The challenge for this cover theme was to capture the wide variety of music genres presented in this issue of 'Music, Politics and the Environment', from classical to traditional rock 'n' roll to contemporary artistic representations, that sing to the environment as a political expression. It was also important to develop a generic concept that would encompass the wide variety of topics covered in the articles such as: music and environmental activism; music and its technological environment; music, acoustic ecology and soundscape studies; the constitution and development of different musical environments; music, landscape, architecture and design; music, memory and place; and music and the political environment. Iconic images of music, such as the headphone, stave and musical notes, laid over an abstract environmental scene seemed the best way to achieve this.

The impact of music on all societies around the world, formed from deep identities, is drawn from traditional lullabies, narrating legendary stories, celebrations, and religious festivals where songs are handed down from family to family. Music is important in many people's lives, independent of their cultural origins, not only as a form of pleasure but also as expressions of political activism and nationalism. Music influences our mood, creates scenes and affects our emotions, communicate values and identity:

One thing we know for certain is that music leaves few traces - except in the minds of those who are engaged with it. It is likely that the traces that it left in our ancestor's minds still resonate in our contemporary, everyday world, in the agility of our thought and in the complexity of our social interactions. Without music, it could be that we would never have become human (Cross 2001, 101).

Reference:

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THEME FOR THIS ISSUE: Music, Politics and Environment
Music, Politics and Environment

TONY MITCHELL

The initial impetus for this special issue came from a conference I co-organised on Music, Politics and the Environment at the University of Technology, Sydney, in April 2013, which coincided with a request from Ross Watkins of Social Alternatives to edit a special issue on Music and Politics. Papers presented at the conference covered topics including music and environmental activism; music and its technological environment; music, acoustic ecology and soundscape studies; the constitution and development of different musical environments; music, landscape, architecture and design; music, memory and place; and music and the political environment. This had in turn been influenced by a conference held by the Canadian branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music in Montreal in July 2011, at which I had given a paper on the music of the Australian lyrebird. Although only three papers survive here from the UTS conference, and the rest are from a call for papers sent to the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) list, there is an Australian focus in at least two of the papers published here, along with papers focusing on music in Iceland and Canada.

Ecomusicology has become a ‘buzz’ word in popular music studies of late, and in studies of the role of music in environmental activism, along with zoomusicology and soundscape studies. The latter term was of course initiated by Canadian composer and environmentalist R. Murray Schafer as long ago as 1969, in his book The New Soundscape, and despite its appropriation by numerous dubious new age music projects, continues to have considerable traction. Other ‘founding fathers’ in the field include François-Bernard Mâche, a former student of the great French birdsong composer Olivier Messiaen, who coined the term zoomusicology, and the related field of ornitho-musicology, in his book Music, Myth, Nature, first published in French in 1983. Dario Martinelli, the author of the 2009 Of Birds, Whales and Other Musicians – Introduction to Zoo-musicology, has done much to advance this field of study. The work of ethnomusicologist Steven Feld, especially his New Guinea-based 1990 Sound and sentiment: birds, weeping, poetics, and song in Kaluli expression, has also been a pioneering voice on music and environmental activism, along with David Rothenberg, the author of Why Birds Sing (2005) and a study of whale song, Thousand Mile Song (2008). The reader will find references to all these authors in the papers that follow.

This issue leads off with Carolyn Philpott’s study of Australian composer Malcolm Williamson (1931-2003), and his attempts to use his 1982 ‘transcontinental’ Symphony No. 6 as a weapon in the fight to save the Tasmanian Franklin River from being dammed. (Former Australian Greens Party leader Bob Brown also played a key role in this protest movement.) Initially an Australian Broadcasting Commission (as it then was) project involving all six of Australia’s capital city orchestras together with a television film featuring Australia’s natural environment, the ABC withdrew its involvement after Williamson insisted it express its support for the anti-Franklin dam activists. Philpott examines the historical background of this ‘non-event’ in the context of Williamson’s often controversial musical involvement in social activism. The dam was eventually prevented due to the election of Bob Hawke’s Labor government to power in 1983, but Williamson’s relations with the ABC were never healed.

This is followed by two papers which deal with ‘animal music’, an often contentious field involving musical interaction between human and non-human agents. In ‘Animal Ecologies’, Sabine Feisst, an ecomusicologist who has published widely on music and the environment, including an essay about the important US environmentalist composer John Luther Adams, profiles three compositions by New York-based composer Laurie Spiegel involving animals and birds which have become urban ‘pests’: mice and pigeons. Cavis Muris (Mouse Hole, 1986) is a 22 minute electronic piece involving a software program called ‘Music Mouse’ and real mice in Spiegel's loft (who eventually meet a tragic end); Anon a Mouse (2003) is a 10 minute opera involving mice, a dog and a human, involving sounds from all three, and ending with a dog’s ‘soliloquy’. Ferals (2006) is an audio-visual ‘immersive installation’ involving New York’s seven million pigeons, over three thousand photos, and eight audio channels projecting urban pigeon sounds: ‘an activist artwork seeking to dispel hatred of feral pigeons, accused of pollution, vandalism and transmission of disease’. Feisst places these works in the context of the extensive use of animals in other works by classical composers within the Western canon, such as Ravel, Janáček and Henze.
as well as mobilising Estonian biologist Jakob Uexküll’s *Umwelt* theory, which explores the ways animals experience their environment, as well as Canadian composer Emily Doolittle’s work on the role of animals in Western classical music. She also invokes Naess’s notion of ‘deep ecology’, which focuses on the interdependence of human and non-human species. Feisst is also careful to discuss the issue of anthropomorphism, or the humanising of animals, an often contentious subject in zoomusicology, concluding that Spiegel’s work exemplifies a ‘thoughtful and serious minded’ form of anthropomorphism. The pioneering Australian moral philosopher Peter Singer’s 1975 work *Animal Liberation* is also invoked.

Richard Sutherland also discusses the issue of human-non-human interaction in music in ‘Animals in the Mix: Interspecies Music and Recording’, which deals with three Canadian examples of ‘new age’ music: *Harmony* (1989), by Dan Gibson’s Solitudes, a ‘natural soundscape’ involving ambient music accompanied by ‘birds, animals, wind, waves and weather’; ‘Haidda’ (1972), by Paul Horn, a piece for flute and two captive orca (killer whales); and the album *Playing Music with Animals* (1982) by Paul Horn, involving ‘collaborations’ with wolves, turkeys, orca, and other animals. Drawing on Mâche, Martinelli and Donna Haraway, and posing questions about the possibility of human-animal collaboration, especially in a recording context, Sutherland invokes Feld’s notion of ‘schizophonic mimesis’, where ‘western music appropriates novel sounds and various forms of music from outside its own traditions’ and sounds are separated from their sources. Sutherland mobilises Naess’s ‘shallow ecologism’; given that the purpose of all three recordings is largely to re-acquaint the listener with a lost sense of nature, the participation of particular animal species in the recordings is largely secondary, and they have little or no awareness of their role in proceedings. Only Nollman seems primarily concerned with the human-animal encounter, but even he concedes that ‘[t]he big question for me is always whether or not the animal would be playing the same sound without my own musical stimulus’. This caveat could also be applied to David Rothenberg’s rather dubious musical collaborations with Australian lyrebirds detailed in *Why Birds Sing*, and Dave Soldier and Richard Lair’s recording project *Thai Elephant Orchestra* (2000), in which elephants were taught to play instruments such as the diddley bow (a home-made string bass), gongs, thundersheets, harmonicas, bass drums, marimbas and a synthesiser. The possibility of ‘animal music’ remains something of a conundrum, although some more conclusive work has been done on birdsong as music (Doolittle 2008; Lumsdaine 2007; Taylor, 2008).

Julie Rickwood’s article ‘Choralecology’ continues the author’s extensive work on Australian *acapella* music, dealing here with the community choir Ecopella, which specialises in environmental activism in both their song repertoire and the circumstances of its performances. Ecopella is actually a network of six community choirs in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory which occasionally comes together for joint performances. The choir has released two albums of their songs, many composed or arranged by key members Miguel Heatwolfe and Paul Spencer, others appropriated from various sources, including a medley from Papua New Guinea. Drawing on Pedelty’s 2012 book *Ecomusicology*, and Australian scholar Brent Keogh’s article about the limitations of music ecology, both of which question the application of scientific notions of ecology and sustainability to music cultures, especially when they are used as little more than a handy trope, Rickwood argues that Ecopella practise what they preach, even if they are often preaching to the converted.

A number of essays have been published on Icelandic post-rock band Sigur Rós’s 2007 documentary film *Heima* (Mitchell 2009; Dibben 2009; Osborn 2013; Richardson 2012), but ‘Nostalgic ideology in the film *Heima*’ by Pörbjörg Daphne Hall is the first to be published in English by an Icelander. Pörbjörg Hall mobilises Boym’s reading of the term ‘nostalgia’ as an unrealistic retro-vision of the rigours and hardships of Iceland’s rural past and combines it with the Icelandic term ‘krútt’ (cutesy, twee), which has been widely used to refer to the music, clothes, beliefs and behaviours of the generation X and Y music scene in Reykjavík. With the insight of someone who understands the nuances of the Icelandic language, Hall analyses two songs in the film which combine environmental activism with rural nostalgia as well as displaying ‘krútt’ characteristics. She warns that a number of these nostalgic (and ecological) ideas have been appropriated in a nationalist context by the new right wing government which was elected in Reykjavik in 2013 after five years of a left wing socialist government led by Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, the longest serving member of the Icelandic parliament, who managed to resolve the economic crisis the country had been led into by its unscrupulous bankers and borrowers in 2008.

Liz Giuffre and Luke Sharp take us into the Montreal metro, where in 2010 three notes, ‘dou-dou-dou’, a tonic, perfect fourth and octave jump, were instituted as a warning signal that doors were about to close. Musically resembling phrases from Aaron Copland’s *Fanfare for the Common Man* and *La Marseillaise*, as well as Elton John’s ‘Can you Feel the Love Tonight’, these sounds have caused a great deal of internet discussion, but are generally regarded as a friendly marker of ‘sonic management’ in the metro, although initial responses to the signal, which included a voice-over by a Montreal
actress, were negative. The authors analyse the sounds in relation to acoustic ecology, Foucauldian power relationships, and Philip Tagg’s work on micro-musicology, as an ‘anaphone’ which exists outside the world of music, but still has musical associations.

In ‘Sounds Like Garbage’, Joshua Ottum refers to the acoustic ecology of Schafer’s World Soundscape Project, only to suggest that Schafer ‘refuses to recognize what can be gleaned from dissecting the very idea of garbage, excavating tossed out timbres, and zooming in on the nuances of microscopic changes in the biosphere’. He then proceeds to analyse the 2012 film Chasing Ice, an ‘eco-disaster blockbuster’ exhibiting melodramatic tendencies, the 2010 music video ‘Plastic State of Mind’, a parody of Jay-Z and Alicia Keys’s ‘Empire State of Mind’ aimed at banning plastic bags, and the 2013 Carbon Song Cycle, an audio-visual ‘10 movement meditation on the way carbon travels through the ecosystem’. All of these examples exhibit ‘predictable tropes’ of ecological disaster. Californian musician James Ferraro’s 2011 Far Side Virtual (FSV), on the other hand, draws its inspiration from the ‘Great Pacific Garbage Patch’ (GPGP), a microplastic space twice the size of Texas situated in the North Pacific and full of waste, and uses the ‘sonic signifiers of the very gadgets and processes leading to such waste’ to create a ‘symphony for global warming’.

According to British music writer Simon Reynolds, Ferraro is associated with what is known ‘variously as chillwave, glo-fi and hypnagogic pop ... the American cousin to British hauntology’ (2011: 345). ‘Hypnagogic pop’ comes from a reference made by Ferraro to a state of semi-consciousness between being asleep and awake, in which the sounds of the 1980s ‘seeped into the consciousness of today’s twenty-somethings’ (Reynolds 2011: 346). Both hauntology, as exemplified by the British label Ghost Box, and ‘hypnagogic pop’ use discarded analogue forms of ‘dead media’ sound production from the 1980s and earlier, such as cassette boom boxes and musical content coming from old computers, radio and TV commercials; a kind of aural and musical detritus. The more recent term vaporwave, as Ottum points out, is ‘a generic term for a style of electronic music that turned to the early 90s corporate internet aesthetics for guidance’, which Ferraro’s FSV exemplifies. This invites a form of ‘compost listening’, which ‘propagates earworms’ and ‘shines a light on the natural sounds of the modern environment’.

Aligned with the ‘vaporwave’ movement in the USA, the ‘freak folk’ phenomenon, as popularised by singers such as Devendra Banhart and Joanna Newsom, is defined by Reynolds as producing ‘invocations of “the old weird America”’ (Greil Marcus’s term, inspired by Harry Smith’s 1952 Anthology of Folk Music) pointing to a vanished era of cultural identity that was both national and deeply local, and one that’s been vanquished by the rise of a trans-American but rootless culture of consumerism and entertainment’ (Reynolds 2011:344). Claire Coleman’s essay ‘“The wild blue yonder looms”: Joanna Newsom’s wildness’ introduces us to a similar form of nostalgia to that expressed by Sigur Rós. Coleman draws on Boym, and also refers to Simon Reynolds’s Retromania: Pop Culture’s Addiction to its Own Past, quoted above. Newsom’s nostalgic idealisation of the wilder aspects of nature is simultaneously romantic and sinister, disrupting conventional song structure but maintaining a fastidious attention to detail and a childish persona and intonation which some listeners find grating, but ‘creating a sense of wildness through the fickleness and capriciousness of the songs’ sounds and themes’.

In ‘Land of Hope and Dreams’, Ian Collinson analyses the output of Bruce Springsteen in terms of a transformation from what Raymond Williams has called ‘aligned’ to ‘committed’ songwriting, considering his albums in the decade since The Rising (2002) up to Wrecking Ball (2012). Collinson convincingly demonstrates that since 9/11, Springsteen has become more militant in his songwriting, as well as providing open support for presidential candidate John Kerry and president Barack Obama. He also argues that Springsteen’s concern with ‘working class geography’ has become more engaged with the struggles of workers, whom he now portrays as wanting to take action, rather than simply describing their misfortunes. The 2006 album We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions, Springsteen’s first album of non-Springsteen songs, is an important stage in this transformation, a homage to the political activist Seeger who died in January 2014 at the age of 94, and one of whose long-term projects was to clean up the Hudson river. In 1997 Springsteen recorded ‘Where Have All the Flowers Gone’ for a Pete Seeger tribute album, and began to investigate Seeger’s career, not having known much about him previously. In 2009, Seeger and Springsteen sang Woody Guthrie’s ‘This Land is Your Land’ together with a host of others at Obama’s Inauguration Celebration at the Lincoln Memorial, and Springsteen spoke movingly about that occasion at Seeger’s 90th birthday celebration a year later.

John Scannell analyses the environment of Dionne Warwick’s rendition of Burt Bacharach’s well-known song ‘Do You Know the Way to San Jose’, which also exists in a television version by British singer Sandie Shaw, complete with hilarious dance routine in which grease monkeys dance with car wheels. Drawing on Marc Augé’s classic text, Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity (1992), Scannell argues that the song critiques the anomie of late 1960s Los Angeles, ‘a great big freeway’, in favour of San Jose, ‘[w]here you can really
breathe … They’ve got a lot of space’. Lyric writer Hal David had served there in the army in the 1950s, but by 1968, when the song was released, the city had already been infected by the growth of Silicon Valley, and become infested by IBM and electronics companies. So Warwick’s protagonist is the victim of a lost idyll, yet another example of the deceptions of nostalgia. Nonetheless, despite the song’s co-option into numerous muzak contexts, it remains one of Bacharach’s most moving compositions, and has even drawn praise from the New York avant garde composer John Zorn.

It seems most appropriate to end this introduction with a quotation from Pete Seeger, a performance of whose I recall at St. Matthew-in-the City Anglican church in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1966, an occasion at which he was interrupted by a drunk who had wandered into the church, and eventually managed to eject. Seeger was a globe-trotter, but always had a message to deliver, whether it be against the Vietnam war as it was in 1966, or against damming and other earth-polluting projects as it was more recently. ‘My job’, Seeger said in 2009, ‘is to show folks there’s a lot of good music in this world, and if used right it may help to save the planet’. In terms of the relation between music, politics and the environment, one couldn’t put it more simply than that. Seeger certainly used music ‘right’, and will always be remembered for his stand on environmental issues.

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Sacrificing a Symphony: Malcolm Williamson’s protest against the Franklin Dam and the implications for the world’s first ‘transcontinental’ symphony

CAROLYN PHILPOTT

The nineteenth Master of the Queen’s Music, Malcolm Williamson (1931-2003), was one of the most gifted and prolific Australian composers of the twentieth century; however, several of his most significant large-scale works attracted more controversy than critical acclaim due to their association with contentious political issues. Among these was his Symphony No. 6 (1982), the world’s first ‘transcontinental’ symphony, which was commissioned by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) and written for all six of its capital city orchestras and the ABC Sinfonia to celebrate its Golden Jubilee in 1982. Initially designed to form part of a television film that showcased Australia – its landscape and natural environment, as well as its orchestras – the project was aborted after Williamson used the symphony as a bargaining tool in his high-profile protest over the damming of Tasmania’s Franklin River. While the plans for the dam were eventually quashed, Williamson paid the ultimate artistic sacrifice – the film project featuring his Symphony No. 6 was abandoned completely and his relationship with the ABC was severed beyond repair. This paper investigates the role that Williamson’s Sixth Symphony played in the environmental activism surrounding the damming of the Franklin River and the implications of this for the composer and the world’s first ‘transcontinental’ symphony.

The battle over the damming of the Franklin River in South West Tasmania in the early 1980s remains one of the most well-known, controversial and influential disputes in the history of Australian environmental politics (Christoff 2002: 208). It began in the late 1970s, when the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission (HEC), owned by the Tasmanian Government, released a proposal to develop an integrated hydro-electric power scheme that would have resulted in the flooding of a large section of the Franklin River, the last of Tasmania’s ‘wild’, undisturbed rivers, and the inundation of a significant portion of the surrounding area, including more than a third of the native Huon pine habitat (Sewell 1987: 507). Although the area was nominated for listing under the World Heritage Convention in 1981, in 1982 the Tasmanian Government passed the Gordon River Hydro-Electric Power Development Act, which permitted the HEC to commence construction of the dam (Bloomfield 1988: 149-150). In response, the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) and the Australian Conservation Foundation, among other national groups, launched a co-ordinated national campaign to save the Franklin River and the surrounding wilderness area, resulting in one of the largest and most effective conservation battles fought in Australia to date. A key component of the campaign’s success was its capacity to attract the attention and gain the support of a number of high-profile national and international figures, including Prince Charles, the English botanist and television presenter David Bellamy (who in 2013 denounced global warming as ‘poppycock’), the world-renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin and the expatriate Australian composer and Master of the Queen’s Music Malcolm Williamson, who then used their public profiles to add even more weight to the argument to preserve the Franklin region (Petrow 2009: 132). This paper seeks to investigate the role that Malcolm Williamson played in the environmental activism surrounding the damming of the Franklin River. It will begin with an overview of the campaign to save the Franklin River and the extent of Williamson’s involvement, and end with a discussion of the implications of this for the composer and the work that he ‘sacrificed’ in the process – his Symphony No. 6 – which, despite its status as the world’s first ‘transcontinental’ symphony (that is, a symphony with parts for all the major orchestras within a continent), has yet to receive much scholarly attention.

Environmental issues have played a prominent role in Tasmanian politics since the unsuccessful campaign to save Lake Pedder from damming in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result of the lessons learned during the battle to preserve Lake Pedder, Tasmanian conservationists became determined to ‘ensure that an environmental defeat on this scale would never happen
again’ (Hutton and Connors 1999: 122) and consequently they became highly suspicious of the planning and activities of the ‘autonomous and highly secretive’ HEC (Crowley 2003: 34). The conservationists had learned the hard way that ‘gentlemanly agreements would have little effect on holding back industrial or other development’ (Petrow 2009: 123) and realised that they would have to ‘learn how to fight and fight with commitment’ when it came to future environmental campaigns (Hutton and Connors 1999: 124). In the early stages of planning their campaign to save the Franklin River, the TWS determined that it would be crucial to secure national support because ‘state governments were committed to development policies that exploited the environment as a way of creating employment’ (Petrow 2009: 128). In order to mobilise support at the national level, TWS branches were set up around the country and the Society used marketing methods to sell its ideas, sending out anti-bureaucratic messages through the media and using moral arguments to persuade the public of the righteousness of its cause (Petrow 2009: 116-117). Its members also lobbied very hard in the political arena.

While the Tasmanian Government claimed that the dam was necessary to secure the future of the State, providing electricity and jobs (Bloomfield 1988: 150), the anti-dam campaigners, led by Bob Brown (the Director of the TWS), argued that Tasmania could not afford the dam, that the power that would be generated was well beyond what was needed to support the State and that preserving the wilderness would actually help to boost the local tourism sector, which would create far more jobs than the dam (Petrow 2009: 119). Strong arguments were also made in relation to the aesthetic value of the Franklin region and the spoiling of the natural, ‘irreplaceable’ beauty of one of the world’s last great temperate wilderness areas, Tasmania’s South West. While Liberal Premier Robin Gray held the opinion that ‘For eleven months of the year the Franklin is nothing but a brown ditch; leech-ridden; unattractive to the majority of people’ (Hutton and Connors 1999: 162), a leading campaigner of the ‘No Dams’ movement, Geoff Law, was one of a growing number of conservationists and ordinary Australians who viewed the Franklin as ‘a wild animal on the verge of extinction – fierce, beautiful and vulnerable’ (2008: 53). Bob Brown and the TWS considered visual marketing to be critical to the success of their campaign (Crowley 2003: 36), believing that film and photographs allow beautiful places such as the Franklin River to ‘speak for themselves – and it is a speech which the exploiters cannot match’ (Brown 1984: 60-61). Early in the campaign, Brown arranged for the production and launch of a number of films that included footage of the Franklin River (Thompson 1984: 101-102), as well as the publication of a glossy brochure adorned with the photograph Morning Mist, Rock Island Bend, Franklin River, Southwest Tasmania (Figure 1) by Australian wilderness photographer Peter Dombrovskis. This photograph, which captures a section of the river that would have been inundated or ‘drowned’ by the proposed dam, was reproduced more than a million times on election posters and campaign materials that were widely disseminated during the early 1980s and was later deemed to have been an ‘essential’ ingredient in the successful outcome of the campaign (Brown 1996: 26).

Figure 1 Morning Mist, Rock Island Bend, Franklin River, Southwest Tasmania (1979). Photograph by Peter Dombrovskis. Copyright Liz Dombrovskis. Used with permission.

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In addition to the economic, social, environmental and aesthetic issues that were raised in relation to the construction of the Franklin Dam, indigenous issues also came to the fore. Aboriginal relics (including tools and animal bones) that dated back almost 20,000 years were discovered by the environmentalist Kevin Kiernan in a cave on the banks of the Franklin River (Kutikina Cave, formerly known as Fraser Cave) and given that this find marked the southernmost point of human activity at this time, it was another significant factor in the argument to preserve the South West region (Green 1981: 83, 93-99; Petrow 2009: 119). Had the Franklin River been flooded, this cave would have been inundated by some 75 metres of water and the relics contained within it would have been destroyed forever (Hutton and Connors 1999: 161).

While Tasmanians and the wider Australian public were exposed to both sides of the Franklin Dam argument through the media, they were given little opportunity to weigh in on the debate in the political arena and in general, public opinion was not a concern among those in power and was simply ignored (Crowley 2003: 39). On one of the few occasions when Tasmanians were given a chance to enter the debate, during a State referendum on the dam held in 1981 by the Labor administration under Harry Holgate, voters were not given a ‘no dam’ option, only a choice of two dam schemes, and this resulted in 45 per cent writing ‘No Dams’ on their ballot papers (Hutton and Connors 1999: 161-62). As a consequence of feeling ignored, many members of the public who supported the anti-dam campaigners subsequently resorted to making their views known through non-violent protests and activism at the grassroots level.

In the months following the election of Robin Gray’s pro-development Liberal Party to office in May 1982, the TWS organised a large and very effective blockade at the dam site. The ‘Franklin Blockade’ was announced on 26 July 1982 (Green 1981: 252) and began on 14 December 1982 when 53 people were arrested at the dam site (Mulligan and Hill 2001: 255). Over a six-week period, 2,613 people (including 1,669 from mainland Australia and 67 from overseas) officially participated in the blockade (Mulligan and Hill 2001: 255-56). More than 1,200 of these participants were arrested, including well-known figures such as David Bellamy, which made headlines in international newspapers (Lupton 2000: 322). The leader of the TWS, Bob Brown, did not simply oversee the blockade – he also participated on the ground and was arrested and remanded in Risdon Prison like many others (Petrow 2009: 122, 125). As the campaign grew in intensity, it attracted even more media attention and when the TWS held a rally in Hobart in early February 1983, 20,000 people joined in to show their support (Townsley 1994: 422). Similar ‘No Dams’ rallies had also been held in Sydney and Melbourne, attracting 8,000 and 15,000 attendees respectively (Mulligan and Hill 2001). The campaign reached a climax on 1 March, 1983 (known as ‘Green Day’ or ‘G Day’), right before the Federal election, when the environmentalists ‘conducted their protest like a para-military operation,’ using radio communication from their barge base on the river to ‘organise the mobilisation of their non-violent guerrilla fighters in the bush to appear at the most inopportune time and thus delay work’ (Petrow 2009: 125). Activism of this kind and on this scale had never been seen in Australia before. As Amanda Lohrey has observed, it was ‘the first mass application in Australia of the techniques of civil disobedience invented by Gandhi many years before and refined by the US civil rights movement in the sixties’ (2002: 18) – and it worked brilliantly.

While the then-Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser had been reluctant to interfere in the rights of the Tasmanian State Government and to fight his Liberal colleague Robin Gray publicly, he knew that he would lose votes at the next federal election if he did nothing at all (Petrow 2009: 129). He therefore agreed to support South West Tasmania being inscribed on the World Heritage List on 14 December 1982 (the same day the blockade began), so that the area could be recognised alongside various other sites considered to have outstanding universal value, such as the pyramids of Egypt, Yellowstone National Park and the Grand Canyon, Sagamartha National Park in Nepal (containing Mt Everest) and Australia’s Great Barrier Reef (Robson 1991: 576). Also on 14 December 1982, the Australian Senate passed the World Heritage Protection Bill to give complete protection to Tasmania’s South West. Fraser’s efforts made little difference to helping his party win the election in March 1983, as supporters of the ‘No Dams’ campaign from all over Australia voted for the Labor Party in the House of Representatives and the Australian Democrats in the Senate, as they had been advised to do by the TWS in the weeks leading up to the election (Petrow 2009: 129). The newly-elected Hawke government’s first priority was to fulfil its pre-election promise to save the Franklin River, and it quickly developed and introduced The World Heritage (Properties Conservation) Act 1983 to give Federal protection to Tasmania’s South West and to other World Heritage areas (Petrow 2009: 130). The Commonwealth parliament passed the Act and challenged the Tasmanian Government in the High Court (Bloomfield 1988: 150). The campaign ended successfully on 1 July 1983 when the High Court ruled (four votes to three) in favour of the Commonwealth, which gave the latter the right to ‘intervene in the affairs of the state government to protect conservation values in areas that were World Heritage Listed’ (Petrow 2009: 130-31). This gave the Commonwealth the power to stop the construction of the Franklin Dam, effectively saving the Franklin River and the surrounding wilderness area.

This result was viewed as the ‘most significant victory of the conservation movement in Australian history’ (Sewell
and a vital ingredient in the campaign’s success had been that its organisers had ‘pitched a dual argument intertwining visual with economic values’ and projected it at the national level to ‘win the hearts and minds of the nation’ (Crowley 2003: 35-36). As Petrow notes, ‘Exploiting the media by using environmental theatre and direct action was a crucial tactic … No Australian could ignore the Franklin issue’ (2009: 125-26), and it was not only Australians who had responded to and showed strong support for the campaign. The battle to save the Franklin had attracted attention from all over the world and drawn activists from numerous other countries to the shores of Australia and the banks of the Franklin River to lend support. Reporters from various international magazines and newspapers, such as Time magazine, the Paris newspaper Le Monde, the Chicago Tribune and the Far Eastern Economic Review, had demonstrated great interest in the campaign and this had signalled to politicians in Australia that the conservationists had effectively focused the ‘entire world’s attention on the Franklin River’ (Norman 2004: 66; Sanders 1991: 73). As Crowley has observed, ‘The mighty Franklin [had become] an international icon for all that was threatened’ (2003: 35). It was no longer ‘just a river’ – it was now, in the words of Australian novelist James McQueen, symbolic of ‘all the lost forests, all the submerged lakes, all the tamed rivers, all the extinguished species’ and an intense desire to protect it was felt by people from all walks of life who wanted to take a stand against ‘mean ambitions and broken promises and hedged bets and tawdry profits’ (McQueen 1983: 2).

A number of celebrities and other high-profile figures who had engaged in the debate over the damming of the Franklin River had also played an important role in bringing greater attention to the campaign, including (in addition to those already mentioned) the poet Vicki Raymond, the actress Lorraine Bayly, New Zealand mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary and the well-known Australian historian Manning Clark (Robson 1991: 565; Norman 2004: 66). In some instances the campaign leaders had actively sought the involvement of particular VIPs for this purpose. For example, Kevin Kiernan, who had discovered Kutikina cave and had been actively involved in the formation of the South West Action Committee in the mid-1970s (which later became the TWS), managed to convince the world-renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin to become a patron of the TWS (Mulligan and Hill 2001: 253). In 1979, Menuhin declared publicly: ‘I can’t begin to tell you of the beauty of these forests … the forests of Tasmania as yet unsullied and unpolluted by our kind of civilisation … That we should have to defend them is something quite unbelievable’ (Brown 2001: 204). Even Prince Charles weighed in on the debate towards the end of 1982 (Thompson 1984: 164), and as the campaign reached fever pitch over the summer of 1982-1983, with a seemingly endless stream of media reports relaying details of the blockade to the public, another high-profile international figure with very strong connections to both the British Monarchy and Australia took a very public stand against the Franklin Dam – the Australian expatriate and Master of the Queen’s Music, Malcolm Williamson.

Williamson, who was born in Sydney in 1931 and moved to London to pursue a career as a composer in the early 1950s, had established himself as one of the most gifted and prolific composers in Britain during the 1960s and was appointed to the esteemed post of Master of the Queen’s Music in 1975 (Philpott 2010). While this appointment required him to be based in England, he was still able to travel extensively and during the early 1980s, when the campaign to save the Franklin was well underway, he spent a considerable period of time jet setting around the world to fulfil commissions, attend performances of his works and undertake research fellowships, including in Australia. In fact, between mid-1981 and mid-1983, Williamson spent more time in Australia than he did in any other country and it was the longest period he had spent in his homeland in the 30 years since he had left. Part of his time in Australia during the early 1980s was spent as a Creative Arts Fellow at the Australian National University, where he met and became friendly with Manning Clark, and at the University of New South Wales, where he conducted research in music therapy; however, he also dedicated a large amount of his time in Australia fulfilling a commission for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) to celebrate its Golden Jubilee in 1982.

This project, which had been entirely Williamson’s idea, involved him composing a new symphony, his Sixth, with parts for all seven of the ABC’s orchestras (the six capital city orchestras and the Australian training orchestra, the ABC Sinfonia), and then travelling around the country with conductor Paul McDermott to record each orchestra playing their respective section or sections in their home city. The individual tapes would then be mixed together in a studio in Sydney into a single, ‘homogenous’ musical work, which would then be incorporated into a television film commemorating 50 years of ABC broadcasting (Ricketson 1982: 6; Strachan 1983b: 3; Campion 2007, pers. comm., 2 July). The planned television film was to include footage of the orchestral musicians playing the symphony as well as scenes of the landscape and natural environment from each Australian state (including the Tasmanian wilderness), making it a unique, highly ambitious and entirely Australian project (Campion 2013, pers. comm., 26 November). In fact, this project was – like the campaign to save the Franklin – unprecedented at the time in terms of its scale and significance. Not only was this the largest and most technically challenging project of its kind undertaken by the ABC until that time (Strachan 1983b: 3), it was also the first time in history that a composer had tackled the task of writing for all the major orchestras of a given country or continent within a single musical work.
Although it was an enormous undertaking, the idea of composing a ‘transcontinental’ symphony appealed to Williamson because he wanted to pay ‘homage’ to the ABC in a way that incorporated the talents of every orchestral musician employed by the Commission at the time (Strachan 1982: 10). Taking inspiration from the concept of ‘homage’, Williamson subtitled the symphony ‘Liturgy of Homage to the Australian Broadcasting Commission in its fiftieth year as University to the Australian Nation’ and set to work fashioning a 47-minute long, single-movement work in 11 linked sections, each of which was designed to be played by a specific orchestra (Williamson 1982). For example, the opening of the Symphony No. 6 was written for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the concluding section for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and there are also parts scored for piano and organ, as well as interludes which call for individual members of various orchestras to play simultaneously. The order that the orchestras are heard in the Symphony No. 6 is shown in Williamson’s plan for the work in Figure 2.

Each section of the score bears a subtitle referring to the home city of the orchestra for which it was written, and most also include an inscription from parts of the Roman Catholic Mass (the opening section, for example, carries the heading ‘Melbourne – Kyrie and Gloria’). Although perhaps seeming out of place in a symphonic work, Williamson – a committed Catholic – frequently ascribed religious titles to non-liturgical works and in this instance, he viewed his Symphony No. 6 not only as a ‘Liturgy of Homage’ to the ABC but also as ‘an act of prayer and devotion and homage to Australia’ (Strachan 1983b: 3). In addition to incorporating religious inscriptions into the score, Williamson also used a compositional device in his Sixth Symphony that has long been associated with the Roman Catholic Mass – a cantus firmus (meaning ‘fixed melody’). During the Renaissance, in particular, it was common for composers of mass settings to employ a pre-existing melody (often taken from plainchant or from another sacred or secular source), or a newly-composed tune, to function as the basis of a new polyphonic work. While Meredith and Harris (2007: 389) claim that Williamson’s cantus firmus (see Figure 3) quotes a pre-existing work with strong religious associations – Debussy’s incidental music for the mystery play Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien (The

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**Figure 2** Plan of the recording sessions for the Symphony No. 6 showing the order of the orchestras and details relating to orchestral requirements (Williamson 1982).
Martyrdom of St Sebastian, 1911) – close analyses and comparisons of the main themes of the two scores do not reveal an obvious musical borrowing. Nevertheless, it is possible that Williamson was influenced by the Debussy work when writing his Symphony, as there are a number of parallels that can be drawn between the two works in terms of orchestral colouring (including the use of the harp) and even in the employment of a similar harmonic palette in some passages. Had Williamson intentionally drawn inspiration from Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien, the connection would have been rather ironic given that he would later offer up his Symphony as a sacrifice for his own beliefs – on this occasion, his beliefs in the worthiness of the battle to save the Franklin River. Regardless of whether or not he drew inspiration from Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien, Williamson’s employment of a cantus firmus in his Symphony No. 6 not only provides another link between his music and the Roman Catholic Liturgy, but also helps to unify the various sections of the Symphony. The creation of a cohesive underlying structure for the Sixth Symphony was no doubt of particular importance to Williamson given that the work was to be written and recorded in a variety of locations and would incorporate the talents of hundreds of people, and yet was intended to be presented as a single, unified movement in its final recorded form (Williamson 1982).

By the time Williamson became involved in the protest over the damming of the Franklin River in mid-February 1983, the project to write and record his Symphony No. 6 was essentially complete; all that was left to do was some final mixing and editing of the sound recording and the last of the filming for the television production. It had taken 18 months of hard work by Williamson and the conductor Paul McDermott, as well as the ABC’s musicians, television technicians and recording engineers to get the project to this stage of completion and it had attracted considerable attention from the Australian and international media in the process, which had helped to build public anticipation ahead of its planned broadcast. All the while, the battle to save the Franklin River had also been making headlines and Williamson was finding it increasingly impossible to ignore it. Not only were images of the Franklin River and the campaign to save it all over the media, but several other high-profile figures who he knew personally – Prince Charles, Yehudi Menuhin and Manning Clark – had also spoken out publicly in support of the campaign and he felt that as Master of the Queen’s Music, and as a ‘patriotic’ Australian, he had a duty to do the same (Strachan 1983b: 3). He had previously voiced his opinion publicly on a range of sociocultural and environmental issues, including in his native Australia and had composed a number of musical works that projected his strong humanitarian convictions to the world. It is therefore not surprising that he also felt compelled to take a stand on the Franklin Dam issue.

Williamson undoubtedly knew that if he threatened to withhold the Symphony No. 6 from broadcast as a protest against the Franklin Dam he would attract significant media attention – to himself and to the campaign to save the Franklin River – and that while some of this attention may have led to positive outcomes, it may also jeopardise the entire Jubilee project and his relationship with the ABC in the process. In his view, the Symphony No. 6 was his largest and ‘finest’ work to date (Sametz 1986: 13), and yet he was willing to sacrifice it in order to take a stand against what he viewed as a great ‘act of vandalism’ against the natural environment (Strachan 1983b: 3). In mid-February 1983, he informed the Australian press that he had issued the ABC an ultimatum – he would withdraw the work from broadcast unless the ABC joined him in his protest. In particular, he specified that he would not allow the two sections of the Symphony that had been recorded by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra (TSO) to be included in the final recording unless they were re-recorded by musicians from other orchestras or the dam project was stopped altogether (Williams 1983: 17). He was quick to point out that this decision was not related to the quality of the TSO’s playing, which he held in the ‘highest regard’, but rather, he did not feel like paying ‘homage’ to Tasmania in the political climate of the time (Williams 1983: 17). He was particularly concerned about the implications that the proposed flooding of the Franklin River would have for the Kutikina Cave site and its artefacts, believing that it would lead to the ‘outright destruction of an area vital to the future of humanity and science’ (Williams 1983: 17). In an interview with Laurie Strachan from The Australian, he declared:

I could not, with sincerity, include the State of Tasmania in my Liturgy of Homage if this act of vandalism goes ahead ... I have held back for a long time before doing this and I do it with sorrow and regret, but I feel the future of humanity and science are more important than anybody’s music. My decision is in no way a reflection on...
the Tasmanian musicians … but I feel it would be less than honest of me, as Master of the Queen’s Music, to pay homage to Tasmania if the proposed action takes place. If I were dishonest in respect to Tasmania, then the honesty of the whole work would be in question … I have given the ABC opportunity to join me in my protest – if they have the guts. If they do, it can go ahead; if not, I will withdraw it … It is a very painful decision to have to make but it is one which, as a patriotic Australian, I must make (1983b: 3).

Although Williamson withdrew his stricture only a few weeks later – after Bob Hawke was elected as Prime Minister and pledged to stop the dam being built (Strachan 1983a: 6) – by this time it was too late for the cause of the Symphony No. 6 and its accompanying film. While the ABC had not responded to Williamson’s threat publicly, other than to state that it would be ‘improper for the ABC to take a view on the dams issue’ (The Mercury, 1983), the composer’s strong public protest and the pressure he had placed on the ABC to support his political stance had caused delays to the process of finalising the sound recording and film footage for broadcast and the ABC subsequently abandoned the project15. As a result, the music was never collated with the film footage, nor televised as once planned (Campion 2007, pers. comm., 2 July) and all that remained from many months of planning, writing, recording and filming was the lone sound recording of the Symphony No. 6, which was not given a public airing until four years after the ABC’s Golden Jubilee16.

While the Symphony No. 6 was favourably received following its premiere via radio broadcast in 1986, with critics describing it as an ‘epic … one of the most ambitious and complex projects in the history of Australian broadcasting … a triumph of vision over practicality’ (Sametz 1986: 12-13) and an ‘Australian musical journey … a liturgical as well as a geographical odyssey’ (Conway 2001)17, it has yet to receive repeated hearings, or to be given the wide recognition it deserves as the world’s first ‘transcontinental’ symphony. It is truly a remarkable work, both in terms of its scale and method of construction, and also carries Williamson’s fingerprint through its incorporation of an array of different musical ideas or ‘densities,’ to use Williamson’s words (BBC Desert Island Discs – Castaway: Malcolm Williamson 1976), into what is essentially a monothematic work. The Symphony’s combination of forthright ebullience and emotional directness can also be considered characteristics of Williamson’s music18. Although he once indicated that he intended to rewrite the work for a single orchestra, so that it could be performed live (Sametz 1986: 13), sadly, he passed away (in 2003) before this vision was realised.

While the plight of Williamson’s Sixth Symphony suffered considerably as a result of his stand on the Franklin Dam issue, it seems as though his choice to involve the ABC in his protest may also have had longer-term implications for his career and his relationship with Australia as a whole. Although he had hoped to gain even more work in his homeland in the following years (Ricketson 1982: 6; Philpott 2009: 180-181), he did not receive any more commissions from the ABC after the Symphony No. 6, and given that he had enjoyed a reasonably productive and equitable partnership with the Commission prior to this time19, this suggests that the relationship had been damaged irrevocably as a consequence of his actions in early 1983. Nevertheless, this did not deter Williamson from composing more works for Australian ensembles and/or based on uniquely Australian topos. In fact, to mark the Bicentenary in 1988, he produced two large-scale ‘protest’ works – The True Endeavour (1988) based on texts by Manning Clark and The Dawn is at Hand (1989) with poems by indigenous Australian poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) – which were both very public statements of outrage at what he viewed as the inappropriate celebration of two hundred years of ‘white supremacy and near eradication of the world’s oldest extant culture’ (Williamson 1992: 9). Williamson’s willingness to compose such controversial works in the wake of the fallout from his Sixth Symphony demonstrates his sustained commitment to putting his political views ahead of his own popularity and professional success and provides further evidence that he had by now learned, in James Murdoch’s words, ‘the power of lobbying and the mechanics of coercion’ (Murdoch 1972: 206).

Of the high-profile international figures who spoke out in opposition of the plans to dam the Franklin River, Malcolm Williamson was arguably one of the most outspoken and influential, and perhaps also paid one of the largest prices – on a personal level – for his stand. Although he was not arrested along with many of his fellow activists, his short-term and longer-term career goals were brought to a sudden and painful halt. It is difficult to quantify the individual impact of Williamson’s protest, as there were many voices and arguments that contributed to the final result. Nevertheless, as Petrow has noted, while such international links as those afforded by Williamson, David Bellamy, Prince Charles, Yehudi Menuhin and others may not have ‘directly save[d] the Franklin’, they undoubtedly ‘lifted the spirits of the campaigners and put added pressure on the Federal government’ to intervene and put a stop to the dam works (2009: 132). Although the global campaign to protect the environment is still ongoing, and is likely to continue until such a time as the exploitation of nature ceases, the Franklin campaign ‘helped to foster the view that nature had rights beyond its use to humans’ (Petrov 2009: 136) and showed that ‘people can change things, not only for the better now but for the better for
the long term’ (Green 1981: 303). While he may have sacrificed his most significant symphonic work to that time, Williamson’s stand against the Franklin Dam no doubt added considerable strength to the campaign to save the Franklin River and in doing so, helped to secure its outcome – so that today, Tasmania’s last untamed river continues to ‘flow wild and free to the sea’ (Brown 1996: 26).

References


Sametz, P. 1986 ‘From the ABC’s Seven Orchestras ... Malcolm Williamson’s “Sixth” Symphony’, 24 Hours, September: 12-13.


End Notes

1. For more information on the counterarguments and views of the employees of the HEC, see Sewell (1987) and Petrow (2009).

2. Clark reportedly believed that the battle to save the Franklin would be viewed by future historians as the ‘single most significant event in Australia’s late twentieth century’ (Petrow 2009: 134).

3. The ABC changed its name to ‘Australian Broadcasting Corporation’ in July the following year (1983).

4. In one of the interludes, for example, the flutes and tuba from the Queensland Symphony Orchestra play alongside the strings of the Melbourne and Symphony orchestras around the Sinfonia, with the composer playing in July the following year (1983).

5. At that time a member of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra (Strachan 1983a: 3).

6. The final duration of the recording (at just under 47 minutes) was considerably longer than that estimated here.

7. The order in which the orchestras appear forms a palindrome bookending the Symphony.

8. The ABC changed its name to ‘Australian Broadcasting Corporation’ in July the following year (1983).

9. For more information on the counterarguments and views of the employees of the HEC, see Sewell (1987) and Petrow (2009).

10. In the order in which the orchestras appear forms a palindrome around the Sinfonia, with the Melbourne and Symphony orchestras bookending the Symphony.

11. The final duration of the recording (at just under 47 minutes) was considerably longer than that estimated here.

12. Non-liturgical works by Williamson that carry religious titles or subtitles include Symphony No. 1 (Elevennin, 1956-57), Santiago de España (1957, ouverture for orchestra), Symphony No. 2 (Pilgrim p augur, 1968) and Symphony No. 5 (Aquerò, 1980), to name only a few.

13. Unfortunately Meredith and Harris (2007) do not provide any illustrative musical examples or acknowledge any sources to help substantiate their claim.
9. As the title suggests, Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien tells the story of Saint Sebastian, the Captain of the Roman Praetorian Guards who was ordered by Emperor Diocletian to be executed by his own fellow archers after it was discovered that he was a Christian. Miraculously, Saint Sebastian survived the attempted execution by arrow fire, only to be sentenced to death again a short time later, after he had denounced the Emperor for his cruelty to the Christians.  
10. Although no official date had been set for the broadcast at the time of Williamson's stand against the Franklin Dam, media reports from the time indicate that the ABC was planning to broadcast it prior to 30 June 1983 (Strachan 1983b: 3).  
11. Williamson knew Prince Charles through his appointment as Master of the Queen's Music and had known Yehudi Menuhin since the mid-1960s, when the latter composed and premiered the composer's Violin Concerto (1965). As mentioned previously, Manning Clark was a friend of Williamson's and was also one of the Symphony's dedicatees.  
12. Williamson had also established a connection with the island state of Tasmania after having visited there prior to his move to England in the early 1950s and to work with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra in the early 1980s.  
13. For example, the documentary Williamson Down Under (1975) details Williamson's successful plight to preserve the landscape and Catholic Church of Tuggeranong in the Australian Capital Territory, which was at threat of being bulldozed in the early 1970s due to urban expansion.  
14. For more information on Williamson's expression of his humanitarian convictions in his musical output, see Michael Barkl (2001).  
15. There were also other delays to the project that were beyond Williamson's control, such as the death of the conductor Paul McDermott on the day that he was to have heard the final version of the complete sound recording (Covell 1986: 18).  
16. A compact disc recording of the Symphony No. 6 is available for loan from the Australian Music Centre. The only surviving video footage held by the ABC archives is a 26-minute film containing excerpts of a recording session for the Symphony No. 6 featuring the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (titled 'Malcolm Williamson 50th Anniversary').  
17. Even the respected Australian music critic Roger Covell, who did not always review Williamson's works favourably, described the composer's use of a cantus firmus as 'brilliant' and concluded his review by stating, 'the achievement, against all odds, is impressive' (Covell 1986: 18).  
18. For more information on Williamson's compositional language, see Philpott (2010) and Philpott (2014).  
19. The ABC had previously commissioned Williamson to compose his Piano Concerto No. 3 (1962), the cassation The Glitter Gang (1973-74), and In Thanksgiving – Sir Bernard Heinze (1982). For more information on these works, see Philpott (2010) and Philpott (2014).

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Animals and their sounds have inspired many human musicians throughout the centuries. In Western classical music, artists have paid tribute to animals in many compositions and often focused on animals popular among humans such as birds such as the nightingale, cuckoo and bullfinch and such domesticated mammals as the cat and dog. Few have felt inclined to give voice to animals regarded as pests: rodents, pigeons and geese. New York City-based composer and animal rights activist Laurie Spiegel has distinguished herself in showcasing underprivileged animals in urban environments through music and other media and raised the issue of ‘speciesism’, constructions of hierarchies of living beings grounded in specific species memberships. This paper sheds light on animal hierarchies and portrayals of rodents and Columbidae in the arts. It provides background on Spiegel’s compositional career and aesthetic ideas, her environmental concerns and philosophies, and her involvement in animal welfare. Three of her works will be explored in detail: Cavis Muris (1986), an electronic piece composed with Spiegel’s software program ‘Music Mouse’ and inspired by real mice in her loft; Anon a Mouse (2003), a ten-minute opera about mice and a dog, a work drawing on animal sounds; and Ferals (2006), an audio-visual installation dedicated to New York City’s pigeons. This paper is based on published and unpublished materials including interviews I conducted with Spiegel. It is also indebted to musical, environmental and animal studies by such writers as Joanna Bosse, Jody Castricano, Emily Doolittle, Amy Fitzgerald, Greta Gaard, Kyle Gann, Linda Kalof, and Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner.
humans and thus, like machines, are for human use.

Many of Spiegel's musical predecessors treated animal sound as raw material in need of sanitation and adaptation before entering their artistic frameworks and employed them only programmatically and symbolically (Fallon 2005: 41-86). Messiaen reduced the degree of stylisation of birdsons in his late style oiseau, yet he mysticised birds as creatures ‘inherently more spiritual and perfect’ than humans (Fallon 2005: 234-239; Doolittle 2007: 25)³. As symbols of God they could not stand for themselves (Fallon 2005: 88-125, 303). Other composers such as Janequin, Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, Camille Saint-Saëns, Richard Strauss, and Francis Poulenc exoticised and parodied animal sounds, focusing on their peculiar and noise-like characteristics, to highlight the animals’ otherness.

In general, musicians have prioritised certain animals for their perceived visual attractiveness and the beauty of their songs. Few artists have focused on underprivileged and disparaged animals, such as rodents, and portrayed them favourably. Viktor Nessler, Karl Weigl, and Friedrich Cerha let rats die in a river in their music theater works based on the Rat-Catcher of Hamelin from 1879, 1932, and 1987 respectively. In his ballet The Nutcracker, Piotr Tchaikovsky lets soldiers defeat an army of mice gnawing gingerbread. Mice are also prey in songs by Hugo Wolf (‘Mausefallen Sprüche,’ 1888) and Francis Poulenc (‘La souris,’ 1919) and in Franco Donatoni’s string quartet La souris sans sourire (1988). The rodents’ low status is reflected in peculiar eighteenth- and nineteenth-century keyboard instruments suggesting the use of real mice (or other animals) whose bodies are hit or whose tails are pulled in order to generate a pitch (Davies 2013). Monty Python’s Flying Circus parodied such an instrument in their mouse organ sketch ‘The Bells of Saint Mary,’ using twenty-three mice struck by mallets.

Such merciless portrayals connote the rodents’ history as a species with plague-carrying fleas in medieval Europe, blamed for the Black Death and other diseases in later times (Kalof 2007: 88). Robert Burns’s famous 1785 poem ‘To a mouse on turning her up in her nest with a plough’ is a rare and sensitive depiction of an individual rodent’s fate. Since the 1960s, several other sympathetic representations of mice have emerged in music, literature and the visual arts. In Song of Terezin of 1964, Franz Waxman sympathetically depicts a baby mouse’s feelings in his struggle with a louse. In 1970, Eric Gross set Burns’s ‘To a mouse’ for bass and orchestra. Hans-Werner Henze lets pacifist cats in the Royal Society for the Protection of Rats raise an orphan mouse in his 1983 opera The English Cat. He foreshadowed cartoonist Art Spiegelman’s 1991 graphic novel and Holocaust survivor story, Maus, in its use of cats (Germans) and mice (Jews) for political analogy. In the 1990s and 2000s some visual artists and filmmakers also featured rodents in provocative ways: Katharina Fritsch’s large sculptures Man and Mouse (1991–2) and Rat King (1993) poignantly expose our uneasy relationship with rodents. Donna Szoke’s installation Invisible Histories (280,000 Radioactive Mice) (2012) commemorates mice used in nuclear experiments and buried near Niagara Falls; and Alex Weil’s 2006 animated short One Rat Short sensitively presents a rat’s struggle for survival in the New York City subway and in a sterile rat lab.

Before earning the label ‘rats with wings’ in the 1960s, pigeons or doves had had long been a Christian symbol for the Holy Spirit, the Christian soul and its peace and often appeared in ecclesiastical art⁴. Virgil Thomson eternalised them in the Gertrude Stein-based setting ‘Pigeons on the Grass Alas,’ St. Ignatius’s witty aria alluding to the Holy Ghost, from his opera Four Saints in Three Acts (1933). André Messager’s 1886 ballet Les deux pigeons, based on a La Fontaine fable of the same title, emphasises pigeons as symbols of human love and includes two live pigeons to represent the love couple in the plot. Anthony Heinrich, a bird lover and friend of ornithologist John James Audubon, featured the now extinct American Wild Passenger Pigeon in his programmatic orchestral work The Columbiad or the Migration of American Wild Passenger Pigeons (1858), but his primary goal was to stress an American national identity.

Pigeons were among the first bird species domesticated by man for use as food, pets and messengers. Franz Schubert romanticised their function as messengers in his last song Die Taubenpost (1828); and Johann Strauss II idealised urban pigeons, a staple of cities for thousands of years, in his polka ‘The Pigeons of San Marco’ from his operetta A Night in Venice (1883). In the early twentieth century, due to their rapidly growing population and visibility, urban pigeons have been perceived as human habitat-polluting creatures; and since the end of World War II, they have been framed as a disease-transmitting species (Jerolmack 2008: 78). In 1959, American singer and songwriter Tom Lehrer satirically commented on New York City’s declaration of ‘war’ on pigeons in his song ‘Poisoning Pigeons in the Park’ whose refrain reads: ‘All the world seems in tune, On a spring afternoon, When we’re poisoning pigeons in the park … We’ll murder them all amid laughter and merriment … Except for the few we take home to experiment.’ Along with rodents, as an invasive species they are now commonly ranked at the bottom of the animal hierarchies, and their fate receives little sympathetic attention.

Most examples mentioned so far point to speciesism, a term coined in the 1970s by the British psychologist...
Richard D. Ryder (1989) and advanced by Australian philosopher Peter Singer in *Animal Liberation* (1975), a book which protests animal abuse, animal experiments, and factory farming. Similar to racism and sexism, speciesism denotes mankind’s discrimination against animals and constructions of hierarchies among nonhuman animal species. Singer described speciesism as ‘a prejudice or bias in favour of the interest of members of one’s own species and against those members of other species’ (Singer 1990: 6). Though St. Francis of Assisi, Montaigne, Voltaire, Jeremy Bentham, Jakob von Uexküll, Gandhi, George Bernard Shaw and others had raised the issue in the past, in the 1970s the animal rights movement was able to build on the successes of the civil rights, feminist, and environmental movements. Indeed such environmental philosophers as Arne Naess, who in the 1970s promoted deep ecology, an environmental ethics, critiquing ‘shallow’ anthropocentric and utilitarian approaches toward environmentalism, also stressed the importance of animal rights. Deep ecology prizes biological diversity and emphasises the intrinsic value of all life as well as the equality and interdependence of humans and non-humans (Naess 1973: 95–100).

Since the 1970s, such musicians as John Cage, Emily Doolittle, François-Bernard Mâche, David Rothenberg, and Spiegel have been affected by these philosophies and have explored novel forms of animal representation and animal participation in their creative projects. Spiegel in particular has showcased animals as subjective individuals that produce aesthetically and emotionally valid self-expression in sound.

**Advancing Electronic Music and Animal Welfare – A Glance at Spiegel’s Career**

Born in Chicago in 1945 and trained in lute and guitar performance, composition, the social sciences and philosophy, Spiegel settled in New York City in the 1960s and began to earn recognition for her work in electronic music in the early 1970s. Soon after discovering the Buchla synthesiser in 1969, she became one of the youngest resident researchers at Bell Telephone Laboratories (Bell Labs), where she worked with Max Mathews in pioneering the use of computers for music. In 1977, NASA took her musical realisation of Johannes Kepler’s *Harmony of the Worlds* (Harmonices mundi, 1619), created at Bell Labs, into space on the Voyager Spacecraft. Since the 1970s she has developed computer-based musical instruments, music composition software, interactive process compositions, computer-generated visual art, and digital animation software. She is perhaps best known for her program *Music Mouse – An Intelligent Instrument* from the mid-1980s, which she originally designed for Macintosh, Amiga, and Atari computers. Named after the computer’s ‘mouse’ input device, Music Mouse uses an XY pointing device to shape melodic lines, harmonic progressions and timbre. Its logic and statistical possibilities allow for the creation of music in many styles, including tonal, modal and other non-tonal approaches. Spiegel has composed many electronic works using this and other software that she developed, as well as works for traditional acoustic instruments. Her compositions are influenced by folk, ethnic, and classical European music as well as by the structures of natural phenomena.

Although a self-described ‘girl nerd’, Spiegel is a nature lover, which is reflected in her nature-inspired works, including pieces with programmatic titles (*Sunsets*, 1973; *Rain Pieces*, 1985; and *Hurricane’s Eye*, 1990); pieces mimicking natural processes, (*Kepler’s Harmony of the Planets*, 1977; and *A Strand of Life: Viroid*, 1990), and pieces capturing recorded natural sounds (*Water Music*, 1974; and *Conversational Paws*, 2001). Such works as *Cavis Muris* (1986), *Anon a Mouse* (2003), and *Ferals* (2006), however, reveal Spiegel, deeply influenced by the counterculture movement of the 1960s, as an environmentalist concerned with ecological problems, global warming, and animal rights. She has published articles and created digital art on environmental issues (Figure 1: Two Pigeons Dark Inversion by Laurie Spiegel). A co-founder of Wildlife in Tribeca and New York City Pigeon Rescue Central, she is also a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation-licensed wildlife rehabilitator and has created music, video and visual art to expose the mistreatment of wildlife, especially in New York City. Spiegel specifically advocates on behalf of animals that have come to be regarded as pests, often as a result of human activity, pollution and urban heat islands, and of human imagination according to which rodents and feral pigeons are incompatible with ‘clean’ and ‘orderly’ urban environments (Jerolmack 2008: 87–89). She is adamant that these disparaged animals deserve their ecological niche and humane treatment, and in the
case of feral members of domesticated species, human care. In her view ‘ferals completely fall through the cracks of legal protection, not being anyone’s “property”, not being wildlife, farm animals or pets’.

**Cavis Muris (1985–6)**

*Cavis Muris* is Spiegel’s first rodent-inspired work. Created with a Macintosh 512k computer, a Yamaha TX816 synthesiser, an Eventide SP-2016 digital signal processor, and C language software written by Spiegel, it is a piece of programme music, and its Latin title means mouse hole or mouse’s cave. *Cavis Muris* was one of the first works in which she used her ‘Music Mouse’ software, but more importantly it reflects her affection for mice which she regards as ‘practically domesticated animals’ and ‘intelligent social mammals’. While composing this work, Spiegel ‘mysteriously found [herself] sharing [her] large old former warehouse loft with an ever-increasing number of real mice.’ Wondering ‘how these mice must experience such a vast and foreign world from their tiny perspective’, she musically realised this idea in a series of five movements (1993: 4). She chose timbres reminiscent of traditional sound sources: dulcimer, mandolin, organ, bells, wordless voices, but also noise-based sonorities. She explored them gradually in the course of the 22-minute tonal, but modally inflected work whose melodic gestures are typified by stepwise motion. Spiegel pointed out that ‘[t]he Music Mouse program had a bias to stepwise motion rather than jagged leaping around’ (Reynolds 2012). The first movement opens with a delicate, high dulcimer-organ-coloured three-note figure which first circles around E in hesitating gestures and then grows in its tonal, registral and timbral range. The steady broadening of the sonic scope, which also marks the second, third and fifth movements, portrays a mouse’s perspective during progressively expansive exploration. Spiegel explained: ‘The piece evolves from a single timid explorer’s first look outside, through varied terrains, to, eventually, a whole band of these minute beings running free in a new world which is, to them, ever-unpredictable, exotic, and immense’ (1993: 5). Her choice of soft and high register sonorities remind one of these animals’ voices and vulnerability. Her generous use of vibrato and tremolo effects suggests the tentative small movements and tiny gestures of mice. Cavis’s penultimate movement is the most colourful and spacious sounding section. Here she blends harmonically static sounds emulating the organ (especially its vox humana register), middle and low register chimes, ominous wordless voices, and roaring wind. Marked by reverberation-enveloped bell and organ sounds, the movement evokes such large human-built environments as cathedrals and other ‘apparently endless spaces, high plateaus, and windswept plains’ (Spiegel 1993: 5) mice might discover before retreating to their safe enclave.

Far from depicting mice as prey or pests, Spiegel brings to mind Leonardo da Vinci’s Aesopian-style fables of the 1490s, which take an animal’s viewpoint. As in these fables, in *Cavis*

**Anon a Mouse**

In 2003, Spiegel wrote another provocative rodent-inspired work: *Anon a Mouse*. It is a ten-minute two-act ‘opera’, whose cast features rodents, a canine and a human. The action takes place in a New York loft’s kitchen in which a mouse family of three live. The loft’s human resident feeds the mice, whereupon they play with each other. The dog hopes to join them, but fails to win their trust, leaving him lonely and sad. Spiegel draws on actual experience, real beings and their sounds, using field recordings she made with a DAT recorder, waiting very quietly late at night in the dark in her own kitchen over several months, and then editing and processing them with a Macintosh 9600 computer with a Symbolic Sound Kyma Capybara system and Eventide H 3000 and DSP 4000 digital signal processors. The piece opens with a few audible human utterances accompanied by environmental sounds: ‘Time to feed the mice … Rice cakes? Rice? Tonight?’ Then such non-verbal human-generated sounds as the crunching of cellophane and breaking of rice cakes are heard along
with the rattling sounds of mice. As the animals take centre stage, the human element disappears completely. The sounds of munching, squeaking, running and playing mice mingle with the sounds of the dog yelping and trying to speak their language with his squeak toy until the piece concludes with an extended canine soliloquy, the whimpering dog now being entirely alone. Spiegel expands and rhythmises these sounds through reverberation, digital delay, loops and multi-tracking to multiply the rodent squeaks evoking the presence of more than three mice. She creates intriguing percussive patterns within the low-pitched textures and subtle rhythmic configurations in the high-pitched parts as the textural density increases and decreases.

Once again, Spiegel portraits animals in unusual ways. The cross-species communication in Anon challenges the established human-animal hierarchy by inverting it: Mice are the protagonists; the dog is a supporting character and the human has a very minor role. Spiegel anthropomorphises the animals, yet thoughtfully. Animals are not symbols for humans and humans don’t play animal roles, as is common in such animal operas as Maurice Ravel’s Enfant et les sortilèges, Leos Janáček’s Cunning Little Vixen or Henze’s English Cat.

In Anon Spiegel lets animals speak for themselves and suggests an animal’s point of view. Using recordings of animal voices, she illuminates the beauty and expressivity of these sounds. Although she edited and processed animal sounds, she did not sanitise or satirise them. The animal voices heard in this work are those of protagonists, not props. They are subjects in the sense that they make subjective individual statements. Spiegel vividly emphasises the interconnectedness and commonality between animals and humans. A ‘squeakbretto’, a witty ‘translation’ from the original, as sung in what Spiegel calls ‘Universal Mammalian Vocal Expressive Language (UMVEL)’ enables humans to follow the plot. Although UMVEL is only a hypothesis that was entirely of Spiegel’s creation, she feels that UMVEL does actually exist and explains why we respond to the cries of other species.

Spiegel noted:

The poignant emotionality of the dog’s concluding soliloquy is as completely comprehensible by our species as it would almost certainly be to most other mammalian species. It’s a language of pitch and time, in a way much like music as a form of expression, except with less contrivance and artificiality than most music, not extra-referential, not symbolic.

She recorded the dog’s final vocalisations not from her own well-cared-for dog, but from a recently rescued distressed dog she was newly caring for in her home.

Clearly Anon discloses Spiegel’s affinity with deep ecology as it underscores the value of all living beings including creatures at the bottom of the species hierarchy, regarded as pests and destined for the exterminator. Spiegel’s perspective emphasises what we and other species share in common not by projection of human traits onto animals, but through empathy with them.

Ferals

With Ferals, an audio-visual installation created in 2006, Spiegel drew attention to New York City’s feral pigeons (Columba livia domestica), now the city’s most visible birds, amounting to a population of perhaps seven million and widely considered an invasive species. Having first encountered pigeons in a science lab during college, she had noticed their return to her neighbourhood around 2000 after a previous local decrease. She observed that, ‘due to the city’s anti-rodent campaign, the pigeons had at last regained their former ecological niche as the dominant scavenger species on our block, a status that I hypothesise alternates between pigeons and rats in urban ecosystems’. Spiegel has cared for many injured and orphaned birds and documented the individuality and variety of her local feral flock in image and sound. She used some of these materials in Ferals to show ‘how beautiful, affectionate and intelligent these feral domesticated doves are’.

This immersive installation consisted of over 3,000 photos, all shot by her over several years and projected on three wall-sized screens. Each screen featured a different stream of images, ‘a series of photos slowly dissolving, panning and zooming, each image into the next one’, and each screen changing its images at a different time to show the pigeons’ immense variety in their physical appearances and subjective characters and behaviours in their often-bleak environments marked by harsh concrete and asphalt surfaces.

The installation involved eight channels of audio, each with different pigeon sounds recorded in urban contexts. The sounds emanated from speakers suspended from the ceiling. Sonically Ferals, for instance, provides insight into a ‘family drama’ with two hungry juvenile pigeons begging their parents for food. Despite indefatigable food searches, the parents fail to satisfy their children’s needs. The listeners can hear in alternation the high-pitched voice of a hatching chirping away and the adolescent voice of a fledgling pigeon, whose voice is breaking in pitch. His utterances are punctuated by sounds of flapping wings as the parent birds leave to search for more food to bring home. Such dramas are now very common as many pigeons starve due to the shortage of water and food.
today’s urban settings through pigeon feeding bans and the pigeons’ branding as ‘freeloaders’ and ‘panhandlers’ (Jerolmack 2008: 78). Overall, however, Ferals suggests the sense of timelessness that these avian city dwellers ‘may experience as they wait and watch part of our world every day, yet are barely noticed or not noticed at all by most humans’17.

Ferals is an activist artwork seeking to dispel hatred of feral pigeons, accused of pollution, vandalism and transmission of disease. Like Cavis and Anon, Ferals reflects Uexküll’s Umwelt theory and deep ecological principles. But in Ferals, Spiegel uses sonic, visual and spatial means to showcase the physical, social and expressive qualities of these birds. Spiegel believes that humans should see pigeons as ‘the dogs of the bird Kingdom’:

Like dogs, they mate for life and share the work of nurturing and care for their young ones. Like dogs, they form strong attachments to territory, and show great loyalty to their home ... Like dogs, pigeons have proved themselves for millennia as our working partners, carrying our messages, using their superior sensory acuity in search and rescue missions and providing intimate companionship to human beings with a level of interspecies bonding that only a domesticated animal created by man would likely be able to manifest. Of all the free birds you will find in our public spaces, only pigeons will come up to you and look you straight in the eye18.

Spiegel believes that aggressive population control of pigeons by humans is not advisable or effective, but rather that a more natural ecological balance could be achieved through the increase of such raptors as hawks and falcons19.

Ferals was featured at New York’s first Ear to the Earth festival in downtown New York City in 2006 and was well received. It ‘completely changed the sense of urban ecology’ that some audience members had harboured previously20. Recently Spiegel has created a video as a sampling of the full installation’s content. She also made a poignant short Public Service Announcement video Endangered Individuals (2011), combining some of her photographs of river geese along the Hudson north of Greenwich Village, raw urban noises and sharp blasts evocative of gun shots, to challenge New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s mission to remove geese from parks and other public places.

Conclusion

Spiegel has created fascinating works using innovative musical means and representing animals in provocative ways. In Cavis Muris, she paints with electronic sounds how tiny rodents might experience intimidating large spaces; in Anon a Mouse, she explores deep ecological cross-species communication; and in Ferals, she seeks to rehabilitate the reputation of pigeons through sound and image. By giving voice to animals at the margins, she reminds us of the human-caused ecological imbalances common in urban environments and speciesism. While not the only musician venturing into such territories, Miya Masaoka having portrayed cockroaches in Ritual, Interspecies Collaboration with Giant Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches (1997–99) and David Dunn bark beetles in The Sound of Light in Trees (2005), Laurie Spiegel stands out in how passionately she merges her ecological engagement and animal rights activism with creative endeavours. Her music compellingly illuminates urban animal ecologies and gives new meaning to Claude Lévi-Strauss’s famous dictum ‘animals are good for thinking’ (1962: 128).

References


End Notes

1. I would like to thank Laurie Spiegel for kindly providing materials and information for this research project.

2. Ethnomusicologist Steven Feld, for instance, eloquently addressed racism and ethnocentrism in his discussion of the appropriation and commodification of pygmy music in world music contexts. He specifically critiques popular music which uses a ‘single untexted
vocalization or falsetto yodel, often hunting cries rather than songs or musical pieces which are nothing more but a ‘sonic cartoon of the diminutive person, the simple, intuitively vocal and essentially nonlinguistic child.’ Steven Feld, ‘The Poetics and Politics of Pygmy Pop’, in G. Born and D. Hesmondhalgh (eds.) 2000 Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music, Berkeley: University of California Press: 273.

3. Although the accuracy of Messiaen’s birdsong imitations is controversial and has varied throughout his oeuvre, musicologist Robert Fallon noted that ‘Messiaen’s late birds redefine the conventions of realistic birdsong, bringing them closer to our experience of real birds than to birdsong familiar in Vivaldi, Beethoven, Wagner, and Mahler.’ Robert Fallon, ‘Messiaen’s Mimesis: The Language and Culture of the Bird Styles’, Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 233; and Olivier Messiaen, 1994 Music and Color. Conversations with Claude Samuel, Portland, OR: Amadeus Press.; 94-95.

4. Used by New York City parks commissioner Thomas Hoving in a 1966 newspaper article, the phrase ‘rats with wings’ was popularised by Woody Allen in his 1980 film Stardust Memories. ‘Hoving Calls a Meeting to Plan for Restoration of Bryant Park,’ New York Times, June 22, 1966. Despite the very different connotations of ‘pigeon’ and ‘dove’, many languages use a single word for both of these birds, members of the Columbidae family. ‘Pigeon’ sometimes denotes large and ‘dove’ small species.


6. Spiegel’s writings and digital art on environmental issues can be found at http://www.retiary.org/


8. In 1983 Spiegel composed Immersion, an electronic work using a McLeyvier computer-based analogue synthesis music system, which features allusions to animal and human sounds and can be seen as a predecessor to Cavis Muris.

9. Spiegel found that wild mice can easily be taught that ‘they will have food and water in a particular place every day … [and] completely stop breaking into my food or doing damage.’ Laurie Spiegel to the author, e-mail of 13 October 2012.

10. A recording of this work can be found at http://www.retiary.org/

11. Laurie Spiegel to the author, E-mail of 25 May 2013.


13. Unfortunately, the real mice that Spiegel had named ‘Mama,’ ‘Alpha,’ and ‘the Runt’ (or the Kid) and whose voices prominently figure in Anon experienced a tragic fate. One day after having apparently ventured to another floor of the building and eaten some poison, all three appeared to be moving more and more slowly and each of them died that day.’ Laurie Spiegel to the author, e-mail 13 October 2012.

14. Ibid.


20. Ibid.

Author
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Refugee

The future became the gargoyle I’d carved in childhood. And flat, dusty land with weeds scrapping margins; squeezed bungalows; fencelines of bristling light; disinfected air smelling of rope; unwieldy, dragged postures. They took my son for silent days that itched on my arm.

My wife’s blacked-out letters fell into skerricks.

I remembered a doll with straw-filled face that my son used to carry and, in fields near our village, guns of soldiers carousing in dirt.

PAUL HETHERINGTON , CANBERRA, NSW
Animals in the Mix: Interspecies music and recording

RICHARD SUTHERLAND

This paper is an examination of collaborations between human musicians and non-humans in relation to sound recording. It draws on three different examples: Harmony, by Dan Gibson’s Solitudes (the first in a series of recordings incorporating nature sounds and music); Paul Horn’s ‘Haidda’ and Jim Nollman’s Playing Music With Animals. There are key differences between the projects in terms of their production, the actors involved and the implied relations between humans and non-humans, which allow us to consider aspects of such collaborations. However, all may be confronted by the question of whether such projects are indeed true collaborations with non-human actors or whether the latter are simply appropriated as part of musical practice, as well as by the question of the extent to which such collaboration can be captured by sound recording.

Introduction

Music has long been understood as a form of relation, a means of constructing communities through shared experience and of defining our relations with each other (Finnegan 2003: 186-187). However, our world encompasses a host of other relations. Are we right to confine music to the strictly human, and if we do open it up, on what terms do we do so? Since François-Bernard Mâche’s work some decades ago, a number of scholars have considered the question of ‘zoomusicology’, that is whether animals have music? (Martinelli 2008; Sorce 2012). There are perhaps implications beyond simply expanding our definition of what counts as music. If we confer non-humans with the status of music makers, what new community is formed? What might this say about our relations to these non-humans?

One of the ways in which these questions have been explored is through attempts at collaboration – human musicians making music with other species. The attractiveness of such an approach is that, as well as suggesting that other species do indeed have music, the activity itself constitutes a relation between humans and non-humans. However, a number of difficulties spring to mind with such projects. The most problematic aspect of zoomusicology remains. How do we know that animals engage in anything like what we would call music? On what basis do we make such an assessment? The field of zoomusicology is still searching for answers to these questions (Martinelli 2008). This, at the outset, might limit the degree to which we can conceive of any possibility of collaboration between human and non-human animals in terms of music making. Still, setting aside whether what non-human animals are doing is music or not, could there not be some kind of interaction occurring? For example, Donna Haraway, even without knowing precisely what her dog Cayenne thinks she is doing, can reasonably assert that the two of them are engaged in some form of mutually aware activity around agility training (2008: 205-246). Such mutual activities are, as Haraway’s work points out, rather commonplace in our world but less so in music, which, for the most part, is viewed as an essentially human occupation. Her work raises other concerns for would-be musical collaborators on the human side, in examining under what conditions and on what terms such interactions can occur. How do we deal with matters such as consent and mutual awareness? What are the situations in which interspecies musical collaborations might occur?

These questions are further complicated by the status of all three projects as sound recordings. Even if interspecies music occurs, can it be recorded? This is not simply a question of whether recordings faithfully replicate an encounter between humans and non-humans, but, rather, a question of what kinds of encounters between humans and animals are possible in terms of sound recording. Jonathan Sterne refers to sound recording as a set of relations, ‘among people, practices, institutions and machines’ (2003: 223). What happens when we add animals to the mix?

This paper pursues these questions through three examples. The first of these is Harmony, the first album in a series of recordings combining nature sounds with music, issued by Dan Gibson’s Solitudes in 1989. The second is jazz/new age musician Paul Horn’s ‘Haidda,’ (a track from his 1972 LP Inside II, taking its title from the...
The first two recordings both achieved some measure of popular success, achieving considerable sales. Both fall loosely within the genre of ‘new age’ music, the development of which is nicely bracketed by the period between the early 1970s, when Horn’s ‘duet’ with Haida was released, and the late 1980s, when Harmony was issued. Nollman’s works do not fit so neatly into the new age genre, and they probably did not sell anything like as many copies. Nonetheless, like the others, his recordings are produced, distributed, and consumed within large and complex networks constituted of a lengthy and diverse set of actors, from whales to record companies, from waves to scientists, and from microphones to environmental groups.

As recordings, all three detach sounds from their original settings, but must nonetheless retain their signification of these settings in order to fulfill their use value for listeners. They still have to gesture towards ‘naturalness’. Steven Feld refers to this process as ‘schizophonic mimesis’ (2000: 263), which he uses to examine the deployment of the hindewhu music of the Mbuti pygmies across a number of recordings, from anthropological field recordings to Madonna and to the Deep Forest new age recordings. In this manner, he illustrates the way in which Western music appropriates novel sounds and various forms of music from outside its own traditions. If, in Feld’s example, the incorporation of elements of hindewhu music into Herbie Hancock’s ‘Watermelon Man’ (2000: 261) constitutes a form of imitation, so too do these recordings and their use of the sounds of non-human actors.

Obviously, we are dealing with different kinds of actors here, such as birds and sea mammals, as opposed to other human beings, and there are, of course, important ethical distinctions. Intellectual property issues may be the least significant of these differences; however, they do offer us an illustration of at least one of the distinctions we make between human and non-human actors in such situations. While Feld and others raise issues about the appropriation by Western musicians of the intellectual property of the Mbuti, we do not trouble about these issues in relation to non-human sounds, not least because they are not generally viewed as the product of an intellect. Animals are themselves more likely to be viewed as property rather than owners of property. More generally, as mentioned earlier, animals signify ‘nature’, a notoriously problematic term, which is worked out differently in each of these recordings, figuring variously as the non-human, the environment within which humans live or the larger reality to which humans belong, along with everything else.

‘Wilderness Lost’: Dan Gibson’s Solitudes and the Sound of Nature

Solitudes founder Dan Gibson channeled an adolescent enthusiasm for the outdoors into a career as a wildlife filmmaker and sound recordist, including the Solitudes Recordings. They were billed as part of Gibson’s ‘Lifelong Commitment to Nature’, and, on the notes for each, he expressed the wish that the series would, ‘inspire people to be more environmentally responsible’ (Gibson 1995). Gibson was a noted conservationist, but he was not affiliated with any particular group. His activism was generally limited to preserving nesting sites near his summer cottage in Eastern Ontario’s Algonquin Park. In fact, he was typical of Canadian first-wave environmentalism, as described by Judith McKenzie. His love of nature was a product of the same, ‘experiences of [staying in cottages], canoe-tripping, and going to summer camp’, (2008: 283) as others of his generation.

Over his career, Gibson developed a number of techniques and equipment for recording natural soundscapes, for example, a hat-mounted microphone, which allowed him to follow the songs of woodland birds as they flitted from tree to tree. The results appeared on a number of recordings from the 1970s on, leading in 1981, to the founding of Solitudes (LeBlanc 1995: 58). Gibson began working with his son Gordon to produce a line of recordings, including Ocean Surf: Timeless and Sublime and Thunderstorm in the Wilderness, which, along with many other similar recordings of the time (Ortega 1995: C5), emphasised the therapeutic aspects of new age music. In the liner notes for one of its recordings, the producers of Solitudes claim that their work ‘relieves everyday stress, stimulates meditation overcomes insomnia and rejuvenates the human spirit’ (Gibson 1995). Harmony was a first for the label, marking the start of the Exploring Nature With Music series, with a number of further recordings in the same vein, such as Angels of the Sea and the label’s most popular title, The Classics. These recordings were a combination of relatively low-key, unobtrusive music with a number of new age characteristics, such as limited musical dynamics and slow repetitive passages alongside sounds of birds, animals, wind, waves and weather (Zrzavy 1990: 38). It was Gordon Gibson who came up with the idea of a series that would combine music with nature sounds. The elder Gibson apparently needed some degree of persuasion to go along with this, agreeing only so long as ‘the music was arranged and performed in a way that complemented
the many sounds of nature’ (Gibson 1989). This was actually a fairly laborious and careful process according to Hennie Bekker, who was responsible for the musical component of Harmony. Bekker, who had already had a long career as a musician, arranger and producer in South Africa, the UK, and Canada before his work for Solitudes, claims that when he first sat down with Dan Gibson to go over the tracks, the latter had an exact plan for where the music would fit; its entry and exit points were timed exactly to complement the track of nature sounds he had already constructed (LeBlanc 1997: 42). The recordings were extremely successful. Harmony sold 400,000 copies worldwide in its first several years after release, and a number of other titles in the series went well into six figure sales in Canada alone (LeBlanc 1995: 58).

These recordings in no way capture a ‘live’ encounter between nature and musicians. The non-human actors involved were dislocated from their human counterparts, both spatially and temporally. In fact, the aim behind Gibson’s wildlife recordings was to capture ‘nature’ with as little reference to human presence as possible (hence the label’s name, Solitudes). The natural soundtracks on Gibson’s albums, whether or not they were accompanied by music, were painstakingly and elaborately assembled in the studio. The aim of doing this was to generate soundtracks with narrative form and shape that would take the listener through a journey, with its own particular pace and rhythms. Gibson was not like some other purveyors of ‘natural’ sounds, such as Bernie Krause, who found that his toilet flushing made a more realistic sound-image of a burbling brook than the real item (Ortega 1995: C5). Nonetheless, Gibson recombined and reordered the sounds he collected, in order to achieve greater impact.

**Whale Music: Paul Horn and ‘Haiidda’**

‘Haiidda’ incorporates the sound of Paul Horn on flute, alongside the sounds of two captive killer whales, Haida and Chimo at Sealand of the Pacific, Victoria, British Columbia in Canada. The piece also incorporates field recordings of a pod of killer whales recorded near the north end of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. It is by no means the first recording to incorporate whale song into music, although it is a relatively early entry into the genre. There is, in fact, a considerable amount of music involving collaborations with whales and dolphins, much of it detailed in David Rothenberg’s book Thousand Mile Song (2008a). Rothenberg points to 1970 as the year in which whale sounds first emerged into both popular and classical musical culture, with the release of the disc Songs of the Humpback Whale. This recording consisted of unaccompanied whale song; however, collaboration with musicians was not long to follow as, at about the same time, tapes drawn from the same recordings were used in American composer Alan Hovhaness’s work, And God Created the Great Whales (Rothenberg 2008a: 25). A number of musicians, including Rothenberg himself, continue to incorporate whale music into their work, and they find opportunities for collaboration with these creatures up to the present day.

Woodwind player Paul Horn is often referred to as one of the founding fathers of new age music. His early career was in jazz but an interest in the spiritual implications of improvisation, led him in the late 1960s to the outer margins of that genre. His commercial breakthrough came with the release of Inside, a recording of Horn’s solo flute in the setting of the Taj Mahal (Yanow n.d.). The collaboration with Haida the orca whale appeared some years later in 1972, on the follow-up recording, Inside II. By then, Horn was resident in Victoria, British Columbia, on Canada’s West Coast. In 1971, cognitive scientist Paul Spong invited Horn to play for Haida, one of the orcas at Victoria’s Sealand of the Pacific, to provide stimulation for the captive animal (Horn 1972). Spong himself had been involved in furthering human-cetacean relations at the Vancouver Aquarium, as part of his research into the intelligence of orcas. His research had led him to believe that he was dealing with highly intelligent creatures, whose cognitive abilities were, if different from our own, at least on the same level, and, possibly, even superior. Spong’s interactions with the Vancouver whales had also extended to playing music for them (Zelko 2013: 164-167).

Haida had been at the aquarium since April 1969. He had been captured by the Seattle Aquarium in 1968 as a juvenile, and was purchased by the newly opened Sealand of the Pacific some months later. He was to be their star attraction and part of the facility’s planned breeding program. He was joined in March 1970 by two female orcas, Knootka and Chimo, as prospective mates. The two females, however, did not get along, and Knootka was transferred to another aquarium (‘Cetacean Cousins’ 2013). It was during this period that Horn first started to play for the whales, leading to the recording on Inside II, entitled ‘Haiidda’ (Rothenberg 2008a: 53-55). In a subsequent development, Chimo’s death from pneumonia in late 1972 left Haida depressed, and Horn was asked to play for him to cheer him up. Although it is difficult to establish precisely what, if any, role Horn played in Haida’s improving mental health, the whale did begin to eat again within days of Horn’s intervention, having not done so for over a week (Ellensburg Daily News 1972: 20).

Horn’s career continued to prosper after Inside II, which reached number 10 on the Billboard Jazz Albums chart in 1973 (AllMusic Guide n.d.). Although there were to be no more interspecies collaborations, Horn continued to pursue music as a form of spiritual awareness and, as the market for new age music developed and expanded, his
recordings continued to be popular. Haida spent the rest of his life at Sealand of the Pacific, and, despite a succession of females brought in to breed with him, produced no descendants. He died of pneumonia in 1982 at the age of 19, only days before his scheduled release back into the wild. His death (one in a long line of fatalities at the aquarium) was partially responsible for the suspension of the capture of orcas in Canada (Spokane Chronicle 1982).

The encounter between Horn and Haida was only one of a number of orca-human meetings organised by Spong, who was something of an evangelist in his view about how we might relate to these creatures. Perhaps the most significant of his converts was the environmental activist Robert Hunter of Greenpeace. Hunter’s introduction to Skana, an orca at the Vancouver Aquarium was apparently a life-changing event, leading him to organise Greenpeace’s anti-whaling campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s (Zelko 2013: 175-177). Spong and his Greenpeace colleagues also became convinced that keeping orcas and other cetaceans in captivity for human amusement was wrong. During the 1970s and 1980s, the group sought an end to the practice, with Sealand of the Pacific as one of the main targets for the group’s activism. In fact, Miracle, another prospective mate of Haida’s, died during an attempt by environmental activists (who were not associated with Greenpeace) to rescue her (The Vancouver Sun 1982). In part, the growing objections to using captive intelligent mammals for entertainment may explain why Horn never repeated his interactions with orcas.

As mentioned above, Haida is not the only orca on the music track that more or less bears his name; Chimo is also heard, as are a number of killer whales from the north end of Vancouver Island, recorded by Spong as part of his field research. Horn was not present at any of the recordings of whales. According to the liner notes, a live recording of their conversation was rendered impossible, due to the poor sound quality of the flute at the aquarium, as well as background noises. As a result, Horn’s part was recorded afterwards in the studio. The sound of his gently reverberating flute is in contrast to the rather flat recordings of the whales in the aquarium. The sound changes altogether toward the end of the piece, when it switches to Spong’s recordings of wild orcas. These sounds are heavily processed, with very noticeable echo.

‘The Energy Exchange of Harmony’: Jim Nollman’s Playing Music With Animals

Jim Nollman has been amongst the most prominent figures in interspecies music making for several decades, as a musician, an author and as an ecological activist, notably with Greenpeace. He has documented his ongoing attempts at human/non-human musical collaboration in a number of books, articles and recordings. Much of this is done through his organisation, Interspecies, founded in 1978, which promotes interactions between wild animals and artists (‘Interspecies’ 2009). One of its major undertakings is the Orca Project, which allows for sonic encounters between humans and wild orcas in Johnstone Strait, off Northern Vancouver Island.

Nollman’s work offers a number of clear contrasts with our first two examples. Although it does not circulate nearly as widely as either Paul Horn’s recordings or the Solitudes catalogue, it represents one of the most sustained attempts to cross the divide between species, occupying a prominent place within the emerging field of zoomusicological practice. Nollman’s activism appears to be far more central to his musical practice. In the notes to his 1982 album, issued by Folkways Recordings, Playing With Animals, Nollman outlines a philosophy of interdependence, in which ‘all of the species, resources and functions of the earth aid and abet the growth and continuity of all the rest’ (1982: 1). His music is meant to serve as a means of both demonstrating and furthering these relationships.

The recordings are ‘live’, which is simply to say that Nollman’s contributions are recorded together in real time, rather than assembled after the fact, as with ‘Haidda’ and Harmony. This does not mean that there is no studio manipulation. On Playing with Animals’ last track, ‘Music to Eat Thanksgiving By: 3 Flute Players and 300 Turkeys’, the parts were doubled up in the studio ‘to give it added density’ (Nollman 1982: 3). Most of the tracks are also edited from what may be several hours down to a few minutes at most. For all that the coordination of Nollman’s contributions and those of the animals is not done in the studio; Nollman’s recordings are, in a sense, no less contrived than either Harmony or ‘Haidda.’ The situations in which they are made are planned (at least by Nollman). He works with groups of animals rather than individuals. In the case of his recordings with turkeys or wolves, if not with orcas, the animals are in some form of captivity.

To make recordings with the orcas is a choice guided in part by the fact that the species’s vocalisations are, unlike those of other whales, largely within the range of human hearing (Nollman 2008). Additionally, making these recordings requires elaborate equipment. This includes not only underwater microphones to capture the sounds made by both Nollman and the whales, but also devices that allow Nollman’s music to be heard underwater – either underwater speakers to transmit the sounds of an electric guitar or the waterphone, ‘an acoustic metal globe, which floats, and is played by stroking its various brass prongs with a violin bow’ (Nollman 1982: 3). Playing the latter device involved Nollman floating in open water among a small group of orcas, two of which on one occasion chose
to charge him, as ‘a joke’ (Nollman 1982: 3). Over the nearly three minutes of the track, ‘Orcas and Waterphone’, we hear whale vocalisations, punctuated by splashing, Nollman’s own cries, and the ethereal sound of the waterphone. The combination of sounds is not unattractive but it is difficult to discern any particular response on the part of the orcas to Nollman’s acoustic invitations.

Discussion: What one hears; what one imagines

What do these recordings say about musical collaboration between humans and human animals? For a start, if, by collaboration, we mean that both parties were consciously working together, then each of the first two cases fails the test. In neither case were the animals reacting to their musical partners. Even in the case of Nollman’s work, we cannot be sure what kind of collaboration is taking place. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of assessing the possibilities for interspecies music is precisely our ability to do this as listeners, especially within the networks of repetition, within which these recordings circulate. The technical requirements of creating an appealing recording is a limiting factor. Horn cannot record with Haida in ‘conversation’ because it would not sound all that good. Gibson assiduously assembles and edits his nature sounds into coherent narratives. In an article on the considerable amount of artifice involved in the production of ‘nature sound’ recordings, Gibson, while not admitting to using these techniques, admits, ‘it’s show business – you have to make the public want to come back for more’ (Ortega 1995: C5).

Even recordings such as Nollman’s, which record his encounters with animals, do not actually convey much of that sense of collaboration in terms of what one hears. Nollman may claim that recording has the potential to engage distant listeners as intensely as the ‘onsite players’ (2008). Nonetheless, he leaves the ‘verdict’ of whether what one hears is collaboration or communication with the listener. Similarly, Rothenberg also hesitates to claim incontrovertible proof that whales are actually responding to him, despite providing both recordings and spectrographic analyses of these recordings that, he says, suggest changes in whale song may be a response to his musical stimuli (2008b).

It is not that recordings cannot capture the sound of these encounters; it is simply that the sound of these encounters is not enough on its own to convey the interaction. As Jonathan Sterne says, ‘sound fidelity could never really be just about the sound’ (2003: 274). If, as Nollman puts it, we, ‘engage intensely’ with these recordings as documents of human/whale interaction, it is perhaps because we take the word of these researchers that this is what is going on. Imaginatively, we read back a set of relationships between the human and non-human actors involved in each into what we are hearing. To do this we rely on the stories about the recording, as found in the liner notes or in media coverage, as much as the recordings themselves.

The creatures in Harmony, as in all of the Solitudes recordings, are anonymous; frequently they are not even identified by species. The recording makes no claims to represent any specific interaction with animals. In fact, the whole point of the Solitudes recordings seems to be to leave these creatures as unencumbered as possible by humans. The recording techniques, even the editing together of the sounds into the tracks used on the album, present these animals in the ‘natural’ context of their environment, alongside other creatures inhabiting similar habitats, as well as sounds from wind and water. In this respect, at least, the recordings partake of what Matthew Brower has described as ‘the rhetoric of the wildlife photograph’ (2010: 83), in which the representation of nature requires the absence of the human.

In Harmony, nature is presented as a precious resource, which must be preserved in a pristine state, not so much for its own sake, as for ours. The healing properties of these recordings assume a primary role in this account, with both Dan and Gordon Gibson asserting that their works, ‘serve as study aids, have some medical uses and are widely used to relieve stress and insomnia’ (LeBlanc 1995: 58). Despite its non-materialist tone, Gibson’s work is perhaps closest to what Naess describes as ‘shallow ecologism’, which sees our responsibility to nature as centered on shepherding its resources so that it may continue to serve our needs (1973: 95). In the spoken portion of ‘Wilderness Lost’, the final track on Harmony, the fictional narrator’s regret focuses squarely on the loss of nature as experienced by humans. The narrative supposes that we could survive the near total destruction of nature, and that what we would miss most is the aesthetic pleasure we derived from ‘the brilliant colours of seasons past, the true pungent smell of a pine on a crisp and cold morning, the sounds of this vanished wilderness’ (Gibson 1989).

When Dan Gibson says, ‘The point is to get people interested in going outdoors and protecting the environment’ (Ortega 1995: C5); he is not proposing a realignment of our relationship with nature. He is asserting simply that humans need nature to keep us healthy and happy. The introduction of music to Gibson’s work does not change this. The rationale, according to Gordon Gibson, was that music made these sounds ‘more accessible and has an overall relaxing effect’ (LeBlanc 1995: 58). The combination of music and nature sounds is not an attempt to encounter nature but rather a means of rendering the finished product more useful to its consumers for stress reduction and relaxation. Collaboration, in this case, if it
occurs at all, is on a radically different basis for the human and non-human actors. Humans determine and define the process at every step. The non-human actors must remain unaware of the process in order to remain ‘natural’.

In the case of ‘Haidda’, the recording may not document an actual encounter; however, it does gesture toward those occasions on which Horn and Haida did meet and, presumably, interact. The recording is presented as a possible encounter, made infeasible only by technical difficulties. One of the key features of the whole episode and its presentation is the singularity of Haida as a collaborator. He is a particular being, with a name, albeit not one of his choosing, or of which he may have not even been aware. The liner notes describe Haida as having intelligence ‘at least equal to “us humans”’ (Horn 1972). The subsequent encounters, in which Horn helps to ‘heal’ Haida, as he suffers bereavement, are bound up with this recording’s interpretation. This further personalises Haida; he is not just any whale, but a creature with at least the beginnings of a biography. In this regard, his contributions to the recording suggest a certain kind of particularised relationship between him and Horn. The implication of their purported collaboration is that Haida is a person because he might participate in music making. This is offered as proof of a degree of rationality and self-consciousness that, according to animal rights philosopher Peter Singer qualifies whales for personhood (1979: 102-103). Individual relationships constitute both the means and the value of crossing the boundary between species.

In Jim Nollman’s work, the recordings themselves seem somewhat less important than they do in the earlier examples. That is, Nollman seems far less concerned with making a recording than with simply documenting his musical encounters with animals. The point for Nollman is the encounter itself; the recordings are incidental to this aim. Nonetheless, they play a useful role in his project, as a means of providing remote listeners some sort of access to his encounters. Through them, Nollman aims to convince others of his views and the value of his attempts at interspecies music making.

The very possibility of interspecies music is problematised in Nollman’s work in a way that it is not in either Harmony or ‘Haidda’. Nollman’s standards for achieving this are, if anything, much higher than in the other two examples. In the liner notes to Playing With Animals he claims that, ‘[t]he big question for me is always whether or not the animal would be playing the same sound without my own musical stimulus’ (Nollman 1982: 1).

This is a long way from dehumanised, dislocated representation of wildlife in Harmony. Nollman wants his contribution to make a difference to the animals’ behaviour, to make them respond to him. But although Nollman acknowledges that ‘every creature possesses an independent intelligence’ (1982: 1), he does not emphasise the individuality of the animals he works with; he does not name them. In fact, according to Rothenberg, Nollman has said that his work isn’t so much about the animals as much as a way ‘to get closer to nature … to get outside myself’ (2008a: 59). This is not to efface the human, but to recognise its relation to non-humans in general. In this respect, Nollman does come close to some of the notions of Naess’s ‘deep ecology’, which subsumes humans within the wider set of relations of nature (as problematic as that concept is). Thus the individuality of the animals is, perhaps, not especially relevant, no more than Nollman’s own. Our ethical obligations are not to individuals but to the entire world.

Conclusion: The Elusiveness of Interspecies Music

Do any of these accounts convince us of the possibility of interspecies musical collaboration? Musical collaboration with other species and our ability to recognise it may depend on our ability to constitute similar forms of organisation across species. Reflecting on the complexity of collective musical improvisation, Howard Becker reminds us not only of the myriad skills and knowledge individuals need to play together, but also of the importance of larger social organisations that allow participants (audiences and musicians) to manage and to recognise their relations with one another in the act of collaboration (2000). He also reminds us that even where only humans are concerned, collaboration doesn’t always come off. Both Becker and Sterne suggest that our listening is also part of that practice. If the meaning of recordings depends on more than just their sound, then for us to ‘hear’ the collaboration, we must, as listeners, be able to share with its participants (and not just the human ones) the listening practices that allow us to interpret it as such (Stern 2003: 274). In that sense would have to be already convinced beforehand.

What would it mean to be convinced? In the case of Solitudes, where the agency is aggregated completely on the human side, not much is asked of us in terms of reorienting our relation with non-humans. Human and non-human remain perhaps dependent but oppositional categories. The implications of ‘Haidda’ as collaboration ask us for a little bit more. Being convinced that collaboration could take place may mean having to expand our definition of personhood and its attendant ethical obligations, at least to creatures such as whales. The implications of Nollman’s version of collaboration are less straightforward because they are more open-ended. If we are to be convinced, on his terms, that collaboration occurred, this might require us to reconsider not only the status of non-humans, but the category of human itself.
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Arrest Me
If poetry is a box of chocolates
This time around I don’t want
The one with a soft centre
Give me a bitter poem
Which explodes my head
As I dance along the street
& kick the curved reflection
Of the world in chromium hubcaps

Rae Desmond Jones, Summer Hill, NSW

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Choralecology?: Community choirs and environmental activism

Julie Rickwood

‘Warning! May cause harmony to the environment!’ (Heatwole 2011) was the lead line in a 2011 promotion for a performance by Ecopella. While plenty a pun is used in the promotions of Ecopella, Miguel Heatwole, the musical director and founder, and the members of the choir are serious about environmental activism. Ecopella suspects that audiences might imagine an environmentally active choir to be a gloomy ensemble. The choir admits that while the repertoire contains some solemn work it also contains ‘quite a number of witty, satirical and very funny pieces’ (Heatwole 2011).

This article examines the expression of environmental activism in the repertoire and performances of the community choir Ecopella. The choir is not definitive of the convergence of community choirs and environmental activism – ‘choralecology’ – but acts as a specific iteration. The article engages with discussions emerging from ecomusicology in an effort to add to the discourse which falls within the ambit of ‘music, culture and nature’ (Torvinen and Engstrom 2013). It most readily engages with the three aspects of environmental activism and popular music that Pedelty (2012: 7) identified as communication, art and advocacy.

We’re not your everyday choir / From our gear you can plainly see – We are in many shades of green – Diversity in harmony.
And as you will soon be hearing / Our repertoire's different too – In melody, rhythm and words, We’re bringing a message to you.

Save-The-World-Music by Cathy Rytmeister, 2011

Introduction

In her editorial in the latest Journal of Human Rights and the Environment, human rights academic and political activist, Anna Grear (2013: 111), declared that:

What is needed – urgently now – is a fundamental worldview shift – a shift inaugurating transformed understandings and practices capable of unseating the dominant consumptive, pathological form of capitalism in the name of a renewing transformation of our deepest sense of who “we” are as earthlings amongst other earthlings and earth systems.

The community choir, Ecopella, has been on that journey since 1998, contributing a musical voice to the increasing clarion for this worldview shift. Ecopella is a network of six community choirs in New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) that sing about the ‘beauty of our world and the struggle to protect it from exploitation and destruction’ (Ecopella 2013). Ecopella believes that its high standard of a cappella singing together with the environmental songs it performs, encourage positive change in people’s thoughts and actions.

Figure 1: Ecopella’s logo, created by David Hobbs

This article examines the expression of environmental activism in the repertoire and performances of the community choir Ecopella. It is not definitive of the convergence of community choirs and environmental activism – ‘choralecology’ – but acts as a specific iteration. The article engages with discussions emerging from ecomusicology in an effort to add to the discourse which falls within the ambit of ‘music, culture and nature’ (Allen 2013) and so I begin by briefly outlining my position. A summary of community choirs in Australia will follow. These preliminary sections situate Ecopella within the scope of both the academic field and the music practice. An overview of Ecopella will then be provided before examining the choir’s repertoire and performances. An analysis then follows, before concluding the article.
Ecomusicology

Grear notes that there is growing interest to ‘give content, meaning and force to what we can think of as forms of eco-humane justice’ (2013: 111). Ecomusicology or eco-critical musicology clearly suggests opportunities for eco-humane justice to be at the core of research. As a field of research that has developed since the 1970s in North America and Scandinavia, it paralleled increasing environmental concern: a ‘period of greening in academia when environmental studies developed in the physical, natural, and social sciences as well as the humanities’ (Allen 2013).

There were evident parallels in Australian academia and rather than provide a thorough overview (which is beyond the scope and purpose of this article) I will share a personal anecdote. A major in my undergraduate studies in the mid-1980s was called ‘human sciences’. It could be counted in either an arts or science degree. Units included human ecology, sustainable agriculture, and human adaptability. Regarded as irrelevant at the time, the human sciences program was constantly under threat from the university. The staff and students of the program lobbied continually against its closure and over time it became environmental studies and eventually into one of the largest and major schools of the university. It was not until my postgraduate studies that my anthropological and then interdisciplinary interest in music and music making became my academic focus. It has therefore been of significant interest to me to discover the growing field of ecomusicology and to have the opportunity to bring my earlier training to consideration within this article.

Since attending a conference in late 2009 in Brisbane that focused on music and sustainability, I have held concerns about the application of scientific concepts to music cultures. Brent Keogh (2013) has recently articulated similar concerns. Directing attention to music ecology, rather than ecomusicology specifically, Keogh recently critiqued the application of the ‘politically neutral scientific’ (2013: 5) trope of ‘ecology’ to diverse music cultures. Ultimately, Keogh’s particular concern is with the adoption of the term ‘sustainability’. He notes the term is often used as a conflation of human responsibility to care for the natural world with the continuation and transmission of diverse music cultures. Keogh concludes that ecology is not ‘the most robust terminology to support arguments for the sustainability of diverse music cultures across the globe’ (2013: 8). Perlman (2012) likewise critiqued the metaphor of ecology when arguing that musical diversity strengthens human culture. He notes that specific data on the benefits of musical diversity is ‘hard to imagine’ (Perlman 2012: 15).

Similarly to Grear, Keogh (2103: 7) declares a need to consider the philosophical questions of what makes us human and our relationship to the natural world. It is apparent that much research of music and the environment has an ethical, political and/or moral intent, even philosophical engagement, which aligns with Grear’s eco-humane justice. While the notions of nature, environment, ecology, and sustainability slide over one another within the discourse emerging from within ecomusicology and allied research, there is nevertheless an understanding that scientific approaches to environmental crises need to be matched with humanistic approaches – something very much engendered within the human sciences program. In the 1980s there was ‘an explosion of awareness of the need for effective global management of the world’s life support system [and] public concern about environmental destruction [which brought] hope for the future’ (Wolf and Wallace 1989: 4). While much of that hope for a sustainable future has been undermined by the continuation of increasing species loss, deforestation, land degradation, climate change, social and economic injustices, and political debates, it nonetheless continues to resonate in tandem with disbelief and outrage with the inaction that seemingly continues.

Ecomusicology enables wide scope for productive research within the nexus of music, culture and nature that is more than simply applying the trope of ecology to music. Ecomusicology readily acknowledges all the complexities inherent in these three terms while, at the same time, recognising promise in that nexus to a diverse array of artistic and scholarly endeavours (Allen 2013). Given the above discussion, ecomusicology is also well aware of the complexities inherent in the adoption of scientific terminology. There is also robust debate about ecomusicology’s definition and its endeavour (see, for instance, Pedelty 2012, Perlman 2012, Allen 2013, Currier 2013, Torvinen and Engström 2013).

There is also much discussion as to how best to apply the research to the shared concern with environmental crises and ‘the crisis of culture’ (Allen 2013), or ‘the dominant consumptive, pathological form of capitalism’ (Grear 2013: 19) that is seen to drive those crises. Perlman (2012: 19) suggests that the activist implications of ecomusicology are unclear. At the same time, Pedelty (2013: 1) notes that ecomusicology can engender productive integration and synthesis across traditional divisions within music scholarship and beyond. I would add that ecomusicology not only enables but almost demands interdisciplinarity. Importantly, while engaging with scientific research it should not shy away from philosophy, ethics and politics. Uncertain activist implications are therefore both ecomusicology’s challenge and its potential.

This article on the convergence of community choirs and environmental activism fits within the broad scope of ecomusicology. Calling it ‘choralecology’ is a shorthand description of that convergence which also plays with
the notions that circulate within the field. I acknowledge its weaknesses: ecology and environmental activism are not one and the same and it also repeats a tendency to conflate a scientific term with a musical one that could prompt criticism. Nevertheless, the convergence, represented in this case by Ecopella, most readily engages with the three aspects of environmental activism and popular music that Pedelty (2012: 7) identified: as communication, art and advocacy.

Community choirs in Australia

In the late 1980s, a popular music scene emerged in Australia that adopted the term a cappella to describe its practice, in an attempt to highlight its difference from formal choral structures and institutions. The ‘a cappella scene’ (Rickwood 1997, 1998, 2010, 2013; see also Downie 1996; and Smith 2003, 2005, 2008) developed into a vigorously organised amateur music network that drew on a global musics1 repertory that was regarded as alternative. The Australian a cappella scene changed the landscape of community choral singing by creating a fresh, open approach that had broad secular appeal and it operated outside institutional choral traditions.

The scene was driven by a desire to democratise singing and to create a contemporary ‘hip’ engagement with unaccompanied harmony singing. It aligned strongly with the multicultural movement of the 1980s-1990s and embraced ‘world music’ as a cosmopolitan representation of itself (Rickwood 1997; Smith 2005). Both the repertoire and practice of the a cappella scene mirrored the Australian folk movement’s sense of authenticity, and as Smith (2005) recognised, shared the same left political leaning, participatory nature and community spirit. Not surprisingly then, many community choirs promoted their music-making within political frameworks. Some embraced the politics of ethnicity and cultural pluralism of the time; many of the women’s community choirs and professional ensembles declared their feminist agenda (Downie 1996; Rickwood 1997; Smith 2005); other choirs formed that musically engaged with a range of issues such as labour rights, gay rights and social justice.

The repertoire performed was scored, or selected and arranged, to express these various political agendas. At the time, no choir existed that specifically focused on environmental issues although some choirs made environmental comment2. Over the last decade, the a cappella scene has been absorbed into the community music movement which is now far more pervasive than the scene had been able to achieve. Nevertheless, the scene made community choirs possible and visible, and greatly contributed to the growth in community music in Australia. The scene’s alternative and political edge has been somewhat muted by the shifts in community music making that have responded to funding opportunities and engaged with other social and cultural interests. As the community music movement has aligned with the arts and health agenda that has dominated community arts over the last decade, community choirs have increased in number and become normalised. Consequently, the music performed by many choirs has lost political intent and musical edge. Some choirs, however, are politically engaged and often provide identifiable threads of the a cappella scene that continue to influence community music making.

Overview of Ecopella

‘Warning! May cause harmony to the environment!’ (Heatwole 2011) was the lead line in a 2011 promotion for a performance by Ecopella. While plenty a pun is used in the promotion of Ecopella, Miguel Heatwole, the musical director and founder, and the members of the choir are serious about environmental activism. Ecopella suspects that audiences might imagine an environmentally active choir to be a gloomy ensemble. The choir admits that while the repertoire contains some solemn work it also contains ‘quite a number of witty, satirical and very funny pieces’ (Heatwole 2011). It insists that a sense of fun fills each performance with positive and satirical messages, and ‘even when the mood becomes serious the beauty and solemnity of the music uplifts the listener’ (Ecopella 2013). Heatwole believes that the high standard of a cappella singing and the songs themselves encourage ‘positive change in people’s thoughts and actions’ (Ecopella 2013).

Environmentalism and music making equally guide the choir’s ‘direct action’. Ecopella encourages awareness of, and concern for, the environment and is musically outspoken in its critique of the mechanisms of government, industry and ignorance that drives conservative and/ or self-interested agendas. In a recent discussion, Heatwole commented that Ecopella was singing about environmental issues before Al Gore’s (2006) An Inconvenient Truth lifted the profile of environmental threats which prompted increasing popular concern3.

Community music and activism have always blended for Miguel Heatwole. He is a well-known vocal performer, workshop presenter, and highly regarded community choral leader. Heatwole was the musical director of the Sydney Solidarity Choir from 1991 until 2012. Over its lifetime, the Solidarity Choir collected songs of freedom, gave them ‘sophisticated choral arrangements’, and sang them ‘with joy and defiance’ at more than 600 community events, public meetings, protests, conferences, concerts, and folk festivals (Sydney Solidarity Choir 2013). The choir was active in the Sydney a cappella Association (SAA), which dismantled in 2002. Heatwole and members of the choir contributed both articles and scores to the SAA publications Oral Majority and Not the Oral Majority.
Ecopella was formed after members of the Solidarity Choir requested to sing ‘green’ songs. The existing material of Solidarity’s repertoire was already extensive and rehearsal time fully utilised so Heatwole decided to establish a choir that focused specifically on environmental issues. Ecopella was thus formed as a single entity in Sydney in 1998. There are now six branches of the choir based in Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast, Canberra, the Southern Highlands, and Illawarra. All gigs require a combination of members from different branches. For example, in 2008 they performed at the National Folk Festival with 50 singers. A performance I attended in Canberra in late 2013 included members from Sydney, Canberra and the Southern Highlands, making a total of a dozen singers. A number of them had recently returned from a tour through Northern NSW and Southern Queensland before venturing to Canberra for the Earthbeat concert, an event that celebrated the environment, both locally and globally. Ecopella shared the bill with Shortis and Simpson, a well-known singing/songwriting couple based in Canberra who had an extensive repertoire of environmentally themed songs on which to draw and, in equal measure, a reputation for satire. The organiser of the concert, Common Ground Exhibitions and Research, is a Canberra-based arts venture established in 2004 to mount environmental events which have included exhibitions, seminars, concerts and a parade of sustainable fashion. Common Ground’s director, Christine Watson, said prior to the concert that ‘If you want to ensure that we pass this land on safely to our children and children’s children “EARTHBeat” will inspire you’ (Musa 2013). As I will show, performing in these sorts of events is not uncommon for Ecopella.

Discussions with numerous members indicated that they all had an interest in the environmental movement and enjoyed singing and, for that matter, singing well. As one member explained, ‘I sing, and love the message that is given in the songs. The music is challenging, and there is a high standard’. Another said she took pride in making good music. Other members also referred to the ambitious arrangements and the opportunity to ‘get together with a group of (reasonably) like-minded people to sing about something we care about’. Many held a belief in the power of people coming together to make change. One member clearly articulated a common theme: that the choir was a ‘great affinity group for protest actions, but one where we [have] fun, and [feel] supported [to participate] as singers, not merely as passive observers’.

A former member noted that Ecopella’s direct activism increased once it had established a reputation in the environmental movement. Heatwole had found that in some situations, however, there was little respect from individuals or groups within the environmental movement for the work of the choir. He and other members of the choir felt that this reflected some ignorance within the environmental movement about the history and role of protest music. Nevertheless, the members of Ecopella are articulate about the choir’s contribution:

… raising environmental awareness and bringing harmony and voice to saving the planet;

… supporting communities to raise awareness of environmental concerns;

Ecopella … is a choir with a purpose – to inform and entertain about the environment. We hope to give an environmental message through music and help rebuild the strength of those fighting for environmental issues, by singing to them;

Bringing songs to people in the context of protests and activism fosters solidarity and celebration, two things that are vital in tough times, especially when conservative governments and climate change nay-sayers have centre stage;
Music is essential to society, although I think its importance can often be under-appreciated. Through music and singing we can uniquely communicate and share ideas and feelings. It creates community and can spur that community to action (however internalised or mute that may be). At the individual level, singing with others promotes a sense of belonging and is well known for being good for you.

**Repertoire and performance**

The repertoire of Ecopella has reflected the evolution of environmental concerns over the last fifteen years and, in doing so, has engaged with the increasing political debates that surround the scientific evidence of human impact on the environment. It has recorded two CDs.

The first CD, released in 2002, is titled *An Organism called Earth*. Its song list does not emphatically herald an environmental thematic. Subtle allusions are made through some of the material, including a medley from Papua New Guinea (PNG). The liner notes are therefore important explanations about each song's selection. Entering Ecopella's repertoire early in its existence, the ‘Ambore Medley’ reflects the practice within the a cappella scene of including global musics identified as appropriate to express political concerns. The three songs of the medley come from the Sepik River and were brought to Australia in 1995 by Henrik Ason, a member of the Raunisi Theatre Group in Wewak. His visit to Australia was part of a campaign exposing the depredations of the logging industry in PNG.

Other songs on the first CD are obvious odes to the planet, such as the title track, written by Paul Spencer; ‘Message From Mother Earth’, written by English songwriter and community music activist Frankie Armstrong; and ‘Universe’s Daughter’ by Australian songwriter and community music activist, Fay White. Lines from Spencer’s ‘An Organism Called Earth’ include:

> All energy on Earth comes from the sun  
> Everything I touch and hear is the Earth  
> My body and mind are made of Earth  
> I am alive because the Earth is alive.

‘Asbestos’, ‘Green Like Me’, ‘Drip Drop’, ‘Pollution’, and ‘Air’ are titles that make obvious their subject. Songs are delivered with serious intent – ‘But now the cancer it has grown/ And my lungs have turned to stone’ (from ‘Asbestos’); or irony – ‘I’m an ethical consumer/ That’s the nineties thing to be’ (from ‘Green Like Me’).

The second CD, *Songs in the Key of Green* was released in 2008. It celebrated Ecopella’s ‘decade of environmental harmony’ and announced its ‘Save-the-World Music’ agenda. To some extent a more didactic element emerges. Its songs include historical references but also vocalise contemporary concerns. Climate change is directly addressed in ‘Living in One World’, ‘My Kyoto’, and ‘Ice Tears’:

Listening for the sound of ice tears falling  
Listening and taken heed  
Listening to the need.

The championing and support of environmental activism is given voice in ‘Restless’, ‘Bonny Portmore’, and ‘Weary’:

> We’re weary  
> We who protest  
> Who build unrest  
> Make this request  
> We need to rest.


There are many unrecorded songs that feature on Ecopella’s website and are added where appropriate for performances. They include ‘Blue and Emerald’, a tribute to the Australian Greens; ‘Councillor Chambers’ a comment on local government; ‘Energy March’, an anthem for protests; ‘Everything Goes’, a parody of ‘Anything Goes’ by Cole Porter; ‘Last Leviathan’ about whale hunting; ‘Let’s Pretend’, an ironic view of choices; ‘Trees and Humankind’, a comment on the impact of colonisation; ‘Take Me There’ a satirical conversation with the ‘nay-sayers’; ‘Who Cares About the Human Race?’, a parody on ‘Hernando’s Hideaway’ using words written by Friends of the Earth; ‘When Coal Seam Gas Was New’; and ‘The Corporate Director’s Guide to Handling Environmental Criticism’.

The songs written by members of the choir are expressions of their political activism. Prolific among the composers have been Spencer and Heatwole. Other choir members have written material although quality varies. It is not easy to achieve the balance of being both politically and musically interesting. Not all songs lend themselves easily to choral arrangement either, and, as one member commented ‘a good message doesn’t make a good song’.

Ecopella’s songs have been predominantly selected and arranged by Heatwole, often into sophisticated four part harmonies or complex eight part songs. Heatwole has a strong sense of aesthetics which drives his selection.
of material to arrange for the choir. He declared that his investment of time in arranging and teaching means he is disinterested in anything that lacks appeal. His primary objectives are the message of the song and the sound of the choir, concentrating on pitch and rhythm over vowel production and blending.

By the end of 2013, the choir had given a total of 377 performances which included environmental protests, campaign launches, community gatherings, benefit concerts and folk festivals. From a modest four performances in 1998 at two protests and two festivals, in 2013 they had 44 gigs. Prominent among the performances were benefit concerts for the Australian Greens, folk and community festivals, events such as Earth Hour, and concerts such as Earthbeat, mentioned earlier. Late in 2013 they held a weekend singing workshop at Wollemi Common, a ‘place for activists and artists to be replenished and inspired’ (Heatwole 2013). Though highly in demand, singing at environmental protest sites in 2013 had been limited to the Whian Whian Forest Protest in Northern NSW and at two anti-Coal Seam Gas (CSG) rallies in Sydney. In previous years, the choir had brought ‘harmony’ to direct environmental activism at anti-nuclear rallies; protests against the labelling of Genetically Engineered food, the M4 tollway, dirty banking, war, tourist development in national parks, and global warming/climate change/global catastrophe; and gave support to rallies such as Clean up Australia and Walk for Peace.

Analysis of the repertoire

An examination of the repertoire, sometimes described as ‘sacred songs for the environment’, reveals a more fine-grained analysis than that suggests (see Appendix 1). One category can certainly be identified as ‘Hymns to the Earth’ but songs about ‘Environmental Damage’ outweigh all other themes. Descriptive and solemn messages of destruction is therefore prominent. ‘Love Songs’ are a collection of five songs that make declarations of affection within a natural setting; ‘Political Commentary’ are songs that often ‘lampoon conservatives’ (Ecopella 2013); ‘Activism’ is a group of songs of admiration for activists or that promote positive behaviours, and ‘World Music’ is represented by the one medley of songs from PNG. Even within these other categories there are still direct expressions of environmental damage. There are also some prescriptive messages, even if delivered with an ironic bent.

While many songs are written by choir members, there is also much established material given choral arrangements. An interesting inclusion is ‘Fragile’ by Sting. His ‘Fragile’ is not referencing the Earth but is a tribute to Ben Linder, a peace activist murdered in Nicaragua.

Christina Mimmochi, a former member of Ecopella and one of its arrangers, felt that the song carried wider resonances. The liner notes introduce the song by saying ‘[n]ot only is our environment Fragile, so are the human beings who defend it and each other’.

There could well have been other inclusions of familiar popular material. Pedelty’s research into rock, folk and the environment (2012, see also Carrigan 2013) identified a number of songs introduced in the late 1960s and 1970s, including Joni Mitchell’s iconic references to paving paradise and tree museums. While his research project was able to identify many others, Pedelty (2013) suggests that popular music research on environmental themes is nonetheless limited. There have, of course, been references to nature within popular songs for decades and increasing musical comment on the state of the environment and political action or inaction that suggests a verdant arena for future investigation.

Some popular music research has been undertaken by others. Martinelli (2013) identified songs that align popular music and the environment within The Beatles’ repertoire. He noted that the band wrote a remarkable number of odes to nature and manifestations of contempt for humanity’s destructive actions, ‘creating a kind of sub-genre of their catalogue’ (Martinelli 2013: 5). Martinelli undertook a survey of songs written before and after the breakup of The Beatles, as well as performances and public commentary. His analysis reveals significant synergy with Ecopella’s material: songs of social protest with an environmental theme; use of metaphors and similes; odes to nature; laments; and activism.

Having added ‘Fragile’ to Ecopella’s repertoire, why overlook Paul McCartney’s ‘How Many People’? It directly addresses environmental activism, being dedicated to Chico Mendes, the Brazilian activist assassinated in 1988 while fighting to preserve the Amazon rainforest. Given the adoption of the phrase ‘save-the-world’, the choir might have also considered including George Harrison’s ‘Save the World’. The lyrics resonate with appropriate sentiment. Ecopella could well have added popular Australian compositions, covering songs previously performed by, for example, Midnight Oil.

Ecopella’s repertoire includes popular songs but it is inherently eclectic and carefully selected. Given its heritage from the a cappella scene it also draws on folk, classical, and occasionally jazz. As previously discussed, the a cappella scene itself was greatly aligned with the Australian folk movement. The music performed by Ecopella contains serious messages but as Pedelty (2012: 143) recognises, this is more accepting in folk music where earnest emotion is acceptable. Nevertheless, it can
also lean toward what Pedelty (2012: 141-142) recognises can be problematic with overtly topical music: too didactic and accusatory, although it attempts to balance these tendencies with irony and humour. Selection and arrangement of material is astute and strategic. Heatwole seems to be sensitive to the potentials and pitfalls that both Pedelty (2012) and Allen identified:

Part of the challenge is to maintain the beauty, inspiration, fascination, and emotion of music while not weighing it down with too much gloom and doom and, at the same time, connecting music and musicking to issues much bigger than ourselves (Torvinen and Engström 2013: 22).

Conclusion
The philosophical, political, ethical, moral and musical intent of Ecopella is self-evident. Ecopella’s mission is clear. It is a community choir that does not simply sing songs about the environment but sees itself participating in and contributing to direct action. Ecopella’s repertoire and performances clearly demonstrate a moral value for the planet, a concern with environmental destruction, the support and sustenance of activists, the promotion of ethically engaged lifestyle choices, and makes comment on political and industrial interests that work against those notions. It also aims for the highest possible standard of a cappella choral performance. Ecopella is visibly about communication, art and advocacy.

Yet, as with other politically inclined community choirs, there are tensions within Ecopella’s project (see Rickwood 2013). This is particularly the case in regard to its performances. Ecopella’s audience is overwhelmingly aligned or active within the environmental movement so the impact of the choir’s message is limited. The audience at Earthbeat, for instance, was very much a reflection of the members of the choir. This performance, like others, was basically ‘preaching to the converted’. At the same time, there is very little way to really know what influence their performances might have on audience members, whether environmental activists or not.

While ‘saving the world’ is a constantly changing and challenging ideal for a musical project, Ecopella can nevertheless define its own commitment to environmental activism and can find contentment in singing songs that reflect and support that activism. In making aesthetically engaging music, by being with like-minded people who create a welcoming and supportive community, and, as was repeatedly articulated, having fun along the way, they make a musical contribution to fostering greater ecological awareness. Given recent actions by the Australian Government under the conservative leadership of Tony Abbott, there is more to be done to effectively highlight both government and corporate hypocrisy and ‘greenwashing’. While the desired structural changes in society to address environmental crises are therefore yet to be fully realised, there is more than good reason and a shared intent by the members of Ecopella to have a positive time getting there.

Acknowledgements
Thanks must go to the members of Ecopella for their generosity in sharing their thoughts and music making with me. I would especially like to thank Miguel Heatwole for his support of my research project and David Hobbs for his images. Appreciation is also given to the participants of the 2013 Ecomusicologies and International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Australia & NZ Branch Conferences who commented on papers that informed this article. Much appreciation is extended to the reviewers of the earlier draft of this article for their insightful and helpful critique.

Appendix 1: Table of themes within the repertoire of Ecopella

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Words/ Music</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hymns to the Earth</td>
<td>Ode to Soil</td>
<td>Paul Spencer</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>An Organism Called Earth</td>
<td>Paul Spencer</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Message from Mother Earth</td>
<td>Frankie Armstrong</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<td>Universe’s Daughter</td>
<td>Fay White</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Sting</td>
<td>1988</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Love’ Songs</td>
<td>All the Wild Wonders</td>
<td>Elizabeth Honey</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Come Away With Me</td>
<td>Tony Eardley</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murrumbidgee Water</td>
<td>John Warner</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>Land of Light</td>
<td>Roy Gullane</td>
<td>1986</td>
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<td>Sleep Well</td>
<td>Nigel Gray</td>
<td>1981</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Commentary</td>
<td>Blue and Emerald</td>
<td>Miguel Heatwole</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Artist(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five Hundred Years</td>
<td>Peter Klein</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stand Fast</td>
<td>Miguel Heatwole</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Make Some Music</td>
<td>Paul Spencer</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<td>Councillor Chambers</td>
<td>John Flecker Ross</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<tr>
<td>Put It On The Ground</td>
<td>Ray Glaser/Bill Wolff &amp; Miguel Heatwole</td>
<td>1947</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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<td>Activism Let's Pretend</td>
<td>Geoff Francis/Peter Hicks</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>Energy March</td>
<td>Cathy Rytmeister</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>Take Me There</td>
<td>Paul Spencer</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>Weary</td>
<td>Miguel Heatwole</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>My Kyoto</td>
<td>Miguel Heatwole</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>Restless</td>
<td>Miguel Heatwole</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>Living in One World</td>
<td>Jules Gibb &amp; Faith Watson</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>Drip Drop</td>
<td>Margaret Bradford</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stand Fast</td>
<td>Miguel Heatwole</td>
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<td>Green Like Me</td>
<td>Paul Spencer</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<td>Two Wheel Tango</td>
<td>Marie-Lynn Hammond</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>World Music</td>
<td>Trad Bondna (PNG)</td>
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<td>Environmental Damage</td>
<td>When Coal Seam Gas was New</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John Spencer &amp; Paul Spencer/Trad English</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Whisper on the Waves</td>
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<td>Ice Tears</td>
<td>Cath Laudine</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>Vegetables from Hell</td>
<td>Geoff Francis/Peter Hicks</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>Wings of a Seabird</td>
<td>Nicholas Carile/Emery Schubert</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>Roads, Traffic and Authority</td>
<td>Paul Spencer</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<td>Machines are Closing In</td>
<td>Paul Spencer</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<td>The Shannon Rise</td>
<td>Phyl Lobl</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<td>Asbestos</td>
<td>Lyle Sayer</td>
<td>1984</td>
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<td>Last Leviathan</td>
<td>Andy Barnes</td>
<td>1983</td>
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<td>Of Trees and Humankind</td>
<td>Wendy Joseph</td>
<td>1982</td>
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<td>Who Cares About the Human Race?</td>
<td>Dennis Aubrey, Rick Wright et al &amp; Christina Mimmochi</td>
<td>1970 1999</td>
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<td>Across the Hills</td>
<td>Leon Rosselson</td>
<td>1968</td>
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<td>Pollution</td>
<td>Tom Lehrer</td>
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<td>The People are Scratching</td>
<td>Ernie Marrs &amp; Harold Martin/Pete Seeger</td>
<td>1963</td>
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<td>Eroded Hills</td>
<td>Judith Wright/Christina Mimmochi</td>
<td>1950</td>
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<td>(Anything) Everything Goes</td>
<td>Cole Porter &amp; Miguel Heatwole</td>
<td>1934 2000</td>
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<td>Bonny Portmore</td>
<td>Trad Ireland/Trad Scotland</td>
<td>c1750</td>
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Videography

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End Notes

1 Mitchell (1996:213) described community music in the 1980s as ‘the dominant local variant of world music’. While not denying the scene did indeed embrace world music, as has been argued elsewhere (Rickwood 1997, 1998), the adoption of global music was not merely through the ‘world music’ market but was also mediated through musicians living in or visiting Australia at the time.

2 This point is based on my over two decade involvement with community choirs in Australia and comments made by Miguel Heatwole. Being anecdotal, this comment begs clarification, suggesting future research in choraleology.

3 Comments from Miguel Heatwole and members of the choir that are not attributed in any other form come from informal conversations and communications with Ecopella during and immediately after their performance in Canberra in late 2013.

4 One member of the choir has recently undertaken a research project to try to evaluate this impact on audience members.

Author

Julie Rickwood has been engaged with music and performance research, music and dance practice, and education for over two decades. In particular, she is a researcher of the Australian a cappella scene and the community singing movement. In 1997, Julie completed a master’s thesis entitled ‘Liberating Voices: Towards an ethnography of women’s community a cappella choirs in Australia’ which examined the interaction of gender, identity and singing. More recently, she completed a doctoral research project, ‘We Are Australian: An ethnographic investigation of the convergence of community music and reconciliation’, a study of three cross-cultural choral interactions in Australia. As a high school teacher, Julie taught environmental science and political activism units. She is a member of the Musicological Society of Australia, the International Council for Traditional Music, and is the secretary of the Australia New Zealand chapter of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music.
Nostalgic Ideology in the Film *Heima* by the Icelandic ‘krútt’ Band Sigur Rós

PORBJÖRG DAPHNE HALL

This paper focuses on nostalgic qualities in two songs featured in the film *Heima* by Icelandic band Sigur Rós which is put in context with the ideologies of the ‘krútt’ (i.e. cutesy generation) and the sociological reality of Iceland today. The nostalgic features analysed can be found in the many layers of the film; in the cinematic techniques, the locations of the songs, the recording technique, the structure of the songs, timbre and timing, as well as in the lyrics. The world depicted in the film appears to be the home of the band; ‘their’ Iceland. Despite the clear longing for a simpler life somewhere in the rural past, the nature and world created in the film have little to do with the harsh and difficult reality of either Icelanders past or present. Arguably, the world created in the film represents an urban or even foreign view of a world and nature, seen by those who have never had to combat the forces of nature in Iceland.

Introduction

Today, nostalgia is a widespread part of Icelandic society. It influences people’s choice of food, clothes and furniture, and affects people’s attitude towards medicine and its environment. As of yet, no comprehensive study has been made to explore the cause and effect of this on Icelandic society and its modern way of life.

The term nostalgia is formed by the Greek words nostos which means to turn back home and alia which is a desire or longing. The term thus means a longing for a home which no longer exists or never existed. Nostalgia is the feeling of loss and displacement (Boym 2001: xiii). The first appearance of the word nostalgia was to describe a diagnosed medical condition from which Swiss soldiers suffered during wartime, when they were away from home. Letting them return back home was said to be the only cure. Later nostalgia became a psychological condition, which seemed to go hand in hand with urbanisation. Progress does not seem to cure nostalgia, but to aggravate it and with increasing globalisation people seem to have greater need to put down roots somewhere (Boym 2001: xiv). Initially, nostalgia seems to be a longing for a place but it is a different time that is sought after, the time of childhood or dreams. In a wider perspective, nostalgia can be seen as a rebellion against the modern idea about time, the time of history and progress (Boym 2001: xv).

The paper focuses on nostalgic qualities in two songs featured in the film *Heima* by Icelandic band Sigur Rós. Firstly, the band and the genre to which it belongs will be introduced, followed by an introduction of the film itself to contextualise the analysis that follows.

**Sigur Rós and the ‘Krútt’**

Sigur Rós is categorised as an ambient post-rock band. It gained international acclaim with their second album, *Ágætis Byrjun*, which was released in 1999. Sigur Rós are at the forefront of the Icelandic indie scene, for which the term ‘krúttkynslóðin’\(^1\) which translates as ‘cutesy generation’ was coined. The Icelandic indie scene is the only section of Icelandic music to have gained considerable recognition outside the country. Due to their success these indie bands and musicians are often featured in the media and they have had a key role in the popular music scene during the last decade, at least in the eyes of critics and cultural pundits. These bands have also been said to have a specifically ‘Icelandic sound’, derived from the landscape (Sullivan 2007).

The krútt ideology with its second-hand clothing and do-it-yourself attitude towards making music (Sokol 2008) can be seen as a form of resistance to consumerism. ‘They are at the core romantic, they are looking for some inner truth, the child within, something noble and authentic’, explains Magnússon, but he believes that the krútt have qualities which will become valuable in the contemporary sociological reality of Iceland:

At the beginning of the century at the same time as people flocked to business school to become a part of the assembly line at banks, a group of
In the discourse around the krútt generation, their political impact has been hugely debated. Gunnarsson thinks that they do not partake in the political sphere, they have nothing to add to the discourse and are thus worthless (2008). Bollason perceives them as using some kind of a 'passive-aggressive political method' refusing to accept the premise of liberalism, rather choosing to retreat into the past, the remote and simple, the romantic and quiet (Bollason 2008). Pálsson sees the krútt ideology as a resistance against consumer culture and states that ‘Aminía’s slow music resembles the calm at the eye of the storm, made to get people to slow down and look around. It reflects a certain viewpoint rather than indifference’ (Pálsson 2008). The resistance against consumer culture can also be seen in the krútt generation's activism in nature conservation.

Heima – a Film about Sigur Rós

The film Heima is a feature-length documentary from 2007 showcasing Sigur Rós’s 2006 summer tour of Iceland, which embodies krútt ideology. The title of the film, Heima (at home), firmly positions the film’s emphasis on showing the band ‘at home’ during their journey around Iceland, along the way expressing their interpretation of the meaning of Iceland and ‘Icelandic-ness’. The film consists mainly of three elements; the band playing live, Icelandic landscape and nature serving as a visual counterpart to the soundtrack, along with interviews with band members, where they offer a sparse commentary on how it felt to play at home and their experience of the tour. Thus, the film offers a clear perspective of what the band considers to be the meaning of ‘home’.

Almost all aspects of krútt can be seen in the film. To name a few examples: the film opens with the production of Sigur Rós’s promotional material by spouses of band members, visits a flea market and at one point an antique record player has a key role. The band then plays at a protest camp to support the protest against the Kárahnjúkar hydroelectric power plant. In addition, old traditions frequently pop up in the film, a performance of traditional rhyme chanting and a traditional Þorrablót (Thorri feast).

Nostalgia

A nostalgic perspective can be found at various levels within the film. Firstly, the whole aesthetic of Heima can be seen as nostalgic as the band investigates the countryside in their quest of finding home, implying that the core of Iceland can be found there. Secondly, the colour palette of the film seems greyer than normal providing it with an old look, resembling the Instagram fad that appeared some years later.

Thirdly, Heima presents a clear longing for a simpler life in a rural setting. This is epitomised in Palli, the only person outside the band who speaks in the film. He, according to Birgisson, is a ‘totally natural guy. He just lives alone with his mother in the countryside and just makes things all day, like carves a stone or something like a rhubarb marimba made out of old rhubarb’ (Birgisson in Deblois 2007). Palli, who makes instruments out of material collected from nature, is clearly held in high esteem by the band who along with granting him a voice, provide him ample screen time in the film.

‘Gítardjamm’ in Djúpavík

The following analysis is an attempt to uncover why two songs/scenes in the film feel particularly nostalgic. In the first scene examined, the viewer is shown dark and gloomy images from present day Djúpavík, a small, now almost uninhabited, village in the West Fjords of Iceland. These shots are then spliced together with old footage of herring being unloaded into the fish factory, at a time when the village was alive and full of people. A popular old song, the ‘Herring waltz’, accompanies it. The band members comment on the isolation and the decline of the place: ‘In Djúpavík, you see this big rusting ship, it is just lying there and this old factory which was probably just used for two years and then there was no more fish and they just closed them down’. Sveinsson adds, ‘Only two people live there, all year round’ and Birgisson also expresses this view: ‘Total isolation, it’s like nothing there’ (Birgisson in Deblois 2007).

The music which follows the ‘Herring waltz’, further accentuates this feeling of isolation and decay. Without an audience, Birgisson sings inside an empty oil tank, accompanied only by a string quartet. The song sounds like a lamentation for the place, a cry for the past and for better times. This song can only be found in the film and has not been released in any other version or format. This is unique for the film as all other songs had previously been released. The name ‘Gítardjamm’ (Guitar Jam), suggests that this was possibly composed ad hoc in the venue and thus, can be seen to have certain place specificities.

The fact that the song has no understandable lyrics, being sung in a nonsense language, somehow emphasises its nostalgic aspect, which suggests it belongs to a faraway space and time. However, it is at the same time intimate, an effect produced by recording the voice from a very close proximity where Birgisson’s breathing is clearly audible.
The melody is simple and natural and could easily belong to the beginning of the 17th century. Its clear direction, although seemingly improvisational, adds to this impression. It has jumps succeeded by step-like movement in the opposite direction; resembling Palestrinian counterpoint. The accompaniment also works in counterpoint, with voices slipping in and out. This and the immense reverb in the tank gives the song a spiritual quality.

In addition, the ‘hopelandish’ which Birgisson’s made-up language has been called by journalists – much to his dismay – and his falsetto singing style remind me of a dog howling. This experience is further extenuated by glissandos and shifts up intervals, staying only momentarily on the lower note. A dog’s howl is a sign of separation anxiety and I would like to suggest that the song expresses an anxiety towards leaving the past behind. This is confirmed by the visuals, which switch between past and present footage as if not knowing where they belong.

Subsequently, a band member is heard saying: ‘It felt good to be able to bring life back to the place, just for a short moment, one night’ (Deblois 2007), commenting on the concert that took place there in the evening.

‘Heysátan’ in Selárdalur

The second example is the song ‘Heysátan’ which is filmed outside the Brautarholt farm in Selárdalur, which is also in the West Fjords. This time the band performs outside, beside the old farm, where houses and other man-made surroundings are decaying, being reclaimed by the elements, and slowly uniting with the landscape. It seems as if nature is taking over the place.

Kjartan Sveinsson explains his understanding of the song7 as follows:

> With heysátan my idea of it after we wrote it, was that there was an old man looking over his field, a big view over the sea or something, and he is dying. He is going to die. He is just lying on the grass, and he is going to die, but that is fine because he has had a good life. He is quite happy dying, actually. And that is what the song is to me. It’s kind of that emotion. … He is really peaceful and he is dying and he is not afraid. Yeah, it’s just a cute story about a man dying. (‘Sigur Rós » Discography » Takk …’ 2013)

This description seems to fit very well with the setting in which the song is performed. Perhaps the location was chosen with the lyrics in mind, but this song is on the album Takk, and also not performed in front of audiences. It is conceived as a dialogue with nature and landscape, which again emphasises nostalgia. During the lengthy pauses in the song, one can hear birds singing and the wind blowing, seemingly to let the place communicate its own past, memories and stories. It also conveys the feeling of nature participating in the event, and arguably this becomes a concert for the landscape. Environmental sounds replace the sounds of audience members in many of the other songs in the film, although the sound of the crowd never receives this much space.

Another layer of nostalgia can be found in the sound world of the song which is spearheaded by the use of harmonium and a hymn-like harmony. The harmonium was the most common keyboard instrument in Iceland from its introduction in 1850, and for the next hundred years. It was common in country churches, and as such fits well with the old tractor and farming equipment shown in the film. The relationship between the visuals and the lyrics almost begins to resemble the ‘literal video’ tradition8, as most of the cuts are in sync with the music and when the tractor in the lyrics is mentioned one sees a tractor in the film, and when the lyrics refer to death the old overgrown cemetery is in the forefront.

Time is also a very important aspect in this song, and a conscious play with time seems to be at work, resulting in an almost unfathomable sense of time and atmosphere. This is achieved by adding and reducing beats in bars which are originally set up to be in standard 4/4 time. Table 1 shows the structure of the song and how time is stretched out. The colour changes from light grey to black as beats per bar increase. The song begins in 4/4, which is standard for pop songs. However, pop songs are usually in four, eight or sixteen bar phrases, but ‘Heysátan’ has five bars of 4/4 in the intro. The intro repeats the first phrase (chord progression) four times with an ever-changing number of beats per bar, and that complexity increases over the course of the four repetitions.

The A section consists of three identical phrases where bars with two beats and eight beats alternate. This is steadier than the timelessness created in the intro, although it can still be seen as playing with time, but now it turns into a foreseeable pattern. Arguably, this fits with the lyrics, which describe the farmer looking over his field, constructing a picture and providing a setting for the song before beginning the dramatic narrative. It is almost as if the A section represents the landscape and nature before the man enters.

The action takes place in the B section where the farmer is killed. The tension is created musically by irregular phrases, less repetition in the chord progression and shorter bars, which supports the action in the lyrics. The outro serves as a reminder of the A section and the setting which was created there gives the impression that the place remains the same although people come and go.

By performing this song in Selárdalur, it gains an additional site-specific meaning. The last inhabitant on
a is repeated without voice
- serves as an outro.

Table 1. The form of the song ‘Heysátan’.

The farm was the artist Samúel Jónsson who was known by the nickname ‘the artist with the heart of a child’. His art is characterised as naive art or outsider art, and during the last decade it has been debated what should be done with his art works as they are now ‘at risk, as the harsh forces of nature are slowly but surely destroying them’ (“Vandamál í Selárdal” 2002). Jónsson fits well with the ideology of the krútt, including D-I-Y and the recycling of materials, and thus it is not surprising that this scene is used to pay respect to his memory.

The most famous inhabitant in Selárdalur was probably Gísli Gíslason of Uppsalir. His biography was the top selling book book in Iceland in 2012 and Guðmundur Andri Thorsson believes that this interest in Gíslason reflects a change in the national psyche of the Icelandic people. He describes this change, how the people living in isolation and out of touch with modern times have become role models, in an article he wrote in late 2012:

After the collapse, it seems as if people have started to think: ‘The odd people in the rural areas - they are us.’ And then a strong interest awakens in their old arch symbol [Gíslason]. Gíslason is no longer strange, not any more, not the ‘other’, he is a symbol for us all, a symbol of the core of the national psyche ... Last year was the year of incomprehensible longing to shed worldly possessions and rebuild a cottage in a remote dale. Keep a few sheep and a couple of cows, grow cabbages, harness the stream and keep a few hens. Write poems at night and talk to god, be content with oneself, live off the land and renounce the world9. (Thorsson 2012)

**Conclusion**

This seems to be exactly what is presented in Heima; a longing for a simpler life somewhere in the middle of nowhere and that is why nostalgia is so important in the film. It seems as if Sigur Rós managed either to forecast what was to come in society, or that they are so influential that six years after the film was shot, the world created in the film has become a model for an exemplary society.

Interestingly enough, part of the krútt ideology has been appropriated by the new right-wing, neo-liberal government in Iceland, under the banner of ‘national culture’ which is worth preserving and supporting. These nationalistic tendencies are problematic and as such it is worth remembering what nostalgia is. Boym mentions that the danger with nostalgia is that one confuses the real home with an imagined home which never existed, and as a result, the longing is grounded in imagination. An example of this is the longing for past times and romantic rural settings which appear in *Heima*. Nature and the world created in the film has little to do with the harsh and difficult reality which people in Iceland had to cope with less than a hundred years ago, where every winter was a battle with nature over life and death. Arguably, the world created in the film represents an urban or even foreign view of nature as seen by those who have never had to combat its forces.

In extreme cases, nostalgia can create a home based on fantasy, which individuals are willing to kill or be killed for. Boym believes that uncritical nostalgia ‘breeds monsters. Yet the sentiment itself, the mourning of displacement and temporal irreversibility, is at the very core of the modern condition’ (2001: xvi), and as such it is difficult to avoid. Thus it is important to approach nostalgia critically, and
not be fooled by alluring images of a faraway past which never existed.

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Exploring the Acoustic Environment of the Montreal Metro by Doing the ‘Dou-Dou-Dou’

LIZ GIUFFRE AND LUKE SHARP

The ‘dou-dou-dou’ is the signal heard as train doors on the Montreal Metro close. It was developed by the STM (Société de transport de Montréal) in 2010 as a way to prevent service delays as well as promote safety within the subway environment (namely to prevent commuters getting stuck between doors and to stop fellow passengers pushing each other). Although only a relatively small sequence in the overall acoustic environment of the Metro, the three tones of the ‘dou-dou-dou’ are important in creating a particular type of social space.

This article explores the development of this unique part of the acoustic ecology of the Montreal metro system, comparing the STM’s publicity material about the development of the signal with key musical and cultural studies frameworks relating to power and affect. The focus is on the ‘dou-dou-dou’ as a method of sonic management within the metro environment, exploring the flows of power between commuters and officials within the space. In addition to being a pragmatic ‘audio signal’ to direct commuter traffic, we propose that the ‘dou-dou-dou’, with its specific composition and instrumentation, can be understood as more than just a musical marker of place in the broader historical and cultural audio environment of the metro.

Introduction: Directing Power within the Metro Using the Specifics of the ‘Dou-Dou-Dou’

In 2010, the STM (Société de transport de Montréal) released the ‘dou-dou-dou’ as it is today, chosen in response to the changing needs of the users of the metro environment. As the STM explains on their website (2011a):

increased safety, improved passenger flow, and fewer breakdowns, these are all good reasons for adopting the audio signal, an international standard.
It advises transit users to clear the doors as they are set to close almost immediately upon the audio signal being activated.

The final choice of the ‘dou-dou-dou’ for the task above came after considering six possible audio tones. Most of the tones that were considered had similar sounds to car alarms or fire warning signals, made up of either one or two tones drawn out on a single note (played as a long drone), or repeating intervals (including those reminiscent of a fire or ambulance siren). The majority of the sounds on the shortlist were also quite abrasive in tone, high in pitch, with instrumentation that was highly manipulated and very synthetic in texture. The shortlist also included tones with variations in speed and rhythm, with some repeating quickly and using a staccato approach, others included periods of short silences or a longer sustain of the note.

The ‘dou-dou-dou’ as it now sounds on the metro is quite different from the rejected tones also considered. It is comprised of three tones that ascend rather than repeat, it is quite soft in timbre, and is relatively measured in terms of tempo and delivery. The STM’s website still includes a link to a compilation of these rejected tones, most likely offered as a way to develop the narrative to allow the organisation to show its commitment to careful and considered management of the metro space (STM 2011b). However, the process of choosing an audio signal for commuter and traffic management can be understood in terms of the STM’s need to control power within the Montreal metro space.

One of the most famous and insightful frameworks for understanding power, Foucault’s formulation of ‘regimes of power’ (1990: 92), can assist in exploring how power is engaged in the metro via the ‘dou-dou-dou’. Foucault argued that power is relational and produced by people in their everyday practices (such as taking the metro). Within his formulation is a process where ‘regimes of power’ are created, resulting in relationships where individuals do not have power, but rather they participate in it (Wilson 1995: 45). The ‘regimes of power’ that people participate in within the Montreal metro have oscillated (and continue to oscillate) between the STM and commuters (by controlling their spatial practices such as not shoving each other and running on the platform) and then back from commuters to the STM through
their feedback of the sound that controls these spatial practices. The STM used audio signals to enact these regimes, with the specifics of the eventual ‘dou-dou-dou’ carefully chosen to maintain this power balance.

Regimes of Power and the ‘Dou-Dou-Dou’: From STM to Commuters

The first regime of power enabled by the ‘dou-dou-dou’ can be understood as a transfer from the STM to commuters. One way to examine this is to highlight the way the STM describes two of the intended functions of the ‘dou-dou-dou’ as an aural directive. On their website under the heading ‘what is the reason for the dou-dou-dou?’, the STM gives two answers (2011a); 1) Prevent transit users from getting stuck between doors (and prevent further injuries), and 2) Prevent them from running or shoving other passengers to board the metro. With this explanation the STM’s political expectations for the ‘dou-dou-dou’ are made clear – the STM aims to control how commuters interact with each other on the platform and while boarding the train, as is clear from the explanation in reason number two. Further to the written explanation on their website, the sign ‘avez-vous entendu le dou-dou-dou?’ (which translates to have you heard the dou-dou-dou?) [Fig. 1], was also featured online and on the metro itself. This further reinforces the power of the ‘dou-dou-dou’ as a directive from the STM to the commuter – to train people to associate the sound with the STM’s expected behaviour.

Figure 1

The regime of power directed from the STM to commuters is also observable by examining how the ‘dou-dou-dou’ is timed within the metro environment. The STM spells out (2011a) their methodologies for the timing of the audio signal on their Mouvement Collectif blog:

The audio signal can be heard when the door-closing mechanism is activated.

Two seconds later (T2), the door-closing cycle is initiated.

Two and a half seconds later (T4.5), the doors are closed and the train gets underway.

In five seconds at most, the doors are closed... so there’s no use running, another train will be by in a few minutes.

By using a particular timing between the tones of the ‘dou-dou-dou’, and also activating the tone itself at a precise point in the ‘door closing cycle’, the STM hopes to hold power over commuters and their actions and spaces. The importance of this regime of power is also shown with a further description on the website under the heading of ‘there’s no point in running’, where they emphasise that a driver cannot intervene if ‘someone or something gets stuck between the doors’ (STM 2010a), and as such they communicate their wish to control commuter movements in this way.

The logic of this political directive is clearly one of commuter safety and in the interests of a well-run metro system. However, the careful use of the audio signal in this manner (with specific attention to how the tone is deployed in terms of rhythm and the expected movement of passengers listening), is significant. For example, while the final ‘dou-dou-dou’ is made up of three tones ascending at an even pace (and deployed at a key point in the ‘door-closing cycle’), other tones that were initially considered to serve the same purpose were very different in terms of rhythm. That is, these tones more often featured quickly repeating intervals or elongated legato tones, sonic markers which were rejected presumably because they would not have the same effect on commuters as the final ‘dou-dou-dou’. Where an even-paced, ascending signal may communicate the message ‘there’s no point in running’; a quicker, more frantic combination of sounds would likely have a different (if not opposite) effect on the listener. Thus the STM’s choice of the final ‘dou-dou-dou’ can be understood as a clear and deliberate choice to use a nuanced audio signal to elicit a nuanced reaction – to ensure that commuters act in a way that the STM deems appropriate.

Regimes of Power and the ‘Dou-Dou-Dou’: From Commuters to STM

The ‘dou-dou-dou’ as it currently functions can also be understood in terms of a regime of power directed from commuter to STM, through a process of negotiation. This is best demonstrated through the testing phase of the audio signal, which included a period where the synthetic ‘dou-dou-dou’ of 2010 was initially played with the accompaniment of a female voiceover announcing ‘Attention, nous fermons les portes’ (which can be literally translated as we’re closing the doors’). The female voice was that of actress Michèle Deslauriers, whose voice can be heard on other announcements in the metro. The STM explained (2010a) that her voice was ‘chosen for its clarity and tone’, with such a combination of pleasing aesthetics as well as functionality a key part of
the STM’s broader agenda, including the organisation’s self-declared commitment to developing ‘Artistic, Cultural and Urban Transport’ (2010b).

Unfortunately for the STM, commuters did not react well to the combination of voice over and ‘dou-dou-dou’. During the trial of the combination in 2010, commuters responding to the STM on social media were clear in their opposition. Some claimed that the ‘dou-dou-dou’ with the announcement was invasive and encroached on the agreeability of their journey. Comments such as those below appeared on the STM’s Mouvement Collectif blog (2010a) shortly after the ‘dou-dou-dou’ with voiceover was deployed:

‘K’, 10 August 2010 – ‘hearing the announcement at every stop almost sent me mad yesterday morning’ (entendre l’avertissement à tous les arrêts m’a presque rendue dingue hier matin)

‘Marie-Eve La Ferrière’, 17 August 2010 – ‘the voice is really too much….it’s tiring hearing it when you have a lot of stations to go through!’ (la voix est vraiment de trop … très fatiguant quand on a de nombreuses stations à traverser!)

‘Karine’, 11 September 2010 – ‘it’s the most annoying thing ever!’ (cela est irritant au plus haut point!)

‘Domachie’, 28 August 2010 – ‘the signal’s a good idea, but I also think the voice should be left out of it. The stations are too close together to have a voiceover, which gets repetitive and tiring to listen to quickly’ (le signal est une bonne idée, mais je suis aussi d’avis que la voix devrait être retirée. Les stations sont trop rapprochées pour avoir un signal vocal, qui devient vite répétitif et fatiguant)

‘Thomas’, 03 September 2010 – ‘I agree with the majority [of people on here]. The sound’s a good idea, and even though I really like the tone of voice, it’s too much. I only had five stops and by the end I’d had enough!’ (je suis d’accord avec la majorité. Le signe sonore est une bonne idée, mais, même si j’adore la tonalité de la voix, cette dernière est de trop. J’ai seulement fait 5 stations et à la fin je n’étais plus capable!)

(Trans. Luke Sharp)

These comments indicate that the voiceover was considered to be an encroachment on commuters’ spaces and sonic environments. This is highlighted by two particular pieces of commuter feedback, with ‘Pascal’ writing ‘what awful noise pollution’ (quelle pollution sonore désagréable, 24 August 2010) and commenter ‘Jacynthe’ beseeching the STM to ‘please spare us from this noise pollution!’ (DE GRÂCE, ÉPARGNEZ-NOUS DE CETTE POLLUTION SONORE!, original emphasis, 31 August 2010).

Comments like these left by commuters on the STM website demonstrate that the combination of the audio signal and voice over was unsuccessful. The commuters not only demonstrate power by complaining, but also by indicating how they are actively choosing to ignore the directives or cut short their use of the metro altogether. In response to opposition to the signal such as the above, the STM ultimately relented and deemed the voiceover unnecessary. They explained that they had chosen to discontinue the voice over but leave the ‘dou-dou-dou’ sound, posting this message on the Mouvement Collectif blog on 30 September 2010:

Many have voiced their opinion and written to us through this blog and Facebook page. The message “Attention, nous fermons les portes” has been removed and only the “dou-dou-dou” signal remains. Since yesterday, and until tomorrow, a train on the Blue line is testing the sound signal. Starting Friday, that train will move to the Orange line, where the sound signal will be tested for several weeks.

Hence, we can see that various ‘regimes of power’ in the metro environment have oscillated between the STM and commuters through the ‘dou-dou-dou’. The implementation of the sound by the transport authority was a way for the organisation to harness commuter actions and to delimit the ways in which both individual and collective spaces on the metro could be constructed by travellers. However, during the initial stages of the implementation of the ‘dou-dou-dou’, the discontent of commuters with the repetitive voiceover prompted the STM to re-evaluate its sonic command, and remove the announcement ‘Attention, nous fermons les portes’. This effectively rendered commuters active elements in the process intended to shape their behaviours and spaces, illustrating the fluidity and changeability of Foucault’s ‘regimes of power’.

**The Journey of the ‘Dou-Dou-Dou’ as Fondly (and Musically) Remembered**

A sound similar to the contemporary ‘dou-dou-dou’ has been present in the Montreal metro system since the late 1970s. Three tones pitched at a tonic, perfect fourth and octave jump, played with relative regularity. It is a sonic pattern that commuters have heard as part of the mechanics of the metro (the mechanical sounding
of the ‘MR-73’ power converter) that has functioned within Montreal metro system since the late 1970s. When the machinery was introduced, the Montreal transport authority (the STM’s predecessor) noted the distinctiveness of the sound the converter made within the Metro landscape, and the authority emulated this breathy three tone combination in its public communications and promotions campaign. Specifically, the 1977 television-based campaign ‘il fait beau dans le metro’ (translated as ‘it’s nice in the metro’) featured an adapted version of the MR-73 sound as its introduction and as part of the advertisement’s main jingle. This audio was accompanied by images of happy commuters dancing along and around the well-functioning metro service, further helping solidify for Metro regulars a positive connotation between the sound and a pleasant transport experience. Although official copies of this advertisement are no longer in circulation, various copies of it have been reposted by enthusiasts on YouTube (‘MysticMTL’, 2013, also Figure 2 below). Such instances of community-created social histories are common on outlets such as YouTube, and can contribute to alternate ways to consider official histories of place, cultural practice and social hierarchy (Pietrobruno, 2013). For example, in histories focused on specific and targeted geography of inner city Montreal such as Straw (2009), the sound of the Metro system is not mentioned although the location of stations and elements of the general experience of travel are.

For example, the Montreal urban landscape publication, Spacing Montreal, provided a link to the YouTube post above, contextualising it first as just a nostalgic curiosity. In his post journalist Matthew Blackett gave no commentary other than to say ‘I don’t know what’s going on during this 1976 commercial promoting Montréal’s metro system, but it looks like fun’ (2007), however, in response a reader suggested that interest in the ad, and the sound, re-emerged in 2007 following the death of the campaign’s creator Jacques Bouchard. Certainly, tributes and nostalgic fan recreations appear to have become popular on social media around this time. For example, on September 4 2007 YouTube user ‘mmystiff’ uploaded a re-creation of the advertisement using the sound of the original television piece and restaging the actions while dancing in their pajamas with their hair in pig tails as a nostalgic tribute to the campaign (Mmysif, 2013 Fig 3 below), while more recently, user ‘carnaval physum’ posted a more faithful imitation of the ad, clearly staged on the contemporary metro environment, but featuring actors playing on the 1970s-styled exaggerated moves and period fashion (Carnaval physum, 2013, Figure 4).

Other social media ‘metro fans’ such as YouTube user Christopher D. Lewis have reinterpreted the advertisement’s jingle and transcribed it for performance as a basic keyboard rearrangement. This re-creation simply displays approval and favour for the jingle as a piece of music, rather than an acknowledgement of its initial marketing context or even an overt connection to
the metro system (Christopher C Lewis, 2013 Figure 5). The 1970s 'il fait beau dans le metro' ad featuring the MR-73-like sound has also been reworked as part of a 2010 local political campaign. Reworked as 'il fait chaud dans le metro' (meaning 'it's hot in the metro') by environmental group Project Metro, the 2010 campaign features new lyrics and references the original dancing commuters in the 1970s original. The video is kitsch but deliberately meant to draw attention to the increasingly uncomfortable experience for contemporary metro users (Project Montreal, 2010, Figure 6). The parody invites those who recognise the experience of the metro via this sound to challenge the old meaning of it ('nice') and instead replace it with a more realistic experience (cramped, overly heated/poorly ventilated). Similar to other instances of videos created for 'brand parody' identified by Jean (2011), here the ‘brand’ of the metro, as recalled by the MR-73 sound, is recontextualised for new purposes. Also, as in instances of political resistance via YouTube-specific campaigns identified by Lim and Golan (2011), here the MR-73 sound and its continued familiarity is used to inspire contemporary commuter action.

The ‘Dou-Dou-Dou’ and the Power of Music

While the final ‘dou-dou-dou’ tones may be easily comparable to musical pieces created for ‘brand parody’ identified by Jean (2011), here the ‘brand’ of the metro, as recalled by the MR-73 sound, is recontextualised for new purposes. Also, as in instances of political resistance via YouTube-specific campaigns identified by Lim and Golan (2011), here the MR-73 sound and its continued familiarity is used to inspire contemporary commuter action.

There are many ways we could undertake a musical analysis of the ‘dou-dou-dou’ as a piece of music, perhaps beginning with Attali’s distinction between the musical and non-musical (or simply ‘noise’). In his famous study Noise: the Political Economy of Music (1977) Attali argued ‘the origin of music’ could be located by understanding that ‘the signification of music is far more complex [than comparisons made between it and language, for example]’ (1977: 25). The various rememberings, recirculations and renegotiations of the ‘dou-dou-dou’ by commuters on social media, both within and beyond the immediate context of riding the Metro, certainly display such complexity. The ‘dou-dou-dou’ is not simply a noise in the metro environment, but sonic communication that conveys multiple meanings.

Tagg’s tools for exploring micro-musicology (2012) are also extremely useful. As part of his ‘typology for understanding musical meaning’ which targets analysis of short, sharp pieces of music in particular, Tagg uses the term ‘anaphone’ as a way of understanding ‘the use of existing models in the formation of (meaningful musical) sounds’. He explains that ‘a sonic anaphone can be thought of as the musical stylisation of sound that exists outside the discourse of music’ (2012: 487).

The ‘dou-dou-dou’ is a perfect example of Tagg’s sonic anaphone as defined above. It is a sound that exists understood by exploring beyond the STM’s reading of the sound. The ‘dou-dou-dou’ as it is played in trains is a reworked version of the MR-73 sound. It has been deliberately produced with a more electric aesthetic so that the direct communication to passengers can be differentiated from the sound made by the converter, a manipulation that engages the listener emotionally.
outside the discourse of music (it is called a ‘signature sound’ by the STM), however, the construction and the deployment of the sound can be understood as musically performed. The ‘dou-dou-dou’ is an extremely brief sound (a piece of ‘micro-music’) but its effect on listeners is easily comparable to other musical pieces.

The ‘dou-dou-dou’ has been clearly constructed with musical elements like tempo and tone – elements which contribute to its ‘meaning’ and allow the sound to work as a sonic anaphone. The tones are spaced out at even, regular intervals clearly and deliberately, and their timbre is deliberately soft, ‘mellow’. Reading the slow, mellow, ascending ‘dou-dou-dou’ as a musically stylised sound, we can understand this sound’s ‘meaning’ as the STM asking their commuters to remain calm, be gently guided, and perhaps even be soothed away from panicked action like opening or barging the doors. The sustain and the echo at the end of the octave tone also gives us that sense of space (there is no need to run for the door, there is ample space already). Such connections between sounds and music serve as good examples of Tagg’s development of musical meaning practicing ‘interobjective comparison’ and ‘hypothetical substitution or commutation’ (2012: 95-6).

Former Montreal metro management authorities were aware of ways to harness the three tones of the MR-73 in order to engage a sense of familiarity and approval from commuters. As discussed earlier in this article with relation to regimes of power, speed and tone have been carefully considered and constructed, maintaining the STM’s authority, and getting commuters to respond to their power in the way they want. This apparent musicality of the tone that has become the ‘dou-dou-dou’ is one that has not escaped the STM in recent times, either. As their website explains,

> the three notes are the musical equivalent of the precise frequencies determined by engineers for the converter’s proper operation … As it turned out, the frequencies composed a pleasant melody that could be heard by passengers. (STM, 2011c)

Evidence of the ‘pleasant melody’ identified by the STM here is also present in how journalist Alanah Heffez describes the loss of the MR-73 cars. She marked the metro’s mechanical upgrades in terms of the loss of the ‘metro melody’, writing that the new carriages could result in a ‘dou-dou-dou-doomed’ change in the Montreal metro soundscape (Heffez 2009). In her article Heffez details the loss of the MR-73 sound by presenting a basic musicological analysis, noting that ‘according to a friend with perfect-pitch, the notes [that the MR-73 car emits] are F-B-flat-F, a Bb5 chord’, suggesting similarities to ‘Beethoven’s 4th or Elton John’s “Can you Feel the Love Tonight”’ (Heffez 2009). A similar connection between common musical pieces and the MR-73 sound was also made by Tom Vanderbilt in Design Observer in an editorial entitled ‘Fanfare for the common commuter’ (2008). Vanderbilt’s analysis focused on the similarity between the MR-73 and Aaron Copland’s Fanfare for the Common Man, a connection Vanderbilt notes that had been made previously; ‘On the Internet, I soon learned, this phenomenon has been duly observed, particularly by obsessive train geeks’ (Vanderbilt 2008). Despite Vanderbilt’s suggestion that direct connections between the train sound and specific popular music may be rare (only to ‘obessive train geeks’), his observation, as well as Heffez’s comments, demonstrate a broader perception of the tone as a form comparable to music (if not a form of music, itself). These positive reactions to the sound of the MR-73 converter (and laments at the loss of the sound upon upgrading the mechanical systems) influenced the STM’s choice of new audio signals for passenger and traffic management. When the ‘dou-dou-dou’ is compared to other music, the signal comes to ‘mean something’ in the same way that popular music like Copland and Elton John’s compositions do. It provides escapism, comfort, and an emotional connection in a way that another command to act would not. Interestingly, this is not the only ‘railway sound’ to be considered in this way, with respondents to Vanderbilt’s Fanfare editorial also citing other ‘railway system’ musical meanings. For example, user James Reyman who claimed that ‘One of the new New York subway cars (I think it’s the Kawasaki R143) plays the first three notes of, “Over the rainbow” when it rolls out of the station’ (Reyman in Vanderbilt, 2008). Responder ‘Ries’ also commented that ‘Honda cut grooves in a road in California, to play part of the William Tell Overture, as cars drive over them’; a comment supported by linking to a YouTube commentary of the road as evidence (Ries in Vanderbilt, 2008).

The consideration of the ‘dou-dou-dou’ as something musical, or at least as Tagg suggests, a sonic anaphone which can be musically stylised, is significant and perhaps not surprising. Given the journey of the ‘dou-dou-dou’ we discussed earlier in this article (including the nostalgic replayings of it on YouTube, the parodies, etc.), the commuters had made it clear that a sound of this type is one they already happily associate with the sonic environment of the metro, and would miss if it was removed. Using Tagg’s tools we are able to further understand why this tone (and its preludes) have been favoured for as long as they have. Thus, the ‘dou-dou-dou’ can be understood as both a short musical piece that provides the desired authoritative communication from a harmonic point of view, but it also reflects the sonic environment of the metro itself when the trains are functioning properly. The local authorities’ choice to communicate with passengers using the ‘dou-dou-
While there has been no sustained work on those sounds (at the moment such comments are anecdotal), the careful construction of the ‘dou-dou-dou’ and power relationships outlined indicate this is an area which would benefit from more research. We hope this discussion demonstrates the value of considering present and past railway networks in terms of their sonic environments.

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& full moon/on rue doudeauville/bends these boundaries beyond barrier/used in commune/fighting for city losing itself lovingly/on a boulevard/where africans meet (discuss the days/dance into defeat/while jelly roll/morton holds ...seance sincerely suspecting soul/sold to someone/scorching his songs in new york/earlier this epoch/this man believed/voodoo a verity he couldn’t escape/performing & playing/untill dawn arrived letting him loose/inside that skull/where he remembered as a child/in gulfport louisiana/ferdinand joseph la menthe heard from hut/sound of screams/those would stay/with him forever how his heroes/had horses eyes/& he knew/robert johnson hands covered in cloth/hiding a hurt/that'd never heal/in this life or another man/he'd have to/meet at crossroads/hoarding a heart he didn’t have/to know civilisation/collapsing in 1928 he formed orchestra/red hot peppers/playing to puppets on a string/he kept mojo/for all luck/it would bring/him no luck at all times/in new york/he’d hate harlem/knowing his ghost there in apartment/performing card tricks/with tarot pack for rich newyorkers/feigned to know/demons & devils in their darkness/they didn’t know/half of it/jelly roll sang his heart out/on a keyboard/crying in creole/as an editor/read henry james to his circle/of friends meeting/for a drink/he read passages what maise knew/while on stage/jelly roll leaped/over all literature left on table/of night club/early one morning/he held book/up to light knowing it all/transparent & tedious/escapes & evasions/from a life not worth living/he mostly thought/as he packed/sheets of paper into a suitcase/with every contract/he had signed/in his life whole worlds wavered/while headless chickens/in new orleans spoke to you/in a language/you knew well/enough to write melody & music/to a murmur/he would compose/careful & concise turning the tune/through his torso/trying a tempo/that’d transcend time till time came/to take him

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Sounds Like Garbage: Paddling through an imaginary island of trash toward a new sonic ecology

JOSHUA OTTUM

In 2011, American electronic musician James Ferraro released Far Side Virtual, a ‘rubbery plastic symphony for global warming, dedicated to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch’ (Gibb 2011). Cobble together with general MIDI (musical instrument digital interface) sounds, abrasive high-def production values, and repetitive melodic gestures, Far Side Virtual beckons the listener to engage with the timbres of environmental consumption. By referencing visual, textual, and virtual aesthetics of corporate computer culture, Ferraro accentuates the ubiquitous sonic branding practices of the digital experience. As the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre circulates in an endless cycle, bits of microplastic converge and diverge in a 5000 square kilometre space. This decentralised concentration of debris does not fit the typical mould of a muse for musical composition. Yet Ferraro’s attempt to encapsulate the sonic signifiers of the very gadgets and processes leading to such waste provides a refreshed space for music and environment to engage. This paper positions the elusive, shape-shifting soundscape of Far Side Virtual as a dynamic example of sonic ecology in praxis, both mirroring and sounding out the physical and aural realities of consumption and its complex after effects.

Somewhere in the North Pacific Ocean sits an island, or rather, a patch. It is a space of man-made mass proportions and some have estimated it to be twice the size of Texas. It is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (GPGP) and it looks like this:

Contrary to popular belief, the GPGP is not as visible and cohesive as headlines would have us believe. In actuality, microscopic debris is spread throughout a large area of the ocean, making it impossible to view it as a concentrated object for study. Misconceptions have floated in and out of the mediascape since 1997 and myths continue to propagate like the increased amount of insect eggs laid on microplastic (Luanaigh 2010). In order to represent and conceive of ecological disasters it has become standard practice to generalise and simplify for maximum impact. As digital technologies open the floodgates for innumerable creative works to address environmental issues, generic codes affix themselves to representations of nature, constituting a blossoming and profitable eco-disaster entertainment complex.

This article will examine the 2011 album Far Side Virtual (FSV) by experimental electronic musician James Ferraro and its rich relationship with the GPGP. By analysing three creative works that engage with the environment, I aim to illuminate the fertile gap that exists for art to intersect with environmental issues in unexpected and productive ways. As the theme of this issue of Social Alternatives takes up the subject of music, politics, and environment, I position FSV as a challenging example of music that reflects, rejects, and reacts to slippery ideas of nature, trash, and a booming industry for the eco-disaster entertainment complex. By calling attention to the ubiquitous sonic infrastructure that permeates consumptive interactions with technology, FSV challenges the listener to not only examine these seemingly insatiable appetites, but the ways in which such behaviours manifest themselves as we engage with environmental issues. As with the
Chasing an imaginary island

The North Pacific Subtropical Gyre (NPSG) is an ‘area of convergence that accumulates particularly high concentrations of plastic marine debris’ (Goldstein et al. 2012). The majority of this debris is called ‘microplastic’, as it has been split into tiny pieces of 5mm or less. With a 100-fold increase in microplastic over the past 40 years in the NPSG, a particular kind of marine insect, the Halobates sericeus, or, the sea skater, has found a new surface to lay eggs on, thereby increasing the density of eggs in the area (Goldstein et al. 2012). Following Roland Barthes’s (1957) idea of plastic as ‘ubiquity made visible’, the literal and figurative distance of microplastics decorating the high seas has lured interested parties to the NPSG to hopefully locate the patch in all its glory. Andrew Blackwell’s account of his voyage to the GPGP underscores the infectious desire to see trash that builds as one tunes to the ‘featurelessness of the ocean surface’ (Blackwell 2012: 133). This desire is played out in real time in the Vice Magazine documentary on the subject, wherein a cluster of ‘explorers’ comment on the disgusting amount of trash they have seen. Yet, heartstring-pulling editing techniques, extensive expletives, and a dramatic soundtrack colour a journey that pales in comparison to the shocking melodrama of a film like Chasing Ice (2012).

Composer Pamela Z and visual artist Christian McPhee, joined by strings, bassoon, and percussion premiered Carbon Song Cycle in April 2013: a ten movement meditation on the way carbon travels through the ecosystem. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video. The spoken word about saving the redwoods and rattling off chemical combinations from the periodic table of elements are accompanied by abstract video.

My point here is not to argue against art that addresses environmental issues. The industry of art dedicated to environmental issue must have a place for large scale projects that include the lingua franca of popular culture. By critiquing Chasing Ice, I simply aim to unpack the shockingly predictable formal techniques of the eco-disaster blockbuster that are quickly becoming as ubiquitous as the shards of microplastic that litter the NPSG. The same goes for environmentally-themed viral song/videos found on YouTube. ‘Plastic State of Mind’ (Zolno 2010) is a song by the artist Ben Zolno and New Message Media parodying Jay-Z and Alicia Keys’s, ‘Empire State of Mind’. The video follows a plastic bag user into a supermarket dream state as he realises the damage the plastic bag does to the environment. The witty repurposing of lyrical space cites statistic after statistic of the harmful effects of the product. The chorus opens up to a soulful ‘ban bags made of plastic’ as a plastic bag monster gyrates in the background. Parodic viral videos carry a particularly ironic aesthetic that uses the language of pop culture to drive home the point. There is no problem with this except to say that there must be room for more in the realm of music than the hippie with the acoustic guitar or parodic viral videos that lead to spectatorial hip-gyrations. Moving from the time/space of film and music videos into the domain of obscure instrumental electronic music opens the question of how to fairly compare the two. It is not my intention to pit one against the other as much as to offer a dialectical model for exploration of alternative approaches to creative work that engage environmental issues at the hyperobject scale, or, ‘... real objects that are massively distributed in time and space’ (Morton 2011: 80). Before moving on, I will examine a less commercial piece that takes the forms and effects of carbon as its subject.

Chasing Ice finds director Jeff Orlowski profiling environmental photographer James Balog’s quest to film evidence of melting glaciers. As the film unfolds, the typical content of eco-disaster documentaries (shocking statistics, talking heads, and speculative theories) gives way to a focus on Balog himself. Orlowski and composer J. Ralph take the spectacle of melting glaciers into ‘hero saves the world’ Tom (Cruise and Hanks) territory. As arpeggiating violins fill out the predictable pseudo-Philip Glass soundtrack, we follow our hero as he busts his knee, takes off his shirt, gives a lecture, cries, takes off his shirt again, and still manages to capture that final photo. After all, it is a film about ‘one man’s mission to change the tide of history by gathering undeniable evidence of climate change’. The US Geological Survey website features pictures of the Muir Inlet in Glacier Bay National Park showing retreat/advance footage covering a period of close to 100 years. This scientifically contextualised footage and information provides a clearer picture of glacial relationship to changes in climate but, alas, a government website is just not as compelling as a good hero story.
character of the organ – deeply connecting to the personified view of Mother Earth as she disappears. It all makes sense. And, apparently, 30 years later, it still makes the most sense.

It begs repeating: the issue at hand is not for the extermination of a specific formal approach to making art out of and in response to environmental disaster. It is to revive the medium through a disconnection with its now predictable tropes. Whether it is the academic avant-garde or the populist approach to riffing on environmental disaster, each form carries with it particular codes meant to shock the viewer/listener into action. Instead of resulting in shock and awe, many of these works devolve into predictable humorous tropes or obtuse apocalyptic doomsday tales. Before turning to James Ferraro’s 2011 album FSV, I will briefly examine both his prolific career and the loose formal aspects of a genre with which he is often associated.

Breathing in vapours

Sometime around 2009, the term vaporwave emerged as a generic term for a style of electronic music that turned to the early 1990s corporate internet aesthetics for guidance (Harper 2012). The term is thought to have roots, albeit shallow roots, in the term vaporware which refers to a software project announced and marketed by a technology company that never comes to fruition. Vaporware can also refer to what musicologist Adam Harper (2012) calls ‘the deliberate fabrication of future products, with no intention to eventually release them, so as to hold customers’ attention’. By slowing down micro-loops of 1980s and 1990s library music, using consumer synth preset sounds, and recontextualising sonic logos and ringtones, vaporwave artists accentuate the ubiquitous sounds of the background, effectively turning the spotlight on the spotlight itself.

At the end of 2013, Ferraro not only showed 30 releases under his own name but nearly 30 aliases with their own string of releases. After releasing multiple recordings in the mid-2000s as one half of the noise duo The Skaters, Ferraro released his first official solo record Multitopia (2007). The record uses clips of reality TV and entertainment news shows to weave a post-9/11 tapestry of ‘extreme, baroque-style consumerism’ (Gibb 2011). From the beginning of his solo career, Ferraro has employed hyper-real rhetoric in song titles such as ‘Wired Tribe/Digital Gods’, ‘Roaches Watch TV’, ‘Condo Pets’, etc.; and in interviews he often cites Foucault and Baudrillard as some of his favourite thinkers. Much like the ephemeral quality of his continually transforming aliases, Ferraro’s biography remains mysterious. Born in Rochester, New York ‘sometime in the mid-80s’, Ferraro remains transient, calling both Los Angeles and New York home (Friedlander 2011). While Ferraro tours and releases physical albums there is a digital quality of transience that spills forth from his work, wherein concepts take precedence over execution and consumer-level aesthetics reign supreme. Yet upon repeated engagements with his discography and its visual components, the richness of the material is in its apparent disregard for accuracy. Similar to the slacker spirit of Richard Linklater and bands like Pavement, Ferraro floats in the strange and fluid spaces between joker and genius, stoner and scholar. The concepts are huge and ambitious, the production is often humble and amateurish. There is no better example of these qualities in Ferraro’s discography than on FSV. In this next section, I consider the productive opportunities FSV allows for an engagement with both environmental issues and the inherent issues with the many social constructions of the very idea of ‘nature’ itself.

Tuning in to the far side

A digital piano figure enters as the flutter of a synthetic, watery ringtone lingers in the background. Thin ersatz woodblocks hammer out a repetitive call and response pattern as they drown in gated digital reverb. The mood is light and anxious. A second ringtone-like piano figure enters supplying a crucial major third that cues the listener to stay light and bury the anxiety. But unease is what guides James Ferraro’s ‘Linden Dollars’ to its circular endpoint. Just after the second piano shows up, a 32nd note tambourine shows up, submerging and surfacing with each piano cue. Functioning as an audible representation of the daily engagement with endlessly clickable links, ‘Linden Dollars’ just won’t let up. More digital voices ‘ooo’ and ‘ahh’ in the background as the piece concludes abruptly after 1m:34s. After an inexplicable 16 seconds of silence, a lower digital voice shows up with a final trite ringtone motif. With no time to process, the album takes off into ‘Global Lunch’: a GPS-voice-filled situation with loud digital triangle figures, innumerable Skype sign on sounds, and a horrifically

Figure 2: James Ferraro - Far Side Virtual album cover, http://hipposintanks.net/releases/james-ferraro-far-side-virtual/
As voices from the virtual world of Second Life and GPS voices cue the listener to order sushi and that they have reached their destination, FSV is imbued with a distinctly mobile listening experience. It is not a stretch to imagine moving through virtual and literal spaces, panned and edited like a commercial, filled with goods to purchase, consume, and throw away. The sounds and melodies equally reflect these consumable qualities, mixed and pieced together as if to demonstrate to full and limited capabilities of a freshly purchased synthesiser in the year 1985. General MIDI sounds are often considered ground zero in the digital music landscape, functioning as a place to start, and hopefully move away from as quickly as possible. Electronic musicians habitually have worked to shape and tweak preset timbres to create unrecognisable sounds, fresh to the ears. In the early 80s, when MIDI first arrived, a standardised set of sounds aimed to mimic the sounds of real instruments. As sampling techniques have grown by leaps and bounds, what were once hailed as authentic sonic replications are often met with ironic cynicism or outright disgust to the distinguishing listener. Yet these dated preset sounds are exactly what Ferraro privileges on FSV, by illuminating falsified representations of ‘the real thing’ the listener begins to question the very idea of real. In context, these sounds beckon the user in and out of virtual and digital experiences. On FSV, Ferraro is giving voice to Bergson’s sense of interpenetration with ‘the notes of a tune melting, so to speak, into one another’ (Bergson 2001: 110).

Beyond good and bad

The project of acoustic ecology was started in the late-60s at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver as part of the World Soundscape Project. Led by R. Murray Schafer and his colleagues, the core of the project was to restore a sense of harmony to the soundscape by ‘finding solutions for an ecologically balanced soundscape where the relationship between the human community and its sonic environment is balanced’ (Westerkamp 1991). Guiding this original mission is a sense of a proper aural imaginary, that things need to be fixed so we can return to a ‘natural’ state of calm. This ‘natural’ sound seems to imply a world without the dissonances of GPS voices, ringtones, and sound logos. Yet such devices are integral to the process of capturing and preserving a pure, hide representation of soundscapes. Like the promise of the Lydian devices infecting the ear with nostalgia, this call to fix a ‘world out of tune’ (Schafer 1977) refuses to recognise what can be gleaned from dissecting the very idea of garbage, excavating tossed out timbres, and zooming in on the nuances of microscopic changes in the biosphere.

On plastic, Barthes (1957: 111) continues: ‘... what best reveals it for what it is, is the sound it gives, at once hollow and flat; its noise is its undoing, as are its colours, for it seems capable of retaining the most chemical-looking ones’. The hyper-real relentlessness of FSV does just this. It calls attention to the aural characteristics and relationship of plastic physical objects such as the smartphone, a bottle, a lighter, and a computer keyboard into razor sharp focus. FSV subverts the expected dream-inducing, minor-key, symmetrical melodic fragments of minimalism by pushing them into a realm of digital maximalism. We are being told each day: ‘Let’s go! Create content! Look... another new thing! Buy it! Throw it away! Click that link! Login!’ If this rapid series of mobile commands sums up time/space of everyday life in a capitalistic society, why on earth choose an amped up musical reflection of this virtual/real threshold? Isn’t the noise of everyday life enough? In Ferraro’s world, the difficult choice to surrender to these sounds can bring us to a more conscious engagement with not only the realities of our current environmental situation, but our habits of consumption and recycling.

While ideas of dark ecology (Morton 2007) and dark nature recording (Michael 2011) aim to expose the full spectrum of ecological connection, there remains an issue of removing technological mediation from the constructed ‘scape’. Whether one is documenting the sounds of a rainforest free from mechanical noise or a day at the landfill, the process is transduced, translated, and disseminated through technological means. The character of microphones, preamps, and digital audio workstations embody specific ideas of how sound should sound. By appearing uninterested in shaping a pristine sonic production or capturing any analogue sounds at all on FSV, Ferraro reveals a keen affinity for interrogating the need for stark good/bad divisions.

In his preface to David T. Hanson’s (1997) Waste Land: Meditations on a Ravaged Landscape, Wendell Berry comments on the ‘terrifying... particularity’ of Hanson’s photographs. The photographs are often aerial shots of sites of deforestation, excavation, and waste ponds. The colours are luminescent, the shapes abstract and alluring. Berry remarks on the temptation to view these pictures privileging their formal features, risking the erasure of the ‘monstrous ugliness’ that contributed to their creation. Berry calls these sites:

bad art if by art we mean the ways and products of human work. If some of these results look abstract – unidentifiable, or unlike anything we have seen before – that is because nobody foresaw, because nobody cared, what they would look like. (Hanson et al, 1997)

While Hanson’s photos depict topological permutations in landscapes, the GPGP leaves more to the imagination. And there is no shortage of imagination, or misconception.
Two graphic novels, *I'm Not a Plastic Bag* (Allison 2012) and *Great Pacific* (Harris 2012) have been published about the GPGP as an actual island. Presumably, the idea is to shock the viewer into consciousness about a ‘real problem’ through fantastical representations backed up by misinformation. Then there is the photo that became attached to the legend of the Patch of a man paddling a canoe through trash-filled water. The picture is actually of Manila Harbor and is another step in a long line of myths about the GPGP. Yet, ‘bad art’ is still what viewers long for. Where is the garbage island? When can we visit the set of Waterworld? Dutch designers at WHIM architecture have proposed to collect the plastic, melt it down, and build a plastic, self-sustaining utopia driven by solar panels and underwater turbines. What would this world look like?

More pressing to the aural issues at hand, what would it all sound like? Perhaps a soundscape filled with ringtones, GPS voice, and digital representations of analogue instruments. The narrative of creative works and media reports about ecological disaster often evokes a doubled response, always already shocking us into loops of inaction and action, disgust and discussion, fear and hope. Whether such questions lead to action is another matter altogether. Of particular interest are not only the ways in which such questions are framed and asked, but if there are any alternatives to such binary constrictions.

**Beyond nostalgia and apocalypse**

The vitality of FSV as a compelling connector of sonic ecologies is in the defamiliarised space setup by its composer. By emphasising the (im)mobile sounds of virtual life and mutating the mix, Ferraro guides the listener into a slippery dialogue with the modern world’s utilitarian relationship with the environment. Ubiquitous sounds often appear as passive agents in our everyday interaction with technology and the outside world. Yet, these seemingly unimportant sounds shape and guide the temporal and spatial relationships of our experience of reality. These sounds carry with the purposive implications for connection, mobility, and progress. The relationship between such sounds and the characteristics of plastic are innumerable. Barthes sounds out the potentiality of plastic, stating, ‘So, more than a substance, plastic is the very idea of its infinite transformation; as its everyday name indicates, it is ubiquity made visible’ (Barthes 1957: 193). It is in the infinite transformation of plastic that the GPGP finds its true, fluid identity. As plastics break down to the micro level they become nearly invisible. While complexities give way to misinformation in the name of creative simplification for commodifiable creative production, the true transformation of the biosphere eludes easy quantification, often resisting familiar quick-fix anecdotes.

The broad narrative of eco-crisis is historically imbued with a sense of urgency that hinges on a reactionary ‘or else’ logic. Malthusian tendencies toward knee-jerk simplifications are so common they almost appear as the only choice. Such claims ooze out of advertising copy, scholarly papers, and attention-grabbing headlines, e.g., ‘National Public Radio’s Scott Simon talks with oceanographer Curt Ebbesmeyer about a giant patch of garbage the size of Texas floating in the Pacific Ocean’ (National Public Radio 2003). And still the microplastic floats in and out of the nets, in and out of sea life, sometimes it’s there, sometimes not. Sea-skaters lay their eggs on it and architects and graphic novelists re-imagine it. A musician even dedicates his ‘symphony for global warming’ to The Patch (Gibb 2011).

In his article ‘Ecomusicology between Apocalypse and Nostalgia’, Alexander Rehding calls for an ‘appeal to the power of memory’, or a reconsideration of nostalgia, as an alternative to recurrent themes of environmental awareness through alarmist rhetoric. While Rehding admits the dangers of ‘regressing into sentimentalizing and romantic nature-worship’, he maintains that the current ‘attention-grabbing apocalyptic route’ of ecocriticism is in need of alternative routes to approach the issues at hand (Rehding 2011). But Ferraro’s work falls somewhere in between the opposing forces of an end of the world scenario and the remembrance of a better one. In using sounds of the recent technological past, *FSV* appeals to an already seemingly unnatural picture. It is not typical environmental nostalgic practice to fill one’s ears with antiquated technological artefacts; imagining shutting down Windows 95 for the first time or being guided by early GPS voices does not necessarily evoke misty memories of a purer time. But something continues to resonate. By filling the aural space with sound logos and melodic fragments through the filter of recently outdated sounds, Ferraro exposes the speed by which such gizmos are discarded. Through this excavation of decomposing technological artifacts, a bizarre affection bubbles toward the surface, giving way to crisp perspectives on issues of sonic ecology.
Dissecting the earworm

FSV lends a refreshing flavour to the familiar sounds and narratives of environmental crises. It reflects and reacts to the fluid definitions of ‘nature’ by creating an auditory time/space filled with swarming sounds. These sounds are inherently mobile as they are born, live, and die in the digital space. There is nothing natural about the situation, except that it seems to be the real and virtual sound of our natural everyday life. The sounds, by their ‘nature’, interrogate the very idea of natural sounds. The essential quality, inherent force, and material aspects of ‘nature’ as a concept open the door to further investigate the intricate histories of Ferraro’s reified sound world (Williams 1985).

It is a stretch to imagine pieces of household plastic floating in remote parts of the Pacific Ocean. Wastebaskets in the kitchen or the nearby garbage dump are familiar sites for waste disposal. Just as the trash begins to smell it is buried or taken out to the next, bigger wastebasket. Pondering the transfiguration of garbage with its inherent mobility and anonymous character connects us to what commercial composers call the ‘sound logo’. A sound logo identifies a product, aurally cuing the listener to attach meaning to the sound, hopefully developing a Pavlovian response. Commercial composers Eric Siday and Raymond Scott pioneered the idea of the sound logo, often using early analogue synthesisers to create aural components to instantly recognize the sound of a brand. As Daniel Jackson, CEO of Sonicbrand Ltd., puts it, ‘The aim of sonic branding, in relation to music is not to pollute the art form but to more accurately express the emotions of individual brands through fabulous music’ (Jackson 2004: 44). Sound logos have arguably weathered the transformational storms of the media far better than their lyrical counterparts of the jingle. Familiar sound logos such as signing into Skype, shutting down Windows, or a GPS voice are imbued with space-producing qualities. The rising ‘pop’ of the Skype sign-on is moving the user out of the thick, sludge of other applications into a clear, fluid world of communicative possibilities. The back and forth ‘question and answer’ sounds mimicked by iPhone’s iMessage maintain this fluid state, underscoring the already liquefied bubbles of text. By surfing our way through the technoscapes we are encouraged to stay mobile, to be distracted and continue exploring. FSV turns this mobile ideology up to 11. The sounds are in high-def, but too loud; the timbres are in focus, but instead of transporting the listener to the next place, they cut into the ear resulting in a near catatonic immobility. The jarring, unbalanced mix of FSV pushes the listener towards a meditative state of anxiety: you want to turn it off, but you can’t; you want to hate it, but you don’t.

Beyond convenient metaphors that interlink the (im)possibilities of an album and an environmental disaster, there lie opportunities to rethink the familiar. Garbage, clutter, and trash are concepts that have been constructed to carry with them undesirable sensorial qualities, but they remain highly transformational. A thing becomes trash once it is relocated. As degenerative processes take hold, the trash changes shape on both internal and external levels. As microplastic in the GPGP has become small enough to seamlessly take root in the ecosystem, the biosphere begins to change. Throw-away, utilitarian sounds and music reflect similar transformational potential as they converge, reorganising our relational habits. By allowing these micro-melodies to reproduce at magnified levels, the sounds effectively exhibit the potentialities of the ‘ohrvurm’, or earworm, as ‘an infectious musical agent’ (Goodman 2010: 147). As Steve Goodman notes in Sonic Warfare, ‘a catchy tune is no longer sufficient; it merely provides the DNA for a whole viral assemblage’ (Goodman: 148). Fully immersed in the generative stench of capitalist com-post, the earworms of FSV mate with each other, cobbling together a fertile leitmotif out of a variety of seemingly forgettable motifs. If the assemblage of recycled auditory viruses mirrors the ideological posture of Muzak and sonic branding practices, we must open the scope of what passes for garbage and what passes for art.

The final track on FSV, ‘Solar Panel Smile’, opens with the sound of Windows XP shutting down. Ferraro then mutates the four-note motif, deconstructing it, highlighting the nuances of the descending melody. A hazy, bubbly ringtone shimmers on loop in the background as the XP shut down continues to unravel. A static pad gives way to an ambiguous synthetic string refrain. Just as the repetition of the figure begins to annoy (or become catchy), an incredibly loud digital bell slams the right side of the mix. The pain of the bell opens up to an endless drum fill ripped from Apple’s consumer digital audio workstation GarageBand. The fill continues to support a series of micro(plastic) melodic fragments. But the fragments never open into a full melody. These melodies are a bridge to somewhere else, just like the endless drum fill should unfold into the persistent predictability of a spacious pop beat, just like the Windows XP motif was designed for a singular purpose. The inherent mobility of these sounds recalls Bakhtin’s understanding of the threshold, whether it be a stairway, doorway, or other transitional site, as a narrative time/space where the action happens; ‘the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold)’ (Bakhtin 1981: 248). Ferraro puts the listener smack in the middle of the threshold and beckons us to linger and pay attention to the complexities of often ignored processes. As the journey of ‘Solar Panel Smile’ unfolds, the ephemeral role of the sharp fourth of the Lydian mode is embraced with ambivalence. This is the same musical interval that often functions in sound logos for movie production companies; these motifs exude the promise of fulfillment that imbues the spectacle of popular cinematic productions. In Ferraro’s hands, constant repetition of the mode reveals its overuse as a device to achieve the ‘natural’ sound of hope. Such ambitions are self-consciously thwarted by the arrival of a short digital crash cymbal that brings
‘Solar Panel Smile’ to a grinding halt. Ferraro is adept at conjuring up musical situations that reflect, through rarefaction, our own relationships with the narrative of ecological crises. This paradoxical narrative is one of crisis and decision, but it moves slowly, tromping through the sea of sound logos, background music, and virtual scenarios, meditating on how such discourses originated.

Compost Listening

Much like hip-hop and many forms of electronic music, FSV maintains an affinity for recycling and recontextualising material. Yet, it does so in a self-consciously naive way, steering clear of reusing forgotten content in the name of sharpening the cutting edge. Instead of dependable practices of musical recycling, Ferraro opts for the compost bin, listening to the de- and re-generation of discarded objects. Upon the release of FSV, Ferraro noted that the true form of the record would be to exist in the mode of ringtones, sounding off anywhere at any time (Self-titled Mag 2013). Additionally, Ferraro expressed ambitions to have the pieces performed by an orchestra using ‘ringtones instead of tubular bells, Starbucks cups instead of cymbals’ (Gibb 2011). With such grand goals, Ferraro remains acutely aware of the ephemeral quality of the project, noting that:

…consumer transience was in fact always a part of the concept of the record. The process of disregard or transience elevated to assisted readymades. The last note of my record will be the sound of the uninterested listener disposing the album into the trash bin and emptying out their desktop’s trash bin. (in Gibb 2011)

In this article I have argued for a reconsideration of seemingly ‘natural’ approaches for creative activity and environmental issues to interact. By examining the formal properties of a series of multimedia works dedicated to a particular environmental issue (Chasing Ice, ‘Plastic State of Mind’, and Carbon Song Cycle), I have illuminated some popular generic codes found in the eco-disaster entertainment complex. Furthermore, I hope to have complicated severely limited notions of what sounds sonic ecology allows to pass as part of the increasingly complex relationships in environmental systems. An analysis of FSV reveals and revels in the large chasm between blockbuster and more ‘difficult’ approaches to creative work that takes environmental issues as its subject matter. By asserting a direct connection to the natural reactions of the bio-sphere, constructed ‘natural’ processes, and the effects of plasticising the ocean, Ferraro shines a light on the natural sonic garbage of the modern environment. Propagating earworms are framed for aural exhibition and GPS voices assume the role of the lead singer; it’s here, on the far side, that the scope of sonic ecology widens to consider synthetic as natural, unfinching at the dispersed fragments of micro-sound that simultaneously mobilise and paralyse.

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**Diary Note, 1940s**

You’d married just before the war.
A child stillborn on Christmas Day.
A wise man brought you a wireless.
You’d listen in your loneliness.
Another, library folios:
Your Georgian painter remembered.
In the ochre dawn you load me
Like hay onto the cart to worship
A risen Christ. Pirosmani.
A doctor would not charge a fee.
Knowing that it was not the same,
You’d type his letters to the state,
Pressing against the policy
Of taking the children away.

*DUGALD WILLIAMSON,
ARMIDALE, NSW*

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**sleeve**

the drive along the bay
from the library furtive books
rose from your lap in waves
soldiers had just crossed the hellespont from that desk perched on the camouflaged sandhills
bus stop heads lounged outside brilliance milkbars short sleeves
rolled tight and casual as testosterone’s gaze ‘personality’ jived around like a candy bar in its own home movie red laminex crooned like a ouija board these were religious days

*JOANNE BURNS,
SYDNEY, NSW*
'The Wild Blue Yonder Looms’: Joanna Newsom’s wildness

CLAIRE COLEMAN

Notions of ‘the wild’, an untamed and natural space, exist as idealisations that imply dissatisfaction with contemporary urban and industrial landscapes. Nostalgic longing for integration between domestic and wild spaces may be communicated by various modes in popular culture. Reynolds argues that nostalgic feeling is not limited, as was argued seminally by Davis (1977), to sentimental longing for one’s real past experiences, but instead can invoke a fabled or imagined past (Reynolds 2011: xxix). Nostalgic longing in popular music, and particularly in folk genres, is often communicated by invoking a binary between an idealised, utopian past and an inimical, malignant present.

Joanna Newsom’s work elicits this binary subtly, using musical and extra-musical intertextuality to reference a fantastic provincial past while also portraying the natural world with a foreboding sense of imminent threat. Reynolds describes the ‘freak folk’ movement, in which Newsom’s work is often categorised, as invoking ‘the unsettled wilderness of early America; a self-reliant existence, outside society and remote from urban centres’ (Reynolds, 2011: 344). This paper will examine the communication of a ‘wildness’ dichotomy in Newsom’s oeuvre, created particularly through inter- and extra-textual associations, in which the wild is simultaneously nostalgically idealised and feared.

Introduction

Joanna Newsom’s music thrives on contrast. Its tempo is rarely fixed, but adjusts to suit lyrical content and flow. Its instrumentation may be drawn from the symphony orchestra, a baroque chamber ensemble, a modern rock band line-up or, occasionally, all of the above. Its melodic and harmonic material is sometimes predictable and at other times comprises acrobatic and unexpected leaps and shifts. The grain of Newsom’s voice ranges from grating to soothing, from unkempt to refined, from muddy and gruff to bell-like in its purity and clarity. These contrasts are further articulated lyrically, as is observable where track titles set up polarities such as ‘Sawdust and Diamonds’, ‘Sprout and the Bean’ or ‘Bridges and Balloons’. These contrary shifts lend a sense of fickleness or capriciousness, a wildness to Newsom’s music that is intentionally constructed. Her subject matter, in particular her characterisation of nature, continues this tendency. Newsom often depicts a version of the natural world that is at once threatening and nurturing. This paper’s title, taken from ‘Swansea’ on Newsom’s debut album The Milk-Eyed Mender, captures her nostalgic rendering of nature’s bounty and its menace:

Borne by wind, we southward blow,
While yonder, wild and blue,

‘The wild blue yonder’ communicates a sense of freedom and open space, and with it a longing for a (perhaps mythical) time when this experience of nature was part of the dominant culture. Simultaneously in this passage the wild blue yonder ‘looms’ imposingly, and this sense of threat is reinforced as the verse completes with images of ailments and interment. Wild nature in Newsom’s work is not simply malignant or benevolent; it varies erratically from being cast as one or the other, or both at once. This paper focuses on Newsom’s 2006 album, Ys, arguing that it conveys a clearly constructed, nostalgic representation of ‘the wild’. Using techniques associated with multimodal discourse analysis, I will demonstrate that the album musically, visually and lyrically communicates a longing for an imagined past in which natural and human spaces converge, where the conflicting serenity and threat of nature is heightened, and where the disjunct between the domesticated human and the uncultivated natural world is removed.

‘Freak Folk’

Joanna Newsom’s whimsical oeuvre tends to be categorised in the ‘freak-folk’ genre, variously called
‘indie-folk’, ‘free-folk’ or ‘nu-folk’, which often musically, visually and lyrically invokes constructions of nature and heritage. By mining musical ideas and resources from the past and combining these with the technologies and stylistic trends of the present, ‘freak-folk’ artists can create works that straddle a temporal divide, fixed in the ‘now’ while nostalgically referencing certain musical or cultural traditions. Simon Reynolds suggests that freak-folk music often invokes the ‘unsettled wilderness of early America; a self-reliant existence, outside society and remote from urban centres’ (2011: 344). Reynolds’ connection between the genre and a wilder, rural way of life is reinforced by freak-folker Matthew Valentine\(^1\), who suggests that communion with the natural world is inherent to the creation of his music. Valentine states: ‘It seems to me, especially living out in the country, you get in tune with the nature [sic], the woods, and there’s a certain sound. If you’re not harmonious with nature then the music doesn’t sound right out here.’ (in Keenan, 2003: 37). Both statements highlight the perception, which is apparent to outside observers like Reynolds as well as to members of the freak-folk movement such as Valentine, that wild nature influences the music of this genre.

However, as this paper argues, the conception of nature referenced here is a nostalgic idealisation rather than a strict reality. Newsom’s album Ys provides a useful case study of how the wild is figured in some freak-folk music. On Ys, Newsom communicates the ‘unsettled wilderness’ Reynolds observes through nostalgic depictions of the natural world. ‘Wildness’ and ‘the wild’ operate as tropes used to disrupt the album’s sense of space and temporality and make manifest a fantastic past. In the wild, bygone era of Newsom’s imagining, her songs’ protagonists live more intimately with nature and are more aware of its glory and its terror. Wildness and nostalgia in the album are, as such, invariably intertwined.

**Nostalgia and the Wild**

When nature and the wild feature in creative works, a flawless, utopian natural world is often presented in a clearly constructed binary against a sinister, degraded industrial world. In many cases these polarities do not lay particular claim to representing an authentic reality, but rather communicate a sense of longing for another time or place. Invocations of the past may not be based in actual memory, but may erupt instead around imagined or romanticised myths of cultural heritage or social traditions that are essentially nostalgic. Nostalgia is closely allied with several recent socio-cultural trends. Vogues for kitsch, retro and vintage seem evidence of nostalgia’s grip on culture, however, nostalgia is a discrete notion that exists separately from these fads and describes a sentimental longing for an absent place or time. Susan Stewart conceptualises nostalgic desire as ‘sadness without an object’ (1984: 23). According to Stewart, longing for an imagined past lacks firm grounding in actual experience, allowing it to persist in idealistic perfection unassailed by the deficiencies and imperfections inherent in reality. Fred Davis observes a very specific relationship between the nostalgic past and the present, stating:

> the nostalgic evocation of some past state of affairs always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties or uncertainties even though these may not be in the forefront of the person’s awareness. (1977: 420)

Davis emphasises that though nostalgia is influenced by the past, it is not a product of the past (1977: 417); rather it is a response to dissatisfaction with certain aspects of contemporary life, firmly situated in the present. In examining nostalgia in Joanna Newsom’s 2006 album Ys, I focus particularly on the record’s multimodal presentation of ‘wild’ nature as both benevolent and threatening, and argue that it communicates cultural longing for a mythical place and time in which close communion with the natural landscape was possible.

Davis’s positioning of nostalgia as an indicator of present day concerns means that an examination of the nostalgic elements of any text offers the possibility for various revelations of the anxieties or dissatisfactions that exist in culture. Examining nostalgia in texts highlights both the subtle desires and hidden concerns that prevail culturally; the types of ‘sadness’ experienced and the ‘objects’ desired (Stewart, 1984: 23). Nostalgic evocations of nature, which may involve stories and images that sentimentalise and/or disrupt the boundaries between the industrial world and the natural environment, communicate longing for a past in which humanity was more attuned and sympathetic to nature. These nostalgic representations simultaneously imply anxieties surrounding humans’ existing relationship with the environment.

Bill McKibben makes a compelling argument that the increase in human meddling in natural processes, as exhibited by climate change and the decrease in landscapes visibly unadulterated by human intervention, has brought about the ‘end’ of nature. He suggests that in the modern period ‘nature’ has been characterised as something wild, unbreakable, and superior to human society (1990: 60), a ‘separate and wild province, the world apart from man [sic] to which he adapted, under whose rules he was born and died’ (1990: 43). McKibben theorises that a socially constructed, robust image prevails of a wild nature which is unimpeachable and able to retain its purity, despite obvious signs of human degradation that suggest the contrary (1990: 53). Newsom’s nostalgic representation of nature in Ys reinforces the sentimentalised social construction of nature McKibben has observed.
Nostalgia for the wild is also bound up in time and place, especially as applied to the idea of home. Davis (1977: 414) and Svetlana Boym (2001: 3) each recounts the evolution of the term nostalgia, noting its origins as a medical affliction experienced by soldiers on long missions away from their native land, and reminiscent of a severely depressive and consuming homesickness. Nostalgic responses often occur where there has been rupture or displacement. Lawrence Buell, in Writing for an Endangered World, observes a generalised sense of dislocation or placelessness in contemporary culture, and a corresponding nostalgia for a place of ‘spiritual fit’ (2001: 74). This longing for a lost, mythical past, in which individuals experienced connection to a specific landscape or location and where humanity lived in closer communion with the natural world, is deeply nostalgic. Placing Buell’s theories alongside McKibben’s offers a rounded perspective on the anxieties and desires communicated in nostalgic representations of nature. McKibben’s construction of wild nature as vast and indestructible offers the reassurance that human interference is, at worst, temporary, and that nature will continue irrespective of our misuse of it (1990: 67). Buell’s contrasting conception of the natural world offering a place of ‘spiritual fit’ (2001: 74) incorporates ideas of home and belonging that validate the individual’s place in the wider world. Although divergent, McKibben’s and Buell’s constructions of nature do not conflict; taken together, they can offer accordan social and individual perspectives. When the wild is treated nostalgically, anxieties around distance from, and longing for connection to, nature may appear concurrently on both broad cultural and intimately personal levels. Newsom’s Ys demonstrates this tendency, evoking the wild as a place of personal ‘spiritual fit’ from which one may be dislocated, and figuring the absence of wildness in contemporary life nostalgically. These themes may be observed by deconstructing the complementary modes on this record, working from a perspective which asserts that songs and albums can be treated as texts and analysed using techniques for multimodal discourse analysis.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis offers a systematic approach to the consideration of ‘language in use’ (Gee 2011: ix) where ‘language’ is not limited to the spoken or written word and can instead be taken to refer to communication in any media or mode, including music. Gee proposes that, in multimodal texts involving words, consideration be given to the interplay between the various modes and the ways they rely on each other to communicate (2011: 79). Communication is further mediated by the assumptions and expectations listeners might bring to the text, which affect the way the text is interpreted. Using Gee’s toolkit, this paper will demonstrate that Ys’s complementary music, lyrics, genre context and visual elements rely on each other in disrupting time and space to communicate the album’s nostalgic tendencies. The expectations brought to the musical experience by the audience or listeners, and what it means when these ideas are confirmed or subverted, will be considered.

Steven Feld (1984: 2) has suggested that all communication occurs at boundaries, stating ‘[c]ommunication in this sense is no longer ontologically reified to a transmission or force; it can only exist relationally, in-between, at unions and intersections.’ Feld encourages analysis that takes both transmission and reception into account, and also situates the text within its broader cultural context. For the analysis of Ys that follows this will mean assessing both Newsom’s communicative intentions, to the extent that evidence of what these intentions might be exists, and how these intended messages or ideas might be interpreted by audiences and listeners. It is important to acknowledge that the arguments made here offer only a possible reading of Ys, not a definitive or absolute interpretation. Applying Feld’s and Gee’s methods to the analysis of wildness and nostalgia in Ys takes into consideration both musical and extra-musical, and textual and inter-textual elements, and allows a holistic impression to be gleaned of how nostalgia figures in the text as it is situated within a broader socio-cultural communicative practice.

Joanna Newsom’s Wildness

In the course of her career to date as a performing musician, composer, and recording artist, Joanna Newsom has produced work that is unusual and difficult to categorise. Newsom trained classically in harp and composition, but by writing and releasing music in the popular sphere her work resides in what reviewer Erik Davis (2006) has described as ‘a secret garden lodged between folk and art music’. Her distinctive vocal style, which Newsom categorises as ‘untrainable’ (Davis, 2006) is idiosyncratic, and a divisive aspect of the music for audiences and critics. For example Sally Pryor’s (2004) review of Newsom’s first album The Milk Eyed Mender calls Newsom ‘a folk extraordinaire with pixie-like features and a ragged, childlike voice, sent to us from the gods in heaven’, while Michael Jordan’s (2010) review describes the vocals on the same album as ‘inexcusably terrible’. John Encarnacao (2013: 199) suggests Newsom’s voice crosses a generational divide by sounding at once ‘wizened and old, and bursting with child-like wonder’ and Erik Davis (2006) concurs that her voice has both ‘weathered and childlike eccentricity’. The wide-ranging perspectives on the listening experience characterise Newsom’s work as innovative within the broader folk genre.

Newsom’s music combines heritage and innovation in a manner that is distinctive to freak-folk. Her archaic, fantasy-narrative ballads, with prominent accompaniment
on the harp, feature talking animals and fetishise the perceived simplicity of agrarian life, but their complex sound palette and highly technical composition and production belie the austerity they revere. Newsom's lyrics are often situated in natural landscapes, but the natural world of her imagining is dichotomised as both nurturing and malignant, lending a threatening air to many of her, in other ways buoyant, works. For example, in 'Cosmia' the calmness of a cornfield is interrupted when apparently innocuous moths imperil the narrator: 'In the cornfield when she called me / Moths surround me / Thought they'd drown me' (34s – 54s). Or, in 'Sawdust and Diamonds' the positioning of wild animal as built object prompts an uncanny discomfort:

And the little white dove,
made with love, made with love;
made with glue, and a glove, and some pliers
swings a low, sickle arc, from its perch in the dark:
settle down, settle down, my desire. (Newsom 2006)

Here the language describing the dove marionette is almost surgical, and suggestive of taxidermy's manufactured attempt at preservation of the organic. There is a subtle wrongness to this image of the artificial dove which subverts listeners' presumptions of the animal, thus invoking the wilderness trope, strangely, by a felt lack in the absence of nature. The wilderness trope prompts associations with the uncultivated and natural, the unrestrained and undisciplined, but still implies operation according to certain organic systems. Animals, humans, ecosystems and places that are deemed 'wild' carry the expectation that they will be free and unhindered, but may also be dangerous and unpredictable. On Ys, this wildness is foregrounded extra-musically through the visual references to the natural/built world dichotomy displayed in the album art.

**Ys’s Cover Art: Collapsing and Disrupting Boundaries**

Although many listeners interact with music digitally, where they may or may not have access to an album's artwork, for some listeners (or potential listeners) the cover is the first indicator of what to expect of an album. In the case of Ys, the cover art is particularly laden with signs and suggestions that Newsom selected meticulously for viewers to interpret. She states:

I think the choice to do a painting instead of a photo was that it afforded so much more opportunity for packing in information, and I thought it was really appropriate and consistent with the content of the songs, to have a really symbolically rich piece of work on the cover. That everywhere you look, everything in that painting is supposed to mean something. (Young 2006)

Newsom's personal involvement with the album's artwork, and her detailed, selective approach, validates an analysis that considers what her communicative intentions might be. By examining Ys’s very formal and deliberate cover art, particularly the sentimentalisation of the wild, a rupture of temporal and physical boundaries is apparent that complements and foregrounds nostalgic notions to be communicated musically and lyrically.

Ys’s cover is a portrait of Newsom with her gaze positioned to engage the viewer, implying that inferences made by examining the painting may apply to her. Painter Benjamin Vierling's creative practice is influenced by the nineteenth century Nazarene style, which in its turn was a movement that paid homage to Renaissance artists (Davis, 2006). Thus, Vierling's work occupies a similar space of chronological displacement as Newsom's album, existing in the present but referencing a past style that itself referenced the past. The portrait bears a number of allusions to da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, such as the posture of the subject, her half-smile, and the sense that she is looking directly at the viewer regardless of the angle from which the image is viewed. Whether or not this visual link was intentional, it cues the viewer to the overt references to the past contained in the album. This link is reinforced by Newsom's attire in the portrait, which appears to be a period costume but is in fact her own everyday clothing (Young 2006). Despite these very specific references to periods from the past, the cover art is firmly fixed as a present day artefact and carries various visual clues to indicate that this is a recent painting, including a jetstream in the sky and a highly stylised landscape evocative of a fantasy novel's cover (Davis 2006). The fantastic elements in the painting point to the compelling imaginative narratives that are contained in the album and represent Newsom as a figure who sits outside of chronology, as if she was only born in the contemporary era by some parachronistic mistake. Boym argues that nostalgia is primarily about temporal disruptions of this nature, stating:

> [a]t first glance, nostalgia is a longing for place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. (2001, xv)

The blurring of temporal boundaries evident in the cover art of Ys reveals and foregrounds the nostalgic tendencies of the album.

As well as disrupting time, the portrait communicates wildness by collapsing the boundaries between the natural and the built world. Newsom sits in an ornately carved wooden chair in some kind of castle or tower,
but is surrounded by flowers that appear to be growing indoors and attended by a blackbird at the window; she is positioned at the centre of this verdant, natural life. She holds a sickle in her left hand, which viewers may associate with death, or harvest, or the hammer and sickle insignia of communism. Her right hand holds a mounted, preserved Cosmia moth in reference to the album's fifth track of the same name (Davis, 2006), and she is flanked by a dried sheep's skull. Here the trope of wildness is most obvious. The landscape is seen to be infiltrating the domestic space, and has brought with it the juxtaposition of growth and decay inherent in nature. Rather than seeming like an invasion, this image evokes a sense of restoration to the ‘natural order’, an illustration of Buell’s (2001: 74) assertion that there can be ‘spiritual fit’ between person and place. These visual disruptions of the margins between the archaic and the modern, between the natural and the constructed, between flourishing and deteriorating, foreground the boundaries to be collapsed in other modes on the album through the use of the wildness trope.

**Wild Songs Subverting Expectations**

Musically, Ys subverts listeners’ expectations of a pop album due to its overt Western art music tendencies, but it avoids the ‘classical music’ tag through its numerous popular music references. In this sense, Ys’s tracks are not convincingly ‘caged’ by genre and are themselves wild. On Newsom's first album, The Milk-Eyed Mender, she uses cunning polyrhythms in the harp line to give tracks the forward momentum and rhythmic drive that is often performed by rhythm guitar or percussion in popular song. Mender tracks are also mostly three to five minutes in length with clear repeating structures. These elements situate the album comfortably in the pop oeuvre despite it lacking a traditional rock or pop instrumental line up. There are enough similarities between Mender and Ys, in particular the same use of polyrhythm and Newsom’s distinctive vocal, that the pop allusions are still apparent on the more recent album. However, Ys’s very long track lengths (ranging from seven to seventeen minutes) and less obvious song structures, coupled with the full orchestral accompaniment (arranged by the noted US musician Van Dyke Parks), draw conspicuously from an art music sound palette. Acknowledging that genre tags are convenient constructions that allow similar and dissimilar works to be grouped, it remains the case that they may impact the creative process. Ys’s ability to exist in the realms of both art music and popular music while displaying various characteristics that wholly fit neither indicates a subversive and wild dismissal of some cultural expectations of genre.

Newsom’s training and virtuosic harp playing are appreciable on both albums, but on Ys there is a much higher expectation placed on listeners’ technical abilities. Gee describes how ‘different sign systems represent different ways of knowing the world’ and suggests that when a communicator chooses to use ‘everyday’ language rather than ‘technical’ language they are privileging one manner of knowing over another (2011: 136). Comparing the music on Mender and Ys, there is an observable shift from use of more familiar, accessible, ‘everyday’ musical language towards more technical, initiated language. It follows that Newsom may be privileging a certain type of listener or knowledge over another by making this change. Ryan Hibbett (2005: 57) suggests that the high art vs mass appeal binary is reinforced by many indie music subcultures, arguing that they contain internal structures and rules including what to wear or which venues to frequent that must be adhered to but require some initiation to be understood. Newsom’s use of more technical musical language might be seen to support Hibbett’s claim if it is read as an attempt to engage an audience of inveterate, elite members. However, in interviews Newsom suggests that instead it was designed to match the darker and more complex themes examined lyrically on Ys. She states, ‘I needed to respond to certain things musically and lyrically ... and I knew that I couldn’t fit any of that gracefully within a normal song length form’ (Davis, 2006). This suggests that the song length was not intended to signify an allegiance to art music practice, but that Newsom made choices that served the songs’ material irrespective of the expectations of genre. The decision to allow the thematic material to dictate the shape, sound and structure of the songs means that the tracks’ forms themselves embody the wildness trope. Newsom's compositional approach allowed the songs and lyrics to develop organically, free of the constraints or traditions of either the art or pop music spectra. At the same time, her work is highly deliberate and intentional, with each word and sound carefully selected and placed with precision.

**Constructing Wild Music**

Ys’s lyrical and musical material are entirely complementary, creating a sense of wildness through the fickleness and capriciousness of the songs’ sounds and themes. The orchestral arrangements by Van Dyke Parks were composed after Newsom completed the final vocal and harp takes used on the album (Young, 2006) meaning that, in a way, the orchestral accompaniment was retro-fitted into the tracks. As a result, the pace and time signature of each song varies dramatically throughout, fitted to Newsom's expressive interpretation of the lyrical content. For example, in ‘Only Skin’ a narrative section (4’ 25”) in rough waltz time and a relatively consistent allegretto speed is followed by a rubato passage (5’ 35”-6’ 05”, indented below) describing wading through shallow water. These tempo changes follow the natural, spoken inflections of the passage’s lyrics.
Scrape your knee: it is only skin.
Makes the sound of violins.
When you cut my hair, and leave the birds all the trimmings,
I am the happiest woman among all women.

And the shallow water stretches as far as I can see.
Knee deep, trudging along—
the seagull weeps ‘so long’—
I’m humming a threshing song (Newsom 2006).

Here, the tempo is flexible and Newsom engages in a little tasteful word painting by pitching the gulls’ cry ‘so long’ higher and increasing its duration compared with surrounding words. This passage seamlessly transitions into a crisp, moderately paced four-in-a-bar with a repeated pentatonic melody line (6’ 06”-7’ 35”) chronicling an uneasy pastoral domestic scene:

Until the night is over, hold on, hold on;
hold your horses back from the fickle dawn.
I have got some business out at the edge of town, candy weighing both of my pockets down
till I can hardly stay afloat, from the weight of them
(and knowing how the commonfolk condemn what it is I do, to you, to keep you warm:
Being a woman. Being a woman.) (Newsom 2006)

As the scene continues, changes to the harmony and a gradual acceleration in tempo lead to a frantic tension, enhanced at 7’01” with the addition of strings to the harp accompaniment:

I see the blossoms broke and wet after the rain.
Little sister, he will be back again.
I have washed a thousand spiders down the drain.
Spiders’ ghosts hang, soaked and
dangling silently, from all the blooming cherry trees,
in tiny nooses, safe from everyone —
nothing but a nuisance; gone now, dead and done —
Be a woman. Be a woman (Newsom 2006).

Here again the juxtaposition of growth and decay is present in the lyrics, with descriptions of ‘blooming cherry trees’ sitting alongside ‘spiders’ ghosts … in tiny nooses’. The section ends abruptly and loudly, with a sudden tempo increase, and introduces new melodic material corresponding with a fearful account of an angry sea (7’ 36”). Although these musical inconsistencies imply a degree of improvisation or extemporaneity, in fact these unpredictable structures are meticulously planned and heavily mediated. This forethought is not necessarily obvious to listeners; the frequent musical transitions seem to occur in response to various cues in the lyrics, and lend the tracks an air of unpredictability and wildness.

Ys’s musical and lyrical wildness is reinforced by Newsom’s choice of subject matter in her lyrics. Newsom is notorious as a fastidious and deliberate lyricist. Erik Davis (2006) describes the lyrics on Ys as ‘intensely worked’ and categorises Newsom’s own position on the intentionality of her writing, stating:

Newsom says that every line she wrote for the album is significant, that choosing a single word arbitrarily would have been like contaminating or physically erasing the memory of a person or key event.

These finely wrought songs are often narrative and frequently allegorical, containing reminiscences about childhood and family, or examinations of desire and bereavement, within recounts of the dysfunctional marriage between a monkey and a bear, or a description of the sea, or the prairie, or of stargazing. The pastoral and the natural are thematically ubiquitous throughout the album, however, they rarely appear in unadulterated forms. Creation and destruction are frequently juxtaposed, lending a threatening undercurrent to the most euphonious descriptive passages.

Conclusion
Visual, sonic and lyrical modes work in combination on Joanna Newsom’s Ys to communicate a constructed and nostalgic portrayal of wild nature. The album artwork is heavy with signification, and suggestive of an intimate collapsing of the traditional division between the natural and human worlds. This convergence is further exhibited compositionally through organic song structures and arrangements, in which practical musical elements such as track length, time signature and tempo are subservient to the requirements of the album’s subject matter and not to the expectations of genre or wider cultural practice. In this sense the songs are, in and of themselves, wild. Newsom’s highly imaginative allegorical lyrics draw significantly upon the natural world for thematic material, creating an image of nature that is wild by being simultaneously idealised and sinister. This portrayal of closeness with nature communicates a nostalgic longing for an imagined pre-industrial past, prevalent on both individual and broader cultural levels, in which boundaries between the human and the natural are blurred.

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Discography


**End Notes**

1. The distinction between audiences and listeners made here relates to the modes that can be accessed when interpreting the text. Where I use the term ‘audience’ I am referring to the audience of a live show, where the performer’s gestures, facial expressions, clothing, banter, etc. are available for the audience to interpret, in addition to music and lyrics. Where I use the term ‘listener’ I refer to aural-only interpretation, although listeners may sometimes also have access to an album’s artwork and draw conclusions based on this visual material. Of course, listening context is also a key factor in this distinction and there is clearly a significant difference to the experience of listening to an album in your car, for example, compared to going to see a live performance of the same work. This difference extends beyond context to content, as different production techniques for recorded vs live music mean that the auditory materials available for interpretation vary for audiences and listeners too. An extended discussion of these factors is outside the scope of this paper, which generally examines *Ys* listeners rather than Joanna Newsom’s audiences, however, it is worthwhile acknowledging that two interpretative avenues exist and that many modes are available to both.

2. Although Newsom herself did not paint the portrait on the album cover, she worked closely alongside painter Benjamin Vierling in deciding the painting’s content.

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Claire Coleman completed her Bachelor of Music Education at the University of Western Australia in 2005. After several years teaching and working in community arts, she returned to study and undertook an Honours project examining authenticity and relationality in Australian contemporary folk music. She commenced her PhD, which addresses the role of nostalgia in contemporary folk music, at the University of Western Sydney in 2013 under the supervision of John Encarnacao, Kate Fagan and Diana Blom. Claire continues to volunteer her time with various not-for-profit organisations and champions inclusive access to community music activities, sitting on the Board of Catch Music and also supporting North Fremantle Community Arts Development. Claire is also a piano teacher and accompanist, and runs indie pop choir Menagerie.

**On Pauline Hanson’s Doorstep**

“What do you want?” she asks.

“I’m new to the neighbourhood,” the boy with marbles replies.

Who is it, Mum? “What do ya want?”

“I’m Jed.” She turns her head: it’s no one.

Who is it, Mum? “It’s one of them.”

Holding the door behind her, she resumes

“Where are you from?” Jed looks at her sandals, the doormat’s greeting beneath the rubber, and places his marbles into his pocket. “Perth.”

“No, where are you from?” “I was born here but my mum and dad....” At the window a sand-pale face girl appears with wide blue eyes. Pushing her out of the way, an older tanned-face boy watches as his mother frowns

“You’ll have to go home, mate.”

She closes the door. He draws the blinds.

**Jake Dennis, Noranda, WA**
A Land of Hope and Dreams? Bruce Springsteen & America’s political landscape from The Rising to Wrecking Ball

IAN COLLINSON

For 40 years Bruce Springsteen has examined and critiqued America’s political landscape. From 1973’s Greetings to Asbury Park, NJ to 2012’s Wrecking Ball, Springsteen has voiced the hopes and fears of those living in an ambivalent, divided and paradoxical America. After outlining Springsteen’s earlier engagements with the political environment, the paper will concentrate on three recent Springsteen’s albums released since 2002 – The Rising (2002), Working on A Dream (2009), and Wrecking Ball (2012). I will show how each engages with particular events and circumstances across America’s social, political and economic landscape; the September 11 attacks; the election of Barack Obama to the presidency; and the Global Financial Crisis. While these albums are products of a particular social and political environment, they must also be regarded as an opportunity for intervention and change in that environment.

In a Paris press conference in 2012, Bruce Springsteen had this to say about his 40 year career as a singer, songwriter and performer: ‘I have spent my life judging the distance between American reality and the American dream’ (Gibbons 2012). This preoccupation with the distance between American reality and American dream is clearly manifested in his music, where brutal realism coexists alongside sparkling optimism. ‘Pessimism and optimism’, says Springsteen, ‘are slammed up against each other on my records, the tension between them is where it’s all at, it’s what lights the fire’ (Gibbons 2012). Over the last decade of his career Springsteen has transformed, I would argue, into a far more political songwriter. As this paper will demonstrate, Springsteen has become increasingly part of the ideoscape as well as the mediascape of America, and with his conspicuous opposition to George W. Bush’s presidency and support for John Kerry and president Barack Obama, Springsteen’s music has come to map the causes of the gap between American dream and American reality in increasingly political terms. This paper will firstly trace Springsteen’s path towards his intervention in America’s political landscape, his movement away from just being in the position of a sensitive witness to America’s socio-political environment and towards being an agent within that environment; and secondly, by looking at four of the albums he released during this period, The Rising (2002), Magic (2007), Working on a Dream (2009), and Wrecking Ball (2012), I will trace Springsteen’s interventions in American political landscape since September 11.

Springsteen’s Path to the Political

In the decade between the ‘The Rising’ (2002) and ‘Wrecking Ball’ (2012), albums which re-established him as a mainstream musical force and one of the world’s biggest live attractions respectively, Springsteen moved from being an ‘aligned’ artist to an increasingly ‘committed’ one (Williams 1977: 199-205). Raymond Williams uses the terms ‘aligned’ and ‘committed’ to understand two different ways in which art and the artist could operate as a political force. Alignment is the awareness that cultural practices express ‘explicitly or implicitly, selected experience from a specific point of view’; ‘commitment’, in contrast, is ‘conscious, active, and open: a choice of position’ that is a ‘conscious alignment’ to a particular cause, or ‘a conscious change of alignment’ from one position to another; Commitment is a consequence then of agency rather than contingency (Williams 1977: 204). Although an aligned artist’s work will certainly register his or her ‘specific relations to specific situations and experiences’ (Williams 1977: 199) this does not necessarily make it political. In contrast, a committed artist’s work, because it is consciously aligned to a particular position, is always political. Springsteen’s work has always exhibited strong social values, but specific political manifestations of these values have taken a long time to develop. For most of his career charting the disparities in American society Springsteen has been ‘aligned’ without being ‘committed’, and his movement between these poles has been gradual.

Bruce Springsteen’s career began at a time when popular culture had become yoked to politics in a way it had never been before. The late 1960s and 1970s were a period when ‘musicians and actors came to influence the times they lived in and in some cases it became difficult to separate them from the social movements they represented (Wheeler 2013: 53). Ironically, Springsteen’s
early career during this same period is notable for its complete lack of any interest in politics, electoral or otherwise. During his early years in New Jersey, Springsteen’s only concern was music, even though he played at a fundraiser for ill-fated Democratic presidential candidate John McGovern in 1972 (Carlin 2012: 127). After the ‘romantic individualism’ of his first three albums, collections of songs that dealt with the gap between the dream and reality through an ‘aesthetics of escape’ – the albums Darkness on the Edge of Town (1978), The River (1980), Nebraska (1982) and Born in the USA (1984) – did show a more conscious interest in the ‘political’ but without actually being political. Springsteen’s move away from the romantic individualism of his first three albums and towards something approaching realism in Darkness on the Edge of Town (1978) and its successors, coincided with a huge downturn in the American manufacturing industry in the late 1970s and the recession in the early 1980s. Others also looked to his interest in Woody Guthrie (he read Bound for Glory at this time) and Steinbeck and John Ford’s Grapes of Wrath as a way to explain Springsteen’s change of perspective (Garman 1996). But at the same time as Springsteen’s writing becomes more indebted to realism, it also becomes nostalgic for a working-class life from which he was soon to become, if he was not already, completely separated; of a working-class life that was under threat from changes in the global economy. Of these albums of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Springsteen writes and sings about what Bryan Garman has called ‘working-class geographies’ (2000) and especially the geography of working-class heterosexual masculinity. As Garman argues, ‘Springsteen has consistently recorded material that not only examines the tension between individuality and community but also embraces his working-class roots and articulates a concern for social and economic justice’ (Garman 2000: 197). This fact notwithstanding, while Springsteen may have written about working-class values and morals, this does not equate to writing about politics. While he may have been ‘singing about Vietnam veterans, migrant workers, class, social divisions, de-industrialised cities, and forgotten American towns’, he never, as David Remnick writes, used ‘an idiom that threatened “Bruce” –the iconic family friendly rock star’ (Remnick 2012). In a interview at the time with Rolling Stone’s Kurt Loader, Springsteen seemed to desire a way to ‘bypass that whole electoral thing’ altogether and replace it with a ‘human politics’ where he could interact with people and communities more directly (Marsh 2004: 493). This is a position that Springsteen would augment and revise twenty-five years later.

As a consequence of songs that map working-class experiences, bereft of working class politics, there are many alienated and helpless blue-collar male narrators and characters in Springsteen’s music of this period. ‘Downbound Train’ (1984), from the Born in the USA album, serves as a representative example of this helplessness, as the narrator explains how losing his job (for reasons not revealed) brings his entire life undone: ‘I had a job, I had a girl/I had something going mister in this world/I got laid off down at the lumber yard/Our love went bad, times got hard/Now I work down at the carwash/Where all it ever does is rain/Don’t you feel like you’re a rider on a downbound train’. The narrator of ‘Downbound Train’ is a victim of circumstances, powerless in the face of impersonal forces over which he thinks he has no control. When his narrators do demonstrate agency it is frequently associated with criminality, in songs like ‘Atlantic City’ or ‘Johnny 99’ (both 1982), which only serves to further marginalise them. The powerlessness of Springsteen’s narrators and characters is due to the way the songs frame social and economic inequality in individualistic or moral, rather explicitly political, terms. As Marx would say, Springsteen’s characters/narrators are pre-proletarian; they are a class in themselves, not a class for themselves: they lack ‘class-consciousness’ (Borland 1988: 134).

It was President Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party’s appropriation of Springsteen and ‘Born in the USA’ during the 1984 US presidential campaign that first politicised Springsteen’s music. As Marc Dolan has written, the Republicans were able to appropriate Springsteen because his values did not seem very far away from Reagan’s (2013: 22). His ideology at that time and at times after could be clearly understood within a certain tradition of republicanism (Cullen 1997: 4). Springsteen’s response to Reagan’s appropriation of his image and values was not manifest in open criticism or an anti-Reagan song but in live performance: he would use a pre-song monologue to rebut Reagan before bracketing ‘Born in the USA’ with a song like ‘Johnny 99’ (from Nebraska) or later, a cover of The Temptations and Edwin Starr’s ‘War’. He would also play the song with a stripped-down ‘folk’ arrangement that shifted the audience’s attention away from the chorus. All these tactics were deployed in the hope that the public would understand ‘Born in the USA’s ‘real’ meaning – herein lies the difference between having values that you express in song and having a politics. Springsteen songs were about certain experiences and values associated with American working-class life; Reagan wanted to turn those songs into a political weapon.

Two years later Springsteen again came into conflict, albeit less directly, with the Reagan Administration when he joined Steve Van Zandt’s Artists United Against Apartheid (AUAA) collective to record a vocal and appear in the video for the protest single ‘Sun City’ (1986). Along with 48 other artists Springsteen pledged not to play at the luxury Sun City resort, or any other venue
in South Africa, at a time when the US government’s official policy toward the country was one of closer cooperation. Although Springsteen’s support for AUAA showed a ‘willingness to take on hotly controversial issues’ it was not representative of his overall perspective at a time when he generally avoided explicit political partisanship (Carlin 2012: 410). However, two years later at an Amnesty International concert in the Zimbabwean capital Harare, Springsteen used the platform of a live performance as an opportunity to make his position on South Africa clear:

my prayers are with the young men here that you can use your hearts and voices in the struggle of the dignity and freedom of all the African people … because whether it’s the systematic apartheid of South Africa or the economic apartheid of my own country, where we segregate our underclass in ghettos of all the major cities … there can’t be no peace without justice and where there is apartheid, systematic or economic, there is no justice … and where there is no justice, there is only War! (Pithouse 2013)

In making a direct and unequivocal comparison between the ‘systematic apartheid of South Africa’ and the ‘economic apartheid’ of the US, Springsteen articulated a partisan political position that was far more explicit than anything expressed in either his songwriting to this point or his activism which had been restricted to social justice (veterans’ groups and food-banks) rather than partisan political ends. In his comments in Harare, however, I would suggest Springsteen offered his audience a glimpse of a political commitment that would emerge more fully in his music and activism after 2002.

Despite the impression Springsteen might give in recent interviews about the singularity of his musical focus over the past 40 years there is no direct line of continuity between the struggle over the meaning of Born in the USA and the music Springsteen recorded over the next seventeen years. While he lent his name to various causes and charities during the 1990s, for example the opposition to California’s Proposition 187 in 1994, Springsteen was largely ‘removed from American life’ during that decade (Dolan 2013: 319). In the music he released in the seventeen years between Born in the USA (1984) and The Rising (2002), only 1995’s The Ghost of Tom Joad seems concerned explicitly with a disadvantaged American reality, and although many of its songs commented on various forms of injustice, the album reflected a nostalgia for the issues that confronted the US a decade and a half before (Dolan 2013: 319). In the last decade, however, in the years between the releases of The Rising (2002) and Wrecking Ball (2012), Springsteen has made his political position, not just his values, much clearer, both through his music and increased political activism. This period of political commitment coincides with renewed commercial and critical success; the six albums recorded between the 2002 and 2012 also mark Springsteen’s rebirth as a songwriter and performer. Springsteen’s recent success has seen him make new music and build new audiences and so avoid becoming another heritage rock act.

Springsteen and America’s Twenty-First Century Political Landscape

Springsteen’s music in the century’s first decade parallels the travails and triumphs of liberal America, from the devastation of the events of September 11 and the bleak years of the Bush junior presidency, to the electoral triumph of the first African-American president. Springsteen’s resurrection begins with 2002’s The Rising, which has been described as the exemplar of the ‘liberal patriotic’ musical response to 9-11 (Cloonan 2004: 26). Faced with a task of dealing with 9-11 and its aftermath, Springsteen’s liberal patriotism focused on the plight of the victims and victims’ families, rather than trying to interpret the events, urge revenge, or question America’s implication in the atrocity (Cloonan 2004: 26). David Carithers describes the album as ‘a work of romantic pragmatism’ because it allows the listener to work through their feelings ‘of hopelessness, grief, divisiveness, and hatred …’ before turning ‘to renewed strength, love, and hope for reconciliation’ (2005: 98). Where The Rising works to rhetorically ‘heal a nation’ (Yates 2010), 2007’s Magic airs the liberal disappointments and grievances of the Bush years – the bi-partisanship and the ecumenism of The Rising have been usurped by anger and recrimination.

Such was Springsteen’s displeasure with the Bush administration that, in 2004, he campaigned for John Kerry in his failed bid for the White House, the first time Springsteen had publicly endorsed a presidential candidate. This movement towards a commitment to electoral politics started earlier during The Rising tour when the songs were politically re-contextualised by a ‘public service announcement’ in which Springsteen called for ‘vigilance’ in the face of civil liberties violation (the Patriot Act) by the Bush Administration (Masciotra 2010: 14). At a campaign event in Wisconsin (October 2004), an audience of 80,000 people listened to Springsteen while he spoke of the need for ‘a sane and responsible foreign policy’, and ‘the protection and safeguarding of our precious democracy here at home’ (in Grieve 2004). In ‘Chords for Change’, an op-ed piece for the New York Times (2004), he laid bare the shortcomings of the Bush administration, and explained his support for Kerry and Edwards:

these questions are at the heart of this election: who we are, what we stand for, why we fight.
Personally, for the last 25 years I have always stayed one step away from partisan politics. Instead, I have been partisan about a set of ideals: economic justice, civil rights, a humane foreign policy, freedom and a decent life for all of our citizens. This year however, the stakes have risen too high to sit this election out. (Springsteen 2004)

His public opposition to the Bush Administration and the Iraq War continued in the title track of Devils and Dust (2005) and in the songs that would later appear on Magic (2007). His audience too would be affected by this move into actual politics as his media commentary offered fans preferred meanings of those songs.

On Magic (2007) Springsteen's music is no longer just a social barometer, but political intervention as political alignments are transformed into political commitments. While it features a few upbeat moments (as did The Rising surprisingly), the songs return to Springsteen's familiar 'working-class geography': alienation, unemployment, returned veterans, masculinity, heterosexual relationships, family, small-town America. But where in the past it would have been sufficient to register the effects of events on individuals and communities, Springsteen's songs are now committed to politically judging these events. So, 'Livin' in The Future' is commentary on the 'cowboy ethics and aggression' of the Bush White House (Masciotra 2010: 174), an America where 'My Ship Liberty sailed away on a bloody red horizon'. Springsteen also keeps up the attack on the Iraq war in 'Long Walk Home' (about the alienation of a returned serviceman), and 'Devil's Arcade' and 'Gypsy Biker' where soldiers are expendable pieces in the game that is Bush and Cheney's war for oil: 'The speculators made their money on the blood you shed'. This commitment to the politicisation of the Iraq War is most clearly articulated in 'Last to Die': 'Faces of the dead at five/Faces of the dead at five/A martyr's silent eyes/Petition the drivers as we pass by'. The track's title tethers the Iraq and Vietnam wars as it is a partial quote from a young John Kerry's statement made to the US Congress on his return from Vietnam in 1971: 'We are asking Americans to think about that because how do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?' (Kerry 2010: 176).

Springsteen and Obama

After being on the losing side of Kerry in the 2004 presidential election, Springsteen actively threw his support behind both of Barack Obama's presidential campaigns, albeit belatedly and perhaps reluctantly the second-time around when he did not join the campaign until October 2012, but he played at both of Obama's inaugurations. If there is one image that shows how far Springsteen has moved in his journey from political alignment to political commitment, it appeared on the front page of The Washington Post on the morning of the 2012 presidential election. Under the predictable headline 'Now it's the Voters' Turn to Speak', are two photographs of the candidates. In one, Romney, alone, stands shaking hands with Republican supporters, and in the other Obama is shown with his arm around Springsteen, smiling and waving. Similar images of Obama and Springsteen had appeared in the media during the campaign: the celebrity politician, who uses 'their imagery, style and rhetoric to operate effectively with a public space' (Wheeler 2013: 62), arm-in-arm with the political celebrity (Springsteen) who has realised that he ‘may draw public attention to a range of causes’ (Wheeler 2013: 115).

Obama's two presidential election campaigns coincided approximately with the production and release of two Springsteen albums, Working on a Dream (2009) and Wrecking Ball (2012). Working on a Dream lacks the political edge that is so obvious on Magic. Its songs are more personal and affirmative – the musical influences this time are Roy Orbison and The Beach Boys rather than Pete Seeger or Woody Guthrie. With its accent on love and affirmation, in Working on a Dream Springsteen seems to have been seduced by 'Obamamania'. Nonetheless, Springsteen reframed the seemingly uncomplicated love song 'What Love Can Do' as a 'meditation on love in the age of Bush' (Masciotra 2010: 234). The spin-doctors of the Obama election campaign would do something similar with the title track. Despite, or perhaps because of, its generic aspirational message ('I'm working on a dream/Though sometimes it feels so far away/I'm working on a dream/And I know it will be mine someday'), Obama adopted the title track as one of a number of official campaign songs and in so doing transformed it into a political anthem: the title even sounds like a catch-phrase or slogan that might have been written for an Obama speech. Springsteen would play the song, amongst others like ‘No Surrender’, and speak at many campaign rallies.

If Working on a Dream heralded Obama's euphoric ascendency, then Wrecking Ball (2012) coincides with the more pragmatic concern of getting re-elected. Described by a Rolling Stone journalist as Springsteen's 'Occupy Album', it is probably the most politically committed album he has released. On the tour to support the album Springsteen would ask his audience, in another of his public service announcements, to think about the ‘social, political and psychological dangers of economic inequality’ and adopting the rhetoric of the Occupy movement, his audience would be asked not to think about 'which side of the 99 percent you’re on but on which side of history you’re on' (Alterman 2012). An ‘aligned’ songwriter should probably have written about the global financial crisis in 2008/9: Wrecking Ball ‘should' have
been released instead of *Waiting on a Dream*. However, the four-year lag between the economic downturn and its musical treatment had a really significant political effect. *Wrecking Ball* does not just act as a comment on the global financial crisis’s ongoing effects, which it does, but it did so at a time when many Americans were considering who to vote for, or whether to vote at all in the 2012 presidential election. The angry patriotism of *Wrecking Ball* is a reminder of what happened during the Bush years and the ongoing hardship felt by many. Springsteen uses the ironically titled ‘We Take Care of Our Own’, which contains the lines ‘from the shotgun shack to the Superdome/there ain’t no help/cavalry stayed home’, to remind citizens of Bush’s incompetent handling of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Significantly, the array of characters and narrators who feature in the songs *Wrecking Ball* seem to know whom to blame for their economic woes. On ‘Shackled and Drawn’, Springsteen howls ‘Gambling man rolls the dice/working man pays the bill/it’s still fat and easy up on Banker’s hill’. In ‘Death to My Hometown’, he compares the effects of the economic recession to that of a war (an interpretation aided by the arrangement and instrumentation of its music that echoes music of the American Civil War) and in ‘Jack of all Trades’, the narrator (who has lost his job) tells his wife ‘we’ll be alright’ because he’ll take any job he’s offered but, at the same time, knows that ‘The banker man grows fat/working man grows thin’, and all he can do is dream of revenge: ‘If I had me a gun, I’d find the bastards and shoot ’em on sight’. Unlike the powerless narrator of ‘Downbound Train’ (1984) or the reluctant petty criminal in ‘Atlantic City’ (1982), these new characters and narrators know which side they are on: they know whom to blame. As Springsteen has taken sides, so have his characters and narrators, and therefore his music traces a different ‘working-class geography’ from that mapped in the classic albums of the late 1970s and 80s.

Significantly, Springsteen has managed to avoid the worst of the criticism that the political right in the United States visit on left-liberal celebrities who endorse political causes or figures. Although he has not avoided the vitriol of the right-wing commentators – Fox News criticised Springsteen’s hurricane relief concerts in New Jersey as pro-Obama propaganda (Seitz-Wald 2012) – neither has he experienced the mainstream condemnation and censorship suffered by the Dixie Chicks, who were ‘castigated by conservative pundits across the country’ and subject to radio boycotts (Baum 2007: 122), and Steve Earle, whose ‘tribute’ to John Walker Lindh, the ‘American Taliban’ (‘John Walker’s Blues’ 2002) was condemned by CNN for glorifying a traitor (Jobes 2004). Indeed, Springsteen seems to have been rewarded for his criticism of neoliberalism, certainly in terms of album and ticket sales. The avoidance of criticism may be explained by Springsteen’s ‘insider’ status. Whereas the views of the Dixie Chicks and Earle, especially, might be dismissed as voices from the fringe or demonised as ‘socialist’ and therefore ‘un-American’, it is difficult for Springsteen’s criticisms of ‘vulture capitalism’ to be dispatched in the same way because, like the Chicago School sociologists, Springsteen criticises a ‘social order in terms of the very liberal ideology with which it is officially justified’ (Smith 1988: 8). So, while Springsteen may have become an angry patriot, he is still a patriot and he remains a subscriber to and an embodiment of many normative American values. Statements such as ‘What was done to our country’, meaning the economic hardship that was inflicted upon American by unethical and unregulated financial markets, ‘was wrong and unpatriotic and un-American and nobody has been held to account’ (Gibbons 2012), are unlikely to alienate many citizens. Despite the strident critique that runs throughout the first half of *Wrecking Ball* (‘We Take Care of Our Own’, ‘Easy Money’, ‘Death to my Home Town’, ‘This Depression’, ‘Jack of All Trades’, ‘Wrecking Ball’), on perennial live favourite ‘Land of Hopes and Dreams’ Springsteen conceptualises America as a train with seats for everyone, including ‘Thieves’, ‘Gamblers’ and ‘Kings’.

**Conclusion**

While it would be very hard to disagree with Springsteen that he has spent the last forty years writing songs about ‘the distance between the American dream and the American reality’, I would suggest he has not always done so in the same way; and for the best part of seventeen years he did not do so at all. While critics, journalists and fans often argue that Springsteen’s music has ‘always been political’ and while in the most general sense this would be true, such generalisations certainly hide the differences in the way Springsteen has historically mapped the distance between the reality and the dream – differences that I have traced in this paper. Broad conceptions of popular music’s relationship to politics, that describe all and any songs that register an awareness of ‘social issues’ as political, elides the important difference between politically aligned and politically committed song-writing. Awareness of the difference between the two categories allows for the differentiation between aligned songwriters who map the political environment of their time and place; and committed songwriters who try to change it. For now, Springsteen and his music sit in the latter category. Acknowledging such a difference allows for a more sophisticated understanding of how politics works through music and how music can be political.

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**Planet Greening**

the trombone farts

a rich and earthy sound of compost decomposing, the busy work of worms and bugs, of blood and bone to ash and dust,

and then, the hushed nocturnal gnawing of silverfish through bolts of silk and ruined knits, behind the door to Blackbeard’s hoard

the trumpet blasts

a defiant passage through the fray of keyboard fuselage and noodling guitar’s electric challenge to the ear of human sound,

as breathtaking as a pirate raid, as dry as ice and rage, the shiv goes straight to the heart, the blade slices clean through the cheek

the drummer smiles

a ripple of dissent on the face of victory, keyboard quails, in sympathy the trumpet wails as percussion storms triumphant over a world united in battles won and lost, they reminisce of greening fields, the heady smell of mulch and the birth of another lark——what fun!

the trombone farts

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**FRANCESCA SASNAITIS,**
**MELBOURNE, VICTORIA**
‘Do You Know the Way to San Jose?’: Burt Bacharach and the music of non-place

JOHN SCANNELL

‘Do you know the way to San Jose?’, a forlorn Dionne Warwick enquired of anyone who might be listening, as she reconsiders dreams of stardom in the self-imposed exile of the ‘great big freeway’ of Los Angeles. This cautionary tale in song, levelled against the all-consuming ‘non-places’ of supermodernity that increasingly governed urban life in the late 1960s, was Burt Bacharach and Hal David’s jaded paean to the lost anthropological place of the organically social, populated by friends and human relations, instead of the ‘solitary contractuality’ (Augé 1995: 94) of those anonymous, transitory spaces dedicated to the sole purpose of fulfilling commercial objectives (Augé 1995: 101-102). Foreshadowing French anthropologist Marc Augé’s classic text, Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity (1992) by two decades, Dionne Warwick’s 1968 worldwide hit single, deceptively ‘Muzak’-ical in form, was also, ironically enough, the product of the very spaces it was protesting. While Bacharach and David’s anodyne easy listening is synonymous with the commercial, transitory non-places of elevators, supermarkets and shopping malls, this paper will argue that its eminently commodifiable pop sensibility was underscored by an inherent self-loathing and need for confession, and that songs such as ‘Do You Know the Way to San Jose?’ could not help but to comment on its collusion in the creation of these non-places of supermodernity in which it served as ubiquitous soundtrack. Listening to it today, we are reminded of just how the non-place has flourished, for if the narrator of the song had ever managed to get back to San Jose they would now be living in the epicentre of supermodernity, a city that serves as the capital of Silicon Valley, and resides over the global, digital non-places of an increasingly networked society.

In ‘Do you know the way to San Jose?’ the listener eavesdrops on an internal monologue that sounds as if it might be delivered from a Bay Area sanatorium. The song’s narrator, lost in transit, recounts her desire to get off the ‘great big freeway’ of Los Angeles, another Hollywood hopeful looking to find a place in the world but never actually arriving at their destination. As the song fades out, we suspect more tranquillisers are being wheeled in. Perhaps the narrator is another casualty of the Hollywood dream, just like the protagonists of Jacqueline Susann’s novel, The Valley of the Dolls (1968) where the ‘dolls’ in question were the barbiturates coyly referenced by the double entendre album title, Dionne Warwick in Valley of the Dolls (1968) and on which ‘Do You Know the Way to San Jose’ also appeared. Containing the film’s hit theme song, the album cashed in on the screen adaptation of Susann’s book and although ‘San Jose’ itself was not in the film, the song’s jaded narrator sounds as if she would have been in good company dosing with its alienated starlets.

Prior to its infamous association with star-struck loners, the city of San Jose was the site of the naval base where lyricist Hal David was once stationed (Serene 2003: 190). Attaching his lyrics to a pre-existing Bacharach instrumental, the two combined on the Brazilian Baiao-inflected (Berry and Gianni 2003: 42) easy listening classic, whose timeless charms continue to serve nostalgic radio and elevators as a perennial staple. Despite its longevity, the song’s appeal would famously elude its performer, and Dionne Warwick has made her disdain for the song a matter of public record on many occasions over the years (NBC Today 2010). While she would undoubtedly have her sympathisers, it would be impudent to deny the song its deceptively rendered pathos:

Do you know the way to San Jose?
I’ve been away so long
I may go wrong and lose my way.
Do you know the way to San Jose?
I’m going back to find some peace of mind in San Jose.

L.A. is a great big freeway.
Put a hundred down and buy a car.
In a week, maybe two, they’ll make you a star
Weeks turn into years how quick they pass
And all the stars that never were
Are parking cars and pumping gas
You can really breathe in San Jose
They've got a lot of space
There'll be a place where I can stay
I was born and raised in San Jose
I'm going back to find some peace of mind in San Jose.

Fame and fortune is a magnet.
It can pull you far away from home
With a dream in your heart you're never alone.
Dreams turn into dust and blow away
And there you are without a friend
You pack your car and ride away
I've got lots of friends in San Jose
Do you know the way to San Jose?
Can't wait to get back to San Jose.

Perhaps Warwick could be persuaded to rethink her position on the song, if it was framed more readily as a concise lament of the non-place. Foreshadowing, as it does, French anthropologist Marc Augé’s classic text, Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity (1992) by two decades, the song explicates supermodernity’s apparent devolution of anthropological place into the non-place that increasingly governed urban life around the very time of the song’s composition.

The non-place is thus distinguished from place, as ‘places’ produce identity through organic relations and shared histories (Augé 1995: 52). The artefacts of social organisation such as monuments, churches and markets are territorial markings that give identity to anthropological space. Non-places, on the other hand are spaces of transience that lack the protracted historical significance that has traditionally defined the place. For Augé, non-places designate ‘two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces’ (1995: 94). We pass through them rather than reside in them, and thus the organically social gives way to ‘... solitary contractuality’ (1995: 94). Examples of non-places include airport transit lounges, supermarket checkouts, fast food restaurants and even road signs (1995: 96-101), spaces where vast numbers of individuals move anonymously for the purposes of fulfilling commercial contracts (1995: 101-102). In contradistinction to place, these non-places ‘cannot be defined as relational or historical’ (1995: 77-78) and identity serves only as a means of passing through them, rather than belonging to them (1995: 77-78). The sprawling, de-centred Los Angeles, connected through a vast network of freeways in service of individualised car ownership is exemplary of the non-place, where fast food, drive-in diners, theme parks and deserted footpaths offer a salient legacy of the city’s emphasis on transit and de-localised consumption.

That the narrator of ‘San Jose’ is incapable of situation in the world of transience and spectacle offers a pragmatic articulation of Augé’s work, where L.A. presents itself as an epicentre of the ‘supermodern’ era.

While occupying the same historical epoch as the postmodern, the supermodern differs in the sense that it is responsible for the material conditions – such as the decline of the organic space of the social – that the postmodern sensibility duly laments. In distinction to postmodernity’s break with its historical predecessor, the supermodern indiscriminately conjoins them as a product of a disjunctive new iteration of modernity. Common to both is an effacing of historicity that undermines modernity’s social organisation. If the infrastructure of the modern city once interwove old and new (1995: 110), supermodernity, on the other hand, divorces history and particularity from its organic context, and turns it instead into spectacle; something that one points to out of the window of a tour bus. The freeways, transportation hubs and shopping malls of non-places, elude a history of localised personal relations, as they beckon us instead to transit through them. Social organisation gives way to individualisation where supermodernity’s ‘clients’ and ‘customers’ are identified through personal data, as a condition of transit. These spaces of supermodernity ‘deal only with individuals, but they are identified (name, occupation, place of birth, address) only on entering or leaving’ (1995: 111) – the non-place of the identified as opposed to the place that expresses identity.

A well-functioning non-place depends upon lack of recognition, as it eludes the messy sociality that might impede upon the consumption habits of its congregations. The rampant capitalism of non-place becomes a defining feature of supermodernity as anonymous bodies are channelled through their transactions as expediently as possible. As beacons of social alienation they can engender hostile protest as enticing targets for terrorism, massacres and other forms of sociopathic reactionism (Augé 1995: 111). As Augé writes, these ‘new socializations and localizations can see non-places only as a negation of their ideal. The non-place is the opposite of utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society’ (1995: 111-112).

At the time of the late 1960s, when Bacharach and David composed ‘San Jose’, America was moving headlong into the supermodern era and the song’s prescience was to protest the decline of organic society well before such vast structural change in social organisation had really taken...
hold. Of course, Warwick’s hit single was also the product of the very spaces it was protesting. As the paradox of the functioning non-place is its dependence on non-socialised identity, then the paradox of ‘San Jose’ is that it served as a ‘Muzak’ soundtrack for precisely those anonymous spaces it lamented.

Any nomination for official composer of non-place would surely consider Burt Bacharach among its frontrunners. Synonymous with the transitory non-places of supermarkets, shopping malls, waiting rooms, elevators, as ‘hold’ music, traces of Bacharach’s mellifluous yet anodyne signature sound seemed to be custom made for the rise of piped Muzak systems which relentlessly regulated the mood of the supermodern consumer. The sound of Muzak – to apply the now pejorative term to the piped music system that had existed in various forms since the 1920s – became increasingly prevalent as post-War consumerism beckoned. During the heightened consumer culture of the 1960s, Muzak systems reinforced their ubiquitous presence. That decade’s invention of the 8-track tape meant that the Muzak company could now deliver an endless-loop tape cartridge system which would play continuously through the non-spaces that proliferated. The affective engineering of non-place should not draw attention away from the real focus – consumption. As Joseph Lanza argues in *Elevator Music*, the rise of Muzak indicates a shift in music from the pipe to ground, or an emphasis on ambience over content, so as to encourage peripheral hearing (1995: 3) – keep moving, keep buying, don’t stop. Muzak was programmed via the technique of ‘stimulus progression’, the term coined by the corporation to discuss the musical regulation of consumer behaviour. As Jonathan Sterne explains in his definitive discussion of Muzak programming, ‘Sounds like the Mall of America: Programmed Music and the Architectonics of Commercial Space’ and ‘stimulus progression’ were originally invented...

... to combat worker fatigue in weapons plants during World War II, functioning on a principle of maintaining a stable stimulus state in listeners at all times. Programming is designed to slow people down after exciting parts of the day and speed them up during sluggish parts of the day. (1997: 30)

The deployment of ‘stimulus progression’ in the shopping mall followed in its wake and Bacharach and David’s ‘easy listening’ style provided a perfect foil for the non-places of consumption, as its undemanding pop sensibility offered no resistance to any impending retail encounter.

The content of the music itself was similarly reflective of non-place, for ‘San Jose’ musical arrangement reflected a generic hybridity that did not necessarily index any actual geographic location. Its arrangement recalls Bacharach’s debt to the Antônio Carlos Jobim’s bossa novas, where the most enduring example of the highly successful Getz/Gilberto albums of the 1960s was his ‘The Girl from Ipanema’. ‘San Jose’, it should be noted is not actually a bossa nova, but is based instead on the rhythms of Brazilian Baiao, a style with which it is often conflated. In this respect, ‘San Jose’ was a pastiche of exotica, the easy listening genre which had enjoyed popularity among discerning hi-fi buffs throughout the preceding decade.

Another creation of non-place, ‘Exotica’ used L.A.-based studio musicians to craft Western versions of non-Western music. Sanctioned almost exclusively out of the recording studios of Los Angeles, the president of Liberty Records, Simon Waronker, coined the term ‘Exotica’ in 1957 as the title for Martin Denny’s first album (Denny 1996: 11). Originally recorded in Hawaii, and featuring the acclaimed vibraphone playing of Arthur Lyman, it was decided that Exotica should be re-recorded at Capitol records in Hollywood in order to take advantage of the newly initiated stereo recording process which was so attractive to an emergent Hi-Fi stereo market. The remake of the album did not feature Lyman and Denny’s band was actually augmented by leading Los Angeles studio players with well known arranger, Julius Wechter, filling Lyman’s vacant spot on vibraphone. These Western reconstructions of the exotic proved quite a lucrative venture throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, and its leading exponents such as Denny, Lyman and Les Baxter conjured up such musical non-places for the jet-set age. The forerunner of a telesthetic ‘world music’ genre that would gain traction in years to come, exotica would whet the collective appetite of its future consumers who could now embark on an aural tourism without leaving the lounge room. Unfortunately this was a ‘world’ reflected through the eyes of white Western record executives firmly entrenched in Los Angeles from where such armchair tourism would continue to be sold to the world.

Exotica’s syncretic promise of flavouring Eurocentrically accepted jazz with ‘exotic’ instruments would produce a schizophrenic (Schafer 1969) style that would accommodate Western ears without alienating them. Denny and Lyman’s idiosyncratically perverse interpretations of jazz and indigenous world music styles incorporated Eastern scales and improvisation as well as dramatic tempo and dynamic changes. Reworkings of ‘traditional’ indigenous Hawaiian melodies and Jazz standards empowered the exponents of ‘Exotica’ as the Eurocentric filters for the ‘exotic other’, who indiscriminately characterised the lives of these ‘primitive’ cultures as ‘relaxed’ as the music they were making. Denny’s liner notes make pretentious claims of evoking "... the sights and sounds of Hawaii, its white sands, the rolling surf, swaying palms stirred by gentle trade winds ..." (1996: 13) which were, of course, merely Western impressions rather than anthropological re-presentations of culture: "[t]his was ‘Exotica’ music –
Refrains produce territory, to cite the well-known Deleuze—rhythmically intensive, or territorial musical styles emerge noise they tend to make. This is why some of the most fact, the more one feels that they don't belong, the more non-identification, because one can, of course, identify with 'not-belonging'. I use 'not-belonging' here, rather than anything, might be considered an artistic response driven existential refrain in lieu of a belonging to place, and, if music's relation to non-place. For it is the very anxiety surrounding one's lack of belonging to place and the need to express identity within the chaos of 'non-place' that catalyses the artistic imperative. Music offers a necessary existential refrain in lieu of a belonging to place, and, if anything, might be considered an artistic response driven by 'not-belonging’. I use ‘not-belonging’ here, rather than non-identification, because one can, of course, identify with not-belonging, yet still remain afflicted by the implicit sense of existential disarray that such a state infers. In fact, the more one feels that they don't belong, the more noise they tend to make. This is why some of the most rhythmically intensive, or territorial musical styles emerge from some of the most marginal communities.

Today, most commercial popular music is being produced for, as well as within, the non-places of supermodern Western capitalism. To recapitulate music's links to 'production of place' would be to deny the epoch from which it has sprung, and perhaps for this reason there is more insight to be gained through analysing popular music’s relation to non-place. For it is the very anxiety surrounding one’s lack of belonging to place and the need to express identity within the chaos of ‘non-place’ that catalyses the artistic imperative. Music offers a necessary existential refrain in lieu of a belonging to place, and, if anything, might be considered an artistic response driven by ‘not-belonging’. I use ‘not-belonging’ here, rather than non-identification, because one can, of course, identify with not-belonging, yet still remain afflicted by the implicit sense of existential disarray that such a state infers. In fact, the more one feels that they don't belong, the more noise they tend to make. This is why some of the most rhythmically intensive, or territorial musical styles emerge from some of the most marginal communities.

Refrains produce territory, to cite the well-known Deleuze-Guattarian position as they assemble milieux and rhythms from chaos (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 313). It is the non-place's chaos and capacity for invention that informs Deleuze's somewhat obscure discussion of it in his Cinema books; obscure in the sense that there has been some confusion over Deleuze's interpretation of non-place, translated by the philosopher as the 'any-space-whatever'. While Deleuze does attribute the any-space-whatever to an Augé, it is to a ‘Pascal’ Augé, rather than to Marc Augé. While his ‘any-space-whatever’ is similar to Augé’s concept, it is not a direct translation of ‘non-lieux’ (non-places) and subsequent authors have just assumed that Deleuze is drawing ’ ... extensively from Marc Augé in his essay ... [even if] it is not clear at all that Marc Augé uses the actual term “espace quelconque” itself (Stivale 2005). As Cinema 1 actually came out around the same time as Augé’s own publications on non-places, including Un ethnologue dans le métro (1986), perhaps Deleuze had recalled an early version of Augé’s work and simply just botched the attribution? One would have to assume so, as most of Deleuze's analysis of “Pascal” Augé's any-space-whatever has many similarities with Marc Augé’s non-place. But Deleuze’s idiosyncratic interpretation of Augé non-place in Cinema 1: Movement-Image, as the any-space-whatever (espace quelconque) will relieve the concept of its somewhat pessimistic orientation to a rather more optimistic outlook. Deleuze’s ‘any-space-whatever’ becomes, ‘ ... a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible’ (Deleuze 1986: 109) who will relish the fact that these spaces destabilise identity and de-centre social relations so as to promote a creative chaos with infinite possibility for connection (Deleuze 1986:109). A point subsequently taken up by Brian Massumi:

Cherish derelict spaces. They are holes in habit, what cracks in the existing order appear to be from the molar perspective ... The derelict space is a zone of indeterminacy that bodies-in-becoming may make their own. (Massumi 1992: 104)

Rather than being driven by attempts to reflect geographical space or place, music creates its own territory. The fact that popular musics are, more often than not, the domain of minority youth cultures, is because this demographic tends to (over)compensate for their relative lack of power over social organisation. In such cases, music is used to mediate the chaos of a lack of identity, and to produce territory where there is none, a necessary means of mediating both physical and existential any-space-whatevers. Deleuze’s concept proves useful in making sense of this relationship between existential habitus and its relationship with musical production. For Deleuze’s transformation of Augé’s concept of the ‘non-place’ into the any-space-whatever allows it to become a catalyst for productivity, which, ”[in contrast to Augé ... rather than being an homogenizing and de-singularizing force ... shows that for Deleuze the “any space whatsoever” is a condition for the emergence of uniqueness and singularities’ (Bell 1997).

The lack of identity cultivated by these spaces beckons creative significations of presence. Think, for example, of the graffiti that marks the railways. This territorial creation is what constitutes the artistic process and signifies presence in this space, even if its subject will never really fully belong to it. As a protest against the anonymous hordes that cannot inhabit these spaces, graffiti is also the first territorial markings of a potentially emergent new anthropological space. This flourishing evidence of human habitation will be erased, expediently removed from the walls of these important commuter spaces lest they be further territorialised.

Identity is comfort for the human subject and there is of course comfort in refrains and this is the reason why place can be stifling, entrenched within its traditions. Perhaps
this is why the narrator of ‘San Jose’ ventured to Los Angeles in the first place, to escape ‘place’ and to absorb the creative possibility of non-place, as the ‘pure locus of the possible’ celebrated in its Deleuzean interpretation. In fact, this creative potential of non-place informs the work of US artist Trevor Young who has done a series of paintings based on its architecture, foregrounding the gas stations, rest stops and fast food outlets that can be found in abundance in Los Angeles. Young makes the point that even in all of its anonymity, the non-place fosters a sense of trust (Young 2009). This willingness to trust is reflected in the comfort we get from the repetition of experience and the sense of certainty it produces that is so vital to the success of global fast food chains such as McDonalds. Yet, with the repetition of similitude comes a repetition of anonymity as well – no loitering, no idle chit-chat with employees – with social engagement kept to a minimum and just the way we like it.

Avoiding the social is also the great paradox in which a burgeoning social media thrives. As the demands of conforming to late capitalist society have rendered life too busy for social engagement, we instead send out banal and indiscriminate observations in lieu of our actual presence in the social, which we can no longer afford to maintain. This contemporary iteration of ‘invasion of space by text’ (1995: 99), was obviously beyond Augé at the time of writing, although it is interesting how we have learned to mimic its generalities of non-specific address which allow us to maintain just enough contact with others so as to keep the flows of our social networks in place, in the off-chance they might be needed in future:

All the remarks that emanate from our roads and commercial centres, from the street-corner sites of the vanguard of the banking system (‘Thank you for your custom’, ‘Bon voyage’, ‘We apologize for any inconvenience’) are addressed simultaneously and indiscriminately to each and any of us: they fabricate the ‘average man’, defined as the user of the road, retail or banking system. (Augé 1995: 100)

For social networks to exist in lieu of the social relationship is, of course, a manifestation of the centrality of the most pervasive non-place of all, the Internet. The contemporary listener would be eminently aware that if the narrator of ‘San Jose’ had managed to return to their hometown then they would now, rather ironically, be living in the epicentre of supermodernity, in a city that serves as the capital of Silicon Valley, and resides over the global, digital non-places of an increasingly networked society.

Situated on the southern shore of San Francisco Bay and part of the broader metropolitan area, the name ‘Silicon Valley’ was coined in the early 1970s, where the scientists and engineers of the Santa Clara Valley were in the vanguard of a microchip manufacturing industry so vital to an emergent microelectronics revolution. As explained in David A. Laws’s, Silicon Valley: Exploring the Communities behind the Revolution, a Souvenir and Guide (2003), the emergent digital revolution was the equivalent of ‘the crude oil of the Information Age’ (Laws 2003: 2), and all of this change was taking place around the time of the song’s release:

Dionne Warwick’s mellow laidback image of San Jose was fading even as she recorded Hal David’s lyrics in 1968. Stimulated by the growth of Silicon Valley, the former sleepy agricultural town was already tearing out its orchards and closing its canneries to make room for the factories and employees of proliferating electronics companies, notably the former IBM storage campus on Cottle Road. Today most high-tech business is concentrated in San Jose’s segment of the Golden Triangle area north of the airport. Joining an already diverse mix of African, Asian, European, and Hispanic cultures, new generations of technologically-oriented immigrants arrived from China and India towards the end of the century swelling the population to 850,000 and making San Jose one of the most integrated cities in the nation. (Laws 2003: 19-20)

Augé’s work was obviously prescient of a cyberspace that was produced by the sands of the Silicon Valley. These new, complex forms of non-place, invented in the suburbs of the Santa Clara Valley, are familiar to us as the sites of computer innovation – Sunnyvale and Atari, Cupertino and Apple, HP and Xerox in Palo Alto. The demands of Silicon Valley’s information technology industry cultivate the contemporary trends toward transnational movements of the contract labour employed to fulfil labour shortages. Called upon and dismissed at will, international workers are organised by multinational capital into a corporate sovereignty that traverses international boundaries, but without being beholden to the social obligations of a state. In fact the complete removal of place is even more effective, especially now that labour can be mediated through the network. Anglophone Indian and Filipino tele-workers are trained to present themselves as locals, even if it is only through the vast global network that such transient interactions could have ever been possible.

By offering a sense of socialisation otherwise missing from the vast suburban non-places that make up sprawling cities such as Sydney, Australia is surely the reason why religious corporations like the charismatic Christian Hillsong church have enjoyed much success. As the larger cities of Australia grew around individual car ownership, organically evolved civic centres gave way to planned cities and shopping malls as the loci of human interaction.
The new breed of religious corporation while promising to offer place, instead provides spectacle and more non-place; there is no discussion with the clergy here, instead you buy the CD and send money to its self-appointed demagogues who build more entertainment centres in return. The rise of the entertainment church has had a particular resonance in the suburbs situated near the institution where I work. Built in the early 1960s, in a once semi-rural section of the city, Macquarie University now finds itself at the heart of vast information technology estates clustered around its periphery. The heart of the suburb is an enormous shopping centre. When the sun goes down there is little reason to be there, and most of my colleagues commute back to the decidedly more organic space of the inner city as expeditiously as possible. All the while, the inevitable daily traffic jams are there to remind us that an increasing portion of our lives is spent in non-place, and reinforces the debilitating effect that it has on our collective wellbeing. To stare at kilometres of cars moving at snail’s pace, as most of us do every day, is to be so inherently blind to a way of life that is not working at all well. Like the narrator of ‘San Jose’, I dream of a return to an anthropological place and of belonging once again; if only the traffic would move!

As a concise articulation of the discontents of non-place, I tend to think of ‘San Jose’ as Bacharach and David’s jaded paean to the lost anthropological place of the organically social, populated by friends and human relations, instead of the anonymous, transitory non-places that most of us, including the narrator of the song, have been forced to occupy. For this reason I have always considered the song to be one of non-place’s most stirring laments.

References


Young, T. 2009 ‘Trevor Young’s Show at Flashpoint Gallery. Non-Places’, Youtube.com <http://www. youtube.com/watch?v=5FYrAqulE0w>


End Notes

1. Let it be said, I am a great fan of Bacharach’s work, and including him within the broader category of Muzak is not designed to denigrate his consummate artistic talents. Bacharach’s music has included in the easy-listening/Muzak/elevator music category in esteemed commentaries such as Dylan Jones’s Easy! The Lexicon of Lounge and Joseph Lanza’s Elevator Music: A Surreal History of Muzak, Easy Listening and other Moodsong, and the recent restoration of Bacharach’s musical reputation is precisely the subject of Geoffrey O’Brien’s Sonata for Jukebox: An Autobiography of My Ears. O’Brien makes reference to the reworking of Bacharach’s songbook by John Zorn as one pertinent example of the restoration of his reputation (O’Brien 2006: 7) and to appease any concern that Bacharach’s music is being unfairly criticised, I will include Zorn’s effusive commentary from the liner notes of the CD, Great Jewish Music: Burt Bacharach as critical counterpoint. Bacharach’s songs explode the expectations of what a popular song is supposed to be. Advanced harmonies and chord changes with unexpected turnarounds and modulations, unusual changing time signatures and rhythmic twists, often in uneven numbers of bars. But he makes it all sound so natural you can’t get it out of your head or stop whistling it. Maddeningly complex, sometimes deceptively simple, these are more than just great pop songs: these are deep explorations of the materials of music and should be studied and treasured with as much care and diligence we accord any great works of art’ (Zorn 1996).

2. In discussion with musicologist John Encarnacao, it was explained to me that the harmonic features of San Jose underscore the shifts in mood experienced by its narrator, and his keen observations are worth reiterating here: ‘The verses, where the narrator asks the way to San Jose and posits it as a kind of bucolic ideal, are in the major key, with major 7th chords aligning with the Brazilian rhythm to give a sense of ease and comfort. We’re very firmly, unequivocally in C major. By contrast, the bridges, which lament the faceless modernity of L.A. and the shallowness of dreams of fame, begin on a minor chord and are harmonically less stable, with a passage that includes a half-diminished chord (on ‘in a week, ...’) kicking off a sequence of chords not in root position. It’s very kind of small-place-good, big-city-bad in terms of musical coding. The song continually returns, and indeed begins and ends, with the sense of small-town idyll’.

3. Music is prophecy: it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code. It makes audible the future. ‘Music is prophecy: it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code. It makes audible the future’ (Attali 1985: 11).

4. ‘The role of the refrain has often been emphasized: it is territorial, a transcending of the everyday, the herald of the future’ (Attali 1985: 11).

5. The ‘any-space-whatever’ whilst similar to non-place is not a direct translation of ‘non-lieu’. As Charles Stivale notes ‘... it is not clear at all that Marc Augé uses the actual term ‘espace quelconque’ itself’ (Stivale 2005).
Roo to plead my case, to offer condolences for was what the fixing was, taking me to the court of the May fixed me. He tells me how to win. It's been this way since Aunt pump the whispers through the blood in my veins and to me in the night and whispers up through our heart, crushes her victims like a python. But I am not afraid.

be her boss talking her up big time to put the tornado up reputation but no one here's seen her yet so it could just coming, another girl, bigger and stronger than me by says I need to watch myself 'cause there's a big fight fists no feet just one big target for me to kick and punch. Fighter in my sights like a bullseye no face no body no tail nub twitches and I don't see nothing but the other fine brown fur rises up on the back of my neck and my heart go boom-boom boom-boom boom-boom and the just the same, and when I step into the ring I feel my the other girls. I stand my ground, fight boys and girls just made me strong and maybe a little different from me being a girl, but it doesn't seem to have hurt me woke up I was ready to fight.

three days and three nights and sang to me and when I where the Devil's Balls are and lay me in the shade for that is what saved me, that and Auntie May. Red, a young buck, Doc said, not old and grizzled and me what was in the chill bucket. The heart from a big red, a young buck, Doc said, not old and grizzled and that is what saved me, that and Auntie May. After the transplant Auntie May she took me out to the Popular Music.

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John Scannell is a Lecturer at Macquarie University, Sydney Australia. He has published on media, new media, popular music, philosophy and film studies and his monograph on esteemed popular music artist, James Brown (Equinox, 2012), reflected upon the constitution of temporality in popular music composition. His main research project at the present time is an examination of illegal e-waste dumping in the developing world and its connection to Internet fraud, but ongoing research interests also include the future of tertiary education and popular music and performance. John is on the editorial board of the Fibreculture journal and books, and is a member of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music.

SHORT STORY

Roo

MAREE KIMBERLEY

They call me Roo because of my heart. I got it when I was twelve, after my first fight. The fight nearly killed me, and the Doc said it was because the heart I was born with had a hole in it bigger than a possum's eye. He didn't have no other heart to hand so he gave me what was in the chill bucket. The heart from a big red, a young buck, Doc said, not old and grizzled and that is what saved me, that and Auntie May.

After the transplant Auntie May she took me out to the where the Devil's Balls are and lay me in the shade for three days and three nights and sang to me and when I woke up I was ready to fight.

Just like that.

I don't know about having a male roo's heart, me being a girl, but it doesn't seem to have hurt me just made me strong and maybe a little different from the other girls. I stand my ground, fight boys and girls just the same, and when I step into the ring I feel my heart go boom-boom boom-boom boom-boom and the fine brown fur rises up on the back of my neck and my tail nub twitches and I don't see nothing but the other fighter in my sights like a bullseye no face no body no fists no feet just one big target for me to kick and punch.

I've never lost a fight yet. But Ringmaster Tom says I need to watch myself 'cause there's a big fight coming, another girl, bigger and stronger than me by reputation but no one here's seen her yet so it could just be her boss talking her up big time to put the tornado up my arse. But I am not afraid.

They tell me her name is Diamond 'cause she crushes her victims like a python.

I am not afraid because my red buck comes to me in the night and whispers up through our heart, pumps the whispers through the blood in my veins and he tells me how to win. It's been this way since Aunt May fixed me.

She's never told me but I know inside that was what the fixing was, taking me to the court of the Roo King to plead my case, to offer condolences for the loss of the young red buck and offer my life spirit in exchange. I don't know the exact nature of the deal she struck or what she offered but I know me and the red buck are bound. Bound in heart muscle and blood, and the taller and stronger I grow the more I feel him moving through my muscle and meat.

Just on dawn I hear Diamond's caravan roll into the backlot. I know it is hers 'cause I can hear her boss call out her name. I hear him whip her too, the crack of leather breaking the crust of frost on the cold morning earth and then the hiss of it against her skin. She swears but I do not hear her cry.

I hear a low hiss.

I peek out through the split in my tent and see a tall, thin shadow slide by. I watch the shadow and wonder whose heart beats inside it.

In the day I keep away from Diamond and she keeps away from me but we both know the other is there. The bookies slouch around with their leather bags and pencil stubs, sizing me up, sizing her up too and I hear the mutters of big dollar bets and wonder of the two of us who the money favours.

Ringmaster Tom don't like me to train on fight day but the backlot is as antsy as hens herding up a virgin bride. I need to get out so I strap my ankles and I run. I run across the sawdust and onto the red-brown dirt. I run down-track and follow the dry creek line with the sun on my back warming the flies. I do not mean to run to the Devil's Balls but there I am heading into their shadows before I know it.

I stop and listen to my heart thrum. I wait. Sweat cools my skin but the shiver inside is from Red Buck, scratching at the knobbles of my spine with his long curled nails. I listen to his whispers scrape my bones, scrabble along my veins and bubble up into the arteries of the heart that once was his and now is ours.

Snap her neck fast, he whispers, or she will crush you.

At ringside Ringmaster Tom bellows my name and pinches my thigh beneath my faded red satin gown.

'Go three rounds then throw it,' he hisses in my ear. 'I'll make it worth your while.'

I glance under his hooded eyes and see the cold lights glittering there. I nod, and return to my corner.

Ringmaster introduces Diamond. She raises her arms and her satin sleeves fall back to show the ribbons of black and white snake skin that curl up her arm. She turns to me and bares her fangs.

I show her my back, stick out my arse in her general direction. The nub of my tail is new, it barely moves through my muscle and meat. She turns to me and bares her fangs.

Diamond circles me.

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Her stride is supple. Watch. Her chin is high. Strike. Thirty seconds in, not even a parry, and I jump. I kick.
My foot, red with dirt from the Devil’s Balls, thwacks into Diamond’s exposed neck. In the silence inside the ring I hear her neck snap. Her fangs pierce her lower lip as her body falls to the canvas. Two beads of blood well from the puncture wounds.

I turn and give Ringmaster Tom the finger before I bound over the ropes, leap through the crowd and out the open tent flaps into the night and run for a home, out in the wide red dust, that I know is mine.

**Book Review**

**Chris Butler. 2012, Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city, USA and Canada: Routledge. Nomikoi: Critical Legal Thinkers. ISBN 978 0 203 880 76 0.**

Despite being one of the most prolific philosophical thinkers and writers of the twentieth century, the work of French social theorist Henri Lefebvre is less well known than it should be, certainly amongst critical legal scholars. Through this carefully compiled exposition of some of the most important strands of Lefebvre’s social theory, Butler introduces Lefebvre’s formidable intellectual works to an unfamiliar legal audience, evidently for the first time.

*Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city* examines, in considerable detail, the philosophical and sociological writings of Lefebvre. As the culmination of Butler’s doctoral thesis it is a meticulously researched and comprehensive work befitting its subject matter. It is an ambitious task given the sheer breadth of Lefebvre’s output in a career that spanned sixty years, and who died aged ninety with a total publication output of some two hundred papers and sixty books. Butler alone cites over forty of Lefebvre’s works.

Butler selects six themes of Lefebvre’s work which he considers most relevant to a critical legal audience. One can only imagine the difficulty in deciding which aspects of Lefebvre’s work to incorporate, and which to omit. The book is divided unevenly into Parts One and Two. Part One (Chapters One and Two) provides the theoretical grounding for Lefebvre’s work, drawing out distinctions between leading theorists of the time including Marx, Nietzsche and Hegel. Chapter One introduces the reader to Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life* and explains how it theorises the experience of daily life within a modern capitalist society. Scholars of jurisprudence will be particularly interested in the ‘theory of moments’ and ‘moments of justice’ that Lefebvre regards as significant for conceiving the political potential of everyday life. This initial chapter also introduces the reader to the Lefebvrean concept of rythmanalysis which is used to theorise the unfolding connections between space and time in everyday life. We learn about the centrality of alienation and the role and importance of the festival within this concept. In Chapter Two our attention is turned to The Production of Space which Lefebvre wrote in 1974 and which conceptualises ‘space’ as more than a mere geographical location or physical commodity. For Lefebvre, space is multidimensional: It is a political instrument, a means of creative and aesthetic expression and part of the relations of production and property ownership. Although at times dense, the examination of Lefebvre’s philosophy of space will be highly relevant to scholars who seek to challenge the commodification of space through law and legal processes.

The book gains pace in Part Two (chapters Three, Four, Five), as this is where some of the key concepts introduced in the earlier chapters are revisited and given practical application in a legal context. Chapter Three (Space, abstraction and law) introduces us to Lefebvre’s perception of the law as a ‘concrete abstraction’. There is a useful critique here of how public law accountability mechanisms may be seen to mythologise institutional transparency. Our attention is turned in chapters Four (State power and the politics of space) and Five (Modernity, inheritance and the rhythms of everyday life) to Lefebvre’s theory of the state. Butler provides a contemporary interpretation of Lefebvrean state theory through an examination of changes to land-use planning laws in Queensland. We are also introduced to the concept of ‘autogestion’ or grassroots resistance to state power, and the capacity of social movements to reappropriate space and to decentralise and democratise spatial organisation. Chapter Six (The right to the city and the production of differential space) explores the utopian orientations of Lefebvre’s social theory and some of the legal implications that flow from it. It is here that the assertion of the right to the city is described and how it forms the basis for affirming new forms of spatial citizenship.

Unquestionably the greatest impact of Butler’s work will be the trigger effect it will have on the future application of Lefebvrean theory to contemporary legal and political contexts. A Lefebvrean-inspired critique of laws and legal processes relating to the regulation of public space and the use of police powers, residential tenancies and social housing regimes are all areas that sprung to mind when reading this work. Environmental regulation and the emerging concept of ‘spatial justice’ are no doubt other areas of law that will also benefit from a Lefebvrean analysis.

This book is a welcome and valuable addition to critical legal scholarship. Butler has provided us with a vigorously researched, well-structured and timely contribution to the field of interdisciplinary legal studies, which has sustained relevance in our contemporary political climate.

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