *Berlin Childhood around 1900.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

_____. (2003) *Selected writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940.* Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press.

_____. (1999) *The Arcades Project.* Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press.

_____. (1973) *Illuminations.* London: Fontana.

_____. (1927) Dream Kitsch – Gloss on Surrealism. In: W. Benjamin, *Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media.* Cambridge, Mass./London, England: Harvard University Press, pp. 236-239.

Bennett, J. (2010) *Vibrant Matter – A Political Ecology of Things.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Berland, J. (2007) The Musicking Machine. *In:* C.R. Acland, ed. 2007. *Residual Media.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 303-328.

Bijsterveld, K. and van Dijck, J., eds. (2009) *Sound Souvenirs – Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Blake, A. (1997) *The Land without Music – Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-century Britain.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Blake, A., ed. (1999). *Living Through Pop.* London/New York: Routledge.

Blandford, P.W. (1986) *Netmaking – Fifth edition.* Glasgow : Brown, Son & Ferguson.
Bloch, E. (1986) *The Principles of Hope – Volume II.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: the MIT Press.

Bloom, H. (1997) [1973] *The Anxiety of Influence – A Theory of Poetry.* New York/ Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bolhman, P. (2002) *World Music – A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bolter, J.D. and Grusin, R. (2000) *Remediation – Understanding New Media.* Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: the MIT Press.

Borgès, J. L. (1941) The Library of Babel. *In*: J. L. Borgès, 1998. *Collected Fictions.* London: Penguin Books, pp. 112-118.

Borthwick, S. and Moy, R. (2004) *Popular Music Genres, an Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Boym, S. (2001) *The Future of Nostalgia.* New York: Basic Books.

_____ . (1994) *Common Places – Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia.* Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press.

Brabazon, T. and Mallinder, S. (2006) Popping the Museum: The Cases of Sheffield and Preston. *Museum and Society*, 4 (2), pp. 96-112.

Breton, A. (1937) *L'Amour Fou.* Paris: Gallimard.

Bronner, S.J. (1989) Object Lessons – The Work of Ethnological Museums and Collections. *In:* S. J. Bronner, ed. 1989. *Consuming Visions – Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1888-1920.* New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 217-254.

Brown, B. (2004) Things Theory. *In:* B. Brown, ed. 2004. *Things.* Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-22.

_____., ed. (2004) *Things.* Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press.
Buchli, V. and Lucas, G., eds. (2001) *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past.* London: Routledge.

Bull, M. (2006) Investigating the Culture of Mobile Listening: From Walkman to iPod. *In*: K. O'Hara and M. Brown, eds. 2006. *Consuming Music Together: Social and Collaborative Aspects of Music Consumption Technologies.* Springer: The Netherlands, pp. 131-150.

Burgess, J. and Green, J. (2009) *YouTube – Online Video and Participatory Culture.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Cameron, K. (2008) The Indie Top 50. *Mojo,* March 2008, pp. 72-83.

Candlin, F. and Guins, R., eds. (2009) *The Object Reader.* London and New York: Routledge.

Canning, C. M. and Postlewait, T., eds. (2010) *Representing the Past – Essays in Performance Historiography.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Cardinal, R. (1994) Collecting and Collage-making: The Case of Kurt Schwitters. *In*: J. Elsner and R. Cardinal, eds. 1994. *The Cultures of Collecting.* London: Reaktion books, pp. 68-96.

Casey, E. S. (1990) [1987] *Remembering - A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Castells, M. (2001) *The Internet Galaxy – Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cavanagh, D. (2001) *The Creation Records Story – My Magpie Eyes are Hungry for the Prize.* London: Virgin Books.

Chanan, M. (1995) *Repeated Takes – A Short History of Recording and its Effects on Music.* London: Verso.

Chow, R. (2004) Fateful Attachments: On Collecting, Fidelity, and Lao She. *In:* B. Brown, ed. 2004. *Things.* Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, pp. 362-380.

Chun, W. H. K. (2011) The Enduring Ephemeral, or The Future Is a Memory. *In*: E. Huhtamo and J. Parikka, eds. 2011. *Media Archaeology – Approaches, Applications, and Implications.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 184-203.

Clayton, M., Herbert, T. and Middleton, R., eds. (2011) *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction – second edition.* New York and Oxon: Routledge.

Clifford, J. (1988) On Collecting Art and Culture. *In:* J. Clifford, 1988. *The Predicament of Culture – Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art.* Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University press, pp. 215-251.

Cocteau, J. (2011) [1929] *Les Enfants Terribles.* London: Random House.

Cohen, N. (1986) Blues, Pre-Blues, and Gospel Reissues. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 99 (392), pp. 241-247.

Cohen, S. And Taylor, L. (1992) *Escape Attempts – The Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life – Second edition*. London/New York: Routledge.
Conte, P. (1995) *Secret Museum of Mankind – Volume I* [liner notes]. Yazoo Records.

Corbett, J. (1994) *Extended Play – Sounding off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein.* Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Cox, C. and Warner, D., eds. (2004) *Audio Cultures: Readings in Modern Music.* New York and London: Continuum.

Creeber, G. and Royston, M., eds. (2009) *Digital Cultures – Understanding New Media.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Crewe, L. and Gregson, N. (2003) *Second-hand Cultures*. Oxford: Berg.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1993) Why we need things. *In*: S. Lubar and W. D. Kingery, eds. 1993. *History from Things – Essays on Material Culture.* Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, pp. 20-29.

Curtis, M. H. (1991) The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, 1893. *In*: I. Karp and S. D. Lavine, eds. 1991. *Exhibiting Cultures – The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display.* Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, pp. 344-365.

Cutler, C. (1993) Plunderphonia. *In:* C. Cox, C. and D. Warner, eds. 2004. *Audio Cultures: Readings in Modern Music.* New York and London: Continuum, pp. 138-156.

Dant, T. (1999) *Material Culture in the Social World – Values, Activities, Lifestyles.* Maidenhead: Oxford University Press.

Davies, J. (2007) Going Analog: Vinylphiles and the Consumption of the Obsolete. *In:* C.R. Acland, ed. 2007. *Residual Media.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 222-236.

Day, T. (2000) *A Century of Recorded Music – Listening to Musical History.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

De Certeau, M. (1988) *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.

de Mul, J. (2009) The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Recombination. *In*: M. van den Boomen, S. Lammes, A.-S. Lehmann, J. Raessens and M. T. Schäfer, eds. 2009. *Digital Material: Tracing New Media in Everyday Life and Technology.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 95-106.

Debord, G. (1971) *The Society of Spectacle.* New York: Zone Books.

_____. (1960) The Adventure (excerpts). *In:* K. Knabb, ed. 1995 (1981), *Situationist International Anthology.* Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, pp. 60-61.

Debray, R. (2000) *Introduction à la Médiologie.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

_____. (1996) *Media Manifestos – On the Technological Transmission of Cultural Forms.* London and New York: Verso.

Del Pilar Blanco, M. and Peeren, E., eds. (2010) *Popular Ghosts – The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture.* New York and London: Continuum.

DeMarinis, P. (2001) Erased Dots and Rotten Dashes, or How to Wire your Head for a Preservation. *In*: E. Huhtamo and J. Parikka, eds. 2011. *Media Archaeology – Approaches, Applications, and Implications.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 211-238.

DeNora, T. (2000) *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Derrida, J. with Stiegler, B. (2002)[1996] *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

_____ . (2010) *Copy, Archive, Signature – A Conversation on Photography.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

_____ . (1997) [1976] *Of Grammatology.* Baltimore/London: John Hopkins University Press.

_____ . (1995) Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression. *Diacritics*, 25 (2), pp. 9-63. Derrida, J. (1994) *Spectres of Marx.* New York/London: Routledge.

_____ . (1989) The Ghost Dance – An Interview with Jacques Derrida by Andrew Payne and Mark Lewis. *Public,* 2, pp. 60-67.

_____ . (1989) *Memoires for Paul de Man – Revised edition.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Dibbell, J. (2004) Unpacking our Hard Drives: Discophilia in the Age of Digital Reproduction. *In:* E. Weisbard, ed. 2004, *This Is Pop: In Search of the Elusive at Experience Music Project.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 279-288.

Dillon, B., ed. (2011) *Ruins (Documents of Contemporary Art).* London/Cambridge, Massachusetts: Whitechapel Gallery/MIT Press.

Donaghy, M. (2000) *Dances Learned Last Night – Poems 1975-1995*, London: Picador.

Dorsett, C. (2008) Glimpsing the Archive. *In:* J. Bacon, ed. 2008. *Arkive City.* Belfast: Interface University of Ulster & Locus+, pp. 124-131.

Du Gay, P., Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H. and Negus, K. (1997) *Doing Cultural Studies – The Story of the Sony Walkman.* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Duckrey, T. with Ars Electronica, eds. (1999) *Ars Electronica – Facing the Future, A Survey of Two Decades.* Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: the MIT Press.

Duckworth, W. (2005) *Virtual Music – How the Web got Wired for Sound.* London and New York: Routledge.

Duncombe, S. (2005) Sabotage, Slack and the Zinester Search for Non-alienated Labour. *In*: D. Bell and J. Hollows, eds. 2005. *Ordinary Lifestyles – Popular Media, Consumption and Taste.* Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press, pp. 217-230.

During, S., ed. (2003) *The Cultural Studies Reader – Second edition.* London/New York: Routledge.

Eagleton, T. (2009) [1981] *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism.* London/New York: Verso.

Eisenberg, E. (2005) *The Recording Angel – Music, Records and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa.* Yale: Yale University Press.

Elsner, J. and Cardinal, R. (1994) *The Cultures of Collecting.* London: Reaktion Books.

Ernaux, A. (2008) *Les Années.* Paris: Gallimard.

Ernst, W. (2013) *Digital Memory and the Archive.* Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
_____ . (2011) Media Archeography: Method and Machine versus History and Narrative of Media. *In*: E. Huhtamo and J. Parikka, eds. 2011. *Media Archaeology – Approaches, Applications, and Implications.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 239-255.

Feld, S. with Keil, C. (2005) Dialogue 1: Getting into the Dialogic Groove. *In*: C. Keil and S. Feld, eds. 2005. *Music Grooves – Second edition.* Tucson: Fenestra, pp. 1-30.

_____ . (2005) Notes on "World Beat". *In:* C. Keil and S. Feld, eds. 2005. *Music Grooves – Second edition.* Tucson: Fenestra, pp. 238-246.

Finlay, J., dir. (2011) *Sound It Out* [film]. UK: Glimmer Films.

Fišer, L. (2006) *Valerie and Her Week of Wonder* [CD/LP]. Finders Keepers.

Fitchett, A. (1997) Sinister: Saropoly... Belleopoly, etc., email communication sent to the Belle And Sebastian Sinister Message Mailing List. Available from: <http://www.missprint.org/archives/html/sinister/1997-11/msg00072.html>

Flaubert, G. (2008) [1881] *Bouvard et Pécuchet.* Paris: GF-Flammarion.

Fletcher, L. (2009) The Material Paradox of Digital Music, unpublished paper presented at the *Socio-Aesthetics Symposium*, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, 24 Aug 2009.

Flusser, V. (1999) Memories. *In:* T. Duckrey with Ars Electronica, ed. 1999. *Ars Electronica - Facing the Future - A Survey of two Decades*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: the MIT Press, pp. 202-206.

Fonarow, W. (2006) *Empire of Dirt – The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music.* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Foster, H. (2002) *Design and Crimes (and Other Diatribes).* New York/London: Verso.

Foucault, M. (2002) *The Order of Things – An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* London and New York: Routledge.

Frow, J. (2004) A Pebble, a Camera, a Man Who Turns into a Telegraph Pole. *In:* B. Brown, ed. 2004. *Things.* Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, pp.

346-361.

_____. (1997) *Time and Commodity Culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fukuyama, F. (1989) The End of History?. *The National Interest,*16, pp. 3-18.

Garde-Hansen, J. (2011) *Media and Memory.* Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press.

Gilloch, G. (1996) *Myth and Metropolis – Walter Benjamin and the City.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gitelman, L. (2008) *Always Already New – Media, History, and the Data of Culture.* Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: the MIT Press.

_____ . (2004) Media, Materiality, and the Measure of the Digital; or, The Case of Sheet Music and the Problem of Piano Rolls. *In*: L. Rabinovitz and A. Geil, eds. 2004. *Memory Bytes – History, Technology, and Digital Culture.* Durham/London: Duke University Press, pp. 199-217.

Glassie, H. (1999) *Material Culture.* Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press.

Gracq, J. (1985) *The Shape of a City.* New York: Turtle Point Press.

Grainger, P. (1908-1909) Advantages of the Phonograph. *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, 3, pp. 148-150. Digitised version available from: <http://archive.org/stream/journaloffolkson03folk/journaloffolkson03folk_djvu.txt>

Graves-Brown, P.M., ed. (2000) *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture.* London and New York: Routledge.

Grosz, E. (2001) The Thing. *In*: F. Candlin and R. Guins, eds. 2009. *The Object Reader.* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 124-138.

Guffey, E. E. (2006) *Retro – The Culture of Revival*. London: Reaktion Books.

Harley, J.B. (2001) *The New Nature of Maps – Essays in the History of Cartography.* Baltimore/London: the John Hopkins University Press.

Hartley, J. (2012) *Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies*. Malden/Oxford/Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Harvey, D. (2000) *Spaces of Hope.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Haynes, M. (1987) *Are You Scared To Get Happy?.* Bristol: self-published.

Haynes, M. and Wadd, C. (1995) A Day for Destroying Things, self-published advertisement in the Melody Maker and the New Musical Express (August 1995).

Heidegger, M. (1954) The Question Concerning Technology. *In*: M. Heidegger, 1993.

Basic Writings – Revised and expanded edition. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 307-342.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2009) The digitalisation of music. *In*: A.C. Pratt and P. Jeffcutt, eds. 2009. *Creativity, Innovation and the Cultural Economy.* London, New York: Routledge, pp. 57-73.

_____. (1999) Indie: the Institutional Politics and Aesthetics of a Popular Music Genre. *Cultural Studies*, 13 (1), pp. 34-61.

Hillis, K., Petit, M. and Scott-Epley, N., eds. (2006) *Everyday eBay – Culture, Collecting, and Desire.* New York: Routledge.

Hine, C. (2000) *Virtual Ethnography.* London, California, India, Singapore: Sage.

Hosokawa, S. (1984) The Walkman Effect. *Popular Music*, 4, Performers and Audiences, pp. 165-180.

Huhtamo, E. and Parikka, J., eds. (2011) *Media Archaeology – Approaches, Applications, and Implications.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Huizinga, J. (1980) [1949] *Homo Ludens – A Study of the Play-element in Culture.* London/Boston: Routledge & Kegan, Paul Ltd.

Hunt, J. D. (1993) The Sign of the Object. *In*: S. Lubar and W. D. Kingery, eds. 1993. *History from Things – Essays on Material Culture.* Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, pp. 293-298.

Huyssen, A. (2003) *Present Pasts – Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

_____. (1995). *Twilight Memories – Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia.* New York/London: Routledge.

Jameson, F. (1971) *Marxism and Form – Twentieth-century Theories of Literature.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jenkins, H. (2008) *Convergence Culture – Where Old and New Media Collide.* New York/London: New York University Press.

Jones, A. (2007) *Memory and Material Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Julien, M.-P. and Warnier, J.-P., eds. (1999) *Approche de la Culture Matérielle : Corps à Corps avec l'Objet.* Paris: L'Harmattan.

Juno, A. and Vale, V., eds. (1993) *Re/Search #14: Incredibly Strange Music, Volume I.* San Francisco: Re/Search Publications.

Kassabian, A. (2013) *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Katz, M. (2010) Beware of Gramomania: The Pleasures and Pathologies of Record Collecting. *In:* T. Schoonmaker, ed. 2010. *The Record – Contemporary Art and Vinyl.* Nasher Museum of Art: Duke University Press, pp. 62-65.

_____ . (2010) *Capturing Sound – How Technology Has Changed Music, Revised Edition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kaufmann, V. (1997) Angels of Purity. *October*, 79, pp. 49-68.

_____ . (2006) *Guy Debord – Revolution in the Service of Poetry.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Kavanagh, J. (1985) *Simply Thrilled #4.* Glasgow: self-published.

Keil, C. and Feld, S. (2005) *Music Grooves – Second edition.* Tucson: Fenestra.

Kenney, W. (1999) *Recorded Music in American Life – The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945.* New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kieckhefer, D. (20??) Archive [online]. Available from < http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/archive/>

Kington, M. (1977) Play it Again, Sven. *Punch*, 21/12/1977, pp. 1220-1221.

Kittler, F. (2010)[2002] *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures 1999.* Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press.

_____ . (1999) *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kluitenberg, E. (2011) On the Archaeology of Imaginary Media. *In:* E. Huhtamo and J. Parikka, eds. 2011. *Media Archaeology – Approaches, Applications, and Implications.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 48-69.

Knabb, K., ed. (1995) [1981] *Situationist International Anthology.* Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets.

Knappett, C. (2005) *Thinking through Material Culture – An Interdisciplinary Perspective.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Kopytoff, I. (1986) The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process. *In:* A. Appadurai, ed. 2001. *The Social Life of Things – Commodities in Cultural Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 64-91.

Kureishi, H. and Savage, J., eds. (1995) *The Faber Book of Pop.* London and Boston: Faber and Faber.

Kusek, D. and Leonhard, G. (2005) *The Future of Music – Manifesto for the Digital*

Music Revolution. Boston: Berklee Press.

Kwint, M. (1999) Introduction: the Physical Past. *In:* M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley, eds. 1999. *Material Memories.* Oxford, New York: Berg, pp. 1-16.

Kwint, M., Breward. C. and Aynsley, J., eds. (1999) *Material Memories.* Oxford, New York: Berg.

Larkin, C. (1992) *The Guinness Who's Who of Indie and New Wave Music.* London: Guinness Publishing.

Latour, B. (1994) On Technical Mediation – Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy. *Common Knowledge*, 3 (2), pp. 29-64.

_____. (1991) The Berlin Key or How to Do Words with Things. *In*: P. M. Graves-Brown, ed. 2000. *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture.* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 10-21.

Lazell, B. (1997) *Indie Hits 1980-1989 – The Complete U.K. Independent Charts (Singles & Albums).* London: Cherry Red Books.

Lefebvre, H. (2011) *Vers un Romantisme révolutionnaire.* Paris: Nouvelles Editions Lignes.

_____ . (1961) Clearing the Ground. *In*: S. Johnstone, ed. 2008. *The Everyday (Documents of Contemporary Art).* London/Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Gallery/MIT Press, pp. 26-33.

Leslie, E. (2007) *Walter Benjamin.* London: Reaktion Books.

Levin, T. (1990) For the Record: Adorno on Music in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility. *October*, 55, pp. 23-47.

Levitas, R. (2010) [1990] *The Concept of Utopia*. Oxford/Bern/Bruxelles/FrankfurtamMain/New York/Wien: Peter Lang.

Lillie, J. (2006) Immaterial labour in the eBay community: the work of consumption in the "network society". *In*: K. Hillis, M. Petit, N. Epley, eds., 2006. *Everyday eBay: Culture, Colleting, and Desire.* New York: Routledge, pp. 91-105.

Lowenthal, D. (1985) *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lubar, S. and Kingery, W. D., eds. (1993) *History from Things – Essays on Material Culture.* Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Macaulay, R. (1953) *Pleasure of Ruins.* New York: Walker and company.

Mandler, P. (1999) "The Wand of Fancy": The Historical Imagination of the Victorian Tourist. *In:* M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley, eds. 1999. *Material Memories.* Oxford, New York: Berg, pp. 125-142.

Marshall, D. G. (1977) Plot as Trap; Plot as Mediation. *The Bulletin of The Midwest Modern Language Association*, 10 (1), pp. 11-28.

Martens, L. (2011) *The Promise of Memory – Childhood Recollection and its Objects in Literary Modernism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Martin, P. (1999) *Popular Collecting and the Everyday Self – The Reinvention of Museums?*. London/New York: Leicester University Press.

Martin, P. and Pearce, S. eds. (2002) *The Collector's Voice: Critical readings in the Practice of Collecting – Volume 4 – Contemporary Voices*. Aldershot, England, Burlington, USA: Ashgate.

Marvin, C. (1988) *When Old Technologies were New – Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marx, U., Schwarz, G., Schwarz, M., Wizisla, E. (2007) *Walter Benjamin's Archive – Images, Texts, Signs*. London/New York: Verso.

McCourt, T. (2005) Collecting Music in the Digital Realm. *Popular Music and Society*, 28 (2), pp. 249-252.

McDonough, T.F. (1997) Rereading Debord, rereading the Situationists. *October*, 79, pp. 3-14.

McGowan, M. (1993) Interview with Vale. *In*: A. Juno and V. Vale, eds. 1993. *Re/Search #14: Incredibly Strange Music, Volume I*. San Francisco: Re/Search Publications, pp. 98-121.

McKenzie, D.F. (1999) *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McRobbie, A. (1993) The Place of Walter Benjamin in Cultural Studies. *In*: S. During, ed. 2003 *The Cultural Studies Reader – revised edition*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 77-96.

Merewether, C. (2006) *The Archive (Documents of Contemporary Art)*. London/Cambridge, Massachusetts: Whitechapel gallery/MIT Press.

Miller, D., ed. (1998) *Why Some Things Matter*. London and New York: Routledge.

Milner, G. (2009) *Perfecting Sound Forever – The Story of Recorded Music*. London: Granta.

Mitchell, W.J.T. (2004) Romanticism and the Life of Things: Fossils, Totems, and Images. *In:* B. Brown, ed. 2004. *Things*. Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, pp. 227-244.

_____. (1987) *Iconology – Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago/London: the University of Chicago Press.

Morris-Suzuki, T. (2005) *The Past within us: Media, Memory, History.* London, New York: Verso.

Muensterberger, W. (1994) *Collecting: An Unruly Passion – Psychological Perspectives.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nancy, J.-L. (2007) *Listening.* New York: Fordham University Press.

_____. (1991) *The Inoperative Community.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Neely, D.T. (2008) Haul and Pull Up: History, *Mento* and the eBay Age. *Caribbean Studies*, 36, pp. 95-120.

Negus, K. (2004) [1996] *Popular Music in Theory – An Introduction.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Neville, B. and Villeneuve, J., eds (2002) *Waste-Site Stories – The Recycling of Memory*, Albany: State University Of New York Press.

Nora, P., ed. (1997) *Realms of Memory – The Construction of the French Past.* New York: Columbia University press.

_____. (2002) Reasons for the current upsurge in memory. *Eurozine* [online]. Available from <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/article_2002-04-19-nora-en.html>

_____. (1989) Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Mémoire. *Representations,* 26, pp. 7-24.

O'Brien, G. (2004) *Sonata for Jukebox – An Autobiography of my Ears.* New York: Counterpoint.

Osborne, P. (1995) *The Politics of Time – Modernity and Avant-garde.* London/New York: Verso.

Parikka, J. (2012) *What is Media Archaeology?.* Cambridge/Malden: Polity Press.

Park, R.E. and Burgess, E.W., eds. (1974)[1925] *The City.* Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.

Pearce, K. (1985) *Hungry Beat #3.* Kent: self-published.

Pearce, S. (1998) *Museums, Objects and Collections – A Cultural Study.* London: Leicester University Press.

Pearson, B. L. (1992) Standing at the Crossroads between Vinyl and Compact Discs: Reissue Blues Recordings in the 1990s. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 105, pp.

215–226.

Pels, P. (1998) The Spirit of Matter: On Fetish, Rarity, Fact, and Fancy. *In*: P. Spyer, ed. 1998. *Border Fetishisms – Material Objects in Unstable Spaces.* London, New York: Routledge, pp. 91-121.

Perec, G. (1965) *Les Choses.* Paris: Julliard.

Peters, J. D. (2010) Introduction: Friedrich Kittler's Light Shows. *In*: F. Kittler, *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures 1999.* Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press, pp. 1-17.

_____. (2004) Helmholtz, Edison, and Sound History. *In:* L. Rabinovitz and A. Geil, eds. 2004. *Memory Bytes – History, Technology, and Digital Culture.* Durham/London: Duke University Press, pp. 177-198.

Petridis, A. (2009) The Belbury Poly: From A Distant Star, Various Artists: Ritual and Education. *The Guardian* [online], 30/01/2009. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/jan/30/ghost-box-bellbury-poly>

Pile, S. (2005) *Real Cities*. London: Sage.

Plummer, R. (2009) Music Sleuths Seek out Lost Tunes. *BBC News* [online]. Available from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8113107.stm>

Poster, M. (2001) *What's the Matter with the Internet?.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Power, N. (2010)Waiting for the Future. *In:* B. Dillon, ed. 2011. *Ruins (Documents of Contemporary Art).* London/Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel gallery/MIT Press, pp. 218-223.

Pratt, A. C. and Jeffcutt, P., eds. (2009) *Creativity, Innovation and the Cultural Economy.* London, New York: Routledge.

Prelinger, R. (2007) Archives and Access in the 21st Century. *Cinema Journal*, 46 (3), pp. 114-118.

Prentice, W. (2012) Collateral Damage. *The Wire*, October 2012, p. 22.

Prown, J.D. (2001) *Art as Evidence – Writings on Art and Material Culture.* New Haven/London: Yale University Press.

Rabinovitz, L. and Geil, A., eds. (2004) *Memory Bytes – History, Technology, and Digital Culture*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Reynolds, S. (2011) *Retromania – Pop Culture's Addiction to its own Past*. London: Faber And Faber.

_____. (2007) *Bring the noise.* London: Faber And Faber.

_____. (2006b) 'Haunted audio: dubversion/deleted scenes/rematerialized tangents/bloopers/offcuts' [online], 25/12/2006. Available from <http://blissout.blogspot.co.uk/2006_12_01_archive.html>.

_____. (2006a) Society of the Spectral. *The Wire*, November 2006, pp. 26-33.

_____. (2005) Untitled blog piece on Ghost Box [online], 26/03/2005. Available from:<http://blissout.blogspot.co.uk/2005/03/not-done-one-of-these-for-while-got.html>

_____. (2005) *Rip it Up and Start Again – Postpunk 1978-1984.* London: Faber And Faber.

Ricoeur, P. (1978). Archives, Documents, Traces. *In:* C. Merewether, C. (2006). *The Archive (Documents of Contemporary Art).* London/Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel gallery/MIT Press, pp. 68-69.

Rietveld, H. C. (2007) The Residual Soul Sonic Force of the 12-inch Dance Single. *In:* C.R. Acland, ed. 2007. *Residual Media.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 97-114.

Rooney, P. (2003) *Songs and Routines.* Reg Vardy Gallery: University of Sunderland.

Rorschach, K. (2010). Foreword. *In:* T. Schoonmaker, ed. 2010. *The Record – Contemporary Art and Vinyl.* Nasher Museum of Art: Duke University Press, p. 9.

Ryan, M-L. (2001) *Narrative as Virtual Reality – Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media.* Baltimore/London: The John Hopkins University Press.

Sadler, S. (1998) *The Situationist City.* Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: the MIT Press.

Samuel, R. (1994) *Theatres of Memory – Volume 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture.* London/New York: Verso.

Sartre, J.P. (1938) *La Nausée.* Paris: Gallimard.

Scanlan, J. (2005) *On Garbage*. London: Reaktion Books.

Schoonmaker, T. ed. (2010) *The Record – Contemporary Art and Vinyl.* Nasher Museum of Art: Duke University Press.

Schor, N. (1994) Collecting Paris. *In*: J. Elsner and R. Cardinal, eds. 1994. *The Cultures of Collecting.* London: Reaktion Books, pp. 252-274.

Scott, C. (2007) *Street Photography: From Atget to Cartier-Bresson*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co.

Scribner, C. (2004) Object, Relic, Fetish, Thing: Joseph Beuys and the Museum. *In:* B.

Brown, ed. 2004. *Things.* Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, pp. 330-345.

Seabrook, J. (2004) *Consuming Cultures: Globalization and Local Lives.* Oxford: New Internationalist.

Sekula, A. (1983) Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital. *In*: B. Wallis, ed. 1987. *Blasted Allegories – An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists.* Cambridge, Mass.; London, England: the MIT Press, pp. 114-127.

Sexton, J. (2012) Weird Britain in Exile: Ghost Box, Hauntology and Alternative Heritage. *Popular Music and Society*, 35 (4). pp. 561-584.

_____ . (2009) Digital Music: Production, Distribution and Consumption; Case Study: the i-Pod. *In*: G. Creeber and R. Martin, eds, 2009. *Digital Culture – Understanding New Media.* Maidenhead: Open University press, pp. 92-106.

Shapiro, P. ed. (2000) *Modulations – A History of Electronic Music – Throbbing Words on Sound.* New York: Caipirinha Productions.

Shove, E., Trentman, F., Wilk, R., eds. (2009) *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life-Practice, Materiality and Culture*. Oxford, New York: Berg.

Simon, N. (2011) Participatory Design and the Future of Museums. In: B. Adair, B. Filene and L. Koloski, eds. 2011. *Letting go? – Sharing authority in a user-generated World.* Philadelphia: Left Coast Press, pp. 18-33.

Sinclair, I. (1975) *Lud Heat: A Book of the Dead Hamlets.* London: Albion Village Press.

Skinner, W. (2010) *Critical Studies: A Determination of the Graphic Legacy of Library Music Sleeve Design*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: self-published.

Small, C. (1998). *Musicking – The Meanings of Performing and Listening.* Middletow, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Sobchack, V. (2004) Nostalgia for a Digital Object – Regrets on the Quickening of Quicktimes. *In*: L. Rabinovitz and A. Geil, eds. 2004. *Memory Bytes – History, Technology, and Digital Culture.* Durham/London: Duke University Press, pp. 305-329.

Sofaer, J., ed. (2007) *Material Identities.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Sontag, S. (2009) [1972] *Under the Sign of Saturn.* London: Penguin.

_____. (2008) *Reborn: Journals and Notebooks 1947–1963.* London: Penguin.

_____. (1990) *On Photography*. New York: Anchor Books.

_____. (1969) *Styles of Radical Will.* London: Secker & Warburg.

Spivak, G. C. (1985/99) The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives. *In:* C. Merewether, ed. 2006. *The Archive (Documents of Contemporary Art).* London/Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Gallery/MIT Press, pp. 163-169.

Spyer, P., ed. (1998) *Border Fetishisms – Material Objects in Unstable Spaces.* London, New York: Routledge.

Schloss, J. (2004) *Making Beats: The Art of Sample Based Hip-Hop.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Steedman, C. (2001) *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Steffen, D. (2005) *From Edison to Marconi – The First Thirty Years of Recorded Music.* Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company.

Sterne, J. (2012) *MP3 – the Meaning of a Format.* Durham/London: Duke University Press.

_____ . (2003) *The Audible Past – Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction.* Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Stewart, K. (1988) Nostalgia – A Polemic. *Cultural Anthropology*, 3 (3), pp. 227-24.

Stewart, S. (2007) [1993] *On Longing – Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection.* Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Stiegler, B. (2009) [1996] *Technics and Time, 2 – Disorientation.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

_____. (2002) The Discrete Image. *In:* J. Derrida with B. Stiegler, 2002. *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews.* Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 145-163.

Strachan, R.C. (2003) *Do-it-yourself: Industry, Ideology, Aesthetics and Micro Independent Record Labels in the UK.* Liverpool: unpublished PhD thesis.

Straw, W. (2011) Music and Material Culture. *In:* M. Clayton, T. Herbert and R. Middleton, eds. 2010. *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction – second edition.* New York and Oxon: Routledge, pp. 227-236.

_____. (2007) Embedded Memories. *In:* C.R. Acland, ed. 2007. *Residual Media.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-15.

_____. (2000) Exhausted Commodities: The Material Culture of Music. *Canadian Journal of Communication* [online], 25 (1). Available from <http://cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/issue/view/91/showToc>

_____. (1997) Sizing Up Record Collections – Genders and Connoisseurship in Rock Music Culture. *In:* S. Whiteley, eds. 1997. *Sexing the Groove – Popular Music and*

Gender. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 3-16.

Taylor, T.D. (2001) *Strange Sounds – Music, Technology and Culture.* New York and London: Routledge.

_____ . (1997) *Global Pop – World Music, World Markets.* New York and London: Routledge.

Théberge, P. (1997) *Any Sound You Can Imagine.* Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press.

Thompson, M. (1979) *Rubbish Theory – The Creation and Destruction of Value.* Oxford, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Tilley, C. (1999) *Metaphor and Material Culture*. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Toop, D. (2004) *Haunted Weather – Music, Silence and Memory.* London: Serpent's Tail.

Touffic, J. (1999) Monstrous Units over the Plateau. *In*: Labelle, B. and Roden, S., eds. 1999. *Site of Sound - Of Architecture & the Ear.* Los Angeles: Errant Bodies Press, pp. 11-15.

Trodd, Z. (2006) Reading eBay: Hidden Stores, Subjective Stories, and a People's History of the Archive. *In*: K. Hillis, M. Petit, N. Epley, eds., 2006. *Everyday eBay: Culture, Colleting, and Desire.* New York: Routledge, pp. 77-90.

True, E. (1990) Cutie calls! – The Rise of Sarah Records. *Melody Maker*, 09/08/1990, p. 36.

Turkle, S., ed. (2007) *Evocative Objects – Things We Think With.* Cambridge, Massachussetts/London, England: the MIT Press.

Uricchio, W. (2009) Moving Beyond the Artefact: Lessons from Participatory Culture. *In*: M. van den Boomen, S. Lammes, A.-S. Lehmann, J. Raessens and M. T. Schäfer, eds. 2009. *Digital Material: Tracing New Media in Everyday Life and Technology.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 135-146.

van Dijk, J.A.G.M. (2006) [1991] *The Network Society – Social aspects of New Media.* London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage.

Van Elferen, I. (2010) Haunted by a Melody: Ghosts, Transgression, and Music in *Twin Peaks*. *In:* M. Del Pilar Blanco and E. Peeren, eds. 2010. *Popular Ghosts – The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture.* New York and London: Continuum, pp. 282-295.

Varda, A., dir. (2000) *The Gleaners and I* [film]. Paris: Ciné-Tamaris.

Various (2010) *Saxana The Girl on A Broomstick* [LP/CD]. Finders Keepers.

Various (2009) *The Sound Of Wonder* [CD/LP]. Finders Keepers.

Various (2007) *Daisies* [LP/CD]. Finders Keepers.

Virilio, P. (1991) *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*. New York: Semiotext.

_____. (1986) *Speed and Politics- An Essay on Dromology.* New York: Semiotext.

Votel, A. *Valerie and Her Week of Wonder* [liner notes]. Finders Keepers.
Wadd, C. (1989) *Cold/Lemonade – A Lie* (Sarah 014). Bristol: self-published.

Walker, J.A. (2001) [1983] *Art in the Age of Mass Media – 3rd Edition.* London, Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press.

Wallis, B., ed. (1987) *Blasted Allegories – An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, England: the MIT Press.

Ward, A. (1990) *A Manual of Sound Archive Administration.* Adershot: Gover.

Warner, M. (2006) *Phantasmagoria – Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-first Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Webb, P. (2004) Interrogating the Production of Sound and Place: the Bristol Phenomenon, from Lunatic Fringe to Worldwide Massive. *In:* S. Whiteley, A. Bennett and S. Hawkins, eds. 2004. *Music, Space and Place – Popular Music and Cultural Identity*. Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 66-85.

Weisbard, E., ed. (2004) *This Is Pop: In Search of the Elusive at Experience Music Project.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Westwood, S., Williams, J., eds. (1997) *Imagining Cities – Scripts, Signs, Memory*. London/New York: Routledge.

Whiteley, S., ed. (1997) *Sexing the Groove – Popular Music and Gender.* London and New York: Routledge.

Wolfreys, J. (2002) *Victorian Hauntings – Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature.* New York: Palgrave.

Woodcock, P. (2000) *The Enchanted Isle – The Neo-Romantic Vision from William Blake to the New Visionaries.* Glastonbury: Gothic Image Publications.

Wright, P. (1985) *On Living in an Old Country – The National Past in Contemporary Britain.* London: Verso.

Wylie, J. (2009) Landscape, Absence and the Geographies of Love. *Transactions*, 34 (3), pp. 275-289.

Young, M. (2006) Latent Body – Plastic, Malleable, Inscribed: The Human Voice, the Body and the Sound of its Transformation through Technology. *Contemporary Music*

Review, 25, pp. 81-82.