

Public consciousness, political conscience and memory in Latin American *nueva canción*

Richard Elliott

Introduction

The *nueva canción*, or 'new song' movements that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, and whose beginnings are normally associated with the Chilean Violeta Parra (1917–67) and the Argentinean Atahualpa Yupanqui (Héctor Roberto Chavero, 1908–92), have been subject to a significant body of scholarly attention (Benmayor 1981; Fairley 1985; Moreno 1986; Morris 1986; Moore 2003). Much of this literature has focussed on the socio-cultural context in which *nueva canción* emerged and on the lives and works of significant figures in the movement, such as Víctor Jara, Inti-Illimani, Quilapayún, Patricio Manns, Silvio Rodríguez, Mercedes Sosa, Chico Buarque, and Daniel Viglietti. The important role played by such performers has consistently been emphasized via collaborations, references, and tributes in a sustained process of memory work, consciousness-raising and the assertion of a shared history (Elliott 2006; 2008a). In light of the many thousands of people in Latin America and beyond for whom these artists have acted as 'movement intellectuals' (Eyerman and Jamison 1991), it is interesting to consider the role that popular music can play in raising, refining or otherwise shaping our awareness of a shared world.

This chapter uses the impact of *nueva canción* to explore some of the ways in which consciousness might be thought of as applying to groups as much as individuals. By 'public consciousness', I mean those types of shared consciousness that go under a variety of epithets such as 'collective', 'mass', and 'social'. I use the word 'public' mainly to highlight the ways in which the themes I am interested in are played out in a public sphere connected to politics and what I am calling 'political conscience', where 'conscience' is not always easily discernible from 'consciousness'. This interest in public consciousness and conscience emerged from researching issues of music

and commitment in Latin America and has been developed as a response to those issues. *Nueva canción* had as one of its guiding themes the quest for identity and renewal in the postcolonial Latin American world, and the musicians associated with *nueva canción* act as movement intellectuals in raising and focusing consciousness of these processes, and in maintaining the relevance of this work in a changing musical world. My case studies here are Víctor Jara and Silvio Rodríguez, but I also discuss Ricardo Villalobos, a contemporary Chilean DJ who represents a generation of Chileans at one remove from the traumas of the previous generation and yet intimately connected to them by inherited memory and shared consciousness. If the musical agenda of *nueva canción*, much like the political agendas to which it attached itself, was guided by notions of collectivity, then this essay is written from a belief that the search for identity inevitably involves a questioning of oneself as an individual that can only proceed alongside recognition of oneself as definable through one's relationship to a collective. Along this line of thinking, consciousness can only exist via recognition of the Other.

The chapter starts with a discussion of the public nature of consciousness and how one might address consciousness (of any kind) epistemologically, whether through the brain sciences, psychology, psychoanalysis or philosophy. This section is followed by an interpretation of the kinds of consciousness involved in the social and political world, paying attention to the historical and cultural iterations of consciousness. Discussion of these modalities inevitably highlights the gaps between them, but it is not the purpose of this essay to attempt to bridge those gaps. Rather, I suggest, via reference to the work of Slavoj Žižek, that we should allow these types of inquiry to resonate with each other. Having set out a general and theoretical contribution to consciousness studies, the chapter then proceeds to a set of considerations more clearly located in a specific, ongoing cultural moment, that of the *nueva canción* movement. This moment, also thought of as an event, is intended to be read not as an exemplar of ideas in the first part, but rather as part of the ground from which they emerge.

An epistemological framework

Although I stress the social here, I do not deny the importance of consciousness at the level of the individual. My point, rather, is to highlight the necessity of thinking of both together. Consciousness must be thought of as social if it is to mean anything beyond an organism's response to external stimuli. Furthermore, when music is brought into relationship with consciousness, then social concerns cannot be ignored; music too must be thought of as social if it is to mean anything. Defining music provides a challenge in that most dictionary definitions require a notion of organization that is hard to divorce from the social. A definition such as 'the combination of sounds with a view to beauty of form' certainly does; 'sounds in melodic or harmonic combination' perhaps less so.¹ It is possible to imagine an isolated experience of these sounds, such as an individual alone in a forest encountering a pleasing combination of sounds from an unknown natural source. But because music derives so much of its meaning from some form of social function, our definitions of it have become similarly socialized. To make this point is to question whether musical affect can be investigated by observing the effects a piece of de-contextualized music has on a similarly de-contextualized individual, be it my imagined forest dweller or a volunteer taking part in a scientific experiment. Granted, an individual taking part in an experiment—whether at home or in a lab—is in a context (as is the music he or she is listening to or playing), but it is highly unlikely that a context organized to map, say, the neurological responses of the individual will resemble in any manner a normal listening or playing environment. What this discussion highlights is that, traditionally, we seem to be engaging in different activities when we discuss consciousness and when we discuss music.² There is a tendency to define the former in terms of the individual and the latter in terms of the collective. What I wish to ask here is whether thinking about music can help us, through recognition of its very powerful socializing processes, to think about consciousness in a manner that reflects the social to a greater extent.

At the same time, we should note that it is also difficult to take account of the seemingly infinite contexts in which music can be listened to, and that a

simplistic recourse to a 'social context' may do little better than one that relies on the artificially isolated individual. In pursuing the (essentially relativist) logic of the myriad potential social contexts in which a musical performance might be experienced, we arrive at an equally individualizing process in which each individual's listening or playing experience is so distinct as to make the social meaningless again. My response is that the term 'public' designates a position between these extremes that is provisional but sufficiently quilted—to use a term from Lacanian psychoanalysis—to suggest observable phenomena that rely on neither of these individualizing moves.³

In a similar fashion, Paul Ricoeur's discussion of collective memory understands the 'tradition of inwardness' inaugurated by St Augustine as a turning away from the collective, the *polis*. Ricoeur follows the development of this tradition through Locke to Husserl, highlighting the emphasis of these thinkers on interiority and reflexivity, but culminating in the problem that 'the entire tradition of inwardness is constructed as an impasse in the direction of collective memory' (Ricoeur 2004: 97). This stumbling block anticipates a potential problem in identifying the 'private' and the 'public'. In arguing for an emphasis on the collective in its cultural and political realms, am I endorsing an Augustinian turn away from the universalizing (i.e. public) work of the brain sciences? Or is the paradox already written into the brain sciences and medicine in general—that it is necessary to penetrate the most private parts of the individual's body, including its brain, in order to construct a universal science of medicine? In related fashion, Ricoeur argues against a polarization of phenomenological and neuroscientific methodologies in the study of consciousness:

This curiosity [about the brain] is one of the dispositions that articulates our relation to the world. The causal dependence in which we find ourselves with respect to cerebral functioning, a dependence whose knowledge we owe to such curiosity, continues to instruct us, even in the absence of suffering due to dysfunction. This instruction helps to warn us about the pretentious *hubris* that would make us the masters and possessors of nature. (2004: 423)

One of the strengths of scientific enquiry into the relationship between the brain and consciousness is that it situates us firmly within the animal world. Science can therefore assist in an even more embracing socializing process than that which we normally associate with the 'social'; beyond our relationship with other humans lies a social as well as a physical relationship with the rest of the natural world. Note the necessity of public consciousness for Ricoeur's point to be thinkable and rhetorically effective: to *be aware* that it is only right to think of humans as animals so as not to have too high an opinion of ourselves is to take part in a complex, unavoidably social and moral train of thought.

In another account that emphasizes the human animal, Slavoj Žižek discusses the 'problem' that cognitive science has with the question of consciousness. Like Ricoeur, Žižek stresses the need for philosophers to take seriously cognitive science's insight that human perception is always already the result of a series of judgements (Žižek and Daly 2004: 54–60). Yet, Žižek states, cognitivism cannot show from where in the human the need to know emerges; there is always an excess maintained by the very act of asking the question. Žižek identifies the central problem of the conflict between philosophy, psychoanalysis and cognitivism as consciousness itself, and one aspect of the problem resides in asking what consciousness does for us. In evolutionary terms, consciousness may have come about in order to enhance our awareness of the world around us, but this does not mean that consciousness has continued to evolve in response to the increasing complexity of human experience; in its emphasis on the role of judgement in perception, cognitivism suggests that consciousness is actually a process of reducing and abstracting complexity. This being so, it is unclear why awareness is needed if consciousness could operate as a blind process guiding our perceptions. The enigma, for Žižek, is found in Kant's question why it is that 'human beings are destined to ask themselves questions which they cannot answer' (2004: 58). Žižek notes Heidegger's observation that 'what characterizes the human being, in the sense of *Dasein* (being there), is that it's a being that asks questions about its own being, that adopts a self-

questioning attitude' (ibid.), and the essential role that philosophy has to play in exploring this self-questioning attitude. Psychoanalysis, meanwhile, asserts that the gap between subject and subject-as-object is an essential part of 'identification and its failure': it attends to the problem encountered when, to use Žižek's example, an objectivizing biological presentation of a genomic formula confronts the subject with the claim that 'this is you' (2004: 57). This gap, which presents the cognitive sciences with the challenge of finding a language that could bridge subject and object, is the *raison d'être* of psychoanalysis.

For Žižek, then, there are two temptations that must be avoided. The first is a dismissal of psychoanalysis by a simplistic cognitivist view that sees contemporary neuroscientific advances as having superseded earlier naive claims; psychoanalysis remains important in dealing with those issues for which neuroscience has yet to find a language. The second is a dismissal of cognitivism by a transcendental philosophy that would argue that 'even if they find a genetic or neuronal chemical base for neurosis ... it still remains a fact that we, as speaking human beings, will have somehow to subjectivize it, to symbolize it in a certain way, and that this will always be the domain of psychoanalysis' (2004: 60). Symbolization will have to deal with the changes and potential trauma wrought by any such self-objectivization. This trauma may itself be one of the things that drives the maintenance of human self-awareness out into the open, into the conscious mind. Developing his own version of a line of thought explored by evolutionary cognitivists, Žižek suggests that, if we are to think of consciousness in evolutionary terms, we should think of it as a 'mistake' in which 'consciousness developed as an unintended by-product that acquired a kind of second-degree survivalist function' and that it 'originates with something going terribly wrong' (2004: 54–9).

More recently, Žižek has developed these issues and provided a more thorough working-through of the relationship between philosophy, psychoanalysis and the brain sciences (Žižek 2006: 147–249). In this account we find a return to the notion of a fundamental 'parallax gap' that separates

psychoanalytic and cognitivist accounts of consciousness. Žižek is still keen to avoid the temptations of dismissing one account from the viewpoint of the other, but does not believe that the way forward lies in bridging the gap between them. Rather, we need to pay more attention to what constitutes the gap: 'What if the actual problem is not to bridge the gap but, rather, to *formulate* it as such, to conceive it properly?' (2006: 214). Žižek draws here on the principle that guides much of his thinking, the notion of a 'parallax view' produced by examining a problem from differing perspectives. Provided these differing perspectives engage thoroughly and effectively with their shared subject matter, the difference between them may be reduced, such that only the slightest shift in perspective allows for the leap from one to the other. This minimal difference does not bring the perspectives together, but marks the unbridgeable gap that separates them from each other and recognizes the gap as a necessity, not an obstacle.

Throughout his work, Žižek (1989; 2002) has shown the fertile ground to be explored by bringing together the work of Hegel, Marx and Lacan, suggesting that individual and collective psychologies mirror and feed each other. With his continued emphasis on the interaction of consciousness and politics, he keeps open the question as to what constitutes materialism. This is important because it is precisely around a claim to materialism that some cognitivist work attempts to dismiss the tradition of transcendental philosophical reflection on the problem of accessing consciousness. Daniel Dennett (1991), for example, adopts a position that, while seeming to have a superficial correspondence with Žižek's, makes claims for a quite different kind of materialism. Like Žižek, Dennett is suspicious of a too-easy dismissal of cognitivism based on its inability to objectivize consciousness completely. But, rather than opt for a recognition of the gap separating the different perspectives, Dennett claims that anyone who is tempted to look for an account of consciousness in places other than those being explored by materialist science is contributing to a 'defeatist thesis' (1991: 33–42), the word 'defeatist' seemingly utilized to paint a picture of head-in-the-cloud idealists or head-in-the-sand fatalists. I want to stress an equal commitment to a materialist theory, but one that can allow itself to consider the political

consciousness of a society coming to terms with cultural trauma (Caruth 1995, Eyerman 2001). Just as science must often put aside questions of faith in order to pursue its goals, certain political situations demand a putting-aside of the scientific in order to address goals of a more urgently materialist nature. Materialism here undergoes a transformation from the realm of scientific experimentation to the more easily and effectively collectivized arena of cultural exploration and dissemination. To look beyond materialist science for explanations of what is happening and what can be done is not to 'wallow ... in mystery' (Dennett 1991: 37) but to recognize that, in redirecting energy elsewhere, one might have to resort to notions of faith, 'necessary illusion' (Anzieu 1990: 95), or even Dennett's hated 'dualism', to get the job done. As Jeff Coulter states:

Believing *in* something ... is usually a matter of conviction (religious, political, etc.). What one truly believes is a matter of what one says and does. Contrary to Dennett, we do not carry our 'beliefs' around in the neural equivalent of a compartment in our heads, but rather what we believe is shown in, displayed by, what we are disposed to say/do and what we actually, in relevant circumstances, say/do. (Coulter 2008: 31)

Awareness and memory

With the preceding discussion in mind, I suggest a definition of consciousness based on various types of *awareness*: of sensations both immediate and less immediate, of data gathered over a period of time. Inevitably, then, I am also thinking about the processes of *memory* on which such consciousness relies. The kinds of distinctions I wish to make can be broadly mapped onto those found in Walter Benjamin's work, the first of which is between *Gedächtnis* and *Erinnerung*. Benjamin's translator Harry Zohn provides a useful definition of the former term as 'a gathering of unconscious data' and of the latter as 'an isolating of individual "memories" per se' (Zohn 2006: 344). The second distinction is between *Erfahrung*, which refers to 'experience over time', and *Erlebnis*, which refers to 'the isolated experience of the moment' (2006: 345).

Awareness gathered over time, thought of as experience and memory, can be said to produce consciousness, especially historical, public, or political consciousness: it is not until we have lived among people and played a part in society that we can truly speak of having this kind of consciousness, and it is impossible to imagine being in society without having a sense of public consciousness.

For Jacques Lacan, this awareness of ourselves in society comes about with our entry into the Symbolic Order, the arena of language and the Law, of the methods and rules of communicating with others. It is also where we become aware of the imperatives forced upon us by our identification with what Lacan calls the 'big Other', the universe into which we are thrust: 'as soon as the symbol arrives, there is a universe of symbols' (Lacan 1991: 29). And, being in a universe of symbols, 'the human order is characterised by the fact that the symbolic function intervenes at every moment and at every stage of its existence' (ibid.). While consciousness may not depend on language, our access to it does, with the consequence that we cannot speak of consciousness or the unconscious outside the Symbolic Order:

If the symbolic function functions, we are inside it. And I would even say—we are so far into it that we can't get out of it ... [W]hen we try to ... bring order to a certain number of phenomena, first in line being those of life, in the end it is always the paths of the symbolic function which lead us, much more than any sort of direct apprehension. (Lacan 1991: 31)

The fact that we cannot gain the necessary awareness of ourselves and others until we have become subjects of the Symbolic Order distinguishes the kind of consciousness I wish to discuss here from other understandings of consciousness and awareness: the awareness I am speaking of is one that attaches itself to the signifying community and relies on both memory and politics. Memory, like consciousness, is something that must be thought of at the level of the collective as much as of the individual. As Maurice Halbwachs

(1992) observed, memory is most commonly sustained via its social dimension, through the processes of recounting to others, receiving others' memories, or being reminded by others. It is these processes that go to make up collective memory. James Fentress and Chris Wickham develop these ideas in their account of 'social memory':

Social memory is a source of knowledge. This means that it does more than provide a set of categories through which, in an unselfconscious way, a group experiences its surroundings; it also provides the group with material for conscious reflection. This means that we must situate groups in relation to their own traditions, asking how they interpret their own 'ghosts', and how they use them as a source of knowledge. (1992: 26)

As for the political, we could do worse than remember the post-Hegelian, pre-Lacanian words of Karl Marx: 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary it is their social being that determines their consciousness' (Marx and Engels 1968: 181).

Conscience and consciousness

Since one aim of my chapter is to bring together the terms 'consciousness' and 'conscience', it is necessary to say a little about the relationship between the two. Given the example of Latin American music used below, it is important to note that in both Spanish and Portuguese one word is used for the two English terms (*conciencia* (Sp.), *consciência* (Port.)). I want to hold on to this fundamental relationship as sustained in the Romance languages, and additionally to think of conscience as a socially evolved form of consciousness—one that, perhaps taking account of the 'mistake' of consciousness, further removes the human from its animal nature. By this I mean that the possession by humans of something called 'conscience' emphasizes a 'consciousness of being conscious', a condition far removed from consciousness as a blind process functioning alongside other 'blind' biological processes. Conscience distinguishes itself precisely by its appeal to a social contract, which may have its roots in biological necessity, but also

seems to exceed biology. Conscience, then, must be part of the Symbolic Order and must be distinguished from another of the Lacanian orders, the Real. The Real is that which cannot be symbolized and which exists beyond our attempts to explain nature; it is 'raw' nature itself, that which always returns to the same place.⁴ For our purposes we might distinguish between the Real as the biological system in which we might attempt to locate consciousness and the Symbolic as the governing principles that dictate how we might go about doing so. The Real is that which irrupts into the Symbolic as trauma, and the gap between the two orders may only be traversed by psychosis or death. Conscience might be thought of as the reminder of that gap, the inner voice that charts the distance between the Real and the Symbolic.

This proposal calls to mind Lacan's theory of the role of language and societal rules in the process of subjectivization (Lacan 2006: 237–68), with subjectivity as the site where the distinction between conscience and 'bare' consciousness is forged. Louis Althusser (1971), drawing on Lacanian notions of identification with the big Other, suggests that subjects identify with ideological state apparatuses via a process of interpellation or 'hailing', which he characterizes 'along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!"' (Althusser 1971: 163). We are literally called into subjectivity by the voice of the big Other (a voice whose origin we cannot locate). Judith Butler's essay on Althusser, "'Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All'" (1995), highlights the ways in which Althusser's theory of interpellation relies on subjects already knowing that they will be called to account (for themselves), Althusser's policeman's hail emphasizing the nature of the guilty consciences we carry around with us in our daily lives.

Mladen Dolar, writing of 'the ethics of the voice' and 'the voice of conscience', asks: 'Given the link between conscience and consciousness (both are modes of *con-scio*), is consciousness about hearing voices?' (2006: 83). Dolar's question leads in turn to the distinction between hearing and listening, analogous to Benjamin's distinction between *Gedächtnis* and *Erinnerung*—one a largely unconscious process, the other an isolated conscious act. When

we speak of something ‘pricking the conscience’, there is a suggestion that conscience, though conscious, is nonetheless still subject to the uncontrolled forces of the unconscious. Deciding to listen to the heard voices to which Dolar refers, with the potential to then act on them, designates the site at which conscience leads to agency.

Music of conscience

Greil Marcus writes of hearing Bob Dylan sing ‘With God on our Side’ in 1963, and of being aware of US history being ‘brought back to consciousness’: the knowledge of that history was already there but had been forgotten. He compares Dylan to someone standing at the edge of a crowd, listening to a politician and spreading a rumour that nothing the politician said was true (Marcus 2005: 20), and writes of a ‘kind of common epiphany, a gathering of a collective unconscious’ in response to ‘Like a Rolling Stone’ in 1965 (2005: 33). Both examples demonstrate a recognition that what is revealed in the epiphanic moment is something that somehow was already known but unconscious: it is a becoming-aware in the way that we speak of becoming politically aware.

In a similar manner I understand my own musical example, Latin American *nueva canción*, as being deeply engaged with a public consciousness, awareness and conscience, as developed in the preceding account. Indeed, the term ‘example’ does a disservice by suggesting something tacked on to a body of theory, acting only to demonstrate the theory’s worth. But the opposite is the case: the music anticipates and invites the theory. I write as someone who was interpellated at an early age by the music of Latin America, and in particular by the politically committed songs of the Chilean Víctor Jara and the Cuban Silvio Rodríguez, and by the equally committed literature of Pablo Neruda and Gabriel García Márquez. These artists in turn led me to a fascination with the history, culture and politics of Latin America, to the academic study of these cultures, and then to firsthand experience. In other words, I can trace a growing awareness of this cultural world, a world to which there was no inevitability that I would become attracted given my spatial and temporal distance from it and its artefacts. That such a process occurred at all

attests to the unpredictable potential of a universe of symbols, to the possibilities of public consciousness across space and time, and to the role played by what Eyerman and Jamison (1991) call movement intellectuals—those artists, critics and other public figures who disseminate the culture of particular social movements to a wider audience. Víctor Jara personifies a movement intellectual, as does his widow Joan who told his story to the world (Jara 1983), the Chilean record label owner Ricardo Garcia who distributed Jara's banned recordings, and those who performed his music, such as the exiled *nueva canción* groups Quilapayún and Inti-Illimani. Whatever the process, for me the music came before the need to ask what it was in the music that solicited my identification. Addressing that need by exploring the cultural context in which this music continued to operate meant that a personal response was transformed into the realization of a collectivity. The music connected me as an individual to a network, an imagined community of listeners.

It is a common response to the stimulus provided by a musical epiphany to search for a narrative that will explain the stimulus. The collective dimension of such a phenomenon can involve seeking information in the public domain about those responsible for the music, and this is certainly true of the kind of politicized music associated with the *nueva canción* movements that emerged in Latin America in the late 1960s. A large part of the meaning of the music arguably resides in this publicly disseminated information, in which narratives are woven around the lives of musicians, the significance of song lyrics and musical instruments, and the political potential of musicians and performers to enact change or to assert resistance. Jara, for example, was one of the voices most closely associated with the campaign that brought Salvador Allende's socialist Unidad Popular party to power in the 1970 Chilean elections. Jara played a decisive role in the development of *nueva canción* and in its political manifestation—with the consequence that he was arrested and subsequently murdered by the Chilean army, following the military coup of 11 September 1973 that brought nearly two decades of dictatorship to Chile. Jara became an icon of resistance and his music a form of symbolic exchange among those opposed to the dictatorship, his music and that of the other *nueva*

canción musicians representing a beacon of hope, an article of faith that change would come. As I have suggested elsewhere (Elliott 2006), the messianic aspect of music's role in heralding change in Latin America cannot be overestimated.

The Cuban singer–songwriter Silvio Rodríguez has played a somewhat different role from Jara: while he has not always been favoured by the Cuban authorities, his music was at least allied to a revolutionary programme that was not subsequently overthrown. Rodríguez is associated with a type of new song known as *nueva trova*, which arose contemporaneously with other *nueva canción* movements that were emerging in Latin America. Rodríguez's music, mixing explicit political statements with coded, metaphorical pieces, found a receptive audience throughout the Hispanic and Lusophone worlds and, in often brutal times—such as during the military dictatorships which gripped Argentina and Chile during the 1970s—offered messages of hope and remembrance to the victims of oppressive regimes. Rodríguez had visited Chile, where his music was to become enormously popular, prior to the 1973 coup that brought Pinochet to power, and had maintained close links with the *nueva canción* musicians then and subsequently. His return in 1990 for a massive concert in Santiago's National Stadium signified, for many, a return to the promise of the Allende years (1970–3) and an end to the official silencing of his and others' music during the intervening period.

A specific song that connects both men and serves as an example of public consciousness is Jara's 'Te recuerdo Amanda' ('I remember you Amanda'). Jara recorded the song in 1969, and it remained a concert favourite for the rest of the singer's life. The lyric describes the relationship between two working-class Chileans and the rupture of that relationship in some unwanted conflict, making implicit reference to the history of conflicts that had shaped life for many generations in Chile and elsewhere in Latin America. The song survived the singer, going on to enjoy a busy afterlife, appearing on the posthumous collection *Manifiesto* (1974) with an English translation read by Jara's widow Joan over the late singer's original recording. 'Te recuerdo Amanda' was also covered by numerous artists, including Quilapayún, Joan

Baez and Robert Wyatt, and Silvio Rodríguez recorded the song in 1998 on a tribute album to Jara. The Cuban singer's version is 'faithful' to the original in the sense in which we often use the word, meaning that it does not depart from the original musical boundaries. The differences that emerge are subtle: Rodríguez's Cubanising of Jara's Chilean Spanish; the alternating fragility and grit of his vocal on this paean to persistence in the face of adversity; the sense that Rodríguez is continuing to engage in the event of remembering Jara.

By using the term 'event' in this manner, I deliberately evoke the notion of a revolutionary event, something that breaks with the continuum of being and suggests new possibilities.⁵ Such events are both personal and collective and demand of those affected by them a severe kind of loyalty or remembering. In such a manner, something as seemingly slight as a song—a fragile lament such as 'Te recuerdo Amanda'—can grow in stature, becoming a shorthand way to connect people in an act of public consciousness. As with its ghostly appearance on *Manifiesto*, where Jara's voice seems to haunt his wife's reading, 'Te recuerdo Amanda' became a spectral accompaniment to the many performances of opposition to the Chilean dictatorship that took place during the 1970s and 1980s. As arguably Jara's best-known composition, it came to mark both the finality of the singer's death and the necessity for the struggle for democracy to continue. To sing the song was to partake in a performative utterance that asserted fidelity both to a large event—the opposition to authoritarian terror; and to a smaller or more minor musical event—the creation of musical materials and performances associated with that opposition.

The artists associated with the first wave of *nueva canción*, then, have had a significant effect on subsequent musicians and audiences, leading to a continued fidelity to the causes for which the music helped to raise consciousness, and a continued presence in the collective consciousness of listeners around the world. The attachment of this music to very particular historical events has ensured that the story of those events has continued to have a notable presence in the public sphere; in Benjamin's terms, a series of

isolated experiences of particular moments (*Erlebnis*) result in a long experiential process (*Erfahrung*). Musicians and other artists have been at the centre of the dissemination of information regarding events in Latin America. Many were among the waves of exiles who fled the most brutal regimes and who brought their stories and music to other parts of the world, helping to form an international network of consciousness about what was occurring back home.

Altered consciousness

If consciousness studies has shown an interest in the effects of drug-induced altered states of consciousness on music (see chapters by Fachner and Shanon, this volume), we might ask why such altered states are mostly seen to concern transformations of the immediate perception of individuals, understood from the perspective of chemical changes in their brains. It is equally the case that we never hear any piece of music the same way twice, that we always bring something new and different to it, and that these differences can arise as much from the impact of history, culture and politics as of mind-altering drugs. History, culture and politics are states that are constantly being altered too, even as we attempt to stabilize them, and one less obvious way to think about altered states of consciousness might be to think about changes wrought by and upon the political state.

Often associated with decadence and hedonism, dance music seems to embody a central tenet of much popular music, where the music and the act of listening emphasize the present. Yet, as much as pop may seem to accept the inevitability of transience, there remain strands of popular music that do not wish to forget and that do not always allow for the easy loss of self. An interesting example of this is offered by Philip Sherburne (Sherburne 2007), who describes watching Chilean techno artist Ricardo Villalobos DJing at the 2005 MUTEK festival in Chile. The effectiveness of the story Sherburne tells relies on recognizing the Chilean folk singer Violeta Parra (the 'mother of *nueva canción*') as an embodiment of the aspirations of the country in the period prior to Pinochet's 1973 coup:

A few hundred rather messy-looking ravers danced and cavorted while a few dozen Chileans and their families looked down on us from the promenade with a mixture of curiosity and middle-class disdain. And then it happened: out of the matrix of pulses, a voice unfurled like some exotic flower. It was Violeta Parra's song, gently remixed by Villalobos to nestle comfortably with the rest of the mix. As the music fell away, we were left only with her unmistakable voice, which traversed an eerie modal scale that seemed, at least to a foreigner, not Chilean, not Latin American, but simply and terrifyingly otherworldly. Up on the promenade, though, the song's provenance dawned on the passers-by, and their expressions changed. Jaws dropped. Time stopped. A wormhole had appeared—both for the ravers dancing in suspended animation but also, more importantly, for the uninitiated spectators who found themselves transported to a year before the dictatorship, before economic restructuring, before the Internet. Villalobos was working his magic, cheating the clock at 128 bpm. (Sherburne 2007: 33)

Sherburne neglects to mention that the song that Villalobos uses is 'Santiago penando estás' (Parra 1999), notable among other reasons for the instrument on which Parra chose to accompany herself: an Andean bass drum called the *bombo* (she accompanied most of her songs with guitar). The *bombo* provides a dull thudding beat and is the only instrument other than Parra's voice on her recording of the song. In Villalobos's set all sounds are removed at the point where he inserts 'Santiago penando estás'—*except* for Parra's voice and a beat which, while sounding like the generic bass beat of contemporary dance music, echoes the sound of the *bombo* to such an extent that it is impossible to tell how much (if any) of the beat has been sampled from the original, how much has been added in the mix, and whether the purpose was to cover the original sound, evoke Andean tradition, or just keep the beat going at this late stage in a four-hour set.⁶ This ambiguity provides another level of connection between the original song and its present incarnation, emphasizing the timelessness that Sherburne finds in this sonic event. Villalobos, it appears, is attempting a strategy of estrangement in which he dislocates his auditors both

spatially and temporally while dancing is displaced by remembering. The point may not even be the historical specificity of Parra's music, important as that is—as is borne out by Villalobos's use of Parra's voice in sets that he produces in other parts of the world where his listener/dancers may have no knowledge of the voice's provenance. Even at MUTEK, the specifics of the memory may not be translatable; but the pointer towards an act of remembrance is recognized because the strategy of estrangement has brought about *an* act of remembering, albeit a remembering that is an attempt to figure out just what is going on (when confused, it is to our memory as much as any other 'sense' that we turn). As Pierre Nora writes in regard to official silences, 'the observance of a commemorative minute of silence, which might seem to be a strictly symbolic act, disrupts time, thus concentrating memory' (Nora and Kritzman 1996: 14).

There is no certainty that those observing the silence are remembering the same thing. In Villalobos's time-'cheating,' as in officially-endorsed public silences, we can expect that 'normal' time will resume: the beat kicks back in, the dancing resumes, and a sort of 'normality' returns. For, while Sherburne's point seems to be that, by keeping the music at 128 bpm throughout his sets, Villalobos is attempting to sustain a 'time out of joint' for as long as possible, and it is easy to see how this time becomes a new kind of normality once the DJ's listener/dancers have adjusted their mental clocks. To finish his set with the Parra tribute would be to leave these listeners stranded; it is the silence and uncanniness surrounding Parra's voice emerging from the mix that is the really 'out of joint' aspect of time at work here, not the 'homely' ('housey'?) music with which Villalobos frames it. Perhaps it is not important what is remembered—and yet the point of telling the story (Sherburne's point) is to say that it does matter.

I find Sherburne's narrative convincing precisely because of my own experience of *nueva canción* and because I am engaged in researching these kinds of responses to music and memory. While I can see such responses as highly subjective, I can also determine a loose community of 'believers' (among whom I count myself) who find in this kind of discourse a useful way

to account for the effect that music has on them. Music has sent out a call, interpellating listeners who then attempt to account for their identification with music. This inevitably involves telling stories, weaving narratives around the musical materials, creating (auto)biographies and histories that interlace personal and public reminiscences. Public consciousness requires *publicists*—interpreters who will take part in the dissemination of cultural artefacts (Marcus for Dylan, Joan Jara for Víctor, Sherburne for Villalobos). To criticize the use of personal reminiscences by highlighting their subjective specificity is to ignore the fact that memory is a process we share with others and that memory (*per se*) is nothing without (particular) memories.⁷

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter for the importance of a sense of public consciousness. Rather than seeing music as merely an example of this, I have argued that music interpellates its audience—issues an invitation to discuss the public dimension of consciousness. My proposal arises from two distinct but related responses. The first is prompted by the absence in cognitivist accounts of consciousness of a convincing exploration of history, politics or society. The second is my response to the call of a music (*nueva canción*) that demands such an account. Behind both lies the key issue of identification, by which I mean both the construction of identity as one develops subjectivity and identification with a musical culture. This suggests that psychoanalysis and phenomenology still have much to say about consciousness.

If *nueva canción* exemplifies the functioning of a public consciousness, the ways in which it is appropriated by subsequent generations may challenge as much as extend the practical uses of its political potential. There would of course be other ways to interpret my use of Sherburne's account of Villalobos's sampling of Violeta Parra (and the abundance of possessives highlights both the fragility and the continuity of the chain). One might wish to focus instead on the role of dance music in altering the consciousness of the individual, and I have already indicated above some of the directions in which such an account might proceed. The question would seem to hinge on the

importance we give to interpretation (and to interpreters) when evaluating what 'goes into' consciousness—an issue vividly discussed by Heidegger in his essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art':

We never really first perceive a throng of sensations, e.g. tones and noises, in the appearance of things ... rather we hear the storm whistling in the chimney, we hear the three-motored plane, we hear the Mercedes in immediate distinction from the Volkswagen. Much closer to us than all sensations are the things themselves. We hear the door shut in the house and never hear acoustical sensations or even mere sounds. In order to hear a bare sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e. listen abstractly. (Heidegger 1993: 151–2)

To understand the 'Villalobos narrative' through a cognitivist account of listening in an altered state among consumers of dance music, might be valid—another step in the dialectic, perhaps—but would also be to 'listen away' from the interpretation of this particular music that Sherburne presents. That is something I would want to resist, since it represents an attempt to 'bridge the gap' and solve what may be fundamentally unsolvable differences between philosophy and neuroscience. The gap may be more productively pursued by attending to, but maintaining, that minimal difference that is forced upon the observer by Žižek's parallax view.

References

- Althusser, L. (1971) Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation), in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, 121-76 (London: New Left Books)
- Anzieu, D. (1990) *A Skin for Thought: Interviews with Gilbert Tarrab on Psychology and Psychoanalysis*, trans. D.N. Briggs. (London and New York: Karnac)
- Benjamin, W. (2006) *Selected Writings Vol. 4: 1938-1940*, ed. H. Eiland and M.W. Jennings, trans. E. Jephcott et al. (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press)
- Benmayor, R. (1981) La “*nueva trova*”: New Cuban Song. *Latin American Music Review/Revista de Música Latinoamericana* **2** (1), 11-44
- Butler, J. (1995) “Conscience Doth make Subjects of Us All”. *Yale French Studies*, **88**, 6-26
- Caruth, C. (ed.). (1995) *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press)
- Casey, E. S. (2000) *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, 2nd edn. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press)
- Coulter, J. (2008) ‘Twenty-five Theses against Cognitivism’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, **25**, 19-32.
- Dennett, D.C. (1991) *Consciousness Explained*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin)
- Dolar, M. (2006) *A Voice and Nothing More*. (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press)
- Elliott, R. (2006). Reconstructing the Event: Spectres of terror in Chilean Performance. *British Postgraduate Musicology*, **8**.
<http://www.bpmonline.org.uk/bpm8/Elliott.html> (accessed 6 August 2009)
- Elliott, R. (2008a) *Loss, Memory and Nostalgia in Popular Song: Thematic Aspects and Theoretical Approaches*. Unpublished PhD thesis (Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University)

- Elliott, R. (2008b) Popular music and/as event: subjectivity, love and fidelity in the aftermath of rock 'n' roll. *Radical Musicology*, 3, <http://www.radical-musicology.org.uk>.
- Evans, D. (2001) *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. (Hove: Brunner-Routledge).
- Eyerman, R. (2001) *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Eyerman, R. and Jamison, A. (1991) *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*. (Cambridge: Polity Press)
- Fairley, J. (1985) Annotated bibliography of Latin-American popular music with particular reference to Chile and to *Nueva Canción*. *Popular Music*, 5, 305–56
- Fentress, J. and Wickham, C. (1992) *Social Memory*. (Oxford: Blackwell)
- Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press)
- Heidegger, M. (1993) *Basic Writings*, rev. edn., ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Farrell Krell et al. (London: Routledge)
- Jara, J. (1983) *Victor: An Unfinished Song*. (London: Jonathan Cape)
- Lacan, J. (1991) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: W. W. Norton)
- Lacan, J. (1993) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book III: The Psychoses 1955-1956*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton)
- Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink. (New York and London: Norton)
- Lambek, M. (1996) The past imperfect: remembering as moral practice, in P. Antze and M. Lambek (eds.) *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, 235-54. (New York and London: Routledge)
- Marcus, G. (2005) *Like A Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads*. (London: Faber and Faber)
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1968) *Selected Works in One Volume*. (London: Lawrence and Wishart)

- Moore, R. (2003) Transformations in Cuban *Nueva Trova*, 1965–95. *Ethnomusicology*, **47**, 1–41
- Moreno, A. (1986) Violeta Parra and “La Nueva Canción Chilena”. *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, **5**, 108–125
- Morris, N. (1986) “Canto porque es necesario cantar”: The New Song Movement in Chile. *Latin American Research Review*, **21**, 111–136
- Nora, P. and Kritzman, L. D. (eds.) (1996) *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past Vol. 1: Conflicts and Divisions*, trans. A. Goldhammer. (New York: Columbia University Press)
- Parra, V. (1999) *Canciones reencontradas en París* (CD, Warner Music Chile 857380321-2).
- Ricoeur, P. (2004) *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press)
- Sherburne, P. (2007) Time Out of Joint. *The Wire*, **282**, 30-5.
- Žižek, S. (1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. (London and New York: Verso)
- Žižek, S. (2002) *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment As a Political Factor*, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Verso)
- Žižek, S. (2006) *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press)
- Žižek, S. and Daly, G. (2004) *Conversations with Žižek*. (Cambridge: Polity)
- Zohn, H. (2006) Translator's notes to W. Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in W. Benjamin (2006) *Selected Writings Vol. 4: 1938-1940*, ed. H. Eiland and M.W. Jennings, 343-55 (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press)

¹ These definitions are taken from *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), pp. 1880-1.

² This may be less the case when thinking of music in the circumstances of musical analysis, in which there is also the tendency for music to be de-contextualized.

³ I am referring here to what Lacan calls the *point de capiton*, translated as either 'quilting point' or 'anchoring point'. In its literal use this point designates a site where the otherwise shapeless mass of stuffing is fixed in place by an upholsterer's needle; in its metaphorical use it designates a site where an otherwise chaotic mass of meaning can be fixed into an isolated sensible form. For Lacan, it is 'the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in ... discourse to be situated retroactively and prospectively' (Lacan 1993: 268).

⁴ Dylan Evans (2001: 159-60) defines the Real as follows: 'the real emerges as that which is outside language and inassimilable to symbolisation ... This ... leads Lacan to link the real with the concept of impossibility. The real is ... impossible to imagine, impossible to integrate into the symbolic order, and impossible to attain in any way'.

⁵ I also deliberately evoke the work of Alain Badiou, whose theory of 'event' I have elsewhere connected with the performance of popular music (see Elliott 2006; Elliott 2008a: 159-211, Elliott 2008b).

⁶ These observations are based on MP3 versions of Villalobos's sets posted to the internet in 2007, now no longer available.

⁷ See Coulter (2008: 20) on the 'globalization of Memory' engendered by cognitivism. This is an area provocatively explored in Edward Casey's (2000) attempt to create a 'phenomenology of memory', and also developed by Lambek (1996) and Ricoeur (2004) to account for the ways memory is used to write history. Sherburne's account, when read alongside Ricoeur's interactive process of memory/history/forgetting, is one in which 'memory' and 'state' become historically meaningful.