

**Faculty of Humanities
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**Ways of Feeling: The Transformation of Emotional Experience in Music
Listening in the Context of Digitisation**

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that digitisation and Internet technologies are changing the emotional experience of popular music listening and explores the ways in which they may do so. I title this thesis *ways of feeling* to emphasise the relationship between music and affect as a product of time, place, and technological mediation. This research project is situated within the theoretical framework of affect theory. In the wake of Sara Ahmed's work in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004), I approach affect in terms of "what sticks": those contacts that leave impressions and work upon the outlines of what we delineate as the limit between I and Other. This is useful for an examination of music and affect because music can travel through the body, stick to the body and circulate around the body in ways that seem to cross the border of what is/is-not the body.

I synthesise this approach with the field of somatechnics, in order to understand the body as always-already positioned in relation to the technological as well as in relation to the technosocial schema built through social and political forces. The somatechnical body enables a broader configuration of corporeal potentialities because it interrogates and confuses the limits between the human subject and non-human technologies, as well as pitching the body itself as technology.

In terms of methods, I have conducted a cyberethnography of Internet users, in particular, users drawn from the online platform Reddit.com. I do not draw from this cyberethnography in a quantitative sense but rather a qualitative sense. That is, the theoretical position in this thesis was not drawn *from* the cyberethnographic research. Rather, the cyberethnographic research supports the weight of my suppositions and offers demonstrations and examples of the kinds of nuance I seek to provide.

This thesis therefore describes and frames a listening culture that is in transition from building connections through traditional modes of listening associated with materiality and tangibility to building connections through sharing digital products on new media platforms. This transition is messy, non-linear, and at times, confounding. Different modes of consumption can and do exist simultaneously, however, they also produce conflicting emotions and destabilising effects in their differences.

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Introduction: Braiding A Rope

“Undoubtedly, music is a play of mirrors in which every activity is reflected, defined, recorded, and distorted. If we look at one mirror, we see only an image of another.”
(Attali 1985, 5)

This dissertation argues that digitisation and Internet technologies are changing the emotional experience of popular music listening and explores the ways in which they may do so. My research objective emerged after reading consistent narratives about the changes taking place in relation to popular music—not just within the music industry, but to the listening experience itself. Over the past several years I have witnessed frequent discussions arise in popular media sources and in online forums that have deployed a dramatic emotional lexicon pitched around mourning and death (Attias 2011; Dettmar 2008; Heawood 2013; Krepps 2014; Rall 2015). Music fans report feelings of loss and grief around losing old ways of listening and the ways that those practices made them feel. I wanted to know what was behind these claims and whether there was any substance to them besides nostalgic re/constructions of the past. Yet, at the same time, many reports are celebratory and privilege a new culture of sharing and community based on feelings of belonging. This thesis both describes and frames a listening culture that is in transition from building connections through traditional modes of listening associated with materiality and tangibility to building connections through sharing digital products on new media platforms. This transition is like any other; it is messy, non-linear, and at times, confounding. Different modes of consumption can and do exist simultaneously, however, they also produce conflicting emotions and destabilising effects in their differences. In order to explore and examine this tension, I have conducted an ethnography of Internet users, or what is called a ‘cyberethnography’.

In conducting a cyberethnography of Internet users, in particular, users drawn from the online platform Reddit.com, I reveal an expansive emotional architecture designed, both directly and indirectly, by the generation of new, or at least newly invested, affective phenomena resulting from the interaction of the body with nonorganic technologies. The shades of emotional expression I have analysed are measured in the subtlest of gradients, which range from the most intimate and private of encounters to the most outward expressions of rapture or even grief. This research is entitled *ways of feeling*, rather than ways of ‘hearing’ or ‘listening,’ in order to indicate the insistence of emotions and affect in music listening in relation to “techno-concorporealities”. This latter term is borrowed from Margrit Shildrick and designates

non-organic technology working prosthetically or 'side-by-side,' as well as weaved within, the organic body (2009, 133).

The digital context and the digital connection

In this project, I suggest that new media forms do not cultivate new emotional experiences *only* for individuals who are active in digital Internet technology but for everyone situated within the framework of the digital context. It is the social and historical moment of digitisation as a contemporary phenomenon that I theorise, rather than just those practices we can single out as specifically digital (although, I do take single practices as examples in order to illustrate my points). For example, listening to music on the radio in a contemporary context implies a very different experience than what it meant for individuals listening to music on the radio in the 1920s. The materiality of the practice is largely the same (i.e. the radio unit is still a wireless device that transmits audio content programmed by someone other than the user). However, the emotional encounter is different because, in the 1920s, listening to music on the radio was brand new; a "magical" phenomenon where songs could be snatched out of "thin air" and free to anyone (Fischer 1926, 12). Radio meant the liberation of music and content. It also meant the emergence of new family bonding activities because the family unit could sit and listen to the radio together, singing songs and listening to favourite programs. Now, radio is considered a secondary medium that many people use for background noise or while driving in their car (Berland 2008, 179). The way the listener is affected by music as it is mediated through the radio has changed in both meaning and intensity and continues to change against shifting historical contexts.

This is to say that some listening practices may involve many of the same *actual* processes as previous generations of technology but a practice cannot be considered outside of its context as it is a product of that context. For example, one could suggest that an individual who listens to the vinyl format exclusively, despite having MP3 technology at hand, is not participating in the new paradigms of digitisation. However, this individual is still situated within a cultural framework in which digitisation is a technological fact and the choice to listen to vinyl over MP3 is a manifestation of the way that individual chooses to cultivate their listening schema in the contemporary context. The subject is always implicated in the culture in which they are situated, regardless of the extent of their (perceived) active participation. In structuralist terms, the subject is 'always-already' presupposed in and by the cultural lexicon. This is to say that digitisation is working upon the listening experiences of everybody who is situated within the paradigm of digital technology, which is now a global phenomenon.

Of course, while digital culture is global, it is by no means universal. Digital culture crosses many geographic and geopolitical boundaries but still excludes participants along demographic lines. Many people do not have access to digital or Internet technologies as a result of various factors such as financial inequity or Internet censorship restrictions. This inequality is referred to as the digital divide (Castells 2001; Kirkman et al. 2002; Norris 2001). Therefore, I situate this argument in what is the privileged culture/s of digital connection, which vary not only across nations but within nations, such as the disparity between rural Australia and metropolitan Australia. Digital culture cannot be considered as an exclusively Western phenomenon either; many non-Western nations have digital and Internet technology of varying speeds and accessibility. However, it is important to note that less than one per cent of populations from nations in Central America, Africa and South Asia generally have Internet access (Guillén and Suárez 2005, 681). This imbalance does result in the disenfranchisement of many people living these communities, particularly in terms of education or employment opportunities and should be noted in any study of 'global' digital culture.

Terms and definitions: Jenkins' spreadable media and Haraway's new bodies

Cyberspace

Throughout this dissertation I make reference to Web 2.0 and cyberspace. These terms are linked but not synonymous. Web 2.0 is used here in reference to the current technical configuration of the Internet, whereas the term 'cyberspace' is used as a conceptual apparatus by which one can imagine a system of interactions that this architecture produces. Cyberspace is a liminal space which emerges as a result of the use of technology in the mediation of human communication in which "the body is absent" (Stratton 1997a, 29). The platform of Web 2.0 technology produces a unique incarnation of cyberspace, largely as a result of its 'user-friendly' configuration. Culturally, we are coming to terms with what this space is; it cannot be said to be physical but it is no less real than any material space. Virtual interactions in cyberspace produce just as much affective material and host just as many intricate emotional narratives as any physical encounter.

Tim O'Reilly and John Battelle coined the term 'Web 2.0' at a Summit on Internet technology in 2004 (O'Reilly and Battelle 2009, 1) to refer to the second wave of technical features developed for Internet technologies, such as the adoption of "public application programming interfaces" that enable communication between users and the embedding of rich media such as video (Cormode and Krishnamurty 2008). As

a result of these new technical features, Web 2.0 cultivates “participatory culture” (Jenkins 2006), “user-generated material” (Van Dijck 2009), “co-creation” (Choi and Burnes 2013), and a forum for transnational “crowd sourcing” (Howe 2006).

One of the most pertinent recent works in this field is Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green’s 2012 text, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*, in which the authors describe the political economy of new media as a hybrid of “top-down and bottom-up forces” that determine how information is shared and how it proliferates across different cultural boundaries (1). Top-down structures include corporate producers, governmental agencies and other broad institutional regulating bodies, whereas bottom-up forces are social and cultural trends that organically determine the flow of media. This model is dynamic and acknowledges the “messiness” (1) of how content becomes shared, reconfigured and circulates in infinite loops. Even though top-down content cannot be controlled once it is released into the cyberspace, the authors do not suppose an end to the power of commercial mass media, rather, they propose that the “informal” spread of media content can indeed “circumnavigate if not circumvent some of the factors (political, legal, economic, cultural) which have allowed U.S. mass media to maintain its dominance throughout much of the twentieth century” (261). It is the effects of participatory culture through transnational channels that give life to this new ‘spreadable’ media. As the authors imply, the social tendency of humans is as long as recorded history, and now individuals can express their needs for connection, belonging and community using even grander and more dynamic models. In doing so, radically new forms of building community and connection through sharing content are manifest. Most importantly in relation to *music* sharing, this type of information exchange has serious implications for the exchange of music files in the compressed MP3 format, and also audio-visual files such as MP4s or AVIs. We have seen the emergence and subsequent domination of these modes of exchange in relation to music, facilitated by Web 2.0 applications and platforms such as Pandora, Spotify, Lastfm, YouTube, Myspace, Facebook, mobile technologies, and a variety of legal download sites such as iTunes and illegal torrent sites such as Pirate Bay. These sharing platforms cultivate and encourage a sense of community and reinforce the imagined space of cyber relations.

However, cyberspace as a concept did not emerge spontaneously with the Internet. As Jon Stratton points out, the *idea* of cyberspace has been around for some time. The origins of cyberspace emerge from the mid-nineteenth century development of the telegraph, a technology that “allowed symbols to move independently of and

faster than transport” (James Carey 1988, quoted in Stratton 1997a, 29). However, even though the body is absent in its material form, it is by no means absent for the individual user, that is, other bodies are absent but the listener’s own body is always present. As Ben Anderson writes in *Encountering Affects*, “a body is always imbricated in a set of relations that *extend beyond it and constitute it*” (2014, 9 my emphasis). Far from being an incorporeal site of being, cyberspace is ultimately operated by very real human operators who each bring to the space different ideas about the body. In its contemporary form, cyberspace is then a cultural site of networked relations in which subjects play out new forms of exchange in relation to popular music and listening practices that involve the totality of the mind/body system.

This space therefore hosts complex environments comprised of affect and affective phenomena. For example, even though cyberspace is a virtual space, it produces contexts which reimagine the organic body because the virtual confuses and interrogates the limits of postmodern corporeality. Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth explain that affect occurs in those encounters between bodies, “whether those bodies are defined as fully human, part-human, non-human or otherwise” (2010, 2). This approach can be read as an extension of Spinoza’s concern with the relationships between bodies which, as Jenny Sundén explains “can be human bodies, but also body parts, nonhuman animals, and inanimate objects” (2013, 372). This point in particular is critical here because I read bodies as technologies and technologies as bodies and the borders between what is/is not the body have become more difficult to define. For example, in the computer-mediated contexts of music listening, the computer interface and all its associated technologies colour the affective dimensions of listening in ways that both trace and confuse normative bodily boundaries. Technologies are just as much a part of the music they mediate as they are a part of the corporeal body entangled in the encounter. In the late 1980s, Donna Haraway reimagined a new body, predicated on the visions of the cyborgian subject and articulated by the language of cybernetics: “We are all chimeras, theorised and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short we are cyborgs” (1987, 2). Far from being vessels of empty robotic scripts, the cyborg represents an expanded subject, one that is liberated, if only partially, from many of the traditional bodily affects regulated by the discourses of biopolitics. For instance, we can read the configuration of the MP3 in the ways in which it parallels the cybernetic subject—both imply fluidity, mobility, and exist in their capacity to be replicated and shared. In the cyberspace, the subject shares data packets as forms of the self—from MP3s to YouTube clips. In the

cybernetic fold, the music listening experience is radically redefined in line with the transformations of the technosocial bodymind.

The online experience plays upon the material body through reflexive pathways, especially through the screen/eye relationship. For example, in Nigel Clark's discussion of William Gibson's cult cyberpunk fiction *Neuromancer* (1986), Clark writes that cyberspace can enact an "even greater intensity than the built environment" because "human bodies act as the receptive surfaces for the images projected by the media" (1995, 123). There is a relationship between the screen and the eye that creates imagined worlds for each individual, which can be just as elaborate, or even more elaborate, than the material world. Added to this visual aspect, there is a phonic component, particularly in the sites that host musical communities, such as SoundCloud or Bandcamp. Sound and music furnish cyberspace with a rich aesthetic tapestry in ways that seem to extend and expand its textures and potentials. It is a space but it does not *take up* space: it is a *cyberspace*.

Affect

Before launching into a detailed examination of affect theory as a critical framework, I will first define how I use the word affect in this project. I make clear that the *phrase* affect theory and the *word* affect are not interchangeable. As I will soon detail, the ramified field of affect theory approaches the concept of affect in endless permutations that are dependent on the extent to which each theorist defines affect as autonomic response or cognitive process. Here, I construct just one definition of affect, assembled from a variety of approaches.

At its most basic, affect is the capacity for individuals to affect something and be affected by something (Massumi quoted in Deleuze and Guattari 1987, xvi; Anderson 2014, 9). Yet affect is not the encounter itself. As Gregg and Seigworth explain, affect "often transpires within and across the subtlest of shuttling intensities: all the miniscule ... events of the unnoticed [...] Affect arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (2). Affect can also leave lasting impressions that can accumulate and leave residues (Watkins 2010, 269) which continue to cultivate an individual's emotional narrative long after an encounter takes place (especially in cases of trauma or repression). In the wake of Sara Ahmed's work in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004), I approach affect in terms of "what sticks": those contacts that leave impressions and work upon the outlines of what we delineate as the limit between I and Other. For Ahmed then, affects are not moments that reside within

bodies but they are the very forces that shape the surfaces and boundaries of the body (194). In Ahmed's language, affect is the very thing that demarcates where one body stops and another begins. Gregg and Seigworth employ similar language. For them, affects are "resonances that circulate about, between and sometimes *stick* to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves" (2010, 1; my emphasis).

Thinking about music in relation to Gregg and Seigworth's discussion is useful here. Music, though a non-human entity, is a force that can quite literally resonate with the human body—with a heartbeat or a breathing pattern for example. Music can travel through the body, stick to the body and circulate around the body in ways that seem to cross intimate borders. Music penetrates the ear and also moves through the hair; we cannot see music but it nonetheless shrouds the body. Music is so personal to the body, but is not the body. This relationship between the human body and music can therefore encompass the widest possible range of affective phenomena.

For my purposes, it is not only the body that is implicated in 'affect'. I agree with Ahmed who states that affect theory too often applies a differential logic that defines affect against, rather than with, emotion (2004, 207). This is especially evident in Brian Massumi's work, as implied by the title of his essay "The Autonomy of Affect" (1995). Massumi correlates affects with non-personal, involuntary bodily events and, conversely, emotions as purely a process of signification (207). As Eric Shouse explains, for Massumi (following Deleuzian principles): "Affect is not a personal feeling. Feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, and affects are prepersonal" (Shouse 2005, para. 1). I veer away from those neat categories that contain affect as purely a bodily event because they imply a clean split in mind/body relations that I do not think exists (this will be unpacked further in Chapter Two on material relations in listening practices). For my part, affect is *essentially* personal—in fact, there is nothing more personal. Our bodily events can and do contain an intellect that cannot be disconnected from either the personal or the social. Studies on trauma and the body attest to such a finely tuned bodily intellect, such as Babette Rothschild's work in *The Body Remembers* (2000). I follow Rothschild's approach to emotions that integrates the processes of signification with bodily feedback. She writes that;

Emotions, though interpreted and named by the mind, are integrally an experience of the body [...] Every emotion is characterised by a discrete pattern of skeletal muscle contraction visible on the face and in body posture (somatic nervous system). Each emotion also *feels* different on the inside of the body. (56; original emphasis)

Being affected by an event involves a holistic process of ‘meaning-making’ and bodily feedback that interact and build *from* each other, even in the subtlest of ways. For example, being nervous about public speaking occurs on many levels, nervousness is autonomic but also feeds on principles of cognition and concerns about being judged. The mind and body are in total concert. Affect therefore encompasses any and all human experience within the realm of sensation: including but not limited to moods, emotions, passions, impressions, sensual phenomena, inclinations, drives, forces, desires, psychogeography, and sentiments. I use affect as the overarching term that can refer to a range of what Panteleimon Ekkekakis calls “affective phenomena” (2012) to indicate a collection of experiences, or in my own terminology, ‘ways of feeling,’ a phrase which I will expand on now.

Ways of Feeling

I title this thesis *ways of feeling* to emphasise the relationship between music and affect as a product of time, place, and technological mediation. The phrase *ways of feeling* plays with, and works upon, the title of John Berger’s 1972 text *Ways of Seeing*. The premise of Berger’s text is to explain the way that cultural and historical contexts shape and manipulate how audiences see or ‘read’ the reproduced image. For example, images of fire meant something very different to people in the middle ages whose cultural framework was shaped by what was perceived as the very real threat of Hell and damnation (Berger 1972, 8). Of course, many people today still believe in a fiery Hell and, for these people, the image of fire still retains that power. However, in the heterogeneity of postmodernity ‘fire’ is coded with new and conflicting meanings. For instance, Indian Ayurvedic traditions code fire as a cleansing and rebirthing element through the practice of Agnihotra, in which a small fire is lit at sunrise and sunset (Agnihotra Australia 2015). The meaning of fire as an image of cleansing is centuries old in Ayurveda, but this meaning has also now spread to other parts of the world and has hybridised into new meanings, particularly in the West. In postmodernity, ‘reading’ images implies heterogeneity informed by the weight of histories upon histories. Analogously, feelings and emotions have been variously constructed and codified throughout history and across culture/s. As I will discuss in Chapter One, the ways in which humans understand ‘feeling’—whether that be constituted as emotion, affect, mood, and so forth—is constantly shifting and changing according to time and place. As such, the way in which we respond to music, and talk about music as an affective medium, is also shifting and changing according to time and place.

One of the greatest influences guiding these 'affective shifts' is the technology that mediates music to us. To draw again from *Ways of Seeing*, Berger also claims that the way an image is mediated to us changes our very experience of that image. Berger details the way images in Renaissance paintings are read in very different terms than images captured by a video recorder or a camera. A work of baroque art is considered "a form of dignity, even wisdom" (1972, 135) that transcends knowledge, whereas a black and white photo is considered to be closer to a factual mediation of an event. However, the way the painting is painted and the way the photo is taken are both informed by artifice. The mediation through technology (whether through the technology of a paintbrush or a camera lens) changes the angles, colours, aspect ratios, what is seen and what is not seen. In turn, the meaning of that image changes. Similarly, as this thesis will explore, the mediation of music through different technologies changes what is heard, what sounds are privileged and thus, the different ways of feeling that emerge as a result.

The phrase *ways of feeling* also serves to incorporate, at its root, an understanding of the many ways in which embodied subjects are politically positioned in relation to listening culture and the different affects this can produce. For example, African-American subjectivity supposes very different histories and relations to music listening than other demographics, for instance, to African-British or Anglo-Australian subjectivity (which is again very different to gendered subjectivities, and so forth). For example, Nabeel Zuberi writes that, in African-American rap music, "technological destabilisations of the 'natural' human voice are important because they challenge racialised ideas about black voices being the transparent repositories and carriers of subjectivity and 'soul'" (2014, 193). In terms of gender, Susana Loza suggests that "the cyborg, fembot and posthuman 'destabilise and reconfigure the dualistic limits of liberal humanist subjectivity'" (Loza 2001, quoted in Stratton and Zuberi 2014, 193). Different subjectivities produce very different affective outcomes when reworked through and alongside new technologies. Our relationships to the world—how we respond and interact with the world—are informed by the narratives with which we construct our identity. In Patrick Hogan's approach to affective narratology, emotions are manifest in the stories we tell to ourselves and to others (2011, 2). Different subjectivities render radically different accounts of the world and these accounts produce a heterogeneity that cannot be discounted nor ultimately fully accounted for.

The embodied subject, or what Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills call "the feeling subject" (2005, 19), imbricates with the social, political, technological and economic

dimensions of culture, dimensions that are constantly in flux. There is not just one way to sense our place in the world; rather, there are infinite ways of feeling that suggest various states of intensity that are always in negotiation with both inner and external worlds. Not that the inner and outer worlds are distinct entities either. The inner and outer dimensions of being are always interacting with each other and then folding back on themselves in repeating patterns of echo and reverberation. In Berger's text, he claims that "the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled" (1972, 7). Here, I propose that the relation between what we *feel* and what we know is never settled. All human experience, including processes of cognition and politicisation, is inherited into the embodied subject because the most politicised aspects of culture can affect us in very intimate and private ways. For example; we *sense* architecture as authoritative and foreboding; we *intuit* social rules about how to act in public spaces, we can be *moved* by border protection policies; people are *oppressed* by unjust regimes. These are all states that relate to social, political and even psychogeographical structures. However, all these states call forth the 'feeling-self' because, to sense, to intuit, to feel oppressed or to be moved are all ways to be *affected* and, thus, they are all part of the affective arena. Throughout this thesis I make reference to how individuals feel using a wide taxonomic registry that are all part of the emotional schema; from feelings of connection and social bonding to experiences of spatial awareness and sexual or primal drives, which all interconnect with subjectivities in different ways.

Critical Framework

Affect Theory

As I have mentioned, this research project is situated within the theoretical framework of affect theory. One cannot discuss affect theory without describing what has come to be known as 'the affective turn' in cultural studies that some theorists suggest took place in the mid-1990s (La Caze and Lloyd 2011, 2; Clough and Halley 2007). However, I suggest that a single 'turn' to affect might be too precise for the trajectory of affect theory throughout the twentieth century. I rather suggest that critical theory has been in a constant 'turn' toward affect and emotion since the Enlightenment, albeit a turn that fluctuates with various philosophical moods. Even in various stages of the twentieth century, major philosophers have incorporated affect into their theoretical frameworks: theorists as diverse as Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, Guattari, Irigaray, and Foucault all attempted in some way to talk about feeling (La Caze and Lloyd 2011, 1). What we have seen in the 1990s and 2000s has been just the most recent of these shifts; albeit one that has taken on an exciting new language.

Sara Ahmed makes clear that it was feminist work which opened up a new critical “space” to explore affect, in particular the emotion/body relationship (2004, 206). For example, work from Alison Jaggar on emotion in feminist epistemology (1989), from bell hooks exploring the space where the painfully personal and highly political meet (1989), and from Sue Campbell on the politics of dismissing and trivialising emotions (1994), all contributed to the expansion of the field in the late 1980s and 1990s. However, for Gregg and Seigworth, editors of *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010), the “watershed” moment for the most recent incarnation of affect theory came with two essays published in 1995; one by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank and the other by Brian Massumi (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 5). Sedgwick and Frank’s “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold” (1995), based on psychoanalyst Silvan Tompkins’ work, sought to do away with the cultural/biological boundary that they felt had caged affect theory, while Massumi’s “The Autonomy of Affect” used empirical research on bodily responses to describe affect as a product autonomous of the conscious state. For Massumi, affect is what is left over from that which is impossible to integrate into narrativised emotion. Affect is nonetheless intense for the subject and produces forces, what Massumi calls the: “never-to-conscious autonomic remainder” (1995, 85). As I mentioned, my approach moves away from Massumi’s clear categories that delineate affect as merely bodily activities that are not implicated in cultural/social/emotional scripts. I do acknowledge the contribution of Massumi’s biological approach to the field, but follow closer to the feminist works that incorporated and launched the bio-psycho-social models in the late twentieth century.

I move forward to the most recent work on affect that both incorporates and extends the 1990s theory into discussions relevant to the integration of digital technology that we live with today. One of the most important texts reflecting this ‘2000s version’ of the affective turn is certainly Jean Halley and Patricia Ticineto Clough’s *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007). What is so important about this book for me is the imbrication of the technoscientific discourse with the older genealogies of thought on emotions, especially Spinozism. Even though Clough and Halley define affect in the vein of Massumi’s pre-individual bodily capacities, as a whole the edited work incorporates the penumbra of approaches to theorise a variety of socio-political structures, from the organisation of sex workers in Calcutta (170) to the “myocellular transduction” of Deborah Gambs (106). Within the collection, Karen Wendy Gilbert’s “Slowness: Notes Toward an Economy Of Différencial Rates of Being” (77) provides a productive and inventive language that can be used to articulate the ways individuals’ music listening experience has been affected by the computer

interface. The premise of Gilbert's chapter rests on the idea that how we understand our technology becomes analogous to how we understand our body. For example, she traces the nineteenth century "thermodynamic" body, informed by technologies regulated by pumps, siphons and standing reserves, to the twentieth century discourse on the body characterised by contemporary warfare—as in "the skilful camouflage and penetration of our model of cancer" (77). Gilbert queries what type of body the cybernetic fold calls forth and what kinds of discourses we employ to discuss that body. It is from this query that this thesis takes form. Our bodies feel different in the experience of music listening because they have been radically reconstructed and redefined by our relationship to technological mediations and the language of digitisation and *networks* in and through which anything and everything can be shared. Clough and Halley's edited collection, and Gregg and Seigworth's edited collection, therefore both inform and direct my theorisation of contemporary music listening practices in relation to emotional experience.

Following on from this, the field of somatechnics is a relatively new area which offers an interdisciplinary approach that continues to liberate affect theory from the body/mind binary. I draw heavily from somatechnics to frame this research.

Somatechnics can be understood as:

A conceptual innovation and intervention [that] highlights the intimate entanglement of *soma* (the body) and *techne* (techniques or technologies), indicating that technologies are not something that are added to bodies, but rather the means by which bodies and their politics are formed and transformed. (Dahl and Sundén 2013, 227)

This approach resonates with the terms in which I have put forth the body. That is, as a constructed model that speaks to the bodily dynamic, yet still, a model built from language—which is itself a technology. The body is cultivated through the ideological underpinnings of contemporary thought *about* technology.

This approach synthesises readily with the vision of Haraway's cyborg I mentioned earlier. In fact, as Ulrika Dahl and Jenny Sundén remark:

Somatechnics as a concept seeks to tie together different feminist modes of thinking and ways of relating to the world through the idea of the body, flesh, soma as always already technological; an idea which owes some of its legacy to Haraway's notion of the cyborg. (2013, 227)

The critical premise of somatechnics therefore rests on the notion that the body is always positioned in its relation to the technological, as it is constituted by technology, and by the technosocial schema built through social and political forces. As Sundén explains in a separate piece: "The body as always already technological is key in somatechnical understandings of embodiment and thus makes it impossible to think of the

corporeal as somehow untouched by the technological” (2013, 370). The somatechnical body enables a broader configuration of corporeal potentialities because it interrogates and confuses the limits between the human subject and non-human technologies, as well as pitching the body *as* technology. This is a useful theoretical strategy in the affective experiences of music listening in the digital context because mobile and computer interfaces entangle with the bodymind in untidy ways that we may not have witnessed before, producing new affects pulsing on the fringes of liminality. For example, cutting-edge live music softwares are adapting 3D mapping technology to create (even greater) immersive environments in the concert experience. These live music technologies work to embed the listener in a soundscape; one no longer just hears the sound—they become a part of the sound. However, the technology of the ear is just as much a part of the sound processing mechanism as the computer software generating the maps.

Further, the somatechnical body is also an affective body. In 2013 Sundén proposed an interesting relationality between the field of somatechnics and affect theory (369). In her article on steampunk and materiality, Sundén examines the use of the machine metaphor in steampunk subculture in order to examine encounters between organic bodies and mechanical/technological bodies. For example, Sundén uses the steampunk subculture’s preoccupation with Victorian corsets to situate the somatechnical body in the schema of affective phenomena, because corsetry is all about restraining and manipulating the flesh in forceful ways that mimic or reshape affective pathways (378). She writes that, in affective encounters, there are “varying degrees of resonance and dissonance, agreement and conflict” (375). In the act of corseting for example, the subject draws into themselves the forces of machina:

A tightening of strong laces running through metal eyelets, exerting a gradual increase of pressure, of steel wiring against flesh, bone, and internal organs. [...] But the slowing down of the body as an effect of a restriction in the intake of air, simultaneously results in an acceleration of the body, making it gasp, heave, move faster. (2013, 378)

The somatechnical body is in constant dialogue with all that affects it and is affected by it. However, the restrictions of flesh and acceleration of organs play out in complex ways that do not necessarily map out in everyday language available to the individual.

As Sundén explains:

What is ‘bad’ for me may be enjoyable, even while decomposing my body and diminishing my power of acting. What is ‘good’ and what accelerates my power may induce anxiousness and sadden me. And, importantly, there may be different degrees of power, intensity, and velocity that are expressed simultaneously – a rhythm that quickens and slows down at the same time, a

strengthening that makes weak, or a diminishing that makes more powerful.
(375-376)

Sundén's description of the complexity of affects and somatechnics resonates through the entirety of this thesis because there are so many parallels that can enlighten encounters with current technological configurations in music listening. As I will soon explicate, the field of somatechnics forms the critical basis for several chapters and, on the whole, reverberates throughout the language of the dissertation.

A great deal of thinking about affect concerns emotions. As I have proposed, I conceptualise affects as forces enfolding all ways of feeling; both cognitive appraisals and autonomic bodily reactions. However, I do recognise emotions as a somewhat separate, yet linked, force in that emotions can be read as the articulated version of the affective position. That is not to say that all emotions are expressed in the sense of being articulated (verbally or otherwise). Rather, making sense of our ways of feeling involves self-reflexivity and a modicum of socialisation in order to understand our behaviours and the behaviour of others. Emotions are, in some ways, the *language* of affect. Emotions suggest a relationship to the Other in that they shape and manipulate the ways we understand how others feel, as well as ourselves. Again, I do not suggest that emotions are separate from the bodily affects, only that emotions are the cultural lexicon to communicate ways of feeling.

Methodology

The methodology for this research is drawn from Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. At its most basic, phenomenology is the study of the lived experience (van Manen 1997; Lavery 2003, 4). As its name suggests, phenomenology is concerned with the study of phenomena that arise from the experience of being in the world. The development of modern phenomenology, established by Edmund Husserl in the early twentieth century (Hopkins 2011, 1), was a break from the Cartesian system that pitched stark distinctions between the outer 'real' reality and the individual experience of reality (Koch 1995; Jones 1975). Following the Cartesian principle, outer reality is a separate and distinct entity that can only be understood in rational terms through cognitive processes of deduction. Sense-perception was thought to distort this process (Sorell 2000, 64) and certainly emotions, or "passions," were considered a lower form of experience emanating from the recesses of the body (95). In contrast, phenomenology seeks to understand the outside world as it is interpreted by and through human consciousness.

Ontologically speaking, Husserl purported that reality could be grasped by and through structures of consciousness, by applying “intentionality” to the object of study, or intentionally directing one’s focus to describe realities (Lavery 2003, 5). For Husserl, to achieve deeper understanding of an object of study, a researcher could also quarantine their personal judgements, a process called “bracketing,” so that preconceived notions do not interfere with the phenomenological inquiry (6). It is at this point that Martin Heidegger’s approach breaks with Husserl’s process. In fact, Heidegger was very critical of Husserl’s phenomenology (Hopkins 2011, 2). Where Husserl sought to capture objects of study as graspable entities that could be objectively studied, Heidegger employed the notion of *dasein*, or “the situated meaning of a human in the world” (Lavery 2003, 7). For Heidegger, consciousness is a product or construction of the historical context from which it arises and, in turn, one can never approach an object of study in a presuppositionless form (8). I take on Heidegger’s phenomenology for this project, in that I too suggest that objects of study cannot be neatly separated from their contexts, nor, should they be. Reality and consciousness are co-constructions (Munhall 1989) and, because of this, human understanding always arises from the relationship between the two acting upon each other.

To narrow down Heideggerian phenomenology even further, I also draw from the application of hermeneutics, a field of inquiry concerned with interpretation of texts. I turn to Hans-Georg Gadamer who developed a hermeneutic approach based on the Heideggerian ontology. The word hermeneutics is fashioned from the Greek *hermenaia*, meaning to translate or interpret. It is associated with the Greek god Hermes who was a messenger for the gods and translated messages for human understanding (Gadamer and Palmer 2007, 44). Therefore, in the words of Gadamer, “What hermeneutics accomplishes, then, is this bringing of something out of one world and into another” (44). I deploy a hermeneutic phenomenology because this model does not seek to deny historicity; rather, the model serves to find meaning in the ‘middle ground’ between the researcher and the object of study. For Gadamer, any research is interpretive and based on a researcher’s historicity. One is never outside of one’s context and so a process such as bracketing is not only impossible but “absurd” (Gadamer 1989, 396). As Susann Lavery explains, hermeneutic phenomenology “focuses on meaning that arises from the interpretive interaction between historically produced texts and the reader” (2003, 16). In order to apply this practically, a hermeneutic phenomenology requires self-reflection (Colazzi 1978). A researcher does not (and cannot) put bias aside. Instead, Lavery explains that hermeneutics calls upon the researcher to recognise preconceived assumptions and make those assumptions

explicit in the research (2003, 17). As a researcher, hermeneutic phenomenology therefore gives me the freedom to draw upon my own experience of popular music communities and use that prior knowledge to translate the emotional languages of my cyberethnography. In a sense, therefore, this also borrows from autoethnographic methodological practice because self-reflection, as in autoethnography, is a critical part of this process (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011). Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams, and Arthur Bochner explain that autoethnography is draws together "personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (2011, n.p.). As a result, I both draw upon and concede my own socio-historical position. A researcher's imprint on their research topic is unavoidable and, this being the case, the question to ask is not 'whether a study can be objective?' but rather, what positive and new understandings can we gain from a researcher's very unique and singular perspective? (Gadamer and Linge 1976, xv).

Methods

Ethnographic research, 'cyberethnography' and Reddit.com

It must first be noted that I do not draw from this cyberethnography in a quantitative sense but rather a qualitative sense. That is, the comments I draw from the cyberethnography are not deployed in order to illustrate the prevalence or repetition of certain affects; instead, I read these comments in terms of what language is used to describe the variations in music listening experiences as they come to be reshaped by digitisation. The theoretical position in this thesis was not drawn *from* the cyberethnographic research, rather, the cyberethnographic research supports the weight of my suppositions and offers demonstrations of the kinds of nuance I seek to provide.

The mode of data collection I use for this project is based on ethnographic methods, tailored to an online approach. Ethnography arose from the discipline of anthropology but spread into cultural studies and rose in popularity in the discipline during the 1980s (Barker 2012, 32). Originally, in anthropological research, ethnography required intensive fieldwork in local communities, usually of non-western cultures, in order to gain deeper insight into social processes (32). At its core, ethnography seeks to interpret lived experience as observed by the researcher (32), which is why using ethnographic methods suits a hermeneutic phenomenology and also suits an inquiry into how people feel about music in their everyday lives.

One of the major concepts in ethnography is paying attention to how people describe their lived experience in order to interpret these meanings and gain understanding. Yet not just any descriptions will do. According to Clifford Geertz, ethnography is concerned with “thick descriptions,” or the uncovering of the multiplicity of experience (1973, 3), as opposed to quantitative yet ultimately superficial accounts of a community. This approach is crucial when investigating the emotional lexicon of virtual communities because emotions by their nature are complex and sometimes even contradictory. Individuals do not always write or say exactly what they mean either. Sometimes emotional language requires nuanced analyses and “thick descriptions” allow for many layers of potential meaning. Or, as Steiner Kvale suggests, researchers must always look for “not only what is ‘said,’ but what is said ‘between the lines’” (Kvale 1996, quoted in Laverly 2003, 19). Lastly, as Maurizio Teli, Francesco Pisanu and David Hakken explain, cyberethnography must also consider both the human and non-human actors because the technology itself ingratiate itself in the mediation (2007, n.p.). This is important because it implies a relationship between the computer interface and the user in cyborgian terms. Bodily boundaries can be fluid and shaped by technological developments, such as in the case of the oculus rift which is a wearable device that becomes an extension of the body itself.

While I use the term ‘cyberethnography’ in this thesis, the term ‘virtual ethnography’ is also another way in which to talk about ethnography as it is carried out on and through the Internet. For my purposes, I do not differentiate between these two terms. However, Christine Hine’s extended discussion of virtual ethnography (2000) provides further understanding of the uses and limitations of such an approach. In a basic regard, Hine explains that the using ethnography to research the Internet can expose “the ways in which the technology is experienced in use” (5). The purpose of which, as she continues, is to “make explicit the taken-for-granted and often tacit ways in which people make sense of their lives” (6). I refer to Hine here because her conceptualisation points to one of the fundamental aspects of my research, which is revealing the critical and fascinating processes of music listening that people ‘take for granted’ in using extant technologies. For example, while users may often think little of using their phone to ‘Shazam’ a song (finding out the song and artist) by using digital Internet technologies—this phenomenon is truly specific to contemporary contexts. Cyber or virtual ethnographic methods take the ‘everyday-ness’ of Internet technologies and de-naturalise them.

I have chosen the Reddit community to represent activities of contemporary music community because it provides a rich source of cyberethnographic material from which to analyse emotionology. Reddit.com is an open source, user-driven community in which pseudo-anonymous users, under a 'handle,' can create threads or comment on existing threads.¹ Comments are then voted up or down and appear closer to the top of the thread depending on their popularity. The voting system naturally moderates content but there are also volunteers who moderate content based on etiquette and relevance. Any registered user can also start their own 'subreddit' built around specific themes. Subreddits act as independent communities and have their own "reddiquette" or community values. According to Reddit, there are more than 9000 active communities built from subreddits and in 2015 more than 82 billion pageviews on the Redditsphere (BlogReddit 2015).

It is important to note that, while my research is demographic blind (I cannot know any details about the users I analyse), data suggests that Reddit.com is male-dominated and therefore not a balanced representation of all Internet users. The male to female ratio sits at 53 per cent to 47 per cent, respectively ("RedditHelp" n.d.). However, while Reddit is male-dominated overall, some subreddits within that number are female-dominated depending on the community (such as the pets subreddit) (Data Is Beautiful 2014). Therefore, one cannot know the specific gender balance nor other demographic markers such as race within the subreddits from which I have drawn my data. Sexually explicit subreddits featuring images of naked women generally attract the highest number of males, however, music subreddits may very well be far more balanced. Regardless, I do note that, based on the datasets, my research is likely skewed to represent the sentiments of men aged 18-49 (Duggan and Smith 2013).

In terms of geographic profiles, Reddit is based in the U.S. and draws most users from North America. However, Reddit is accessed in over 208 countries and is popular with Australian Internet users (Alexa 2016). In an attempt to cross-analyse language used in emotional communities and to balance out this potential skew, I also draw from other platforms such as YouTube, and social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram, SoundCloud, and Spotify. However, these platforms mimic much of the Reddit demographic data because they are products of the same technologies emerging from affluent, technologically-equipped nations. As such, this thesis is based in the context of largely Western, affluent, digitally connected communities.

¹ For the most comprehensive work on Reddit.com to date, see Adrienne Massanari *Participatory Culture, Community, and Play: Learning From Reddit* (2015).

My method involved systematically searching the Reddit database using keywords that pertained to my topics. I then collated the comments that related to my inquiries and categorised them according to which comments were most relevant to each theoretical subject. They were categorised as follows: materiality/touch, memory/nostalgia, sound technology, vaporwave, mobile media, live music, playlist, community, and general. Many discussions overlap and might appear in more than one category. For instance, a discussion about whether vinyl is a 'better' format than the MP3 falls into both the category of sound technology and nostalgia, in which case the context would depend on its final use in this project. In total, I analyse language from 27 Redditors, which are used as examples to illustrate the theoretical arguments (and which are cited in the end reference list). Where I needed extra research in addition to Reddit, I would cross-reference comments on Reddit with comments on other platforms such as YouTube or debate.org.

The users in this study are identified by their online 'handles' only and therefore the research does not compromise the participants' anonymity. In saying this, however, cyberethnography is not without ethical problems. For example, as Hine states:

To participate in a newsgroup [or Reddit group] without revealing one's role as a researcher would, as in all cases of covert ethnography, pose a considerable ethical problem. Arguing that online interactions are sufficiently real to provide a context for an ethnographic study has an ethical corollary: online interactions are sufficiently real for participants to feel they have been harmed or their privacy infringed by researchers.

I, too, have suggested that 'online interactions are sufficiently real to provide a context for an ethnographic study' and therefore I must acknowledge the comparable ethical problems of covert research in that I cannot guarantee the tacit agreement of users in my study.

Significance

I understand the significance of this research in two ways. The first is recognising its place in the scope of popular music studies literature. There are only a few research projects that connect music and affect to changes in technology specifically through the deployment of affect theory. Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle's 2013 text *Sound, Music and Affect* comes the closest to bridging that gap. Two chapters in particular have a focus on new media, however technology's effect on emotion in music listening is not the central focus of Thompson and Biddle's book, and it leaves much untouched terrain to map. Conversely, Aram Sinnreich (2010) touches on affect in his research on mash-

up culture but focuses more acutely on the social and regulatory structures that dictate the direction of music itself. Perhaps closest to my research into digital listening practices is Raphaël Nowak's text *Consuming Music in the Digital Age* (2016). While Nowak's interview-based research approach and his assertions about 'affective responses' to music as dependant on consumption modalities are valid and useful, his approach varies greatly from my own and, as a result, very different kinds of conclusions are reached. For example, his chapter on the "material modalities of music consumption" as they constitute life narratives and identity-making mechanisms is particularly insightful. However, Nowak's approach does not address the more critical functions of the body as a site of intense and complex dynamisms.

Other popular music theorists have done extensive work on music and affect, which complement this work. For example, David Hesmondhalgh's critical defence of music in *Why Music Matters* (2013) is an invaluable contribution that integrates a new language for aesthetics and emotion into popular music studies discourse. While other theorists, such as Dan Laughey (2007) and Adrian North, David Hargreaves and Jon Hargreaves (2004) look at 'uses' of music in everyday life in relation to technological capacities. However, it should be noted North et al do not address nuanced affect theory alongside it. The canon of popular music studies clearly includes a diverse range of approaches that combine analyses of music and affect. My work here seeks to bring those strands together using the emergent critical language of somatechnics in a way that has not been done before. Up until now, somatechnics has not been applied to the study of popular music in any sustained way but holds so much potential for doing so.

In the 1970s, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) wrested popular music studies away from the mid-century theorists, such as Adorno and Horkheimer, who would see popular music relegated to the sidelines of culture and cast as nothing more than a standardised, and standard, appeal to the common masses (Bennett 2008, 420). In doing so, in the words of Andy Bennett, the CCCS rejected:

the pessimistic claims of these writers concerning mass culture as a bourgeois instrument for ideological domination of the masses [and] the CCCS endeavoured to recast popular mass culture as a potentially subversive resource when placed in the hands of working-class audiences. (2008, 420)

By integrating somatechnics into the canon of popular music studies, I aim to continue a tradition of revealing the profound uses and effects of popular music as an activity that can extend the experience of everyday life for listeners. In addition, by synthesising somatechnics and popular music studies in such a way, the research also breaks open further insights about the impacts of Internet technology on affective

schemas in the West and thus also contributes to Internet studies in more general terms.

Secondly, my project concerns the vital importance of music in our culture and across cultures.² Why concern ourselves with critical analyses of how music feels? An answer lies in what music provides for us in a cultural sense. Hesmondhalgh details the critical function music plays in maintaining personal and collective relations in human communities. He explains that music can be intensely private but can also help to link this private and often chaotic internal territory to the communal experience (2013, 2). Music makes sense of an often nonsensical or violent world and can enable a bridge from the psychic to the social. Music cultivates and enhances collective experience and, as Hesmondhalgh remarks, “there are reasons to value that” (2). Added to this, now more than ever, it is vital to celebrate the important role of popular music in the wake of twenty-first century neo-liberalism (3). Hesmondhalgh points to the savage cuts to arts funding in the UK, and the situation is very similar in Australia, with \$100 million being slashed from arts funding in the last budget (Dow 2016). While artists and arts organisations may be the most vocal in speaking out against these cuts, it is everyone within the community who suffers from a lack of creative work. Fundamentally, “Music matters because it has the potential to enrich people’s lives, and enrich societies” (Hesmondhalgh 2013, 1). That fact alone is worth critical analysis of what is changing in music so that we can map its topography and its effect on social structures.

Chapter Outline

I envisage this thesis as a four-strand braided rope, in that I wind together four distinct yet complementary theoretical strands, of which each strand is itself independently fashioned. The constitution of a braid means that if one strand is unwound, the other strands fall out of place. I conceptualise these four strands as follows: emotion as force, music as pleasurable practice, the body as technology, and digital technology as determining agent. Each strand is twisted over and under the other strands in patterned intersections, sometimes hiding from view, yet always still supporting the integrity of the rope, always *there*, even if out of immediate sight. This is to say that the thesis does not break evenly into block sections. Rather all strands exist and constitute the thesis simultaneously but move in and out as they are emphasised through

² I stop short of suggesting that music is ‘universal’. However, while Bruno Nettl does suggest that music is virtually a global human practice (2005, 46), he also points out that there are some groups or communities that might impose restrictions on music or certain types of popular music, as in the case the Islamic revolution in Iran during the 1970s (22).

different chapters, sometimes curving into each other as the rope is pulled tighter or loosened.

Further, the constitution of rope material, of each strand, is fibrous and textured. In this metaphor, the language of emotion and affect is the fibre and texture of this thesis—it makes up the very materiality of the thesis and cannot be isolated from it. The language of emotion hides itself in plain sight; just as one sees the rope but not the fibre. Yet, the fibre is the *fact* of the rope. The metaphor of rope here is deliberately resonant of technoconcorporeality too: long hair is braided as a rope, the skin of animals is made into leather and plaited into bridles and other products, *into technology*, and rope itself is a technology as the body is a technology. The figurative and material ‘strands’ also weave in and about each other here, as language itself reveals its somatechnical marvel that connects bodies to other bodies and also to the technology of matter and thought.

Chapter One takes the form of an ‘emotionology,’ which is a study of the way emotions and affective phenomena can and have shifted and changed according to socio-historical, cultural and technological specificities of music listening. I borrow the term ‘emotionology’ from the work of Peter and Carol Stearns who approach historical study in relation to the kinds of emotional structures at play in specific periods and how these structures are managed and produced by dynamics of power and ideology. However, this is not to imply historicity. Instead, I stress that this emotionology is a *narrative* account based on analysis of the literature on recording technologies, such as Greg Milner’s text *Perfecting Sound Forever* (2009) and Mark Coleman’s text *Playback* (2009) as prominent texts. In looking at the emphasis of different emotional schemas in varying temporal and/or cultural zeitgeists, I note that the body comes through in many ways, but is certainly most conspicuous in the analysis of jukebox culture in the 1940s. The deployment of this particular music machinery—its integration into the somatic life of musical experience—worked to cleave together somatic aspects of the subject’s body, and the body of others, by re/producing the dancing body in a new way. Hence, the strand of somatechnics arises, and begins to unfold from here throughout the rest of the thesis.

In Chapter Two, I move into a discussion of *transition*. This thesis is predicated on the argument that digital technologies are catalysing a range of transitions in emotional schemas, and therefore, in Chapter Two, I distinguish and explore the kinds of models that can be said to be ‘in transition’. Specifically, I look at listening models shifting from an emphasis on materiality and collecting to online sharing. In order to

examine this phenomenon, I acknowledge the radical modifications of sensorial somatechnics as they relate to both material and immaterial modes of listening. That is, the body's sensory mechanisms work as technologies that organise the affects and encounters of music listening and, simultaneously, cognitive faculties distribute meaning based on discursively produced constructs dependent on the individual's subjectivity and positionality. Therefore, the body (which constitutes the bodymind) must be acknowledged in the transition between material and immaterial relations in order to recognise that historically specific listening practices that were dependent on physicality cultivated those structures that are in transition today.

Undoubtedly, the grandest project emerging from digital technologies is the Internet. As a result of the digital MP3 file, music can be sent around the Web and reworked infinitely and in some of the most surprising and creative ways which continue to challenge and redefine what music is and what *listening* is. Therefore, in Chapter Three, I focus exclusively on music listening through the fixed-point, Internet-connected personal computer. I argue that the relationship between the individual and the personal computer produces original and creative listening practices contingent on the functional and interactive nature of Internet technologies, such as music streaming services, the 'mashing' together of music and video, and the new ways one can discover music online. In order to explore this listening practice, I situate the relationship between the individual and their personal computer through a somatechnical framework. I put forth the human-computer interface as a somatechnical relationship because it is characterised by the meeting of two highly complex technological systems: the human bodymind vis-a-vis the computing apparatus. The relationship between the two produces reflexive pathways; i.e. both the computer and the individual respond to stimuli and instruction from the other. I then synthesise this argument with material from Tiffany Watt Smith's recent text on emotions, *The Book of Human Emotions* (2015), in order to tease out the specific kinds of affective phenomena arising from this evolving and exciting relationship.

In Chapter Four, I look at the impact of mediatisation on experiences of liveness through the camera phone as it is deployed in the concert space. In this chapter I examine the ways in which contemporary screen relations have profoundly redirected affective and aesthetic strategies of live music experience to culminate in a complex relationship with camera phone technology. This new relationship is characterised by feelings of possessiveness, a sense of control over narrativising one's experience, and new sentiments toward concert community. I note the conflicting, and at times very

negative sentiments, emerging from the ubiquity of the camera phone. In particular, I examine the disruption of social viewing practices by individuals holding up the device or by the brightness of the display that distracts other viewers from the stage. Lastly, I look at the popular appropriation of Baudrillardian theory as it is applied to the camera phone in public discussions. I suggest that these public discussions use Baudrillard to point to the way that the camera phone produces tension in live music communities, and even broader social schemas, because it calls attention to what Slavoj Žižek called the “ultimate paranoid fantasy,” a kind of ‘fakeness’ to which I have referred earlier (Žižek 2001, quoted in Stratton 2006, 39).

Chapter Five explores the way mobile music devices with touchscreen technology produce new somatechnical figurations that reshape emotional dynamics of music listening. In particular, I focus on skin-on-screen contact in order to suggest that the screen acts as a reflexive surface producing intimate relations for the mobile listener. Touchscreens imply the relationship between skin on skin—the skin of our body (in particular the hands) against the skin of the screen. It follows that mobile touchscreen devices invoke a degree of sensuality—in the coming together of bodies, fluids and other organic materials which ‘stick’ to the touchscreen (the language of “stickiness” pointing again to Ahmed’s conceptualisation of the way affect can “stick” to bodies as I discuss in the Introductory Chapter). Following the work of Ahmed and Stacey in *Thinking Through The Skin* (2003), I carry out a “dermography” of touchscreens, or, the study of surfaces as skin and skins as surfaces.

The final body chapter of this thesis operates as a case study in order to argue that listening experience is also affected by the changes to music *itself* as a result of digitisation and Internet culture. I focus on the Internet-genre called ‘vaporwave’ as an exemplary model of the way in which some music listening experiences are exclusively and fundamentally a product of the digital zeitgeist. I present cyberethnographic discussions of how it *feels* to listen to vaporwave in order to illustrate the way music fans make sense of digital genres in their own emotional lexicon and the bodily affects to which listeners allude. I also examine the ways in which vaporwave artists repurpose muzak® in order to excavate and explore uneasy feelings that are generally repressed by dominant or commercial culture. The project of vaporwave, on this level, deals with issues of powerlessness, obfuscation and repressed trauma but can also be read as a process that confabulates the past and confuses temporal boundaries.

The chapters I present here do not cover the entire mass of sprawling experiences available in contemporary music listening, rather, they each draw from a

specific set of circumstances in music listening that provide insight into changing ways of feeling. In their totality, they work to illustrate that the way people feel while they listen to music is predicated on techno-social mediations and, like the ways of feeling before them, they cannot and will not stay the same.

Chapter One

The Specificity of Feeling: Towards An Emotionology of Music Listening

Neo: I just have never...

Rama Kandra: ...heard a program speak of love?

Neo: It's a... human emotion.

Rama Kandra: No, it is a word. What matters is the connection the word implies.

The Matrix Revolutions (2003)

Introduction

In this chapter I argue that ways of feeling in the scope of popular music listening change, and have changed, throughout time, according to place, and as a result of technological mediations. To argue this, I will first emphasise the cultural and historical specificity of emotions as they have been theorised through different historical periods. I punctuate that brief account with the example of the printing press as a technology that has been well theorised as an agent of change (Errington and Miragliotta 2007) and the ways in which it impacted forms of experience, particularly in bringing about new ways of feeling about the subject and the concept of 'freedom'. By framing technology and emotions in this way, I emphasise the constructedness of emotions in culture, while also conceding the powerful forces of those emotions in the everyday life of individuals as they are shaped by technological agents. I then use this as a basis from which to trace a narrative of emotions in music listening as they have shifted and transformed according to the developments in music technologies and how they interact with the somatechnic of the body.

I call this exposition a narrative, rather than a 'history,' to acknowledge the plurality of the past, as it is constructed by and for different audiences, and the inability to conflate myriad stories into one neat stream of 'history'. In doing so, I break from the "common understanding of history as coterminous with the past, as unique, given and singular" (Donnelly and Norton 2011, 174). Instead, I pinpoint various critical stages, which then forms a kind of *narrative* of music listening. In order to do this, I analyse literature that examines the technologies of music listening which focus largely on technical function and social context, such as Milner's *Perfecting Sound Forever* (2009) and Coleman's *Playback* (2009). I synthesise this with theory of affect and emotions in order to suggest how these technologies may produce affective phenomena, either deliberately or indirectly.

Stearns and Stearns call this kind of approach an "emotionology" because it focuses on the way that affective phenomena change throughout time and according to

place (1985, 813). Stearns and Stearns define emotionology as “the attitude or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression [and] ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in humans” (813). By concretising the premise that affect, moods and emotion in music listening are not ahistorical but instead vary by historical and cultural context, I then have a foundation from which to explore the specificity of emotional experience in the transformation to digital listening practices throughout the succeeding chapters.

Piecing together some sort of narrative about the specificity of emotional responses to music as a result of technological changes is difficult because the literature on this simply does not exist. There is extensive literature on the specificity of emotions throughout different historical periods (Rosenwein 2002; Reddy 2001; Hochschild 1979; Stearns and Stearns 1985) and thorough accounts tracing the development of music technology in regards to its impact on political, economic and social aspects (Sinnreich 2010; Attali 1985; Milner 2009; Frith 1996). However, as I mentioned in the Introductory chapter, there is no comprehensive text that has brought these branches together to detail the specificity of emotions in music listening throughout all the radical changes that have taken place in technology, particularly in the twentieth century. As a result, my aim here is to synthesise these two branches—of music technology and emotional experience—into a narrative that emphasises their intimate relationship and how each affects, and has affected, the other.

The specificity of feeling

The way individuals express and manage emotional material and affective phenomena are products of culture. As William Reddy points out in *The Navigation of Feeling*, it has often been assumed that because feelings, emotion and affect are, to an extent, biologically based that they are in fact universal (Reddy 2001, 3). To this day, in mainstream discourses of emotion, the assumption is that all people in all cultures feel emotion, and *ipso facto*, people in all cultures must feel emotion in the same ways (Greenfeld 2013). In addition, the association of emotional experience with biology has been built largely on gendered assumptions about female irrationality as dichotomised against male rationality (Lutz 1988). However, examining the production of feelings and emotions across temporalities and cultures, we see, in the words of Reddy, “troubling difficulties of definition arise” (2001, 3). In fact, emotions are not universal but are radically variable.

Emotions, both as they are experienced in and across various cultures and how they have been theorised and understood as human phenomena, have changed and continue to change. For example, a concern with affect and emotion has been with philosophy since the 'pre-Socratics' in the sixth century BC (Solomon 1993, 3), many of whom deemed the soul as the regulator of emotions and virtue (Granger 2000, 275). Later, Socrates and his student Plato were concerned with emotions but viewed them as dangers that posed a threat to reason (3). Plato both feared and was in awe of the power of emotions, illustrated by his decision to banish poets from the Republic, and yet, at the same time he was overly preoccupied with Eros, the Greek god of love (La Caze 2011, 1). The early Greeks were concerned with the relationship between music and emotion too. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates discusses the power of music with two other philosophers, coming to the decision that "a nation's rulers must 'guard carefully as they can against any innovation in music'" because music had the capacity to "permeate the inner part of the soul" and threaten the stability of the State itself (quoted in Sinnreich 2010, 15). Around three hundred years later, The Stoics also saw the passions as excessive overflows of reason (La Caze and Lloyd 2011, 1). Again, emotions needed to be guided and cultivated so as not to threaten reason or logic. The Stoics also solidified the link between ethics and emotions and professed that happiness was in fact the product of leading a virtuous life ("Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy" 2013).

The strong relationship between ethics and emotions in the private life of the individual remained a primary concern up until the middle ages. As Robert Soloman explains, Christian philosophy was preoccupied with the concept of sin, which "led to elaborate analyses of those emotions, passions, and desires designated as sins (notably greed, gluttony, lust, anger, envy and pride; sloth perhaps is a special case)" (Soloman 1993, 6). This preoccupation is illustrated perhaps best by the relentless crusades and Inquisitions that took place, which centred on rooting out sin from the body and soul of the individual, often through torture or death. It is not until the Enlightenment and the rise of Cartesian philosophy that we see a radical break from these traditions.

The 'father' of Enlightenment philosophy, Rene Descartes, set the course for the study of emotions on a radical new trajectory. For Descartes, the soul provided "pure intellect" whereas the emotions were mere interruptions from bodily processes (Lloyd 1993, 46). This notion enabled the justification of pitting the soul against the body and established an entrenched binary between 'mind and body' that endures to this day. It is also largely from this basis that the male-female/logic-emotion binary was

concretised in philosophy (see Lloyd 1993). Descartes saw emotions as purely bodily functions and even “bestial” (Soloman 1993, 6) and because women were seen as a part of the natural world, particularly in their ability to give birth, they too were seen as a bestial. Logic was relegated to the masculine domain. As Susan Bordo writes:

The Cartesian ‘masculinisation of thought,’ ... is one intellectual ‘moment’ of an acute historical flight from the feminine, from the memory of union with the material world, and a rejection of all values associated with it. (1987, 9)

As a result of these associations, emotions (and women, for that matter) needed proper training and guidance so that they remained in place and did not disturb the higher faculties of the mind (La Caze 2011, 1). Despite all the later work that critiqued and displaced these notions, the Cartesian ‘man of reason’ still retains much of its potency in Western traditions to this day (Battersby 2005).

One trajectory that would alter the course of the Cartesian principle was Baruch Spinoza’s work on the emotions. Spinoza’s metaphysics arose from a basis of oneness and unity, meaning that he viewed all substances as part of the holistic universe, including God and nature. The mind-body ‘problem’ that had plagued Descartes was somewhat resolved by Spinoza, in that mind and body were described as dual “aspects” of the same substance (Solomon 1993, 7). As Marguerite La Caze and Henry Martyn Lloyd explain, for Spinoza, “all human activity including cognition produces and is produced by affect” (2011, 1). This was a significant departure and the Spinozistic turn continues to fuel contemporary affect theory today.

In the eighteenth century David Hume would also raise the status of emotions in the Western tradition. In Hume’s work, the passions are motivating forces that are central to social and political structures. Hume famously wrote: “It is not against reason to prefer the destruction of half the world to the scratching of my finger” (Hume 1888, quoted in Solomon 1993, 7). In this respect, the role of emotions in the process of decision making is elevated and integrated as a central tenet of reason and logic. Both Hume and Spinoza are therefore generally considered to have conceived of the “cognitive dimension of emotions” that are part of mainstream psychology today (7).

In the following century, Friedrich Nietzsche privileged the status of emotion above that of ‘Reason’ itself (Solomon 8-9; La Caze and Lloyd 2011, 1). However, this view would struggle to retain popularity throughout the twentieth century, particularly in Continental philosophy, after the First World War ravaged Europe and later, with the rise of Nazism that spread out of Germany. According to Robert Solomon, mid-century mainstream discourse would see the passions “relegated to the sidelines” (1993, 9) in an attempt to efface these collective traumas. It was not until the later twentieth

century that emotions came back to the fore. Some of this interest was centred on the establishment of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic tradition. This was later extended by Jacques Lacan, who contributed invaluable insights into the dynamics of affect, much of which has permeated cultural theory as well as popular culture. This brief history throws into sharp relief the radically variable ways of both reading emotions as a function or construction of social and political forces, and as they are approached in epistemological terms.

Added to the changing social and theoretical position of emotions, technology is, and continues to be, inextricably implicated in the changing models of affective experience, either as it shapes or is shaped by those social forces. In order to better frame the upcoming emotionology of music listening technology, I reference the emergence of the printing press here as a parallel way to imagine the impact of digital technologies. The printing press provides an appropriate parallel to frame the relationship between technology and social sentiment because it emerged rapidly and had almost instantaneous impacts on social, political and emotional life. Johannes Gutenberg developed the printing press in the fifteenth century and, as Wayne Errington and Narelle Mariogliotta recount, the invention quickly spread across Europe and began to disrupt the Church's monopoly on the production and dissemination of knowledge (2007, 4-5). Though literacy rates were still quite low, communities could begin to share ideas without the strictures of Church mandate (2007, 4-5). In response, the Church, in cooperation with the State across Western European nations, would construct a "highly repressive licensing system" which found broad opposition among the emerging capitalism in post-feudal Europe (5).

However, it was the Church's opposition to the dissemination of reading materials that helped to shape a new social sentiment based on the idea of freedom for the individual to attain and interpret knowledge through the printed word. For example, in 1644, John Milton contested Church administration of licensing laws asserting that free press enabled "the human spirit to flourish" (quoted in Errington and Mariogliotta 2007, 6). Milton's claims rested on the individual's right to develop a relationship with God. This would, however, segue into a new argument by the mid-seventeenth century which focused on the rights of the individual as a member of society, most heavily influenced by the ideas of John Lock (6). Bolstered by the campaigns of John Asgill and Mathew Tindal, the notion spread that "A free press was essential to allow the individual to achieve enlightenment and knowledge, a condition that could only be achieved if ideas were able to flow freely within society" (7).

What is important to note from this brief account is the rapid transformation of ideas about *ways of feeling* as a result of printing technology. Prior to the development of the printing press, claims to an individual's right to knowledge and enlightenment as a predicate to 'freedom' were not a part of social discourse, and had no real way of becoming articulated *en masse*. There was no language with which to speak about this concept. A sense of the subject's right to 'be free'—whether that be freedom to attain knowledge, to write, to read, or to participate in a literate community—is a modern consideration that came to the fore in tandem with technology rather than being some 'naturally' occurring phenomena or pre-existing condition. In addition to this, ways of feeling about freedom and even agency are modelled around technology *as social*. The technology of the printing press, for example, did not spontaneously affect change on its own but augmented cultural practices and cultural expectations of individual autonomy. As Barbara Rosenwein's work suggests, "Emotions depend on language, cultural practices, expectations, and moral beliefs. This means that every culture has its rules for feelings and behaviour; every culture thus exerts certain restraints while favouring certain forms of expressivity" (2002, 837). From her research on the middle ages, for instance, Rosenwein hypothesises that emotions are always contextually bound and ideologically motivated. Prepersonal affective intensities (which may start out as intense but ultimately shapeless) must become translated into the language/s of emotion through the channels of cultural scripts which are constantly being challenged by developing technologies. The most intimate and well-guarded emotional materials of an individual's interior world are "malleable" and "constituted by culture" (Reddy 2001, 37). From this basis, I put forth an 'emotionology' of music listening that is constituted by culture and dependent upon technological determinants which are constantly in flux.

The emotionology of music listening and technology from the 1880s to the 1990s

In this section, I trace key aspects of music technology in the period marked from the invention of playback in the late 1880s to the introduction of the MP3 file in the 1990s focusing on the kinds of experiences associated with each technology around the time of their introduction. Specifically, I discuss the gramophone and phonograph, the radio, the jukebox, the LP, the analogue cassette tape, and then I conclude with a discussion of MP3 technology. However, as the MP3 is the locus for a complex synergy of emotional experience and technological function, an approach to MP3 technology could be formulated from a variety of standpoints, from its implications in mobile media to its role in digital piracy. Therefore, in order to make an examination worthwhile in a

limited space, I select just one practice, that is, the emergence of digital playlist technologies.

Digitisation is one of the most radical changes in music listening since the invention of recording technology. However, it is by no means the only change that has taken place and caused serious upheavals in the emotional experience of music listening. Therefore, I must make note that putting forth a chronological account of listening technologies is not to suggest that the narrative of music experience is in some way teleological. Rather, the objective of this emotionology is to illustrate the variability in listening practices as they *emphasise* different aspects of the music experience.

The phonograph and early technologies

Recorded music that could be accessed 'on demand' meant new ways of feeling in the scope of music listening experiences. In particular, I focus here on feelings of intimacy as they relate to individual listening practices which could be finally cultivated in the private sphere with the invention of the phonograph. The phonograph was largely the brainchild of Thomas Edison, which came into fruition in 1877 (Milner 2009, 34). Phonograph technology works by first capturing the vibration of the original sound through a large horn. That sound, or more accurately, the vibration of that sound, then impacts a diaphragm which is fixed to a stylus. The stylus 'etches' the vibrations analogously onto a suitable surface. In the case of a phonograph this is a cylinder usually made from a celluloid material. To play this back, the stylus then retraces those vibrations, or 'grooves,' which causes the diaphragm to again vibrate. The resulting vibration is amplified by the horn, playing back what was the original sound (36-37).

When Edison was conceiving this invention, recording music was not initially what he envisioned for the machine. In fact, he thought the potential of the device's power was as a dictation aid (Milner 2009, 34). However, playback would of course become a revolutionary technology with far more social and political implications. As Jacques Attali writes in *Noise* (1985) "Possessing the means of recording [...] allows one to impose one's own noise and to silence others" (87). To illustrate this point, Attali references Adolf Hitler's assertion from the *Manual of German Radio* (1938) in which Hitler is quoted as saying that, "Without the loudspeaker we would never have conquered Germany" (quoted in Attali 1985, 87). The ability to capture sound, to play sound back, and to amplify sound therefore marked a prominent shift in the cultural landscape.

By 1888, Edison began “to suspect that the phonograph was an even more complex ‘truth-teller’ than he imagined eleven years earlier” (Milner 2009, 35). There were other inventors, too, working on sound recording in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Edouard-Leon Scott de Martinville built a “phonoautograph” device in 1857 that could record but not play back and Charles Cros also had plans for a phonograph in 1877 but lacked funding to develop the project (Milner 2009, 23-24). However, by 1888, it was finally Emile Berliner who introduced a similar machine, the gramophone, to the world. It worked much the same way as the phonograph, but instead of etching sound patterns onto a cylinder it used a disc (37). So from 1890 to 1900 Edison’s phonograph was filtering into people’s homes but by 1901, with the marketing prowess of the Victor Talking Machine Company, Berliner’s gramophone would dominate the marketplace with its user-friendly discs. Though the gramophone discs possessed an inferior sound quality, they were more durable and cheaper than phonograph cylinders and were therefore more popular with the public (37).

The gramophone and intimacy in the private sphere

The introduction of this technology ushered in new dimensions of intimacy in the music listening experience because, prior to the gramophone and phonograph, listeners could only enjoy music in the form of live performance, which was most often a social event outside of the home. For example, in 1925 Compton Mackenzie called the effect of the gramophone “unimaginably great” because it had “killed the tyranny of the pianoforte” (547). According to the article, Mackenzie “believed in the existence of thousands—nay millions—of people who did not know their own capacity for enjoying and appreciating music” (547). Mackenzie believed the gramophone could rectify this and provide people with the gift of music in the home that was not reliant on live musicians.

As Christopher Small also explains, modern listening experiences had been constrained to the live domain, such as attending orchestral concerts or social events such as weddings, but these occasions had rules, limitations and rigid social expectations (1998, 38). In fact, orchestral concerts were so bound to social etiquette that, in Small’s words, “when musicians were employed, they were there as much to help their employers perform as to perform *to them*” (40; original emphasis). Ways of feeling in music listening were largely tasks of “emotional management,” to borrow a term from Arlie Hochschild (1979), in that one had to contain or even manufacture emotional responses. For instance, a show of feeling at the right moments may need to

be forced, during a crescendo or diminuendo in the case of orchestral performance. Conversely, weeping or other forms of inappropriate emotional display would need to be controlled or contained as to not upset the balance of social etiquette. Arlie Hochschild describes these as “feeling rules” which are patrolled ideologically (1979, 551). However, emotions are not just hidden or forced, but they are ultimately shaped and augmented by the limits of their performance. For example, if we are told we should not feel anger, the feeling-self must find ways to manage and shape that process to render one’s emotions “appropriate” (552). Hochschild also explains that feeling rules are subject to social membership and that “emotion work can be done by the self upon the self, by the self upon others, and by others upon oneself” (562). In this sense, the music listener’s experience is tied to what is expected of them in each setting, largely dictated by what technology is available to them. Taking away the burden of expectation can therefore change the core of the listening experience.

One’s emotions in the scope of listening are always subject to social expectation. Removing the listening act from the bounds of that management freed the listener from many of these emotional sanctions. However, the gramophone technology also inherited its own ‘feeling rules’ and was not devoid of the strategies implied by emotional management. For example, as Alexandraw Hui argues, the Edison Company organised Tone Tests, ReCreation Recitals, and Mood Change Tests “which were a concerted effort to train the public to receive the sounds of the instrument in a specific way” (2013, 601). As Hui recounts:

The goal of these Re-creation Recitals remained to showcase the fidelity of the Edison instrument’s sound. The recording artists were therefore encouraged to conform their voices to match the sounds generated by the phonograph (Thompson 1995; Milner 2007). Certainly they were forbidden from ‘showing up’ the phonograph recording of themselves with the bending of notes or additional musical flourishes or simply singing louder. Advertising copy declared, ‘The Artist’s Tone is the Edison Tone,’ perhaps more revealing of the machinations of the Re-Creation Recitals than the marketing unit intended. (610)

The introduction of gramophone technology into the home therefore meant a more intimate relationship with music because it could be experienced in a more private context, albeit one that was directed and constructed by the implications of commercial interest which guided the production of gramophone technologies. Despite this, the entrance of music into the home was largely characterised by fewer sanctions on emotional performance.

Paradoxically, the home was often experienced as a prohibitive environment for those individuals who were ‘trapped’ by the domestic sphere, such as women or

children. In this case, phonograph technology could open up “the cramped urban cell into as many worlds as there are records” (Eisenberg 1987, quoted in Coleman 2009, 44). In his text *Electric Sounds* (2007), Steve Wurtzler writes that with the affordability of the technology, “every home could benefit from the spiritual qualities of the greatest performers and performances” (126). Of course, the premise of affordability here is still determined in the context of the middle class, but, for those who were lucky enough to afford the new devices, new emotional worlds could be explored and experimented with. In a sense, the gramophone was really the first ‘mobile media’ too, because the devices could be moved with relative ease and were often taken on holidays (Laughey 2007, 172). In its totality, this new technology meant a sense of control and a new level of intimacy in the listening experience. The capacity for control in music listening practices is largely taken for granted in contemporary Western cultures, where home hi-fi systems are literally ‘part of the furniture’. Though home stereos have been naturalised in the private sphere, that ability to have music on demand is a product of time and place. The introduction of music playback technology into the home therefore saw sweeping changes to ways of feeling by enabling listeners to ‘own’ their personal experience in more intimate and personal dimensions.

The ‘Magic’ of Radio

When radio was introduced in the early 1920s musical experience was infused with a sense of freedom and even ‘magic’. Music could suddenly be snatched out of thin air at the one-off cost of a radio set. Radio was a “sonic revelation for listeners” (Coleman 2009, 44). In 1915 engineers sent the first transoceanic transmission of a voice from Virginia in the U.S. to Paris, France (Fischer 1926, 12). By September 1921 the first official broadcasting licences were issued in the U.S. and in the rest of the developed world through the early 1920s (12-13). The possibilities for music on the radio were immediately recognised. One radio program manager claimed that, “Music is the foundation on which broadcasting rests. We would close our station today if we had no music, and so would anybody else who runs a station” (quoted in Fischer 1926, 15). William Arms Fisher, both a composer and a music historian, wrote about the radio in 1926, saying that:

The fascination of this space annihilator lies in the ability to catch from the ether and make captive voices from far away, together with the ability to shift at pleasure from one source or station to another. Add to this the great variety of entertainment and instruction available, and to this freedom of selectivity add the further fact that this mass of entertainment [...] is free to all—and the spell of radio is explained. (1926, 12)

Fischer's declaration illustrates how radio was seen as a magical form of music listening. Radio quite literally revolutionised how people in the West thought about how and where music could be consumed, who could consume music, and in what ways music might reach us as a result of new technologies.

Despite the parent culture's warnings and reproaches, teenagers and young adults were ready to embrace the exuberance of new syncopated sounds that were being played on the radio, particularly from African-American culture. One parent is recorded as asserting that:

'No, I will not have a radio set in my home. Under no circumstances would I permit the developing musical taste of my children to be influenced by such music as is broadcast night after night [...] We've bought a radio set and its [sic] awful! I don't mean the set, that's wonderful, but the music. Last night we tuned in fourteen stations and every one announced that the orchestra would now play 'Red Hot Mamma'! (quoted in Fischer 1926, 72)

Of course, the emerging youth culture loved this 'vulgar' music with all its exhilarating energy and sexual undertones. Despite the many efforts against it, the radio was the technology that helped usher in what is now known as the "Roaring Twenties" (Barlow 1999, 20). William Barlow explains that "middle-class 'flappers' and 'flaming youth' were in open revolt against the old-fashioned Victorian moral codes that were the foundation of their parents' puritanical culture" (20). In the U.S., the radio started playing "black music," making the older generation nervous about racial "mixing" (20) and degeneration. Jazz and dance music reached Australia and other Western countries in the 1920s too (Gibson and Dunbar-Hall 2008, 264) and music from the African-American subculture broke into the wider consciousness to form new hybridised musical experiences with a particular focus on dancing and physical expression. Though Australia did start producing its own 'brand' of jazz, there was considerable African-American influence in this early period of Australian jazz (Shand 2008, 3-4).

Youth culture was enthralled with the magic of the radio. Paula Fass writes that in the 1920s university students would "loaf and fool around" while listening to the radio, and those diversions "were important and conducive to peer interaction" (Fass 1977, 207-208). Thus, the radio helped pave the way for the youth culture of the 1950s and 1960s in which teens and young adults had the time and means to integrate music listening into their social dynamic. The radio was entertaining, cheap, social, risqué, and provocative. In turn, this technology supported new ways of feeling about being independent, being sexual, and feeling connected to one's social group. Radio technology would shift the relationship of youth with music forever. Radio was felt as a liberating force in the emotional life of younger music fans.

The Jukebox

The electrical amplifier was developed in 1927, a technology that would eventually pave the way for the rise of jukebox culture in the 1930s and 1940s (Coleman 2009, 51). In this section, I read jukebox culture as a support structure to collective expressions of musicality, particularly in physical ways through the practice of dancing. This is because the jukebox enabled collective forms of sociality through dancing at a time when live performance was costly and prohibitively expensive, especially in those communities suffering through the Great Depression. Even as the Great Depression had swept throughout the western world in the early 1930s, people still wanted, perhaps even needed, to experience the joys of music and dance. As Coleman remarks, “Just because people couldn’t afford record players or records didn’t mean they were tired of listening—or dancing. A coin-op machine came to the rescue” (2009, 50). If anything the Depression made fertile ground for the growth of the jukebox because it provided cheap entertainment, as opposed to having to pay musicians in live bands. In fact, it overshadowed live music to the point that, in the U.S., the American Federation of Musicians went on strike to protest against the technology (Townsend 2007, 67; Coleman 2009, 53).

In the U.S., where the jukebox originated, those who suffered most during the Depression, and therefore those less likely to afford attendance at live performances, were those communities which were *already* disenfranchised by the socio-economic landscape (Helmbold 1988). Accordingly, jukeboxes quickly grew in popularity in the ‘jook joints’ and dance bars of the working class and, notably, throughout African diasporas in the U.S. In fact, while there is no definitive evidence to pinpoint the origin of the term ‘jukebox,’ I find the most convincing elucidation is Lorenzo Turner’s etymology. Turner suggests ‘jukebox’ is etymologically derived from the Gullah word *juk* or *joog* meaning “infamous or disorderly” (quoted in Gorman 2001; Segrave 2002 17, 18). Gullah is a West Indian Creole English, established in the U.S. likely in and around South Carolina by the descendants of African slaves (“Gullah” 1975, 468). This is likely the reason that music executives attempted, though unsuccessfully, to rename the jukebox with terms more appealing to white conservative culture, such as the “music vendor” (Segrave 2002, 18).

The origins of the word ‘juke’ fits with the significant role the jukebox played in Africa diasporas. Coleman explains that the jukebox was so tied to African culture that “African-American music, with its emphasis on syncopated rhythms and unbridled

emotional expression, became the definitive sound of the new machine and the new era” (Coleman 2009, 34). The fusing together of black musics with the jukebox machine, and jukebox culture, eventually spread across to other Western countries. In Australia this was slightly later in the decade, spurred on by the arrival of American soldiers (Segrave 2002, 159), with the highest concentration of soldiers in Brisbane from 1943 onwards (Potts and Potts 1985, 166).

Dancing music into the body

White dance bands and black artists were being played side-by-side on the jukebox, and in public spaces no less. Suddenly white and black audiences were “exposed to each other’s cultures *en masse* for the first time” (Coleman 2009, 35; original emphasis). The jukebox became *the* social music experience of the 1940s (Segrave 2002, 216). As a result, I assert that the jukebox cleaved together not only sounds but *bodies*. This follows Tim Wall’s work on dancing in youth culture, in which he asserts that the relationship between rock ‘n’ roll dancing and racial politics, in the U.S. context, is generally trivialised by historical accounts and had impacts beyond a new “biracial” market (2009, 183). This is not to imply that it was acceptable or common for white and black audiences to yet share intimate relationships in public or even dance together—largely it was not (Segrave 2002, 46). Wall points out that “new black pop did not represent actual integration, nor did ideas of ‘youthfulness’ overcome racial inequalities” (184). However, what I suggest here is that dancing provided a context in which white and black audiences could perform and explore the somatic aspects of different racialised practices by taking new sounds deep into the flesh through the corporeality of dance, in particular the Madison and the Twist in the U.S. context (Wall 2009, 183). As Wall contends, “the playlists of these jukeboxes and radio stations gave white American youth access to musical forms that race politics, culture, and geography usually kept segregated” (186). Of course, it was largely through the appropriation of black music by white artists that African syncopation would find a mainstream audience, and I will focus on the appropriation of black music by white culture shortly.

The impact of dancing in relation to affective phenomena, and its role in bridging black music to white audiences, cannot be overstated here. Dancing is a way that music is inhaled into the flesh, giving rise to a greater sense of connection with one’s own physicality (Hesmondhalgh 2013, 31). In the words Ben Malbon, in the act of dancing:

The relationship between movement and thought (or motion and emotion) is central [...] ordinary gestures and action can become 'a dance' if a transformation takes place within that person—a transformation that takes that person out of his or her 'ordinary world' and places them instead in a world of heightened sensitivity and altered perception of self, others and/or the environment. (1999, 86)

Dancing to music not only vitalises and energises the individual, but also has the potential to effect perceptual changes, and by implication, affective changes. The jukebox was the premier technology that enabled the interfusion of black music to white audiences, especially in the scope of public dancing.

With the jukebox especially, white audiences could absorb a new kind of cultural materiality that had concrete effects on dancing styles and bodily experience. Black music, either played by black artists or as it was appropriated by white musicians, emphasised aspects of bodily encounter that the tradition of Anglo-European popular music did not. As Jon Stratton explains, following on from Dick Bradley's work, African-American popular music style was distinguished by a more intense guitar work, a more driving beat and "more emotionally uninhibited vocals" (Stratton 2008, 23).

In Perth, Western Australia, for example, those aspects of popular music in the post-war period that were derived from African-American artists were greatly frowned upon by the conservative middle-class parent culture. Young people were steered away from black music and were instead encouraged to attend dance halls that allowed quickstep, foxtrot or modern waltz (Spargo, Spargo, Baker and Netolicky 2009). Regardless, young people would make their way to the coastal city Scarborough in order to dance to rock and roll at the Snake Pit (Spargo, Spargo, Baker and Netolicky 2009). The Snake Pit Café was the first venue in Perth to feature a jukebox, where it sat on a concrete terrace. It provided a space for youth culture to flourish, and somewhere for teenagers to mix with the opposite sex through less inhibited dance styles (Andros, Lewis and Netolicky 2009). Dancing, to varying extents and dependent on specific locations, can reshape social norms of togetherness. As such, dancing had (and still has) the potential to be politically transgressive *because* it is deeply social. As Hesmondhalgh emphasises, dancing can bring about "a pleasurable and enriching sense of *shared* agency for those who value it [and] the physicality of dance can make it an immensely appealing aesthetic experience to communities that are excluded from many more reflective cultural forms" (2013, 109; original emphasis). The jukebox exposed conservative white communities to the possibilities of alternative experiences.

However, the growing popularity of black music in white demographics led to the further appropriation of African rhythms by white artists in the following decades, with artists like Elvis Presley co-opting both musicality and dance moves from African-American culture (Bertrand 2000, 28; Lott 1993 52). This was an unscrupulous theft; black artists were never offered remuneration (Bertrand 2000, 30). However, I agree with Michael Bertrand who proposes that, simultaneously, it was a way that white audiences could push against “a bourgeois or middle-class ethic that they considered repressive [because] societal prejudice and economic barriers had compelled many to retain traits antithetical to the middle-class ethic. Those traits had great appeal to those opposed to the dominant culture” (30). White appropriation of black culture was, and continues to be, highly problematic and contradictory; on the one hand it suggests transgressions and hybridity, and on the other hand it conjures deeply racist implications left over from the popularity of minstrelsy and blackface in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century in the U.S. that had its roots in slavery (Lott 1993). Yet, I suggest that dancing to rock and roll music was a way that those contested sites could be articulated and abreacted into the material world for a cross-section of racial and socio-economic demographics. As Hesmondhalgh goes on to write, “The excitement, friendship, and sociality brought about by music have a connection to politics and to making connections across different communities” (2013, 111). For Iain Chambers,

dancing is the fundamental connection between the pleasures of sound and their social realisation in the libidinal movement of bodies, styles and sensual forms. It represents a social encounter, which can be a dance hall [...] where bodies are permitted to respond to physical rhythms that elsewhere would not be tolerated; the moment where romanticism brushes against reality. (1986, 135)

Jukeboxes energised public spaces with bodily vitality, perhaps even contributing in some small way to the changing face of racial politics that followed in succeeding decades. Though this appropriation has rightly been asserted as an unethical attenuation of minority culture, its impact on forms of togetherness should not be diminished.

Jukebox and somatechnics

In putting forth the jukebox as a technology which energised and politicised space, I introduce here a somatechnical reading of the jukebox machine vis-à-vis the human technology, as a relationship that produces the dancing body. The dancing body is a moving body; a moving machine, in both a theoretical and material perspective. For

example, as Karin Sellberg, Kamillea Aghtan and Lena Wånggren remark, the moving body is:

a concept that bridges the divides between living and dead, solid and abstract, organic and inorganic substances—and as such it opens up the potential for numerous divergences with recent theories of embodiment and materiality, (2014, 1)

In this conceptualisation, the dancing/moving body has the ability to breach normative boundaries. It challenges those static and restrictive environments, environments which are constructed and maintained ideologically and physically, and that keep at bay the potential for change to emerge—the office worker in her chair, the toll booth operator in his booth, and all those other sluggish (death-like) encounters which are naturalised by bureaucratic systems of power. Dancing threatens stillness and by doing so, threatens to change what *is*. As Michel Serres writes: “Dancing, the music of the body ... sows the eternal return of rhythm with the seeds of the unexpected” (2008, 321). This is because change itself is movement, i.e., the passing of one state to another requires movement, just like dancing requires movement and therefore requires the body, and other bodies, to change. The dancing body, as it is produced by the jukebox, is a powerful and dynamic technology which holds the potential to forge new pathways of how one thinks about their body and the body of others. In Jane Bennett’s words, “humanity and nonhumanity have always performed an intricate dance with each other” (2010, 31). In the jukebox ‘joints’ bodies dance with themselves, with each other, but also, with the jukebox itself. In doing so, lines of restriction, borders, *between bodies*, either human or nonhuman, may become redrawn and retraced. As such, the jukebox exemplifies the way music technology reimagines and, subsequently, materialises, new ways of feeling for the listening, and dancing, audience.

The Long-Playing Record and the “Concept Album”

Up until the mid-1940s, vinyl records could not hold more than 10 minutes of music, which meant that listening experiences were determined by formatting constraints (see Millard 2005). In 1945, a German-Hungarian born engineer named Peter Goldmark was listening to a vinyl record at a dinner party. While initially enjoying the recording of Brahms’s Second Piano Concerto, Goldmark was jarred and grated by the record’s inability to continue the movement untarnished by the clicks and “strange noises” made by the machine (Coleman 2009, 56). Goldmark, the brilliant engineer also responsible for the invention of colour television, sought to rectify this issue.³ As

³ It is said that when Goldmark pitched the idea of a long-playing record to the president of Columbia Records, “he was politely told to stick to television” (Coleman 2009, 57). Thankfully, he did not.

Goldmark writes in his autobiography, “My initial interest in the LP arose out of my sincere hatred of the phonograph” (quoted in Coleman 2009, 56). However, in order to make the record last longer, the nature of the technology needed to be completely reimagined. So Goldmark set about reconfiguring amplification problems, the shape of the grooves, the cartridge and stylus technology, the turntable, and, as a result, “the musical taste of the nation” (56). The format ushered in the age of the long-playing album based on its capacity to hold 25 minutes of music on each side (62). To this day, many music fans still appreciate listening to albums based on this typified duration.

The technical story of LP technology is thoroughly covered by Coleman in his work *Playback* (2009) so I will not retrace that history here. What I am concerned with is how this technology came to reshape emotional investments in listening experience as a result of the longer duration of that format. I focus here on the emergence of the ‘concept album,’ which was made possible as a result. A concept album is a work that unfolds as a unifying story or cohesive theme as it played in chronological track sequence. The story or theme can be based on one or more characteristics, such as “instrumental, compositional, narrative or lyrical” aspects (Shuker 2012, 8). As Roy Shuker explains, when the LP was introduced, “the album changed from a collection of heterogeneous songs into a narrative work with a single theme, in which individual songs segue into one another” (8). Bill Martin notes that in the wake of albums like *Rubber Soul* (1965), and *Pet Sounds* (1966) “the *album* rather than the song became the basic unit of artistic production” and “in the wake of these albums many musicians took up the ‘complete album approach’” (1998, 41; original emphasis). As a result, emphasis on narrative structure became tied to popular music texts and reshaped how listeners regarded the strategies and pleasure of music listening in relation to duration and the embedded narrative within the album.

Narrative is closely linked to listening pleasure and developing emotional connections to music because, simply, “stories engage our feelings” (Željana 2014, 209). As Hogan remarks in his work, *Affective Narratology* (2011), “stories are demarcated most significantly by emotion systems” (121). When the LP infused narrative into the listening experience, it also infused a more nuanced way to experience a musical text that sustained the added dimension of complex narrative. For example, though concept albums were largely avoided by country music artists, Willie Nelson’s *Yesterday’s Wine* (1971) is one exception in which a complex story is told by the combination of the tracks, the images and text provided for the listener on the LP’s jacket (Stimeling 2011, 394). Travis Stimeling explains that the “narrative possibilities of the concept album” is

what attracted Nelson to the project (2011, 394). For Nelson, the narrative of the album traces a theme inspired by Kalil Gibran. Nelson has remarked that the album explores Gibran's idea that "life on earth is a quest for returning to God" (390). Based on this central concern, the album is made up of a "series of vignettes depicting a protagonist at various stages in this quest, creating a story 'about a guy – imperfect man – watching his own funeral and reviewing his life'" (390). The level of intricacy and degree of nuance enabled by the narrative structure was not possible, in popular music, in the same way before LP technology opened up the space to explore more complex themes in greater depth. This meant music fans could now be exposed to a new kind of listening experience which sustained emotional bonds through the power of narrative.

Cassettes and Mixtape Culture

The 1960s saw the advent of cassette technology, which also meant at-home recording and piracy was suddenly possible (Tschmuck 2006, 150). As a result, the cassette meant the explosion of the 'mixtape' phenomenon. Thus, sharing music became a highly stylised, personalised and customisable experience, peaking by the 1980s with the emergence of the Sony Walkman (152). I argue here that both making and listening to mixtapes with analogue cassette technology produced a kind of 'game-making' behaviour, because the putting together of the cassette mixtape (without the ability to cut and paste as we can now through digital programs) had to be 'played out' as a careful game of *order*, based around the rules of song flow.

The attraction of game behaviour is related to feeling like we are part of a world that has rules and order (Huizinga 1955, 10). For example, a sense of gratification emerges from the success of how one orders and shapes song flow and how the tracks mix and match together—both in the act of creation and the act of listening. The rules and order provided by game worlds are gratifying; they can promote feelings of joy and community, and can be just as (if not more) fulfilling as 'real worlds,' as the predilection for online gaming, fantasy novels and films indicate. Cassette technology therefore enabled new ways of creating game worlds in popular music culture and new avenues of escape—a type of shadow reality through song lists. This idea continues to resonate throughout popular culture, such as in Nick Hornby's cult classic novel *High Fidelity* (1996), later developed for the screen, and the more recent film *Cuban Fury* (2014) in which the main character slaves over the perfect song order for a mixtape intended for a woman he aims to pursue.

The rules set down for mixtape creation is resonant of Johan Huizinga's assertion that the pleasure of play is partly drawn from the creation of order, or even further, that it "is order" (1955, 10). For instance, in regards to rule making and rule adherence, Huizinga describes the play ritual as:

A voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is 'different' from 'ordinary life'. (1955, 28)

For Huizinga, a positive experience is tied to the projection of order "into an imperfect world" (10). He suggests that, "into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection" (10). Interestingly, in the same passage, Huizinga draws upon a musical metaphor in order to describe the joy of ritual play, indicating the way play "is invested with the noblest qualities we are capable of perceiving in things: rhythm and harmony" (10). Music commentator Joel Keller explains his mixtape creation behaviour here:

I miss the way I used to make mixes. I'd [...] spend a couple of hours or more finding just the right combination of songs to put on the tape. The levels would all match; loud songs got softened and soft songs got a boost. I would attempt to take the mix right to the end of the tape; I'd spend over an hour finding that perfect minute-and-a-half song or snippet that would fit musically with the rest of the mix. (Keller 2004)

As Keller's description illustrates, for the mixtape maker, production and consumption of the mixtape are driven by, and help to shape, feelings of 'ordered creativity'. The music must flow within the limitations of the cassette tape format. In this example of music listening technology, the search for—and the gratification of finding—order in mixtapes therefore connects with a very long tradition of ritual and game.

Analogue cassette tapes and feelings of empowerment

Mixtape creation also took on a political edge during the 1980s and 1990s as a direct result of the piracy involved in their creation. Of course, piracy is pervasive in the digital age, perhaps more so than at any other time. However, the analogue process enabled a distinct underground scene to evolve based on a mixtape subculture. Mixtapes became politicised subcultural statements for disenfranchised musicians to rally against what was seen to be the march of capitalism in the music industry. In turn, the mainstream music industry launched an attack on DIY recording. In the 1980s the British Phonographic Institute (now known as the British Recorded Music Industry) supported major labels in a campaign based on the now famous slogan "Home Taping Is Killing Music" (McLeod 2005, 521). With the advent of the cassette, there was

immediate tension between the interests of major labels and the artists who valued creative and commercial independence. In fact, one of the first cassingles released—Bow Wow Wow’s “C.30 C.60 C.90 Go”—was a deliberate statement against the growing exploitation of artists by a profit-obsessed music industry (Johnson 2006; Grabel 1983; Brown 2012, 54). Bow Wow Wow, a project of Malcolm McLaren, released the single only on cassette with the B-side left intentionally blank to actively encourage home taping (Brown 2012, 53-54). According to Richard Grabel, the release “celebrated the joys of cassette taping (as opposed to record buying)” (Grabel 1983). EMI did agree to release the cassingle but they refused to promote it because they felt it advocated piracy (George-Warren et al. 2001, 108).

In the U.S., a similar sentiment grew, particularly in the hip hop scene, which relied on cassettes for block parties and the release of DIY music (Bell 2012). DIY, or ‘do-it-yourself,’ can be understood as an “independently driven entrepreneurial creed that prioritises direct action and coalition building over traditional models of career development” (Lopiano-Misdrom and De Luca 1997, 104). For underground artists, DIY cassettes were integral to defining lines of empowerment in an ever growing industry of exploitation. Anthony Kwame Harrison writes that the

distinct DIY underground hip hop movement that emerged in California (around local scenes in Los Angeles and the Bay Area) [was] a response to the commercial rap music industry’s unwavering commitment to gangsta rap imagery and themes. (Harrison 2006, 285)

In the counter-capitalist ethos of mixtape DIY, music scenes mark out affective lines which demarcate boundaries of independence from corporate interests. The cassette mixtape, in this sense, become a site unto which feelings of empowerment and territorial strategies meet for both listener and creator.

Taking this further, I suggest that the DIY sentiment is linked to feelings of solidarity and independence for individuals because DIY constitutes the idiosyncratic styles and meanings that are very specific to community values. For Harrison, it was the cassette tape that supported “hip hop’s peculiar standing at the crossroads of anti-corporate subcultural movement and cottage cultural industry” (2006, 288) in the Bay Area underground scene. Harrison argues that the DIY nature of the cassette enabled a defence against the mainstream because analogue taping functions in ways that digital formats, like the compact disc, could not. For example, one way in which individuals expressed their feelings about artistic integrity in this scene was via the “crudeness” of the cassette tape—as opposed to a more professionally produced technology such as a compact disc. In this sense, “Crudeness can be thought of as an alternative aesthetic

orientation that makes use of imperfections and sonic disjunctures to convey a sense of underground hip hop authenticity” (289). As a result, Harrison views “audiocassette tapes as unique technologies that simultaneously embrace the progressive politics of subcultural inclusion while defending subcultural boundaries against mainstream co-optation” (283). In this instance, actors in local scenes form an emotional attachment to analogue technologies which are used to express feelings of empowerment and belongingness.

The coevolution of music and moving images

The fusion of moving images with music dates back to the introduction of the television. As Carol Vernallis mentions in the introductory chapter to her text on music video: “I loved music video before it existed. As a young teen, I would stay up to watch Don Kirshner’s Rock Concert or The Midnight Special on television ... I was transfixed by the image of the musician performing on camera” (2004, ix). By the 1980s, with the emergence of MTV, music mediated through television evolved into its own distinct genre which became known as the ‘music video’ (x). I am interested here in television’s role, particularly that of MTV, in suturing together music with the televisual apparatus during this critical period and how this impacted ways of feeling about music listening.

I turn first to Guy Debord in order to expound on this notion. In 1967, following the uptake of black and white television across Western nations, and then colour television, Debord entered a critique of the transforming effects of televisual culture in *Society of the Spectacle* ([1967] 1994). This text provides insight into the development and subsequent domination of the visual aspect in media relations and the further ocularcentrism of the Western media. The spectacle, as it is theorised by Debord, is not an indictment on television itself. Debord asserts that the spectacle is “not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images” (n.p.). This is to say that the capitalist mode of production produces social organisation, predicated on models of objectification which are naturalised by and through the accumulation of spectacles, or the “monopoly of appearance” (n.p.). The televisual apparatus is always-already constituting the subject as consumer of the spectacle. The development of music/television cannot be thought about outside of this context, a context in which music is framed within the parameters of commodifiable culture and fetishised as such. The listener becomes a spectator, which brings with it all those implications of watching. Even when they are not watching they are *still watching*. What I mean by this is that even when one listens to the radio or a CD with no moving images the *resonances* of music television—either music videos one has already viewed that

correlate to a specific song or music videos pastiched together inside the subject's mind drawn from the of music video aesthetic—come into play, perhaps largely unconsciously, and produce the listening experience as a watching experience even outside of the viewing apparatus. These experiences co-constitute each other and cannot be untied.

By the 1980s, with television embedded into the household framework, MTV would further transform and fuse together music with moving image. This period is perhaps best exemplified within the framework of gender representations, in particular the construction of the female body through music video in the 'age of MTV'. Writing in 1987, Ann Kaplan noted that, while there were certainly videos representing the "postmodern feminist stance" (for which Kaplan offers several examples), these were isolated moments among a "plethora of texts" which mediated "the rich sensation of glossy surfaces, bright colours, rapid action [and] parade of bodies in contemporary clothing that the dominant videos offer" (116). Giving examples, Kaplan notes John Parr's "Naughty Naughty" (1984) and Robert Palmer's "Addicted To Love" (1985), in which the female body and the glossy world of fashion and fetish come together. Female bodies are objectified using these televisual strategies that link together the pleasure of music with the pleasure of voyeurism. MTV's commercial framework, as Kaplan explains, represented "only those female representations considered the most marketable" (115). Visual faculties tend to dominate listening aptitude. That is, in the context of an ocularcentric cultural paradigm, it is the image rather than the sound that is privileged.

Further, the form of any televisual genre works to construct arrangements between its elements in order to "create specific expectations which are aroused, guided, delayed, cheated, satisfied, or disturbed" (Bordwell and Thompson 1993, 35). As Joe Gow explains:

By constructing the relationship between an audio recording of a song and a set of visual images in a particular fashion the producers of a music video hope to engage their auditors in a sensually-rich viewing and listening experience. The general audiovisual pattern serving as the blueprint for this construction is the form of the video clip. (1992, 44)

Thus, MTV served to greater codify music experience as a voyeuristic one, which can augment the type and intensity of pleasure in the listening practice. I leave the discussion of image and music here for now, however, I return to the implications of screen relations in Chapter Five in regards to the changing nature of liveness as it becomes mediated and/or filmed through the camera phone.

Digitisation and development of the MP3

The compact disc ushered in the age of digital formats with the introduction of the WAV file. The compact disc was released across Europe and Japan in 1982, and across the U.S. in 1983 (Pohlman 1989, 12), and was marketed as a superior format which could not be surpassed. In fact, the industry was so intent on establishing the CD as the premier listening format that, in some instances, vinyl LPs were physically taken off shelves (Coleman 2009, 141). However, even at the peak of the compact disc age in the late 1980s, MP3 technology was already being developed by several different groups (Sterne 2012, 128). By the mid-1990s an MP3 file standard was settled in the world of global communications.⁴ MP3 file sizes are so small because the technology takes the original music file, with all its reams of information, compares it to a mathematical representation of the gaps in our hearing (Sterne 2012, 1-2) and cuts out what we cannot 'really hear'. By cutting out the sections of the audio that we cannot really hear the file can be reduced to around twelve per cent of its original size (Sterne 2012, 2). As a result, music files can be rapidly uploaded, downloaded, stored and shared online. It has made digital programs like iTunes possible and completely revolutionised the playlist experience. It is the playlist as a mode of listening that I focus on here as one instance of the way that the MP3 changed emotional experiences for the digital age of popular music consumption.

In terms of affective experience, digital playlists enabled by the MP3 are characterised by an unparalleled sense of control, convenience, flow and fluidity. For example, as one mobile user has described it, digital playlists enable the ability to manufacture "no dead air" (Bull 2005, 344). As Michael Bull explains, "no dead air" refers to the ability to sustain a "seamless auditory experience" (344). In Bull's empirical research, he examines the morning commute of an iPod user:

She would scroll through her song titles looking for a particular song to listen to that would suit her mood at that particular moment and, whilst listening to that song, would scroll through her list for her next choice – her musical choices would merge seamlessly into one another during her journey time. Of course, this is merely one strategy for creating a seamless and aurally privatised listening experience for iPod users. (344)

Bull's description here is resonant of the production of a sense of 'flow'. For example, Mihaly Csikszentmihaly and Jeanne Nakamura describe flow in very similar terms, as an experience that "seamlessly unfolds from moment to moment, [where] one enters a subjective state" (2002, 90). As Csikszentmihaly writes, a sense of 'flow' is critical in

⁴ MP3 is short for MPEG-1, Layer-3. MPEG refers to the Motion Picture Experts Group, a consortium of engineers (Sterne 2006, 829).

enjoying any activity (1990, 48) and is also intimately connected with the production of pleasure. Other characteristics of flow noted by Csikszentmihaly and Nakamura involve, “An Intense and focused concentration on the present moment [...] a merging of action and awareness [...] and a sense of personal control or agency over the situation or activity” (90). For example, digital ‘playlisting’ enables focused concentration on the present moment because the task requires concentration, but not so much concentration that the individual is perplexed and ceases to enjoy the activity. It enables the merging of action and awareness in that one is both contributing to the playlist through active participation but is also aware of the musical landscape they are creating; one has the sense of slipping in and out of action (the doing) and awareness (the being in). Lastly, and perhaps the most critical characteristic, is the ‘sense of personal control or agency over the situation or activity’. Digital programs mean complete control over cutting, pasting, deleting and editing as well as being able to put all of one’s music on one portable device.

Bull’s research brings this issue to the fore. In his work on the Apple iPod, Bull collates and analyses users experience of the mobile device. One user, ‘Terry,’ explains that, “I can’t overestimate the importance of having all my music available all the time. It gives me an unprecedented level of emotional control over my life” (2005, 343). Of course, Walkmans and personal stereos have existed since the late 1970s, however, these technologies limited music choice, content order, and manipulating settings based on current mood. Conversely, digital music players store thousands of songs which can be arranged and listened to based on a variety of configurations (Bull 2005, 343-344). As a result, “Technologies like the Apple iPod produce for their users an intoxicating mixture of music, proximity and privacy whilst on the move” (343-344).

The digital and mobile playlist technology gives users not only an “intoxicating mixture” of music and emotion, but often it produces a sense of control over the very nature of *time and space*. As Bull continues:

In the often-repressive ‘realm of the eversame’ (Adorno, 1976) or the ‘ever-always-the-same’ (Benjamin, 1973), the iPod user struggles to achieve a level of autonomy over time and place through the creation of a privatised auditory bubble. [...] In this de-routinisation of time lies both the unalloyed pleasure of listening but also the management or control of the user’s thoughts, feelings and observations as they manage both space and time. (2005, 344)

The user can ‘cocoon’ themselves from the outside world, and the passing of time, which Laughey describes as a kind of Goffmanian “involvement shield” (2007, 175). With the idea of control in mind, I suggest it is no coincidence that Apple’s playlist software is entitled “iTunes,” with the “i” reflecting the personal control and choice one

has over one's experience and its customisation to each individual (Rosen 2011, 2). The term "i" has become so meaningful a signifier in contemporary culture that it has crossed over into popular vernacular in order to describe the new generation—the "iGeneration." The iGeneration generally refers to the generation of users who grew up with digital technology and are obsessed with Apple products such as iPads, iPods, iMacs, iWatch and other Apple products (Rosen 2011, 2; Whitaker 2010). The iGeneration have certainly been accused of self-absorption, and even narcissism, which is perhaps a fair assessment based on the number of 'selfies' that exist online (Alloway et al 2014). However, I suggest that this 'iCulture' is also an extension of the idea that the individual can now have ultimate control over some aspects of their life—if not with everything at least with their music. Obsessing over one's music, in one way, might seem to be an inane preoccupation but the activity suggests a deeper need for a sense of security that comes with feeling like one is in charge of one's own life and personhood. While some may argue that the iGeneration takes this concept to the extreme (Alloway et al 2014), in that they are over-indulgent in their narcissism, control is nevertheless a significant aspect in the emotional configuration enabled by the digital playlist experience.

Conclusion

I have used this chapter to concretise the argument that ways of feeling are historically and culturally specific. Based on this premise, I have traced a narrative of some the emotional changes that have taken place in music listening as a result of shifting modes listening technology. I have called this an "emotionology," after Stearns and Stearns' term, because this narrative forms a kind of 'study' of emotions as they relate to a specific area. Laying out the changes in music listening demonstrates the great influence that technological mediation has over our emotional experience. Whether it is from the early days of phonograph technology, where people's home lives were enlivened and brightened by music, or the contemporary experience in which we can enjoy music whenever and wherever we feel like it, technology continues to change ways of feeling. Of course, this chapter is not supposed to function as a comprehensive list. My purpose was to select technological shifts which exemplified some of the changes in the past 100 years. The purpose of formalising this argument is to have a framework through which to present a detailed study into the specificity of the digital music listening experience in the following chapters.

In this chapter, I also introduced a major underlying theme of this thesis, which is based on the language of somatechnics—the theoretical and material meeting of the

body with, and as, technology. In this chapter's context, I used somatechnics to underscore the complex relationship of affect and music, in that the body has its own intellect—its own technology—that produces encounters between human and non-human bodies within the scope of musical experience. In this instance, I examined the jukebox as a function of social interactions that sustained the technology of bodily movement through dancing. By doing so, I put forth a somatechnical body that holds the potential for dynamic affects which may precede change in material spaces. By energising the field of materiality—moving away from those 'death-like, sluggish encounters' proscribed by the bureaucracy—the dancing body is a powerful agent of change. With the vigour of change in mind, I move onward in this thesis to excavate the more recent permutations in music listening which have been brought about by the contexts of digitisation.

Chapter Two

Bringing Touch To The Fore: The role of touch and materiality in the immaterial music listening environment

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that the role of touch and materiality maintains a critical, yet redefined, position in music listening culture despite the emergence of digital music as the dominant listening mode. This is because the particularity of the sensation of touch is inherent to material listening practices and, as such, produces its own unique forms of listening experience which must now take on new meanings in the context of digital music.

For this chapter, I define material listening practices as any activity in which the listener must deploy a material product on which music is inscribed. This includes vinyl records, cassette tapes, compact discs, VHS and beta disc. I define immaterial listening practices as activities in which one listens to music which is not inscribed on a material object, and is only deployed in the MP3 format. This 'virtual' listening mode can be deployed on a variety of platforms, such as streaming services, mobile media players, online sharing sites and computer-based exchange. I use the term immaterial here because 'digital' can in fact include the compact disc format. In a technical sense, the CD is a 'digital optical disc data storage' format, and is therefore a product of the digital age. However, while the compact disc represents the shift from analogue to digital formats, it is a physical object. Therefore, I use the term 'virtual' or 'immaterial' for all online or MP3 listening modes, however, I deploy the term 'digital context' or 'digital musics' in reference to the wider trend of listening through non-material formats.

The following chapter will explore the significance of materiality and the processes of touch in listening practices by considering their role in a context within which materiality has become redefined. For instance, how is touch and materiality reconfigured in the case of owning musical texts? Or fetishising music products? Or building relationships with others through the listening experience? To answer these questions, I first establish the ways in which materiality and touch emerged as emotional markers of listening experience. To do this, I demonstrate how the material music product emerged from historically specific modes of consumption born from twentieth century contexts. Music listening became inextricably tied to the processes of material consumption, through such practices as: the collecting of material texts, holding the product in the hands, feeling the weight and dimensions, reading the liner

notes on vinyl sleeves, cassette sleeves, and compact disc sleeves, and even experiencing the olfactory sensations of different products (vinyl lovers will often refer to the 'smell' of vinyl as part of the experience of listening [Lief 2014]). However, this is not to suggest that material products boast an inherently better listening experience, rather, it is to illustrate how the discursive site of the material product was constructed through those material and sensorial relations predicated on twentieth century consumption practices. The chapter then moves forward to discuss the current ways in which listeners redefine the meaning of touch and emotion and the significance of material products in relation to building a sense of ownership in the digital context. I will also explore the current role of touch in relation to the production and construction of memory in listening practices that employ memory as an affective strategy. Lastly, I will examine the role of touch in relation to building and maintaining emotional connections to artists and other listeners in the contemporary listening environment.

The body's sensorial somatechnics

In order to 'bring touch to the fore' I situate this chapter within a framework that approaches the bodymind using a concept which I term as *sensorial somatechnics*. This is to say that the body's sensory mechanisms work as a technology that organise the affects and encounters of music listening. Simultaneously, as well as congruously, cognitive faculties organise meaning based on discursively produced constructs dependent on an individual's subjectivity and cultural positionality. Therefore, the body (which constitutes the infinitely complex system of the bodymind) must be acknowledged in order to understand the historically specific listening practices of the twentieth century that are in transition today. That is, the human experience of material music products must be understood in relation to the somatechnics of the body's sensorial capacities.

In order to concretise a somatechnics of the sensorial technologies that operate in this plane, I borrow from the Lacanian model of subjectivity that Elizabeth Grosz articulates in *Volatile Bodies*: that of the Möbius Strip (1994, xii). The Möbius surface is defined as having only one side and only one boundary component. A model of the Möbius can be made by taking a paper strip, giving it a half twist, and joining the strip together. A line can be drawn from a starting point, in a single continuous curve through the length of the strip, but without ever crossing an edge. As Grosz explains, this model:

avoid[s] many of the common metaphors that have been used to describe the interactions of mind and body, metaphors of embodiment, of containment, machine metaphors, two sided coins, hydraulic models – models which remain committed to dualism [...] The Möbius Strip has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes another. (1994, xii)

Using this model, I suggest the bodymind to be a site of interrelating organic technologies in which thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and so forth, are always operating in a complex play of mutual interdependence. In this model, it is not impossible, to quarantine cognitive, emotional, or sensual realms: these are not independent entities but rather dynamic processes woven infinitely between, through and about each other. For example, emotions in music listening extend both from reading the text cognitively and from bio-feedback from the phenomenal world, such as the tactile experience of the music product. Using this model gives us the opportunity to better understand an emotionology of music listening in the transition between material and immaterial music products, and to acknowledge the way in which historically specific listening practices that relied on bodily technologies, such as the sense of touch, helped to cultivate the discursive structures that are in transition today. By using this basis, I will assert that the role and significance of touch is still very much a critical aspect of listening in the digital landscape, however, its meaning has been reconfigured and reshaped by emergent modes of listening.

The 'play' of sensuality and discursivity

Our senses work as a bridge between the body and all that is not the body, in collaboration with those cultural processes built upon the discursive limits of language and epistemology. At times, this concert of sensuality and discursivity is harmonious (where the world as we 'feel' it and the world as we 'rationalise' it makes sense). However, at other times, the concert is discordant and filled with emotional violence. In either case, sensorial technologies colour our ways of feeling with shades of nuance and subtlety. The senses process the fleshy encounters between the body and the world. The senses are crucial to the listening experience because music listening travels *through* those borders. As David Howes puts it, material culture "gives expression to a particular set of *sensual relations*" (2006, 161; original emphasis). That is, the senses—touch and sound, for example—do not emerge in quarantined containers but interconnect and enliven one another in sensual play. As Howes goes on to write:

Every artefact embodies a particular sensory mix. It does so in terms of its production (i.e. the sensory skills and values that go into its making), in the sensory qualities it presents, and in its consumption (i.e. the meanings and

uses people discover in or ascribe to it in accordance with the sensory order of their culture or subculture). (2006, 166)

Sound and touch are tied together, but have also been tied to the sensory order of Western material culture. Sound and touch are also signifiers of wider cultural *signifieds*; both sound and touch are translated into complex meanings that carry intertextual associations (Attali 1985 ix; 25). I will return to Howes' quote later in this chapter in order to point to the subcultural particularities of listening culture and how emotional markers are ascribed to the material artefacts of music listening. For the moment, I use Howes' approach to emphasise the way that listening to music can, and does, interact with touch and materiality to construct affective states. The senses are interpreted and 'made sense of' through the wider discursive processes constituted by the social apparatus. This process is a part of, and shapes, the sensorial somatechnics of the Möbius bodymind—a system that is never finalised nor ending but constantly twisting in on itself.

To follow the work of Howes further, material relations must be recognised in holistic terms that incorporate the *feel* of a surface, the weight of the object, its smell, its sound and so forth (2006, 169). This also resonates with the work of Joseph Smith who writes that feeling responsive to music involves the listener as a totality: "[The] bodily response to music involves the entire individual since 'mind' and 'body' are artificial divisions" (quoted in Dura 2006, 26). In the work of Ahmed too, the body and the emotional dimension are critically linked through the senses (2004). Ahmed writes that "If the contact with an object generates feeling, then emotion and sensation cannot be easily separated [...] Emotions are both about objects, which they hence shape, and are also shaped by contact with objects" (6-7). For Ahmed, objects are thought about as both material *and* imagined. A song, for example, can simultaneously inhabit both of these positions. The material stands in for the imagined (the *signifier* with multiple *signifieds*), thus, the material becomes bound to the psychic experience. The material product, a 7" vinyl of a hit song, for instance, and the imagined experience of that song become intertwined for the listener. It is for these reasons that the material music product has taken on so much significance in the dominant model of music listening and why this model is so deeply embedded in popular music practices.

Materiality, authenticity and listening culture: How touch 'came to the fore'

Material listening culture is a product of the consumption practices that emerged in the twentieth century. When vinyl records were released for mass consumption in the mid-century, music listening (and even the idea of sound itself) became bound to the

material product. As formats developed from vinyl to cassettes and then to compact discs, changes would take place, but throughout all these format changes there was consistently a material product on which the listening activity would rely. Over the course of at least fifty to sixty years, listening culture (and subcultures, such as cassette exchange communities which I discuss in Chapter One) were built around practices which were tied together with the sensorial somatechnics of bodily encounter. For example, a TDK advertisement for the cassette product is captioned with the slogan “Hot Bodies Need Hot Cassettes” (Adsavage 2016). The advertisement constructs music as a physical experience and draws an explicit link between the physicality of the music listening experience, the body of the listener, and the body of the cassette tape—which are all constructed in terms of subjective corporeality. Listening practices were bound to the material world and experience of corporeality, shaping the discursive site of the musical product as a *material* product. The body’s sensorial somatechnics were at the forefront of shaping and sculpting the listening experience—in this case, the sensorial capacities of heat, movement, touch, weight and sensual play are brought to the fore. The logic and language of consumption folded in on the sensorial technology of the human body, in a kind of Möbius twist which I described earlier.

The discourse of authenticity: Materiality as a discursive construct

In the language of dominant popular music discourse, there is a sense that material listening practices retain a more ‘authentic’ experience than virtual listening practices in the context of digitisation. For example, Redditor ‘crak_the_sky’ received 15 upvotes in support of his/her claim that it is: “really difficult to spend money on digital music. I don’t like not having something physical to go with it” (2014). ‘crak_the_sky’s’ assertion instantiates this relationship between materiality and constructs of authenticity in popular listening modes. However, twentieth century constructions of authenticity and materiality can be viewed as a legacy from Renaissance ideals, in which the original artwork (usually a painting or sculpture) was consecrated as the ‘authentic’ version, even while exact replicas might be able to be made (Butler 2006, 469). From this basis, Walter Benjamin theorised that, “The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity” (1936). Benjamin explained that, in the age of mechanical reproduction, “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (1968, 214-216). For example, the Mona Lisa is kept behind glass in the Louvre while the exact image of the Mona Lisa is printed on tea towels in tourist shops

outside. The image is the same but the value is dependent on the painting's materiality in 'time and space'.

The value of authenticity in popular music discourses works in similar ways, and the significance of this cannot be overstated here. Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor characterise popular music culture's preoccupation with authenticity as a 'quest,' a search for that which is truly genuine (2007, viii). However, this quest is built around certain rules. For example, even though a vinyl album is still a reproduced and reproducible object, the material fact of the vinyl lends 'weight' to the ideal of authenticity, as opposed to the *virtual* reproducibility of an MP3. I suggest here that this construct retains significance as a direct consequence of the material relations built from these twentieth century (and even older) practices, in which authenticity was bound to touch and materiality.

As a result of the relationship between authenticity and materiality, the material product, therefore, should be approached both discursively and 'somatechnically'. A discursive construct, as articulated by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), is the locus at which various discourses about a particular cultural subject or artefact meet and come together. Institutional and disciplinary structures build language to determine what is accepted as knowledge regarding a particular topic or subject. Thus, discourse itself is highly regulated and has its own internal rules (Mills 2004, 43). However, discourses do not work alone but are regulated in relation to other discourses, forming a complex "web of practices" (43-44). Through language, discourses form together a kind of interweaving mesh (44) and the resulting latticework forms the discursive construct. Thus, the discursive nature of knowledge imposes limits of what is "sayable" about that subject or artefact (44). In *Madness and Civilisation* (1961), Foucault took the 'madman' as a case study that illustrates the way in which institutional discourses build discursive constructs. In this examination, Foucault finds that the institutions responsible for defining madness—the institution of medicine and the judicial system as two examples—organise logics around the reality of madness. Each logic reifies the other, or as Foucault pronounces, "we find a rigorous organisation dependent on the faultless armature of a discourse. This discourse, in its logic, commands the firmest belief in itself, it advances by judgements and reasoning which connect together" (1961, 91). The material product as a site of knowledge is built from various connecting logics that regulate the understanding of consumption and listening.

However, my argument here emphasises that discourse does not operate outside the scope of sensorial somatechnics. What I mean by this is that the significance and affective value of the material product is not only shaped by institutional language—from the discourses of the creative industries to the ideology of neo-capitalism—but also by the forces of material relations as they relate to the phenomena of touch and tactility that is experienced by the consumer. For instance, music blogger Simon Sweetman says that “there’s a physical connection with vinyl. You are forced to interact with it; it’s tactile” (2011). In a sense, the corporeal experience shapes the discursive site of the material product and vice versa, in the Möbius bend which generates concomitant and enfolded experiences of both mental and bodily intellects.

The significance of touch as a product of twentieth century material relations was exemplified by the new approaches to psychosomatic phenomena that emerged during the early to mid-1900s. For example, Sigmund Freud’s deployment of touch as a “technical tool” in the process of patient therapy (Bartole 2011, 379) sought to concretise the intimate link between the psyche and sensorial phenomena. When Freud would encounter resistance from a patient he would exert gentle pressure with his hand on the patient’s forehead, while explaining to the patient that the effect of the touch would conjure thoughts and memories. Using the power of suggestion, the patient was then directed to articulate the thoughts regardless of their content (379). As Tomi Bartole explains, the purpose of this action was to redirect the patient’s awareness, therefore leaving a space through which could enter unconscious or buried thoughts (380). Freud’s technique deploys the body’s somatechnics as a mechanism in which touch relays and builds cognitive and affective materials. I read the significance of materiality in similar terms, in that the function of touch through more traditional contexts of music listening—feeling the weight of an LP in one’s hands, flicking through CD liner notes, and so forth—have become bound to unconscious pleasure or emotional release. Consumers *expect* this listening experience to produce affective material that differs from virtual experiences, and this expectation is a powerful force in the investment of listening to music on material formats.

A Freudian account of cathexis is possible here also. Cathexis can be understood in terms of the somatechnics of the body because it suggests that psychic energy is translated into emotional connection to an object. This process works as a kind of ‘technology’ that can move energies to and from the body’s inner delta. For Freud, the *valeur affective* of an object draws its power from the individual’s ever-present longing for the maternal object (LaPlanche and Pontalis 1973, 65). This “cathexis of longing,” or

Sehnsuchtsbesetzung, suggests a deep never-to-be-recovered desire for that missing object (65). Similarly, in an 'age of obsolescence,' as the digital context is sometimes called (Fitzpatrick 2006), a sense of longing for traditional music listening practices, and even for the objects themselves, is often cited in popular music discourse. For example, pop culture website BuzzFeed laments late twentieth century music listening in the article "35 Music Experiences You'll Never Have Again" (2013), which includes activities like "waiting outside record stores for midnight releases". In an academic sense, in the work of Russell Belk, the significance between emotion and materiality in contemporary consumer culture is similarly emphasised. He writes that "digital possessions lack the soft tactile characteristics of clothing and furniture that make it possible to almost literally embed our essence in such possessions" (2013, 480). While Belk's approach suggests an 'inherent-ness' in emotional responses and materiality, I think it is more pertinent to focus on the ways in which historically specific modes of music listening have been deeply embedded in popular music listening culture, both discursively and through sensorial somatechnics of the body. The desire, and the longing, for music became rooted in the physical nature of the listening experience across a variety of popular music practices.

'Props' of listening and the fetishisation of material music products

In this section, I focus on the ways that material products represent the pleasure of the listening experience in ways that immaterial products do not. Material products act as a kind of prop, and in some cases are even fetishised in popular music culture. A prop is that which stands in for something else, whereas fetishism implies the practice of worship, originally referring to the worship of abstracted gods by 'primitive' peoples (Kaplan 2006, 17). In contemporary terms, fetishism suggests an erotic aspect and generally refers to the "displacement of erotic interest onto an object, such as a shoe" (16). For Louise Kaplan, fetishism is approached as a "strategy," which is the actual *process* whereby one fetishises an object. For Kaplan, this process emanates from "the need to transform something unfamiliar and intangible into something familiar and tangible" (16). For my purposes, I read the fetishisation of the material music product as a process by which one makes reachable the unreachable. Music itself is a quasi-material phenomenon, because sound cannot be held, touched or given substance but through the materiality of the music product. Through material relations the music can take on substance and is endowed with another dimension in time and space. Added to this, I suggest fetish is deeply *emotional* because the process is driven from a strong desire to regain something lost or unreachable. While not always an explicit emotion,

regaining that which is lost is nonetheless a complex personal experience predicated on an individual's psyche and subjectivity and can be imbued with broader emotions such as sadness or a craving for satisfaction.

In the West, twentieth century consumption practices cultivated a fetishisation of material products (Lunning 2013, 7) that continue to resonate in the context of contemporary digital culture. Twentieth century commodity fetishism arose from an infinitely complex set of historical and social circumstances, too long to detail here.⁵ However, it is important to note that this history extends at least as far back as the development of the European mass market during the second half of the nineteenth century (Stratton 2001, 26). In Stratton's text, *The Desirable Body*, he cites Stuart Ewan who explains that, by the introduction of assembly-line mass production, "excessiveness replaced thrift as a social value. It became imperative to invest the labourer with a financial power and a psychic desire to consume" (Ewan 1976, quoted in Stratton 2001, 32). Major institutional discourses—of advertising and industry—as well as state apparatuses governed by free-flow economics, would enable the unmitigated growth of consumer culture. As Stratton goes on to explain, "commodities became, themselves, constructed as fetishes" which was a process that "involved the libidinal energisation of the commodity" (32).

I jump forward to the explosion of popular music and commodity fetishism which intersected from the post-war period onwards and manifested in such moments as the 'hippie' trend of the 1960s, the "fetish fashion" of 1970s punk, and the mainstreaming of punk fashion in the 1990s (Lunning 2013, 7). Popular culture, fashion, sex, gender and music became inextricably linked in postmodernity and a range of commodities were fetishised in the process. Aggressive marketing and the rise of hyper-consumerism gave way to a lifestyle culture. As Kaplan writes:

Material objects that are regarded with extravagant reverence and sought after with a compelling, 'I've got to have it,' are fetishes. Such items could be almost anything—chiffon scarves or Manolo Blahnik stiletto sandals, Prada handbags or Chanel jackets... Or, to leave the world of fashion, there are kitchen utensils, or cell phone attachments, iPods. (2006, 17)

In popular music culture, music fans worship rare vinyl or limited editions, or even their favourite CD, perhaps put on display by framing or hanging. The listening experience is imbued by the intense connection to its correlate object. It is taking the intangibility of listening and transposing it into a concretised form that can be touched, stroked, held and even shown to others in three dimensional form.

⁵ Jon Stratton covers this history in detail. See *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption* (2001).

Connected to the strategy of fetishisation is the way that music fans can exhibit extreme behaviour in hunting down and buying rare copies or limited editions. Special editions are still popular and many are still released with textured covers or embossing (loagytbear 2013). One Australian metal band, Malignant Monster, even sign their CD covers with the blood of the lead singer and close the paper cover in a wax seal (Malignant Monster 2013). This kind of sensual play facilitates a strategy of fetishisation: music fans can hold the creative *lifeforce* (in the form of blood) of an artist in one's hands and listening then becomes also touching, smelling, feeling as well as hearing (I return to this example later in the chapter).

The way sensuality and fetish manifest in material music products is implied by one Redditor 'pocketgnome,' who writes:

There's something about the whole experience. Finding and searching for records, bringing them home and reading who the artist credits and the things they write on the art. Listening to the album as a whole—the way the artist intended the album to be listened to - instead of skipping over songs we don't 'like'. (2014)

The material product is therefore constructed as an experience that provides supplementary dimensions to a product that previously could be experienced in only one dimension. The listening experience, in this respect, is also constructed as an emotional-sensual project which manifests a host of affective phenomena driven by the desire to connect in a deeper, perhaps more personalised, way. Consumption modalities shape these practices, as Shuker explains, "Recording industry packaging practices have created a number of collectibles, including picture discs, picture sleeves, boxed sets and 'promos'" (2010, 57). Consumers use these artefacts as strategies to individualise the music experience. James Clifford writes, "At a more intimate level, rather than grasping objects only as cultural signs and artistic icons, we can return to them ... not as specimens of a deviant or exotic 'fetishism' but our own fetishes" (1988, 229). The material product functions as a critical object in the context of digital musics because it provides an aspect of the listening experience—namely, its material sensuality which can be fetishised on some level and in idiosyncratic ways—that cannot be as readily reproduced through virtual modes.

This process speaks, in part, to the resurgence of vinyl as a popular format in the context of digitisation (Wilson 2016). For example, Redditor 'apropos_cluster' writes:

I thought a cd booklet with nice design could make a cd worth owning from a very young age, so when I discovered LPs, I was obviously blown away. My first was an original press of Neil Young's *Tonight's The Night*. If you've never held one, it's printed on a very delicate, thick, fibrous paper. It's soft and matte

and its absorbency prevents the black ink from ever becoming very bold. It reeks of the subdued tones present on the record. It is beautiful. (2014)

In this case, the listener makes an explicit connection between the materiality of the vinyl sleeve and the 'subdued tones present on the record'. This demonstrates the process I describe above, in which intangible phenomena, such as music, is given 'body' by the tangible product.

It should be noted, however, that the process of fetishisation is not to suggest that the material object provides an experience that is *inherent* to music, or an experience that is objectively more authentic. As Kaplan points out, fetishism is associated with falsity (2006, 17; 19). The word 'fetish' comes from the Portuguese, *feitico*, meaning false (17). One worships the *object in place* of the abstraction, that is, a feeling or sensation (originally referring to the worship of abstracted gods by 'primitive' tribes). The abstract thing, whether it be a sexual fantasy or an emotional release, cannot be easily accessed nor easily articulated by the individual—but the object *can* be accessed at will. "A fetish can be held, seen, smelled, even heard if it is shaken, and most importantly it can be manipulated at the will of the fetishist" (20). The object stands in for, or provides greater substance to, the immaterial experience. Similarly, in looking at the ways in which listeners describe their experience of traditional listening modes, the materiality of the products stands in for the emotional release or pleasure of the listening experience; they become bound together in psycho-sensual patterns of practice.

In the framework of sensorial somatechnics, these psycho-sensual patterns of practice present a key aspect in understanding the place of touch and material relations in the age of immaterial musics. In the scope of music listening, sensorial faculties translate the physicality of the experience in more complete terms than virtual experiences alone. I return to the work of Elizabeth Grosz to highlight the functionality of touch in the play of both sound and fetish. In Grosz's articulation of the Mobius body, "the skin and the various sensations which are located at the surface of the body are the most primitive, essential, and constitutive of all sources of sensory stimulation" (1994, 35). The pleasure of touching is translated through material relations and can support the listening experience in a way that seems to alter and attenuate those barriers between inner and outer dimensions. As Grosz continues:

The information provided by the surface of the skin is both endogenous and exogenous, active and passive, receptive and expressive, the only sense able to provide 'double sensation' [... which means] the subject utilises one part of the body to touch another, thus exhibiting the interchangeability of active and

passive sensations, of those positions of subject and object, mind and body.
(35-36)

The flux and flow of intensities *decorate* the listening experience through the interaction with materiality. The listening experience is modified and shaped by the listener's concrete presence in three dimensions. This is not to suggest that material listening has superiority over immaterial formats. Both material and immaterial listening practices provide different forms of pleasure and/or conveniences that cannot be quantified as more or less valuable than the other. Rather, this is to suggest that the material product provides aspects that the virtual cannot and therefore still retains a critical, albeit redefined, function in listening culture. Material products do not function as the only access to music listening now. Instead, material products are a singular listening style deployed in order to produce different emotional and sensory experiences that privilege the critical function of touch.

Touch and materiality in relation to the sense of ownership and collecting in the digital context

Ways of feeling, ways of owning

Touch can also imply a sense of ownership and has become another way in which consumers redefine their experience of owning music in the context of digitisation. Many consumers may play, stream, and exchange MP3s online, but will also suggest that this does not necessarily constitute owning a music collection through which emotional connection is constructed. For example, Redditor 'heilage' writes: "Listening to music on vinyl makes me feel different to listening to music on e.g. Spotify" (heilage 2014). 'heilage' also received 45 Reddit 'up votes' for this statement, which indicates that this sentiment resonated with others in the thread. In a similar vein, 'Trachtas' writes: "I like listening to music to involve leafing through my collection, taking out a record, placing it on the player, dropping the needle down, sitting back into my chair" (2013). For 'Trachtas,' leafing through *his* collection is of significance and the fact of ownership imbricates with the act of listening. In even more explicit terms, music blogger Luc Duval writes:

I imagine it would be quite difficult to play records without feeling a more palpable and personal awareness of, and connection to, the music that one listens to. I even feel a stronger sense of ownership of the music that I have on records than the music I have stored on my computer. (2011)

This individual is articulating a very specific emotional experience in music listening; the experience of feeling ownership over the listening experience itself. This is not to

imply that all music consumers feel that materiality confers ownership, however, it is to suggest that for some consumers the material product and the *notion* of owning are related and therefore produce positive listening experiences when one deploys those products. Ownership has long been associated with having something tangible in one's possession (as per the old adage that "possession is nine points of the law" [U.S. Legal 2001]) and here individuals similarly point to a sense that a physical copy has a different quality than having access to a digital collection. It is not just a 'competition' between vinyl and the MP3 however. Another Redditor, 'fucommant,' talks about the connection to his cassette connection in material terms, "there's just something about looking at the quantity of tape as an indicator of the music. Its [sic] just so badass" (fucommant 2013). It is clear that in the transition to digital forms, physical music products still retain an emotional significance to users for various reasons that imply a sense of ownership which is not as prominently experienced in non-physical modes.

I would also make the point here that whether we can characterise these users' feelings as 'real' is not the point. By 'real,' I mean to say, if we blindfolded the same users and put on a vinyl and then an MP3 of the same song and asked them to describe the differences we might assume they would not be able to do so, or could only do so to a limited degree. However, that is not relevant to this argument. What *is* important to my thesis is that the individual *experiences* her or his feelings *as* different based on the constructs at play in relation to ownership. Feelings are subjective in their very nature and therefore there need not be an objective correlation between the fact of materiality and emotion. What matters is that music fans perceive their emotions as being different in some way. For example, Redditor 'jparmar' writes:

I have an iTunes library of about 16,000 tracks [...] however, I have started purchasing vinyls of my favourite records because it's a lovely sensation to own beautiful original physical forms of music that means so much to you—in all its large album art glory; it becomes something to be sentimental about. (2013)

For this Redditor, records are attached to an emotion, specifically, sentimentality. Other music fans echo similar sentiments, such as 'Dinosaursteak' who writes: "For some reason if I don't have a physical copy I don't really feel like I own it. I have Spotify, iTunes, Pandora, but nothing will ever replace my record collection" (2013). These Redditors point to a clear contrast between material and immaterial formats, which shapes the production of a sense of ownership over the listening experience.

Collecting material products in the context of immaterialisation

The comment above by Redditor, 'Dinosaursteak,' raises another critical issue related to owning, which is related to the new meanings around collecting material music products in the context of virtual listening practices. Collecting material music products, particularly vinyl records, emerged as a significant and ritualised practice in popular music culture (Shuker 2004; 2010). In *Wax Trash and Vinyl Treasures* (2010), Shuker outlines the contexts which enabled the practice of vinyl collecting to flourish:

During the mid-to-late nineteenth century, a mix of capitalism and consumerism, increased leisure time, disposable income and nostalgia made collecting a significant aspect of the social identity for the new middle classes of Europe, Britain and its colonies, and the United States. Record collecting as a social practice was a logical extension of such activities. (2010, 3)

In a complementary discussion, David Beer explores several concepts behind the record collecting phenomenon and suggests the practice performs several functions that immaterial musics cannot replicate in the same ways. For example, Beer explains that he has compact discs in a collection that still have "stickers on the case from a small independent record store in Derby city centre" (2008, 75). In Beer's words:

Collecting is the accumulation of a form of material biography that reveals things about us, about our life trajectories and histories, and about the social and cultural movements, moments and events that we have lived through or that we find connection with [...] the physicality of the collection is an integral part of our relations with it and the identity constructions it facilitates; this is both how we think of ourselves and how we wish to present ourselves to those that visit the private places where we exhibit our collections. (2008, 75-76)

The most critical aspect in this excerpt from Beer, for my purposes, is his insistence on the *physicality* of the collection in terms of shaping relations with it. Collecting material music products is about collecting experiences, and ways of feeling about those experiences in their function as identity-making instruments. As an extension of this process, listening to those products is a way of accessing those experiences and constructs of identity, which are evidently tied to these material artefacts.

However, the meanings and emotional attachments to collecting are becoming reconfigured as virtual libraries become the dominant mode of listening. In his article, Beer goes on to question the residual effects of this shift, particularly on these practices which have come to form such major parts of collector's emotional schemas. He asks, "if the explicit physical identity forming and material biography properties of the music collection are removed (or at least realigned) from the domestic space and reinscribed upon a virtualized and mobile digital file, what are the consequences?" (2008, 77). For Beer, marketing discourses intersect with new listening practices in order to reshape what collecting itself means in order to privilege the "iconic interface [of the MP3 player] and the veneer of simplicity" (71; 74). I would suggest that, in addition to Beer's

account, the significance of collecting has also been somewhat superseded by the significance of *sharing*. Volker Grassmuck calls this the “sharing turn” (Grassmuck, quoted in Belk 2013, 1596) where the traditional notion of “you are what you own” is recapitulated as “you are what you share” (1599). I suggest that the new sharing culture is manifest in the many peer-to-peer download websites, streaming services and online platforms available to music fans. What has become critical is the collecting of ‘sharing experiences,’ particularly through the countless platforms to which a listener can register. Registering for a site, such as Spotify, where one can expose their playlists and critique the tastes of others, is almost a ritual of collecting itself. Users can store each login detail for each different sharing experience, and rotate visits to each sharing site, in a kind of ritualistic play that extends sharing pleasure.

In his work on the “extended self” in the context of the digital age, Belk draws on a story told by writer and social commentator Julien Dibbell who digitised his CD collection (2013, 479). Dibbell first laments losing the palpable history of the music he loved. However, after the initial moment of grief, Belk goes on to suggest that Dibbell cultivated new emotions in place of the grief. The “new kind of collecting is also magical, thrilling, and enthralling” (479).

[Dibbell] marvels at the ease of online acquisition, the ease of instantly recategorizing and rearranging tunes, and the ease of sharing them with distant others. He found a new kind of intimacy with his music, released from its plastic prison and potentially informed by the comments of legions of unseen aficionados. Although this may be an overly optimistic appraisal of compensatory gains, it does hint at new possibilities with digital music. (479)

Far from the process of digitisation being an empty and ‘soulless’ expedition, instead, there is a sense of discovery and therefore hope and excitement. Music fans can find new songs and new avenues of music listening. This is not to say that virtual possessions can easily take the place of material possessions. Instead, as Janice Denegri-Knott and Mike Molesworth (2010, 110) suggest: “Virtual goods occupy a liminal category between the material world and the imaginary world” (479). Digital experiences have not replaced traditional ones, rather, new listening experiences create an entirely new space for the grounds of engagement and what it means to feel emotionally connected to listening experience. Rather than connecting with tangible items, individuals connect with the activity of sharing and as they listen and stream online music, individuals invest psychic energies into that experience.

The role of materiality in relation to the production and construction of memory

In this section, I examine the ways in which music listeners deploy material products in order to construct memory, and produce pleasure related to acts of remembering, particularly in ways that consumers cannot do with immaterial formats. To explore this phenomenon, I return to Grosz's model of the Möbius bodymind in order to highlight the inflection of memory into materiality and materiality into memory. For example, Redditor 'heilage' writes:

For the past few years I have gotten a strange attachment to old things, or things that represent 'the way we used to be' in a way. I like leatherbound [sic] books and I like paintings instead of digital photo frames. (2014)

For 'heilage,' the fact of materiality enables a bridge to the affective state that has been eroded over time—the way things used to be. *This is not to suggest that this state ever existed.* What is important is the holding on to an *idea* of the way things used to be; for 'heilage' it is the desire to return to traditional modes of interaction in the context of digitisation which produces an ambivalence toward contemporary media. 'heilage' uses materiality to produce and play with the pleasure of remembering. As Grant McCracken explains, "goods help the individual contemplate the possession of an emotional condition, a social circumstance, even an entire style of life, by somehow concretising things in themselves" (1988, 110). This idea also resonates with Pierre Nora's work on *les lieux de mémoire* (1989). Nora's work was written in the late 1980s, however, it still retains relevance here because the 1980s was also a time of great transition in media, with the introduction of the home computer, compact discs, the personal Walkman, and fax machines. Nora discusses a cultural anxiety around the "collapse of memory" in the postmodern age, which in turn catalyses "consciousness of a break with the past" (7). He writes: "There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieus de mémoire*, real environments of memory" (7). 'heilage' demonstrates this sentiment through the 'strange attachments to old things,' or, those products which have become preserved as 'sites' of memory.

To explore the role of music materiality in the function of memory further, I return to the work of Beer, who explains the way that connection to musical products is not just a case of connecting with a physical item, rather, it is the connection to the narratives that emerge "through the unique relations that the collector has with that particular object" (2008, 75). Beer describes the emotional process of looking through his compact disc collection, complete with the stickers and labels from each store:

These labels bring to mind memories of times spent, during my youth, rifling through the shelves of the store, an experience that is recalled merely through the presence of these sticky labels. These labels also have the price and short

messages from the record store staff (about the content of the CD) written on them; this recalls the relations and moments of connection between me and the staff over shared interests in the music. (2008, 75)

Memory and emotion are profoundly linked, and are undoubtedly called forth using the processes of touch and materiality. For Shuker, material culture informs a “strong connection” between music products and memory (2010, 53). Material products have been constructed to interact with memory and emotion in different ways than immaterial practices have been constructed because they ‘take up’ physical space and inhabit physical form (in much the same way as the human body does). Material products can inform the listening experience as idiosyncratic and personal by using the structures of material culture as a site of meaning and meaning-making.

Material music products also enhance the processes of memory in ways that other material products cannot because of the relationship between music and time. Catherine Strong explains that, “Music provides a different type of access to memory than other artefacts of the past, such as photographs, because of the way it moves through time itself as it plays” (2015, 421). Strong draws from Tia De Nora’s work to emphasise the unique capacity of music to structure processes of remembering. For instance, a photograph or postcard is static, these are products that exist in time and space, but do not appear to move through time *with* the user. A song, however, forms a direct connection to time as it moves through it. In De Nora’s words, music “provides a device for unfolding, for replaying” (De Nora 2003, quoted in Strong 2015, 421), referencing the way that music appears to the individual as a companion through time and, in a sense, travels with them through the shifts between pasts and presents. A song appears to trace the untraceable; the slippages of time can be marked through a melody or well-worn beat. Of course, the relationship between music and time is not tied to its materiality, however, coupled with the ideas above in which I illustrate the connection between material culture and memory, the material music product works as a device for processes of remembering, which heightens and individuates listening in nuanced and distinct ways.

However, though material listening practices may be distinct from MP3 listening practices in terms of connecting with memory, that is not to say that material products are superior. In fact, many individuals can and do deploy a range of music mediation devices in order to take pleasure in the relationship between music and memory, such as the exchange of YouTube song clips between friends on Facebook that serve to maintain personal connections to shared experiences, as just one example. As Andy Bennett explains, one of the “palpable effects” of “mediated memory has been a

diversification of the ways in which the past is remembered and represented” (Bennett 2010, 246; original emphasis). Bennett points to the complexity of how memory and music might come together in the contemporary digital framework, where one can more easily look up a song on YouTube than dig through an entire record collection sitting in another room where the material format of the song is stored. Mediated representations of memory through music do not supersede the material processes of remembering, but can complement it, and in some ways even augment it. As Bennett continues:

Rather than struggling with a narrowly codified, not to say monolithic, set of representations, late modern individuals may find within the realms of mediated memory multiple frames of reference through which to organise and rehearse their own personal memories of the past. (2010, 246)

As music becomes reframed by digital contingences, so too does the individual’s investment of memory, in both private and shared spaces, and material and immaterial formats. The exponential expansion of modes of listening are then ‘mixed and matched’ together in playful ways.

Memory, nostalgia, and the ‘case for vinyl’

It may very well be the destabilising effects of immaterialisation that have led to a resurgence of vinyl sales (Hayes 2006). However, in mainstream discussions, attached to this premise is often the caveat that listening to vinyl is nothing more than misguided nostalgia (Burrow 2013), characterised as the result of an inability to move on from the past, or a sentimentalising of what was in place of an acceptance of what is. I suggest that nostalgia *is* implicated in the contemporary listening experience, however, I refute the *trivialisation* of nostalgia, particularly as this trivialisation works to minimise the affective strategies employed by music consumers to retain a sense of connection to material products and therefore the listening experience.

In dominant discourses about emotion, nostalgia is constructed as a superfluous or inauthentic emotion. In the Preface to Janelle Wilson’s book, *Nostalgia* (2005), she writes, “Nostalgia has gotten a bad rap. Those who seem to live in the past often face criticism from others. Many pundits and scholars associate nostalgia with reactionary thought” (7). One of the other reasons for this ‘bad rap’ is the suggestion that nostalgia is used as a way to cover over the historical facts of a context, a way of remembering the past so as to deny its trauma or to over exaggerate its greatness—a common accusation levelled at the Baby Boomer generation who, as Carl Wilson writes, “wax self-congratulatory about ending segregation and war, even as they voted for politicians who would deregulate banks and invade Iraq (the first time)” (2011). This

view of nostalgia, as a way to deny the reality of the past, is particularly evident in mainstream discussions of material music practices. *The Guardian's* music blog begs us: "Let's Stop This Nostalgia For 'The Golden Age' Of The Album," imploring that it is "annoying" and largely for "middle-aged men weeping over vinyl copies of *Dark Side of the Moon*" (Burrows 2013). Whether or not the demographic of middle-age men are implicated in the resurgence of vinyl does not automatically negate all instances in which nostalgia is implicated. I argue, rather, that nostalgia serves a concrete and important function in the music listening experience, one that is very emotionally valid in the lives of the listeners.

Firstly, in rebuttal of *The Guardian's* suggestions about vinyl and middle-age men, both empirical and anecdotal research suggests that preference for the vinyl format is not limited to one age demographic and in fact is just as, if not more, popular in the 18-25 demographic (Hayes 2006; "MusicWatch" 2016; mkhaytman 2012; Ihaza 2012). Music commentator Jeff Ihaza writes in *The Pitt News* that while vinyl evokes nostalgia for those who lived through the record era, it is also "the 20-something generation—including me—who wax romantic for a time we never experienced, buying a physical copy of the music we love is an enjoyable experience" (2012). This point is important in order to understand the function of nostalgia as an emotion that interacts with listening practices which rely on traditional or material formats, because nostalgia serves to connect music fans together within the practice of listening and therefore heighten and intensify the musical text.

To argue that nostalgia serves to connect music fans together, I look here at the literature on nostalgia which emphasises its deployment as a social emotion (Routledge et al 2011, 638-9). For Svetlana Boym, it "has a propensity to enhance social connectedness as individuals can share in its collective meaning" (Boym 2007, 9). Boym suggests that nostalgia is a symptom of postmodernity, the result of a desire to slow progress and even stop time: "nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time," she writes (9). The work of David Hayes on music formats also resonates with this idea. In a 2006 study, Hayes conducted field research and interviewed teenage music fans who "lamented the passing of (what they commonly perceived as) a golden age of recorded music" (51). Hayes reported that more than one third of the teenagers he interviewed held little interest for modern music, which he categorised as "a subset of music fans fixated on music from previous eras to the degree that they privileged LPs and turntables over contemporary digitised formats and playback systems overwhelmingly endorsed by their peers" (52). Hayes extrapolates four distinct

characteristics emerging from their narratives, which “contributed significantly to the development of their affective relation with vinyl” which include “the appeal of LP jackets, custodianship of records, engagement in the listening experience (including participatory aspects of the turntable), and the quest for elusive vinyl recordings” (52). However, there is an important distinction to make here between different ‘forms’ of nostalgia. The function of nostalgia in this sense is produced by the desire for social connectedness. For these music listeners, deploying material formats effectively enables them to ‘plug in’ to the collective desire to ‘rebel against the modern idea of time,’ in Boym’s words, as well as negotiate problematic encounters with contemporary forms of music engagement.

Further, nostalgia is an emotional state as real and provocative as any other emotion. So why is emotional experience of nostalgia so denigrated when it comes to missing a piece of vinyl? I suggest the denigration and devaluing of nostalgia emerges from the dominant discourse of emotion in which nostalgia is associated with ‘women’s feelings’ and therefore discredited as trivial and over-articulated. Hence, *The Guardian’s* joke about middle-aged men ‘weeping,’ because weeping is considered to be for women. Emotions associated with nostalgia, such as sentimentality, grief, fear, and vulnerability (Velatsou 2012, 113-114) have long been characterised as ‘women’s emotions’ (Lloyd 1993). Therefore, to feel these emotions is to be weak and womanly. I suggest this approach to nostalgia is based on an attitude structured around the legacy of emotional devaluation. In similar terms, nostalgia is often deployed as a ‘scapegoat’ to conflate and simplify feminine-coded ways of feeling that involve complex interactions between sadness, loss, joy and memory. Wilson writes that “The experience and expression of nostalgia need not be merely an escape, nor does the past need to be viewed as static” (2005, 7), with which I would agree. Nostalgia can emerge from a complex play between sense of displacement, in physical terms, and a sense of loss in emotional terms. Boym explains that:

The word ‘nostalgia’ comes from two Greek roots, *nostos* meaning ‘return home’ and *algia* ‘longing.’ [...] a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy. (2007, 7)

The etymology of the word points to its historicity. Nostalgia originated as a medical diagnosis in seventeenth century Switzerland, particularly for soldiers fighting abroad and missing home (7).⁶ These are powerful and painful emotions that call on the most human of experiences regarding loss and loneliness.

⁶ The medical “cure” for nostalgia was “opium, leeches, and a journey to the Swiss Alps” (Boym 2007, 7).

In a more contemporary sense however, researchers have suggested the important role nostalgia plays in supporting mental health. In the work of Constantine Sedikis, nostalgia was shown to “counteract loneliness, boredom and anxiety. It makes people more generous to strangers and more tolerant of outsiders. [...] On cold days, or in cold rooms, people use nostalgia to literally feel warmer” (Tierney 2013). These emotions entwine with the music listening experience in the process of nostalgic sentiment. When an individual listens to their vinyl records, the complicated play between joy and loss can cultivate a powerful affective state that supports the pleasure and processes of remembering. For example, Redditor ‘mkhaytman’ writes:

I’ve decided to make an argument for vinyl, as I love the format and want to share it with as many music lovers as possible. I’m 24 years old, I started out buying CDs from record stores in NYC, but soon I discovered Naptser [sic] and suddenly I was downloading any music I wanted. Any song, album or discography was at my fingertips, and I took full advantage. I filled harddrive after harddrive. But I missed going to the record store and browsing for new music. Buying something based on the cover art or because the clerk recommended it. I missed listening to the whole album, and hearing every song. Downloading made me a music-monger. I wasn’t enjoying it, I wasn’t savoring the music. Today I only listen to digital music when I am on the go. When I am at home, there are few things I enjoy more than the ritual of selecting an album from the shelf, and lowering the needle onto the spinning record. (2012)

‘mkhaytman’s’ comment helps to demonstrate the critical aspects of nostalgia here: longing, desire and sentimentality for that which has been lost. In Shuker’s words, the “patina of nostalgia” (2010, 53) is supported through traditional listening practices and plays a valuable role in the emotional landscape of many individuals in this particular historical moment. Nostalgia plays a complex but significant role in the contemporary landscape of listening practices.

The role of materiality in relation to building and maintaining emotional connections to artists and other listeners

Connection to artists

Earlier in this chapter, I made reference to the Australian metal band Malignant Monster, who sign their CD sleeves in the blood of the lead singer and seal the sleeve with a wax insignia. I pick up from that discussion here to explore the way the listening experience is often characterised by a desire to connect with the artist producing the music to which one is listening, and the way materiality is implicated in that desire. In the case of Malignant Monster, the use of blood on the CD sleeve resonates with the act of listening, particularly to metal music which is often constructed as an ‘outsider’

genre, in that both suggest a degree of transgression. In the same way that sound permeates and moves through bodily borders, so does blood, albeit in a different way. As Grosz explains, “Body fluid attests to the permeability of the body, its necessary dependence on an outside, its liability to collapse into this outside (this is what death implies), to the perilous divisions between the body’s inside and its outside” (1994, 193). Blood both illustrates the closeness of the inner and outer worlds, while at the same time drawing attention to the wide chasm between them.

Further, and moreover, the blood symbolises and solidifies a bond between listener and the artist, which can be achieved through the material exchange. For example, the use of a fluid like blood has Biblical connotations, in which Jesus Christ asked his disciples to ‘drink of his blood’ in order to seal the covenant—the ultimate bond. In a similar sense, blood is used symbolically, as well as physically, to point to lines of heritage and familial ties. In quite another sense, blood takes on sexual connotations, such as in its use in vampire narratives to suggest a visceral link between two individuals (Seed 1985). In all these scenarios, blood is deployed as a substance that can confer a powerful connection. The case of the Malignant Monster CD sleeve exemplifies the way material culture can play with such themes in physical formats.

To place this discussion in the context of material versus immaterial listening, I turn to the cyberethnography. ‘buckeyelaw’ writes: “On the internet you can find any music for free, whereas with records you have to find them and value that artists work with your money. That builds a stronger attachment to the music than just downloading the songs from the pirate bay” (2014). For ‘buckeyelaw,’ tactility retains (and perhaps even increases) in significance in the context of digital music because of the different kind of connection it provides to the artist and the music they create. This sentiment is echoed in other discussions in which music listeners have claimed that physically having an album can help facilitate a connection to an artist or listening encounter (see discussion thread “Vinyl resurgence—not actually because of vinyl?” 2013). Some music fans also suggest that listening to music on vinyl feels more supportive of that artist than listening to the music through MP3 (boweryfixie 2014; Bandrewbeckham 2014; eisforerik 2014). Redditor ‘flugger128’ writes that:

For portability, there will always be the CD ripped to MP3 or downloaded and imported to iPod. For that intimate purchase, and personal experience of listening to music, and supporting the artists at the same time—there’s vinyl. (2014)

Different modes of listening connect consumers to the artist in the act of the listening experience. This is not to contend that all, or even most, contemporary listeners react

this way to the immaterial context. Rather, this is to illustrate how some affective transitions take place and what meanings shift in the process. The material product can often (but not always) produce a more visceral experience than the MP3 format and therefore brings forth the sensual play of touching (others) into the act of listening.

Connection to other listeners

It should be noted that the digital context has produced new ways of connecting to other listeners in the online community, a concept I explore in Chapter 1 regarding the sharing of playlists. Here, however, I focus on the role of the material product in producing subcultural connections based on the individual's desire to interact with the material product in the process of social listening. For example, listening to vinyl is often organised as a niche, subcultural practice. In one of the most comprehensive texts on vinyl record collecting, Shuker writes that, "The 'social practices' [...] shared by other record collectors, presents an interwoven narrative of desire and identification, alongside notions of cultural and economic value, which characterize many collectors' accounts of their passion" (2010, 10). For example, music blogger Simon Sweetman writes about the social process he uses to generate 'first listen' experiences, which he calls "the crate game" (2011). In the "crate game," Sweetman and his partner store a crate of brand new, unplayed and hermetically-sealed albums at home, and when someone comes to visit they are given the honour of selecting an album from this crate in order to 'first-listen' together. Sweetman himself describes this as:

[A] ritual for me and Katy; we both enjoy seeing what gets chosen—sometimes that's as interesting, in a way, as the actual album. The process of elimination—from what gets shortlisted—can be quite intense and it's often amusing. In the end, after all the careful planning, it might come down to a whim, a prettier cover, a sicker/weirder image, a name a person has never heard or a record that reminds them of their childhood. (2011)

Sweetman and Katy translate the processes of subcultural membership—knowledge about music—into the pleasure of music listening. I recall the quote of Howes here, which I mentioned earlier in this chapter, in which he describes the relationship between materiality and consumption and "the meanings and uses people discover in or ascribe to [material artefacts] in accordance with the sensory order of their culture or subculture" (2006, 166). In this case, the vinyl artefact lends itself, as an object in time and space, to the practice of the subcultural ludic ritual based on material artefacts; the 'invitee' must choose an album based on its materiality—"after all the careful planning, it might come down to a whim, a prettier cover, a sicker/weirder

image, a name a person has never heard or a record that reminds them of their childhood” (Sweetman 2011).

A similar process emerges in the cassette subculture in the context of digitisation. While MP3s have greater convenience than cassettes, again, the cassette is redefined as a product with *emotional* value. In the short film *You Need To Hear This*, three cassette tape aficionados “explore what drives their enduring love for the cassette tape” (Kenny 2013). During the film, Jen Long, founder of cassette-only label Kissability, explains that when she was younger she “had this cassette recorder thing, it had a microphone on it so you could record yourself, and it came with this yellow tape ... one side was blank so you could record over it...” (Kenny 2013). In this instance, materiality confers a connection with the music in a deeply personal way—which transmutes into, and is fluid with, subcultural listening practices. In comparing playlist creation in digital formats versus those on cassette tape, Henry Rollins decries that, “digital is almost disingenuous” (Taylor and Petzold 2012). Here, Rollins expresses the value of making analogue playlists for other listeners. For Rollins, this cassette subculture is about the collusion of individuals in the cassette game; all individuals included in the game must share the appreciation for the effort and personalisation poured into the mixtape.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have examined the nuances of listening to material music formats in order to demonstrate the ways in which material formats can produce affective strategies in distinct ways within the digital context. This is to emphasise that, in the emerging context of digital musics, material listening modes maintain critical roles, functions, and meanings that cultivate or maintain particular ways of feeling, some of which relate to a sense of ownership, a sense of connection and the pleasure one may take in processes of remembering.

Interwoven with these arguments and explorations, I have threaded through the underlying framework of sensorial somatechnics in order to emphasise that the role of materiality is predicated on, and configured by, the bodily technology of touch. Touch enhances the visceral aspect of experience and imbricates with processes of discursivity and the broader epistemology of material relations, through the Möbius inflection of body into mind and mind into body. However, while the digital context can reconfigure and emphasise certain features of material relations, particularly in the scope of touchscreen mobile devices which I will discuss in Chapter Five, there are

some relationships that cannot be so easily transmogrified, such as the relationship between vinyl and listening rituals that I describe in this chapter. The sensorial technologies organise the holistic experience of listening, which is why the Redditors featured in this chapter often focus on senses that are peripheral to sound—such as feel/touch, weight, and texture. Sensory mechanisms also help to construct memory and to intensify the pleasure of remembering, which, as I demonstrate through Beer’s work, is deeply tied to how we feel about ourselves and our pasts.

I have also suggested, at several junctures, that the purpose of this chapter is not to imply a superiority of material formats. Instead, I have looked at the ways that digital contexts reshape the meaning of material formats in light of the fact that listeners no longer explicitly need them. Instead, listeners desire them in order to support different strategies of emotional investment or production; from fetishisation to connection with artists and others. In the following chapter, I leave material formats behind to start exploring the nuances of online listening behaviours, and the ways in which the online environment has transformed the creative praxis of listening.

Chapter Three

The 'Creative Listener': Internet Music and the Computer-Body Somatechnic

“The human body interacts with machines in many ways.
Many of these ways are obvious, but none are ever simple”.
(Rawdon Wilson 1995, 240)

Introduction

In this chapter I focus on the Internet as a technology of music listening as it is accessed exclusively through fixed-point personal computers. I argue that the relationship between the individual and the personal computer produces original and creative listening practices contingent on the functional and interactive nature of Internet technologies. In order to explore this listening practice, I situate the relationship between the individual and their personal computer through a somatechnical framework. I put forth the human-computer interface as a somatechnical relationship because it is characterised by the meeting of two highly complex technological systems: the human bodymind and the computing apparatus. The relationship between the two produces reflexive pathways; i.e. the computer and the individual respond to stimuli and instruction from one another.

In popular or general understandings, the relationship between the individual and the computer is generally regarded through traditional 'human/tool' binary, in which the computer operates as merely an instrument of the human will. This is erroneous, for computers do things we do not want them to do all the time. Computers, when turned on, are also continuously running scripts and programs of which the user is unaware. However, the traditional 'human-tool' binary has been naturalised through the presupposition of human superiority and the 'invisibility' of technology, particularly technology that works without causing disturbance. In the words of Robert Rawdon Wilson, “machines are so omnipresent in the western technological environment that they are also invisible ... while they are still functioning, the extended systems that make machines possible are largely out of sight, too complex to be seen easily” (1995, 241). To make visible these complex systems is to see that the human-computer interface is coadjutant, in that one increases and augments the effects of the other. This is not to imply agency, but rather, to indicate that the coming together of the computer-human is far messier, disordered and non-hierarchical than is usually allowed by conventional 'everyday' understandings. Though the computer is constantly running many processes to which the human is oblivious, the human, too, is running

complex processes, including emotional ones, on multiple levels, that are irrelevant to the processes of the computer. Both human and computer sustain simultaneous and deeply rooted pre-established scripts while also both maintaining open lines of communication to and from the other.

The performance of the computer is produced by its relationship to the human, but also, the body's technology—our somatechnic—is shaped by, shaped around, and shaped *with* the technology of the computer, just as much as the computer is shaped by human design. For instance, just as the computer receives stimuli and commands from the human, and then acts on those commands, so too does the human respond to the communications from the computer, through the interface of the screen and the relationship of touch and the keyboard. Therefore, how we create and undertake processes of creative thinking is reshaped by this figuration as it is mediated through the computer-human interface. This is a symbiotic relationship whereby both actors are in constant, and often playful, dynamics of actions and reactions.

The human-computer interface also radically reshapes the experience of listening to sound because the computer modifies the boundaries of the body and therefore re-establishes where and how emotions emerge and are exchanged. For example, Rawdon Wilson discusses the somatechnics of Stephen Hawking's vocal prosthesis, writing that Hawking's "vocal presence is electronic whether you are standing next to him or on Mars. You could never be certain where his edges are" (1995, 243). Hawking is there but not there; the effects of his consciousness are locally situated by the electronically amplified extension of his voice in a material setting, but his body is elsewhere. In the same way, the computer defies the traditional 'edges' of human being-ness. As another instance, when a writer types words on the screen the conceptual processes and complex thought patterns of the individual become absorbed into the matrix of the computer. The computer ingests and remediates not only the signs of language but the signified meanings which can be exchanged in packet switches around the networked globe, producing concrete effects with material consequences. Entire human archives are held 'hostage' by the computer. Much information exists only within the archival walls protected by the rules through which the human can communicate with the computer. It modifies that which we can do, think, write, transmit and undertake, in ways that certainly did not exist prior to computing technology. As Rawdon Wilson puts it:

Even glasses modify consciousness. It is not merely that I can now see better, but also that an aspect of my being has been put behind me, but never out of

mind as well. My ocular prosthesis elevates me to a higher plane of fulfilment, towards a more ideal conception of myself. (1995, 239)

The same process unfolds in the experience of music listening. For example, entire music collections are maintained on computers (and often backed up on hard drives, but again, those can only be accessed by connecting to a computer). Streaming services, YouTube accounts, Spotify playlists, and other services maintained by fast and stable Internet connection are all at the mercy of those structures of communication between human and computer. Thus, the individual forms a radical bond with that portal—the computer—which regulates, mediates, maintains and modifies all those practices of music listening that the contemporary listener is now bound with. In order to engage with music, the listener can (and sometimes must) capitulate to the extant listening practices that reshape traditional music experience, such as mashups, remediations, streaming services, and the effects of social networks.

As a result of this developing relationship that augments traditional processes of creation, I argue here that computer-based Internet practices have produced a new ‘type’ of listener: the *creative listener*. Creative listeners can mould and manipulate the listening practice using Internet technologies that are contingent upon high-speed processing systems that enable multi-media experiences. As a result, the creative listener is reflexive, open, exploratory, and engaged, which then leads to exciting new affective potentials, ranging from the capacity for streaming services to intensify feelings of *dépaysement* to the capacity of applications to support the exciting processes of new music discovery. However, it is important to clarify that the term ‘creative listener’ does not imply a listener who creates; that process is more closely linked to notions of prosumption, that is, the ways in which individuals both consume music and produce music (Ritzer et al 2012). While prosumption cultivates many levels of creativity, this thesis focuses on those listening experiences that do not require or include processes of production. Rather, ‘creative listening,’ as I define it here, is about finding new ways to enjoy the experience of listening to music within the scope of *listening only*. What I mean by this is that Internet listening practices call upon the listener to be creative in their understanding of what might be considered a listening experience—from ‘mashing’ songs with cat gifs to streaming several simultaneous feeds layered over each other (two practices which I will explore shortly). Unexpected and extant listening modes challenge the Internet user to redefine the boundaries of what can be understood to be a pleasurable way of listening.

The nature of creativity can be understood using a number of approaches, but I focus on creativity here as it unfolds as a social phenomenon, put forth by

Csikszentmihalyi (2014), particularly because so many Internet listening modes are the product of co-creation. Csikszentmihalyi's approach to creativity is critical for my purposes, because for him, this phenomenon is not merely a mental process, as most psychologists generally assume (Csikszentmihalyi and Wolf 2014, 162-163), but rather, emerges from "a virtual space, or system, where an individual interacts with a cultural domain and with a social field" (100). Perhaps most crucially, however, Csikszentmihalyi points out that creativity is not ahistorical. In order for something to be original and 'new,' there must be an 'old' (162). Internet listening, for example, is creative because it is a departure from traditional and long-held rituals of consumption. This is not to suggest that traditional ways of listening did not have creative aspects. However, listeners were limited to those practices restrained by their technological housing and, additionally, older technologies were not as highly interoperable. In his work on "mash up culture", Sinnreich explains that in previous generations of technology "separate communicative functions were served by distinct technologies" which meant that content could not be customised and therefore produce original behaviours of consumption. However, as Sinnreich continues, "all functions are now converging on the same digital platform [therefore] all cultural participants can create, retrieve, edit, and share ... using a single tool, an Internet-connected computer" (2010, 72). Therefore, I describe creative listening in relation to "originality, freshness of perceptions, [and] divergent thinking" (Csikszentmihalyi and Wolfe 2014, 164) that are specific to the technological capabilities and social forces at work. Through the reflexive pathways of the human-computer interface, the creative listener can now be exposed to fresh listening schemas that break from traditional models, in which music was restricted to its originally recorded form and format.

Specifically, I select three modes of Internet listening to examine in order to illustrate the different ways that each can produce nuanced affective schemas. To do so, I draw largely from the recent text by Watt Smith, *The Book of Human Emotions* (2015), which is an encyclopaedic compendium of less prominent emotional schemas, many of which are drawn from their basis in other cultures. First, I look at the somatechnical implications of streaming services in which the human-computer interface becomes a portal between geographical locations, producing feelings of *dépaysement*, literally, "decountrification," or the surreal sensation that one is removed from one's native locale. I also examine other feelings that might arise in this listening practice, namely, *mono no aware*, a sensitivity to ephemeral phenomena, and the expression and cultivation of curiosity in the listening experience. I call this type of listening 'geo-listening' and I argue that it is a creative process because the computer provides

functions and original avenues to explore new 'worlds' and sites of being. In the second section, I look at the ways Internet-connected personal computers enable the complex formation of original music communities built around ideas of phonotopia, that is, the coming together of "virtual communities organised largely around recorded sounds" (Saffle and Yang 2010, 323). In order to explore this phenomenon, I first examine the practices of playlist sharing on Spotify. I then look at the Trobe fandom of R.E.M fans who use community support to shape 'first listen' rituals. I then move on to argue that Facebook can work as a phonotopian exchange because the platform merges together personal relationships with music listening, enabling listeners to express aspects of their 'creative' selves. In the final section of the chapter, I consider processes of active discovery which are associated with feelings of revelation and wonder. I suggest that the process of discovering new music has undergone a dramatic shift. In more traditional ways, music discovery is based around material practices such as browsing the record store, however, more music consumers are also (or in some instances, instead) turning to music discovery services and applications on Internet networks. The listener can 'plug into' creative new models of information sharing and discovery in order to revitalise the sense of inspiration in music discovery.

Before moving on to these sections, however, I make clear that the fixed-point personal computer produces different affects in music listening than in other contemporary technology, such as mobile media, home stereos or car radios, because it features high-resolution large-scale monitor displays and can house large CPUs which generate fast processing speeds. The sheer functionality, complex operating systems, customisability and networking capability generate intimate relationships between an individual and their everyday computer. Therefore, music listening can be more complex and inter-relational than other listening modes or previous generations of technologies. The term 'creative listening' also represents the shift from the mid-to-late 2000s peer-to-peer (P2P) downloading model which focused more on collecting music to archive in personal software, and less on streaming and networking services that are instantaneous and in which music is not stored by the user. P2P of course still persists, however, increasingly stringent tracking technologies coupled with inexpensive, or free, streaming services has actualised the 'always-online' model—the digital consumer *streams, uploads and interacts*. The creative listener exchanges ideas about their favourite music and the music recommended by others. The creative listener is also critical and critiques, but is always open to the potentialities of Internet culture, in which all texts are able to be reconfigured and collaged together in the "flattening of historical frames into one continuous present" (Kaplan 1987, 144). As a result of the

reconfigurability of all sounds, styles and modes of listening, the Internet listener is exposed to, and imbricated within, new ways of being affected by music, which can often yield surprising results.

Streaming Services: Creative streaming, global dreaming

Here I focus on the way streaming services offer listeners creative experiences based on novel features and functionality enabled by the interface with the personal computer. The somatechnical nature of the computer interface brings together the human body with the power of virtual travel enabled by the channels and conduits of high-speed processing. Though it is information that is travelling in tiny parcels of data, or 'packets,' it *feels* as though the virtual self is able to travel the globe and 'peer into' different worlds as they are expressed through audioscapes. These creative listening practices result in the intensification of certain emotional schemas. I will focus on *dépaysement* or 'decountrification,' and the drive of curiosity, as well as *mono no aware* which is a feeling characterised by a sensitivity to ephemeral phenomena.

You are listening to Los Angeles: What is geo-listening?

I define 'geo-listening' as the practice of using a streaming service that can mediate site-specific sounds from one or many geographic locations in real-time. I focus on one website in particular, called "You Are Listening To Los Angeles," which is a streaming that service picks up the radio-transmission from emergency service scanners (police, fire, ambulance, port authority, etc.) from a variety of cities. There are also options to listen to air traffic control feeds from various airports, real-time audio from online gaming feeds such as *Call of Duty*, and even a stream of archived 'JFK' speeches picked up from the University of Virginia. The listener can choose from a dropdown menu which city or feed they would like to listen to and the stream will transmit that feed in real-time. Simultaneously, the listener is asked to overlay a stream from *another* streaming service, SoundCloud, onto the original stream. The SoundCloud stream is a random playlist of downtempo and ambient music. The listener can manipulate the volume level of each stream to create the mix they desire or skip forward through the SoundCloud streaming playlist that is embedded on the site. There are also other features on the website that share the interface of the screen. In particular, the live tweet feed from the website creator runs down the lower left hand side of the computer screen. The listener can also choose to enter into full screen mode which features a photograph of the city to which one is listening on the entire computer face. On the right hand side of the screen, a dropdown menu offers the listener the ability to

“build your own,” which has even more customisable features. The listener can choose their own SoundCloud playlist to overlay onto a specific feed and also add YouTube video to the experience. Additionally, the listener can then select and upload their own image from a URL anywhere on the web and use that as their custom background.

Moving away from the main page, the information page indicates how many concurrent listeners are listening with you, from what geographic locations they are listening, and to what they are listening. Listeners can share their own customised stream with others on other social networking sites, and they can also offer their stream to others on the same website. Geo-listening collapses together virtual and material spaces into a listener-friendly interface. Listeners can literally create their own listening schemas and acquire new tastes by drawing from original audioscapes, and a stimulating variety of sounds which challenge traditional song structures and ultimately reshape listening activities.

Dépaysement

Eavesdropping on the audioscapes of different material spaces produces a kind of virtual ‘portal’ to that dimension. This can be read as an experience of *dépaysement*, a French word literally meaning “decountrification” (Watt Smith 2015, n.p.). To explain the affective schema of *dépaysement* I describe the project from French artist Sophie Callé who constructed an art piece in the 1980s in order to exemplify the way one can be affected by tenuous or loose connections to distant places. In her artwork, *L’Hôtel*, Callé displayed the photographs she took of various items selected from guests’ rooms in a Venetian hotel where she worked as a chambermaid. Some of the items, from suitcases and bins, included postcards, phrasebooks (with dog-eared pages), train timetables, pills, love letters and more, to which Callé added descriptions. Watt Smith explains that the artwork:

evokes the disorientation felt in foreign places. It tells of deciphering a strange language, and squinting at peculiar currency. [...] the form of Callé’s piece excites the experience of being a stranger. Each fragmentary clue draws us in, inviting us to imagine the occupants’ identities – but never quite giving their secrets away. (2015, n.p.)

The streaming project “You Are Listening To Los Angeles” can be read in similar terms, as an exploration in *dépaysement*. For example, in the cyberethnography, Redditors deploy a lexicon that resonates with this idea of being both drawn to, and perplexed by, the geo-physical anomaly enabled by Internet listening platforms—the sense that one is both there and not-there. Reddit user ‘sythec’ points to the experience of being *drawn into* liminal space, by saying the streaming service draws one “deeper and deeper” into

the “night” (sythec 2011). In the same thread, another Redditor, describes the streaming project as “way trippy” (Brownandcrustystains 2011). The sensation of being drawn into something while simultaneously feeling destabilised by it, or ‘tripped out’ in the popular vernacular, is a marker of the affective force of *dépaysement*, in which the individual is both compelled by wonder and frightened of the unknown.

Watt Smith explains that *dépaysement* is also often frustrating because it makes us feel “out of place” and “unsettled” (2015, n.p.). However, as Watt Smith continues:

just sometimes, it swirls us up into a kind of giddiness, only ever felt when far away from home. When the unlikeliest of adventures seem possible. And the world becomes new again. (n.p.)

Similarly, I read the Los Angeles streaming project as an experimentation with feelings of simultaneous displacement and marvel, in which users can explore new affective structures which were not possible in traditional modes of communication. For example, Redditor ‘cerology’ describes a listening experience in which the scanner feed from the “Los Angeles” platform was relaying a ‘real-time’ police chase of an individual into a backyard. The unknown subject then took off their shirt in order to change their appearance, which was relayed in the police feed by the officer (cerology 2014). ‘cerology’ effectively ‘eavesdrops’ into this event and translates the soundscape into a listening experience. It is surreal and unnerving because it transports the listener into the reality of a material situation, but one that is far removed from one’s own. The sense of space and time is destabilised, because it *feels* as though space is collapsing in on itself and time can be experienced non-linearly. Parallel actions begin to exist on infinite levels; the listener is embedded into the multiversal experience.

In using geo-listening, the listener can gratify a sense of curiosity and inquisitiveness by pursuing new sites of musical experience combined with geographically diverse locales that they may have never pursued otherwise. For example, in the “You Are Listening to Los Angeles” streaming service, the listener is a kind of ‘eavesdropper,’ experiencing the thrill and titillation that comes with hearing information you are usually not exposed to, in a similar way that French artist Sophie Callé surreptitiously ‘looked in’ on tourist’s bedrooms. Geo-listeners can express and engage their curiosity, and be transported to different virtual spaces, in entertaining and original ways that sit at the edges of the human/computer apparatus. In John Connell and Chris Gibson’s words, music is a “mechanism” by which cultural materials can be transported through time and space, and transplanted into a new environment (2003, 161). Geo-listening, as a function of the fixed-point computing experience, provides an enormous range of new materials to build creative new listening practices.

The virtual tourist

I argue here that geo-listening also produces a virtual tourist and ways of feelings which are produced through practices of virtual tourism. Virtual tourism, for my purposes, is best characterised through Mohammed Maymand, Hassan Farsijani and Sara Tahery Moosavi's definition as a "non-physical form of tourism" that "integrates both "computing systems and human attitudes towards virtual and unreal travel" (2012, 3073). This can include a range of activities, from simple searches on Google Maps to the more involved practices in the program Second Life. However, this is not to imply that virtual tourism is a replacement for physical forms of travel; these are two different things with emphasis on entirely different forms of experience. For example, the virtual tourist cannot smell the air but they can jump from geographically disparate locations with ease (the basis of hyperlinking), as in the use of Google Maps. In virtual tourism, the activities occur within the bounds of the user's conceptual geography of Internet networks, i.e., though the user is not physically moving, the user *feels* as though they are travelling or, in the popular vernacular, 'surfing'. Virtual and traditional modes of tourism inform each other but cannot replicate each other. With this being said, I emphasise the feelings and experiences that are produced and explored by the virtual tourist that emerges on geo-listening platforms as a result of the ability to listen to audioscapes from non-local sites.

I refer again to the platform "You Are Listening To Los Angeles" as a listening experience that produces feelings relating to virtual tourism. For example, the Button Map function is one distinct feature that can exist in virtual forms of tourism that cannot be replicated in physical travel. The Button Map is an interactive map which can be zoomed in or zoomed out and which displays flagged listening stations marked by icons. The user can press on an icon and be taken directly to that the city's feed. In some instances, this feed will be a police scanner, but there are also icons for airport traffic control feeds, a bowling alley in Reno, and the "Deep Thought" channel which is placed in Lhasa, Tibet. (The "Deep Thought" channel is different from the other feeds in that it is not a real-time application but recordings taken from archived speeches from notable thinkers such as Aldous Huxley and Jiddu Krishnamurti). The icons act as *portals*. The user presses on a portal and is 'taken' to a new place that becomes remediated and reconstructed through and by multimedia. By interacting with this map and streaming the different soundscapes from either physical locations or conceptual locations, such as in the case of "Deep Thought," the virtual tourist can go places the physical tourist cannot at speeds the physical tourist cannot, which produces

a modicum of freedom and a sense of pleasure, while also maintaining a sense of safety and comfort. As I note earlier in this chapter, one Redditor remarked that listening to the station feels like being taken “deeper and deeper”. This can be read as a cognitive metaphor in which a description in material terms explains an abstract process, i.e., the user is not really ‘going deeper’ but *senses* they are ‘going deeper’ as a result of the functionality and interactivity of the portal-style button.

In the mid-1990s, Paul Virilio wrote that, “When cosmic imagery is completely digitalised in the next century by computer processors, cybernauts will be able to travel in their armchairs as simple viewers discovering a surrogate world that will have emerged from information energy” (1995, 154-15). I suggest that the geo-listening platform is a creative and imaginative audio-visual experience in which the user becomes a kind of cybernaut, to borrow Virilio’s term. Maren Hartmann updates Virilio’s work in her text *Technologies and Utopias* (2004) to suggest that deployment of the word cybernaut reflects the way in which virtual practices are conceptualised in terms of space—astronauts and cosmonauts are “representatives of space travel” (227). Hartmann reads the cultural understanding of space travel in similar terms to the cultural understanding of ‘cyber’ travel in that notions of spatiality in these practices are complex. She writes that,

Outer space is both non- and hyperspace. In this sense it is similar to cyberspace. Outer space’s endlessness challenges known explanations and makes it difficult to refer to it as we would to other physical spaces. It is simply not tangible. (2004, 228)

Cyberspace, too, is not tangible. However, rather than this intangibility limiting the production of experience, the opposite seems to emerge in which the abstract forms of space and virtual travel are mapped onto multimedia experiences. For example, perhaps one of the most alluring of these portals is “The Bloop”. “The Bloop” is represented by a green icon floating in the middle of the Pacific Ocean south-west of Guam, where “The Bloop” was originally found. “The Bloop” is a sound that was captured in 1997 by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) from the Ocean Explorer’s acoustics program. When the sound was first recorded its source was a mystery, which resulted in wild speculation about massive unknown deep sea creatures, hence the title of the portal: “Cthulhu Fhtagn” after H.P. Lovecraft’s fictional cosmic sea entity. In 2012, NOAA reported that they believed the sound to have emanated from an icequake (Steadman 2012) which are generated from large icebergs as they crack (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. n.d.). What is pertinent here is not where the sound comes from but where the sound ‘takes’ the listener—that is, to the bottom of the ocean. Again, this is a marked distinction from

traditional forms of tourism (one cannot generally visit the bottom of the ocean), however, in the event of geo-listening the virtual tourist is ‘pulled into’ the ocean by structures of spatial metaphors—it feels possible to go to the bottom of the sea even though consciously we know this is not possible. The user is drawn ‘deeper and deeper’ into the multimedia experience, and thus, into the wonder of abstract space which has no limits.

Creative Connections: Saffle and Yang’s Phonotopian Communities

The Internet-connected computer is a portal to other places, but also to new social connections that can manifest in radically varying and creative ways. In order to explore this phenomenon, I investigate the kinds of ways in which individuals can reach out for a sense of ‘community’ and interact by deploying music via sharing capabilities. I look at three examples here: the playlist sharing community, Spotify; a ‘first-listen’ community called Trobes; and the Facebook community that serves to merge and play with personal relationships by using listening practices.

I deploy Michael Saffle and Han-lun Yang’s model of the “phonotopian” community to suggest that the Internet supports the creative navigation of new connections, in place of material spaces, such as the record store, which have become less frequented in popular music culture as a result of online consumption models. For Saffle and Yang, the term phonotopia “refer[s] to virtual communities organised largely around recorded sounds” (2010, 323). I explore the sense of phonotopia cultivated by creative models of sharing and streaming music using the desktop or laptop computer.

Spotify’s phonotopia

Spotify can be read as a phonotopian space in which music playlists enable and support connections, conversations, exchanges and interactions between music fans from different geo-locales. Spotify is also used by third party websites to host playlists, and therefore Spotify works as a kind of functional interactive playlist exchange which can be plugged into via any other community, such as Reddit for example. Even though these phonotopian spaces may be “short-lived” and “momentary,” as Jill Dolan critiques, they encourage people to come together and “to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world” (Dolan 2003, quoted in Saffle and Yang 2010, 335). For Saffle and Yang online music communities are simply about constructing a “good place” (319).⁷ Playlist

⁷ It should be noted that though Saffle and Yang connect ‘phonotopia’ to the term ‘utopia,’ I do not follow this connection necessarily. Phonotopia can be read in terms of its etymology as a place (topos) formed

communities provide a place for fans to freely share and connect with each other without the threat of physical harm, the perils of illegal downloading, or concern about physical appearance. Put simply, these communities use music to create a sense of connectedness for people, and the importance of this emotional connectedness cannot be overstated here. Researchers of the emotional processes of loneliness and intimacy, John Cacioppo and William Patrick, claim that, in terms of achieving happiness, people rate intimacy and social affiliation above wealth, fame, and even physical health (2009, 5). This explains, in part, why so many music fans use Internet technologies to reach out to other individuals who share their tastes. Playlist communities exemplify the capacity of individuals to create, feel and act upon mutual feelings of community.

However, most importantly, the phonotopian community has been constructed as a *creative* space, in which listeners can generate playful connections and express feelings of individuality. For example, one popular comment thread on Reddit.com, relating to playlists, is titled: "It's playlist time: what are the 3 songs that make you the most happy (contribute and I'll share the playlist here!!)" (scratchytunes 2013). The Redditor seeks three favourite 'happy songs' from each comment, in order to make YouTube, Grooveshark, and Spotify playlists to share. In total, there were 3112 comments in response, many of which just suggested three 'happy' songs for the playlist. However, some Redditors discussed their selections further. For example, Redditor 'bajaf2k' writes: "Just want to say I was feeling depressed with everything going on around me, and just loaded up the youtube [sic] playlist in hopes of feeling better. Thank you for this post, I needed it" (bajaf2k 2013). The processes of piecing together a playlist based on one's emotional architecture, whether to express joy or the desire to connect and share painful experiences, is a way in which individuals are enabled to express their creative potentials through digital phonotopias.

In another separate thread, one Redditor asks for help in creating a playlist, using Spotify technology, for his mother to listen to while receiving chemotherapy. The Redditor explains:

I did this to make my mother's pain a little less painful. Thank you so much Reddit. [...] I will start compiling this amazing list into one massive 'F**k [sic]Cancer' ballad. Words cannot express what this means to me. (joliedame 2013)

There were more than 1100 comments and suggestions in response to this request, demonstrating the level of support that can be provided through online community,

around sound (phonos). The importance here is not on the utopian ideal, rather it is on the emergence of community built from listening practices which can sometimes lead to positive experiences.

particularly through playlist exchange. This resonates with Hesmondhalgh's discussion of collective musical experience, in that even if "people's feelings towards distant others may often be only superficially compassionate, and may even be sentimental and self-serving ... the capacity for solidarity with strangers remains crucial" (2013, 85). The collective exchange of digital playlists has therefore opened up entirely new possibilities to reach out to others and share experiences through music listening. In drawing on Martha Nussbaum's work, Hesmondhalgh also adds that music matters because it enriches and cultivates our inner worlds" and it feeds "processes of concern, sympathy, and engagement, against helplessness and isolation" (17). We see this enacted through the function of the Internet, in ways that were not possible prior to digital technologies.

The 'Trobe' fandom as a phonotopian community

Digitisation has also reshaped a significant popular music ritual which has implications for the way fans develop connections with new or favourite artists: the first listen. As I mention in Chapter One, albums were adapted into the long play format, and in doing so, they were designed to be listened to as a whole and in consecutive song sequence, particularly in the first instance (Martin 1998, 41). This contributed to specific notions about the 'first listen ritual' and how that ritual should unfold, in that the music fan should listen to a new album in its entirety as the artist intended.

I take the example on online music fandom in order to illustrate the creative ways that individuals maintain traditional rapports with first listen through the phonotopian community. In Lucy Bennett's study, "Music fandom online: R.E.M. fans in pursuit of the ultimate first listen," she examines "Triskaidekaphobics" or "Trobés" for short (2011, 748).⁸ Trobés are a social sub-group of the R.E.M fansite Murmurs.com. The group comes together in order to ensure that Internet spoilers and online digital samples of new R.E.M albums do not reach the members prior to the official release date, so that they can achieve the "ultimate first listen" (749). Bennett's aim is to "analyse their attempts to recapture the pre-internet experience of listening to and purchasing a new album as a singular event" (748). While Bennett's purpose is to frame the activity in relation to subcultural capital, I am interested in what the research reveals about the *feelings* associated with the first-listen ritual and how those are

⁸ The word triskaidekaphobic refers to a fear of the number thirteen and is used because the name was chosen in anticipation of the thirteenth studio album.

managed in digital contexts, particularly through community-based approaches such as this. For example, one Trobe explains:

I had listened to other albums [...] online before the album release and found that it somewhat diminished my enjoyment because the record release date was not a big deal anymore to me. My listening experience as a 'Trobe' this time around, therefore, enhanced my experiences as a fan because I rushed out to the record store to buy the new album as soon as I got a chance and I felt the 'old school' rush of wanting to get home to listen to the album when I bought it. (Bennett 2012, 758)

The Trobe community can be read as an inventive model of phonotopian digital community because the group deploys Internet technologies in order to support and respect each other's first listen. For example, the forum stipulates that each member must pledge an oath not to listen to any pre-releases, and in a 'tongue-in-cheek' tone the pledge then states:

If I do, I will be shamed amongst my fellow oath-takers and will not enjoy the new album nearly as much as they will. I understand that by breaking any of the codes of my oath, I will be subject to whatever punishment my fellow oath-takers deem fit, cruel and unusual or not. (Bennett 2012, 751)

The satirical nature of the pledge demonstrates the imaginative methods deployed in order to derive the ultimate amount of pleasure from the first listen ritual. The forum is also used to discuss "levels of commitment, provide encouragement for each other and talk about what they hoped or anticipated the new music would sound like" (752). Bennett explains that members would even make "themselves available on chat clients to provide support for other group members when a new snippet of information, or song, was revealed" (752). This level of encouragement and commitment is pertinent because it illustrates how inventive ways of deploying fan forums for different purposes can bolster the phonotopian community as well as the first listen experience.

However, a lingering reservation in this argument remains: how is the phonotopian space experienced *as collective* when the individual is interacting in physical isolation. In order to explain this, I draw from Trevor Pinch's recapitulation of Goffmanian theory (2010). As Pinch notes, while Goffman's work was originally used to examine face-to-face interaction, so many Goffmanian terms and approaches can readily apply to an examination of interactions as they are mediated through Internet technology. As Pinch continues, "the fluidity of online identities fits well with Goffman's notion of 'performing the self'" (411). Most pertinent here, though, is Pinch's interpretation of Goffmanian "co-presence" (420). Originally, Goffman used this term to examine interactions in which the subject was joined in material presence with another, however, we can extend its use to conceive of co-presence "as a means

whereby interactants are available and accountable to each other for their mediated interactions” (420). In doing so, virtual phonotopia can be read as a model for creative connections precisely because music is both the ‘medium and the message,’ to play with the famous words of Marshall McLuhan. Music *houses* the content of transmission and it *is* the transmission. Most importantly, in whatever situation that music is received and experienced, it is always a bodily experience. Therefore, when the computer mediates that content/message, it unfolds as a presence that works upon the receiving body as it would if it were shared in a face-to-face interaction. This loads the interaction as intimate and energetic. The Internet-connected computer is a technology of immediacy and therefore becomes a part of the experience, because it is the primary factor of regulation and determination in how that music is received. The computer interface is the concrete partner in the material experience because it connects the subject to the rest of the world. Through the computer interface, users can find and sustain highly organised and committed groups of like-minded music fans who work toward the same goal and seek to maintain the “awe and surprise” (750) of the first listen ritual as a phonotopian activity.

The Social Network: Friends don't let friends listen to Nickelback

In this section, I look at the role of social networks, in particular Facebook, in order to illustrate the extant creative processes by which people curate listening practices within a group of users they personally know (either very well or as acquaintances) and how those exchanges impact the emotional dimension of listening in new and original pathways. I focus on Facebook here because, unlike other sharing sites, such as Reddit.com or MySpace, the Facebook application is built on networking with people that the user already knows or has some prior connection with (although, this might not always be the case). The complexity and force of the emotional dynamics produced within and by the Facebook application cannot be overstated. In 2014, a landmark study was published through Cornell University which examined the “emotional states” of nearly 700,000 Facebook users (Kramer, Guillory and Hancock 2014). The authors found that emotional states can be transferred to others like an “emotional contagion” which can lead users “to experience the same emotions [as others] without their awareness” (8788). “Emotional contagion” is a term established from previous studies in laboratory experiments which show that people can transfer positive and negative emotions to others through networks (Fowler and Christakis 2008). In Kramer et al’s study, the research found that “emotional contagions” can occur even “without direct

interaction between people (exposure to a friend expressing an emotion is sufficient), and in the complete absence of nonverbal cues” (2014, 8788). Here I focus on music as an avenue of that emotional transfer.

Currently, there are several different ways to listen to music on Facebook using an embedded function that plays music through the third party apps Spotify or Rdio. There is also a “currently listening to” pull-down selection in the status bar that can identify what music you are listening to in real-time and share that on your feed (this feature has only been rolled out in the U.S so far). The relationship between music and social media has been developing rapidly since the mid-2000s and, in its current state, music and social media are inextricably linked (see Mjøs 2012). Amanda Krause, Adrian North, and Brody Heritage examine the relationship between Facebook and popular listening practices in their study, “The uses and gratifications of using Facebook music listening applications,” in which they found that:

In 2013, nine out of the 10 most-liked people on Facebook and seven of the 10 most followed people on Twitter were musicians [...] Thus, there is a cultural shift in music and social media due their reciprocal influence on each other (Burns, 2009). As such, it is impossible to understand the role of music in the modern social world without an understanding of music in the context of social networking. (2014, 71)

I would agree with the stipulation that contemporary listening practices have been indelibly shaped by social media networking, however, I would hasten that the relationship changes not only the role of music but the feelings experienced by listening to music shared on social media. In their study, Krause, North, and Brody discuss levels of “gratification” and table a list of “uses,” for using Facebook listening apps. The authors find three significant “gratifications” underlying the use of Facebook listening apps, which they describe as communication, entertainment, and habitual diversion (2014). For the authors, the study indicates that users deploy these apps as a leisure interest which are undergirded by “communicative and personal motivations, such as using the tool to promote not only a musician or group, but also to express one’s own identity” (2014). I take this conclusion as a launching point to explore further nuance to this schema. For example, how are communicative and personal motivations gratified and through which specific emotional avenues? What is the content and quality of this communication and how is it shaped by music as opposed to just an email or text message? How does one express one’s identity using these functions and why is this important within the scope of personal friendship and family networks?

First, I examine how communicative and personal motivations are gratified through specific music listening/sharing functions, and which specific emotional avenues may be engaged. To synthesise and follow on from the two studies I put forth above, I suggest that communicative and personal motivations are gratified as a result of the transfer of 'positive or negative' emotional states (including the scale and nuance of these states) to others, which provides a sense of phonotopian bonding. The successful transfer or uptake of one's emotion can release the individual's interior 'reality' into the social world, which helps to either relieve the burden of negative emotions or feel good about sharing the benefits of positive emotions. For example, a user can find a song that articulates the kind of emotional state that user wishes to express and share. Usually, the user finds the song or discovers the song on YouTube and then posts the link in the Facebook status bar, which activates by pressing the enter button. Once that link is activated, a still shot and pre-scripted blurb populates the status bar. When that status is posted live onto the Facebook feed, other users have several choices: to ignore the status event, to 'like' the status event, to engage with the status event by posting a comment in response, to follow the link and listen to the song, or, engage in a combination of these functions. All of the choices, excepting ignoring the event completely, leads to the sharing and possible transfer of emotional material onto other users. For instance, if the song relates a story about a lost love, the emotional trajectory of that post will follow the affects and emotions associated with mourning and loss. Other users may listen to the song and then write a post which relates a similar narrative, in order to engage the original user in a network of emotional sharing. Studies of music sharing on social networks point to the important role that the sense of altruism plays as a motivating factor to engage with the nuanced emotional schema of others in a social network (Dongwon et al 2011, 721). This process is dynamic because it is dependent on the translation of psychic mechanisms into network pathways that can follow unexpected routes of travel; this might mean that a user can surprise others by their emotional vulnerability, which in turn, leads other users to take the opportunity to share their private and potentially delicate emotional situations. As Despoina Velatsou explains:

The desire to testify, whether about an event that directly affects one's own life or about an event that touches the collective life of a community on a large scale, has become a basic component of contemporary culture [...] The internet, especially, works as an open space that transcends the traditional and establishes new boundaries of public and private spheres, as well as of personal and collective subjectivities. (2012, 108)

This process is also creative because users literally have millions of songs and styles of music that they can draw upon in order to share their experiences. Those songs then

become part of the creative process of building one's emotional narratives and imbricating that music listening experience into the social aspect of emotional attachment and expression.

Further, the process described above produces different results than other forms of electronic communication, such as an email or text message, because users can manage the content and quality of communication differently. An email or a text message must rely on words, and on some occasions an image or short clip, in order to express and articulate often very complicated situations. However, a music video shared onto someone else's Facebook Timeline (which is often then shared onto the general feed by the Facebook algorithm) can suggest varying degrees of emotional turmoil or joy. For example, Hesmondhalgh emphasises the way the aesthetic of popular music carries specific resonances in ways that other texts do not. He writes that, "songs allow for a conjunction of the emotional effects of music with those produced by words, narratives, and visuals" (2013, 23). When a user shares a song using the YouTube link embedded onto the Facebook application, the user is calling forth and connecting with a variety of discourses and meanings. To post a song on one's feed or on another user's timeline is a pathway to express one's own articulation of emotion that might be outside of one's ability to express, for different reasons such as fear of judgment or an incapacity to make intelligible one's own emotional landscape. As Hesmondhalgh continues:

In the era of YouTube, many of us have regular access to recordings of performances, including clips from old television programs, promotional videos, and live shows filmed on mobile phones. Listeners (who are often spectators too) can therefore often engage in the activity [...] where emotion might be directed in artworks: we react towards characters, sharing emotion through identification or reacting against the emotions of a character. (23)

Users convey their own emotions using the narrative of music as a proxy channel of communication and idealisation. Other users can either confirm, contest or engage in other ways, which creates the bounds of the phonotopian activity. As Velatsou goes on to note in her research into "testimonial culture," online communities are "markers of the blending between the personal and the collective, of the internet functioning as a common and public space for personal reflection and emotional release" (2012, 108). By posting a song on the Facebook feed, the user engages in creative ways to express deep-seated emotions or affective dynamisms that might be difficult to express otherwise.

However, sharing music is not an apolitical act. The materials that individuals choose to share are carefully curated and based on specific cultural contexts which

indicate systems of identification and belonging. Sharing music is a vital process of belonging because it renders one's identity compatible to that of the network. Identity can be approached in myriad frameworks, so I focus on Henri Tajfel and John Turner's definition of 'social identity' here, which they put forth as "The individual's knowledge that [s]he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 292). I turn to my ethnographic research of Redditor language to illustrate this process. For example, Redditor 'tal087a' writes about his experience in attempting to pursue a sexual relationship with a peer in his college dormitory. He explains that the incident occurred when:

iTunes library sharing was popular, and pretty much everyone in the hall had their music connected to the internet, and everyone on the floor could see your music library and listen to your songs. I crept the hell out of this girl's facebook and music library, basically putting in every single band and song that she liked in hopes that she would see my playlist, notice that we had the same taste in music, and then want to date me and have sex and stuff. It didn't work. (2013)

This Redditor's experience indicates the synergetic associations of the three facets: Facebook, music sharing, and markers of taste as the foundations of identity. While 'tal087a' concedes that the ruse 'did not work,' the example still demonstrates the investment in music sharing in order to harvest the products of our emotional repertoires through the presentation of the social self to others. The individual uses the computer interface—the self as it is represented in the online community—as an extension of the self in order to participate in dynamic social play.

Finding Jesus: Creative Processes of Discovery and Revelation

Perhaps one of the most creative aspects of Internet listening refers to the new and constantly evolving methods used to discover music one has never heard before. I title this section 'Finding Jesus' in reference to an Internet meme that emerged from a twitter update in which a user suggests that discovering new music you love feels like 'finding Jesus' ("RelatableQuotes" 2013). For popular music fans, discovering new music has always been a priority and continues to be so, attested by the numerous and creative Internet apps dedicated to music discovery as well as the advancing literature available on developing music recommendation services (Celma 2010; Shan et al. 2009).

The multimedia functionality of Internet-connected computers enables original strategies to find and feel inspired by the discovery of new music in ways that were impossible in previous generations of music technology. Prior to digitisation, traditional strategies of discovery usually involved listening to the radio, perusing local record stores, and exchanging products with friends at home or at social gatherings. Although these strategies are still very much accessible, more music consumers deploy Internet applications either as supplement or replacement of those traditional means. I examine what I consider to be some creative modes of these discovery strategies here to suggest that the Internet, as it is accessed through the fixed-point personal computer, enables exciting and often surreal experiences of discovering new music. Here I put forth the feeling of *dolce far niente*, or “the pleasure of doing nothing” (Watt Smith 2015, n.p.). I suggest that *dolce far niente* is linked to creative listening in the scope of music discovery because finding new music is a reward unto itself that does not fall into the scope of the productive bureaucratic paradigm of everyday work life. The individual can take pleasure investing their time in personal activities, the pleasure in doing ‘nothing’, which paradoxically feels like doing something pleasurable.

Further, I argue that the sensation of discovering new music through Internet practices vitalises the aspect of flow. For example, as Csikszentmihalyi and Jeanne Nakamura note, flow emerges when the challenge of a task stimulates the individual but does not “overmatch existing skills” and, mixed in with this aspect, is the pleasure of “immediate feedback about the clear progress being made” (2009, 195). For example, by clicking through to the website procatinator.com, the user is welcomed by a cat gif which repeats to the soundtrack of a song embedded from YouTube. Immediately, the listener can begin making evaluations of the song, mixed with the enjoyment and pleasure of the cat gif. The user can watch the cat gif for as long as the song continues, or, the user can find out what song they are listening to by clicking on the text that hyperlinks to the original source on YouTube. From there, the user can find out more about the song and add that song to their YouTube playlist or bookmark that song in other ways. This is also a creative listening activity because it is an original way to expose oneself to the potential of new musical enjoyment, and weaves humour into the music discovery process. It stimulates the individual and challenges their appreciations of new music—the listener must make decisions on whether the song is enjoyable or whether they do not want to pursue that music. Simultaneously, the user is relying on their existing skill set to evaluate and make judgements about that music. However, and perhaps most importantly, the user is given a sense of carefree enjoyment, or *dolce far niente*, in that there are no consequences to their decisions and

the activity is really a means of enjoying spare time and investing in the 'pleasure of doing nothing'. This resonates with the title of the website, 'proccinator,' which is a play on the term 'procrastinator,' which is someone who is attending to a task in order to avoid another, less pleasant task.

As another example, the website rainymood.com is similar in that the site borrows music from YouTube and embeds the tracks into the site's front page inside a high-definition graphic of a rainy window. Integrated with tracks from YouTube is a rain soundscape, to mimic the dreamy mood of a stormy day. There are also options to "make your own rainy mood + YouTube mix," to share the experience on social media, or additionally the user can also follow the song that is playing to YouTube for more information. Through the computing apparatus, the user can go further and buy those songs for download on other devices. This is a creative process because it integrates another aspect to the music discovery strategy, particularly targeted for people who feel connected to the sounds and scapes of rainy days, and the types of music that capture that particular sensation. Because of the nature of the screen interface, the user can imagine themselves as participating in the experience of a rainy scenario, which has positive effects for some people. For example, pluviophilia is a recognised affective state in which the individual enjoys rain, and finds "peace of mind during rainy days" ("Urban Dictionary" 2016). Further, the image and sound of the rain can conjure a synesthetic experience whereby the listener can 'smell' the rain. The smell of the rain, or "petrichor," as Anu Garg explains, is a "concoction of some fifty chemicals from dry plants that are trapped in the earth. With the rain they are released in the atmosphere ... the result is sublime" (2007, 43-44). In this instance, the Internet enables not only multimedia functionality but the greater potential for synesthetic experience, in which feelings and emotions are intensified and may open one to new ways to feel inspired by the discovery of new music.

Conclusion

Listening to music on the Internet through one's personal computer opens up an enormous space for creative connections and creative listening practices. As I have traced in this chapter, the human-computer interface opens up portals to new worlds in the case of 'geo-listening,' and in doing so, this practice solicits new affective schemas which were not as accessible prior to this technology. Feelings such as *dépaysement*, the feelings brought about through virtual tourism, and the compulsion to gratify one's curiosity can all be produced and thus explored through imaginative interactions using music as a conduit of those exchanges as it is mediated through the computer interface.

The human-computer interface also reshapes how individuals seek out creative connections in heretofore uncharted pathways, in which feelings can be exchanged almost as emotional contagions, such as in the case of Facebook listening practices. In addition, the creative and even synesthetic aspects of new music discovery have been translated from traditional models situated in material settings to the avenues defined through digital parameters that capitalise on multimedia environments. Imaginative ways to put music together with other media—such as gifs, video, images and text—illustrate the potential for computer listening practices to be surprising and adventurous. In their totality, these listening practices make way for the production of a listener who is open to exploring new musical avenues, or as I have suggested, the computing interface produces what can be described as a creative listener.

I have situated the creative listener in terms of a somatechnical framework because, as I have argued, these listening practices are dependent on the relationship between two highly complex, semi-closed systems—the human bodymind vis-à-vis the computing apparatus. I call both of these systems ‘semi-closed’ because, while both the bodymind and the computer maintain their integrity, both are always open to each through fissures and circuits, as well as being amenable to the wider discursive structures that engulf them. Needless to say, the model of the creative listener is antithetical to the mainstream ideal which draws clean lines between the material body of the user and their ‘virtual’ activity as it is mediated through the screen interface. In fact, the computer very much *reaches out*, in a sense, and marks the body with enduring impact through affect and encounter. As Virilio articulates,

beyond the confines of proximity as we know it, prospective telepresence—and shared tele-existence with it—not only eliminate the ‘line’ of the visible horizon in favour of the linelessness of a deep and imaginary horizon. They also once again undermine the very notion of relief, with touch and tactile telepresence at a distance now seriously muddying not only the distinction between the ‘real’ and the ‘virtual,’ as Cybersurfers currently define it, but also the very reality of the *near* and the *far*, thus casting doubt on our presence *here* and *now* and so dismantling the necessary conditions for sensory experience. (Virilio 1997, 45; original emphasis)

The examples I have put forth in this chapter, such as the *dépaysment* of geo-listening and the emotional contagions let loose in phonotopian communities, illustrate the redundancy between *near* and *far*, and *here* and *now* in ways that are indeed not virtual but experienced in the body of the user. The tactile telepresence, in the words of Virilio, is a function of the computing interface. This function may have been present in the experience of previous technologies, radio for example, but in very different ways and certainly in ways that did not enable customisability and creativity as they do through

the fixed-point computing system. The listener has almost endless avenues through which to explore creative listening potentials. As a result, the listener is exposed to new ways of feeling about community, about music discovery, about personal relationships as they are mediated online, and about the power of technology to open doors to these sites of feeling. I move now from computing technology in a fixed state to the mobility and movement enabled by the camera phone.

Chapter Four

The Camera Phone in the Concert Space

Introduction

Digital filmic technologies have interpenetrated the concert experience and brought with them all of the compulsions implied by collecting, preserving, and filming. In Chapter One's emotionology of music listening, I discussed the changing experience of recorded music as it became mediated through the screen. I extend that discussion now to look at the impact of mediatisation on experiences of liveness through the affordance of the camera phone as it is deployed in the concert space. Screen relations have profoundly redirected affective and aesthetic strategies of live music experience to culminate in a complex relationship with camera phone technology that is characterised by feelings of possessiveness, a sense of control over narrativising one's experience, and new sentiments toward concert community. In analysing this technology, I perform a feminist reading of the camera phone in the concert space in order to excavate the politics of emotional dynamics in the space of live music. In performing this reading, I note the conflicting, and at times very negative sentiments, emerging from the ubiquity of the camera phone. In particular, I examine the disruption of social viewing practices by hands holding up the device or by the brightness of the display that distracts other viewers from the stage. Lastly, I look at the popular appropriation of Baudrillardian theory as it is applied to the camera phone to suggest the camera phone produces tension because it calls attention to what Slavoj Žižek's "ultimate paranoid fantasy," to which I referred to earlier in this thesis. Through this fantasy the individual becomes suspicious that the world, designed to look real, is in fact fake (Žižek 2001, quoted in Stratton 2006, 39).

The relationship between live music and filmic strategies

First I look at how *live* music, as opposed to pre-recorded music, has become bound to structures of visual representation through screen mediatisation. One of the recurring themes in ethnographic analysis is a questioning of why individuals are content to watch a live performance (perhaps one that is unfolding before them) on a small screen of questionable or varying quality (see Tinckoy 2014). I suggest one answer to this question is that listening culture has become so profoundly entangled with the televisual apparatus—in particular the interface of the screen—since the rise of the 'MTV aesthetic' that all music experience, including liveness, has become subsumed into the "mediatic system" (Jameson 1991, 162). This process is naturalised by the

commercial music aesthetic and produces a subject who calls upon the screen interface in order to make sense of live music in digital environments. Put simply, contemporary audiences do not consume music outside of its relationship with image. As I mentioned in Chapter One, even when the image is absent in more traditional modes of music experience, such as in the case of listening to a CD or to the car radio, the domination of the image is still present because that experience is still operating within the postmodern context of spectacle and consumption. In Chapter One, I focused on the interpenetration of screen relations into music experience through the paradigm of watching. In this section, I focus on the interpenetration of screen relations through the paradigm of *filming*.

The construction of live music emerges as a function of filming and film largely in the 1960s and in particular with the heavily mediated events of the 1969 Woodstock Festival, which would later become crystallised in Michael Wadleigh's rockumentary *Woodstock* (Maurice 1970). What interests me here is not the construction of Woodstock through mediation *per se* (though this point is significant in its own right and well theorised in Andy Bennett's edited collection *Remembering Woodstock* [2004]). Rather, I am concerned with the way that *filming* itself became concretised as a tradition and how the function of filming live music became part of popular music culture in its own distinct way. As Dave Laing explains, the *Woodstock* film was generally accepted as the first film to capture the zeitgeist of a live popular music event (2004, 13). Laing goes on to explain that the distinct difference of the Woodstock movie to prior unsuccessful attempts at mediating live concerts was the way the filming and editing were approached (13). Indeed, the promoters believed that "the solution to this dilemma was to hire a documentary film-maker who was as unorthodox as themselves" (13) and so Michael Wadleigh's succeeding film used "bold technical means" (13) to construct a sense of excitement and ambience. In particular, Wadleigh deployed split-screen editing (where two different images appear simultaneously) which would be described as "a milestone in artistic collage of raw footage into a multipanel, variable-frame, dazzling montage that engages the sense with barely a let-up" (Elley 1991, 682 quoted in Laing 2004, 13). What this does is inhere the aspects of filming and processes of editing into the paradigm of liveness in a way that sets up the concert as a thing *to be filmed*. What I mean here is that concerts have become appropriated by audience members as a thing to be filmed, edited, split-panelled, re-represented and narrativised in filmic terms. The ability to film the concert has become just as important, if not more important in some senses and for some fans, as experiencing that concert first-hand. I

suggest this is a product of the coevolution between live music and filming processes that emerged during this critical phase of popular music.

Digital film/ing into the era of camera phones

This process, in which live music has become subsumed into the mediatic system, has extended beyond that of the televisual apparatus and become inhered into the digital filmic practices of camera phone technology. This evolution likely emerges as a result of the similarity of televisual apparatuses and digital technologies which deploy the screen as a feature of the device (as in the television vis-à-vis the camera phone). As Camille Baker, Max Schleser and Kasia Molga note, “The mobile phone can be seen as a viewing device for micro-movies [and] in the age of high definition, the mobile phone has introduced a new standard at the other end of the cinematic spectrum” (2009, 101). The camera phone emerges then as a product of the culture of spectacle in the west (Debord 1967), both as it serves to mediate recorded material to the user (as in a television) and also through which the user can film and then mediate their own material to others (as in a recording device that builds images for televisual systems).

However, there are of course major differences between traditional teletechnologies and extant digital filming practices that make camera phone mediation and playback a markedly distinct genre with distinct associations. For example, the camera phone produces new *ways* of filming because the user does not only view moving images but also creates them and so the film/filming becomes intensely personal and self-directed. Even in the case of sharing live music clips on social media, the filming process, and the resulting clip, produce a first-person aesthetic that has become part of a generic convention for camera phone films. For example, YouTube videos of ‘live footage’ can be immediately recognised as ‘fan footage’ because of the insistence of the camera angle’s first-person directive. Even in the case of FanFootage.com, in which many clips are edited together from fans who upload at the same concert, each ‘clip’ that is woven together represents a precise angle from which that fan has filmed their experience of that concert. In a way, this calls forth a similar, yet more evolved, generic convention as the kind of ‘multi-angle’ technique use in the 1970 *Woodstock* film. In fact, in a 2014 Linkin Park FanFootage.com video, split-panelling is deployed, which echoes those earlier incarnations of live music filming but one that has been filmed using collective approach (“Linkin Park” 2014).

This approach to aesthetic also serves to shape live music as a non-linear, collectively structured event which can be easily remediated via multiple platforms.

For example, in a similar way that the ‘dazzling montage’ of Woodstock was cultivated by split-panel editing, the camera phone also does something to the contemporary live music experience through media hybridity, in which any connected user can ingratiate their personal experience into the collective experience. For example, A. Engström, M. Esbjörnsson and O. Juhlin present a study of the SwarmCam application as “an innovative system for video capture and live transmission on mobile phones” (2008, 165). The SwarmCam application is designed for use in live music events in which a VJ is employed, particularly in night clubs. A patron can download the SwarmCam app to capture the events from a first-person perspective and then can stream that recording directly to the VJ on duty. The VJ works as a gatekeeper, deciding whether to use that material, and if so, the VJ can then edit and add effects to the recorded material and mediate it through the VJ’s public screen. The patron receives a notice on the mobile phone to indicate that they are “on air” (164). Anyone with camera phone technology can then become both producer and viewer of digital film *while* they are embedded within the event.

Interestingly, both SwarmCam and FanFootage technology have also emerged as a way to delineate an *appropriate* track or moment in a live concert in which fans are encouraged to use their phones in order to make a collaborative video (bombaybicycleclubtv 2014), in a sense, finding a way to regulate the ubiquitous camera phone in the concert space. As one Redditor explains, some concert organisers (or even the artists themselves) will implement rules about how fans can use their camera phones. Redditor DynamiklolGoddamn writes that:

I’ve been to a few concerts where you’re not allowed to have your phone out like this. They’d quite literally send someone down to tell you to leave since that rule is posted all over the place. It’s a bit like the few theaters [sic] that hired people in black body suits to get people to shut the fuck up during movies, only they’d make them leave instead. (DynamiklolGoddamn 2014)

This was not a one-off event. In the case of The Yeah Yeah Yeahs concert at New York’s Webster Hall, the band posted a notice at the entrance of the venue which stated: “Please do not watch the show through a screen on your smart device/camera. Put that shit away as a courtesy to the person behind you and to Nick, Karen and Brian” (Hann 2013). There are reports of several other artists banning camera phone use from their shows (Mitchell 2014). While I return to the issue of concert behaviour and camera phone use in a more detailed reading later in this chapter, in this instance, I use these examples in order to illustrate how the technology of SwarmCam and FanFootage have become a way in which to redirect the desire to film the concert at moments in which all patrons (and artists) can feel comfortable. In the case of Bombay Bicycle Club, the

lead vocalist/guitarist Jack Steadman says to the audience, “It feels weird to say this but for one time only please get out your phones and be creative, be whoever you want to be” (bombaybicycleclubtv 2014). The camera phone is changing the very behaviours, approaches, ‘feel,’ and potentials of what can and cannot be done at the concert in ways that continue to shift and change as new platforms and applications are introduced.

The ‘Possessive Spectator’: Capturing and collecting the concert

The camera phone augments the drive to collect and save live music experiences through typical consumption practices that exploit models of desire and need. This desire to preserve and collect does not guarantee possession, only the illusion of possession. What I mean here is that the experience of a live event is, by its nature, ephemeral. We can record and re-experience that *recorded* version at a later time, but we can never go back in time and experience the original event in the specific location in which it existed in time and space. Therefore, the desire to re-experience is never truly satisfied and thus requires its chronic repetition. The collection of the experience by its recording and sharing may confer a kind of subcultural capital for the sharer, also. However, this still does not provide a re-experience of the exact event in its passed time and space. Therefore, events are compulsively recorded and shared as a kind of compensatory measure. Laura Mulvey associates this behaviour with the “possessive spectator” (2006). For Mulvey “the desire to possess and hold the elusive image” is what leads to the chronic viewing repetition. As Mulvey writes, Freud emphasised the pleasure of repetition as it emerges in childhood, which often seen in children playing by always returning favourite stories or obsessively playing with certain toys. This compulsion of repetition is subsumed into practices of viewing in adulthood. However, as Mulvey goes on to write, “With electronic or digital viewing, the nature of cinematic repetition compulsion changes. As the film is delayed and fragmented ... into favourite moments [...] the spectator is able to hold on to and to possess, the previously elusive image” (2006, 161). Based on this understanding, I suggest that the camera phone in the concert space often functions as the gratification of repeated pleasure, which explains why the camera phone is often used obsessively within the concert space. Digitisation, and the technologies that enable the instant preservation of memory and experience, provide previously uncharted ways of holding and guarding the feeling of concert going in ways that suggest the drive for pleasure in the infantile sense of play and repetition.

The analysis of Reddit users’ comments revealed a number of discussions where music fans explain their use (and in some cases, *defend* their use) of camera

phones during the concert experience as a means to concretise important music experiences and guard them as possessions that can be recalled at one's pleasure. In one subreddit, 'drchazz' begins a thread with the statement: "Please, for God's sake, put your cameras and phones back in your pocket and just enjoy the concert" (2010). In response to this statement, another Redditor defends the use of camera phones in some instances by explaining that capturing the final Nine Inch Nail's tour was a significant event in which Trent Reznor encouraged the use of video and audio recording. Spocktease writes, "The result? A priceless collection of the entire tour" (2010). For this Redditor, the possession of this final tour on personal video is a 'priceless' artifact. Similar discussions are featured on the social debate forum, Debate.org, which provide evidence of not only the cultural significance of preserving events, but the drive to 'watch it over and over'. I have collated three of the contributions to the debate here:

The idea of taking these gadgets is to capture a moment that you want to see over and over again later in the future.

Concerts are a lot of fun and [...] and those devices can help people keep the memories going forever.

The concert is meant to be enjoyed and remembered, especially since they are so expensive. These people use the cameras to capture a good moment in life and then to relive it. (Debate.org)

Again, the language points to the importance of repetition and preservation. Or more specifically, users claim they want to preserve the experience *in order to repeat it*, which alludes to Freud's explanation of the pleasure of repetition and also to Mulvey's possessive spectator. The camera phone enables the viewer's obsession with repetition and pleasure, in ways that were not possible in traditional personal media because they were limited by technologies that could not perform these functions. Cameras that had film spools could only take so many photos, and those photos could only be seen by developing them which was expensive and time consuming. Therefore, people would take photos sparingly and only at certain intervals. Whereas, with digital technology, smartphones can capture and share thousands of photos at little to no extra expense. One can playback photos and video instantaneously and also upload them to sharing sites where they can be repeatedly viewed by others.

However, even though the convenience and cost-effectiveness of smartphone photography at concerts has meant that any moment can be captured, traditional notions of filming still encourage the user to capture every moment possible. As Lisa Gye notes, "camera phone advertising draws on the rhetoric of Kodak camera campaigns whereby consumers are compelled to document an occasion to make it

'worthy' of remembering" (Gye 2005, quoted in Hjorth 2007, 227). There is a paradox at play here. On the one hand, the smartphone user can take as many photos as they want, regardless of what is 'worth' sharing or remembering. However, on the other hand, the use of these devices is still driven by the traditional notions of photographic discourse in that one must preserve all that is possible. What is at stake is the growing tension between possessing the experience and taking part in that experience without the need to chronicle and preserve it. This is because the drive to preserve and possess the concert is not the same as actually *being able* to preserve and possess the concert. In writing about cinema, Mulvey explains that "experience is so ephemeral, it has always been difficult to hold on to its precious moments, images and, most particularly, its idols" (2006, 161). However, in response to this ephemerality, the film industry provides still images of the movies that can supplement that movie-going experience (161). This is "designed to give the film fan the illusion of possession, making a bridge between the irretrievable spectacle and the individual's imagination" (161). Similarly, the concert experience is also ephemeral (in many ways much more so than the cinematic experience because a film cannot change upon each viewing but each live performance does change). The camera phone therefore provides a similar function of the cinema stills. There is a sense that the obsessive chronicling of the event can somehow quash the anxiety of ephemerality and losing that experience in the march of time. The camera phone user becomes a kind of music lepidopterist, one who pins down the music experience behind 'glass' (or a screen). Liveness is fleeting like the life of the butterfly and so the camera phone works to hold that moment, suspended in time. What I mean by this metaphor is that by demanding the evidence of being in the moment in order to 'save' the moment forever, many music fans (and many artists too) feel the action paradoxically destroys the thing it is trying to save (see Bennett 2014). For instance, in the same way that the glory of the butterfly is in its livingness, so too is the live-ness of the concert. The concert fan can preserve the picture of the experience but not the experience itself, affirming Mulvey's suggestion that these processes of cinema and photography are designed to give the fan the *illusion* of possession and, therefore, perhaps the illusion of control over the ephemerality of time itself.

This desire to possess experience is also linked to the pleasure of collecting. As George Ritzer, Paul Dean and Nathan Jurgenson point out, collecting experiences is of growing importance in contemporary Western culture (2012, 7). This is driven by effective marketing strategies of current digi-tech companies, in that every smartphone campaign is designed to convince the consumer that moments must be recorded in order to be concretised as 'real,' which is itself a construction of marketing (because

what truly can be said to be 'real'). Although collecting photos and videos of concert experience is not a new phenomenon, its extent is unmatched in digital contexts. Alexander Bryan points out that "The amount of content we generate and consume is accelerated by the presence of mobile phones" (2011, 142). As a result, digital camera phones enable an unprecedented level of self-narration and the construction of emotional narratives—the stories we tell of ourselves to others, the stories we tell to ourselves about ourselves, and the emotional schema those narratives take. For example, in their article, "Tourist Photographs: Signs of Self," Russell Belk and Joyce Hsiu-yen Yeh's explain that, by taking photos we engage in a type of "self-fashioning" (2011, 349). The ubiquitousness of the camera phone in the concert space points to chronic and constant *collection* of self-fashioning material that can make sense of one's life and situate one's life within comfortable emotional conditions: photos attest to the participation in live concerts, of loving music, of being happy, of having friends, and enjoying one's life. As Belk and Hsiu-yen Yeh explain:

the performativity of such photography with its staging and posing of shots means that tourists intend something more than simply experiential documentation. Along with the act of naming or labeling things we encounter, either before or after photographing them, in taking tourist photos we are potentially collecting illustrations and titles for a self-narrative. (2011, 349)

The photographer becomes both hero and narrator of their own epic and the practice of experience collection accumulates a wealth of resources from which to "extend the self" (Belk 1988). Further, in a useful combination of both Belk's work on collecting and Mulvey's interpretation of the pleasure of repetition of film, Belk and Hsiu-yen Yeh's write that, "By allowing us to collect evidence of where we have been and what we saw and did there, we may be attempting to claim these otherwise intangible and ephemeral experiences as a part of our extended self" (2011, 346). Digital filmic technologies have interpenetrated the concert experience and brought with them all of the compulsions implied by collecting and preserving. However, as I have pointed out, this desire to preserve and collect does not guarantee possession, only the illusion of possession. Perhaps this difference is not important to those concert fans who take photos and chronicle the live event as it passes. Rather, perhaps it is the threat of losing the *illusion* of possession that drives compulsive camera phone. As Mulvey claims, "The technological drive towards photography and film had always been animated by the aspiration to preserve the fleeting instability of reality and the passing of time in a fixed image" (2006, 18). The coming together of camera phone technology with the concert experience produces a trend towards those screen relations that are driven, at their core, by the needs of the 'possessive spectator'.

Alternative Viewing Pleasures: Structuring new narratives of the concert experience

I argue here that the camera phone contributes to changing notions of *how* live music is understood as an experience that can produce pleasure in the context of digitisation and personal mobile screen technologies. As Philip Auslander theorises in *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (1999), the privileged role of liveness as a marker for authenticity began shifting in the 1980s and into the 1990s. This was not a clean nor univocal process of course, and the extents to which the role of liveness shifted are dependent on generic conventions associated with varying styles of music. For example, it shifted in more complex terms within the rock canon (see Auslander “Trying To Make It Real” in *Liveness*). However, what is critical in terms of my argument is the way the dominant paradigm within mainstream music followed a trajectory which devalued liveness as a marker with which to construct pleasure in music experience (for the audience in the concert space). Auslander points to the example of Milli Vanili to explain the critical period in which these shifts were most evident. Milli Vanili were scandalised after it was exposed that, not only had they lip-synched in concert, but they were not the original singers on their own album, for which they had been awarded a Grammy (Auslander 1999, 61). Critically, Auslander notes that the youth demographic were not “upset” by this scandal, rather, it was the parent-culture who were most “disturbed” (85). Auslander correctly asserts that this reflects the dichotomy of ‘rock’ as opposed to ‘pop’ music, because youth culture understood the distinction that pop was not expected to maintain authenticity through live performance. However, more importantly for my argument here, it also illustrates the *historicality* of liveness, in that youth culture was shifting to a new paradigm in which liveness, as a whole, was not a critical characteristic of enjoying a performance. Teletechnologies, in a sense, have “colonised liveness,” to borrow a term from Auslander (13). The camera phone, as a technology of mediation, is continuing to rework, and in some ways undermine, the privileged and championed role of liveness in music listening because of its mediatic function. In the current historical moment, attending a concert is just as much about being able to participate in the experience through the use of the digital camera phone.

However, this shift is not without tension. Dozens of articles, hundreds of comment threads and several public appeals from respected musicians (see Waters 2011) have implored the thousands (if not millions) of music fans to turn off their mobile phones during the concert, or at least to cease activities such as texting,

updating statuses and tweets, and taking photos and videos. Although the results and impacts of these public appeals are difficult to quantify, there is no evidence nor research to suggest that the use of the camera phone has abated at all. The assertions from these public discussions focus on points such these: that the viewer is missing the concert because they are too focused on their personal device, that the viewer cannot appreciate the full extent of the live experience because they cut themselves off from the ambient environment, and that one cannot feel 'in the moment' if they are preparing for future instances to prove they were at the show. These assertions emerge from the traditional expectations of how liveness *should* be experienced and how authenticity of that experience is constructed.⁹ However, these models for enjoying the live show are constructions that have been naturalised through popular music discourse and repeated subcultural behaviours. Therefore, I argue that these discussions miss a critical point, which is that music fans likely do understand that they might miss some aspects of the live performance, but that is traded against the capacity to be a *part of that performance* through the deployment of digital screen technologies. The live music audience is finding new criteria from which to produce pleasure and make sense of the concert experience that is no longer *as* attached to clichés of 'being in the moment' that permeate so many of the public discussions. The pleasure of concert experience is rather a hybridisation of liveness *with* mediatisation as an integrated totality through which audiences can not only watch but participate and create emotional narratives. I explore these models now.

Digital Storytelling

The stories we tell about our life give meaning to our emotions and give structure to affects; the pushes and pulls of everyday life. The way we tell those stories, the way we 'narrativise,' is therefore crucially important in making sense of our world and our place in that world. As such, personal narratives of the concert event are important to the way in which music culture is experienced and enjoyed. Storytelling and narrative have been associated with the concert for decades, and theorists have explored the way in which the function of narrativisation extends the pleasures of belonging and community experienced in that space (see Bennett 2004).

Conventional story telling techniques revolve around linear models, climactic structure and analogue modes such as speaking or writing. As a result, this has been the

⁹ This is more critical in some genres than others. As Philip Auslander explains, for a long time 'rock music' recordings required ratification by the live performance in order to merit claims to authenticity (1999, 83). Wendy Fonarow illustrates similar sentiments about the performance of indie music (2013, 21).

dominant way of generating and understanding personal stories. However, traditional modes of storytelling are changing as they are impacted by digital technologies, and so too are the ways in which individuals understand and tell those stories. Bryan defines “digital storytelling” simply as “telling stories with digital technologies” (2011, 3). Digital technologies, such as the camera phone, expand and recreate experience in exciting new ways because they are loaded with functional tools and the capacity to connect on multiple levels simultaneously. As Larissa Hjorth explains, through new technologies, “everyday users create their own digital storytelling techniques and diverse networks of distribution” (2007, 227). Here I explore the way that individuals use camera phones in order to tell stories about their concert experiences centred on the pleasure of narrative. Functionally, the camera phone enables many digital storytelling techniques that reshape the story itself. In this section, I focus on: the hypertext narrative model, the interactive narrative model, and the combinatorial narrative model.

Hypertext is a phenomenon of the digital Internet age whereby users can ‘click’ or ‘touch’ (by way of the touchscreen) a piece of text that hyperlinks to another portal. In this way, the story text is ‘live’. The story text therefore feels alive and dynamic. It produces a sense of immediacy and contact in the process of storytelling and promotes feelings of connectedness for the user. Bryan describes hypertext as an “unusual storytelling platform” that encourages the user to navigate along certain story lines (like a choose your own adventure model):

Unlike a novel, we have no single, linear direction to follow. Instead, reading a hypertext is something like a hybrid of exploring a space (think: museum, park, city), solving puzzles (which path will be productive?), and reading an opera libretto or closet drama (staging it mentally). (2011, 18)

The hypertextual narrative device is a way that users can participate and change the story while it happens, by choosing which portals to venture within and whose stories to weave into their own. For example, a camera phone user can take a short film or a photo of a musician during a specific guitar solo, and then tag a Facebook user who appreciates guitar solos. When other users read the ‘story’ of this event, through the lens of this user, the narrative is alive with portals to other worlds, other users’ stories, adding a richness and depth to the concert experience for those who are participating in this hypertextual story. Lucy Bennett explains the way that non-present actors involved in the generating and participation of these hypertextual stories change the experience of the event itself: “fans reflect on the shared experience that the practice promotes, others also articulated how the process importantly worked to strengthen, solidify and maintain a sense of community among the fans” (2014, n.p.). The story of

the concert, in this instance, becomes about the shared-ness of the event, as if the number of participants 'reading' the story as it unfolds intensifies the story for the person living it out in real-time. This is a different approach to narrative structure, but interestingly, one that sustains models of group storytelling which have existed for millennia. Group storytelling, while only recently synthesised with hypertext technology, has always been a part of, what Joe Lambert calls, "healthy communities" (2013, 3). Lambert emphasises that:

Stretching, massaging, and meditating our way out of our predicaments as individuals and as societies needs to be combined with the process of telling re-telling stories [...] as acts of art and creativity. We need to stop and listen to each other's stories as daily ritual, as life process. (2013, 3-4)

Digital storytelling achieves both speaking and listening in specific new ways. In the interactive narrative, a user can geotag other users, invite other users to the event in real-time, tag who is present at an event, post selfies at the event and upload them instantaneously on a variety of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook or Twitter (or all in parallel action). In this instance, the linear model is replaced by *multiple* models of interaction in offline and online settings which feed into and sustain each other. Bryan calls this "platform affordances" in that any "digital story can take advantage of the unique affordances of each digital platform it uses" and by doing so "each segment of a story can push the unique nature of its digital housing to accentuate the story's power" (2011, 43). For example, the concert event can be mediated through the camera phone, but then "remediated" through a variety of platforms that construct several versions of the event in creative audio-visual formats. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin define remediation as "the representation of one medium in another medium" and argue that "remediation is a defining characteristic of the new digital media" (1999, 45). For example, the footage of a concert can remain housed on its original medium (the camera phone), however, that specific footage, or segment of the story, can be repurposed into new digital formats; on YouTube, Flickr, 4Chan, Tumblr. A combination of all of these accentuate different aspects of the show in fragmented and highly stylised arrangements. This again echoes Mulvey's description of digital media as a fragmented kind of cinematic experience. For instance, YouTube has become a popular forum for the remediation of live events that imbricate with individuals' stories about that event. YouTube also interconnects with other social platforms, in particular, Reddit.com, that can host subreddits on which users can only post YouTube footage that has been collated around certain themes. Through the cross-posting enabled by digitally housed platforms, new models of creative remediation take place. For instance, Reddit user 'bmlbml' posted a thread to share camera phone footage from a

2002 gig in Portland, Oregon (bmlbml 2012). From this thread, users can follow the link to YouTube and watch the footage taken at the show. Other users, from both YouTube and Reddit.com, interact in the YouTube comment posting thread and share stories about what that show or band means to them. One YouTube user writes: “omfg thanks to whoever recorded this show...gotta be the best show ever recorded...really thanks for holdin the camera up all night....i fight tears back every time i watch this [sic]” (see pbelmore 2011).

In addition, still shots are also significant. They are shards of the whole and tell stories in fragmented ways that can be woven together using the story or stories of the user. In analysing Reddit.com, I have found the most popular subreddit for reposting still photographs is /r/sydgigpics! on which users can post their still shots (through a third party hosting site such as imgur.com or flickr.com) and then other users can view the photos, post comments, ask questions and vote those photos up or down. The subreddit is described as a forum that aims “to provide a place where people could show off their camera phone pics taken at music gigs around Sydney [sic]” (eashdaddy 2015). In this instance, the Web transforms from a global network of anonymous actors, to a far more intimate set of relations, using remediated still shots to constitute the narratives which construct live music culture in a localised community of music fans (in Sydney, Australia).

Lastly, I look at the power of combinatorial storytelling, or social media storytelling, in which many different combinations of online platforms used simultaneously result in multiple stories of the same event, which can all interlink in complex patterns. For example, a U2 concert takes place; tens of thousands of people are in attendance and thousands of those people are actively using their mobile phone to take and upload photos, to find friends, to tag other users, to show they are there and to describe their version of events as they take place. Users can connect with other concert attendees when both are geotagged at the same show; publically describing where they are, what they are doing or buying and what their experience is of the show. Twitter, Instagram and Facebook are perhaps the most instantaneous of the social media story telling apparatuses. Each user contributes their part of the unfolding event and can highlight different parts of that story. For instance, a user can upload a photo of the stadium arena to highlight the enormity and scope of the event and then link that Instagram photo (along with hashtags) to Facebook directly, and then that user can also tag friends and add a small anecdote. Many stories make one story and produce a new sense of *belonging* in the live music group dynamic. Chris Chesher

examines the use of camera phones at an actual U2 concert that took place in Sydney in 2006, with 70,000 people in attendance. In Chesher's analysis, the camera phone not only reconstructs narrative but it can also become part of the narrative itself. He writes:

Towards the end of the show, the mobiles around the stadium made a final hurrah. Lead singer Bono incited the audience to make quite a different use of their mobile phones—to turn them on, hold them up, and 'set the stadium alight'. The house lights were turned down, and thousands of phones appeared around the stadium. U2 fans refer to this part of the show as the 'Milky Way'. It was a democratic light show in which every phone's backlight became a star. Through the song the majority of people attending held up a phone, almost as a religious icon. (2007, 223)

In this instance, the screen interfaces with the materiality of the concert experience and provides a complex twist in the combinatorial story telling model in that the screen works as both physical actor and digital accomplice in the narrative of the concert. Feelings of belongingness are accentuated. Chesher goes on to describe this event in the language of Latour's "panoramas," which answer

a desire for wholeness and centrality. It is from those powerful stories that we get our metaphors for 'what binds us together,' the passions we are supposed to share, the general outline of society's architecture, the master narrative with which we get a commonsensical idea that interactions occur in a 'wider' context: that there is an up and a down; that there is a local nested inside a global [...]. (Latour, 2005, quoted in Chesher 2007, 224)

Following on from the 'Milky Way,' the audience was then asked to SMS a number that appeared on the giant screen behind the band in order to support the campaign to 'make poverty history'. Chesher explains that, at each show, some of the names of participants flash across the giant screen minutes later. Multiple stories (tens of thousands in this case) intersect instantaneously and on multiple platforms in order to create stories of belongingness and foster a sense of collectivity in the live performance through radically new modes of technological innovation.

These digital storytelling devices imbricate with the screen relations I have described above, in that the camera phone supports emotional narratives in ways that are specific to that device. While other technologies can tell stories, sometimes in similar ways (such as a DSLR camera or a phone with SMS capabilities), the simultaneous functions of the mobile yet connected camera phone device *work together* to create new narrative constructs untethered from the confines of analogue linear models. In the words of Gye, "Camera phones are not just another kind of camera" (2005, 279). These digital technologies do not just change the way we take photos, rather, they change what those photos can do, what stories they can tell, who they can tell them to, and thus, how those stories are translated into emotional narratives that support and create meaning in the life of the concert fan. The

interjection of the screen interface into the world of the concert space therefore redefines many diverse practices and ways of feeling, particularly in relation to the ways we tell our stories and experiences of belonging through music.

The Politics of Technology: A Feminist Reading of the Camera Phone

As much as the camera phone enables the preservation of ephemera and reworks live music narratives in digital platforms, many concert attendees actively dislike and discourage the use of camera phones in concert spaces. The very fact that the camera phone has been banned in many venues (Nelson 2013), and is the locus for such heated discussions, emphasises the device as a site for intense cultural change and emotional charge. The analysis of Reddit users' reveals a concomitant obsession *and* contempt for the camera phone in the concert space, which suggests complex and shifting tensions about how one might both narrativise and experience liveness in the age of digital technologies.

Filming, objectification, and the balance of concert ecology

The camera phone inheres traditional cinematic practices, albeit in new ways and through new aesthetics. With this in mind, I therefore read the camera phone in the context of screen relations, in which filming and viewing has been constructed through the masculinist paradigm of 'the gaze' which turns the performance into something that can be objectified and fetishised. The 'gaze' is a product of patriarchal capitalist arrangements which channel the scopical drive into the hierarchical watched/watcher dichotomy. In Mulvey's words, "the fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded [him or her]" (1975, 6). The core drives of the contemporary subject, as a product of historical situations and matrices of the phallic-State apparatus, are translated and exploited in the structures of filming. As Mulvey explains, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (1975, 11). In doing so, that which is watched is also objectified. As Susan Sontag puts it, "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power" (1977, 4). Dong-Hoo Lee explains this in reference to the camera phone, in that, "to photograph is to frame the object, having a distance from it to some degree, the photographer temporarily has power over the object" and further that "those who see the picture are also put into the same position of subject as the photographer" (2010, n.p). For example, as one

Redditor asserts, "I like to get a couple nice pictures of the band on my cell phone, *just to have them*" (i_heart_gopher_anus 2015; emphasis added). The material totality of the live event is objectified by its reduction to mere image, either moving or still. The materiality of the live performance becomes flattened onto the surface of camera phone screen and its translation into an image. This process resonates with the function of the music video as a genre of commercial operation. As Diane Railton and Paul Watson explain, the *raison d'être* of music videos is because they function as consumer products (2011, 1-2). As a result, there is a sense that when the live music fan/camera phone user creates their personalised 'music video' they are translating that live experience to its function as a product.

Further, as the performance becomes flattened onto and objectified through this reductive process, it becomes transformed into an object that produces exchange value for its 'owner,' the 'value' of which can be exchanged for a kind of cultural capital for the owner/user. This is a process that produces an entirely new schema of, largely negative, emotional experiences for others operating within the concert space. For example, a selection of Redditors express their feelings as follows:

The camera phone 'is literally blocking the views of other people behind them for their vanity video, which they will never likely watch again. So it's like ruining someone else's experience to get something valueless for yourself.' (OffTheRivet 2014)

Its [sic] for the facebook aged [sic] people to post it up and let everyone know how they went to this amazing show.' (spacemanoncrack 2014)

I don't understand why people want a crappy phone recording with terrible audio quality of a show. It seems like people are more interested in telling people that they saw a band than in actually seeing the band. (holditsteady 2014)

For these live music fans, the use of camera phones disrupts their enjoyment of the show. Not only is the camera phone user blocking the view of others around them, but the camera phone user is doing so in order to objectify and reduce the live performance to something that can be presented and exchanged for cultural capital. This echoes the work that Lucy Bennett has done on camera phones at the live show. Bennett argues that:

There is a tension and liminality for some fans between wanting to engage in acts of service to the fan community through texting and tweeting to the non-physically present audience, and committing to what is perceived as their own uninterrupted engagement in the live concert experience. (Bennett 2014, 90)

Bennett's research echoes many of the sentiments emerging from the Reddit cyberethnography, in that there is a tension at play within the space of the concert as it

exists as an ecology. As one system is disrupted, i.e. the balance between appropriate watching/recording practices, other systems predicated on constructing the live experience are also disrupted. In synthesising this with the political implications of the gaze as a process of objectification, the camera phone can be read as device that separates both the viewed and the viewer in structures of power, and as a device that destabilises a sense of harmony within the concert space, between those who are filming and those who are being disrupted by that filming. Practices of looking and filming are not benign, apolitical habits. Instead, looking and filming inhere the most foundational aspects of culture. The cultural fascination with screen and film has penetrated into, and hybridised with, live music culture through digital camera phone technologies. In doing so, the camera phone has assimilated into the concert experience many of the scopophilic implications, such as objectification, cultivated through structures of film and photography.

The screen as veil

“What is, then, this anxiety about living in an unreal world?” (Stratton 2006, 13)

A recurring concern emerging in the public discourse on the camera phone in the concert space focuses on ‘the screen’ as a kind of dividing partition that shields the user from ‘real’ experience or the development of ‘real’ memories. This point has been raised in several news items: “Is Smartphone Photography Killing Our Memories and Experiences?” (Cade 2013), “Too many smartphone photos, too few memories” (Toutounji 2013), and, “YouTube ‘destroying music,’ pianist says in angry protest” (Connolly 2013). Reddit discussions illustrate a similar motif. In a photography subreddit, one thread is entitled, “Camera phones are ruining how people enjoy concerts. Opinions?” (ndborn7 2014). Some of the opinions gathered are as follows:

In reality, the way we enjoy live shows, music, plays, and life events, is changing. Whether it’s for the better or the worse (I’d say the worse, personally). ([deleted] 2014)

What the hell, people, filming Sigur Rós with iPads during the show. I even saw a guy scrolling through facebook during a song. Unbelievable. (rideThe 2014)

Growing up (and shooting shows formally) has taught me the value of focusing on the music and nothing else. (Mista_Freeze 2014)

People are ruining their own enjoyment of concerts by trying to watch the concert through the screen of their cell phone. (weegee 2014)

In another example of the discussion in popular culture, commentator Mike Rugnetta from YouTube’s PBS Channel questions whether the screen divorces the subject from the concert experience entirely (PBS Idea Channel 2012). Rugnetta draws from Jean

Baudrillard's work on the hyperreal in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) to suggest that the camera phone at the concert produces a model of Baudrillard's hyperreality whereby representation and "thing being represented" become one and the same. Rugnetta asks: "When you share those photos [...] are you sharing an experience, or are you sharing an idealised reference, some kind of empty symbol?". Rugnetta's popular appropriation of Baudrillardian theory, and the discussions emerging in online discussions, reflects a wider trend to express anxieties about the development of screen technologies and their interpenetration into everyday life. In terms of concert behaviour specifically however, many people get drunk, talk, socialise and generally ignore the music, yet, these groups are not vilified in the same ways as people who film using their phone. This suggests that the anxieties about the camera phone in the concert space are *less* about the problem of people not 'properly experiencing the music' but about something far more deep-seated, which I suggest is tied to a long-held cultural insecurity regarding the nature of reality itself.

I borrow here from Stratton's discussion of "(Un)Real Environments," in an exploration of the theoretical implications of *The Matrix* trilogy, to suggest that the camera phone produces tension because it calls attention to Zizek's "ultimate paranoid fantasy," which I described earlier (Zizek 2001, quoted in Stratton 2006, 39). As Stratton explains, the intensity of this paranoia within the "Western imaginary" extends back to Cartesian philosophy and the "evil demon" hypothesis. Descartes proposed that we are either living in a 'true' reality created by a moral and just God, or alternatively, a malignant entity could ultimately be deceiving the human senses and 'tricking' an individual into believing in a certain 'reality' of which individual would never be made aware (39). For Descartes, this exploration tested the limits of knowability. However, as Stratton points out, in either 'reality' (whether reality is created by an evil genius or a benevolent Creator) the individual is always "removed from reality" (40). As Stratton goes on:

To put it differently, Cartesian individualism places the person in the world but they are not a part of the world. As a reflexive mind situated in a body the philosophical question that echoes through the modern era concerns what status individual experience has in modernity—is it real? Indeed, what can the individual know of the world? (Stratton 2006, 40)

Cartesian philosophy continues to shape the western imaginary and throughout popular culture we see the legacy of this paranoid fantasy—in which the individual is veiled from their true world—return in various iterations such as in *Total Recall* (1990) *The Truman Show* (1998), *The Matrix* trilogy (1999-2003), *eXistenZ* (1999), and more recently, *Inception* (2010). To place this in the context of the camera phone 'problem,'

however, we see clear similarities emerge between this paranoid fantasy and the language emerging in the camera phone discussion. There is a sense that the camera phone can somehow trick the user into believing that they are experiencing a concert in reality when in actual fact, that user is 'trapped' behind a screen. To emphasise this point I reiterate the Redditor's comment from above in which they assert that "people are ruining their own enjoyment of concerts by trying to watch the concert *through the screen* of their cell phone" (weegee 2014; emphasise added). In Stratton's words, there is a sense that it is technology "that plays the role of the evil genius" shielding the subject from their natural world (40). Therefore, the tension surrounding camera phones and the 'correct' way of experiencing live music emerges from an expression of anxiety around the limits of knowability, and the subject's position within that knowable world, that has been developing since Cartesian thought. We see this repurposed in contemporary popular culture through a variety of texts.

Conclusion

This chapter was structured in order to emphasise the complexity and multiplicity within the affective schema of camera phone use, which can be read on many levels that may not always neatly resolve. There are contradictions at work in the language I analyse from the ethnographic research, in that many people both love and hate digital technologies—sometimes for the same reasons. I do not seek to resolve any of these contradictions. Instead, this chapter serves to highlight the contradictory nature of camera phone use, and illustrate the reshaping of traditional modes of concert behaviours so that they remain exciting, relevant and engaging in contemporary contexts. Some public discussions would seek to simplify the issue by arguing that the use of camera phones in concerts is an age 'problem,' in that younger concert attendees are the 'perpetrators' of bad camera phone behaviour because they are 'digital natives,' and therefore lack the respect that is found in previous generations. However, as Andy Bennett and Karl Maton reveal in a 2010 article, deeper analysis of the digital native concept "has shown flaws in the argument that there is an identifiable generation or even a single type of highly adept technology user" (321). Young people do tend to adopt new technology readily and incorporate that technology into their social lives (Bennett and Robards 2014, 1), however, this does not causally suggest that young people are the only users of mobile technology at concerts, nor that the use of mobile technology is a mark of disrespect. In fact, Marc Prensky's popularisation of the digital native term (2001) preceded what Bennett and Maton describe as an "'academic moral panic,' in which dramatic language proclaiming profound change and a series of

strongly bounded divides close down genuine debate” (328). As the authors point out however, these kinds of claims, in which youth culture is (usually negatively) identified as a site of a breakdown in ‘traditional values’ is typical of a kind of “historical amnesia” recurring each time a new technology disrupts particular forms of engagement. For example, Bennett and Maton write that, “They are the same as claims made, in the late 1950s and early 1960s about a generation of students immersed in new forms of commercial culture, such as television and popular music” (328). I agree with Bennett and Maton and add that, rather than reading camera phone use as a ‘problem’ of youth culture, it is instead part of a deeper cultural change that reflects progressive shifts in the affective strategies of live music.

I wish to end this chapter on a final thought about the role of connection as a great well of emotional resource for music fans. The examination of the screen as a catalyst for codified behaviours and new regimes of pleasure appears, at times, paradoxical and contradictory. I suggest that, even though feelings toward the camera phone in the concert space are at times paradoxical and contradictory, these feelings emerge from the same affective terrain, in that both negative and positive regard for digital technologies suggest a desire for connection in the concert space that has always been important. This idea emerged in my mind after reading Nick Couldry’s “Liveness, ‘Reality,’ and the Mediated Habitus from Television to the Mobile Phone” (2010). Couldry writes that, “Liveness—or live transmission—guarantees a potential connection to shared social realities as they are happening (2010, 355). The concert as a strategy of liveness offers the chance for concert fans to share in the passion for popular music and intensify that passion through modes of collectivity. The live event is built on connections—connections to other fans, to the artists, to the value of ‘here-ness’. In many ways, so is the camera phone, because it is a technology of simultaneity and networking that can increase the individual’s sense of belonging to the community present at the concert in real-time. The device can be a hindrance, but it can also forge connections that were not possible before.

Chapter Five

Screen as Skin: The Somatechnics of Touchscreen Music Media

“Why should our bodies end at the skin?” (Haraway 1987, 33)

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the way mobile music devices with touchscreen technology produce new somatechnical figurations that reshape emotional dynamics of music listening. I deploy somatechnics as a conceptual apparatus because the field suggests an “intimate entanglement of *soma* (the body) and *techne* (techniques or technologies)” (Dahl and Sundén 2013, 227). Up until now, somatechnics has been largely applied in queer theory to bring forth and denaturalise “operations of power that shape corporealities” (Sullivan and Murry 2012, n.p.). However, I extend its use here in order to argue that the changing relationships between the human-computer interface result in new affective schemas that expand and reconfigure how it feels to listen to music in a mobile setting. In particular, I focus on skin-on-screen contact in order to suggest that the screen acts as a reflexive surface producing intimate relations for the mobile listener. Touchscreens imply the relationship between skin on skin—the skin of our body (in particular the hands) against the skin of the screen. It follows that mobile touchscreen devices suggest a degree of sensuality—in the coming together of bodies, fluids and other organic materials which ‘stick’ to the touchscreen (the language of ‘stickiness’ pointing again to Ahmed’s conceptualisation of the way affect can “stick” to bodies as discussed in the Introductory Chapter). Following the work of Ahmed and Stacey in *Thinking Through The Skin* (2003), I carry out a “dermography” of touchscreens, or, the study of surfaces as skin and skins as surfaces.

The function of skin, both in a corporeal and a discursive sense, cannot be overstated. Skin is the covering that “protects us from others and exposes us to them” (Cataldi 1993, 145). Skin is profoundly significant in that it provides the basis for an overwhelming variety of trends in the politics of subjectivity, from the classic work of Frantz Fanon on skin colour (see *Black Skin, White Masks* [1952]) to more recent feminist work on the politics of ageing skin or stretching skin, such as in the case of pregnancy (Tyler 2003). Skin is not politically benign. It is “the fleshy interface between bodies and worlds” (Ahmed and Stacey 2003, 7). By “thinking through the skin,” to use Ahmed and Stacey’s words, I read mobile touchscreen technology as an exciting new way to imagine music listening in terms of cyborgian relations.

In addition to performing a dermography of the skin-on-screen relation, I also put forth the mobile media device as a techno-*concorporeal* prostheticised figuration at

the interface of human-computer relations. These devices are *concorporeal*, to borrow a term from Shildrick, because they can work prosthetically ‘side-by-side,’ as well as weaved within, the organic body (2009). In this respect, I focus on the somatechnics of mobile music players as sex toys (marketed as ‘acsexories’). The somatechnics of this relationship, with particular emphasis on the technology of female genitalia, suggests a radical redefinition of how music shapes the body and in what ways bodies can be manipulated by the mobile music device. In this section, I interrogate the theoretical and material limits that demarcate the human and the machine in the scope of music listening. By doing so, I suggest that these prosthetic figurations are the basis for a new mode of inter- and intra- corporeal relationships with music devices, whereby music is absorbed into the subcutaneous layers of embodiment and therefore experience.

Mobile music media has become the subject of great interest in popular music studies in recent years (Werner 2015; Beer 2010; and Åman and Liikkanen 2013). Most notably perhaps, Bull has focused on the “culture of iPod” in relation to the way sound maps out listeners’ spatial awareness in the urban landscape and in the commuting experience (2000; 2005; 2008). Jonathan Sterne, too, has offered insights focusing on the socio-technological aspects of mp3 development to provide an understanding of the way that the “quality of ‘portability’ is central to the history of auditory representation” (2006, 825). However, as Nina Gram has pointed out, the literature focuses overwhelmingly on the motivations and effects of using mobile media in relation to exercising control over the listening experience in particular spaces (2009, 1).

I break from this trajectory to develop an inquiry based on the more recent developments of touchscreen technology in mobile music devices. Touchscreen technology is used in several portable media players such as the Pono, the Sony Walkman NW2-F805, the Cowon A5 Plenue and of course, the Apple iPod and iPad. There are two forms of touchscreen technology: resistive and capacitive. Both android and Apple devices employ capacitive sensing whereby the screen is fitted with an electromagnetic field that can detect movement based on precise changes in that field from another conductive surface that transmits electricity—such as the skin (Kirk 2012). So a touchscreen will only respond to something that emits electrical pulse, either through the living tissue of the skin or a purpose-built device that is designed to give an electrical pulse, such as a stylus that mimics living skin. The screen is therefore designed to respond to the *living-ness* of human touch.¹⁰ In a way, the screen can feel our touch in the same way that we can feel the touch of others, again suggesting the

¹⁰ Animal skin does also work, i.e. a cat’s paw. However, these devices are designed for human use so I focus the ‘humanness’ of the skin-screen interface from here.

touchscreen itself as a kind of skin. The touchscreen-skin therefore reproduces the human-computer interface as a reflexive, affective, and deeply intimate phenomenon, in ways that we are only just beginning to experience in the development of portable music.

Somatechnics as conceptual apparatus

In reading the touchscreen as a skin, I suggest that the screen/skin interface has reshaped music listening because of how we relate to our skin and the skin of others. I deploy the conceptual apparatus of somatechnics that enables me to explore an understanding of skin (human or other) as a technology produced through bio-social-psychic structures. The body itself is a technology, and as a technology, the body interacts with other technologies, both machinic and organic. For Dahl and Sundén, somatechnics is an intervention in critical inquiry that indicates “that technologies are not something that are added to bodies, but rather the means by which bodies and their politics are formed and transformed” (2013, 227). In the somatechnical model, listening is informed just as much by the technology of the ears, skin, and discursive apparatuses (such as language), as it is by machinic assemblages and digital networks. Somatechnics is valuable for this exploration because, as an investigative tool, it allows for the creative production of a variety of “open-ended” figurations in which to “imagine knowledge, bodies and subjectivities *otherwise* and in multiplicity” (227; original emphasis). For example, in this chapter, I imagine the bodies of both human and mobile media devices as deeply relational and indicative of the way bodies and their affects and/or emotions can be fundamentally changed by their contact with other bodies (human or otherwise). Thinking about mobile touchscreen technology using a somatechnical model therefore unlocks a variety of theoretical doors, through which the potentialities of music listening are coupled with the affective dimensions and emotional repercussions of *skin on skin relations*.

The field of somatechnics emerges from the legacy of feminist theories that sought to reimagine the body, in particular Haraway’s cyborgian vision (Dahl and Sundén 2013, 227) in which hybridities of machine and organism serve as an ontology that might decolonise the body from so many political and social traumas, in particular, “the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the production of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other” (Haraway 1987, 2). Somatechnics advances and extends these ideas to build an understanding of technology as an “intimate part of what we have come to think of as our bodies” (Dahl

and Sundén 2013, 227). In doing so, as Dahl and Sundén note, the core of somatechnics is about “border crossings” and “boundary confusions” (228).

It is the confusion and subversion of the screen/skin interface that concerns me here. I interrogate how these boundary confusions between screen-skin/human-skin can reconfigure emotional and affective dynamics in the listening experience, especially in regards to the way that affective dynamics of skin relations can mark expressions of love, tenderness, or even disgust and fear. Affect theory is deeply imbricated with models of somatechnical thought too. For Dahl and Sundén, affect constitutes the “somatechnical assemblages of images, media technologies, and bodies” (2013, 231). I take this approach as the launching point from which to explore and understand the way touchscreens of our mobile music media have changed ways of feeling in the digital listening experience.

Music listening at the border of the human/computer interface

The touchscreen-skin mimics our own skin. The touchscreen is sensitive to stimuli, it reveals internal dynamisms, and it is smooth to the touch. This produces a kind of mirroring process by which the skin of the touchscreen, its ‘face’ if you will, becomes anthropomorphised in similar terms as the human body and human face. In the cyberethnography, we see concrete examples in which users personify their touchscreen devices in ways that suggest the skin-on-skin relation is critical in the affective experience of mobile media. For example, OtisDElevator explains that:

Way back when I was at university I was talking about a programming problem with another student. He kept touching my screen and leaving smudges. The third time he touched it, and after firm two warnings, I simply wiped my thumbs down each side of my nose and pressed the grease loaded thumbs on to his spectacles, saying, ‘There, now how do you like it?’ (2015)

For OtisDElevator, the memory of this ‘screen-skin violation’ still resonates years after the experience. This emotional narrative betrays a deeper condition of the human-device interface in which the interface has been absorbed into the matrix of the human skin-psyche. For OtisDElevator, the touchscreen skin is his/her skin, which is why after ‘two firm warnings,’ OtisDElevator feels justified to press ‘grease-loaded thumbs’ onto the glasses (another technology that extends the bodily surface) of the other student. These surfaces work as our own surfaces; they are personal and produce affects as would the organic skin. For example, as one Redditor says, “I would never touch the screen of someone else’s computer with anything... it just violates some moral code” (tylerni7 2010). Screens have been absorbed into the integrity of the human body dynamic. They require guardianship as with our very own organic body would and the

border between what is our skin and the skin of the machine is no longer clearly demarcated. This resonates with the work of William J. Mitchell in work *Me++: The Cyborg Self and The Networked City* (2003) who describes the skin-covered body as only one aspect of the entirety of bodily experience. He writes:

My natural skin is just layer zero of a nested boundary structure. When I shave, I coat my face with lather. When I'm nearly naked in the open air, I wear—at the very least—a second skin of SPF 15 sunblock. My clothing is a layer of soft architecture, shrink-wrapped around the contours of my body. (Mitchell 2003, 7)

In the experience of the externalised skins, the human body is extended and expanded in new somatechnical figurations. The technology of the skin—its ability to fold, produce sweat, stretch and absorb substances—is mirrored in the technology of mobile devices that are sensitive to touch, that can be broken or scratched, and that can be violated by the fingers of another. This is why using touchscreen devices is not just a one-dimensional listening experience, rather, it is an activity that calls forth all the sensitivity of skin-on-skin relations and attendant bodily integrities.

The function of skin as a surface (rather than organ, for example) is reversible too (Shildrick 2003, 165); one cannot touch something or someone without also experiencing touch themselves. In relation to touchscreen technology, when a user touches the screen to enact a function, the user is also being touched *by* the screen. This produces its own effects in which the user becomes intertwined with listening experience through the subtle sensualities of contact and caress. For psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu in *The Skin Ego* (1989), the surface of the body is the very basis of all experience, the “mental image of which the Ego of the child makes use during the early phases of its development to represent itself as an Ego containing psychic contents, on the basis of its experience of the surface of the body” (1989, 40). Our skins produce our *corpo-reality* and, thus, the skin of the touchscreen produces its own realities, or rather, we project onto it the limits and codes by which we understand embodiment to take place. The touchscreen makes music listening into a sensual, skin-on-skin phenomenon in a way that was not evident in traditional music listening. Anzieu’s “skin-ego” also calls upon Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “intercorporeality” which emphasises “that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and non-human bodies” (Weiss 1999, 5). As Dahl and Sundén explain, Merleau-Ponty’s work “attends to the multiplicity of sense perceptions: bodies can be touched as well as seen” (2003, 5). In the instance of touchscreen mobile devices, music becomes embodied—it can be touched, seen, and be moved around as an extension of one’s own body. Where the core body goes, so the

touchscreen follows. It's another layer of the body which produces psychic investments in the music itself because that music becomes, also, another layer of the self.

Finally, the music itself is a thread that sews together the flesh of the human with the internal workings (or organs) of the mobile music device. The earphones work as a vein, 'pumping' the music through the body of the device to the body of the subject. I use the phrase 'pumping' the music deliberately here because it is a common phrase in street vernacular that also resonates with the language of the hydraulic model of the body as a system of pressures and conduits through which the blood circulates oxygen. The earphone cord becomes an externalised vein that fuses the human/device together as one in a somatechnical fusion. Mitchell's elaboration of the wearable self provides further insight into the way technologies are integrated into the self. In Mitchell's terms, the individual's body is "only the core" of the entire self:

I consist of a biological core surrounded by extended, constructed systems of boundaries and networks. These boundary and network structures are topological and functional duals of each other. The boundaries define a space of containers and places (the traditional domain of architecture), while the networks establish a space of links and flows. Walls, fences, and skins divide; paths, pipes, and wires connect. (2003, 7)

The body is 'only the core,' and the mp3 player or tablet technology is linked to the self in a way that becomes a part of self and integrated into the somatechnics of the human body. Listening, in this case, is an integrated and holistic phenomenon in ways that traditional modes were not. The listening experience has reached a new somatechnical figuration here, in that bodily affect and discursive constructs of the body—what it means to be a connected self/device—generates an exciting new way to understand how music breaches outer surfaces.

We may think of our own body as a somatechnical figuration of a listening device in its entirety. For example, bone-conducting headphones now mean that the bone of the skull holds and channels the music through the head itself: "When hearing through bone conduction, sounds from the air or those presented through vibratory devices strike the bones of the skull bypassing the ear canal and stimulate the fluids of the cochlea" (Henry, Tran, and Letowski 2009, 1). The music is literally infused in inside the *bodily fluids*. The body becomes the device; our organs serving as the hardware, and our mind the software that runs the scripts of code. For Mitchell, in a post-biological future, we may think of ourselves as software. The cyberethnography suggests that perhaps we are already there, in that our mobile listening devices have become compatible doubles of the self, that store our music, memories and structure

ways of feeling. The self and the device are compatible. As Mitchell explains, this does not have to mean disembodiment, or the devaluation of the material self. Rather:

It is a more complex, spatially distributed, fluid, hybrid form of embodiment enacted with new hardware— one in which silicon, copper, and magnetic subsystems play a vastly increased role, while carbon-based subsystems play a diminished and no longer so privileged one. Mortality reappears as a server crash. (There are some work-arounds, perhaps; you could implement reincarnation as restoration from backup, and transmigration of the soul as a hardware replacement strategy.) (2003, 168)

The body (*soma*) and the technology (*techne*) have become fused in their confusion by way of the listening technology interpenetrating the body's own technology. The body has open channels allowing a constant flow in and out, it is by no means a closed system. The way music enters through the body is penetrative and intimate in psycho-sexual parameters suggesting stimulation of bodily fluids and corporeal resonances, vibrating our very bones in order to make the music manifest in new ways.

Sartre and the erotics of touch as possession

The question that undergirds this investigation is why it is that touch should produce such intense and intimate relationships between human and device. Here I draw from Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenology explored in his work *Being and Nothingness* ([1943] 1992) in order to illustrate how the touchscreen has intensified listening experience as a result of the acts of stroking and caressing, usually reserved for those things onto which we project desire. Firstly, Sartre points out that, if to stroke a surface was merely for the sole purpose of interacting with only the surface, there would be no relation between the surface and the stroke, no implication of desire or wanting (390). Portable media players fit into this model of desire in that the touchscreen device, particularly the iPod, is an icon of consumption obsession (see Kahney 2005). As Sartre writes, to stroke or caress an object of desire is not merely a superficial activity but a "shaping" (1992, 390). He writes: "In caressing the Other I cause [his/her] flesh to be born beneath my caress, under my fingers" (390). Touch brings the body of the Other into the self and, by doing so, brings that body into knowing. It traps the Other into the material world of the self through the "game" of touch (Deutscher 2003, 144). In his work, Sartre is discussing the desire for the female form, however, this model can be applied in an understanding of the interaction between touchscreen device and listener (we could say that the device is objectified in similar terms to the female form and exploited under the regime of late-stage). To take Sartre's approach, the production of music listening pleasure is ultimately tied to the appropriation of the Object through touch. As Penelope Deutscher explains: "touch occurs as part of a subject's making itself

body. For Sartre, the touch of a skin against an object or another occurs as part of a constant project to appropriate the world” (2003, 146). Touch, catalysed from the desire to attain a form of pleasure (which can be read here as either sexual encounter or musical experience) implies a much deeper dimension of affective phenomena than just the interaction of boundaries and surfaces.

To follow from this line of inquiry, the listener too can be said to appropriate all the potentialities and sensualities that the device contains, as would a lover. The actions and activities of finding the music (stroking the screen), gently pushing its surface (to select songs) and so forth, produce the pleasurable relationship with the touchscreen device. Even the language of the mechanics to turn the device ‘on’ or ‘off’ is suggestive of the sensual act in progress. As Sartre goes on to say:

My shirt rubs against my skin, and I feel it. What is ordinarily for me an object most remote becomes the immediately sensible; the warmth of air, the breath of the wind, the rays of sunshine, etc.; all are present to me in a certain way, as posited upon me without distance and revealing my flesh by means of their flesh. (Sartre 1992, 392)

What Sartre is saying here reminds me of the way the touchscreen device provokes similar effects of being-in-the-world because it has both immediacy, ‘without distance,’ and reveals the listeners flesh to be in the action of appropriating pleasure from the surface of its skin. This experience is not like that of the radio, where music is filtered through the air, nor is it like the experience of live music which produce completely different effects to do with collectivity. This experience is specific to the function and erotics of touch and the immediacy that the touchscreen device can sustain. Therefore, the question as to why touch, in particular the type of touch enabled in mobile touchscreen devices, produces such intense relationships between human and device, is answered by Sartre’s understanding of the way stroking, caressing and other modes of touch can engage the listener in sensorial and sensual encounters with erotics of consumption. Deustcher goes on to explain that in Sartre’s model, to desire (as the listener desires the touchscreen) “is first to be reduced to one’s own body” (2003, 143). Deustcher quotes Sartre in saying that to desire and to caress as a function of that desire enables one to feel one’s own skin, one’s own muscles and one’s own breath: “I feel them not in order to transcend them *toward* something as in emotion or appetite ... but as a *passion* by which I am engaged in the world and in danger in the world ... The being which desires is consciousness *making itself body*” (quoted in Deustcher 2003, 143). The touchscreen device brings the listener *into the music* and by doing so, into the erotics of listening. In Sartrian terms, erotics is present in its facticity, “the contact of two skins” (1992, 56). I suggest that, in the digital age, two skins may involve very

different versions of the human epidermis. Touching the screen-skin, manipulating the controls and appropriating the music as pleasure is not a mere superficial encounter. Rather, it is an intense interaction between two concrete forms that produce the world within that interaction.

Haptics: The 'touchy-feely' world of mobile music

Sartre's erotics of touch provides a way of understanding how the tactual bond between user and device is cultivated in relation to the praxis of desire. However, this still does not address the question of why that tactual bond should be so in demand as popular music culture *appears* to be moving towards more immaterial modes of listening. In Chapter Four I emphasised the importance of the tangible world of music listening as it has been cultivated and naturalised through twentieth century practices. Here, I argue that, while materiality has become certainly less prevalent, the need for the tactual bond does not disappear, rather, it is translated into the model of touch as it is specific to that of haptic technologies. As Ahmed points out in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, "the lived experience of being-itself depends on the intensification of the skin surface" (2004, 104). This dependency has not vanished completely, instead, it has become refocused. However, I do not suggest that haptic interfaces, such as the touchscreen, provide the same types of skin-on-surface contact that characterised twentieth century relations with tangibility. While twentieth century models of tactual bonds were about physicality, haptics is about *closeness*.

Closeness is critical to the practice of music listening because listeners are always in the process of bringing music 'close'. Music is not here. Music is 'otherwise-here'—in our ears, our minds and our bodies. Music is not here, but it is *almost* here, so in this sense, music is virtual. The techniques of touch in haptic-listening demonstrate the reach for bringing the virtual into the here, or giving the virtual a sense of 'here-ness'. For example, love is a virtual experience in that it cannot be said to be in a specific place. Therefore, in order to make love 'concrete', to bring love closer to a material experience, we bring love into the physical by manifesting the virtual into something we can touch—such as a wedding ring, a kiss on the mouth of the loved one, the ideographical heart carved into a tree. In terms of music, better audio quality brings the music 'close' by enabling a deeper appreciation of the attributes of that music. Live concerts bring the music close by adding extra sensorial dimensions to the listening experience, such as interaction with artists and other fans. Listening to music on an LP brings the music close because the listener can connect physically with the weight of the vinyl, the artwork on the cover and even the smell of the sheath. Touchscreen

devices do not provide any of those things. What they do provide, however, is all of one's music available at the touch of the screen. I argue here that this capability is not just about convenience, rather, it is also about closeness. The listener becomes immersed in their collection, the virtual collection is pulled into existence at the manipulation of the touchscreen, it is brought closer through gentle nudges and grazes of the user's fingers. The music is all there, all the time, simultaneously. As Mark Paterson explains, the differences in computer interfaces produce radically different degrees of closeness, "Whereas the keyboard is a passive mechanical channel between the computer and user, haptics enables a more active exploration and allows the user not just to *see* three-dimensional shapes represented on the screen, but also to *feel* them and interact with them" (2007, 374; original emphasis). The mobile device listener is embedded within the virtual matrix of their music collection that exists with them and that listener can move through that virtual matrix as if they are native to it. For Paterson, haptic interfaces such as these, "are a set of augmentations that begin to play with an emerging multisensory realm, one that talks of the engendering and engineering of 'immersion,' of 'presence,' of 'aura' through the addition of touch" (2007, 374). Paterson goes on to explain that it is the sense of copresence that "fosters feelings of nearness and intimacy" (374). Similarly, the mobile device user is copresent with all of their music, which enriches the sense of intimacy with the music experience in ways that were not possible in more traditional listening practices. Having one's entire collection 'at one's fingertips,' in the language of mobile device marketing, is therefore about much more than a convenient way to access and transport large amounts of music. It is also about the interweaving of one's experience with the virtual world of music, bringing that music closer into the experience of the being.

I love my iPod: The mobile music device as cyborgian sexual relationship

If the outer layer of the screen works as a kind of epidermis then we can read the inner mechanisms of the device as internal organs, suggesting an interiority to the device that produces even further sensualities from which to read affectivity in relation to mobile media. Specifically, these sensualities are produced via the operation of absence and presence—the mobile device as prosthesis. As I illustrate above, the touchscreen device is implicated in intimate relations with the human body; it is connected to the body and mirrored by the skin. Therefore, I read the touchscreen device as a prostheticised cyborgian figuration. Its face is sensitive to the touch, and by touching it in the right ways with the right pressures, music is released and pleasure is produced. Sensual and sexual relationships between the human and the cyborg have long been part of the

cultural psyche. For example, there is a recurring theme in popular culture in which sexual relationships between human and cyborg are imagined and explored (see films such as *Blade Runner*, *Cherry 2000*, and the film *A.I.* which also features cyborg prostitution). These films explore modern anxieties, as well as the *frisson*, that is produced in the development of relations between techno-machinic devices and individual bodily boundaries. As Sharalyn Orbaugh notes, explorations of cyborgianism are not about the future but are the expression of current ideas about the human body” (2002, 436). For Jennifer Gonzalez too, “The image of the cyborg body functions as a site of condensation and displacement. It contains on its surface and in its fundamental structure the multiple fears and desires of a culture in the process of transformation” (1995, 267). The touchscreen device, as cyborgian figuration, invokes confusion and fusion between the subject and machine. This produces new affective attachments seated in both fleshy corporeality and discursive meanings about how one defines the borders of affection and its role in music listening.

For example, in analysing Redditors’ comments, specific language points to the construction of the mobile listening device as an object requiring guardianship from the molestation of other hands and fingers, as one might do with a loved one (a child or partner). Redditor ‘loveshiswife’ started a comment thread explaining that s/he has a co-worker “with long nails who will aggressively jab at my screen when indicating a link/object. Man it gets my back up” (2010). In response, another Redditor writes: “omg I would have stabbed her in the fucking eyeball” ([deleted] 2010). There are several terms of consideration in these two comments: “aggressively jab,” “long nails,” “stabbed,” “eyeball,” and “fucking”. To ‘aggressively jab with long nails’ is a symbolic portrayal of the sex act, in particular, of rape. Jane Caputi puts forth a reading of stabbing and jabbing as an act of sexual release in a Freudian approach. In her work *The Age of Sex Crime* (1988), Caputi suggests that penetrating a body “with a bottle, broom, or screwdriver, achieving ‘intimacy’ with an axe or a knife [...] provide the sex in sex crime” (134; original emphasis). In the example above, the co-worker’s long nails serve as the phallus, such as a knife or gun would. For this Redditor, the phallic woman has symbolically crossed the appropriate borders that demarcate *his* device.

The other Redditor’s suggestion of retribution, ‘to stab her in the eyeball,’ is also sexual in nature. The use of the word ‘fucking’ as an adverb charges the phrase with a sexual violence (likely unconsciously but still as forcefully), pointing to its status as a taboo way to describe rape. Many people believe that the word ‘fuck’ comes from the legal term for rape: to ‘foresee unconsented carnal knowledge’ or some variation on

that theme (Sheidlower 1995, xii).¹¹ Coupled with this, the phrase to ‘stab in the eye’ is resonant of the law of an ‘eye for an eye’. If the original crime was an act of sexual assault—being stabbed with the fingernail, a penetration by the phallic woman—then the punishment must also consist of a penetrative assault of the body, by stabbing in the eye which represents a phallic penetration into a soft, fluid-filled orifice. This takes the notion of the skin of the mobile device to a new dimension of intercorporeality that mimics the somatechnics of the sexual body, because it is not just the skin that is being molested here, but the very integrity of the device. This suggests a relationship to music listening, as a result of the human-computer interface, that is specific to the type of technology available to consumers. Listening to music using a mobile touchscreen device therefore involves a far more complex emotional and visceral schema that, as suggested here, call forth feelings of bodily territoriality and psychic borders that maintain the music device, and the music contained within, as an *extension* of the human sensual form.

Music Players as Sex Toys: I’ll never listen to the Black Eyed Peas in the same way again

The example described above is largely symbolic but I wish to further that discussion to a more concrete example of the way touchscreen technology expands a somatechnical reading of the music experience through sexual parameters. Recently, the adult market has released musically-powered vibrating sex toys, based on the iPod brand, that can be manipulated via a touchscreen (Gluckstern 2010). This enables a direct sexual release and even orgasm using the mobile music experience:

the Ohmibod is a music-powered vibrator that translates tunes from any MP3 player (actually any audio source so iRiver, Creative, Zune etc will all work too) into vibrations. Offered as an ‘acsexory’ aimed squarely at the world’s largest selling personal entertainment device (the Apple iPod). (Hanlon 2006)¹²

The music itself drives the force, intensity, rate and speed of the vibration. A more physically intimate relationship with music cannot be imagined. This device implies a somatechnical coupling between human and machine on multiple levels, and in ways that radically redefine the affective dimension of music listening. What I mean is that the technologies of the female genital organs work together with the technology of the device in order to produce feelings and sensations that were not previously possible with music listening (the device is marketed toward females but males could deploy the device for their own pleasure). The somatechnics of this relationship suggests a

¹¹ In fact, the word ‘fuck’ has a Germanic etymology and is not, as urban myths suggest, an acronym. As Jesse Sheidlower explains, it is related to words in Dutch, German, and Swedish, all which have sexual meanings such as “to strike” or “to move back and forth” (1995, ix).

¹² There are also two other similar products on the market to date, iBuzz and iGasm (Moses 2007).

radical redefinition of how music shapes the body and in what ways bodies can be manipulated by the mobile music device. As one reviewer of the product writes, “I’ll never listen to the Black Eyed Peas in the same way again” (Hanlon 2006). The ways in which we experience intimacy, pleasure and connection in the music listening activity has been ultimately and radically reshaped in ways that traditional mediations were not.

Musically-powered sex toys therefore imply a new space for imagining female sexuality in terms that invite the coupling of music and genitalia, personalising and perhaps even empowering music listening in gendered terms. However, the relationship between female sexuality and technology is as complex as it is controversial. As Donna Drucker covers in her work on *The Machines of Sex Research* (2014), in the late Victorian era machines were used to provide women “relief from ‘hysteria’” and surgeons “use certain tools to shape or to ‘fix’ genitals into idealised contours and sizes” (1). Female sexuality has been utterly colonised by the medical profession and continues to be regulated and controlled by the machines and technologies of scientific rationalism. However, there have been and continue to be forces that pull in other directions, which serve to redistribute the balance of biopolitics in favour of women’s right to bodily integrity. For example, Drucker goes on to explain that the emergence of second-wave feminism, gay and lesbian rights, and civil rights catalysed a shift in sexual biopolitics “from punitive measures to investigations of basic physiology and numerous other topics” (2). She writes that:

Radical feminism galvanised the American feminist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, cementing key concepts such as ‘the myth of the vaginal orgasm’ and ‘the personal is political’ into popular discourse and consciousness [Faludi 2013]. Women worldwide made numerous political, economic, and cultural gains from the late 1960s through the mid-1980s, including the passage of Title IX in the U.S. requiring gender equality in college sports, contraception becoming free in the United Kingdom. (Drucker 2014, 2)

I cover this history briefly in order to contextualise the biopolitical implications of the musically-powered vibrator, insofar as it relates to the somatechnics of women’s experiences of music as they have shifted from traditional listening to new digital paradigms. What this context provides is a far more heterogeneous narrative of affect and encounter; the musically-powered vibrator proposes an empowerment but one that has emerged from the histories of scientific-patriarchal paradigms. In *The Technology of Orgasm*, Rachel Maines explores the “medicalising of female orgasm in Western culture” that is deployed to protect dominant and patriarchal “illusions of coitus” (2001, 121). For instance, the musically-powered vibrator is shaped as what Maine would describe as the “reassuringly phallus-shaped vibrating dildo” which can

be understood as a substitute for the penis. This suggests that the device serves not only the technologies of female genitalia but also the paradigm of male sexuality that requires females to continue to desire the phallus, in the case that vibrators should render the male subject unnecessary.

In a somatechnical model, the music-powered-vibrator therefore implies a complex negotiation between the technologising of the female orgasm and the appropriation of contemporary models of digitisation for female empowerment. For instance, the musically-powered vibrator could be read as an exploitation of female sexuality to sell new technologies or it could be read as a new model for women to integrate music into their sexualities more deeply and powerfully. I do not propose here a resolution that comfortably ties together the political ramifications of such a debate. However, what is evident is that the development of touchscreen technologies in mobile music media are producing new strategies of listening that work in conjunction with human sexuality, suggesting the touchscreen as a type of cyborgian sexual figuration. It would be interesting to explore how these are marketed a little more.

Grief and loss in the world of mobile touchscreen technology

As I have been suggesting, the touchscreen skin is, in a way, alive, particularly in the minds of users. It responds to the living-ness of the human skin's electrical conduction and responds to the commands it *feels* through changes in its own skin's electrostatic field. As a result, it works as a kind of cyborgian prosthetic which produces new forms of pleasure and intimacy in the music listening experience, but also new possibilities for absence and loss. In this section I explore the phenomenon of grief in regards to mobile media and inquire as to what this phenomenon can tell us about the specificity of listening experience in digital contexts. I suggest that the reflexivity of the touchscreen-human interface, which I have explored above, results in the treatment the touchscreen device as a thing that can experience death, just as the skin itself might experience death through trauma, old age, or conditions like necrotising fasciitis or gangrene. The device is so attached to the human body that it ingratiates itself as a kind of prosthetic instrument, one that is vulnerable to loss, theft, and the precariousness of the outside world. It is symbiotic with the human, like a foetus. It requires charge in order sustain its life and the human requires it to be living in order for it to provide listening pleasure. When that relationship ends, it is a kind of death. As a result, popular music communities produce strategies of mourning in order to cope with the loss of these personal devices. For example, in the Reddit community, language is used that

indicates the collective grieving in regards the discontinuation of the iPod Classic: “She’s finally gone [...] Good Bye iPod classic” and “RIP iPod Classic” (8blueBuddha 2014). Even though the iPod Classic did not have a touchscreen display, it was the original device that led to the entire suite of touchscreen technologies for portable media players that followed (Hiltzik 2014) and had a ‘click wheel’ that could be stroked and manipulated. Users personify and grieve the obsolescence or loss of all types of technologies, from cars to CD players to tennis rackets. However, the portable media player is grieved and personified in specific ways that differ from other technologies because it is the first technology of its kind to have the capacity to hold such a vast amount of music, to be robust enough to travel anywhere without skipping or damaging the internal CD or cassette, and generally to feature as a constant companion to the modern music listener as in a prosthesis which can be mourned if lost.

To frame the mobile device as a prosthesis, the term is used here as “a metaphor signalling some kind of mediation between an artificial device and the supposedly natural body” (Shildrick 2009, 133). As Katherine Ott points out, it is a “literal interface between flesh and machine” (2002 quoted in Shildrick 2009, 133). Mobile devices, particularly those devices that can receive commands via voice activation or alternative controls attached to the earphones, work as prostheses which enhance the listening experience by enabling the freedom of music to be heard and controlled anywhere the user desires. Bull attends to the high regard that users have for this kind of prosthesis, particularly office workers who bear the everyday commute by using these functions (2005, 348). This is reminiscent of how Shildrick writes about prosthesis. She says, “Historically, such technologies [prostheses] have usually grounded some utilitarian compensation for a perceived bodily lack, but the emphasis now is firmly on enhancement and supplement” (2015). In this understanding, the mobile device is not a technology that needs to bridge a lack or repair damage, but it is a technology that can enhance and supplement any human body and bring relief from the demands of the outside world. Shildrick writes, in the current context, “issues of bodies, boundaries, and technologies increasingly challenge not only the normative performance of the human subject, but also the very understanding of what counts as human” (2015, 13). Rather than considering prosthesis as a management tool to repair the ‘non-acceptable’ human body, prosthesis here is read as a *concorporeality* (Shildrick 2009) between the “organic and inorganic, the assembly and disassembly of surprising connections, the capacity to innovate” (Shildrick 2009, 133). Prosthesis is therefore about potentialities.

With the above statements in mind then, the mobile device as prosthesis relates to practices of mourning because the death of the device points to the end of a part of the body that one had invested with all the potentialities of listening pleasure, which itself constitutes a kind of living-ness. When read in this way, it is no wonder that individuals grieve the loss of these devices as they would with any integral bodily operation that offers life-enhancing features. One Redditor expresses grief by explaining that his/her iPod “recently died after about 7 years of faithful service” (yanchovilla 2014). This device ingratiated its being into the life of this user. The impact of grief on the listening experience in digital contexts is therefore substantial; it creates trauma of loss that must be recognised and attended to with the range of cultural praxis reserved for grieving. Mostly, this means discussions and testimonials of one’s device to others in the music community. Redditor dfloyd13 begins a group discussion with a thread title borrowed from a *Wired Magazine* article “‘Looking at someone’s iPod was like looking into their soul’ On death and iPods: A requiem” (2014). The thread received 287 responses, many of which were commiserating the loss of personal devices, such as k_thrace who responds with: “Somebody stole my soul out of my car then” (2014). Also in response, Redditor justicecupcakes, says: “I can’t really imagine ever going without mine. It’s a bit pathetic, but it’s a major part of my life” (2014). This Redditor demonstrates the extent to which the mobile device (in this case the iPod) can support the emotional microcosm of the user, so much so that one ‘cannot imagine to live without it’. In Bull’s words, the iPod works as a “‘framing’ device, enabling a distinctive mode of auditory embodiment—governing the way in which iPod users engage and orientate themselves to the world and to themselves” (2008, 22). Bull’s vision resonates with the notion that the iPod device (or any mobile device with similar capabilities) becomes an extra-sensory prosthetic instrument in which experience is redefined. The device recalibrates the user’s interaction with the external world using cyborgian strategies in which “the iPod user is an ‘orchestrating’ self who tones down stimuli from one sensory field [whilst] amplifying information coming through another channel” (Geurts 2002, quoted in Bull 2008, 22). The outside world—that is, the world outside of the user’s listening experience—can be ciphered and then modified through the parameters of the technological mediation at work. This echoes Kathryn Geurts’ assertion that the way an individual experiences sensorium is by no means a natural phenomenon untouched by cultural scripts and codes. Rather, Geurts explains that sensory and somatic practices only become embodied through the “ushering into” that culture’s sensorial framework (2002, 232). The body must learn how to interpret the cultural sensorium in order to make sense of signals surrounding

it. Using a portable media player requires a refashioning of this interpreting schema and, in this way, the body's somatechnic—its sensorial faculties and cognitive abilities—works symbiotically with the prosthetic of the portable media player in order to cultivate the peak listening experience in a mobile setting. In this sense, the human body inheres the cyborgian technology. As a result, I suggest that digitisation enables the mobile media device unprecedented capacities, that offer not only convenience and fluidity but also a new way of being that reconfigures human/cyborg relations in new and intimate ways.

Conclusion

I have filtered the touchscreen through a variety of conditions in this chapter. Its skin has been exposed to the molestation of sticky fingers and jabbing nails. Its body has been appropriated through Sartre's erotics of touch and caress. It has been tethered to the somatechnics of female genitalia and sexual gratifications. Users have mourned the passing of their devices, and the devices of others. Chronic use has suggested the device as a prosthesis that transforms somatechnics of sensorium and the world outside the 'iPod bubble'. Users have absorbed these devices so far into the fleshy folds of the human skin that the borders between prosthesis and subject have given way to a cyborgian figuration in which new models of feeling can be explored and imagined. Specifically, these are ways of feeling that extend bodily boundaries, as well as integrate music listening into the very fluids of the body. As Claudia Castañeda writes, "Human nature as it is investigated, generated and lived, is said to be undergoing a transformation that explicitly breaches the human/non-human divide" (2003, 223). The mobile device sits at the precipice of this divide.

The overarching theme of this chapter, however, is the skin and the way that the touchscreen device specifically produces new somatechnical figurations based on skin-on-skin relations. The skin demarcates bodily borders based on the ontology of surface and containers, meaning the skin is imagined as the border between the self and everything else which is not the self. The psyche generates its corporeal boundaries based on the edges and borders of that skin, or what Anzieu named "the skin-ego" (1985). The skin is far from a superficial utility. It is a locus of bio-social-psychic processes, and produces a *frisson* when interacting with the Other. In this chapter, I have constructed the touchscreen device as an Other, onto which the user can project a variety of feelings and notions about pleasure and possession. The fact that the touchscreen device, as cyborgian construction, does not have consciousness or agency is not relevant here. Social constructions of love, desire, erotics and pleasure

often rely on the notion of two autonomous subjects. However, to scratch this surface even slightly is to reveal a wealth of relationships between human and non-human or non-conscious figurations which produce just as intense and profound ways of feeling as any other. For Castañeda, “To ask whether robots have skin is to ask about ‘our’ post-human nature and its embodiment as it is being re-imagined in technoscientific domains” (2003, 223). This being the case, I reimagine the touchscreen-skin relationship as a new way to experience listening as a techno-concorporeal and prostheticised figuration at the interface of human-computer relations. By doing so, I interrogate the theoretical and material limits that demarcate human and machine in the scope of music listening. The human is a technology; albeit a fleshy organic technology that operates within the natural physical laws of growth and decay. However, the boundaries of the human body are not set. They are fluid, adaptive, elastic, mutable and most of all, interconnective. The human body can be hooked up to a machine to monitor heart rate, the body can be hooked up to another machine to support its very life force. In these instances, the human body is only a node in a series of technologies which extend experience and interconnect with organic processes.

Reading the mobile touchscreen player as a somatechnical figuration therefore suggests that the listening experience is developing along with the technologies that mediate music to the body in ways that continue to challenge our understanding of bodily borders and in ways that redefine what it means to *feel* the music. Therefore, the touchscreen-skin is a critical site of affective relations that dramatically reshape what it means to listen to music in a mobile setting; a private and intimate encounter between the user and their counterpart.

Chapter Six

Vaporwave, or, Music Optimised For Abandoned Malls: A case study

“The Virtual Plaza welcomes you, and you will welcome it too.”

(Harper 2015).

“What if we were to listen to a shopping mall instead? What could be heard?”

(Sterne 1997, 22).

Introduction

The digital context has produced new genres of popular music that have emerged out of the specificity of contemporary technohuman configurations and Internet platforms: genres such as oceangrunge, PC music, and post-ringtones music (*The Economic Times* 2013; Martin 2014; Bassil 2014). In this chapter I focus on the genre of vaporwave, an online music genre based on sampling, as a case study to interrogate and explore emotional dynamics in the act of music listening as produced by and through cyberspace. To do this, I examine the vaporwave genre on three levels.

On the first level, I examine Redditor’s language in terms of how it feels to listen to vaporwave in order to illustrate the way listeners make sense of digital genres in their own emotional lexicon. Listeners discuss their listening experiences as a way to explore and express their feelings of alienation and isolation. In this section, I look at the ways in which listeners appropriate popular versions of Marxist theory in order to articulate these feelings. I suggest, however, that the root of these feelings can be recast in more historically-specific frameworks that incorporate the impact of digital relations on the contemporary subject, such as the paradoxes of prosumption and conflicting experiences of globalisation.

On the second level, I examine the ways in which vaporwave artists repurpose muzak®, and other outdated corporate ephemera, so that they may excavate and explore uneasy feelings that are attenuated by dominant or commercial culture. The project of vaporwave, on this level, deals with issues of powerlessness, obfuscation and repressed trauma which cannot be resolved by the glassine world of contemporary media relations.

In the final section of this chapter, and on the final level of examination, I perform a reading of vaporwave to critique the genre as a process that produces a “compensatory nostalgia,” to borrow a term from Healy (2006). Using Healy’s model of compensatory nostalgia, I suggest these digital listening practices can be read as a

process that confabulates the past and confuses temporal boundaries, which is why listeners often refer to vaporwave as an avenue to explore and express worlds and experiences they feel have been lost in the passage of time or space. I use Healy's framework as a way to read vaporwave as the product of an online listening experience in which the relationships between personal and collective memories are being transformed and results in a kind of 'nostalgia without memory,' that is, a way of feeling that produces a form of fabricated nostalgia.

What the 地獄 is vaporwave?

Musically, vaporwave is an electronic music comprising sonic rudiments (tones, beats, timbres and so forth) hybridised from a wide variety of 'background musics,' largely muzak®,¹³ as well new age ambience, 'on-hold' music, cocktail jazz, and other "corporate sonic ephemera of the 80s and 90s" (Ward 2015). The music itself is then chopped in with slowed-down repetitive samples and drowned heavy reverb (Wolfenstein 2015; Galil 2013). As a result, vaporwave has been described as a type of "plunderphonics," a term coined in the mid-1980s by composer John Oswald to describe music made through sound collage, or 'plundered' from other sources ([1985] 2008). The effect is to produce music that "satirises the emptiness of a hyper-capitalist society" (Ward 2014), which is exemplified in the idea that the music is not its own thing but a patchwork of other things; ultimately, empty. However, the most pertinent aspect of vaporwave that points to a critique of the 'emptiness of the hyper-capitalist society' is the repetitive appropriation of sonic and visual aesthetics of 1980s 'mall' culture. Vaporwave seeks to mimic mall aesthetics; that of gloss and surface, a liminal space where if you are not consuming, you are not welcome (Harper 2015). It is for this reason that vaporwave is described as 'music optimised for abandoned malls' suggesting a kind of 'consumption lubricant' that permeates modern public spaces such as the cinema or shopping centre, spaces that are oblivious to the presence or absence of humanity (Harper 2015).

The word vaporwave comes from the term *vaporware*, a word used by the technology industry to describe a product that is marketed to the public but never actually released or that never even existed (Calore 2011). The name invokes that which is lost in the tides of technology and consumerism and, I would add, those objects created by the illusion of marketing. In line with this theme, vaporwave is a

¹³ The word muzak is often used to refer to a generic type of music, but the term muzak® denotes a registered trademark belonging to the company Muzak® Holdings, which was sold in 2011 to the Mood Media company. It is the latter term I use in this chapter.

project in which the artists aim to explore “soulless techno-corporatism, with accompanying videos that draw on early Internet imagery: glitch graphics, late-90s web design, and cyberpunk aesthetics” (Harper 2015). The vaporwave visual aesthetic is integral to the totality of the vaporwave listening experience. The sound of vaporwave does not exist independently from its visual accoutrements, to the extent that some Redditors suggest that vaporwave is first and foremost a visual medium with sound as a secondary layer (see subreddit VaporwaveAesthetics). In this way, vaporwave defies traditional music conventions that typically privilege the music over the visual form.

Vaporwave is often referred to as an Internet-only genre because it emerged solely on and through digital platforms (Wolfenstein 2015). With the exception of one instance that may or may not come to pass,¹⁴ it continues to be played and shared *exclusively* through online networks (mainly Reddit, YouTube, Bandcamp, Tumblr and Soundcloud). Vaporwave emerged in the early 2010s through online platforms, however, it has a special relationship with Tumblr. Some sources suggest that vaporwave originated from the Tumblr platform and spread out into other sites from there (Wolfenstein 2015), although, most likely, it emerged from several platforms simultaneously as these are ultimately all connected (Wang et al 2010).

In 2013 vaporwave overflowed into the song-sharing communities such as Bandcamp and SoundCloud and received more attention in wider circles (Harper 2015). Some of the main artists celebrated in the genre are Chuck Person, James Ferraro, and Skylar Spence (likely all pseudonyms). However, perhaps the most ‘vaporwave’ of all practitioners is Macintosh Plus, who also goes by the names Vektroid, New Dreams Ltd, PrismCorp, Virtual Enterprises, Laserdisc Visions, and 情報デスク VIRTUAL. Macintosh Plus released a seminal album, *Floral Shoppe* (2011), which generally stands as the epitome of the style. For example, countless memes, tributes and homages to the vaporwave aesthetic borrow directly from Floral Shoppe ‘album cover’ themes: a roman bust against a neon pink background featuring a city skyline at dusk adorned with characters from the Japanese language. While Japanese characters and Japanese Internet aesthetics¹⁵ are used in vaporwave artwork, this is likely born from a trend to ‘kitsch-ify’ Internet aesthetic (Kulka 1996, 21) rather than as a marker of its geographic origins. As vaporwave commentator ‘Wolfenstein’ suggests in his brief

¹⁴ In early 2015, an event called “Boogie at the Hypermall 20XX” was announced which would effectively be the first ever vaporwave live event. It has still not been held.

¹⁵ By ‘Japanese Internet aesthetics’ I mean the graphics imitating 1990s Japanese websites characterised by bright colours and busy text (Francisco 2012).

documentary, vaporwave “distinctively has no set location as to where it originated [instead] it started online, making it the first genre of music to be completely globalised” (2015).

Level 1: The emotional lexicon of vaporwave listening experiences

In this section, I look at the language fans employ to describe the way it feels to listen to vaporwave music and how that language may connect to broader implications of the subject’s experience in digital consumer culture. Namely, I look at the ways that vaporwave connects to feelings of alienation, feelings of anonymity and hollowness, and its associations with dystopian visions of postconsumer culture. Throughout the cyberethnography discussions of vaporwave often assimilate popular appropriations of Marxist theory. For example, Redditor ‘fugged_up_shib’ writes that “Marxist stuff” is the “meaning of vaporwave” and that “the use of soulless corporate muzak appears to be a cheeky poke at capitalism—which is what makes me think the message is anti-capitalist” (2015). Popular commentary also works to concretise the premise that vaporwave is a ‘Marxist genre’. For example, music commentator Adam Harper writes that, “The name ‘vaporwave’ itself is reminiscent of a famous passage from Karl Marx’s and Freidrich Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*, “‘all that is solid melts into air,’ referring to the constant change society is subjected to under bourgeois capitalism” (2015). In fact, while Harper’s quote is correct (Marx and Engels [1848] 2007, 11), the word ‘melts’ is an inaccurate translation of the original text. The original text uses the word *verdampft* which means ‘evaporates’ or even ‘vaporises’ rather than ‘melts’ (Dyneslines 2011; Babylon 2016), which resonates even more sharply with the term ‘vapour’.¹⁶ However, Marx’s critique was situated in nineteenth century conditions in which complex digital phenomena were not impacting and informing other processes of production and consumption, such as the rise of prosumer economies and cybercommunities. Considering that vaporwave is an online phenomenon, I suggest that emotional narratives about alienation, feelings of hollowness, and anxieties about postconsumer dystopia, can be recast in more contemporary frameworks that incorporate the impact of these digital relations. I will return to this at the end of the following section with a discussion of postmodernism and alienation.

Alienation in a brave new connected world

Descriptions of vaporwave listening experiences as alienating, yet welcoming and ‘calming,’ point to complex and conflicting affective geographies. Redditor Shima33

¹⁶ I would like to acknowledge Professor Peter Beilharz for this information.

writes, “At its core, vaporwave is about capturing alienation in music” (Shima33 2015). RightError adds that “there is that isolation/alienation feeling I get from all the distorted lost worlds themes” (RightError 2015). Another Redditor suggests that:

Alienation is a great word for it. Sometimes I find myself really uneasy with vaporwave. It makes me uncomfortable at times, but at the same time is compelling to me [...] my keyword for the tone of it is ‘alienation’ to achieve a feeling of eeriness and uneasiness, but also a welcoming and calm feeling as well. (theyremovingit 2015)

The language in these comments points simultaneously to feelings of connection (welcoming, calm, compelled) and feelings of being removed from connection (alienation, isolation). For listeners, vaporwave therefore actualises a paradoxical listening experience. I suggest that this paradox is indicative of similar feelings associated with digital consumption practices that inhere the positive effects of connectivity wrought by the “global village” (see McLuhan 1964) but which also frame the continuing reality of the isolating effects of globalisation—its economic imbalances and digital divides.

For example, in relation to the specificity of digital consumption practices, the rise of prosumption reflects the paradoxes and contradictions which undergird contemporary consumer relations. For instance, vaporwave itself is an exemplary form of prosumption in that roles of production and consumption merge together to form new models of trade which are somewhat liberated from traditional models of music consumption. Prosumption, in this respect, has been lauded as a radically positive change. Purchasing power is replaced by trade and barter models, the donation economy, ‘pay-as-you-feel,’ as well as enfranchising the ‘prosumer’ with certain levels of control over their work. As Robert Kozinets, Andrea Hemetsberger and Hope Schau assert, with “the diffusion of networking technologies, collective consumer innovation is taking on new forms that are transforming the nature of consumption and work and, with it, society” (2008, 339). However, as Edward Comor points out:

At first blush, the prosumer appears to be aware and in control of her productive and consumptive activities, she appears to be a prospectively transcendent figure. This, however, is a mistake [...] the fundamental conditions behind alienation remain unchanged. The seemingly free and autonomous prosumer has not forsaken exchange relations, for how could she if private property and contract relations remain entrenched institutions; entrenched in their mediation of both socio-economic relations and consciousness itself. (Comor 2010, 439)

This above critique of prosumption in the globalised economy exposes the paradox and contradictions of contemporary economic relations, which produce conflicting emotional positions for the contemporary subject. In one respect, the prosumer is

empowered by online 'cottage industry' models, yet in another respect, the prosumer is still embedded in larger matrices of late-stage capitalism. In this sense, vaporwave's assimilation of Marxist language is pertinent (though likely not deliberately so). For example, though Marxist theories of alienation are not specifically discussed in the cyberethnography, Marxist critique of capitalism as an alienating force does, in fact, resonate here in that "alienation is a condition long associated with capitalist modernity" (Comor 2010, 441). As Peter Archibald's research makes clear, the conditions of worker alienation has not diminished in developed economies (2009).

Dijck and Nieborg also point out the hypocrisy and exploitation of the prosumption ideal as it is appropriated by large conglomerates. They describe the community-based language of prosumption to be a "rhetorical ploy popular among advertisers, who like to present telephone companies as being in the business of 'connecting people' or promote credit card companies as 'facilitators of love and affection'" (Van Dijck and Nieborg, 2009, 863). Still, the positive effects of prosumption cannot be ignored—its capacity to redefine consumer relations has revolutionised modern trade in online communities in many ways and thus it is a complex phenomenon that cannot be resolved into neat models (see Ritzer, Dean and Jurgenson. 2012).¹⁷ As a result of this paradox, feelings of isolation and alienation are not cleanly demarcated nor can they easily be directed toward specific processes of consumption because these processes inhere feelings of both alienation and connectivity simultaneously. Vaporwave exemplifies contemporary affective geographies that sustain conflicting and contradictory modes of feeling as a result of complicated digital economic relations and the subject's position within them.

However, though vaporwave listeners cite Marxist philosophy in their comments, vaporwave is perhaps more suited to a more contemporary discussion of alienation, such as that which emerged in the late 1950s with the Situationist International (SI) philosophies, which drew heavily from Marx (Plant 1992, 1). Sadie Plant elucidates that:

The Situationists characterised modern capitalist society as an organisation of spectacles: a frozen moment of history in which it is impossible to experience real life or actively participate in the construction of the lived world. They argued that the alienation fundamental to class society and capitalist production has permeated all areas of social life, knowledge and culture, with the consequence that people are removed and alienated not only from the goods they produce and consume but also from their own experiences, emotions, creativity, and desires. (1992, 1)

¹⁷ Prosumption is not an exclusively online phenomenon and has existed for many decades prior to the Internet age (Ritzer, Dean and Jurgenson. 2012). However, I refer to its function in terms of online processes here.

This approach lends itself to a postmodern digital context as it more keenly focuses on the effects of visual mass media and its colonisation of the lived experience, implicating Internet technology's penetration into all facets of the everyday. Therefore, I suggest that the comments from vaporwave listeners can be read in reference to SI postmodern approaches that have been recast in contemporary terms. This includes Plant's *The Most Radical Gesture* in which she argues that the SI foreshadowed the digital world in all its "superficiality" and moments of alienation (1992, 5). The alienation to which vaporwave listeners speak can be contextualised in reference to prevailing conditions in which the very substance of the body itself—our "emotions, creativity, and desires" are alien to us. As Debord wrote in his classic text *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), "the spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images" (n.p.), referring to the organisation of culture and meaning based on, in, and around the hyperreal world of the spectacle. The individual's relationship to others and to institutional structures is based on that which is manufactured for the benefit of capitalism. Vaporwave—in all its contradictory aspects—both replicates and exposes the alienating strategies of contemporary visual culture that has moved beyond what traditional Marxian theory can contain.

Anonymity and feelings of hollowness

Further, the language from cyberethnography associates vaporwave with feelings of being a faceless or anonymous subject. This is evident in the threads which discuss examples of vaporwave sound aesthetic as "pure creepiness" and "hollow white nothingness" (Abridge27 2015). One Redditor explains that,

'Generic things,' mass produced and characterless, have always made me feel a particular melancholy—like feeling pity for the love an item or song will never receive. Vaporwave's use of these generic feeling songs, replete with repetition, give me that same sense of fleeting melancholy. Mall muzak and the like happen in environments where they are not at the forefront. This sort of music passes us by in a brief moment of our lives, anonymous and unappreciated. (DoFDcostheta 2015).

The 'hollow' and 'generic' sound aesthetic is achieved in many vaporwave tracks by stripping the mid-section of the tones. The term 'mid-section' is a cognitive metaphor used in sound mixing that represents the middle range of frequencies that can be manipulated in the mix. In the language of sound engineering, mid-section tones are often anthropomorphised as a 'body' ("Secrets of Mixing" 2013). For instance, if the mid-section frequencies are full and privileged in the mix, the sound will be referred to as having 'good body'. Conversely, vaporwave strips these frequencies out and, as a

result, vaporwave mixes generally have no mid-section—no *body*. Just like the consumer is nobody, vaporwave has no ‘body’.

The notion of the anonymous or ‘hollow’ consumer resonates with the theme of ‘consumption obsession’ that vaporwave uses as a visual leit-motif. As Bert Adams and R. A. Sydnie explain: “The commodity, such as the television set or video game, becomes a fetish for the consumer—an item that in a hollow way pretends to give meaning to life” (2002, 128). Vaporwave, as a digital genre, is a way for listeners to explore this sense of hollowness, the sense of being a ‘nobody’ in a globalised digital world. This is why Harper refers to the sonic landscape of vaporwave as the sound of the “virtual plaza” (2015) which parodies the contemporary consumer who purchases in both anonymity and in a type of somnambulist half-sleep. The plaza is virtual because the individual is there but not *really there*. The individual is the faceless, non-individuated, anonymous consumer. The preoccupation with anonymity is also exemplified by the fact that artists trade under pseudonyms. Some artists even trade music under several different pseudonyms making it difficult to know who made which tracks. Anonymity divorces artistic identities from the music they make, but also divorces their identities from the listener. The music becomes completely disengaged from the usual strategies of connection between fan and artist, deliberately eroding human reciprocity in the listening experience and, by doing so, exploring those aspects of digital culture in which the individual loses individuality and specificity.

The distant self in dystopian postconsumer culture

As I have mentioned, vaporwave draws largely from the genre of muzak®, which is an easy-listening style of music often played in shopping centres or, in more Americanised phraseology, ‘the mall’. For vaporwave listeners, this aesthetic provokes:

That feeling of being a bystander at the arcade waiting for your turn (nanosmusics 2015).

Slightly-dystopian “What if”? style of music [...] makes us wish we could be in that non-existent period of time just so we could walk down a gigantic mall with our friends with our Walkman and brightly-patterned clothes (ChiptuneGhosts 2015).

[...] the busy yet empty mall analogy (Kidneybot 2015).

[a] futuristic/dystopian feel, or ‘world that never was’ vibe (lifeanddecay 2015)

[a sense of the] hyper-real, consumer-driven world of the early 21st century. For many of us, this was a relationship that was built on the technological utopianism of ‘90s culture, but one that has now been

challenged by the global recession and by the resultant collapse of the ideals of the free market, corporate power, and technological progress that so defined the '90s. (DasModernist 2015)

This language suggests vaporwave listening as an enterprise in emotional exploration; the exploration of worlds and states of being that can be envisioned but never actualised. The genre of vaporwave is subtitled as, 'music optimised for abandoned malls,' because it aims to produce the effect of a postconsumer environment where the relics of mall culture survive and the human subject exists in a transfixed purchasing trance. These notions echo the Derridian concept of "hauntology," which comes from the French *hantologie* following Derrida's use of the word in his text *Spectres of Marx* in 1993. As Colin Davis explains, the French word *hantologie* "supplants its near-homonym" *ontologie*, thereby "replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive" (2005, 373). Vaporwave's 'hauntological' aesthetic calls forth and explores listeners' experience of the future that was advertised but never delivered (as in the term vaporware).

Derrida's *hantologie* is manifest in the deadmalls.com phenomenon, which intersects and interacts thematically with vaporwave's preoccupation with the abandoned mall. The Dead Malls website is a collection of images and stories of the malls which have been left abandoned and neglected across America. The images of rotting suburban spaces and the manifest legacies of the global financial crises are haunting and ghostly. These 'dead malls' exemplify vaporwave's characterisation of a future that is here but also never arrived. In Adam Trainer's chapter "From Hypnogia to Distroid" (2016), he writes that, "What sets vaporwave apart as an aesthetic system is the lack of direct comment taking place in the music itself ... vaporwave presents a simulation of both the empty vacuousness and the boundless promise of a postglobalised consumer landscape" (421). Vaporwave listeners therefore explore, and are positioned within, a very particular affective schema specific to the framework of consumer relations in the digital age in which the listener is haunted by the spectres of better, or at least different, futures.

Further, the symbol of the mall plays a very significant role in cultivating the listening experience because of the tightly-bound relationship that has been constructed between the mall and the contemporary subject. In Sterne's words, the mall is an "icon" for hyper-consumerism and the soundtrack of this space is undoubtedly muzak® (1997, 22; see also Harper 2002). For Sterne, the muzak® disseminated throughout The Mall of America, the largest mall in the U.S., constitutes

its very architecture: “Rather than simply filling up an empty space, the music becomes part of the consistency of that space. The sound becomes a presence, and as that presence it becomes an essential part of the building’s infrastructure” (1997, 23). Since the emergence of muzak® in the 1930s (Muzak® Holdings was founded in 1934), music has become implicated in corporate strategies as an accomplice to consumer manipulation and workforce management, helping consumers shop for longer and encouraging personnel to work more productively (Jones and Schumacher 1992, 156). In this instance, music is therefore stripped of any sense of artistic individuality or potentialities (Lanza 1995, 67-68). Instead, music itself becomes absorbed into the matrix of mall culture. In Sterne’s critique of *The Mall of America*:

The economics and social organisation of programmed music presumes and exists on top of a whole culture and economy of recorded music. In other words, programmed music presumes that music has already become a thing—a commodity (1997, 24).

By drawing upon and repurposing muzak®, vaporwave works as a parody of the commodification of contemporary music as well as the broader commodification of culture itself. By doing so, the genre taps into a sense that the listener is ‘always-already’ exploited. The listener consciously accepts their position as a faceless consumer in a nightmarish dystopian world.

The slowed-down samples and heavy reverb used in vaporwave add to the feeling of being narcotised or heavily sedated, taking to the extreme the idea of the ‘zombified’ consumer.¹⁸ In fact, as Alexander Carpenter writes, out of all genres, muzak® is most closely associated with “zombie music” (2013, 1237). Carpenter uses two films, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and its remake *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), to illustrate the way easy-listening mood music piped into elevators and shopping centres represents the culture of zombie (1231). While both films feature muzak®, the 2004 version of the film is actually set in an American mega-mall. As Carpenter explains, muzak® is deployed in the film in order to draw similarities between the cult of consumerism and the living dead; a mindless cannibalism of humanity (1239). Similarly, the sedative effect of vaporwave’s anti-muzak® lampoons the contemporary subject who consumes in a state of hypnosis.

Vaporwave works to defamiliarise the familiar by making absurd what has come to be naturalised. The virtual plaza is a post-consumer plaza. A shopping mall for the end of the world, so to speak, in which all individuals are subsumed into the role of

¹⁸ One track entitled “リサフランク 420 / 現代のコンピュータ” by Macintosh Plus features Diana Ross’ “Swept Away” slowed down to the point of obscurity, sculpting an expansive arrangement that feels both familiar and close yet simultaneously so far away.

consumption and all activity in everyday life falls under that rubric. There is no more 'consumer' and 'non-consumer' because *all* subjects are interpellated into the architecture of consumption. For music commentator Robert Ham, vaporwave therefore constitutes:

A decidedly dystopian genre [...] glistening beats for a hyper-glassine sound that would feel equally appropriate playing underneath a modern cut of *Blade Runner* or a first-person shooter zombie attack video game. (2012, n.p.)

In this sense, vaporwave invokes very similar experiences as these popular science fiction texts that explore and consider terrifying possibilities in which the subject has already been transformed into a mindless drone. For example, Stratton reads *The Matrix* trilogy as an exploration of a dystopia, with a "twist" (2006, 29), where the "machines provide an albeit illusory world which is better than the 1999 peak of human civilisation" (30). Stratton goes on to quote James Berger who explains that while modernity was "preoccupied by a sense of crisis," in more contemporary contexts, "This sense of crisis has not disappeared, [...] it exists together with another sense, that the conclusive catastrophe has already occurred" (Berger 1999, quoted in Stratton 2006, 36). Berger suggests that we might not even know exactly when this catastrophe occurred but "the ceaseless activity of our time...is only a complex form of stasis" (Berger 1999 quoted in Stratton 2006, 36). In the first *Matrix* film, for example, Morpheus explains to Neo that humans are not sure of the exact date and that the details of when and how the machines took over the human race is not known ("although it was us that scorched the Sun" as Morpheus confesses). Humans 'go about their business' completely oblivious to the fact that they are in fact in a dream state being drained of their life-force. In a similar way, vaporwave's ceaseless preoccupation with the mall as an eerie oasis suggests that listeners are terrified that perhaps the dystopic-future has arrived, but that we as a people have been so hypnotised into complacency by the machines of consumption that we cannot recognise this fact, instead, going about the business of consumption as if nothing has happened. These are the ways in which the cyberethnography presents vaporwave as a listening experience that calls forth feelings of alienation, isolation, and feelings of hollowness and anonymity, and the sense of living in a dystopian future-present.

Level 2: The Vaporwave Project: Objectives at stake in the production of vaporwave

Do vaporwave artists dream of abandoned malls?

For vaporwave artists, the genre is a project that seeks to pervert the function of muzak® as a calming aural tonic in order to excavate the uneasy feelings that

commercial culture seeks to repress and silence. Simon Jones and Thomas Schumacher call muzak® “an instance of cultural totalitarianism, reproducing an ideology of bureaucratic rationalism and perpetuating alienation and false consciousness” (1992, 156). Vaporwave artists therefore aim to intensify the uneasiness of muzak® in order to highlight its underlying function. In this way, vaporwave focuses on those parts of our culture that are uncomfortable or deliberately neglected, in order to excavate the dregs of cultural production and the waste products of consumer culture.

The vaporwave project digs up that which capitalism discards, and brings it to the fore: old VHS tapes, bad haircuts, the grating tones of corporate instructional videos, and so forth. In doing so, vaporwave serves as a type of cultural purge of old and buried material. For one Redditor, vaporwave is “the most cathartic” music s/he has ever heard (joshuatx 2015). Applying Eldritch Priest’s work on experimental music is pertinent here. For Priest, muzak® is “the public shame of good taste” (2013, n.p.). The use of shame as a collective emotion is critical here. As Julia Kristeva famously explores in *Power of Horror* (1982), shame is representative of that which is abject, those materials that culture seeks to rid itself of (8). And yet, vaporwave takes this shame as its launching point and with this ‘shame’ creates new sounds. As Priest explains, recent experimental compositions have repurposed many of those sounds which have been thrown away, made disposable, or discarded as waste material (or as he calls it, that which has been made into “shit”). Experimental music calls forth these obsolete sounds in order to “fertilise the wide field of listening with a farrago of attentional spores that sprout gnarled shoots of interest to see new aesthetic sensibilities” (2013, n.p.). Following along these lines, I suggest that vaporwave, as an experimental form of music, repurposes those artefacts that our culture has repressed or disposed of, particularly in relation to the 1980s, the decade with which vaporwave is preoccupied. This process enables artists to articulate ways of feeling which are otherwise difficult to express because they are the very moments that consumer culture attempts to attenuate by the promise that purchasing objects can erase suffering —the AIDS epidemic, the Ethiopian famine, and other collective or social traumas. The nature of repression, however, is not an eradication of material. The material lingers, biding its time to re-emerge. Vaporwave seeks out that which has been lost and that which, in itself, has been alienated, in order to charter those lost affects. Priest explains that those “habits of inattention developed around the use of ubiquitous audio media forms” has helped to create music that “replicates and warps the drifts and digressions that constitute those habits” (n.p.). The fact of our cultural alienation, culminated in the corporatised sounds of muzak®, are exacerbated in the sounds of

vaporwave, a genre customised for the digital experience in which all material is accessible and yet so much has been silenced.

A project in powerlessness

The vaporwave project interrogates the limits of our power as individuals in contemporary digital contexts in which we can see everything but act on little. Devorah Kalekin-Fishman and Lauren Langman draw from Marcusean theory to explain the way:

late capitalism seemingly liberated erotic desire, but this 'liberation' was calculated to incorporate the individual into the 'administered society' where the person is alienated from his/her 'real needs' and therefore chooses hedonism, consumerism, or sexuality over liberation. Thus, capitalism has colonized sexuality, and offers only 'repressive desublimation'. Conditions of alienated labor lead people to embrace standardized escapist entertainment that keeps them deceived, distracted, and powerless either to understand their lives or to mobilize for progressive change. (2015, 919)

Drawing on those sounds of discarded or repressed material both *mimic and mock* the subject's position as a disposable and powerless commodity of late-stage capitalism. An alienated sound for a repressed subject who turns to consuming to cover over their feelings of powerlessness. For example, the song "Jon Benet" by vaporwave artist 18 Carat Affair (Sullivan 2011) features the generic characteristics of vaporwave sound and imagery. The YouTube clip features an outdated video of a woman gently bathing in flower water while hollow beats are played against the bright tones of keyboard synth. However, in stark juxtaposition, the title "Jon Benet" inescapably makes reference to the 1996 assault and murder of JonBenét Ramsay, a six-year-old girl found dead in her parents' basement. The murder of JonBenét Ramsay, located in Colorado in the U.S., was a global phenomenon sensationalised by media speculation and the fact of JonBenét's participation in child beauty pageants, which many believe constituted abuse in itself (Pannell 2007). The crime was never solved, some suspect through conspiracy to cover up the crime, or through incompetence, and so her killer was never brought to justice. For nearly two decades it has haunted the cultural psyche, particularly in the U.S.

What is pertinent to this argument however is the expression of this powerlessness through the vaporwave model. I turn to Clara Latham's work on the ways in which music can be used as a conduit for the expression of repressed trauma and psychic material. Latham reads the vocal performance of Albertine Zehme in Alfred Schoenberg's *Sprechstimme* as a technique that expressed a range of affects, particularly those produced by repressed trauma. In Latham's examination of affect in Schoenberg's *Sprechstimme*, she writes:

When the subject does not release the trauma by purging the affect through the acts of mourning or revenge, the affect remains attached to the memory of trauma. By speaking of the trauma, the subject recreates the affects that were originally associated with the trauma. This gives the subject the chance to adequately release the affects: to abreact them. (2013, 107)

In a similar sense, I suggest vaporwave artists use the genre as a project to call forth collective trauma through the empty sound of tinny synth and hollowed out drum beats to express forms of anguish and powerlessness, echoing back to the earlier point I make about the subject having 'no-body'. The language deployed in the cyberethnography points to these feelings of despair. Redditor 'Toof_Paste' writes: "I feel a wave of mixed emotions hit me at the same time ... part sadness and fear of what will happen to mankind in the future (2015). Redditor 'Raidicus' calls vaporwave "the sound of broken promises" (2015). Another Redditor simply describes vaporwave as "the loneliest music" (Dawsinn 2015.) The vaporwave project serves as an exploration of absurdity that cannot be 'made sense of' by the media, regardless of the promises made by commercial culture. 18 Carat Affair's track can therefore be read as a moment in the articulation of powerlessness for the repressed subject.

Level 3: A critique of vaporwave

In this final section, I read vaporwave as a genre in broader terms. I critique vaporwave as a form of memory play that confabulates the past, fabricates memory and produces a kind of 'compensatory nostalgia' using specifically digital techniques. In addition, I examine vaporwave as a strategy of 'gestaltism'—a reach for wholeness in a fractured, multiplicitous world—by its repetitive deployment of collage techniques.

The pleasure of memory: Somewhere between my childhood and here

First, I look at the way that vaporwave uses generic and broad cultural symbols which generate the sense of shared memory or even false memory.¹⁹ Vaporwave borrows from a range of disparate times and places and, by doing so, vaporwave confabulates the past and confuses temporal boundaries. The emphasis is not upon what is being told but the style of the telling; not the narrative but the narratology. In these terms, vaporwave works as a type of 're-representation' of memory. In order to illustrate this phenomenon, I present several comments from the cyberethnography relating to the aspect of memory in the experience of listening to vaporwave. They all point to some

¹⁹ False memory, or "false memory syndrome," is often associated with the spate of "childhood abuse hysteria" in the 1980s in which genuine abuse cases sparked further false allegations created by parents' power of suggestion on children (Sinason 1998, 122). It is now generally used to describe a condition in which patients confuse their memories as a result of the power of suggestion of the therapist. This is, of course, not to imply that real cases of abuse never occurred.

form of distorted or disrupted experience of remembering. For example, for Redditor SockMice, “Vaporwave represents a fogged window reflecting snippets of childhood memories [sic]” (2015). Another Redditor, called joshuatx, says vaporwave is able to tap into music s/he once loved but had “literally forgotten or discarded in terms of memory” (2015). joshuatx goes on to say that:

It reminds me of living in Okinawa as a kid, a time which I hadn't really fixed with a specific artist or music (like I did as a teenager later) but is instead framed by background music and the aesthetics of toys and tv [sic] and other commercial media I was surrounded by at the time. (2015)

In these comments we see a recurring theme that links vaporwave to the production and experience of memory, but in ways that suggest these memories are not reliable, i.e. ‘fogged’ or ‘discarded’. The comment by another Redditor, arleybob, frames these comments in a more definitive way. For arleybob, vaporwave “brings up a weird old feeling of being nostalgic for something *that never happened*” (2015; my emphasis). This comment points to the idea that ‘vaporwave nostalgia’ is not at all to do with grief or loss in a personal sense but, rather, calls forth collective forms of memory and shared programs of remembering. The listener draws upon their own repository of past experience in order to ‘plug into’ the complex and collective re/production of memory which is reworked into the art/music synthesis, albeit one that is produced within the margins of liminality (i.e., a space that is transitory or that feels not quite ‘real’). This is why listeners describe vaporwave as an avenue to explore and express worlds and experiences they feel have been lost in the passage of time or space. These individuals’ memories are, in a way, ‘crowd-sourced’ both to and from the vaporwave aesthetic.

Further, vaporwave capitulates to the *impossibility* of memory in postmodernity, and can be read as an attempt to redefine the practice of memorialisation in order to destabilise what has come to be concretised as The Past. In “Memory as Forgetting” (2003), Eric Berlatsky draws on a Lyotardian framework in which he posits that postmodernism “takes place in the realization that Enlightenment rationalism and scientific positivism are not tied to objective truth and reality” (2003, 101). Instead, the contemporary context is defined merely by “‘language games,’ like narrative itself, that create ‘the effects of reality,’ that, in a postmodern age, become ‘the fantasies of realism’” (Lyotard 1984, quoted in Berlatsky 2003, 101-102). I apply Berlatsky’s reading to vaporwave because, in a similar sense, vaporwave undermines traditional narrative structures that give rise to any sense of a coherent past. Symbols and sounds from a wide variety of artistic and commercial forms come together in often nonsensical ways that serve to take apart holistic accounts of historical record

and make a mockery of formal narrative structures. Vaporwave is also based on the notion that commercial interests dictate cultural stories, i.e., the term vaporware satirises commercial predictions of futures that never happen/ed. As Berlatsky points out, in postmodern contexts:

‘Objective’ history, and positivist science not only become misled in their attempts to configure the world as an eminently understandable and coherent system, they also become ideologically charged deceptive practices that posit an immanent and essentialised world where none exists. (101-102).

Commercial interests are ideological interests; they rewrite the past and the potential future in order to capitalise and exploit, often at the cost of the suffering of disenfranchised peoples. By deploying commercial aesthetic and reworking those sounds and images in the extreme, vaporwave magnifies postmodern capitalism’s nightmarish emptiness. Vaporwave draws attention to these concerns particularly in the digital context, in which so many individuals are connected but with so little political power to effect change. In doing so, vaporwave exemplifies ways of feeling in the digital listening context as a complex phenomenon that imbricates both intimate and social affective dimensions of memory as a fractured picture trapped in lost or liminal space.

Vaporwave is an activity in which remembering itself is part of the pleasure of the music listening experience. Memory is a discursive cultural practice, in large part monitored and constructed across all media (Zierold 2008, 399), and yet has become slippery and treacherous terrain in postmodernity (Berlatsky 2003). Memory and History are met with scepticism and cast as ambiguous and fallible structures. Vaporwave highlights the ambiguity of memory as a project of media construction. In this it speaks to individuals born in the early to mid-1980s who were inculcated with baby boomer rhetoric marking the ‘death’ of the 1960s as a ‘golden age,’ as well as the discourses of consumption excess, in which lifestyle technologies were supposed to make life better, despite the grip of the AIDS epidemic and the end scenes of the Cold War. Vaporwave plays upon the processes of remembering for the sake of remembering itself rather than for some formal retrieval of facts. For example, let us consider the track “Evening Division Unit” by vaporwave artist J Sanders (Sanders 2016). The track is engulfed by a steady, dark synth which locates the listener/viewer in the era of 1980s new wave/post punk. Already, the listener/viewer is asked to participate, or play, with memory. The beat sits on a slow 85bpm which lends the track a sluggishness and suggests a modicum of control and regimentation. The effect produces a type of gothic march that never slows or quickens but remains exact throughout any key changes that take place. It is a dark march, overlaid by images of

Japanese business women smiling and engaging in positive social situations. These images are then cut in with Nissan model cars and with the actor Kyle McLachlan, who is well known (particularly in TV fandoms) for playing the role of FBI Agent Dale Cooper in the dark psychodrama *Twin Peaks*. Meanwhile, the Mona Lisa slowly appears and morphs into a 3D rendering of a woman participating in the stock market on an outdated computer system. The track is a project that splices archive with affect. The sounds and images together produce a type of disjointed narrative, which constitutes a sense of remembering scenes that did not occur in the sequence the narrative suggests. The Mona Lisa and floating signifiers that reference late-twentieth century business models are worked together to form pastiche from cultural repository. The sheer pleasure of creating the past—in a way, by destroying it—undergirds the digital listening experience exemplified by vaporwave. Vaporwave makes remembering and listening into artistic practice. Collective memory fuses with personal narrative; the vaporwave listener in is the process of memory but has never fully remembered. Memory is drawn as shifting, mobile, fluid, playful and always unfolding. In vaporwave, the project of memory is never complete but open to constant revision.

Vaporwave also suggests a kind of temporal contradiction in that it appropriates so much material from the past—outdated VHS tapes, old pop songs—yet so much of vaporwave production relies on contemporary sound mixing technology and software as well as the need for digital platforms to circulate the music itself. Vaporwave both recalls and displaces the archive by confusing the boundaries between past, present, and future. This can be read in terms of Healy's compensatory nostalgia. Healy suggests that "compensatory nostalgia" (2006) comes about as a result of the paradox between remembering and forgetting that is ubiquitous in contemporary Western culture, and in particular, through the saturation of media in the age of digitisation (222). Healy formulates this position from Andreas Huyssen's work (2000), in which Huyssen suggests that the "relationship between memory and forgetting [are] actually being transformed under cultural pressures" (quoted in Healy 2006, 222). Huyssen questions whether the relationship between memory and forgetting is being transformed as a result of "new information technologies, media politics, and fast-paced consumption" (2000, 27). "After all," he writes, "many of the mass-marketed memories we consume are 'imagined memories' to begin with, and thus more easily forgotten than lived memories" (2000, 27). As Huyssen explains:

contemporary culture is relentlessly cast as forgetful, its historical consciousness lost or anaesthetised. Yet on the other hand there is a seemingly endless proliferation of discourses of the historic, of commemorations, of memorialising, of genealogical and local historical enthusiasm, and an

unceasing escalation in the desire to preserve, record and document 'the past'. It seems that Western society's memory culture suffers from a hypertrophy of both remembering and forgetting. (quoted in Healy 2006, 221)

Rather than being opposites, remembering and forgetting are inextricably relational, as Huyssen writes: "Memory is but another form of forgetting, and forgetting a form of hidden memory" (2000, 27). In line with this paradox, vaporwave's 'memory play' is both a form of remembering and of forgetting, in that the material that constructs vaporwave is old but still does not claim to make any coherent sense of the past. Nothing is remembered 'properly' so to speak, but is layered in obscurity and drenched in processes that make the original barely recognisable. Vaporwave plays upon and expands a liminal listening space in which the past, present, and future exist synchronously.

The affective dimensions of the vaporwave collage aesthetic

"The world attacks us directly [...] tears us apart through the experience of the most incredible events, and assembles and reassembles us again. Collage is the most appropriate medium to illustrate this reality."

Jiří Kolář (quoted in Taylor 2004, 185)

Vaporwave is, in effect, comprised of sound and image collage. Sounds collaged together. Images collaged together. Sound and images collaged together. Therefore, to read vaporwave as a case study in contemporary listening practices, we must trace what role 'collage' plays in wider implications of aesthetic experience. The word 'collage' is the French noun that is drawn from the verb *coller*, literally "to glue" or "to stick" (Taylor 2004, 8). The verb *coller* is used in French in a variety of idioms: eyes 'glued' to women, backsides 'glued' to seats, and later, as Brandon Taylor explains, "To be *collé* to a woman was to be married to her ... or, from the early twentieth century, to be living with her in 'in sin'" (8). Collage connotes a confusion of boundaries through 'stickiness'. For Taylor, collage is associated with "indecentcy, paradox and perplexity—as impurity by any other name" (8). In aesthetic terms, when an "imported object" imposes itself on another surface on which "it does not belong" the new relationship brings forth a type of inappropriateness that is, in Taylor's words, "jarring or wrong" but at the same time cultivates a "frisson of excitement at the sight of a coupling which is illicit, discontinuous, at the very limits of aesthetic decency" (8). Collage is about pushing uncomfortably against that which contains it; by doing so it often blurs the very rigidly held boundaries between low and high art, which marks its experimental and marginal status (9).

Up until the late twentieth century, collage was largely produced by *papiers collé*, glued papers, but now collage is set free from these traditional parameters and takes on new meanings in the digital world. I suggest that vaporwave's collage aesthetic is a means to effect specific emotional resonances that construct and represent the individuals' affective landscape in a digital paradigm. To be more specific, because collage is about taking apart and putting back together, I read vaporwave's use of collage as the manifest desire to bring back a sense of ordered identity in a fractured, schizoid world in which boundaries are fluid and often chaotic. To do this I synthesise a reading of collage in vaporwave with *gestalt* theory, a field that is concerned with how one comes to make order out of disordered parts.²⁰

The word *gestalt* is taken from the German and has no direct English translation. The closest reference is taken to mean "form," "shape" or "configuration" (Singh 1991, 296). In *gestalt* psychology, developed by academics and psychoanalysts in the 1920s (Wenger 1997, 35), the central principle is based on the understanding that "the mind forms a global whole with self-organizing tendencies" (Aftab n.d.). Gestalt is about feelings of wholeness, control, and oneness. *Gestalt* psychology therefore works to "understand the laws of our ability to acquire and maintain meaningful perceptions in an apparently chaotic world" (Aftab, n.d.). In relation to art and design, *gestalt* "refers to the act of perceiving visual relationships as well as the process of giving these relationships a structured form" (Wenger 1997, 37). In putting these understandings together, we can read the *gestalt* of vaporwave's collage as an expression of the terror of disassembly and an attempt to explore this terrain in digital contexts. I certainly do not suggest that vaporwave is a deliberate exercise in *gestaltism* (although some artistic projects may be). Rather, I suggest that vaporwave is a project that encapsulates a reach for the individual to form coherence from chaos. These are not simple dynamics that lead cleanly from one emotional state to another. As Seigworth and Gregg explain, "affect emerges out of muddy, unmediated relatedness and not in some dialectical reconciliation of cleanly oppositional elements or primary units, it makes easy compartmentalisations give way to thresholds and tensions, blends and blurs" (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 4). By using visual techniques that suggest this blurring and messiness, vaporwave collage can be read as a project that is preoccupied with bringing totality back into self. The collage aesthetic suggests a desire to bring the disordered self back into safe confines of completed-ness.

²⁰ Gestalt theory is often associated with popular psychology, however as Charles Bowman explains, a wide range of interdisciplinary schools converge on the concept, from "physics to feminism, Hasidism to Taoism, and radical individualism to relational psychology, to name just a few" (Woldt and Toman 2005, 4).

Let us take 18 Carat Affair's track "Promethazine" (Unevermine 2014). A woman in a neon pink tank top dances slowly and seductively but her image is cut through by contoured lines of burnt orange and deep purple which fall into transparency as they shift. Separate images of block colours are overlaid onto the woman so that she is never seen in her totality; she never becomes whole. However, the constant motion of the strips suggests that a complete image might soon be possible. This clip is an example of what Czech artist Jiří Kolář coined as *prollage* (Taylor 2004, 181). *Prollage* is a method of collage that involves two or more different images cut into strips and then reassembled in a staggered sequence (181). As Taylor explains, *prollage* gives a "behind-bars appearance that is also a simultaneity-effect whose purpose is to tease the mind and the eye" (181). The mind/eye is teased, or seduced, toward a desire for the wholeness of the image. The woman continues to dance throughout the entirety of the clip but her face and body are never in full view and she never becomes a whole image. The woman is always shielded from the viewer through the strips of the *prollage* until she finally fades into blurred obscurity. The vaporwave track is a practice of both seduction and deception because the *gestalt* is never fully realised.

Another variation of collage that is credited to Kolář is the practice of *rollage* (181). In this method, two or more copies of the same image are cut into strips and mounted in a staggered sequence (181). This effect is used in another track, also by artist 18 Carat Affair, entitled "Mirror Mirror" (SynesthesiaeFilms 2011). A woman with startling red lips and a matching red top is dancing against a grey background. The moving image is cut into vertical strips that are staggered against each other, producing a *rollage* effect in motion. These scenes are then cut between other types of collage effects and kaleidoscopes, as well as video of a well-dressed woman smoking a cigarette in a mirror. This *rollage* presents one of the major themes of *gestaltism*, particularly in a psychoanalytic sense, which is the confrontation of the shadow self; the merging with the self in the mirror—hence the title of the track "Mirror Mirror," the word mirror repeated. The self is cut into strips which exist against each other, like the effect of looking into a mirror. I suggest that it is for these provocations that listeners describe vaporwave as "eery" (vhs_box_art 2016; silentphantom 2015; Harper 2016).

In a Freudian sense, feelings of eeriness are related to the meeting of the unfamiliar and the familiar, or what Freud described as "the uncanny" (1919). Freud writes that "the 'uncanny' is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (1919, 1). Through the *rollage* in "Mirror Mirror"

a doubling is suggested. The two images are the same and they constantly ‘play’ with each other but are not each other. They are familiar and unfamiliar—like the *doppelgänger*, the externalised mirror image. Yet the images are never reconciled. The strips never meet and the double continues its shadow play, which exacerbates the feeling of eeriness. In his essay, Freud points to the work of Otto Rank, who also connected “the double” with a desire to be reflected, i.e., in mirrors and shadows. This is because “the double” provides the individual with an immortality through preservation of the self: “doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of the genital symbol” (Freud, 1919, 9). The “double” emerges from the stage of infantile narcissism, however, once “left behind the double takes on a different aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death” (9). (Interestingly, in the very end of the track “Promethazine,” childhood toys are featured through a blurred lens, but disappear in three to four seconds of their appearance.) As the self emerges into adulthood, into the social structures that require the condition of phallic rule, the double becomes that which *threatens* the total destruction of the ego. It must be repressed, pushed away. Of course, the “double” never truly leaves, which is why the effect of “doubling” in media images harks back “to particular phases in the evolution of the self-regarding feeling, a regression to a time when the ego was not yet sharply differentiated from the external world and from other persons” (10). As Freud goes on to explain, this is what is “partly responsible for the impression of the uncanny” (10). The doubling ‘effect’ is a preoccupation in vaporwave aesthetic²¹ and I suggest that this this preoccupation both reflects and constructs an emotional architecture of the digital listening experience in which layers upon layers are available for production and consumption. Kolar once wrote that *rollage* enabled him to “see the world in at least two dimensions ... ‘the stratifications made me realise just how many unknown layers make up life and just how many unknown deposits exist within each of us’” (quoted in Taylor 2004, 181). I suggest vaporwave uses the effect to a similar means, whereby the *rollage* (of images, but also of sound and image together) enables vaporwave consumers to explore the multiplicity of ways of feeling in a complex digital age that involve the tensions produced by that very multiplicity.

Conclusion

²¹ See vaporwave mixes “Subconscious Browsing” and “Satisfaction Guaranteed” for more examples of the use in the double effect overlaid on vaporwave playlists.

Vaporwave constructs, and in some way, articulates, complex ways of feeling in the realm of digital listening experiences. This case study illustrates deeply involved encounters with music, in which listeners describe feelings that both reflect and construct emotional narratives that help to cultivate and constitute the self. In this chapter, I have examined vaporwave as a case study on three different levels. The first level explored the language listeners employ to discuss their feelings about vaporwave, pointing to feelings of alienation and isolation, powerlessness and paradox. The second level examined the vaporwave project as it is imagined and put forth by vaporwave artists and, through this examination, emerged a sense that the vaporwave project processes repressed or submerged cultural materials. Lastly, on the third level, I performed a reading of vaporwave to critique its function as a generic model. Through this critique I found vaporwave as an experience of confabulation, confusion and 'compensatory nostalgia'. In addition, the visual aesthetics of vaporwave, in terms of the use of collage, point to the experience of the digital listener as a fractured subject in a chaotic, complex world.

I have performed a case study in this chapter in order to generate specificity; to know exactly what kinds of genres digitisation might produce and what kinds of emotional systems fit in with contemporary models of music listening. Different styles of music have long been associated with attendant emotional schemas: the association of punk with hostility and aggression, or black metal with death and nihilism, are just two examples. These models represent a type of "affective economy" (Grossberg 1997, 75). Lawrence Grossberg used the rock and roll apparatus to illustrate the way different genres of popular music can produce very specific effects of empowerment and "energy" (77), which are always entangled with ideological articulations of subjective categories, of sex, class and so forth. Vaporwave, too, is a product of "a particular social and historical site" that "brings together musical texts and practices; economic relations; images ... social relations; aesthetic conventions; styles of language, movement, appearance; dance; media practices; [and] ideological commitments" (75). By drawing from a variety of relations, in which affect, emotion, pleasure and one's self of sense are deeply imbricated, a genre can help to transform the "affective geography of the everyday lives of its fans" (76).

Specifically, using vaporwave as a case study, we see the way digital listening experiences are highly specific to its mediation. Let us take, for example, a reading of British house music as a postmodern artefact. Alan Kirby explains that, "For postmodernists, a more apt example of Barthes' notion of text as a 'tissue of quotations'

or of Jameson's pastiche could not have been imagined" (2009, 88).²² Of course, as Kirby concedes, this type of plunderphonics was not at all new. Rather, he writes:

What the sampler permitted, in a shift anticipated by Walter Benjamin, was the cannibalization of *recordings* rather than simply of songs, a process that yielded contemporary pieces from sonic components clearly created at a range of past times. The sense of hearing something utterly 'now' formed at many different periods [...] was uncanny, dislocating, evocative, and exciting. (88; original emphasis)

In a postmodern reading of house music, it is both the style of musical pastiche and the possibilities enabled by the techno-historical moment that produced house music as emotionally legible to some listeners. This is likely because 1980s sampling techniques and the electromechanical sound rudiments pointed to larger technological advancements that were infiltrating the everyday lives of individuals, such as compact disc technology, new computer technologies and even medical breakthroughs such as the eradication of smallpox. However, these feelings, like all others, are products of time, place and subjective positioning. For instance, at the same time that house music was spreading across Britain (Kirby 2009, 87), The Smiths were singing about burning down the disco because "it says nothing to me about my life" (in 1986). In Kirby's words, The Smiths were, "Locked inside the expressive-meaningful assumptions of white-boy rock music. The Smiths could only look at house and see an inability to evoke everyday experience, a failure of signification" (87). Conceding the heterogeneity of emotional narratology is just as important as placing ways of feelings into neat categories in order to discuss them.

In this chapter, I have taken a transection of music listening experiences to explore some of the ways that listeners describe, express, exchange, construct and reflect their feelings of new Internet genres. In doing so, I have found the overwhelming emotional theme in the vaporwave listening experience is about the way that music can both reflect and position the modern subject as an alienated entity immured within the matrix of late-stage capitalism, the very context in which vaporwave is situated and through which it is produced. Recurring visual and phonic themes point, almost chronically, to the critique of the commodification of contemporary music as well as the broader commodification of culture itself. However, vaporwave does not seek to undo any particular systems of thought. Instead the genre seeks to make them known and bring them to the surface, such as through the repurposing of the uncanny sounds of corporatised muzak® drenched in obscure outdated samples. In deploying techniques

²² It must be noted that Kirby himself does not suggest house as postmodern, rather, he is presenting a reading of house as many postmodernists read the genre. In fact, Kirby feels that postmodernists "misconstrued house by overemphasizing its use of sampling" (2009, 88).

such as pastiche, intertextuality, and collage, the vaporwave experience becomes about the estrangement, or in Marxian language, *entfremdung*, of the self from the self, demonstrating feelings of powerlessness, confusion, disconnection and a longing for order and wholeness. All of this colours the emotional schema and gives us an insight into what kind of historical moment we are situated in and what kind of feelings might be in play for some musical communities.

Conclusion: The Braided Rope

Music is prophecy ... It makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible, that will impose itself and regulate the order of things; it is not only the image of things, but the transcending of the everyday, the herald of the future.
(Attali 1985, 11)

Introduction

In commencing this project, my research objective was to explore and understand the relationship between our affective experiences of music listening and the ways in which those are impacted by the emergence of digital technologies. My thesis rested on the premise that technology and musical experience are infinitely and intricately linked in ways that have not yet been fully acknowledged by the literature on listening experiences throughout popular music studies. In order to argue this, I conducted a cyberethnography based on Reddit.com users and performed a language analysis of the emotional lexicon put forth by these music fans. What has emerged in exploring this research topic is a more profound relationship between the technology of the body, the technology of computing assemblages and the potentialities of music pleasure than I could have previously imagined possible.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I conceptualised the thesis as a four-strand, braided rope. Music, emotion, somatechnics and computing apparatus formed each strand and all looped around and through each other in order to support the tensility of the 'rope' in its entirety. In tying together the different strands of this braided rope, I have aimed to demonstrate just one way of tying this rope together. There may be many other ropes similarly braided, but this one is singular in its nature.

Further, in order to make this 'rope' a legible and coherent body of work to be read in linear fashion, I broke down aspects of my approach into chapters that work *not* linearly but in parallel. To read one is to read all and to read all is to read one, the same way that in looking at a portion of rope reveals some strands on top and others hiding beneath, yet the viewer can reach out and *feel* the bottom of the rope and know those strands continue to exist even out of view. Yet, each strand can be unwound from the body of the rope and maintain an integrity of its own. The allusion to *feeling* the rope is not accidental here. There is a bond, both figurative and material, between the rope as technology and the human body too. The technology of the rope, in a material sense, has made possible the history of human technology itself—hunting, levering, attaching, fastening, pulling (Small 2002; Turner and Van de Griend 1996). Rope is undeniably political: rope binds, enslaves, tightens, frightens, hangs and controls. Therefore, 'rope'

becomes also a metaphor for technology and its relationship to the body, and this metaphor has unfolded and woven through itself over the course of this thesis.

Tying off the braid

Now that the rope has been braided, both as it has been written and as it has been read through, I 'tie off' some of the conclusions I have been working towards.

From having to sharing

Earlier in this thesis, in Chapter Two, I explored the ways in which music fans describe the negotiations that must be made in transitioning from material consumption to digital consumption, and how those negotiations imbue themselves into the listening experience to produce new affective dynamics. Traditional practices of the twentieth century built rigid and deep-seated discursive constructs that dictated how 'authentic' listening takes place, but now that many of these constructs are rendered irrelevant by digital schemas, listeners must renegotiate some models of experience. Specifically, music fans are letting go of some of those investments in physical products that represented, so intensely, the listening pleasures that imbricate with touch, possession and collection. That is not to say that traditional listening practices and rituals around collecting are gone, instead, they take on a renewed significance as listeners must create new meanings about why and how they spend money on physical products instead of purchasing online. Therefore, although there is still much emphasis on mourning and 'missing' those material listening practices, music fans are taking on board new mechanisms of bonding through sharing MP3s. Both practices exist simultaneously but perform different functions. As I explore in Chapter Two, collecting physical products is associated with pleasure of memory while sharing immaterial music is related to altruism and online freedoms. Belk's updated work on the "extended self" (2013) concretised this premise, in that he articulates a similar trend in the wider digital culture in which emotional investments are redirected into a sense of community and social bonding. Saffle and Yang's phonotopian communities are complementary to this approach and their discussion of online communities as phonotopian spaces afforded me a way to model listeners' experiences in streaming sites such as Spotify.

A part of this sense of community is played out in the new models of creativity and creative listening afforded by digital exchange. Participatory culture enables forms of collaboration that produce entirely new ways of listening that were categorically impossible before the existence of Internet technologies. The examination of geo-

listening highlighted just some of these creative practices. In particular, I looked at the ways feelings of *dépaysement* and feelings associated with virtual tourism take place in websites like You Are Listening To Los Angeles, in which users are encouraged to contribute. The Internet provides an extraordinary space to explore one's creative and imaginative potential with others, and imbue that creative potential in new listening schemas.

The theme of community was also apparent in the exploration of the camera phone in the concert space. While there are many points of contention about the use of camera phones, one of the understandings reached in this research related to the way that camera phones function as a social technology and a way to contribute to the digital 'storyboard' across many different platforms. Music listeners use the camera phone to tell their stories about live music in new ways that inhere the visual into the narrative. Undoubtedly, the ecology of the concert space is destabilised and disturbed by the penetration of the camera phone into live music ritual, however, this does not negate its use as a social and narrative tool. Rather, live music fans take to the online space in order to discuss, debate, argue and explore the ways in which camera phone use might be regulated and 'practiced' in ways that shape the concert space in positive, rather than negative, ways.

Skins and surfaces

One of the most remarkable changes emerging from digital music is the ways in which mobile music devices interact with the skin and the human body. As a technology, the body is constantly in negotiation with other technologies that constantly remake material realities. One of the most radical of these technologies is surely mobile media devices as they have become intimately, profoundly and materially tied to the body's somatechnic. I argued in this thesis that mobile devices are cyborgian in their nature because they both mimic and transect the human body, in particular, through the function and figuration of the skin. In coming to conclude this theme, the research I have synthesised, from theorists such as Ahmed and Stacey, has deeply resonated with the ways music fans describe mobile experiences. The skin of the hands, the skin of the female sexual organs, and the skin of the body as it shivers in response to music, are aspects of skin on skin encounters in listening experience that have come to the fore in this research. The skin has come to represent a construct far more critical to music listening than I ever imagined possible in commencing this research, both in its relation to mobile touchscreen devices, but also in relation to the skin of the screen of the camera phone, a device which is now an integral aspect of the live music experience.

Musical mutations and transformations

Listening has changed because music itself continues to evolve and shift according to changes in technology. It would be impossible to chart the many different branches of music in the contemporary context, so I selected just one in order to establish a case study. The vaporwave case study raised several significant points of interest about the listening experience in contemporary digital music genres. First, an examination of the emotional lexicon in the language of Reddit users pointed to shared affective schemas built from collated and collective archives. Listeners utilise vaporwave as a reservoir to contribute to as well as draw from. Specifically, vaporwave listeners construct their experiences as explorations in alienation, anonymity, hollowness, and the sense of operating in a dystopian postconsumer culture. In terms of the production of the genre, the vaporwave project appears to function in a model of prosumerism, taking place on social media sites and exchanged only through online channels in which the lines between listener and creator are blurred. The general anonymity of the artists points to the sense that one cannot know who might be both producing and listening—fan or creator. The notion of anonymity points again to the exploration of alienation, particularly in terms of powerlessness and critique of late-stage capitalism.

In terms of critiquing the genre itself, I have argued for a reading of vaporwave as a project that confuses and confabulates the past in order to take pleasure in the processes of remembering. The pleasure of memory imbricates with the listening experiences in ways that are unique to this moment of digital music. The digitisation of music itself is also evident in the vaporwave collage aesthetic in which the visual and the aural are dissembled and reassembled in creative, but fractured, processes. I have suggested that this collage aesthetic—the taking apart of faces and sounds—points to the affective dimension of the postmodern self in that the individual takes part in the schizoid moment of contemporary culture through an alienated/alienating genre such as vaporwave.

Significance

This project is distinct from, yet in many ways complements, other work recently undertaken on listening practices in the digital age. As I point out in the introductory chapter, the most recent and closest research into digital listening practices is Raphaël Nowak's text *Consuming Music in the Digital Age* (2016). In the Introductory Chapter I make reference to this text, and suggest that there are certainly valid arguments emanating from Nowak's interview research and his assertions about 'affective

responses' to music as dependant on consumption modalities. His chapter on "material modalities of music consumption" as it constitutes life narratives and identity-making mechanisms is particularly insightful. However, Nowak's approach does not address the critical function of the body as site of intense and complex dynamisms. Nowak situates his research in the framework of 'everyday life' (6) whereas this thesis, while looking at everyday practices, is situated in those fleshy folds of the body, and crevices of the psyche, which I feel push against, and fail to be contained by, that paradigm. In the words of Attali, music explores "much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code [...] it is not only the image of things, but the transcending of the everyday" (1985, 11).

In a broader sense however, in undergirding research with the language of somatechnics, this thesis extends and contributes to a Spinozan phenomenological worldview whereby the experience of life and living—nay reality itself—is about things colliding and transforming as they collide. Things affecting each other. As Dahl and Sundén note, somatechnics is a project that extends this tradition:

In the wake of Spinoza, bodies are understood through their capacity to affect and be affected, and affect as something that moves between bodies (be they human or non-human) in ways that fundamentally question the boundedness of bodies, subjects, objects. It is precisely this questioning of bodily boundaries that makes affect theory such a productive companion to a discussion of somatechnics. (2013, 230)

In any discussion of music, the body should be addressed as both a site of sensorial experience and discursive construction that interweave and fold into each other in the Mobius metaphor with which I began this thesis. This thesis is significant because I seek to transgress those boundaries which contain music, both theoretically and practically, within arbitrary limits. In order to achieve this, this thesis has woven together critical theory from a range of distinct yet interrelated approaches—affect theory, somatechnics, cyber theory, film theory, art theory, psychoanalytic theory, gestaltism, and discourse theory—in order to frame a new a way to think about the state of music listening experience in the context of popular music studies.

Further Research: How long is a piece of rope?

In cultural theory, much like the borders of the body itself, endings and openings can be reversible and uncertain. An ending in this sense is somewhat arbitrary, as we name and articulate where something can or could end. In saying this, I mean to suggest that tying off this particular portion of rope does not imply its finality, rather, there is great potential for its continuation into other strands of listening experience. For example,

there is room here for extended work on listening through other technologies and the implications they might suggest, in particular, through Google Glass or using virtual reality. Independent work could also be undertaken into the relationship between the somatechnics of female genitalia and music technology, with a focus on its implications as a gendered process of both consumption and construction. I would also welcome the opportunity to pursue the growing and entangling relationship between liveness and the screen and extend the discussion in this thesis to look at deeper psychoanalytic dynamics that might be at play in camera phone music consumption practices.

In addition, one of the major limitations of this work is that in researching online practices, the research undoubtedly excludes the practices of those communities and individuals who do not and cannot have access to Internet in the context of the everyday. As I point out in the Introductory Chapter, this thesis is set in the context of affluent, technology-driven cultures—as is much research into popular music practices. However, this tends to leave behind communities that participate in popular music in interesting and important ways, yet are ‘invisible’ because they are not represented through Internet media. Therefore, research projects that focus on the ways in which technology works to either exclude or marginalise regional communities or developing nations in terms of popular music practice could be contributed to the existing literature.

Closing Remarks

In closing this dissertation, I tie off a collection of ideas which have been developed through an interdisciplinary approach and an in-depth examination of the ways in which listeners characterise their relationship to music during the digital transformation. What I had hoped to show the reader is another way to appreciate the flows and affects of music listening experience through a major techno-historical shift. However, what has also emerged throughout the research and writing process is the extraordinary plasticity of the human body in the adoption and adaptation of new phenomena shaped largely by online and virtual interactions.

As I have suggested, listening experiences are deeply emotional and inherited into the body as well as shaped through discursive forces. As such, they are non-linear, messy and, like much human experience, contradictory and fluctuating. Despite this, we clearly see three major and overarching themes emerge that, in a sense, ‘sum up’ the transformations I detail in this thesis. These are: the active negotiations that emerge between having (materiality) and sharing (immateriality); the recapitulation of the skin in the mobile listening experience; and the ways in which music itself seems to absorb

and reassemble the affective schemas that shape the postmodern subject in the digital world. If, as Attali claims, music is a herald, then these findings suggest that while listening practices will evolve in complexity, they will continue to do so in deeply collective ways.

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