Rock Music from the Late 1960s to the Mid-1970s: A Lacanian Intervention

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Abstract

In rock music history, the period between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the punk era saw the experimentation of the mid to late 1960s lead to the creation of several distinct sub-genres and styles. Using Lacanian psychoanalysis and cultural theory, this thesis focuses on this often understudied and overshadowed period of rock music history with the aim of reassessing the value of some key critical debates to form a commentary on the music's place in wider society. Following introductory arguments is an exploration of rock and Lacanian theory through four chapters. Chapter one introduces Lacanian theory through the lens of British blues and race. Chapter two focuses on the fantasy of progression as it relates to capitalist production and the psychoanalytic category of perversion, using the band Genesis. Chapter three explores David Bowie's alter-egos and addresses questions of identity politics with an exploration of Lacan's *sinthome*. Chapter four takes Lacan's formulation of the death drive into a study of Hawkwind, highlighting the nature of drive and how this situates a music within a specific type of community. The thesis gives an account of an often-overlooked period in popular music history, furthers a critical musicology that considers popular music as a source of theoretical value and brings clarity to notions borrowed from psychoanalysis within music studies. Secondarily, the thesis presents a consistent version of Lacanian theory that will serve as a framework for further enquiries into psychoanalysis and music.

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Introduction

Aims

This thesis explores the potential for renewed theoretical investigation by bringing Lacanian thought into popular music studies. By integrating Lacan, our aim is to identify areas of inquiry that invite us to reconsider the frameworks through which we approach music from a cultural perspective. This thesis will seek to close a gap in current popular music scholarship, where Lacan's influence has often been either neglected or timidly theorized. We seek to challenge existing theoretical perspectives on rock music by delving into the existing contradictions that permeate this area of study. With a focus on late 1960s and mid-1970s rock music, we will identify a common thread that binds diverse musical genres and ideological goals together, grounded in Lacanian notions of negativity. Our ultimate aim is to develop a reinvigorated Lacanian praxis tailored towards rock music, thereby providing a foundation for further cultural explorations that seek to negotiate the diverse fields of rock music and Lacan.

Lacan and Rock

The history of British rock music demonstrates a genre that has frequently adapted to shifting social and political landscapes. In rock, we find a resilience that lends itself to multitudes of aesthetic and ideological expressions. The period that we are concerned with in this thesis is the end of the 1960s to the mid-1970s. Musically, this period was fruitful in its production of iconic bands and artists, who would create divergent sub-genres of rock such as: progressive, glam, folk, punk, and early heavy metal. Our initial interest in this period comes, not only from its aesthetic achievements, but for its positioning in history in the wake of 1960s counterculture and its political resonance.

We can frame this resonance within our chosen period by answering an analogous philosophical question: what happens the morning after the revolution? Slavoj Žižek provides a concise answer, 'in a radical revolution, people not only 'realize their old (emancipatory, etc.) dreams'; rather, they have to reinvent their very modes of dreaming'.[1] We can simplify this answer by stating that the initial push, or enthusiasm for a revolutionary violence, must be

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[1] Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (Verso, 2009), p. 196.

accompanied by a willingness to re-structure the negativity, or void, this violence opens in society. Thus, the revolution is as much a continuation of re-structuring and re-imagining, as it is an act of reactionary defiance. We may be talking hyperbolically in applying this question to 1960s rock counterculture, as revolution is too strong a term to discuss this movement, however, the form of the question is still relevant when applied to moments of change within musical culture.

When we state that a void was opened, this isn't to definitively claim that the counterculture was successful or not. The aftereffects of a cultural shift are contingent, which makes any programme of contextual change open ended. On the impact of this movement, Sheila Whitley states, 'There is little doubt that the late 1960s/1970s caused many to reflect on what appeared to be the failure of the counterculture; the realisation that the party was over and that the freedoms promised by the cultural revolution were little more than a stoned dream'.[2] In calling the counterculture a failure, we are only judging it by its explicit aims and goals, rather than its indirect, or unintended consequences. A failure can be productive and can lead to several varied affective reactions. The responses towards a feeling of despondence, fidelity, boredom, fatigue, or betrayal, could all garner very different musical products in creative and political terms. In other words, even a failed revolution can be viewed as a success in opening a negative space for an unintended cultural shift. It is the status of rock music as re-imagining itself against the backdrop of a negativity, which places our chosen period of study as a rich and productive object for a retroactive assessment. The general interest in studying this period is in the question: if a cultural revolution in rock music did not achieve its utopian promise, what contingent cultural and political effects are apparent within the music that followed?

We can give a brief survey of some of these effects. One observation is that at the beginning of the 1970s, there was a noticeable change in political enthusiasm compared to rock's earlier articulation as part of a wider global countercultural movement. Andy Bennett states, 'British rock music during the early 1970's became noticeably less political, the anthemic call to arms of songs such as 'Street Fighting Man' being replaced by more world-weary commentaries'.[3] The sentiments of 'Street Fighting Man'[4] by the Rolling Stones, were antithetical to a hippy

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[2] Jedediah Sklower and Sheila Whiteley, 'Countercultures and Popular Music', in *Countercultures and Popular Music* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), pp. 3–17 (p. 11).

[3] Andy Bennett, *British Progressive Pop 1970-1980* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2020), p. 7.

[4] The Rolling Stones, 'Street Fighting Man', *Beggars Banquet* (Decca - SKL.4955, 1968).

movement that largely followed a pacifist attitude of passive protesting. As the 1960s worn on, a more radical element within the left came to the surface. Bennett's point is that this contradiction, or indecisiveness on the left, led to a fatigue in political interest amongst musicians and audiences alike.

However, this is not a view held by everyone. In arguing for the 1970s as generally less political, we forgo some significant changes in the musical discourse of liberatory political causes. As Mark Pedelty and Kristine Weglarz comment: 'in terms of movement politics, the 1970s witnessed as many or more gains than the 1960s. Gender equity, gay rights, reproductive rights, and global human rights experienced major leaps forward'.[5] While we can perhaps see the impact of these leaps forward most clearly outside of the rock genre, we can at least say that rock music, at its best, gave organisation to the impulse of this wider political change.

Another view is that the political ideology of the reactionary left found an aesthetic continuation in the 1970s by appealing to an educated upper-middle class youth. On progressive rock, and its drive towards an aesthetic liberation of rock music, Alan Moore comments, 'It is this commitment to vision which distinguishes progressive rock from other popular musics, and it is the vision of a better society which links progressive rock to those movements of '1968''.[6] We thus find three differing accounts of music's ongoing political engagement in the 1970s: one of political fatigue, one of a generalized spread of emancipatory ideas, and one of a continuation in a different guise. All these studies are concerned with certain causes and aftereffects of a negativity. If we account for each position theoretically, a distinctive unifying idea emerges. In the 1960s, we have a countercultural movement that misses its aim, and in reaction to the void opened by this failure, new desires and aims are formed. This is a very simple idea, yet in another context, it forms the core of the theoretical framework in this thesis.

The *objet petit a* (*object a*), as developed by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, follows an identical path as the above premise. Lacan would call the *object a* his only invention: 'am I a bad judge when I answer that the little o-object was perhaps what I had invented…Perhaps, it

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[5] Kristine Weglarz and Mark Pedelty, 'An Introduction to Political Rock: History, Genre, and Politics', in *Political Rock* (Routledge, 2016), pp. xi–xxv (p. xvii).
[6] Allan F. Moore, 'British Rock: The Short "1968", and the Long', in *Music and Protest in 1968*, ed. by Beate Kutschke and Barley Norton (Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 154–71 (p. 159).

is surely, in any case…no one invented it apart from me'.[7] To explain, for Lacan, the starting point for any discourse is not a neutrality, but a position of negativity. Desire, a major theme in Lacan's thought, is the product of this negativity. In modernity, our lives are dominated by finding desirable objects and events as substitutes for what we are missing. It is a lost object that we perceive as a missing piece of ourselves, which causes us to search for objects that may fill in this lacking element. The *object a* is thus the *object-cause of desire*. Like a missed goal in a revolutionary act, in subjective experience, our desires are based upon losing an object and finding a replacement to fill its negative void. This object is something primordially lost, or repressed, that drives us in life. To bring the two versions of the idea together: the position in a negative space opened by a subjective or revolutionary failure is experienced as a lost object that causes us to desire substitute objects. If we also call the revolutionary failure a lost object, we can see the *object a* as a cause of new musical and political desires. Thus, in any analysis of a cultural moment or artefact, we must consider both cause and effect.

In this thesis, Lacanian psychoanalysis will form the basis for an intervention into our chosen period of study. We have been coy, as our initial comments on rock music and politics have demonstrated an application of Lacan's ideas, before we have raised the question of how best to approach his thought. This is to softly demonstrate the overall application of Lacan in this thesis: to show how Lacanian psychoanalysis and popular music studies can interact and produce ideas and concepts that enrich both disciplines.

Lacan considered the breadth of psychoanalysis in his practise as both a clinician and wider thinker. He specifically designated psychoanalysis as a praxis, rather than academic discipline:

> What is a praxis? I doubt whether this term may be regarded as inappropriate to psycho-analysis. It is the broadest term to designate a concerted human action, whatever it may be, which places man in a position to treat the real by the symbolic. The fact that in doing so he encounters the imaginary to a greater or lesser degree is only of secondary importance here.[8]

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[7] Jacques Lacan, 'The Seminar of Jacques Lacan : Book XXI : Les Non Dupres Errent Part 1 : 1973-1974.', 2011, p. 100. <https://esource.dbs.ie/handle/10788/171> [accessed 13 September 2023].
[8] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (Penguin Books, 1979), p. 6.

In this passage, Lacan sets out a methodology; 'to treat the real by the symbolic' is to find within ideas places of inconsistency or failure, which are real places of structural negativity that cause the desire for new imaginary ideas. To explain these concepts, we can say that we mediate the world through signifiers, which are symbolic; through combinations of signifiers, we create images as a supplement, which are imaginary; we often fail to capture the whole of what we mean in this combination of signifiers and images, which is the real. The imaginary, symbolic and real thus make up a triad of psychic registers that, when tied together, make up our being. When we talk of the real, it is to reference a part of our being that we feel as present yet cannot assimilate into our symbolic or imaginary ideas of ourselves.

Already we can project the value of this methodology in the critique of academic debates within music studies: in working through inconsistencies, or real points of negativity, we can test if academic debates live up to their desired imaginary aims. By calling his work a praxis, Lacan also broadens his ideas so they can reach outside of academic circles into places where this theoretical movement can be demonstrated. This includes our chosen object of study: rock music. In our example of the failure of counterculture, we have demonstrated this methodology in a very basic format: through a symbolic goal, which is a cultural ideal for change, we have found a negative cause, which Lacan would term real. This real negativity has, in turn, become a cause of desire that has fed into new musical formulations.

Lacan gave his own direct response to the most significant countercultural events in his native France.[9] As part of a global countercultural movement, the May '68 student uprisings marked a watershed moment in modern French history. The events began with students protesting the restrictive rules and general poor conditions in French universities. Although these beginnings were arguably a bourgeois interest, the sentiment soon spread across the country, and revolts began in the general population. Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey states: 'The success of the students in getting the government to agree to their demands served as a model. The horizon of possibilities also expanded for other groups. New forms of action increased their willingness to act'. – the dynamic of protest'.[10] While some may see this type of action as a successful form of resistance, Lacan identified a structural weakness within these events. His famous response to May '68

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[9] Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Norton, 2007).
[10] Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, 'May 1968 in France: The Rise and Fall of a New Social Movement', in *1968: The World Transformed*, ed. by Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 253–77 (p. 263).

was, 'What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a new master. You will get one'.[11] We can debate whether this new master is one of a brutalist regime, or the headless master of an emerging neo-liberal politics, however Lacan recognises the structural implications of active politics and reacts by disinvesting. This is an example of Lacan's methodology in action, he sees the goals of '68 as imaginary fantasies, and it is precisely because resistance movements place a fantasy of overcoming a substantial power as its aim, that it misses something: the real treated by the symbolic. What we can take from this is that Lacan is a philosopher of the cause, or the form that revolution reacts against, over the effect, or the content of a particular revolutionary dream.

For the revolutionary, the utopian dream is a substitute for the lost object. However, utopias are a structural impossibility because the *object a* is a real absence that cannot be gotten rid of through its active displacement. As Joan Copjec states, 'The violence of this passion insists in each penetration, transgression, and in removal, which is only exacerbated by the fact that each arrives on the other side, only to find that the Real has fled behind another barrier'.[12] Thus, the *object a* demonstrates that the mastery of social space is limited internally. Because we have limitations as desiring subjects, we are always left with a structural remainder. However, the strength of Lacan's thought is not to think of this remainder as a problem to be solved, but as an essential element that must be accepted rather than overcome. Following this thought, a Lacanian intervention begins at a point of limitation, a common negativity, which each political reaction must process. In this same debate we are presented with a further critical dimension through Lacan. Rather than finding a new fantasy to fill the negativity left by the countercultural failure, Lacan's disinvestment can be read as a radical acceptance of the failure itself, which is the production of *object a*, as a necessary structural loss.

To give a musical example of this latter position, 'Revolution 1',[13] by The Beatles, was released in 1968 in response to several pocket uprisings, which inspired a politically active component in the counterculture. This included, the Vietnamese Tet offensive, Vietnam protests in America, student occupations at Columbia University and the May '68 events of Paris.[14] Although the Beatles were an important part of that same counterculture, the song's lyrics

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[11] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, p. 207.

[12] Joan Copjec, 'May '68, the Emotional Month', in *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (Verso, 2006), pp. 90–115 (p. 111).

[13] The Beatles, 'Revolution 1', *The White Album* (Apple Records - PCS 7067/8, 1968)

[14] John Platoff, 'John Lennon, "Revolution," and the Politics of Musical Reception', *Journal of Musicology*, 22.2 (2005), 241–67 <https://doi.org/10.1525/jm.2005.22.2.241>.

present a cautionary message to its revolutionary wing. Penned by John Lennon during the bands famous excursion to India, the lyrics respond to revolution, after an ambiguous statement, 'you can count me out (in)', we get the line, 'it's going to be, alright'.[15] Rather than a call to arms, the song feels more of a disinvestment in revolutionary politics. For some circles of the left, this became a sign of the Beatles losing touch with the general feelings of their audience, as Greil Marcus comments, 'We felt tricked, because we had expected the Beatles to be *our* spokesmen (whoever "we" were), to say what we wanted to hear, what we wanted to learn about'.[16] Where taking a passive attitude to political activism may have angered some fans, we should consider the political position of disinvestment, a tenet of Lennon's thought, as a position of possible emancipation from political expectation. This is to render popular music a sight of passive relief from ideological pressures and imperatives to become politically active: a cause rather than effect. We can recall the sentiments of, 'All you Need is Love'[17] and the later song, 'Imagine',[18] and find a similar gesture.

Through John Lennon, we have thus demonstrated in shorthand the form that this thesis will take. Following Lacan's methodology, we have engaged in a critical debate, a 'symbolic' order, and found a 'real' counter position to the investment in a progressive 'imaginary' fantasy. Following this initial example, the reoccurring critical gesture in this thesis will be staging Lacanian interventions to re-assess the pre-suppositions we have surrounding critical debates in popular music studies.

Lacan and Music – Literature Review

We can take Lacan's methodology into a review of scholarship that marries the thinker with musicology. In using Lacan as a theoretical reference, we must be cautious of how we read his thought. There are difficulties in reading a thinker who constantly questions and re-appraises his own ideas. Lacanian scholars often have differing thoughts on how to best bring his ideas into a wider cultural theory. In popular music studies, there are few book length treatments of Lacanian theory, and those that do appear, are often treated as curious oddities. The task of a

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[15] 'The Beatles - Revolution 1 Lyrics', *musiXmatch*, <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/The-Beatles/Revolution-1> [accessed 14 October 2023].
[16] 'A Singer and a Rock and Roll Band (1969)', *GreilMarcus.Net*, 2018 <https://greilmarcus.net/2018/03/01/a-singer-and-a-rock-and-roll-band-1969/> [accessed 30 September 2023].
[17] The Beatles, 'All You Need Is Love', *All You Need Is Love* (Parlophone - R 5620, 1967).
[18] John Lennon, 'Imagine', *Imagine* (Apple Records - PAS 10004, 1971).

anyone engaging with Lacan and music studies is thus to find ways to marry disciplines that are often antithetical, while provoking enough interest to produce a novel academic dialogue with readers. We can highlight some of the scholars who have attempted this feat.

Listening Subjects, Music Psychoanalysis and Culture,[19] by David Schwarz, is for most Lacanian musicologists an introductory work because it brings together culturally and historically diverse music examples, putting them through psychoanalytic argumentations. The overall mix of Lacanian theory and music is underdeveloped, which is understandable, as this work is a rarity of its time. The author is bold and places studies of the Beatles side by side with Schubert, Peter Gabriel, and right-wing Oi! music. In this sense, we get a disjointed effort that does little to consider an underlying theoretical trajectory. The book's main contribution is to introduce some important terminology translated from film studies, with notions such as the 'Acoustic Mirror' and the 'Sonorus Envelope' becoming tenets of Lacanian musicology. However, a major flaw is an overreliance on analogies between music and theory. After long passages of analysis, Schwarz finds single lines from psychoanalytic writers sufficient, rather than working through and earning his theoretical insights.

Music in Youth Culture, A Lacanian Approach,[20] by Jan Jagodzinski, is a theoretically complex work. Where Schwarz writes in a classical analytical style, with extended musical analysis, Jagodzinski is more concerned with the social conditions and psychology of the performer and audience. His work is complex and gives us an understanding of Lacan's philosophical position alongside his contemporary French theorists, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida. The author combines ideas of the pathology of the performer, sexual difference, and race, from examples that rely on autobiography rather than any considered musical analysis. Although a limited work in that its examples are from a similar time and place (1990s and early 2000s American popular music), there is a wide variety of Lacanian theory applied. However, this work falls into the opposite trap to that of Schwarz. Rather than saying too little, this work overwhelms the reader with theoretical approaches, without giving due time or energy into outlining the wild divergence between opposing theorists and Lacan's thought.

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[19] David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Duke University Press, 1997).
[20] J Jagodzinski, *Music in Youth Culture: A Lacanian Approach* (Springer, 2005).

Voicing The Popular, On the Subjects of Popular Music,[21] by Richard Middleton, is the most developed engagement with Lacanian theory in music studies to date. His position as a cultural materialist is given a new breadth through the addition of Lacan and Žižek's ideas. Coming from a rich field of Marxist musical analysis, Middleton provides a full historical monograph that places both the split subject and, more importantly, the weak master of Lacanian theory into an intervention of western popular music. From the earliest slave songs into (then) current pop music, Middleton develops a theory of how the subject (the Lacanian subject) is structured and structures music through the notions of authenticity, race, repetition, and social/racial positioning. The strength of this work is its hyper focus, each chapter takes a single idea and wrestles with it through different variables. Although Middleton does slip into some awkward confutations between differing French theorists, his work demonstrates the fruitful nature of giving a considered presentation of Lacan. Middleton identifies a unique aspect in Lacan's work: 'What is conspicuously absent in both Derrida and Deleuze is anything fulfilling the function of the Lacanian Real — the rock of the Real… , the hard kernel that resists both the Imaginary and the Symbolic but, at the same time, is their source'.[22] It is these moments, missing in both Scwartz, and to a lesser degree Jagodzinski, where we can separate Lacan from his peers, which gives us valuable entrance points into Lacan's uniqueness.

Following this short initial survey, we can set out exactly how we are going to approach Lacan's theory. If we are going to present a theoretical work, the most important aspect is setting out our starting point. As with Middleton, and Lacan's methodology, we will form this through the Lacanian real treated via the symbolic. However, exactly how we place the real, in relation to the imaginary and symbolic is a contested issue in Lacanian music studies. Žižek provides two dominant readings of Lacan based on how thinkers position the real, he states, 'The Lacanian Thing is not simply the 'impossible' Real which withdraws into the dim recesses of the Unattainable with the entry of the symbolic order, it is the very universe of drives'.[23] In other words, the real is either an absence that is missing, or, in the form of a drive, an absence that is present in the symbolic as a felt absence. Based on this division, we can thus place the real into differing positions. The real can be thought as a lost 'thing' that is forever missing, and hence puts us on the path of desire, or an object that is present in its absence as an object-cause of desire, the *object a*, around which repetitive drives endlessly circulate. Where the former

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[21] Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music* (Taylor & Francis, 2006).
[22] ibid., pp. 191-192.
[23] Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* (Verso Books, 2007), p. 97.

presents a logic of fantasy, only the latter conceptualisation captures the radicality of Lacan: rather than a fantasised substantial negativity outside of the symbolic, the symbolic itself contains a substantial negativity, a drive towards death as a perpetual cause. As Paul Verhaeghe comments, 'The excess of the Real reappears in the Symbolic's shortfall, its inability to 'say it all'.[24]

We can use this division between the real as either a desire beyond or excessive drive within as a useful distinction in presenting a further cross section of Lacanian music writing. Both positions offer a differing way to consider how music is structured. The position of the unattainable thing beyond language leads to theories that seek to find privileged examples of construction, or deconstruction, that artistically attempt to reach this position beyond. This lends an exclusivity to certain styles of music and often leaves popular music as an afterthought. As we are concerned with popular music, the latter position of the real offers an opportunity to uncover a universal form of incompletion that undercuts any notion that a privileged example of music exists. It is here that we find the radicality of Lacan. His strength is not in an intellectual or physical resistance to a substantial power, but in finding within the dis-empowered (the disinvested), a universality of mutual castration, a split in the subject, that leaves all power lacking. We can continue our review with several examples that position the real in the first of these ideas: the real outside of language.

Thomas Reiner's article, 'The Composer, the Musicologist, His Wife, and Her Lover: on Lacan's Relevance to Music',[25] uses Lacanian theory to argue for the perverse overreliance on master signifiers within music studies. In his use of the Lacanian registers of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real, the author finds a tool to illuminate the functionality of differing forms of music criticism. However, his reading of these registers is flawed in his appraisal of the Lacanian real. In the final example of his text, the author uses the cover of the Genesis album *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*[26] as an example of Lacanian theory, he states, 'Our subject has stepped out of the Symbolic and courageously faces a bleak, unbearable and unspeakable Real'.[27] For an article that argues that music should be read semiotically, as a text, this transcendental view of the real presents a difficulty as it re-enchants music as having an

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[24] Paul Verhaeghe, 'Lacan's Answer to Alienation: Separation.', *Crisis and Critique*, 6.1 (2019), 365–88 (p. 376).
[25] Thomas Reiner, 'The Composer, the Musicologist, His Wife, and Her Lover: On Lacan's Relevance to Music', *Directions of New Music*, 1.2 (2018), pp. 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.14221/dnm.i2/3>.
[26] Genesis, *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* (Charisma - CGS 101, 1974).
[27] Reiner, p. 11.

exclusive position outside of language. The counter to this reading is to see music tangled within the symbolic, as its excessive real condition. However, this is not considered by the author.

In, 'The Object of Jouissance in Music',[28] Sebastian Leikert provides another version of Lacanian theory, based on a desired thing, which separates *jouissance* from the symbolic. This is a reading based on Lacan's *Ethics* seminar,[29] which presents a divisive view of Lacan. This reading mystifies the *object a* as holding a forbidden enjoyment that exists through breaking free of the constraints of the written, in this case the score, into the excesses of performed music. For Leikert, 'The battle carried out in musical works consists in bringing the contradiction between the signifier and the object of music into an appreciable form'.[30] The author places the castrato in opera as having a privileged access to a lost object in the form of a cry; a voice as one of Lacan's examples of *object a*. In the cry, we find moments that go beyond the symbolic, 'within that monolithic opacity of the cry lies a liminal act of binding which allows for the Real to shine forth in its fascinating force'.[31] However, for Leikert, perversion is confusingly held as an anti-symbolic path in which the castrato's voice is given the status of the real as a positivised force, rather than negative cause. This is to miss the radical negativity at the heart of Lacan's thinking: the *object a* is always already present as a negativity within, rather than positively beyond the symbolic.

In, *Dissonant Identities: The Rock 'n' Roll Scene in Austin, Texas*,[32] Barry Shank uses Lacanian theory to supplement his analysis of identity formation. He finds in Lacan's imaginary and symbolic, two differing concepts that, in a negotiation, give subjects a way of integrating and forming a musical community. Shank states, 'wound through the desires of every other member of the scene, each participant in the rock'n'roll scene constructs a self-image, an instantaneous (mis) recognized identity, formed out of the knot of these intertwined desires'.[33] For Shank, there is a play around a central void where each member places an imaginary projection, an ideal, into a wider community. This creates an ever-changing flow of identities that forms a

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[28] Sebastian Leikert, 'The Object of Jouissance in Music', in *Lacan in the German-Speaking World*, ed. by Elizabeth Stewart, Richard Feldstein, and Maire Jaanus (SUNY Press, 2004), pp. 9–19.

[29] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII* (Routledge, 2008).

[30] Leikert, p. 11.

[31] ibid., p. 17.

[32] Barry Shank, *Dissonant Identities: The Rock'n'Roll Scene in Austin, Texas* (Wesleyan University Press, 1994).

[33] Shank, p. 131.

symbolic position, another form of ideal, for others to move towards. Shank places the real and the imaginary as categories that form a resistance to the symbolic. In adolescence he finds an exclusion from positions of power, which he equates with the symbolic. The imaginary, which consists of fantasies of reaching the impossibility of the abject real, thus becomes a source of power for young, musically inclined subjects. Shank comments, 'feelings that this process engenders both describe the pleasures that derive from participation in a scene and explain the capacity of adolescents to dance with "the abject."'.[34] Although the author sees this as an accurate representation of Lacan, in his mis-reading, we can think the problem of placing the real as a performative beyond: in following the imaginary, the real is given the status of the most effective of fetish objects.

Kenneth M. Smith's article, 'Formal negativities, breakthroughs, ruptures and continuities in the music of Modest Mouse',[35] engages with Lacan and a conflated misreading of Hegel's dialectics, to prop up Adorno's negative dialectic. Through music, he thinks of the real as an abject form in a constantly moving performativity of the imaginary. For Smith, Adorno's modernist examples, 'laid bare the tensions behind their conception (tensions immanent in the object itself), but refused reconciliation as positive syntheses'.[36] The author makes an error by conflating the negative dialectic with the Lacanian real. The author attempts to argue that, in Adorno's thought, Modest Mouse's music becomes a modern example of a negative dialectic. On a musical example, Smith states, 'beneath the album's beguilingly optimistic façade of communal euphoria lies Lacan's 'real' with images of death, sewage and decay'.[37] Again, this version of the Lacanian real is an abject point beyond the symbolic. It is an anti-social space that acts as a fantasy of escape, rather than a place within the symbolic itself.

When we consider Lacan's work, he never wrote a single book, and it is often easy to forget that his seminars were often tangential, and in constant evolution. This means that even authors who deploy Lacanian concepts directly, can choose those concepts poorly. John Stratton latches onto a moment in later Lacan, where Lacan himself seems to regress into a logic of an enjoyment beyond the social. In, 'Coming to the fore: the audibility of women's sexual pleasure

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[34] Shank, p. 135.
[35] Kenneth M. Smith, 'Formal Negativities, Breakthroughs, Ruptures and Continuities in the Music of Modest Mouse', *Popular Music*, 33.3 (2014), 428–54 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143014000385>.
[36] ibid., p. 429.
[37] ibid., p. 446.

in popular music and the sexual revolution',[38] Stratton examines representations of feminine sexual pleasure in 1960s and 1970s pop music. The author hears the female orgasm vocalised in music as an expression of a unique type of enjoyment. He states: 'For Lacan, female jouissance had a mystical quality. In a post-Freudian psychoanalytics founded on structure and language the supplementary quality that Lacan attributed to female jouissance placed it beyond everyday understanding – beyond, outside of, language'.[39] Although there is no doubt Lacan spoke of a feminine jouissance in his seminar XX,[40] this is a point where we must admit that even Lacan sometimes betrayed his own discovery: here he presents a fetish in the place of the *object a* as a real object.

Although we can be critical of these works, one constant fight we must endure when reading and writing on Lacan is to ensure we don't fall into a logic of fantasy as a transgressive discourse. Although our chosen area, popular music, is an art form that places fantasy at its core, our second reading of Lacan can offer a way of viewing fantasy as an access to the real, rather than a fetish of the thing beyond. Again, to evoke Lacan's praxis, it is in finding the real within the symbolic, or the points where musical narrative breaks down into the real, that we can find the singular radicality of popular music. Writing that utilises this latter idea is still in its infancy; we can find evidence of the theory but must work to find examples of authors who specialise in popular music.

In *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*,[41] J.P.E. Harper-Scott finds in the Lacanian concept of the quilting point, a tool for critiquing both the capitalist relation between art and commerce and a general essentialist thrust in popular music studies. Initially, the text mounts a criticism on musicologist Richard Taruskin, which demonstrates the political value of Lacan. As a musicologist in a position of influence, Taruskin is accused of a xenophobia. Harper states, 'The effect of Taruskin's xenophobic–capitalist quilting point is that everything that comes into contact with it, musically or critically, will show up in relation to his essential insistence that the American political and economic model is the only moral good on earth'.[42] This is a system

[38] Jon Stratton, 'Coming to the Fore: The Audibility of Women's Sexual Pleasure in Popular Music and the Sexual Revolution', *Popular Music*, 33.1 (2014), 109–28 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114301300055X>.
[39] ibid., p. 125.
[40] Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (Norton, 1998).
[41] J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[42] ibid., p. 8.

of creating value that acts on a binary system of moral and immoral art production. It is this type of criticism that Harper-Scott seeks to dismiss as a masculinised, ideological view of the musical field, which is blinkered by finding value in de-valuing another branch of music. The alternative is using a psychoanalytic method that refuses the binary dynamic of the friend/enemy. This is an invaluable insight into Lacan and cultural studies of music as it produces the possibility of re-quilting our perception. Lacan's dialectical method re-quilts space based on a central void, the real, rather than a friend/enemy dynamic, 'there is a complementary relationship between the retrospective fixing of meaning in a quilting point and the forcing of a new quilting point in the form of a void (∅) element in a given situation'.[43] This void is the real as internal to the symbolic. Where this text is at its strongest is in its bold criticism of fellow academics who miss the Lacanian insight of the void, which creates a split subject as a lacking being.

Lawrence Kramer's work, *The Thought of Music*,[44] flirts with a Lacanian musicology based on the ideas of the fetish and the symptom (*sinthome*) yet shows an uncomfortable resistance to Lacan. For Kramer, 'We fetishize music - but also prize it, also make a sinthome of it - to guard ourselves against too much receptivity and too much openness to mere sound'.[45] In this passage, Kramer makes an important point: music can act as an imaginary supplement (fetish), or a real supplement (*sinthome*) to our symbolic position. In this latter position, we find our second version of Lacan, who prizes cause over effect. Although Kramer dedicates a fair amount of space, this text is not wholly Lacanian. Kramer's main concern is not to develop a Lacanian musicology, but to use differing, and often irreconcilable, theoretical positions to critique the hermeneutics of music scholarship. Kramer's concerns are over musicology's reliance on the hermeneutic cycle, 'the principle that no understanding can arise that does not depend on prior understanding, but that genuine understanding must do more than merely reproduce prior understanding',[46] Again, he finds in the psychoanalytic notion of the symptom a way out of this cycle, which de-substantialises the initial category of prior knowledge, to unveil a cycle that is in fact non-existent, 'To understand the cultural dynamic, it helps to understand the artifact that comes, often retrospectively or retroactively, to act as a cultural symptom'.[47] In this, prior understanding is incomplete, it relies on retroactivity to complete it

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[43] Harper-Scott, p 161.
[44] Lawrence Kramer, *The Thought of Music* (Univ of California Press, 2016).
[45] ibid., p. 81.
[46] ibid., p. 148.
[47] ibid., p. 165.

as either an imaginary fetish or real symptom. Although Lacan's name drops out of the final third of this text, it is here that Kramer is most Lacanian. There is a general sense that Kramer, in his detours through positivist thought, censors the name of the true protagonist of his text in a non-productive academic (university) discourse.

Seth Brodsky's, *From 1989, or European Music and the Modernist Unconscious*, uses Lacan's notion of the symptom in its full potentiality as a cultural critique.[48] This book is focused on two central tenets: modernism and Lacan. The author uses a structural device of repetition throughout the text, falling into deeper contradictions, and re-emerging from the other side of musical analysis with richer and richer forms of interpretation. This movement is possible thanks to Lacan's four discourses, which offer discursive frameworks to highlight the short period in the history of music under scrutiny. The repetition in the text is in service of theorising, 'a negativity that does not figure within being as its opposite, but is perpetually being reborn alongside it, its always missing twin'.[49] This piece of negativity, which is the real, is experienced as a symptom. The symptom is the pivot on which Lacan's four discourses rotate and form a cycle of impossible mastery. It is in this position, of symptom, that Brodsky places modernist music. For Brodsky: 'modernism would be an enjoyment of a modernity it does not and cannot "have" - an enjoyment of precisely modernity's failure to appear. Here modernity becomes a kind of eternal parapraxis'.[50] A more familiar term for the parapraxis would be the Freudian slip. Modernist music, in its constant deferral through fantasy, thus becomes a site, not outside of language, but to evoke Lacan, an unconscious site structured like a language. The real as a certain aspect of modernist music is not a place beyond, but a symptom within the wider history of music.

Stop Making Sense by Scott Wilson develops the unconscious as a musical concept.[51] This work not only borrows Lacanian ideas, but it also adapts and develops these ideas to present a new language of musicological terms. Wilson's version of the real is outside of sense, but music, as non-sensical, is present within the symbolic. Wilson develops a concept of an audio unconscious, 'desire also operates in an audio unconscious where speech is absent or misperceived and music is the privileged form'.[52] Where Brodsky gives this concept over to

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[48] Seth Brodsky, *From 1989, Or European Music and the Modernist Unconscious* (Univ of California Press, 2017).
[49] ibid., p. 8.
[50] ibid., p. 125.
[51] Scott Wilson, *Stop Making Sense: Music from the Perspective of the Real* (Routledge, 2018).
[52] ibid., p. 43.

modernist composers, Wilson provides examples drawn from popular music. In the cough of Hank Williams, or the screams of Yoko Ono, we find the voice as *object a*. These negative, non-sensical excesses within music present symptomal points that demand either interpretation or acceptance as non-sensical. The author uses the term 'amusia' to describe places within music where non-recognition persists as the very cause of our interest. Wilson states, 'The term amusia does not denote the absence of music, a specific cultural and social form, but its unbearable presence'.[53] The 'a' in amusia is a stand in for the *object a*, which is a real absence that is felt positively. In this idea, a theory of music emerges that holds a singular enjoyment in the excesses of musical production.

In, '"Losing what we never had": Žižek and Lacan Rock On with Bryan Adams',[54] Graham Wolfe introduces Lacan's key concepts of the *object a* and enjoyment through a nostalgic storytelling, popular in rock music. Wolfe pre-dominantly analyses 'The Summer of 69'[55] by Bryan Adams as a song that stages an impossible sexual encounter. This encounter is impossible both from a logistical point, Adams being only nine in the summer of 69, and from a more general theoretical point of the impossibility of a full sexual relation. 'There is no sexual relation',[56] is a Lacanian aphorism that dictates that in any sexual encounter, the two are always joined by a surplus object, Lacan's *object a* as real. Thus, the sexual couple are always a not-two. Wolfe uses a metaphorical reading of the song, that places the 69 of the nostalgic summer, as a sexual act rather than calendar year:

> every empirical 69, in order to work, must be a 6 + 9 + a. Insofar as a fundamental deadlock or impossibility pertains to human sexuality per se, every sexual relationship needs to be supplemented with an a, a "something more" infusing the base components of reproduction, a fantasy-dimension exceeding the physical bodies in their "natural" operations.[57]

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[53] Wilson, p. 33.

[54] Graham Wolfe, '"Losing What We Never Had": Žižek and Lacan Rock On with Bryan Adams', *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, 5.4 (2016) <https://Žižekstudies.org/index.php/IJZS/article/view/533> [accessed 14 October 2023].

[55] Bryan Adams, 'Summer Of '69', *Summer of '69* (A&M Records - 390 024-7, 1985).

[56] Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 94.

[57] Wolfe, p. 9.

The point here is that the gap of nostalgia, the symbolic longing for a past sexual encounter, is also a real gap in the sexual encounter itself. Here we find the full scope of Lacan's teaching, that there is no original place of a full enjoyment that we may return to one day. The original itself is always already an incomplete act. Wolfe thus hits upon one of Lacan's insights, that a nostalgic fantasy that keeps one desiring, can be traversed to a seeing through the fantasy and gaining enjoyment from knowing that the nostalgic real object is forever lost.

In 'Desperately Seeking Wilco',[58] Becky McLaughlin discusses her own history of relationships through her musical tastes. In coming to terms, or traversing the fantasy, of music as a pertinent marker for her love life, she, like Wolfe, arrives at Lacan's idea of the impossibility of the sexual relationship. The author's relationships are a series of mismatches, of falling in and out of love, and in Lacan's psychoanalysis she finds solace in the hopelessness of finding a full sexual rapport, without a real remainder (*object a*). Through Wilco's 'Impossible Germany',[59] she exemplifies a theory that sees love in the hopelessness of finding a perfect partner without some form of distance, 'At the end of Part I, the singer moves toward hope, toward the possibility of being heard. And yet, as we see from the singer's use of the future progressive tense, being heard is a phenomenon that can only be gestured at in some (im)possible future'.[60] McLaughlin reads the two parts of the song as representations of effect and cause. The vocal section is a marker of effect, a hope for a full sexual relationship beyond the song's title, an 'Impossible Germany'. As the author states, 'love is not in Germany; love is in the movement *toward* Germany'.[61] The instrumental section becomes a representation of cause, a repetition that finds enjoyment in its own continuation, rather than in a fantasy beyond. It is in the split between these two scenes that we find the subject of Lacanian psychoanalysis, forever split by the real between hope and hopelessness.

In sum, we have reviewed much of what is both coherent and relevant to us as Lacanian scholars in popular music. Here we find gaps in the field that are considerable. Although this presents an opportunity, it also causes problems for the Lacanian scholar as there is so much unwritten material and so many paradigm shifting concepts that musicology could benefit from, yet still need detailed explanation before they enter the field as common concepts. Considering

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[58] Becky McLaughlin, 'Desperately Seeking Wilco', *Rock Music Studies*, 5.1 (2018), 29–45 <https://doi.org/10.1080/19401159.2018.1429909>.
[59] Wilco, 'Impossible Germany', *Sky Blue Sky* (Nonesuch - 131388-2, 2007).
[60] McLaughlin, p. 41.
[61] ibid., p. 41.

what we have presented, there are no Lacanian book length studies that focus on a single time in popular music history. This also means that there are no book length studies that attempt to focus on a particular period and work through its critical and historical studies using Lacan as a tool for an intervention. What we can take from our review is that there is enough material to at least formulate and justify Lacan's praxis being extended into music studies. However, more needs to be done to work through Lacan's concepts in detail to make his work more familiar within popular music studies.

Method

The conjunction of music and cultural theory is a very broad field of study. It can encompass both empirical and non-empirical research across all cultural associations with music. It can adopt wildly different philosophical perspectives to frame its findings. In this respect, the method for study is an open question. As Michael Pickering states, 'For one reason or another, cultural studies has been lax in thinking about methods, and so failed to engage in any breadth with questions of methodological limit'.[62] This may seem like an 'anything goes' process. However, in many ways, we are liberated from the weight of tradition within this type of study. A method, then, must justify itself against several differing positions on cultural work. Even if limits are ill defined, no matter the theoretical position or analytic approach, it is helpful to set a productive limit to the process. In this respect, we will take Lacan's methodology, 'to treat the real by the symbolic', as this creative limit.

To give a further explanation for our purposes as musicologists, we can think of this as a process of retroactivity. In shifting our perspective on history, finding the position of the real, we identify music as internally incomplete regardless of existing presuppositions. Thus, because of the real within the symbolic, any interpretive framework cannot account for music as a full positive object: it is always subject to a retroactive intervention. Through this intervention, we can form a comprehensive cultural analysis of both music producers and audiences. This is specifically aimed at questioning the specific progressive historical narrative evident in our chosen period.

On a retroactive method of analysis, Žižek states:

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[62] Michael Pickering, *Research Methods for Cultural Studies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 2.

According to the standard view, the past is fixed, what happened *happened*, it cannot be undone, and the future is open. It depends on unpredictable contingencies. What we should propose here is a reversal of this standard view: the past is open to retroactive reinterpretations, while the future is closed since we live in a determinist universe.[63]

This research will fundamentally adopt an anti-progressive historical perspective, invoking the retroactive theoretical framework. This framework challenges the conventional notion of a fixed past, arguing that deep seated historical presuppositions can be reinterpreted.

In sum, the methodology emerging from this research situates itself at the intersection of history and theory, emphasizing the identification of music as internally limited and resisting the notion of stable progression. This inability to achieve complete interpretation is anchored in Lacan's concept of the *object a* as a real object.

Case Studies

We must select some musical examples in which to stage our Lacanian intervention. This thesis will explore four differing bands/artists, along with their respective genres of music. Our choice of case study is based on musical grounds, to incorporate a diverse survey of differing genres within our period, but also on differing debates that each example produces in relation to the wider field of popular music studies. In each chapter, we will present a debate, and demonstrate where our Lacanian intervention can either adapt or rectify the presuppositions of that said debate.

Chapter One will explore the complexities of race and racism in British blues rock, with a specific focus on Eric Clapton. Clapton serves as a privileged example; his personal politics and views on race are scrutinised due to some very public discriminatory actions. We aim to uncover the structure of the relationship between the British and American blues through a psychoanalytic exploration of the connection between bluesman, Robert Johnson, and ways in which he has been mythologised. This exploration will introduce two key concepts: the *Anstoss* and Lacan's structure of fantasy, and will ask if the attachment to an ideal, whether positive or

[63] Slavoj Žižek, 'Hegel, Retroactivity & The End of History', *Continental Thought & Theory*, 2.4: Emancipation after Hegel (2019), 3–10 (p. 5)

negative, is structurally racist. From this questioning, we will aim to challenge prevailing dualistic frameworks in popular music studies through a psychoanalytic/dialectic approach to analysing music and race as fantasy structures. This chapter will end with an extended discussion on Lacan's formulas of sexuation, which will form a consistent theoretical reference for the rest of the thesis.

Our aim in Chapter Two is to explore fantasy's influence on symbolic organizations further. With a focus on progressive rock, we will discuss an ideological link between progression in both music and the wider capitalist economy and the psychoanalytic notion of perversion. We will intervene into two debates from popular music studies. The first is situated within a discourse that pits progressive rock against punk, as a way of situating value in a legitimation of cultural products. The second is the critical alignment of progressive rock with Adorno's negative dialectic, which seeks to view progressive rock as emancipatory. We will intervene to offer a differing interpretation; this is through testing both theoretical frameworks against Lacanian concepts to ask whether both follow perverse structures. Peter Gabriel and his time as the eccentric frontman in the band Genesis will provide a theatrical case study. This will demonstrate how psychoanalytic concepts of perversion form a praxis, which can be found in the unfolding of a musical performance.

While the first two chapters will be critical of the contradictions found in existing musical debate, the latter two chapters will seek to offer solutions to the theoretical problems we identify. In Chapter Three, through David Bowie, we will explore an organizational principle in the Lacanian notion of symptom. Bowie's ever-evolving alter-egos will be framed using the literary monster, to exemplify the symptom within a societal context. This perspective will challenge a popular line of thought in scholarship, which is to analyse Bowie using theories of performativity, as developed by Judith Butler. We aim to scrutinise Judith Butler's theory of performativity, intervening with the concepts of the symptom and the *sinthome*, to provide an enriched understanding of Bowie's work. Thus, in this analysis, we will test the merits of a theory of the symptom, as a singular idiosyncrasy common to all of Bowie's alter-egos, as contrasting with the popular narrative of performative deconstruction.

In Chapter Four, we will extend our intervention of the symptom, to emphasize an organizational structure rooted in a community of non-fetishist singular beings. To this aim, we will examine the band Hawkwind and their involvement in free festivals. We will develop a

theory that will argue for Hawkwind as working outside of a conventional fraternal organizational principle. By revisiting our Lacanian methodology, we will analyse and criticise symbolic narratives of active resistance. The Isle of Wight festival will serve as an illustration of Hawkwind's unique organizational principle, combining our prior concepts of dualistic resistance and offering a glimpse of a Lacanian community based on the notion of death drive. Our overall aim is to fully develop the logic of the feminine non-all, initially explored in chapter one. This will be argued as a primary form of organization, suppressed by theorists who either implicitly or explicitly fall on a dominant logic of masculine fantasy.

Chapter 1 – The British Blues

Introduction

Rock music has always lived in the shadow of race relations and racism. From early rock-and roll to countless genres beyond, there exists a moral ambiguity surrounding popular music as raced. To demonstrate this ambiguity, the following chapter will focus on the British blues of the late 1960s. Our main argument will follow the assertion that moralising the rights and wrongs of unsolicited musical borrowings, from a position of historical domination, misses a key dimension that only psychoanalysis can reveal. Through a Lacanian intervention we will demonstrate this as the unconscious production of enjoyment, which keeps us connected to ideas of race even when knowledge of its contingent historical structure is abundant. The following is not an attempt to settle moral arguments, but a demonstration of what race relations can tell us about the ways in which popular music is consumed and how it produces enjoyment in the listener. Race, racism, and our enjoyment of music may be a sensitive topic; however, we inevitably must confront how and why we enjoy cultural artifacts in full knowledge of unethical discriminatory practises.

Psychoanalysis provides an overarching structure, that when applied to cultural artifacts, uncovers a dimension of enjoyment that functions through discrimination. This can be against a raced, sexed, aged, classed, disabled or any type of grouping that acts as a mark of difference. The name of this discriminatory structure is fantasy. Fantasy is a way for subjects to produce enjoyment from an imagined overcoming of a position of alienation. We will argue that, for the British bluesman, racial fantasies countered the general alienation found in youth, which was exacerbated in the 1960s by an oscillating logic of capitalist dissatisfaction and satisfaction. The delta blues and its distant articulation in the 'Surrey delta', is indicative of the assertion that we gain enjoyment in a full knowledge of other people's suffering. Our claim is that the British bluesmen of the 1960s would revel in the hardships of American blues singers through fantasy, creating a scene based on an outlaw mentality of transgressing suffering through music.

Speaking in 1955, the year that rock-and-roll gained its wide appeal, Jacques Lacan gave something of a predictive statement on the development of late capitalism:

> We live in a society in which slavery isn't recognised. It's nevertheless clear to any sociologist or philosopher that it has in no way been abolished. This has even become the object of some fairly well known claims. It's also clear that while bondage hasn't been abolished, one might say it has been generalised.[1]

We can argue that the ideal of the bluesman became a beacon of liberal freedom. However, Lacan's point is that liberal freedom is a structuring principle of capitalism that often gets confused as a source of resistance against a figure of patriarchal power. The problem we must address is that this assumes that freedom and capitalism are synonymous. Where this chapter is at its most critical is in confronting theories that seek to resist racist ideas, without taking due diligence in locating Lacan's generalised bondage under late capitalism. These theories seek to create a false notion of freedom based on the overcoming of mastery. However, if we consider Lacan's statement, it is not the master but the absence of structure that keeps us bonded to an imagined position of self-mastery. This is to miss the subtle function of capitalism as a system of dissatisfaction, which only promises satisfaction. In this sense, many of the criticisms of race theory in this chapter will be based on seeing freedom were Lacan sees bondage. Whilst we cannot compare the general bondage of the capitalist subject with the horrors inflicted upon the enslaved masses, there still exists in the ideology of liberal freedom a libidinal attachment to enjoyment that leads to a society of dissatisfaction. In this chapter, by focusing on why we enjoy despite our knowledge of the violence present in the formation of racialised society, we will open a dialogue on the logic behind persistent libidinal attachments to the racial other.

The capitalist economy is a system that thrives on promised satisfaction, while never fulfilling this promise as the very condition for its reproduction. In this sense, our generalised bondage is our imagining of ways of enjoying by overcoming dissatisfaction, without overcoming dissatisfaction. Žižek comments: 'It seems therefore that today's pre-dominant economy of enjoyment repeats the paradox of quantum physics where possibility…as such possesses a kind

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[1] Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan* (Routledge, 2013), p. 132.

of actuality: to imagine a possible gratification of desire equals its actual gratification'.[2] In terms of race, we will imagine the racial other as the social outlaw who has an extra form of satisfaction that we may procure through either loving or destroying. However, we will present the view that the very function of this figure is to remain at a distance through a fantasy of gaining an outlaw enjoyment, which is the drive of deferred enjoyment under late capitalism.

We can sum up the theoretical movements made in this chapter. Our starting point is a general introduction to the British blues scene in the 1960s, before introducing a privileged example in Eric Clapton. Through Clapton we will investigate the status of the bluesman as a racial other who is both loved and hated as an ideal that can never be fully realised. From this point we can develop a psychoanalytic approach to race that explains racism as the way in which fantasy operates in the unconscious. This follows the idea that we have a libidinal attachment to the very same object we fantasize about overcoming. From this we can demonstrate that the enjoyment in fantasy is produced not in its realisation, but in its continuation. From this fantasy structure, we can then introduce a further notion that will deepen our understanding of race as one of many discriminatory forms that can be produced from musical activities. The idea of sexual difference in Lacan's work gives us two differing positions, a masculine logic that is based on fantasy as the producer of enjoyment, and a feminine logic that finds enjoyment despite fantasy structures. It is the latter form of enjoyment that we will eventually develop as a way of moving outside of a form of cynical reasoning that we find in theory that seeks to counter racist and general discriminatory thought, while doing little to remove this structure of fantasy. With this latter idea we can find a way to unite particular emancipatory struggles, resolving them in their common exclusion which avows the problems of historical projects that seek to find balance through fantasy.

As theorists of popular music, understanding the Lacanian unconscious's role in producing racial enjoyment is an indispensable pursuit. We will intervene with the premise that what is unconscious in both positive and negative representations of the racial other is a libidinal attachment. As this libidinal attachment is unconscious, it can emerge in places where we think we are acting in a non-racist manner. It is the goal of the following chapter to argue that in missing this unconscious dimension, we are in danger of re-producing the very racist structures we seek to criticise. Once we uncover this structure, we can demonstrate a more fundamental

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[2] Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (Routledge, 2012), p. 32.

dimension in discriminatory cultural antagonisms, which connect race to several other instances of social exclusion. Our overarching question in this chapter is: in British blues, can we demonstrate a specific psychoanalytic condition of race and racism and if so, can this tell us something about a wider logic of discrimination that exists in popular music?

British Blues in Context

Blues music was a popular and much pilfered mode of expression for many British rock musicians in the 1960s. By finding mainstream success through paying tribute, British musicians would adopt the musical tropes and lyrical content of the genre and in turn re-popularise the blues in its American homeland.[3] In post-war urban London, British blues started with revivalist enthusiasts who acted as curators of recorded American blues. Over time the genres popularity grew outwards from a local scene and in turn entered the cultural mainstream. Susan Oehler Herrick describes this development in the 1960s: 'The Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, and Cream began as blues purists…Blues purists sought to authentically replicate music, indicating shared ideals promoted by folk revivalists'.[4]

British blues followed a path that runs throughout the wider history of popular music. This is one of finding value in a perceived authenticity against the backdrop of an inauthentic commercial pop music. Authentic replication can be argued as an ideological movement rather than an achievable artistic goal. Steve Redhall and John Street state: 'Ideas like 'roots' and 'authenticity' are clearly ideological constructs which rest on doubtful musical and political assumptions'.[5] Because of this, blues music forms a contested site of meaning. In attempts to replicate aspects of the American blues, British musicians would form their own idealistic versions of the blues. This was based on whichever recordings, myths and legends were available across the cultural divide between London and the Mississippi delta. To name a handful of differing, yet commercially accepted acts, The Rolling Stones didn't play like Van Morrison, who sounded wildly different from The Animals, who contrasted from Long John Baldry. Each of these examples would place a common pool of bluesmen amongst their influences and toe a fine line between the notions of authenticity and commercial success. Of

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[3] D. Pattie, *Rock Music in Performance* (Springer, 2007), pp. 53-87.
[4] Susan Oehler Herrick, 'Performing Blues and Navigating Race in Transcultural Contexts', in *Issues in African American Music*, ed. by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (Routledge, 2016), p. 15.
[5] Steve Redhead and John Street, 'Have I the Right? Legitimacy, Authenticity and Community in Folk's Politics', *Popular Music*, 8.2 (1989), 177–84 (p. 182).

British musicians, John Mayall states that blues: 'was a starting point…They had to find their own way of expression. That kind of led them into other areas that just happened to make them very popular on the rock-and-roll pop scene. In all cases, everyone ended up finding their own identity'.[6] This would suggest that the blues was not a consistent object but was partially constructed by its British practitioners to give form to a nostalgic fantasy. We can build the connection between British and American blues as always being part of and an active structural agent of modernity. Leighton Grist comments, 'No less than the different styles of American blues, whose influence it sometimes latently but inescapably bears, such music emerged from, and differently articulates a response to, a specific material context; that is, cosmopolitan, 1960s British modernity'.[7] What this signifies is that rather than a reified tradition the blues was a mediator for an articulation of the modern subject. The British bluesman was constructed by and played a part in constructing a version of blues modernity simultaneously. In other words, it can be argued that the structural fantasy of the delta blues was as much a product of the British cultural imagination as an expression of a specific cultural moment in time and space.

Because of the distance in culture, the British blues relied on essentialist notions of America, which romanticised the life of the bluesman. On British blues, Andrew Kellett makes the argument that because of this distance in both space and time: 'Britons were free, if only in their own minds, of the ideological quicksand of "white guilt" and racism with which white Americans' understanding of the blues was often encrusted'.[8] Under these terms, the blues in Britain owed its popularity to a distance from the music's social politics. This made it a malleable form for a generation of young musicians who used it as a way of expression without the proximity of direct racial politics. However, this type of cultural borrowing runs into the risk of consciously or unconsciously appropriating and objectifying race. Dave Morse observes that with British blues, previously idolised bluesmen became, 'Implicitly regarded as pre-cursors who, having taught the white men all they know, must gradually recede into the

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[6] John Mayall, quoted in Roberta Freund Schwartz, *How Britain Got the Blues: The Transmission and Reception of American Blues Style in the United Kingdom* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007), p. 241.

[7] Leighton Grist, '"The Blues Is the Truth" THE BLUES, MODERNITY, AND THE BRITISH BLUES BOOM', in *Cross the Water Blues: African American Music in Europe*, ed. by Neil A. Wynn (Univ. Press of Mississippi), pp. 202–17 (p. 211).

[8] Andrew Kellett, *The British Blues Network: Adoption, Emulation, and Creativity* (University of Michigan Press, 2017), p. 177.

distance, as white progressive music, the simple lessons mastered, advances irresistibly into the future'.[9] This speaks of a wider relationship between British blues, race, and capitalism.

By giving an aura of authenticity through mythologizing, the British blues gained a privileged position apart from that of pop music. Dave Allen comments, 'The unexpected popularity of British blues in the 1960s is often characterised as a direct consequence of some young people's rejection of what they perceived as the artifice of pop music at a time when they needed a more real mode of cultural expression'.[10] As with any commodity it is exclusivity, or scarcity, that creates value. Being connected to notions of authenticity gave the blues the aura of a scarce musical form. The commodity commands an enjoyment through its privileged acquisition, and an aura, such as that created through marketed authenticity, chimes with the creation of a scarcity that drives the capitalist economy. David Harvey notes: 'Scarcity is in fact necessary to the survival of the capitalist mode of production, and it has to be carefully managed, otherwise the self-regulating aspect to the price mechanism will break down'.[11] Contrary to a central idea in the politics of rock music, as it's being aligned with social liberation, a contesting claim is to view rock as one of late capitalism's biggest commercial success stories.[12] In other words, a contradiction arises where the notion of blues authenticity can be claimed as both a successful product and site of resistance to capital. This is exemplified through the contextualisation of a wider social trend of cultural legitimation. In general, rock music was a big part of what can be termed a privatisation of youth that took place under consumer capitalism in the mid-20th century. Here, capitalism directly influenced the creation of new youth sub-cultures vying for cultural positions. We can think of rock music as a site where social standing was claimed through its status as both a popular and aesthetic artefact. Thus, against pop, rock music (using blues as an authentic prop) could enter the cultural mainstream as a legitimized commodity.

Richard Middleton asserts that the legitimation process of popular culture in the 1960s went beyond classic notions of class struggle, into a wider system where the bourgeoisie was re-constructed. With this, 'socially rising fractions, newly enriched with education capital but

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[9] Dave Morse, quoted in Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (University of California Press, 2000), p. 59.

[10] Dave Allen, 'Feelin' Bad This Morning: Why the British Blues?', *Popular Music*, 26.1 (2007), 141–56 (p. 145).

[11] David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p. 61.

[12] Mickey Vallee, '"More than a Feeling": Classic Rock Fantasies and the Musical Imagination of Neoliberalism', *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 56.2 (2015), 245–62 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14735784.2014.941509>.

relatively poor in economic wealth, attempted to usurp established interests'.[13] Ideological legitimation drove a progressive movement within popular music. This was as a cultural symptom of social reforms where new opportunities in work and education for the working classes offered greater social mobility and aspirations.[14] For example, in the 1960s, provincial students benefited from a statewide project of modernisation that opened university education to a greater demographic of people. An important point of contact and development for many young rock musicians was London's art colleges. The education of several art school musicians gave a bohemian and romantic individualism as a source of expression in rock. One such beneficiary was blues guitarist Jimmy Page who, 'arrived at Art school as a well-established rock-and-roll guitarist [and] found college life valuable simply for its lack of formal demands'.[15] This was a time where rock music progressed from its escapist beginnings and aspired towards the lofty ideal of a serious popular music. Many musicians who adopted the blues used it as a prop to create a path towards a high/authentic art. The blues in this context, when utilised alongside an individualist artistic outlook, becomes an object of fantasy. The distanced image of the blues, without social context, reduces its meaning to an object that serves the purpose of creating a neutral ground for cultural experimentation.

In Britain, the major blues rock bands of the late 1960s were mostly connected to a smaller collection of musicians that formed a scene. Two pivotal acts of the 1960s, John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers and Alexis Kroners Blues Incorporated, became gateways for numerous young musicians to forge successful careers. This suggests that the primary structure of the blues band was the fraternity.[16] The fraternal organisation in rock music and wider society, can be seen as an effect of major global events in the early 20th century and the rise of consumer capitalism. The aftermath of two global wars and the uprising of both fascism and communism signalled a regression from traditional parental figures as a new generation of consumerist youth enjoyed freedoms through the commodity form. This is exemplified in the 'artificial group' in Freud's analysis of the modern organisation of the church and the army.[17] What ties these groups

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[13] Richard Middleton, '"Were the Rockers Right? Revolution and Legitimation in British Pop Music of the 1960's"', in Richard Middleton, *Musical Belongings: Selected Essays* (Routledge & CRC Press, 2009), pp. 89–117 (p. 101).

[14] Jim Tomlinson, 'Conservative Modernisation, 1960–64: Too Little, Too Late?', *Contemporary British History*, 11.3 (1997), 18–38 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469708581447>.

[15] Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art Into Pop* (Methuen, 1987), p. 83.

[16] Theodore Gracyk, *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity* (Temple University Press, 2001), pp. 17-20.

[17] Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (Hogarth Press, 1948), pp. 47-51.

together is not the father of the primal horde, who returns after his death as a symbolic law of mutual prohibition, but one member of the group, a sibling, raised into the position of an imaginary leader. Juliett Flower Macannall states, 'the occupant of the "third party" position (the singer, the leader, the brother) is no father, but a mere pretext for enforcing identically and identification'.[18] The modern father is a sibling figure who, taking the place of the traditional strong father figure, acts as a childish clown. This infantilisation comes with an ability to enjoy what most only desire through fantasy. In the case of our British blues rockers, the fantasy other who adopted the position of a sibling was the delta bluesman. As Kellett states, in the bluesman, musicians found, 'an archetype that the young Briton in search of his own masculine independence could contrast favourably with the boring, conformist, suburban "organization man" of 1950s Britain'.[19] In psychoanalytic terms, we can describe this modern leader as an effect of the inefficiency of the traditional oedipal father, who forms a group unable to give way to narcissistic tendencies. In our case, the bluesman as imaginary leader becomes an ideal for an outlaw enjoyment that ties the group together through a mutual identification rather than prohibitive command.

Eric Clapton and Race

Eric Clapton is the privileged example in our investigation, as his relationship with the blues has taken many complex and controversial turns throughout the years. As stated above, one way in which the blues has been mediated is by channelling its wider mythology through the figure of the delta bluesman. Positioned as a romantic figure, the hedonistic and nomadic life of the bluesman is an archetype for the modern rockstar.[20] Clapton held a close affinity to Bluesman Robert Johnson, however, as Ulrich Adelt states, 'Since Johnson had been dead for more than twenty years when Clapton encountered his music and little was known about his biography at the time, it was easier for Clapton to create a romanticized image of Johnson than of other authentic blues musicians'.[21] Romanticisation was inevitable as most musicians in the 1960s who bought into the mythical status of the bluesman were from times and places other than the Mississippi delta in the 1920s and 1930s. It is this gap in knowledge, created through distance, that myth comes to fill in. Johnson's legacy rested on a mystification that gave

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[18] Juliet Flower MacCannell, *The Regime of the Brother: After the Patriarchy* (Routledge, 1991), p. 30.
[19] Kellett, p105.
[20] Carlo Rotella, *Good with Their Hands: Boxers, Bluesmen, and Other Characters from the Rust Belt* (University of California Press, 2002), pp. 93-99.
[21] Ulrich Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties: A Story in Black and White* (Rutgers University Press, 2010), p. 63.

consistency to his image, which was one of the most circulated ideals for the generations of bluesmen that followed. Of Johnson's appeal, Garth Cartwright states, "Dying young (and violently) has long made for good business in popular culture, and when the 1960s British blues boom stumbled upon an album of Johnson's recordings everything about him suggested 'doomed Romantic poet/nascent rock star' ".[22] Johnson's songs became standards of British blues. Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, and Cream all covered Johnson's music as part of their live shows and on record. In the mystery surrounding his life, Johnson was turned from a popular local blues act into an enigmatic talent. The man's story is of a lost prodigious bluesman with a life forever split between fragments of knowledge and half-truths.

In his career, Clapton took the racial other of Johnson as a figure of veneration through which he explored the blues as a grounding for several differing styles. Of his relationship to the blues, Clapton states:

> It's very difficult to explain the effect the first blues record I heard had in me, except to say that I recognized it immediately. It was as if I were being reintroduced to something that I already knew, maybe from another, earlier life. For me, there is something primitively soothing about this music, and it went straight to my nervous system, making me feel ten feet tall.[23]

His immediate affinity may be connected to coming to terms with his own feelings of alienation as a youth growing up in post-war Britain. Clapton's backstory is one containing identification issues resulting from emotional trauma. As Kellett states, 'This theme of emotional abandonment was one of several factors that Clapton has said caused him to feel an "emotional poverty" and later to identify with blues music'.[24] He was the child of a teenage pregnancy at a time when a stigma was attached, which led Clapton's mother, Patricia Molly Clapton, to give up Eric. He was raised thinking his grandparents were his parents until finding out the truth of his paternity aged nine. Eric was subsequently rejected by his mother more than once in his lifetime, as she started a new life and family with an air-force man in Canada. Evidently there are seeds planted in Clapton's backstory that would give an affinity with blues music long before he became a career musician.

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[22] Garth Cartwright, *More Miles Than Money: Journeys Through American Music* (Serpent's Tail, 2009), p. 275.
[23] Eric Clapton, *Clapton: The Autobiography* (Crown, 2008), p. 40.
[24] Kellett, p. 27.

There is a pattern that Clapton would follow throughout his career: finding a popular sound and rejecting it in favour of a return to a perceived authentic blues. As stated above, authenticity is a signifier that is often attached to the blues as a marker of the music's value. Clapton's first commercial success came with The Yardbirds 1965 single 'For Your Love'.[25] This marks an early moment in British music history where a popular rhythm and blues band would turn to pop music. The single marked out a split in the blues community between purists and those choosing to write songs for a commercial pop market.[26] Eric Clapton would quit the band soon after the release of the single in search of a more authentic ideal and joined John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers. From here, there are continued oscillations where he moves away and returns towards a blues authenticity. His Americana influenced projects, Blind Faith and Derek and the Dominos, came after his progressive/hard rock band Cream, his *Unplugged* album came after a number of 80s sounding pop albums, and he produced later tribute albums to artists such as Robert Johnson and JJ Cale. What this signifies is a career that set a common dialectic of a movement away from the perceived authentic roots of the Blues, followed by a return. In this, we find Clapton frequently repositioning himself towards a nostalgic fantasy of a lost enjoyment through the racial other of the bluesman.

Another dimension to Clapton's love of the blues was a very questionable attitude towards race. There are several instances in Clapton's career where he has either wittingly or unwittingly displayed racist attitudes towards both musicians and wider society. For example, when Jimi Hendrix arrived in London in 1966, he was seen as technically and performatively more advanced than any of the then current musicians on the rock scene. Hendrix also adopted a position like that of Robert Johnson, as a racial other who became mythologised by the press, fans, and fellow musicians alike. In a famous 1968 interview, addressing the myths that surrounded Hendrix, Eric Clapton casually used racist language: 'Everybody and his brother in England still sort of think that spades have big dicks. And Jimi came over and exploited that to the limit'.[27] Using derogatory language in describing Hendrix demonstrates a naivety around race and highlights a contradiction that places Clapton in an impossible position for fans and critics. On the one hand he is an ally of African American culture, yet on the other, he shows a

[25] The Yardbirds, 'For Your Love', *For Your Love* (IBC, London - DB 7499: Columbia, 1965).

[26] David French, *Heart Full of Soul: Keith Relf of the Yardbirds* (McFarland, 2020), p. 37-42.

[27] R. S. Editors, 'Eric Clapton: The Rolling Stone Interview', *Rolling Stone*, 1968
<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/eric-clapton-the-rolling-stone-interview-41988/>
[accessed 12 September 2023].

rank ignorance of the levity of casually using a racial slur. Obviously, Clapton could plead ignorance; his cultural distance from America manifested in a ham-fisted way of discussing a racial other. However, this is not an isolated moment. A second example comes from an infamous stage rant at a 1976 concert in Birmingham where Clapton declared his support for Enoch Powell, shouted national front slogans and criticised immigration in Britain.[28] This incident caused a cultural ripple in the form of the Rock Against Racism movement, who formed a response to Clapton:

> What's going on, Eric? You've got a touch of brain damage. So you're going to stand for MP and you think we're being colonised by black people. Come on…you've been taking too much of that Daily Express stuff, you know you can't handle it. Own up. Half your music is black. You're rock music's biggest colonist. You're a good musician but where would you be without the blues and R&B?[29]

It is from this response that we can introduce a theoretical position on race that will be explored in this chapter. The accusations of brain damage forming a response to racism frames it as a problem to be solved through raising the conscious of the racist. However, within leftist critical thought there are theoretical positions that give differing ideas on how we should approach racism as a symptom of modern society. Racism being abundant in the historical development of popular music suggests that increasing knowledge alone is not a solution. Although knowledge of racism is widely abundant, the mechanism of structural discrimination still lingers. Past the notion that something should be done critically to rectify the implications of inequality and politically distasteful representations of race, there is confusion on how we can move forward with a critique. The framework of psychoanalysis offers the insight that increased knowledge is not necessarily able to treat the psychic weight of the affect attached to racism as it manifests to the racist subject. The above comments on Eric Clapton demonstrate both knowledge in his dedication to the study of the blues and affect in his emotional investment in distant figures such as Robert Johnson. In the manifestation of his momentary public racist outburst, we can state that even without conscious ignorance or prejudice, his racism still existed and was excessively violent despite his Blues fixation. In sum we can say

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[28] Allison RappAllison Rapp, 'When Eric Clapton's Bigoted 1976 Rant Sparked Rock Against Racism', *Ultimate Classic Rock*, 2021 <https://ultimateclassicrock.com/eric-clapton-rant-rock-against-racism/> [accessed 2 October 2023].
[29] Red Saunders, quoted in John Malkin, *Punk Revolution!: An Oral History of Punk Rock Politics and Activism* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2023), p. 237.

that racism is not a knowledge problem, it is not an affect problem, but it is a problem with how we relate to affect. It doesn't take an analyst to come to the insight that a drunken racist outburst might have something more to do with a person's own self destruction, a relation to their own affective suffering, than to the racial scapegoat chosen for hatred.

Freud gives us the basis for thinking of how we treat problems related to affective emotion. In a critique of a case, where an analyst offered knowledge as a response to affective sexual symptoms, he states:

> If knowledge about the unconscious were as important for the patient as people inexperienced in psychoanalysis imagine, listening to lectures or reading books would be enough to cure him. Such measures, however, have as much influence on the symptoms of nervous illness as a distribution of menu-cards in a time of famine upon hunger.[30]

The basic insight is that rather than confronting the racist with knowledge and expecting no resistance, a solution may lie in finding a way for the subject to take responsibility for their own suffering, rather than displacing it onto another. This solution is not one of increasing knowledge of the racial other, but of changing the very structural co-ordinates in relation to why this other is needed at all. It is on this point that we can introduce Lacan and the idea of fantasy. Fantasy explains the way we unconsciously attach to affects that come from acts of hatred, despite conscious knowledge that we are partaking in discriminatory actions.

The Racist Fantasy

To engage with racism, race, and music through a Lacanian intervention, we must consider what Lacan, a theorist who rarely comments on racial matters, can contribute to this discourse. A concept that is at the forefront of Lacan's psychoanalytic thought is enjoyment. This forms both an abject stain and point of excess that gets in the way of the smooth running of social relations. Enjoyment is a concept that plays a major role in how we can think of racism as structured unconsciously. For example, Zahi Zalloua states that Žižek's writings on race re-orientate, 'our critical attention to racism's affective pull and fantasies, to desires and enjoyment that it effectively provides, (re)produces, and satisfies'.[31] From here we can list

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[30] Sigmund Freud, *Wild Analysis* (Penguin UK, 2002), p. 7.

[31] Zahi Zalloua, *Žižek on Race: Toward an Anti-Racist Future* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), p. 13.

reasons why racism is sustained including hatred, ignorance, and historical prejudice, however, a Lacanian reasoning arrives at the notion that at the root, the racist enjoys.

As with many of the terms that will be applied throughout this thesis, the status of enjoyment can lead to ambiguity. For Lacan and psychoanalysis generally, there is a distinction between the notions of pleasure and enjoyment. Whereas pleasure is kept within a boundary and relation to identification with and through objects, the status of enjoyment can lead beyond the pleasure of objects into suffering. To invoke Freud's dictum, enjoyment is, 'beyond the pleasure principle',[32] as an excess within our identification. Enjoyment as a pain in pleasure, or suffering past a point of identification, is commonly left untranslated in Lacan's native French as *jouissance*. For Aaron Scuster, 'the crucial feature of *jouissance* is a loss of self-identity and self-control, the submerging of the ego in the impersonal flesh, the blind impulses and passions of the bodily drives'.[33] Pleasure and enjoyment are inter-linked: pleasure signals a temporary understanding or belonging in relation to an object, whereas enjoyment goes beyond the object into a drive that signals a subjective lack that cannot be satisfied by objects.

In relation to the concept of enjoyment, we can divide the cultural theory of race into systems that seek to eradicate anti-social enjoyment, towards a smooth social neutrality, and those that recognize enjoyment as a crucial structural element that must be acknowledged rather than denied. The former position aims for a post-racial society and can be deemed a form of utopianism. Our position, in following Lacan and dialectical thinkers such as Hegel, Freud, and Žižek, fits into the latter category that, while acknowledging the abhorrence of racism, sees utopian thought as ideological. The problem we face is that in music studies and cultural theory generally, the former is the major position. To exemplify the merits of thinking of enjoyment structurally, we must engage in a critique of much of what is considered common knowledge when it comes to theorising race.

Theorising race follows a distinction in how we use knowledge to arrive at the truth of a given situation. If we reiterate Freud's point that knowledge alone does not cure the symptom, then it follows that the accumulation of knowledge alone is not a path to truth. Lacan sets out his

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[32] Sigmund Freud, *Modern Classics Beyond the Pleasure Principle: And Other Writings* (Penguin UK, 2003).

[33] Aaron Schuster, *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis* (MIT Press, 2016), p.96.

position on truth as existing in the breakdown in, rather than the accumulation of, knowledge. Where knowledge stops meaning, it starts enjoying:

> This knowledge is a means of jouissance. And, I repeat, when it is at work, what it produces is entropy. This entropy, this point of loss, is the sole point, the sole regular point which we have access to the nature of jouissance. This is what effect the signifier has upon the fate of the speaking being translates into, culminates in, and is motivated by.[34]

In other words, to reach a truth about a situation, or us as subjects, we must include enjoyment as a loss which both undercuts knowledge and by extension completes it in its incompletion. It is this gap in knowledge, a form of enjoyment that is the fundamental truth of our subjectivity, that we find the structure of discriminatory actions. To try and seek a way of denying that we are lacking, that we can never be complete subjects, leads us on the path of jealousy and envy. We see others as non-lacking, as holding the missing piece that we need to have a complete knowledge or mastery of our own subjectivity. However, this narrative is nothing but a discriminatory fantasy.

To outline how this notion relates to a theory of race, Frantz Fanon gives a picture of the racial other that demonstrates an imaginary dimension. Here, the lack in the racist subject is projected as a stolen enjoyment onto the body of the other:

> Every intellectual gain requires a loss in sexual potential. The civilised white man retains an irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest. In one way these fantasies respond to Freud's life instinct. Projecting his own desires onto the Negro, the white man behaves "as if" the Negro really had them.[35]

For Fanon, racism is a fantasy structure that relates to a lack (truth) formed in what is gained through knowledge (intellectual gain). When the racist is forming a dialogue around the racial other, it is aimed at placing them in the position of the enjoying subject; the one who goes

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[34] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 56-57.
[35] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Pluto Press, 1986), p. 165.

beyond the social and must be segregated and punished for this transgression. This is a fantasy formation that, paradoxically, gives the racist an alternative enjoyment through the imaginary other. Racism is not just a personal prejudice, but on a societal level can galvanise communities through a common point of hatred. If we consider enjoyment as anti-social, the act of racism gives the racist community a place to dispose what goes beyond a social contract onto the figure of the racial other. By displacing enjoyment onto a racial other, the racist seeks to turn enjoyment into a type of pleasure by finding an object to mediate a structural lack in the social. To use Benedict Andersons definition: 'racism and anti-semitism manifest themselves, not across national boundaries, but within them. In other words, they justify not so much foreign wars as domestic repression and domination'.[36] In effect the racial other is an included outsider that becomes a point of repressed enjoyment in the social. For example, in the figure of the blues musician, or the divide between black and white music in America generally, we can see a dialogue where division creates the possibility for a community to form through a displacement of the anti-social into a defined racial other. If we extend this logic, we can say that while the blues musician enjoys/suffers, the racist enjoys/suffers through the blues musician rather than take responsibility for a personal lack.

Our response to this assertion might be that we can enjoy blues music and know that we are not racist. However, this is where a Lacanian intervention can clarify the situation by stating that racial enjoyment is unconscious rather than conscious. We can avow our own prejudice while still gaining enjoyment through race unconsciously. As Eric Clapton demonstrates with his casual racism and uncontrolled outburst, gaining an expert knowledge of the racial other's position within society and meeting that knowledge with identification does not guarantee that we remove the structure of how this fiction produces an unconscious enjoyment that can overpour into overt racist acts. We can apply this to our split in theoretical positions on race by stating that those that privilege knowledge as a pathway towards utopian neutrality miss an important unconscious dimension of enjoyment.

Todd McGowan theorises a fantasy structure that demonstrates the unconscious attachment to racial enjoyment. This is based on positing the racial other as an obstacle within a fantasy that provides both a barrier and is the subject's only access to a form of enjoyment. What is

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[36] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006), p. 150.

unconscious in this fantasy is that rather than a barrier to a future enjoyment, imagining this enjoyment depends on the racism of positing a racial other. This paradoxical structure is explained through the Fichtean notion of the *Anstoss*, as McGowan comments:

> Fichte argues that we create ourselves and the world through an act of self-positing or self-determination, but this positing always encounters an obstacle that both limits it and drives it onward. The obstacle is also an impetus. Without the obstacle, our self-positing would lack any incentive to develop itself and keep going, which is why the obstacle is also an impetus. The name that Fichte uses to describe this obstacle is the *Anstoss*, which means, conveniently, both obstacle and impetus at the same time.[37]

Racist activities in which one group separates another, based on difference, follows the dynamic of narrativizing a fictional obstacle that hinders a fictional smooth-running society. The ideal of a smooth-running society is one that separates enjoyment from the suffering that is implicit within an act of going beyond identification. Whether or not the racist fantasy operates, societies must contend with anti-social outbursts. This is especially true of our current capitalist system that privileges competition through the creation of scarcity as an impetus towards infinite growth. The sleight of hand that operates within the fantasy of the racial other is one of displacing the anti-social enjoyment within the social as a privilege of another race. The racist fantasy enables a path that absolves the responsibilities of a social group for enjoyment by displacing the cause of anti-social outbursts onto another group within the same society. In hiding the impossibility of the smooth-running society and providing a fantasy based on oppressing a racial other, we can see racism as both the condition of society, providing a fantasy of something beyond, and keeping the existing society galvanised through finding a filter for its anti-social excesses. The basic racist fantasy follows the narrative that if the racial other were irradicated, then their form of anti-social enjoyment will become the privilege of the oppressors. Racism can be seen as a conscious act, however, because the fantasy of the racial other finds its role as the producer, and not just the obstacle to enjoyment in the unconscious, we can see it operate in places where we think we are practising positive racial relations.

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[37] Todd McGowan, *The Racist Fantasy: Unconscious Roots of Hatred* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2022), p.16.

The notion of race posits a lost object belonging to a racial other who enjoys. This lost object is one that if we were to obtain, would fulfil our desire, thus the racial other is a barrier to our own enjoyment. Another name for this object is the elusive *object a* of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the object-cause of our desire. Through this lost object, there is a fundamental structure that places jealousy as a central feature of race relations. We can see the structure of the racist fantasy in what Lacan identifies as the earliest moments of a child experiencing the *object a*. This lost object appears upon seeing the sibling, or another child enjoying at the mother's breast. It is from a position outside of this scene, of feeling excluded from a complete enjoyment, that comes the function of a jealous gaze. Subsequently, Lacan creates the neologism 'jealouissance' as a signifier to sum up this experience. Of this scene, Lacan states, 'this [jealouissance] is the first substitute *jouissance*, according to Freud - the desire evoked on the basis of a metonymy that is inscribed on the basis of a presumed demand, addressed to the Other'.[38] As a substitute, we can call this jealous gaze the most basic example of the subject's desire as directed towards a material object. This object takes the place of a more fundamental truth of the subject's inherent lack. In other words, the subject in this scenario erects a barrier between itself and its own lack by placing the sibling in a position of privilege. The function of this barrier gives the subject the fantasy of a complete identity. In this example, the jealousy, or hatred of the sibling is based on the idea that if the subject could obtain that same object, the mother's breast, they would also achieve a complete enjoyment. Along with this hatred, there is also a conflicting love for this object and the sibling who, becomes an ideal image for the subject who becomes excluded from the scene. Love, in these terms, becomes the love of an ideal reflection, or narcissistic love. There is a contradictory position that is opened for this enjoying other through the jealous gaze. Lacan explains this love/hate dynamic through a reification of the *object a* as a meaningless gestural remainder.[39] This *object a* is reified into a piece of lost knowledge that can guarantee a full identity for the subject. Hatred comes from the assumption that this agency of knowledge will not yield its secret to the subject. This love/hate dynamic can be applied to our example of the British bluesmen, as demonstrated through Eric Clapton's love of the blues and expressions of hatred in racist acts. Although in most instances there is a strong affinity between musicians from both the British and American blues scene, with a mutual respect and some very productive collaborations, we can still call

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[38] Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 100.
[39] ibid., pp. 83-94.

the structure of this music racist. This is because of the nature of fantasy and certain mechanisms in which a fantasy can be structured unconsciously.

To return to our theoretical divide outlined above, we are now able to critique the position of a post-racist social neutrality as a response to racism. Ideas that view the symbolic order as an ideological villain, which should be deconstructed through higher, deeper, or excluded forms of knowledge introduce a complexity into leftist thinking. Politically a notion of freedom based on the ability to assimilate identity through a neutrality of signifiers is a basic paradigm of leftist resistance. The most prominent of these theories introduces a politics of the body, which can be termed 'biopolitical'.[40] This follows a discourse of power where the body is seen as a sight for emancipatory struggle. Below we can demonstrate several examples that follow a similar logic. However, our view is that this type of thinking, as prevalent in leftist liberal thought, is a misstep. Žižek highlights this in a defence of the left, 'This means that *the critical statement that patriarchal ideology continues to be today's hegemonic ideology is today's hegemonic ideology*; its function is to enable us to evade the deadlock of hedonist permissiveness, which is effectively hegemonic'.[41]

If we take Žižek's assertion into account, theories of resistance to patriarchy are a straw man that sustain a capitalist fantasy. What he terms hedonist permissiveness can only exist under a patriarchal figure who is seen to limit enjoyment. However, in capitalist society, finding an alternative ideal to a patriarchal father includes the structure of the racist fantasy, which privileges the 'small other', or sibling as an alternative to the 'big other': the primal father. In either venerating or hating the racial other, the underlying structure of racism can persist. We can thus outline several examples from popular music studies that fail to consider the structural similarity between racism and certain forms of patriarchal resistance.

Loren Kajiawa and Daniel Martinez Hosang, commenting on their taught university course, state:

"Music, Politics, and Race" teaches that musical activity can have tangible consequences. By providing small pockets of freedom where musicians and fans can think creatively

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[40] M. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson and Graham Burchell (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008).

[41] Slavoj Žižek, *The Relevance of the Communist Manifesto* (Wiley, 2019), p. 18.

and challenge the status quo, music enacts alternate worlds and keeps alive collective visions of more just equitable realities.[42]

A utopian element of popular music, which in this case gives an imaginary equitable political landscape, is a common end for political studies of resistance to patriarchal symbolic systems. However, the logic of deferred equality demonstrates an underlying problem that forever elides this goal. In a discussion of pedagogy, Kajiawa and Hosang use the term 'liberatory play' as a framework to write an alternative historical narrative that links the 1970s singer Sylveter and 1990s hip hop group N.W.A. Initially there is a major juxtaposition at play between these two examples. Sylvester is a singer connected to the gay liberation movement, whereas the N.W.A are glorified as masculine gangsters. Both acts can be seen in the position of enjoying something transgressive, or hedonistic to borrow Žižek's framing. Where the authors assign both as highlighting a position of freedom, the projection of racial others as holding a privileged enjoyment through liberatory play is too close to the racist fantasy structure for comfort.

Both these examples highlight a politics of resistance based upon the removal of patriarchal barriers. If we follow the N.W.A, the barrier is the police force and ongoing economic segregation of black people in Los Angeles. By calling this type of resistance 'play' in the first instance, we get the admission of a fantasy, however rather than a practise for a real emancipatory event, we never move beyond the fantasy. In other words, the perceived reality outside of our enclave is a sustaining fantasy of patriarchal repression. The deadlock of hedonist permissiveness relates to a position of psychosis; hedonism released from any grounding is a form of social death. For example, if there are no police the N.W.A have no impetus for transgression, and hence this transgression loses its consistency. Thus, the patriarchal father of a police state sustains a hedonistic violence by becoming a barrier to its full realisation.

There is a further dimension to gangster rap that cannot be ignored. Discrimination also presents itself in the maintenance of the group dynamic. Denise Sullivan observes that gangster rap is, 'often aided by a litany of homophobic, misogynistic, anti-Semitic remarks and violent

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[42] Regina Bradley and others, 'Pedagogies of Music, Politics, and Race: A Roundtable Discussion at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association; November 12, 2017; Chicago, Illinois', *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 30.3 (2018), 17–44 (p. 120) <https://doi.org/10.1525/jpms.2018.200002> [accessed 23rd of July 2023].

scenarios'.[43] If this is also a form of liberatory play it forms a particularism that repeats the racist fantasy. Fantasy places an *Anstoss*, which can be any form of small other, as the generator of deferred enjoyment. Rather than a pocket of resistance, we get a false movement of prejudice. Thus, if we are to call a particular music liberatory, we must find places where an exclusionary fantasy becomes inoperative.

Nina Sun Eidsheim theorises ways in which the racial other is constructed in response to the acousmatic demands of sound. Her solution to hearing sounds as racialised is to take the position of 'listening to listening'.[44] In her study on race and vocal timbre, she states:

> I align with Jacques Derrida's belief that the search for meaning consists of a series of deferrals. (But I do not align with his prioritisation of written language.) By insisting on returning to the category of the listener, which embodies the category of the originator of meaning, I am not insisting on a more perfect understanding of the voice. Instead I aim to confront the continually developing understanding of meaning, the choices and power structures at its base, and the selective choices even the most conscientious listeners make out of choice.[45]

To unpack this dense passage, we can see that the process of listening to listening is designed to take a step back from the process of listening as a subject, into a meta-position that can gaze upon the entire field of meaning. In terms of a critique of race, Eidsheim takes an approach that develops a system of difference based on an un-subjectivised way of listening to music. To condense her argument, this move is from looking at the relation between music and race as one of subjects interpolated into the habitual prejudices of the symbolic, built up over time through subjective racism, into a post-racial space of neutral listening. As a political tool, this critique enters the ground of raising the consciousness of racist subjects into a realisation that their prejudice is habitual and can be deconstructed. Like our previous example, the irony of this position is that it repeats the logic of the racist fantasy. Here the racist listener is seen as insufficient to the task of music, in other words they enjoy where they should be listening. In Eidsheim's fantasy, this obstacle needs to be cleansed of enjoyment for a desexualised meta-

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[43] Denise Sullivan, *Keep On Pushing: Black Power Music from Blues to Hip-Hop* (Chicago Review Press, 2011), p. 204.
[44] Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Duke University Press, 2019), pp. 27-28.
[45] ibid., p. 22.

listener to arise as a fountain of complete knowledge. The only problem here is the same as that of racism: this obstacle is also the impetus. Without the enjoying listener the music becomes nothing but a sterile neutrality devoid of interest. In Lacanian terms, Eidsheim seeks a knowledge cleansed of truth.

Jayna Brown follows a similar framework to argue for a specific form of aesthetic resistance in the black female voice.[46] Her rejection of psychoanalysis is localised in a Kristevan/Barthasian fantasy of pre-linguistic space. Although taken literally by Brown, she divests this pre-linguistic space by bringing it fully within the symbolic order as a minor counterpoint acting as a site of resistance. She presents her position on music and race as follows: 'I argue that black vocalisations should be listened to differently, considering black subjects' alienated relationship to language (the Law), as not pre-linguistic expression, but as *anti*-linguistic. Black sonic emissions actively refuse language as inadequate'.[47] One problem with this account is that anti-linguistic vocal sounds are not exclusive to black female singers. In privileging a specific group of vocalists as using these vocal inflections as a site of resistance, Brown is completely reliant on the context of race as concrete rather than as ideological. The underlying structure that is disavowed is that of the anti-linguistic vocalisation as a point of breakdown within a structural narrative, rather than being a site outside of the symbolic. In this regard, through rejecting a straw man version of psychoanalysis, she arrives back at an un-intended psychoanalytical position, that of the symptom which undercuts the narrative structure. This is, however, disavowed through the assignment of a psychotic position as a point of refusal towards the symbolic order. For example, in a commentary on a performance by Nina Simone, Brown highlights her erratic behaviour as an enactment of resistance. In performing her mental illness through rambling between and during songs, Brown argues that 'Her erratic behaviour is disturbing, at the same time it demonstrates a critique of the audiences' expectation for emotional release'.[48] This refusal is seen as a position of freedom, however, in assigning Simones's rambling as a form of errant enjoyment, she is no nearer to escaping a racist stereotype. Exchanging one form of the racial other, the one who has soul, for another, the one who holds a mad outlaw enjoyment, is only to shuffle the deck rather than overcome the structure of the racist fantasy.

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[46] Jayna Brown, 'Black Sonic Refusal', in *The Female Voice in the Twentieth Century: Material, Symbolic and Aesthetic Dimensions*, ed. by Serena Facci and Michela Garda (Routledge, 2021), pp. 102–17.
[47] ibid., p. 108.
[48] ibid., p. 113.

Martha Feldman also engages with Lacanian theory in her discussion of voice as a vocal break.[49] As with Jayna Brown, Nina Simone becomes the privileged example in demonstrating the potential of the voice over and above language as a tool for resistance. In relation to race, she states: 'More than a mere phenomenon, the break is most importantly a form of knowledge, such that no agency or freedom is possible without it - hence the necessity of the eruptive phonic disturbance that takes place in a fugitive way outside convention, outside language'.[50] While her analysis of the break is Lacanian, she fails to theorise the voice sufficiently enough to avoid turning it from a failure in language, Lacan's 'knowledge as a means of jouissance',[51] into an object that is opposed to or 'outside' language. There is a very subtle divergence between these two positions that create very different effects theoretically. Feldman's voice is what she calls a transitionary object, or an object of exchange between the singer and listener. In terms of the structure of fantasy, this places enjoyment at the level of exchange rather than as internal to the subject. Unwittingly, this line of thought takes a radical concept, voice as that which makes any symbolic system non-functional by giving a point of failure, and turns it into an object of exchange, voice as something more than language that gifts enjoyment too the listener. Feldman speaks the language of capital when she states, 'As the voice invests, I would argue, so do listeners: the more I invest, the more you may give. What you give must include risky investments on your, the singer's, part to make it worth my while to invest more'.[52] This is the exact movement we find in the racist fantasy, one of displacing castration onto another (in this case Nina Simone) and giving the status of enjoyment an exchange value; creating a fetish object of investment. The promise of this investment is one of going beyond the symbolic to a place where, 'envoicing itself becomes almost impossible, where the very experience of it is denied, transformed in a break from the symbolic and hegemonic political and racial order'.[53] However, as Mladen Dolar, one of Feldman's interlocutors, reminds us, 'It should be stated clearly: it is only through language, via language, by the symbolic, that there is voice, and music exists only for a speaking being'.[54]

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[49] Martha Feldman, 'Voice Gap Crack Break', in *The Voice as Something More: Essays toward Materiality* (University of Chicago Press, 2019), pp. 188–209.
[50] Feldman, p. 196.
[51] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis,* pp. 39-54.
[52] Feldman, p. 196.
[53] ibid., p. 199.
[54] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (MIT Press, 2006), p. 31.

If we accept the differences between Dolar's and Feldman's et al position on voice, a dividing line can be drawn between theoretical positions. A helpful tool in this task is to think of a simple phrase from the Lacanian canon, 'The non-duped err'.[55] This phrase places a dividing line between those thinkers that hold a place of cynical distance to a given symbolic order and paradoxically censor its structure through escapist fantasies, and those who remain on the side of the symbolic order yet traverse its need for an exceptional position by accepting its flaws. Using this divide we can identify our above examples as differing forms of cynicism. By creating a space outside of the symbolic order, cynics believe they can critique its ineffectiveness. It is, for Lacan, the non-duped, or those that place an over emphasis on resistance who err, who are cynical. In terms of theories of race, those who believe that knowledge of racism, becoming cynical of its function, can be used to right an error in thinking, believe that the racist is lacking knowledge of their anti-social prejudice, yet do nothing to remove the enjoyment attached to the racist fantasy. Jennifer Friedlander counters this position:

> The dupe avoids the trap of believing that she can outsmart the efficiency of the symbolic ruse. In other words, the subject who allows herself to be duped, who avoids believing that one can step outside the illusion, inhabits the truth that, deceitful or not, it is the symbolic fiction that structures reality.[56]

In cynical discourse, if freedom lies in the emancipation of the body from the control of the social symbolic law, the non-cynical discourse emphasises the need for the symbolic in gaining access to what cannot be subsumed by that law. These positions can be termed that of the person who sees the full scope of the symbolic order's power and stops thinking at the point of uncovering the truth of its fallacy, thus erring into believing that a proper critique has taken place, and those who see in the fiction a kernel of truth in the form of the symbolic order's failure to hold power. Where our examples err the most is in trying to find a substantial position outside of the symbolic, which is based on substantialising the symbolic as a position of power. This is where the cynic does not see the symbolic as a fiction. The subject of a non-cynical position is the only one who experiences the symbolic order in its insubstantiality and traverses the need for a fantasy of a transcendent enjoyment that would give a position of mastery. Thus,

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[55] Lacan, 'The Seminar of Jacques Lacan : Book XXI : Les Non Dupres Errent Part 1 : 1973-1974.'.
[56] Jennifer Friedlander, *Real Deceptions: The Contemporary Reinvention of Realism* (Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 123.

rather than finding an outlaw genre of music, a meta-position of listening, a distance through mental illness, or a transactional object, as found in our above examples, in accepting the law as fiction, the dupe discovers an insubstantial law is already a position of freedom.

Racecraft

To develop the idea of patriarchal law as insubstantial, as based on a fiction, we can return to the identification with the bluesman. There is a way of relating to the world that comes from taking on traits and identifying with another, this can be termed an ideal. We can see this demonstrated with the myths and legends surrounding Robert Johnson, one of the privileged ideals amongst British bluesmen. In the modern popular imagination, it is Johnson who is most closely associated with the ancient myth of gaining supernatural abilities from the devil at the crossroads. According to William F. Danaher: 'By crediting Johnson's talents to supernatural powers and placing Johnson in another category from themselves, musicians who did not display his virtuosity, even after years of playing, legitimated their continued participation in the subculture and maintained in-group solidarity'.[57] Johnson's myth describes him handing his guitar to the Devil at the crossroads in Clarksdale, Mississippi and receiving some extra worldly talent in exchange for his soul. The circulation of this myth grounds Johnson with a narrative of a talent born from a short circuiting of social rules. Dealing with the Devil promotes a theft born outside of the hegemonic social organisation. George Lipsitz highlights how this myth is also one that censors the labour of a black American race under segregation. [58] He connects the crossroads myth with, 'Western culture's enduring attachment to romanticism, to separating life and art, to elevating individual emotions over collective conditions, and to turning social pain into an aesthetic pleasure'.[59] In other words, by finding a path towards a socially prohibited way of enjoying, out-with conventions, this myth offers a form of escape. The fantasy of the racial other produces an enjoyment while also giving a false, or fantasised image of breaking free of the alienating effect of social prohibitions. However, this comes at the cost of assigning enjoyment to an ideal, a fetishist denial that defines the very structure of racism.

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[57] William F. Danaher, quoted in Adam Gussow, *Beyond the Crossroads: The Devil and the Blues Tradition* (UNC Press Books, 2017).
[58] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics, Revised and Expanded Edition* (Temple University Press, 2006).
[59] Lipsitz, p. 120.

Barbera and Karen fields provide an indispensable definition of how race functions in society. This is as a shorthand for an ideological process of symbolic investment and denial. In separating the terms of race, racism and *racecraft*, they formulate different categorisations of race as the reified aftereffects of racism:

> Racism always takes for granted the objective reality of race…so it is important to register their distinctness. The shorthand transforms racism, something an aggressor does, into race, something the target is, in a sleight of hand that is easy to miss. Consider the statement "black Southeners were segregated because of their skin color" – a perfectly natural sentence to the ears of most Americans, who tend to overlook its weird causality. But in that sentence, segregation disappears as the doing of segregationists, and then, in a puff of smoke – paff – reappears as a trait of only one part of the segregated whole.[60]

In this passage we can identify the categorisations of race as insubstantial divisions based on personal and societal prejudice. In moving from the aggressive action of racism, we arrive at an unconscious retroactive reasoning that pushes the blame for a personal frustration onto a racialized outsider. This racial other then becomes a point of difference in which negative qualities are contained and removed from the social. This is a form of enchantment of the racial other, which is how the authors arrive at the term *racecraft*, as a signifier that describes this process of denial and displacement. In Robert Johnson, we can see a process of *racecraft* as the fundamental way in which his legacy has been mediated. For example, in the crossroads myth we find a justification for the negativity produced in a cultural difference. In the translation between British blues musicians in the 1960s and delta bluesmen of the 1930s, an interpretation of a different way of enjoying, or playing music, becomes an intrinsic 'enchanted' aesthetic of a specific race of bluesmen. The shift here is from the delta bluesmen who worked on their craft to produce a specific sound, to delta bluesmen having a specific sound that is a mystical gift from another time/place. The sleight of hand turns the negativity of a style, the labour of the subject, into the positivity of an object specific to the symbolic position of an antithetical race.

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[60] Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (Verso Books, 2014), p. 17.

The earliest example of *racecraft* as applied to Johnson can be seen shortly after his death. John Hammond was a record producer and an archivist of delta blues and other African American music. He was a curator between the first and second half of twentieth-century popular music, through re-issuing blues recordings during the 1960s counter-cultural movements. One of his early attempts to present African American music was a Carnegie Hall concert called 'From Spirituals to Swing', held in December 1938. Paul Allen Anderson comments, 'Hammond's concert of folk music would offer tough-minded folk realism and a desperate jubilation rooted in the everyday life of doubly oppressed workers in the South'.[61] The concert arranged by Hammond was a variety performance representing different styles of African American music in a linear historical form. For Hammond, the man he wanted to perform the delta blues was Robert Johnson. This proved an impossibility as Johnson had died a few months prior to the concert date. Sean Lorre comments, 'From the moment in 1938 when John Hammond was unable to produce the corporeal Johnson and used his records and tall tales to stand in for the man, "Robert Johnson" became the most malleable stuff of legend, romance and imagination'.[62] Instead of Johnson performing two of his recordings were played to the audience. Hammond also replaced Johnson with fellow blues singer Big Bill Broonzy. What came to fruition in lieu of a Johnson performance was the reification of a complex artist into the familiar trope of the bluesman. A show that told a story from songs of slaves in the south to the latest jazz recordings could only be through giving consistency to separate musical movements. This narrative of a consistent history did not rely specifically on Johnson, the show went on without him, which would suggest that rather than Johnson being the privileged blues performer, he was closest to Hammond's readymade ideal of authentic delta blues. This is a racialised symbolic position that can be adopted by a substitute based on stereotypical differences. Bruce Conforth and Gayle Dean Wardlow suggest this point in the way Broonzy fit into the Johnson role:

Evidence of Hammond's notion of authenticity can be found in how Hammond described Roberts' replacement – Big Bill Broonzy. Broonzy was already a well-established, urban recording artist, yet Hammond described him as a 'primitive blues singer' who 'shuffled' onstage. By the time the concert was held, however, Broonzy had been living in Chicago

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[61] Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought*, New Americanists (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 238.

[62] Sean Lorre, 'Constructing Robert Johnson', *Musicological Explorations*, 13 (2012), 127–54 (p. 149).

for eighteen years, had recorded over two hundred sides, and wore very fashionable suits.[63]

Broonzy would play up to this character for much of his career, choosing to wear work clothes rather than to go back to his Chicago style suits. This shows that the idea of the authentic bluesman is largely a creation of marketing rather than an organic development. From this we can conclude that the authenticity that Hammond was looking for was pathological rather than resting in Robert Johnson. He enacted a displacement of *racecraft* that imposed a personal feeling of lack onto a fantasized other. This directs our thoughts towards the blues as serving a structural end. It provides a place for an enjoyment that doesn't fit, which is censored through creating an ideal symbolic position for a racialised other. Race is thus imposed onto the performer via the fantasy of the blues through racism, rather than being a primary element.

We can translate these racial dramas into psychoanalytic terms by introducing the terms of symbolic castration and the phallus. Although overtly sexual terms, we can say that the cultural difference between American and British blues, or the initial impact of the former on the latter, comes with the effect of symbolic castration. What we mean by this is that with anything novel being introduced into a situation, a trauma of identification is attached. This trauma has a castrating effect on the receiving situation as it indicates change. The phallus, or phallic position is a way to ground this trauma by assigning a place for it within the existing symbolic situation. We thus find a path towards overcoming the castrating effect of the new through the phallic signifier. In short, the assignment of a mystical power to the bluesman is a way of processing the traumatic effect of difference.

We can understand the idea of a symbolic castration via Lacan's introduction of three terms, need, demand and desire.[64] In infancy, we can equate need with the most basic appeal to a parent. We are born as helpless infants, and our needs are taken as a parental responsibility. In this respect need is also related to the impossibility of direct access to a mythical full enjoyment without mediation; our needs are mediated by objects and people rather than being fulfilled immediately. Demand is the appeal to the object or other on a symbolic level, which is

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[63] Bruce Conforth and Gayle Dean Wardlow, *Up Jumped the Devil: The Real Life of Robert Johnson* (Chicago Review Press, 2019), p. 245.

[64] Jacques Lacan, *Formations of the Unconscious: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book V* (Wiley, 2020), pp. 77-83.

necessary because a need cannot be satisfied directly and always relies on some outside object. For example, we all need food, warmth, and love, what differs in demand is the articulation of the specific form in which we want the other to respond to our needs. Our third term, desire, results when a demand addressed to another fails to garner the fulfilling response and something is left wanting. As Lacan states: 'What is desire? Desire is characterized by an essential shift in relation to everything that is purely and simply the order of the imaginary direction of need – need that demand introduces into another order, the symbolic order, with all the disruption that this is liable to bring about'.[65] The symbolic order, or language, is liable to disruption for Lacan, as he privileges the signifier (meaning) over the signified (object). The signifier is not glued to a specific signified, as we find in Saussure's structural linguistics,[66] but is a system of differences made of signifiers liable to slippage. One of Lacan's examples of this slippage is the toilet door that can have either the signifiers Gentlemen or Ladies placed above, what is signified is not in the object, the door, but the differing chains of signification we invest in.[67] In other words, rather than the primacy of the object, it is only when the signifier crosses over into the real world that systems of meaning happen. When Lacan comments that, 'the signifier stuffs…the signified',[68] he is saying that the signified is always excessive in giving meaning. Things say too much, and as a result, leave interpretation lacking; we are always left at a distance to objects in themselves. Desire is the name for what we lose in translation with this process of signification. Demand never fully satisfies need because it never hits the mark, not because of a subjective failure, but because objects themselves are never just objects in themselves, they are stuffed full of excessive meaning. The conclusion of this entanglement of terms is that we are always symbolically castrated. We rely on language and language is always inadequate at fulfilling an impossible (real) need as it is internally castrated by necessity.

We can apply the term symbolic castration to a certain gap that is opened when a subject and the symbolic position that a subject aspires to fail to intersect completely. As Žižek states, 'castration is the very gap between what I immediately am and the symbolic mandate that

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[65] Lacan, *Formations of the Unconscious*, p. 82.
[66] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Open Court Publishing, 1986).
[67] Jacques Lacan, 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud', in *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition In English* (WW Norton, 2006), pp. 412–45 (pp. 416 -417).
[68] Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p 37.

confers on me this authority'.[69] We can think of this gap as the formation of the unconscious. Because symbolic castration leaves us with a gap in meaning, language functions unconsciously, or in unintended ways. The excesses of signification form the material of the unconscious. We can say that in every utterance in the direction of meaning, something excessive goes missing and forms a locus for the movement of language in the unconscious. Thus, we are left with a remainder of unsatisfied desire. One way in which subjects process this inevitable castration is to find a signifier that will close the gap of needs and demand. This is where we can develop the crucial notion of the phallic signifier. In psychoanalysis the phallus is thus not a biological concept, but a signifier that covers the entire field of signification to give consistency to a system that is inherently castrated.

We can develop the notion of the phallic signifier by identifying a symbolic castration in Eric Clapton's relationship with Robert Johnson's music. For Clapton, Johnson's songs are objects that ask more of the listener than they give through clear meaning; they are stuffed with signification. On his early experiences with Robert Johnson, Eric Clapton states:

> I'd never heard anyone do that before. All the music I'd heard up until that time was just pop music made for entertainment. Robert Johnson wasn't entertainment. When I first heard him, I had a very hard time listening to him, because it demanded something of me.[70]

Clapton assigns an unspeakable demand to Robert Johnson, which can be theorised as a lack in meaning, or a displacement of desire. In other words, Clapton's assignment of a demand to Johnson is an act of *racecraft*. He displaces the castrating effect of the music into a demand, something that can be satiated through finding a lost object for its fulfilment. We can thus place this into our dialogue of need, demand, and desire. In listening activities, we are trying to fulfil a need, and we demand something of the musical object. When we find a music that speaks to us, it is because it is stuffed with signification, it goes above and beyond a simple cycle of need and demand and leaves us with an unsatiable desire. If a musical object does not evoke desire, then it is difficult to call it music at all, but only a background convenience or annoyance.

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[69] Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (Routledge, 2012), p 78.

[70] Brad Tolinski and Harold Steinblatt, 'Eric Clapton: "I Actually Have about Zero Tolerance for Most of My Old Material. Especially Crossroads"', *MusicRadar*, 2021 <https://www.musicradar.com/news/eric-clapton-interview-blues-robert-johnson> [accessed 13 September 2023].

Clapton was confronted by a castrating effect in his initial listening to the blues. Compared to pop music, this commodity highlighted a gap in Clapton's subjectivity; we can say it left him symbolically castrated. In terms of the fantasy of the racial other, this is a displacement of contradiction, or sexuality, from Clapton himself to a place beyond the limit of a lost history. Here we can see the notion of the phallic signifier of the racial other as a defence mechanism against castration.

The common understanding of the phallic signifier is as a prop in which masculine power is located. Musical instruments are often seen as analogous with phallic substitutes. For example, the electric guitar is often taken to be a false appendage. In his study of Jimi Hendrix, Steve Waksman coins the neologism 'technophallus' to describe the electric guitar as a contingent tool that gave Hendrix the means to achieve a mastery of his craft, 'The electric guitar as technophallus represents a fusion of man and machine, an electronic appendage that allowed Hendrix to display his instrumental, and more symbolically, his sexual prowess'.[71] Similarly, Krin Gabbard, in his study on subverting the phallic position in jazz, assigns the trumpet as a phallic instrument, 'On the most obvious level, the phallicism of the jazz trumpet resides in pitch, speed, and emotional intensity'.[72] Again, this gives the instrument the status of a contingent tool with capabilities beyond the general scope of the voice. Finally, perhaps the most overtly grotesque picture of the instrument as phallus comes from representations of violinist Paganini. Maiko Kawabeta comments on one such image as depicting, 'Death dragging a grotesque phallus-bow across a naked female torso, thus bringing together cruelty, sexual arousal, violence, the gender symbolism of the violin bow'.[73] Here the violin bow is seen as the ultimate signifier of male power and oppression.

These representations suggest that rather than a single phallus, there are at least two in play. These are the lost, imaginary phallus that accounts for the musician's castration, and the symbolic appendage that enables them to re-capture what has been lost through castration. Lacan addresses this multiplication of phalluses through his differing psychic registers. It is a feature of Lacan's writing that he will use one term to mean different things depending on which of his divisions of psychic register they belong. In summary, these registers are the

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[71] Steve Waksman, 'Black Sound, Black Body: Jimi Hendrix, the Electric Guitar, and the Meanings of Blackness', *Popular Music and Society*, 23.1 (1999), 75–113 (p. 93).

[72] Krin Gabbard, 'Signifyin(g) the Phallus: "Mo' Better Blues" and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet', *Cinema Journal*, 32.1 (1992), 43–62 (p. 44).

[73] Maiko Kawabata, *Paganini: The 'demonic' Virtuoso* (Boydell Press, 2013), p. 69.

symbolic, which can be thought of as language, the imaginary, which is the register of narcissistic representations, and the real, which is what cannot be captured in the signification that comes from the symbolic and imaginary registers. Lacan gives the phallus an imaginary and symbolic meaning. We can think these as the division between an imaginary lack that once held a phallic signifier and a symbol that holds the place of that lack. Todd McGowan gives a precise definition:

> The symbolic phallus is the phallus as the privileged signifier, whereas the imaginary phallus is the object lost in symbolic castration…Lacan provides his most detailed description of the imaginary phallus, and he links it to castration in order to indicate that castration involves the subject losing what it never had (which is why its object is imaginary and not real).[74]

The consequence of this distinction is that which is lost, the imaginary phallus, becomes an empty concept, it is a lack in general. It is this gap in signification that the symbolic phallus comes to stand in for as a third term that we mediate culture through. Just as the male reproductive organ seems to be a privileged part of the anatomy, in speaking about the capture of a lack, the phallus becomes the place holder of enjoyment in a symbolic system.

Jennifer Freidlander develops the notions of masquerade and imposture to orientate symbolic castration and the phallus, 'Whereas imposture carries the burden of accomplishing an identity based on the illusion of knowledge, masquerade accepts the knowledge that identity is an illusion'.[75] A woman knows the secret of symbolic castration, so she masquerades as feminine (condenses an identity) to keep this secret from the masculine gaze. In this respect, woman can be thought of as a threat to the masculine position because they know the truth of castration. Male imposture, on the other hand, relies on a prop to hide castration as a secret. In this context, Stephen Frosh comments on the precariousness of the male position:

> The complication for men is that we might think we own something but can never be sure, because so much of that thing is a fantasy concerning potency- we never know if it

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[74] Todd McGowan, 'The Signification of the Phallus', in *Reading Lacan's Écrits: From 'Signification of the Phallus' to 'Science and Truth'*, ed. by Calum Neill, Stijn Vanheule, and Derek Hook (Routledge, 2018), pp. 1–21 (p. 4).
[75] Jennifer Friedlander, *Feminine Look: Sexuation, Spectatorship, Subversion* (State University of New York Press, 2009, p. 64.

is, or we are, good enough. This uncertainty and sense of distance from the ideal can then lead us into an obsessive and impossible search for the truly desirable, potent phallus to replace the one we have.[76]

The male will look to hide or displace the question of desire from the symbolic through imposture. This is the covering over by assigning lack to another (racial, sexual, gendered other) to gain the appearance of having control, or a full knowledge of identity. Again, the question of authenticity can be thought of as a marker of this strategy. The figure of the authentic bluesman displaces the question of a desire outside of the symbolic into a nostalgic fantasy of a different time and space.

In the failed attempt to form an identity in response to a symbolic mandate, Lacan theorises a stumbling block in the form of the question 'Che Vuoi?' (What do you want from me?). To return to Eric Clapton's assertion that Robert Johnson's music demanded something of him, we can think of this as an instance of the Che Vuoi? Because in his initial interaction with the blues, there was a remainder that couldn't be put into symbolic terms, Clapton was confronted with a disembodied questioning of both himself and the other's desire. As we are objects of love and loving subjects, this question can be attributed to our very early (failed) attempts to both satisfy and direct demands at our parents through language. As Dylan Evans states:

> In early development the child soon realises that he does not completely satisfy the mother's desire, that her desire aims at something beyond him, and thus attempts to decipher this enigmatic desire; he must work out an answer to the question *Che Vuoi?* ('What do you want from me?'). The answer the child comes up with is that what the mother desires is the imaginary phallus.[77]

Thus, the child does not have this object but a fantasy of imposture, of there being a phallic position that can provide an answer to the enigmatic Che Vuoi?

Lacan borrows the question, Che Vuoi? from Cazotte's *The Devil in Love.*[78] This is a tale of a young Spanish military man, Alvaro, who is invited to summon the devil and, as the stories

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[76] Stephen Frosh, *Sexual Difference: Masculinity and Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2002), p. 77.
[77] Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2006), p. 121.
[78] Jacques Cazotte, *The Devil in Love* (Heinemann, 1925).

title suggests, begins a love affair. The narrative can be called mythical as it traces the steps of a subject into the fantasy of a love that provides an answer to what the subject wants from the other. Dorothea E. Von Mucke gives an extensive analysis of this process as she traces the story's links to Lacanian theory: 'the initial incantation of the Devil must also be analysed as an apotropaic gesture. The sequence of Alvaro's extravagant wishes, with their instant realization, is supposed to hold an utterly frightening apparition at bay and control the frightening echo of the 'Che Vuoi'.[79] This suggests that fantasy is a defence mechanism. Instead of an answer to the Che Vuoi? which has a castrating effect for the agent of interpolation and subject, there is a taming of anxiety through fantasy. Fantasy creates a distance; in this case the immediacy of the devil becomes mediated through the distance of placing love beyond the figure of an imaginary object. Like the first love object, the mother, we arrive back to the answer of the phallus as supplement.

The basic movement of fantasy places an object in the position of a distancing mediator. This can include any figure of discrimination including the racial other. Fantasy demonstrates how racism relates to the Lacanian idea of desire. For example, Žižek identifies racism as a structure in answer of the question Che Vuoi? Of the Jew as an exemplar, he states:

> In the case of anti-Semitism, the answer to 'What does the Jew want?' is a fantasy of' Jewish conspiracy': a mysterious power of Jews to manipulate events, to pull the strings behind the scenes. The crucial point that must be made here on a theoretical level is that fantasy functions as a construction, as an imaginary scenario filling out the void, the opening of the desire of the Other. by giving us a definite answer to the question 'What does the Other want?', it enables us to evade the unbearable deadlock in which the Other wants something from us.[80]

We can identify the racist fantasy structure as an answer to the Che Vuoi? in the blues, through the music's aptitude to evoke nostalgia. Nostalgia produces enjoyment through a lost object that must stay lost as the very condition of this same enjoyment. For example, it is Robert Johnson's absence, rather than his presence, that places him in the position of the lost object that gives him the status of an imaginary ideal. For the British blues rocker, the blues is a music

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[79] Dorothea E. von Mücke, *The Seduction of the Occult and the Rise of the Fantastic Tale* (Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 25.
[80] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Verso Books, 2019), p. 128.

that places them on the path of fantasy through the distance of time, place, and racial identity. We build nostalgia into these features of the music as a desire for an imaginary phallus, or lost object that is excluded from modern life. Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber comments: 'Through the recapture of what is lost, nostalgia satisfies the need for jouissance and eroticizes the other to gain such fulfilment. The eroticization of race represses the real, allowing for an imaginary wholeness'.[81] Nostalgia covers a truth relating to the status of racial relations mediated through a fantasy object. Without the nostalgic fantasy of a cultural history rich in tradition, the racial other confronts us as an uncanny figure who causes anxiety in its lack of historical identity. Middleton states:

> The figure of blues nostalgia, and the traumatic hinterland it covers, thus locates us in an historical structure of meaning, allied on the one hand to the layered pattern of revival, but condensed also on to a concrete sexualised metonym that in turn relates to a network of racialized projections, introjections, and abjections.[82]

Race censors a discriminatory trauma disembodied from a historical situation as a way of assigning meaning. Here, we find the displacement of *racecraft*: race as an ideological structure. Because nostalgia puts us on the path to knowledge without an ultimate truth, it veils the impossibility of race as an ordinary feature of any given group of people. This is an imposture; the censorship of a point where consistency fails. This also evokes the wider point that any structure that sees race, either in a positive tradition or cultural facet or in a negative outwardly racist manner, must account for these as fantasies in a reaction to an inner primary dis-identifying trauma. As Lacan comments, 'There is no longer any way, therefore, to reduce this Elsewhere to the imaginary form of a nostalgia for some lost or future Paradise; what one finds there is the paradise of the child's loves, where…scandalous things happen'.[83] As we move through the logic of fantasy, which directs us towards a form of impossible enjoyment, we begin to get the sense that this is not a structure specific to race. For example, nostalgia is a very general term that can be applied to any distant object that we gain enjoyment from through this same distancing. We can now take something of a step back from race and demonstrate a more general structure that gives us a critical tool in identifying where

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[81] Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber, *Subversive Voices: Eroticizing the Other in William Faulkner and Toni Morrison* (Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2001), p. 17.

[82] Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music* (Taylor & Francis, 2006), p. 54.

[83] Jacques Lacan, 'On a Question Prior to Any Treatment of Psychosis', in *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition In English* (WW Norton, 2006), pp. 445–89 (p. 458).

discriminatory fantasies of all types are operative; this is Lacan's structure of sexuation, or sexual difference.

Sexuation

Thus far we have been critical of the position of fantasy in forms that are both overtly and unconsciously racist. However, in this thesis, we must find an alternative view to ensure that our criticisms do not fall into cynical gestures offering no real alternative to the discriminatory fantasy structure. To this end, the Lacanian logic of sexuation is a formalistic way of theorising the ideas of masculine imposture and feminine masquerade touched upon above.

To begin our exploration of this theory, we can introduce the psychoanalytic notion of primal repression as another term for symbolic castration. Primal repression dictates that in any system of meaning, something is always missing from the beginning; it has been primordially repressed as a condition for its existence. For example, blues nostalgia answers to something that must remain lost, otherwise the spell of nostalgia in producing enjoyment is broken. Following Lacan, Leon Brenner comments: 'Something in language is not able to grasp the full scope of...original *need*. That part of need is what, according to Lacan, is primally repressed, and in turn engenders the place of *Desire*'.[84] By primal repression we are not discussing the idea of the signifier introjecting onto some primal scene where we are uncastrated, a position outside of language. This is to create a cynical distance, a fantasy position outside of the symbolic order. Rather than a hope of a neutral space, primal repression dictates that negativity goes all the way to ontological ground. This conditional negativity is the definition of sexuality; a product of a fundamental ontological split that casts us forever adrift from complete mastery of our own subject. 'Sexual difference is a singular kind of difference, because it starts out not as difference between identities, but as an ontological impossibility (implied in sexuality) which only opens up the space of the social'.[85] Something is always already missing in the passage from nothing to something. This is what Zupančič terms the missing signifier, which, 'leaves its trace in a particular feature/disturbance of the signifying system – enjoyment'.[86] To connect this idea to one previously discussed, the missing

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[84] Leon Brenner, 'Demand (Minus –) Need (Equals =) Desire', *Psychoanalysis and Philosophy in Berlin*, 2016 <https://leonbrenner.com/2016/12/06/demand-minus-need-equals-desire/> [accessed 14 October 2023].
[85] Alenka Zupančič, *What IS Sex?* (MIT Press, 2017), p. 37.
[86] Zupančič, p. 42.

signifier is an apt stand in for the term 'imaginary phallus'. The imaginary phallus, which is a myth of a complete enjoyment, marks the place of a missing signifier that, because it is missing determines the Lacanian aphorism that there is no sexual relationship.[87] Because sexuality meets us in places of lack and excess, these positions escape positive signification and rely on a stand in, the phallic signifier to give consistency.

To visualise this missing signifier in musical terms, we can think of silence as what is always absent yet present in the musical field. For the field to function smoothly, there must be a reference to silence (an impossible yet present empty place of non-meaning, beyond the pleasure principle). Pluth and Zeiher give weight to this argument, stating, 'At the rare moments when Freud himself brought up the topic of silence, his points fell into two main categories: silence was either an indicator of repression (that is, it was a sign that repression was happening in real time), or it was a feature of the workings of the death drive'.[88] Drives circulate around a primally repressed silence and include the drive towards repetition, volume or complex organisation. These drives are summed up by the phrases, repetition for repetition's sake, volume for volume's sake, complexity for complexity's sake. Each of these phrases represents the mode of a repressed drive, which is the form rather than the content of modes of musical organisation. Each circulates around the primary repressed silence that, like the signifier, is referenced in any musical articulation. The most common example would be the function of silence before an orchestral performance. This silence marks a broken connection with the general, unorganised sound of the concert hall. This is an arbitrary example, but you could say that for an orchestral performance to work, there must be a break between the unmusical and the musical. The general musical noise is what we could term the symbolic order in which one signifier, 'silence' goes missing. A further point is that even if the concert hall is in-itself silent, there is still a moment of ritual silence, or poise, which marks the beginning of the event. This shows, that, which cannot enter the symbolic order positively, is primally repressed. Here, the moment of silence in an orchestral performance can be called a mark of a ritual. This is the passage from the silence of the drives into the fantasy of desire. In this sense, silence is the space that makes musical meaning possible. Musical organisation forms a limit to the drive through a repression of its libidinous element. This neutralisation of the sexual undercurrent is a form of masculine imposture.

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[87] Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 35.
[88] Ed Pluth and Cindy Zeiher, *On Silence: Holding the Voice Hostage* (Springer Nature, 2019), p 32.

Lacan develops a theory of sexual difference based on differing gendered constructs of social space that arise against the impossibility of neutrality due to primal repression. The graph below (Figure 1) shows the male side of this division on the left and the female on the right.
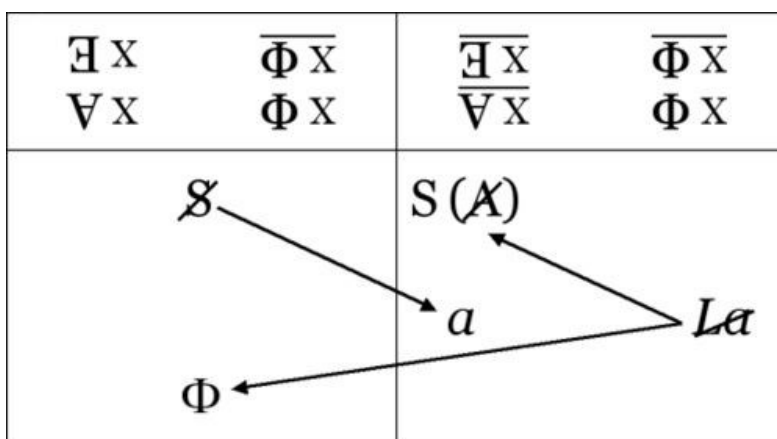
$$\begin{array}{ll|ll} \exists x & \overline{\Phi x} & \overline{\exists x} & \overline{\Phi x} \\ \forall x & \Phi x & \overline{\forall x} & \Phi x \end{array}$$

$$\cancel{S} \qquad S(\cancel{A})$$

$$a \qquad \cancel{L}a$$

$$\Phi$$

Figure 1: Lacan's Graph of Sexuation[89]

To give a very brief explanation of how we read the formulas in this graph (Figure 1), in the top half we find formulas for a universal and particular statement. These identify how each side of the division relates to the fundamental lack in both the subject and society as an ordering principle. The upper (particular) formula of the male side is to be read: there is one man who is not symbolically castrated, as a result the lower (universal) formula reads: all men are symbolically castrated, they have entered the symbolic order. The upper formula on the female side reads: there is not one who is not symbolically castrated, while the lower formula reads: not all are symbolically castrated.

To simplify these abstract statements, we have already seen that in racial relations, the racial other is the figure who escapes the symbolic and as a result forms the basis of the racist community. We can reduce the complexity of the argument to the processing of a common term: the phallic function (symbolic castration). Each side demonstrate a different way of trying to overcome castration. The statements we can draw from this function are contradictory. The relation to castration for men is that all are castrated, but there is one who is not castrated. For

[89] Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 78.

woman not one is not castrated, but not-all (non-all) are castrated. These statements are complex but show that, rather than males and females forming a contradictory pair or binary, the contradiction is within each sex itself. While for the male, he can stabilise his position through the function of the exception (fantasy), the female position is open-ended. She in effect does not exist, as she makes no exception in who is included and excluded and is thus not limited by, but within the symbolic: she is non-all. In this regard, the female side is primarily hysterical, closer to the truth of castration through condensation (masquerade), where the male side falls into an obsessional displacement (imposture) of castration. Also, these are structural positions rather than a division of biological genders. Both biological men and woman can follow the logic of either formula of sexuation.

Joan Copjec finds the male and female positions as differing contradictions by marrying Lacan's formulas of sexuation with Kant's dynamic and mathematical antinomies; she states: 'In Kant's analysis, it is the dynamical antinomies (the "male side" of the formulas, in our reading) that appear in many ways secondary, a kind of *resolution* to a more fundamental *irresolvability*, a total and complete impasse manifested by the mathematical conflict'.[90] The mathematical conflict, which is akin to the statement of the feminine non-all, is the primary position that the male side escapes through the structure of fantasy. This is an important turnaround for psychoanalysis and forms a response to accusations of being phallocentric. What is demonstrated in the mathematical antimony is that a masculine attempt to totalise through finding an exception is based on assumptions rather than facts. We can say that in assuming masculinity exists, that it is an object in space and time, we must assume it will eventually reach a point where it is a complete object. However, as demonstrated in terms of Blues rock and the racial other, the fantasy of overcoming the time of nostalgia or the adopting the space of the racial other do not guarantee that we reach a totality. In fact, with our outline of the racial other as a mode of enjoying through a created obstacle, the very attempt to exist, or enjoy fully without a remainder leads to an effacement of the subject. In other words, to progress towards a full existence in space or time is the very fantasy that sustains the masculine subject rather than its completion. It is the feminine that highlights the status of the male formula as a fantasy.

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[90] Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (Verso Books, 2015), p. 227.

Kant's (feminine) mathematical antinomy is exemplified by a contradiction of two statements that attempt to find a beginning of the world. The example given is the attempt to think of a totality, which ends in two statements that contradict each other. Either the world is a product of and is limited in space and time (thesis), or the world pre-exists and is infinite in space and time (antithesis). Both statements cannot be true, but Kant's point is that they can both be false. It may be that the world in-itself, which frames both sides of the argument as a stable concept, cannot be proven as existing: 'the thesis and antithesis statements, which initially appeared to constitute a *contradictory* opposition, turn out upon inspection to be *contraries*'.[91] In this sense, the very symbolic ground of the either-or choice is undermined through the recognition that the world might be incomplete, or symbolically castrated. The proof of the in-existence of the world comes down to the impossibility of capturing a world, which is ever changing in time, into the notion of space and vice versa. To delimit the world in its capture in space is to ignore an aspect of the world (missing signifier), and hence the capture is not totalised. Because primal repression makes meaning possible, the totality of all concepts and objects that make up a world is impossible to grasp without leaving a space, or empty signifier, for meaning to take account. 'The world is an object that destroys the means of finding it; it is for this reason illegitimate to call it an object at all. A universe of phenomena is a true contradiction in terms; *the world cannot and does not exist*'.[92] In this sense, the world is non-all, its truth is that knowledge will forever remain incomplete.

We can say that because there is no limit or totality there is no space outside the world, no place from where we can view its totality, thus we cannot be certain that it has a full existence. To use a fantasy to prop up this falsity is a movement away from truth. In using the imaginary to fill in what goes missing in the symbolic, the masculine position is a position of imposture. The feminine position has no exceptional point, and the totality of its field is closer to the truth. The truth here is that what is universal or can become a common bond in a community is the very failure of the symbolic to operate smoothly. In this sense non-existence is a privileged position for Lacan as it gives us the very co-ordinates of the psychoanalytic cure, which seeks to traverse the fantasy of the male exceptional point: the discriminated other.

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[91] Copjec, *Read My Desire*, p. 218.
[92] ibid., p. 220.

Women are individually non-all, they recognise their castration and recognise the castration of the world in its non-totality. If we look to the bottom-right half of Lacan's graph (Figure 1), castration is represented by two signifiers introduced by Lacan and placed on the side of woman. First, there is the signifier of the barred other, which is akin to the missing signifier. This indicates woman's relationship to the truth of castration. Second, the *object a* indicates that woman is only whole through a male fantasy of a feminine *jouissance*, which is the universal truth of all being: she is non-all.

To argue for the structure of fantasy as having a general discriminatory function, we can highlight the structure of the racial other as identical to the fantasised ideal woman as an object of love and hatred. Both demonstrate the primacy of the position of the non-all and its censorship in male fantasy. Another short period from Eric Clapton's career serves as an example of a change in fantasy object. This is at the level of content, shifting from the racial to the sexed other, while keeping the form of fantasy operational. Clapton, under the moniker of 'Derek and the Dominos' released *Layla and other assorted Love* Songs[93] in 1970. The entire album, and most evidently the two stand out songs, 'Layla'[94] and 'Bell Bottom Blues',[95] have origins in an obsessive infatuation in Patti Boyd, wife of George Harrison. Boyd, already a great muse in popular music due to Harrison's own tribute, 'Something',[96] became a sublime object elevated into an impossible position. The *Layla* album acted as a vehicle for courtly seduction, one of obtaining Boyd as a forbidden object in fantasy.

The general functionality of the love song is to give an easily expressed version of romantic love. We can divide love between two notions that frame our experience: moral love, which is based on having a reason for loving in fantasy, and ethical love, which is to love despite reason, or despite fantasy structures. Eva Illouz gives this distinction through the terms eros and agape: 'In their normative attempt to decide what love ought to be, philosophers have distinguished between "erosic" love, based on reason, and "agapic" love, which owes nothing to reason but is freely bestowed'.[97] Courtly love is a type of moral, or 'erosic', love that we can identify in rock music. The object of the lady in courtly love poetry is an impossible figure in that she

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[93] Derek & The Dominos, *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs* (Polydor - 2625005, 1970).
[94] Derek & The Dominos, 'Layla', *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs* (Polydor - 2625005, 1970).
[95] Derek & The Dominos, 'Bell Bottom Blues', *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs* (Polydor - 2625005, 1970).
[96] The Beatles, 'Something', *Abbey Road* (Apple Records - PCS 7088, 1969).
[97] Eva Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (University of California Press, 1997), p.221.

serves a structural function related to the narcissism of the lover. As an object of love, she is raised to the position of the sublime in fantasy, even against the backdrop of a reality where women are mistreated as objects of exchange. This is a love/hate structure also reserved for the racial other. As Lacan states: 'The object involved, the feminine object, is introduced oddly enough through the door of privation or of inaccessibility. Whatever the social position of him who functions in the role, the inaccessibility of the object is posited as a point of departure'.[98] The woman as a love object is raised to create a distance between the lover and personal enjoyment. This is the dimension of the abject woman who holds the truth of the man's castration. The actual figure of the (non-all) woman has very little say in this entire operation, she is reified as a phallic signifier. Žižek comments on this figure, 'The idealization of the Lady, her elevation to a spiritual, ethereal Ideal, is therefore to be conceived of as a strictly secondary phenomenon: it is a narcissistic projection whose function is to render her traumatic dimension invisible'.[99] As secondary, the woman of courtly love is nothing but a projection of male fantasy covering over castration, she is a fetish object in the exact same position as the racial other. What is primary and censored by this fantasy is the non-all woman who holds the truth of the universal castration of all beings.

Yoko Ono is the one figure who brings together most of the differing versions of the masculine discriminatory fantasy. She became a love object in much of the content of John Lennon's late Beatles and solo efforts and subsequently gained more attention as a wife of a Beatle than for her own career as an artist. While she is a muse on record, she is also thought as a catalyst for breaking up the fraternity of the Beatles. She provides such an exemplary case as a racial, sexed, aged, and loved object of fantasy that she can only be presented as a contradictory figure. Joseph Jonghyun Jeon states, 'Hatred of Ono can thus be read as an example of Lacanian "paranoic alienation" expressed by the subject of Western capitalism who projects outwards his or her sense of alienation onto various threatening figurations of otherness'.[100] Robert Johnson also fits a paranoic structure where in lieu of patriarchy, a brother or sister figure becomes a stand in as an ideal in which to identify.

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[98] Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960*, p. 184.
[99] Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Casuality* (Verso, 2005), p. 90.
[100] Joseph Jonghyun Jeon, *Racial Things, Racial Forms: Objecthood in Avant-Garde Asian American Poetry* (University of Iowa Press, 2012), p. 148.

To develop this position, we can return to Lacan's graph (Figure 1). If we develop the logic of fantasy a little further, we arrive at the figure of the paranoic other. This is a figure who acts as a point of identification in capitalist society in the absence of the traditional strong father figure. Woman is revelatory of the position of an internal limit of reality, whereas the male finds a way to create liminal space through an imaginary object. The male side is based on the myth of Freud's primal horde.[101] This is a masculine logic not found on the female side of the graph (Figure 1), as what 'causes' femininity is forever mobile; it doesn't rely on myths. The male relies on this myth to cover over what on the feminine side remains in the open, which is the question of desire, Che Vuoi? He thus disavows lack through the rule of the exception. This is a denial of the lack in the other (imposture), or the missing signifier. The male finds a way to include everything in the world by a taking account of sexuality and giving it a representative in the form of the big or small other (father or sibling). In this sense, for the male, the world exists as a constantly deferred completion.

Freud's myth of the primal horde follows the lines of jealousy and love/hate. The myth is of a primal father, a tyrant to be feared who has access to all women: he has unlimited enjoyment. His sons, jealous of their father, are prohibited from the enjoyment of all women and decide collectively to murder him. Rather than the murder creating a society where everyone has unlimited access to enjoyment, a guilt giving superego is installed to stop the sons descending into chaos. This law becomes an equivalence that covers the whole moral field. In this sense, we give freedom up in favour of a fantasised utilitarian society. There is, however, a problem with the idea of equality under the moral law. As we have seen from the idea of symbolic castration, we can never live up to the position given to us by this law. Either man is inadequate or exploitative; we can achieve no right measure in relation to the superego. The masculine position is in a perpetual 'crises under the threat of castration.

The classic idea of the primal father highlights the fantasy of an enjoyment beyond a limit, which creates the space of masculine imposture. The most apparent version of this fantasy operative in capitalist societies is not the big other (father) but the small other (sibling); our paranoic figures such as Robert Johnson or Yoko Ono. Our example of the fantasy other demonstrates that there is a certain paranoic twist to the primal horde myth which acts as a misdirection. A further movement is placed on the side of man in modern society. The superego

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[101] *Moses and Monotheism by Freud, Sigmund (1955) Paperback* (Vintage, 1900), pp. 129-148.

based on an imaginary sibling, rather than hierarchical father, offers the impossible imperative to Enjoy! This is the dominant superego imperative in capitalist society, that turns enjoyment into a goal orientated achievement through the fantasy of finding a lost object that will provide a 'full' enjoyment. Žižek states: 'superego marks a point at which *permitted* enjoyment, freedom-to-enjoy, is reversed into *obligation* to enjoy – which, one must add, is the most effective way to block access to enjoyment'.[102] In this sense, freedom-to-enjoy is a masquerade, a freedom to enjoy ones symbolic castration as an inevitability, whereas obligation to enjoy make one seek an impossible, or more complete enjoyment beyond castration through the fantasy image of the sibling who enjoys more. This is the very structure of paranoia.

The superego imperative to 'Enjoy!' acts in the same way as the primal father's imperative of sexual prohibition. Both are ideals that are impossible to live up to. While we can never be as pure as the father, we can also never enjoy as much as the brother, or fantasy other. This leaves us with two systems, traditional authoritarian, and capitalist hedonist, that both push us into cycles of guilt due to us not living up to an impossible ideal. As we have learned through our racist fantasy, it is the racial other in the displaced position of an ideal brother who unconsciously becomes a scapegoat for racism through our impossibility to enjoy as fully as him/her.

Another term we can use to mark the shift to an overreliance on the imaginary is capitalist realism.[103] This is a changing perspective on the role of authority that is a legacy of enlightenment thinking. Mark Fisher popularised the term *capitalist realism* to describe the predicament of a society with no alternative to the narcissistic pleasures provided by capitalism. The legacy of 1960s protest against the figure of an imagined symbolic father, birthed a secondary identification that took hold once enthusiasm for mass political criticism waned. 'One of the successes of the current global elite has been their avoidance of identification with the figure of the hoarding Father, even though the 'reality' they impose on the young is substantially harsher than the conditions they protested against in the 60s'.[104] The problem in the 1960s protest against the father was that the power that was imagined to be held by the political system was already fragmented. Pocket uprisings, such as those of May '68, guided

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[102] Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (Verso, 2002), p. 237.
[103] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, UK Washington, USA: Zero Books, 2012).
[104] ibid., p. 20.

protest towards an already fractured generation of 'weak' fathers. Rather than the patriarchy, the fraternity became the dominant mode of organisation in society under capitalism.

Another name for the paranoic other is the 'anal father'. Žižek states this is, 'the reverse of the Name of the Father, namely the anal father who definitely does enjoy'.[105] Thus, the masculine mode of enjoyment, first outlined under the auspice of the racial other, can be generalised as the unconscious structuring fantasy of capitalist post-modernity. Another way to frame this shift is to say that rather than an identification with the law, or the name-of-the father, which is termed the ego ideal, the artificial group that places the anal father at its centre identifies with the ideal ego, the narcissistic mirror image. This is the replacement of the father with the brother, one who acts as if in charge but is forever separated from the symbolic position and responsibility of authority. Verhaeghe describes the emergence of the anal father and the effect of the reversion from the symbolic to the imaginary, 'The absence of the possibility of identifying with the symbolic function condemns the contemporary male to staying at the level of the immature boy and son, afraid of the threatening female figure, which once more assumes its atavistic characteristics'.[106] We can again highlight a fraternal masculine organisation with the example of British blues rock and its racial other. In the blues rocker, the position of a new class of modernists was forged against the backdrop of a legitimation of popular music. Ideologically, the community forged under the fraternal, is a brotherhood that disavows the upper limitations of a traditional hierarchical system. In the next chapter, we will demonstrate the fraternal fantasy of absent earthly limits forms the basis for a further notion connected to rock music: progression.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that what psychoanalysis offers a theorisation of race and racism is to not only connect its structure to a general theory of masculine exceptionalism, but a further logic of critique in the feminine non-all. To re-trace how we have arrived at this conclusion we found in Eric Clapton a divergent attitude to race. This was a split between loving and hating the racial other that suggested a contradictory attachment that produced a form of enjoyment. From this insight, we were able to introduce the psychoanalytic notion of fantasy producing

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[105] Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, p. 143.
[106] Paul Verhaeghe , 'The Collapse of the Father and Its Effect on Gender Roles', in Renata Salecl, *Sexuation* (Sic; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 134.

enjoyment by placing the racial other in a position of nostalgic distance. In this distance, the function of the racial other became that of the *Anstoss*, a Fichtean notion of an obstacle that is also the impetus for enjoyment. The logic of the racist fantasy was thus connected to a more general capitalist logic of dissatisfaction. In exploring the phallic signifier, we outlined the idea of symbolic castration as the source of dissatisfaction. This is the subjective split that the racial other becomes a solution to. The racial other, in being loved and hated is not an object erected to be overcome, but to give the possibility that the subject who erects the racial other may one day achieve a full enjoyment. The promise, which is a constant deferral of enjoyment, is the source of another type of unconscious enjoyment rather than its fulfilment. This led to the insight that the nostalgia of the bluesman only produces enjoyment if the bluesman stays lost. We used this position to critique several theorists of music and race. Our insight was that they ignored the dimension of the *Anstoss* by re-producing fantasy structures that, rather than disinvest from how unconscious enjoyment is produced at the expense of the racial other, found differing ways to prop up this fantasy. In rejecting these claims, we found these theorists to repeat the logic of capital, which in turn reproduces the racist fantasies they attempted to overcome. Our solution was to explore how Lacan presents a logic of sexuation that forms the basis for a critique of racism and any discriminatory logic. The masculine exceptionalism present in racism was found to be a secondary logic to that of the feminine non-all. This latter logic demonstrates an organisational principle that needs no exception and is a tool to avow the unconscious libidinal attachment to the racial other.

This chapter ended by setting up our next study. By showing that the fraternity is based on the exclusionary logic of the sibling, rather than the classic authority of the primal father, we have demonstrated a tenet of liberal freedom. By flattening the patriarchal logic, in favour of the fraternal, the outcome is a space of perceived freedom without the constraints of authority. It is this fantasy of freedom that is the dominant one within capitalism and will form the basis of our next chapter. This will be an exploration of progressive rock and its links to the psychoanalytic notion of perversion.

Chapter 2 – Progressive Rock

Introduction

By the early 1970s, the musical experimentation of the previous decade led to several divergent genres of rock music. With blues-based bands such as Cream and the Jimi Hendrix Experience, and the avant-garde experimentation of the Beatles, came a new approach to rock music: progressive rock. The idea of progression is a political and aesthetic idea that signals a hopeful investment in a future ideal. This can be an ideal society or artform that forms the impetus for moving forward. However, if we consider our psychoanalytic framework, we can also call progressive ideas fantasies. It is from this that we can continue our development of the fantasy as a structuring principle that places music within a logic of masculine exceptionalism. Where our previous chapter started with the racial other and found a generalised logic of fantasy based on Lacan's formulas of sexuation, here we will take the idea of the masculine fantasy further and demonstrate its centrality in capitalist society. We will develop within fantasy the structure of perversion. Whereas some theoretical positions find in perversion a site of resistance, it is the claim in this chapter that progression, as a capitalist fantasy, and perversion form a set of bedfellows.

We left our previous study of the blues by outlining the fraternal organisation central to capitalism and, by extension, the rock bands of the mid-20th century. By investing in the sibling as ideal, rather than the father as law, we came upon an impulse of individualism based on the removal of patriarchal fantasies. However, a problem that we uncovered came with theorists of resistance who failed to recognise in their own theories, an unconscious attachment to this same logic of a sibling ideal. Whether it was the mystical bluesman, the outlier Nina Simone, or the courtly love object of Yoko Ono, we found differing objects of the male fantasy. Progressive rock repeats the exclusionary logic by placing art music and aesthetic value in the position of *Anstoss*. It is the repeated attempt to raise the artistic conscious of both musician and audience that becomes the obstacle and impetus for enjoyment. We can thus add the classical virtuoso and the romantic hero to our ideal siblings. We can call these figures perverse as in the function of the fantasy, they adopt the position of the fetish. In criticism, to replace one example of an image of a fantasy other with another, without confronting our exclusionary libidinal attachments, is a fetishist logic.

In this chapter, we will ask what the underlying logic of perversion can tell us about the social and cultural significance of progressive rock. We will also ask how far perversion structures our critical views as musicologists, either as a conscious or unconscious principle of organization. We will seek to go further than the basic logic of the fetish by arguing for a mode of criticism that, in attempting to escape the logic of the fetish, gets caught up in more complex perverse fantasies. It will be through a psychoanalytic dialogue with Adorno and critics of progressive rock who follow his ideas that we will demonstrate the breadth of perverse logic in popular music studies. The survey of criticism in this chapter will demonstrate an oscillation between a legitimation, or an attempt to re-establish the father's law, and a negative dialectic of breaking through any representations of authority. This oscillation is framed as a perverse cycle of sadomasochistic construction and deconstruction. It is in this perverse cycle that we will find a similarity to the capitalist logic of satisfaction and dissatisfaction: the fantasised promise of desire forever deferred.

The structure of this chapter begins with a contextualisation of progressive rock, before re-establishing the masculine logic of the exception in a dialogue between progressive rock and punk music. We will then introduce a new theoretical concept, the Hegelian notion of the bad infinity, as a predecessor to Lacan's logic of fantasy. This will frame progressive rock as a music that defers enjoyment by seeking to transcend its own musical conditions. We thus find a fantasy of the imaginary aesthetic ideal that progressive rock moves towards. Another name for this ideal is a meta-position. By developing and critiquing this notion through musicology, we will introduce the Beatles, arguing for them as our first extended example of progressive rock as following a perverse logic. As early influences on the progressive impulse in rock music, we will explore the shift in the general discourse of the Beatles between their early and mid-career to demonstrate how meta ideas amount to a fetishist logic based on aesthetic ideals. This is the displacement of the bands early symbolic castration, found in their live performances, into the promise of a transcendent beyond. In presenting a counter to the meta ideal, we go through Adorno's concept of the negative dialectic. Here we argue that rather than this concept offering an alternative to the fetish, Adorno and those who utilize this concept only fall deeper into sadomasochistic perversion.

The last sections of this chapter will take the resulting concept of masochist theatre and critique its position of radicality. This will be through an extended exploration of the progressive rock

band Genesis. Through Peter Gabriel as a frontman, and the song 'The Musical Box',[1] we will find in the logic of masochism a propping up of the dominant fantasies of the masculine social order. In the exploration of progressive rock and perversion, our goal is to exhaust the logic of the masculine exception and highlight its grip on cultural theory and music studies.

Progressive Rock in Context

There are moments in the history of rock music where new musical ideas and technologies have expanded its scope within the wider economy of popular music. These moments form a discourse on rock's status as either a source of light entertainment or a progressive art form. The term 'progressive' is often attached to or becomes a central identifying feature of differing music genres. Rock music, when considered as progressive, is thought to move beyond simple teenage fantasies of rock-and-roll towards serious cultural and political purposes. We can think of a basic definition, 'The term "progressive" implied that a band or solo performer combined core rock origins with a style that did not come from the roots music of the 1950s'.[2] In incorporating influences from outside of the standard rock format, progressive rock was a music of advancement built upon a fundamental collection of practices and outlooks including musical ambition, new technology, musical virtuosity, expansive lyrical content, and the extended form of the concept album. With this drive towards expanding musical horizons, rock music was refined into a form that could both claim the status of art and adapt to the commercial needs of the music market. This adaption saw a gradual aesthetic change where rock moved from being predominantly recreational dance music into a base for intellectual pursuits. On progressive rock, Deena Weinstein states, 'it was, at least in the era of its formation and initial crystallization, an expression of a sociocultural movement, specifically an attempt to put forth claims of value for the upper middle class'.[3] With this class dynamic, progressive rock adopted a discourse of upwards mobility and cultural legitimation.

Progressive rock has its roots in the experimental and psychedelic culture of the late 1960s. On this period, John Covach comments, 'rock musicians continually experimented with many

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[1] Genesis, 'The Musical Box', *Nursery Cryme* (Charisma - CAS 1052, 1971).

[2] Robert G. H. Burns, *Experiencing Progressive Rock: A Listener's Companion* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), p. XV.

[3] Deena Weinstein, 'Progressive Rock as Text: The Lyrics of Roger Waters', in *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, ed. by Kevin Holm-Hudson (Routledge, 2002), pp. 91–111 (p. 92).

musical styles and approaches, creating diverse and often surprising musical combinations'.[4] However, the period where progression became central in rock music was in the 1970s with the loose genre of prog rock. Prog rock is categorised around the output of a pool of bands and musicians who emerged predominantly from middle to upper class universities and schools in southern England. The most well-known wave of bands included, Yes, Genesis, Emerson Lake and Palmer (ELP) and Gentle Giant. Amongst these bands, the aesthetic criterions of musical ambition, technology and virtuosity led to performances that used changing time signatures, extended solos and long, drawn out musical sections.

Macan identifies these as features borrowed from European art music: 'Anyone who has even a passing familiarity with progressive rock is usually aware that it represents an attempt to harness classical forms into a rock framework, to combine the classical traditions sense of space and monumental scope with rocks raw power and energy'.[5] With this influence, musicians who could blend the avant-garde, classical and rock-and-roll, became desirable to meet the demands of experimental rock music production. These influences were met with new technologies such as the mellotron, Moog analogue synthesizer. This led many bands to incorporate the keyboard as a lead instrument. By 1973, Robert Henschen comments, 'With the unlimited, orchestral qualities of the improved synthesiser, it was logical that classically trained pianists with repressed rock proclivities would pioneer new areas of modern music'.[6]

In rock music, the classically trained pianist would bring new sounds and musical influences. For example, before joining Yes, Rick Wakeman was one of the most famous of this new breed of rock musician.[7] He was a young keyboard prodigy who trained at the Royal College of Music and found himself in demand for rock sessions. This included work for The Strawbs, Magna Carta, and playing on some of David Bowie's early definitive songs. As the sound of the Moog synth and keyboard became more integrated into guitar based hard rock, musicians such as Wakeman, who could negotiate between technique and technology, and high and low culture, eventually became central figures in the prog rock genre.

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[4] John Covach, 'The Hippie Aesthetic: Cultural Positioning and Musical Ambition in Early Progressive Rock', in *Rock Music*, ed. by Mark Stuart Spicer (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), pp. 65–77 (p. 66)

[5] Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 40.

[6] Robert Henschen, 'Electronics in Rock: The New Superstars Play Multi-Keyboard', *Music Journal*, 37.3 (1979), 14–16 (p. 14).

[7] Chris Welch, *Close to the Edge: The Story of Yes* (Omnibus, 2008).

Keith Emerson is a further example of a piano player who was the main 'star' in both The Nice and ELP. Emerson's music didn't just integrate compositional techniques such as developing motif, metrical modulations, and using extended sonata forms, he would also demonstrate his love for classical music by arranging orchestral music for a rock trio. In their career, ELP had seven UK top 10 and US top 20 albums,[8] however, it was a musical style that while met with adulation, also garnered cynicism from critics. John Peel summed ELP up as a 'complete waste of time, talent and electricity'.[9] On 'The Barbarian',[10] a song from ELP's debut album, Robert Christgau comments:

> Does the title mean they see themselves as rock-and-roll Huns sacking nineteenth-century "classical" tradition? Or do they think they're like Verdi portraying Ethiopians in *Aida*? From such confusions flow music as clunky as these heavy-handed semi-improvisations and would-be tone poems.[11]

These comments are representative of a wider critical view of progressive rock as a genre that in its ambitiousness, eventually became too bombastic and isolated a large portion of the rock audience.

The Infinite

Because of progressive music's lofty aims, prog rock has been open to criticism based on its perceived distance from more organic or 'authentic' forms of popular music. This is often framed through the differing ideological discourses of progressive rock and punk music.

David Beer creates value systems inherent to criticism based on these ideological differences. He states, 'Punk sociology stands as the antithesis of what might be thought of as prog

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[8] 'INTL: Emerson, Lake & Palmer Sign Their Ground-Breaking Progressive Rock Catalogue To BMG', *BMG*, 2015 <https://www.bmg.com/de/news/INTL-Emerson-Lake-Palmer-Sign-To-BMG.html> [accessed 4 October 2023].
[9] John Peel, quoted in Edward Macan, *Endless Enigma: A Musical Biography of Emerson, Lake and Palmer* (Open Court, 2005), p 109.
[10] Emerson Lake & Palmer, 'The Barbarian', *Emerson, Lake & Palmer* (Island Records - ILPS-9132, 1970).
[11] 'Robert Christgau: CG: Emerson Lake and Palmer' <http://www.robertchristgau.com/get_artist.php?name=emerson+lake+and+palmer> [accessed 15 September 2023].

sociology'.[12] Beer's division follows the difference of judging aesthetics on either virtuosity and esoterism in the case of prog sociology and raw aggression and an aversion to virtuosity in punk sociology. Although there is nothing wrong with these value systems, the ideological move is to argue for the legitimation of each in relation to the cultural value of music. The results are that we often find reactionary criticisms that reflect a divide between genres. This divide sees them play off one another in a friend/enemy dynamic.

Paul Hegarty identifies a general shift in attitude in the music press of the mid-1970s:

> The same newspapers, such as the New Musical Express, that had previously promoted progressive rock, started to attack well-established bands. Punk claimed to be a return to rocks roots and to the source of rhythm, energy and authenticity that 'trained' musicians were no longer seen to provide.[13]

We can attribute this attitude to an inclination for the music press to reflect and reposition themselves based on popular tastes within music. The general feeling behind this attitude was that progressive rock had isolated its audience in Britain by, among other reasons, finding and following success in the U.S.A. By following commercial interests, the term progressive was not just an ideological motive behind the music, but also a factor in its accumulative potential. For the most successful bands of the era, building bigger and more elaborate live shows fit for American stadiums became a goal. This was rather than playing the smaller concert halls and clubs on the British tour circuit. Martin James highlights the divide of progressive rock in comparison to punk, where punk bands played in pubs and student unions: 'The huge stadium gigs of the stars of progressive rock were too distant to offer any tangible sense of subcultural opposition. Rather they became emblematic of the separation and distance of a ruling elite'.[14] We can frame this argument by considering elements of progressive rock that focused on raising consciousness and overall aesthetic value within music. Thus, it is inevitable if a music genre attempts to move beyond current expectations of an audience that there is going to be some level of resistance and accusations of elitism.

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[12] D. Beer, *Punk Sociology* (Springer, 2014), p. 44.

[13] Paul Hegarty and Martin Halliwell, *Beyond and Before, Updated and Expanded Edition: Progressive Rock Across Time and Genre* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2021), pp. 199-200.

[14] Martin James, 'More punk than Pink: Pink Floyd's relationship with 1970s UK punk, in Chris Hart and Simon A. Morrison, *The Routledge Handbook of Pink Floyd* (Routledge, 2022), pp. 242-257 (p. 247).

If we look a little closer at the punk resistance to prog, we can see a general dynamism that repeats throughout the history of popular music. Jochen Eisentraut identifies this as an eventual movement from accessibility to inaccessibility, 'As established styles become codified and entrenched, the space for newcomers to intervene and make an impact, to participate in the music and style discourse, becomes marginal'.[15] This process is not exclusive to progressive rock, however it does identify a general problem underlying the structure of progressive music: the alienating of an audience from the music and the music from itself. If we consider the term 'progressive', it suggests an ongoing construction that in turn suggests that we are dealing with an incomplete object moving towards completion. The term progression itself is malleable. We can easily view punk as a progressive political project, one based on a progressive deconstruction of the established music industry. Brian Longhurst summarises this assertion: 'the problem with this sort of approach, of seeing the music as 'corrupted' by the industry and consumerism, is that is difficult now, and indeed it may always have been difficult to suggest that rock or pop was ever outside the structures of the record industry and capitalism'.[16] Whether it is a deconstructive or constructive mode of progression, in following this same logic, genres with little in common musically can still affect the same underlying ideological movement.

As discussed above, the movement towards commercial and intellectual progression can isolate a large part of the rock audience. It is from this point of view that we can show a link between progressiveness in rock music and the wider context of the progressive as a drive within the capitalist economic system. Discussing the progressive nature of capitalism, Lacan states, 'the so-called liberation of the slave has had, as always, other corollaries. It's not merely progressive. It's only progressive at the price of a deprivation'.[17] This deprivation follows the logic of an entropic principle where progression can only come at the cost of the loss of an energy. In a reversal of logic, this negative energy, a useless surplus, creates the stumbling block towards an endless drive for progress. What is created is a system where the very drive towards progress creates the very limits to that same progress. This follows the same structure as the *Anstoss*, as developed in chapter one, which is the limitation and the condition for imagining something to progress towards. In our previous chapter, this was the racial other who

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[15] Jochen Eisentraut, *The Accessibility of Music: Participation, Reception, and Contact* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 74.
[16] Brian Longhurst, *Popular Music and Society* (Polity, 2007), p. 107.
[17] Jaques Lacan, quoted in Fabio Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics: Surplus, Subtraction, Sublimation* (A&C Black, 2010), p. 59.

held some forbidden limitless enjoyment. In progressive rock, this same fantasy form is repeated as a limitless expansion into space and time: an infinity.

Todd McGowan develops the progressive idea as it relates to capitalism using differing categorisations of infinities borrowed from Hegel. He identifies Hegel's thought as both diagnosing and showing an alternative system to capitalism's reckless expansion. Where capitalism runs on a fantasy of infinite expansion that denies any limit as permanent, the simple alternative is an admission of castration, or an internal limit to every subject that must be accepted as infinitely unsurmountable. McGowan states, 'Every moment of hope for a stable and prosperous economic future will run aground on capitalism's internal limit, a limit that derives, ironically, from the system's infinite need to expand itself'.[18] This fantasised need for expansion is a 'bad infinity', whereas the acceptance of an internal limit is a 'true infinity'. These also reflect Lacan's formulas of sexual difference. Where man reacts to castration, he creates a fantasy of limitless enjoyment. Where woman reacts to castration, she enjoys her very limit as non-all within the symbolic order. As a system predicated on individual freedom and endless economic growth, capitalism follows the bad infinity in that any natural or unpredictable limit to these tenets undermines the ideological drive of the system. McGowan continues, 'The limit is not external to capitalism, but the product of its own striving to transcend every limit. In the capitalist universe the logic of the bad infinite leads the system directly to the true infinite, and this infinite spells its failure'.[19] The masculine solution to this inevitability of failure is a permanent deferral of limitations and an endless accumulation through fantasies of completion.

Hegel formulates the deferral of the bad infinity as a fantasy, an *ought*, 'The solution, therefore, remains for consciousness a mere *ought*, and the present and reality only stir themselves in the unrest of a perpetual to and fro, which seeks reconciliation without finding it'.[20] The different infinities are not limited to the logic of capitalism and its critique. We can also see the difference between the true and bad infinities in aesthetics. In progressive artworks, we find a logic of a utopian striving towards eliminating any barriers to a complete, or infinite enjoyment. An artwork that follows a bad infinite is offering the same fantasy of limitless progression as

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[18] Todd McGowan, *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets* (Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 153.

[19] McGowan, *Capitalism and Desire*, p. 153.

[20] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (Penguin UK, 1993), p. 60.

capitalism and can be judged as ideologically symbiotic. If we return to our examples of prog and punk, we can say that while they differ in content, there is an underlying fantasy attached to the capitalist music industry that contains these differences in an identical form. This is, according to Gerald Groemer, 'the music industry's stranglehold on the mediation of desire and demand for the pursuit of a bad infinity of desirable products'.[21] In other words, even if the content differs, or the fantasies that people invest in promote very different ideals, it is the very investment in finding an ideal that unites these genres in a bad infinite. Paul Stump comments, 'punk's mantras claimed a share of rock's ill-gotten booty; punks glorified consumption, but more for unruly, bohemian purposes than those genteel bourgeois pursuits now accumulating around rock's nobility'.[22] Even if the content that punk sells is anarchy, it still needs to place a limit, which is an enemy in the form of the corrupt rock establishment, to overcome. In other words, buying a Sex Pistols t-shirt is no way around the logic of the capitalist bad infinity. Anarchy in the UK and a vitriolic attitude towards much of the industry is as much a fantasy of a future without limitations as that of a seamless aesthetic in progressive rock.

Simon Frith demonstrates the form of the bad infinity and the structure of capitalist accumulation as repeating despite a changing content in generational music taste.[23] His argument is that by and large, youthful fantasies of de-alienation repeat and renew themselves throughout different generational life cycles. For example, the shift from a prog to punk sociology can be viewed through the lens of a new youth culture challenging the values of the old. Frith states:

> Young people are thought to have the most emotional investment in music and popular music is believed to have its most significant impact on people's lives, on their identities, social networks, moral values and so forth when they are young. This means, paradoxically, that for grown-ups popular music always seems best to express the past, the sense of possibility that they no longer have. From this perspective, popular music cannot be heard to progress because its value is essentially frozen in time.[24]

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[21] Gerald Groemer, *Goze: Women, Musical Performance, and Visual Disability in Traditional Japan* (Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 214.

[22] Paul Stump, *The Music's All That Matters: A History of Progressive Rock* (Quartet Books, 1997), p. 193.

[23] Simon Frith, 'Can Music Progress?: Reflections on the History of Popular Music', *Muzikologija*, 7, 2007, 247–57 <https://doi.org/10.2298/MUZ0707247F>.

[24] ibid., p. 153.

The capitalist logic is to reproduce its fantasy of a limitless future, rather than reach the future and crush the need for progression, which would stop the drive for accumulation. The functionality of popular music structures a certain point in the consumers life cycle and a fantasy isn't necessarily followed or progressed from as people age. This implies that the desire for progression is an ideological factor tied to the potentialities of a young life. Music, for those most outside of the youth market, is enjoyed aesthetically through nostalgia as younger generations find their own novel repetition of pop. In this renewal, age itself is considered a limit that is to be overcome by the production of an endless variation of styles targeted towards a younger audience. Genres in themselves rarely see out whatever historical project we assign to them before the consumer is either aged out or the genre finds its tasteful limit. Capitalism accounts for this loss through an endless repackaging of its old materials. New formats and re-mixes solve the problem of a lost entropy for the consumer aged out of the youth market. This gives the idea of progress a conservative turn. The new is rather a way to contain new consumers within a capitalist system through the logic of a bad infinity. It is a solution to an unsolvable problem that is constantly approaching while moving away from the limit of the youthful lifespan. In this sense the promise only functions through its deferral. What is reproduced here is the form of the fantasy regardless of content. The utopian moment of the fulfilled project, be it punk's anarchic (non) future or prog's legitimation, cannot be realised for fear of introjecting into the reproduction of the capitalist fantasy.

Bill Martin questions if progressive rockers can make valid attempts at artworks that hold eternal value in their aesthetic elevation, he asks, 'but the real question here would have to be whether or not there is something in the very nature of rock music that means that it cannot develop into an "adult" art form'.[25] Our answer to Martin's question is to place the *Anstoss* as the reason why rock cannot become an adult artform. Not because rock music is incapable, but because the adult artform itself is an ideal at the end of a fantasy. In this fantasy of maturity, of moving past the contradictions of rock as a youthful art-form, the *Anstoss*, the obstacle and driving force, comes in the form of base aspects of rock music that are perceived as barriers to rock in its progressive mode. However, it is from these base elements that the progressive rocker gains a libidinal enjoyment. A definition of maturity is the position of the father or living up to the symbolic position without experiencing castration. Thus, maturity itself is a bad infinity.

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[25] Bill Martin, *Music of Yes: Structure and Vision in Progressive Rock* (Open Court, 1996), p. 44.

This repetition of a fantasy of a full enjoyment and its perpetual deferral is reminiscent of the perverse structure in psychoanalysis. In the bad infinite a self-limit is denied, and its overcoming displaced into some future utopian hope. Here we find a split between what is evident and its solution coming in the form of a forever deferred displacement; this is the logic of the fetish. To outline this logic in psychoanalytic terms, Freud defines a fetish as the result of a fundamental displacement projected into the child's early experiences of sexuality.[26] To give a condensed version of this developmental drama, the child initially has a belief that the mother has a phallus. A defence against a castration anxiety is enacted where upon realising that the mother does not have a phallus (this is not an exclusively male anxiety), the child seeks to find a substitute object that would cover this anxiety causing revelation. The fetish as a suspension of movement through focusing on some partial substitute object (usually another body part) is a denial of being castrated. As Freud puts it: 'the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mothers) penis that the little boy once believed in and…does not want to give up'.[27] This, in effect creates a splitting in the child's ego between its full entry into language and maintaining a fantasy of being a supplement for the mother. Where we would expect the child to reach maturation and detach from the mother (a fantasy of completion), the pervert finds a way to hold on to hope in this imaginary relation through the disavowal of reality.

Considering the logic of the fetish, we can discuss how different music genres follow the progressive fantasy and how they account for inconsistencies, or points of castration, within their organisation. For instance, the following journalistic quote demonstrates a fetish logic by placing the band Yes in the position of restoring order in an overly promiscuous music scene:

> In this Aquarian age, when sheer romanticism has often been ridiculed and swept aside in the rush towards trendy permissiveness and its resulting hangups, Yes have acted as an equilibrium. For besides helping to re-introduce some basic sanity, in an effort to counteract the paranoia (the cancer of creativity) that abounds within the industry, they have infiltrated into realms of neo-fantasy and gargantuan musical splendour.[28]

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[26] Sigmund Freud, 'Fetishism', *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 9 (1928), 161–66.
[27] ibid., p 162.
[28] Roy Carr, 'Yes Move into the Gap Left by Nice', *New Musical Express*, 23 January 1971 <https://www-rocksbackpages-com.libproxy.ncl.ac.uk/Library/Article/yes-move-into-the-gap-left-by-nice> [accessed 16 September 2023].

We can read the Freudian drama backwards into this account of the band. Whatever romantic ideal the journalist had of rock music has come up against its limit in a vague description of a surplus of enjoyment in the form of a corrupting sexuality. It is through an organisational ideal, the so-called neo-fantasy, that the band re-establish some order, which by chance props up the old romantic order. Prog, in this analysis becomes a kind of meta-language, a traditional superego figure that censors the overtly sexual non-progressive elements in rock music. If we reversed these terms, we could imagine this quote as summing up punk ideology by adding a psychotic element that deconstructs the established organisational structure. In this reversal the oppositional fantasy still exists, and we get caught in a circular logic where prog construction and punk deconstruction can only be enacted against one another.

This meta-position is in-itself a fetish. It is an imaginary gaze occupying a position of mastery, a phallic position. In this instance the meta-position of prog covers over the enjoyment, or sexual promiscuity within rock music, to give the entire field stability. With this it creates a moral divide where the sexual elements, the useless surplus distractions that do not aid progression, become pushed to the outside as a false limit. We thus get a divide between what is included and what is excluded from the genre, rather than experiencing sexuality as an internal limit to meaning. This is the movement between a true and bad infinity. In the realisation of an internal limit, we sacrifice this limit for the promise of a future enjoyment that rests in the very expulsion of that original sexual limit. We thus get a payoff between two forms of enjoyment. Either we accept that our social space is corrupted, always limited by the sexual, or we disavow this limit in the hopes of a complete enjoyment of a totalisation of social space. This is the trick of the fetish: in creating a divide it displaces the location of our enjoyment from an internal limit to a created opposition via a meta-position that completes social space through exclusion.

The final moment of this process, which completes the bad infinite, is to imagine an illusory self-generating value of the meta-position itself. This is the same process we find in the logic of commodity fetishism. In commodity fetishism, 'what is really a structural effect, an effect of the network of relations between elements, appears as an immediate property of one of the elements, as if this property also belongs to it outside its relations with other elements'.[29] In other words, we see in a commodity an intrinsic value that is purely relational with other

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[29] Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 19.

commodities, yet we disavow this network of relations to invest in the illusion that the prized commodity has some sublime quality outside of those relations. We can see an analogy between the privileged commodity and the meta-position, both adopt phallic positions. With this we can re-introduce the status of a signifier without a signified. Applied to the privileged commodity and meta-position, this suggests that they exist without a relation to other signifiers, yet because of this they hold a mystical power as lost objects. They are fantasy objects that can guarantee a full enjoyment. Both the desirable commodity, that we feel will complete us in some way, and the meta-position in its very emptiness, ground us as subjects through offering focal points for desire: the desire to have it all through the commodity, and the desire to see it all through the meta-position.

We can apply the idea of the meta-position, or meta-language to progressive rock. Atton and Anderton assert that, 'It is as if the term "progressive" carries too much negative critical weight and that writers need to show how 'their' group rises above what we might call the 'everyday progressives and displays unique features, not those of the herd'.[30] In this passage, we can see a process of disavowal involving a belief in a privileged position. This is one of a perceived legitimation of progressive rock through its aesthetic sublimity. Chris Atton highlights the mode of enjoyment, in which fans approach progressive rock as involving an intellectual displacement:

> It is as if to be able to appreciate this music–on whatever level, even without fully understanding its musical form - is to wear that appreciation as a badge of honour. That songs are written in irrational time signatures that make dancing, if not impossible, at least an unusually skilful exercise, or that songs change time signature and key very frequently, is for the progressive rock fan part of the delight.[31]

While we might think that the enjoyment of progressive rock comes from a position of higher understanding, what we find here is a pleasure that is found in a distinct lack of knowledge of the musical form. Whether we use a fetish of a meta-position to guarantee that the music has a higher aesthetic value or not, we are no better or worse off in the production of enjoyment.

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[30] Chris Anderton and Chris Atton, 'The Absent Presence of Progressive Rock in the British Music Press, 1968-1974', *Rock Music Studies*, 7.1 (2020), 8–22 (p. 16) <https://doi.org/10.1080/19401159.2019.1651521>.
[31] Chris Atton, '"Living in the Past"?: Value Discourses in Progressive Rock Fanzines', *Popular Music*, 20.1 (2001), 29–46 (p. 34) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143001001295>.

Either it comes from our knowing that we don't know or believing that somebody else knows. In this sense, all the fetish offers is a deferral of our experience of symbolic castration, not its actual overcoming. In sum, if we do not understand the music, gaining only a partial understanding, there is still an enjoyment that comes from knowing that its laws are guaranteed by a community who believes in a meta-language, even if individually we lack knowledge. This is a form of displacement that places the responsibility of meaning onto a fetish.

We can give a couple more examples of critics who argue for prog's meta-position. Keistler and Smith highlight Robert Fripp and King Crimson's musical ideology, they state, 'fulfilling Fripp's notion of creating a music as 'high order language system', this group produced social critique without the use of lyrics or a programme'.[32] This is an acceptance of Fripp's own lofty ideas about his band. Keistler and Smith reinforce a fantasy of prog as a musical meta-language, which has the effect of creating value beyond common language (social relations). It becomes in effect a meta-language that follows the fetishist reversal of value. In effect, value is invested into an improvised music that is by nature spontaneous, purely because of its oppositional status to lyrical music. A second example comes from Anderton, who privileges prog as a meta-genre. He argues 'progressive rock should be regarded as a meta-genre, which subsumes a wide variety of styles and genres for which there is a general agreement regarding progressiveness'.[33] This cover-all term, meta-genre, subsumes rock history and its lateral developments. Anderton thus places the act of naming a music as progressive as a badge of honour within a group bonded by a set of overarching meta ideas.

To explain the meta-position further, we can link it to the concept of the master signifier. In Lacanian terminology, the master signifier is a later formulation of the symbolic phallus, which creates a neutral background for the signification of a social field. For Lacan it is, 'nothing other than the body in which all the other signifiers are inscribed'.[34] To explain this, we can think of any system of meaning as consisting of several signifiers. In this system there must be an empty place for the inscription of meaning, as meaning names an absence; this is Alenka Zupančič's 'missing signifier'. With the view that progressive rock, 'was designed for listening

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[32] Jay Keister and Jeremy L. Smith, 'Musical Ambition, Cultural Accreditation and the Nasty Side of Progressive Rock', *Popular Music*, 27.3 (2008), 433–55 (p. 439).

[33] Chris Anderton, 'A Many-Headed Beast: Progressive Rock as European Meta-Genre', *Popular Music*, 29.3 (2010), 417–35 (p. 418) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143010000450>.

[34] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, p. 89.

to rather than dancing to',[35] we can outline how the master signifier functions. If we accept the assessment that dance is something that must go missing for progressive rock to become listened too (although dance and progressive rock do exist in fusion music), dance marks a point of non-sense that must be kept at bay for the ideal listening element to successfully emerge. At the place of 'dance', 'progression' as the master signifier is thus installed to give consistency by covering over this missing signifier. A master signifier is an elected signifier that signifies nothing, its function is to cover over absence and give a positive anchor for meaning. In progressive rock the signifier 'progressive' knots all other elements into a consistent system. For example, technology is used across all popular music, including those genres that might be seen as regressive by progressive rock aficionados. It is only by being anchored by the master signifier that technology, alongside other elements such as extended forms and fantastical lyrics, gain consistency as a system of meaning.

Another way of framing the idea of the meta-language, or master signifier, is to relate it to the notion of genre. We can see a bad infinity reproduce itself as music moves from genre development to genre development. With prog's intellectualised status it passes over into an inaccessible form of music for much of its audience. This is a limit common in the development of any genre. To return to our previous examples, the dualism of punk music and prog follows this similar pattern. The fantasy of no future becomes a new fetish to replace the old fetish of a future legitimate form of rock music. The logic of fetishisation demonstrates a continuation between these genres of a capitalist led fantasy of overcoming an internal limit, which is as far as capitalism can go without defacing its own logic. The end is only ever a part of a fantasy that must never be fully realised. We can think of punk as supplanting prog as a popular genre; however, it also conserves the phantasmatic structure that underlies both genres.

The development of the logic of the fetish is evident in the general formation of musical genres. Alan Moore asserts that: 'usages of style have a strong tendency towards emphasising the poetic. Discussions of genre, however, tend to emphasize the esthetic'.[36] Following this we can argue for different ways in which we digest music. If style is poetic and belongs to, or names, the realm of emotion and affect, this affect will be experienced differently depending on how

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[35] Jon Stratton, *Spectacle, Fashion and the Dancing Experience in Britain, 1960-1990* (Springer Nature, 2022), p 2.

[36] Allan F. Moore, 'Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre', *Music & Letters*, 82.3 (2001), 432–42 (p. 437).

developed the sense of the genre, or organisational principles that dominate our experience of the music are. Genre suggests a displacement of style into regimented symbolisation, which is a necessary movement for organizing our listening experience. In this respect we can equate style with an internal limit to genre, as sexuality is a limit to ego formation in our psychoanalytic drama.

If we proceed with the definition of genre as an organizational principle, we must ask how this organisation functions. Fabian Holt gives an outline of the construction of genre as consisting of signs and values that unite an audience in a common listening practise, he states: 'We can use the word sign as a general concept for sounds, words, images, objects, and gestures that represent concepts. We can observe how strings of signs have been connected to the same generic concept through codes in a genre system'.[37] This theory of genre takes a generic concept, which is an empty signifier, and invests it with meaning through a range of signs that form a constellation. These signs are little reified pieces of style and name some esthetic aspect of music that is affective rather than discursive. Signs, in this respect, are equivalent to fetishes in a meta organising concept. For Holt, genre is thus reminiscent of what Lacan calls a master signifier.

As discussed above, a master signifier is a meaningless signifier that signifies nothing yet becomes an anchoring point for meaning. To give a further example, as it applies directly to genre, the signifier rock means very little without the investment of a chain of signification that holds its identifying elements. In the case of prog, rock is invested with stylistic images such as progression, virtuosity, and complexity. The genre, in this sense, does some work for the listener by absolving them of part of the anxiety of interpretation through a displacement of passive experience onto the pre-dictated conventions of genre. As these conventions relate to an ideal, we can say that genre, in pre-empting a part of our experience of the music, follows the logic of a bad infinity. It offers a narrative way to deal with our anxiety when faced with unbound stylistic elements in music. Todd McGowan explains this same process through a succinct account of genre displacement as it relates to film studies: 'One of the predominant ways that the symbolic order functions in cinema is through the mediation of genre…Locating a film within a genre lessens the trauma of encountering it for the audience'.[38] In this analysis,

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[37] Fabian Holt, 'Genre Formation in Popular Music', *Musik & Forskning*, 28 (2003), 77–96 (p. 86).
[38] Todd McGowan, *Psychoanalytic Film Theory and The Rules of the Game* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2015), p. 99.

genre governs audience expectations and places any unknowns into a symbolic representation through a strategy that predicts traumatic aspects of the film. Trauma exists in a metonymy with our definition of style, which also relates to the idea of a surplus enjoyment.

In relation to the fetish, we can identify that genre dictates the positions of the producer and audience towards what Jennifer C. Lena terms a, 'genre ideal'.[39] Borrowed from the psychoanalytic concept of the ego ideal, this gives agents involved in the creation of the genre a visual or auditory goal to work towards. It is an imaginary ideal that serves the purpose of taking a fragmented set of objects and sets them towards a mutual cause based on an overriding element within their musical field. The genre ideal adds an element of consistency where value judgements are imposed that register a product's success or failure in relation to canonised or successful musical production. As Lena states:

> To show that they are part of the scene fledgling musicians must show that they understand the coalescing genre performance conventions. Innovators or stars within the community are produced when they are able to introduce or modify performance conventions in ways that meet with approval.[40]

For Lena, a politics of opposition develops between genres, which in turn adds a hierarchical battle for legitimation. It is at this point that we find a fetishist reversal in full force as the value created through forming competing genres is mis-recognised as intrinsic to genres themselves. The logical outcome of this is a progressive process of legitimation where a genre will claim to rise above the rest, reaching the status of a meta-genre. This is of course nothing but a fantasy. When Lacan declares, 'no metalanguage can be spoken, or, more aphoristically, that there is no Other of the Other. And when the Legislator (he who claims to lay down the Law) presents himself to fill the gap, he does so as an imposter',[41] he is telling us that we cannot find a position outside of language in which to guarantee legitimacy. The beyond, or infinite position of seeing the field of rock music from a meta-prog position is a fetishist ideal that does nothing but censor our listening experience. The question then becomes how to move away from this bad infinite, to which we can answer with the true infinite. This is also Lacan's answer in the psychoanalytic

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[39] Jennifer C. Lena, *Banding Together: How Communities Create Genres in Popular Music* (Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 16.
[40] ibid.
[41] Jacques Lacan, 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious', in *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition In English* (WW Norton, 2006), pp. 671–703 (p. 688).

clinic. At the end of analysis, to traverse the fantasy is the demystifying of the value of the fetish and realising that our internal limits cannot be overcome. We can only re-orientate our lives into a more satisfying relation to our symbolic castration. However, before we can traverse the fantasy of genre, we must already be invested in its fiction. To return a Lacan aphorism, this is why the non-duped err the most.

Although we can criticise its investment with ideals, this is not to say that genre is dispensable. It is imperative that mediation, or a gap between observer and song exists, otherwise this immediacy would close the space of interpretation. In this respect both style and genre are indispensable in interpretation. However, depending on how we frame these moments of excess through displacement, we can come up with a few distinct interpretive views. These views can be thought in terms of the direction of causality. When we look at music from the position of a stylistic element, we retroactively assess a contingent feature that forms some idiosyncratic interest that captures our attention in the music. When we look at music from the position of genre, a pre-conceived set of nominal ideas form an ideal where a music is assessed as either meeting the genre conventions or not. The former is a definition of Hegel's true infinity, while the latter is a definition of a bad infinity. In this sense genre is a conservative principle that gives our experience some organisational reference point, whereas style is a moment of rupture that changes the course of a genre. Style is the surplus negativity of non-meaning given body as an interruption in the symbolic order: a symptom.

Samo Tomsic gives us a useful definition of how style and genre work dialectically, 'Style does not stand for the language of torture, but for the tortured language'.[42] In this view style is thought as a stain on genre, blocking its reaching an impossible full discursive function. The reversal of the bad infinity would not be to proceed with a constant oscillation of genres, or of no genres, but with tortured genres. In this respect we traverse the capitalist fantasy by identifying moments of limitation within organisational principles, the places of constant deferral, and orientate ourselves around them by taking responsibility for our own castration. This is rather than falling into a friend/enemy dynamic as demonstrated through the prog/punk dualism. For example, when we connect to a piece of music that we know nothing of and have no genre definition to rely on, there is a moment of becoming lost, a moment of anxiety before

[42] Samo Tomsic, 'Baroque Structuralism: Deleuze, Lacan and the Critique of Linguistics', in *Lacan and Deleuze: A Disjunctive Synthesis*, ed. by Bostjan Nedoh (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 123–41 (p. 137).

an interpolation into a genre or narrative happens. When Freud states that 'every finding of an object is in fact a re-finding of it',[43] he is getting at this moment of anxiety, of re-finding the lost object as lost. Even though this moment of losing oneself is a moment of anxiety, it is still enjoyable. This is then the point where we can recognise that we do not need the structure of the fetish to enjoy, we can already enjoy our own limitations. Another name for this is traversal, which is the realisation that life functions outside of meta guarantees and future promises of deferred enjoyment. It is at this point that we reach the true infinity; an enjoyment based on music's ability to leave us lost, to alleviate the pressure of endless accumulation. Using the band ELP as an example, Paul Stump sums up this idea with a succinct observation:

> But the emotional immediacy of pop music, its orgasmic tensions and releases, no matter how scorned by the progressive cognoscenti, were emotional responses apparent in popular song just as much as in the nineteenth century Romantic art music the likes of Emerson wished to emulate. Was ELP really to be such a hidebound opponent of the jouissance of music, and substitute technique and form in its place.[44]

We will return to the logic of the true infinity and its bedfellow of the feminine non-all in the latter half of this thesis. But for now, we must proceed further in tracing the connection between progressive rock and the perverse fantasies circulated in capitalism. In sum, style, in its links with spontaneity and contingent affect can be linked to the unconscious: the torturer of language. Genre, on the other hand is an implementation of fetishism with the goal of giving the discursive aspect of music consistency.

The Progressive Beatles

As discussed through the figure of the racial other in chapter one, the supplement of fantasy in Lacanian psychoanalysis indicates the ineffectiveness of symbolic law, its inherent castration. This is a lack marked by the *object a*, the lost object that causes both desire and castration anxiety in the subject. It is the fetish that covers over this lack through displacing the anxiety of loss into a goal directed possibility. In this sense, when we speak of fantasy, we speak of a perverse logic. Our above discussion on progressive rock suggests an apparent fetishist displacement of certain aesthetic features that enacts a censorship aimed at elevating popular

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[43] Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: The 1905 Edition* (Verso Books, 2017), p. 73.
[44] Stump, p. 99.

music into a legitimate art form. We can thus argue that some of the aspirations towards higher value systems within progressive rock follow a path of creating a culture of divide along the lines of intellectual investment within the rock fanbase. This investment is centred around a cultural inclusion and exclusion based on knowledge acquisition. From these observations we can place the fetish and its theorisation as key to answering questions surrounding why rock music has a proclivity to progress.

The logic of the fetish dictates that in moments when a covering of lack fails, we are confronted with the lost object in its most personal form as a symptom: a surplus internal/external protuberance which makes identification with a complete body impossible. Hence, at the level of a subject's fundamental defence against anxiety, there can be a misfire; an ineffectiveness of the law in organising a subject's desire. This failure of the law creates a feeling of subjective fading. As Lacan states: 'Anxiety, as we know, is always connected with a loss...with a two-sided relation on the point of fading away to be superseded by something else, something which the patient cannot face without vertigo'.[45] The definition of anxiety is when a lack itself comes to lack and we are confronted with a positive spectral object. This is the *object a*, not as a common object of desire, but as a remainder. This remainder is the mark of a true infinite, it is our infinite capacity to fail in being consistent beings. The failure of the fetish, however, is not the end of the line for perversion, as social links can be formed from an active maintenance of perverse fantasies. In capitalism, we are forced into the position of perversion in maintaining a system based on a denial of limits, which is a bad infinite. As Tomsic states: 'Capitalism is not perversion, but it demands perversion from its subjects'.[46] In other words, most people who exist in the modern world aren't perverse, but to exist under capitalism, there must be a minimum investment in the deferred promise, or fantasy ideal of the pervert going beyond all limits. The maintenance of this guiding fantasy relies on the agent of perversion found in sadomasochism. Sadists and masochists are manipulators of the social order who maintain the illusion that the social order does not lack. To unpack this dense theory of perversion, we can introduce the logic of a perverse social link through the Beatles.

The Beatles' career exemplifies a lifecycle of reinvention and regression. This movement can be applied to the social manifestation of the psychoanalytic logic of perversion, which

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[45] Jaques Lacan, quoted in Evans, p. 11.
[46] Samo Tomšic, *The Capitalist Unconscious: Marx and Lacan* (Verso Books, 2015), p. 151.

dynamically re-invents the phallic signifier by accounting for, and covering over, its failure through imposture. The Beatles, in their mid-career experimentation, maintain a progressive bad infinity that enters rock music as an aesthetic as well as ideological feature. Alison Stone comments on the mid-career Beatles albums, 'these developments marked a bid for art status: the album, especially if it was a concept album, was organized around ideas and the appropriate response was intellectual, a response of listening to and thinking about it'.[47] In this shift in musical content, we can see many of the features that were taken up by the later progressive rockers as genre ideals. Although we may not think of intellectualising as a form of sadomasochism, the deeper meaning imposed on the artistic weight of the music creates the illusion of a complete system of meaning, a system fantasised as being devoid of castration.

In arguing that the Beatles followed a perverse logic, we need to locate places in the band's lifecycle where symbolic castration can be demonstrated. In relation to castration anxiety, Mari Ruti states: 'ultimately men who seem to have power are as lacking, as castrated, as the rest of us. It's just that they foment, have historically fomented, almightiness to obscure this fact'.[48] Fomenting appears through the creation of meta discourses that form the position of phallic power within the social system. Following this, we can identify moments where the shifting of discourse (reinvention) can be viewed as an act of fomenting a phallic position in response to a failing fetish object.

In the early stages of any band's career, through to their first successes, symbolic castration can be seen in the gap between the fantasy of attaining the phallic position of becoming a star and the inevitable emptiness of adopting that same symbolic position. To introduce a classic rock-and-roll ideal, we can connect Elvis Presley to the Beatles through the latter's indebtedness to the former's early music and style. As John Lennon once stated, 'Nothing really effected me until I heard Elvis. If there hadn't an been Elvis, there wouldn't have been The Beatles'.[49] Elvis, in this picture, is placed into the position of a substitute father/brother, as through his ideal, the Beatles became possible. Lawrence Kramer positions Elvis as an example of a differential other, assigning him as the keeper of a privileged enjoyment: 'Elvis's voice is a law unto itself. What it gives to his fans is a pleasure purely vocal, purely musical, the pleasure of being

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[47] Alison Stone, *The Value of Popular Music: An Approach from Post-Kantian Aesthetics* (Springer, 2016), p. 44.
[48] Mari Ruti, *Penis Envy and Other Bad Feelings: The Emotional Costs of Everyday Life* (Columbia University Press, 2021), p. 180.
[49] John Lennon, quoted in Jon Stewart, *Dylan, Lennon, Marx and God* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 94.

touched by absolute song: the transgressive pleasure of the autonomous artwork'.[50] Where Elvis Presley's initial introduction to America came with a veil of sexual obscenity, his fame and international reach pushed him into the position of a sexual fetish, one whose hip-shaking and racialised vocals produced an excessive enjoyment. Kramer adds that, 'Elvis himself was a Little Richard impersonator'.[51] This highlights the gap between the fantasy and the failed symbolic position. If we see a passage from Little Richard, to Elvis, to John Lennon, we can see a repetition of a symbolic position that is nothing but the reproduction of a form regardless of its content. To further evoke Simon Frith's example of the aging audience, while the star might grow up and grow out of the symbolic position, the position of the star must reproduce itself to continue the bad infinity placed on the fantasized possibility of reaching this privileged, complete enjoyment.

There is always a gap between the performer and this symbolic position, which is a gap of castration that causes anxiety. It is then left for the subject to find a way to account for this gap. As the phallus is a form of imposture, it holds no power except that invested into it through fantasy formations. Marjorie B. Garber comments on Elvis's imposture in relation to the weight of his phallic position.[52] His way of dealing with the anxiety of castration was to stuff his trousers with a false prothesis:

> Elvis stuffing his own pants with a prothesis presents the Presley Phallus as marionette, the uncanny as canny stage device, one that can manifest its phallic power automatically, so to speak, with a tug of a string or a backward push of the hips. Recall once more Lacan's paradox about virile display. The more protest, the more suspicion of lack.[53]

This is a strategy of imposture, of trying to live up to an impossible masculine position by finding a literal phallic prop to foment a position of authority. Where this strategy fails, as one will inevitably be aged out of virility, it forms the basis of a perverse logic. We can see a similar strategy of imposture in the Beatles. P. David Marshall comments: 'the Beatles embodied a series of cultural memories that overwhelmed their own present as a group. In a very real sense,

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[50] Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (University of California Press, 2023), p. 235.
[51] ibid., p. 231.
[52] Marjorie B. Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (Psychology Press, 1997), pp. 353-375.
[53] ibid., p. 366.

the Beatles had to reinvent themselves'.[54] In other words, the pressure of their elevated positioning came with the castrating effect of their audience. This led the band to find new (perverse) ways in which to counteract the castrating element and keep themselves together as a fraternity.

If we frame the Beatles' career with a psychoanalytic oedipal drama, we can see how perversion is a way that renewals and reinventions take form. Bruce Fink defines the form of the fetish as a way of making amends for a failed passage into maturity.[55] In Lacanian terms, the name-of-the-father is the answer to the mothers lack. This is the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the child enters the symbolic order by displacing castration anxiety through the father (authority figure), as that which fulfils the lack in the mother. However, the father may not fulfil its function successfully, he may be a weak father. There is the possibility that the child ends in a liminal position between its immature anxiety and its mature development as a speaking being: it is here that a perverse logic develops. As Fink states: 'The mother's lack has to be named or symbolized for the child to come into being as a full-fledged subject. In perversion, this does not occur: no signifier is provided that can make that lack *come into being at the level of thought*, easing its real weight'.[56]

To find an analogy, we can see in the early Beatles career them becoming caught in a liminal space as Beatlemania became a form of mass hysteria. This eventually played a part in the band retreating from live performance and focusing on studio recordings. As McCartney states: 'The screaming…got so as you were inaudible. And so you really were going through the motions and that's why it was good to go 'Whoo-oooh!' because something was going on, because otherwise it was just little matchstick men doing this stuff that you couldn't hear'.[57] The turn away from live performance to become a studio band can be considered an attempt to re-instigate a fundamental control over hysteria. This is based on a perverse fantasy that absolves the Beatles from being subjects of a meaningless bodily enjoyment through a displacement onto the album form. Although the Beatles always released albums, in the bands early career these were driven by single releases and live touring. In moving towards the album form as a

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[54] P. David Marshall, 'The Celebrity Legacy of the Beatles', in *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society: A Thousand Voices*, ed. by I. Inglis (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 163–76 (p. 173)

[55] Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 165-205.

[56] ibid., p. 178.

[57] Paul McCartney, quoted in Ella Atcheson, 'The Beatles Never Intended to Quit Touring for Good', *NME*, 2016 <https://www.nme.com/news/music/the-beatles-4-1191035> [accessed 16 September 2023].

primary mode of expression, the band found a medium to expand on both their musical and overall conceptual ideas. Of the album *Revolver*,[58] Stephen Valdez states, 'The recording sessions for *Revolver*, beginning in April 1966, demonstrate that the Beatles were concerned with creating studio art works rather than the dance-orientated pop songs that could be readily reproduced live'.[59] The taming of this audience through complete avoidance would then turn the listener from screaming teenager full of sexual excess to pacified listener, gazing intently at images and album covers and finding meaning in the music and lyrics. This move gave the Beatles an increased control over their presentation and performances. We can see this as a pacification of the castrating hysteria of the live audience and a conservative move in the preservation of the band's phallic position.

To form an analogy to this movement, we can turn to Lacan's examples of obscenity in the historical form of Baroque art. Lacan finds obscenities in Baroque Christian art in works that undermine the traditional phallic signifier of God. This understanding comes from Lacan's visit to Rome, in which he witnessed a display of obscenity in artworks that showed the partial drives, or excessive sexuality of its subjects openly. As Will Greensheles states, 'There is, in Lacan's appraisal, a certain admiration for what we might call the Catholic Church's polymorphous perversity, its renunciation of normative, genital sexuality in favour of the 'oral drive''.[60] This concept is central to one of Lacan's commonly quoted passages, 'The Baroque is the regulating of the soul by corporal radioscopy'.[61] In this enigmatic phrase, we get the soul and the body not in its usual configuration as two entities, but as one and the same. In effect, rather than the body limiting the soul or vice versa: a dualism, we get the soul moving with the body as a partial (suffering) drive: a dialectic. To borrow from Hegel, this is substance as subject, a true infinite or, ironically in line with the Beatles propensity to use puns, a Rubber Soul. The artworks referenced are those that display suffering, however something that supplements these is the notion of a meta-position of a heaven beyond. As Lorenzo Chiesa puts it:

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[58] The Beatles, *Revolver* (Parlaphone - PCS 7009, 1966).

[59] Stephan Valdez, 'Revolver as a Pivotal Artwork: Structure, Harmony and Vocal Harmonisation.', in *Every Sound There Is: The Beatles' Revolver and the Transformation of Rock and Roll*, ed. by Russell Reising (Ashgate, 2002), pp. 89–109 (p. 89)

[60] 'Will Greenshields', *REFRAMING PSYCHOANALYSIS*, 2016 <https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/repsychoanalysis/tag/will-greenshields/> [accessed 16 September 2023].

[61] Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 116.

Salvation is preserved by replacing the classical illusion of *jouissance* with the 'abjection' of *this* world, while opposing the latter to *another* world of eternal life. Christianity thus recuperates meaning (salvation and eternal life) precisely thanks to the disclosure of truth as meaningless (the abjection of this world). It turns incompleteness into the definitive reason to believe in completeness.[62]

In this figuration, we get the suffering on earth and the promise of a heaven beyond, which mirrors the formulation of the bad infinity. This addition of a heaven beyond to the Christian faith is a perverse censorship of the true infinite on display. The Hegelian/Lacanian position on the Christian faith is that, 'what dies on the cross is God-as-a-transcendent, punitive or vengeful, superego figure'.[63] In other words, the founding gesture of Christianity is to enact the death of god through his castration on the cross. He becomes a failed obscene material figure who people bond with through a mutual failure. This sleight of hand, the disavowal of Jesus as a figure of god's impossibility, is one that the later Christian church establishes with our now familiar masculine logic of exception.

With the Beatles' avoidance of a live audience, there is a censorship of an obscene core that plays into the very power of organised phallic authority. In Oliver Julien's commentary on the early concept album, he states:

by 1966 - 67, this music was no longer shaped with a view to putting it on record: it was being created for the record. In other words, it had reached a point in its evolution where the determination of the creative process by phonography was on the eve of inducing the decisive and permanent separation of recording and performance.[64]

Recording and live performance, heaven and earth, and body and soul can all be found to enact the same divisions in logic. We have in the Baroque the soul as a symptom or failure of the body. This failure to be a complete body is censored in a separation where body and soul are seen as progressive stages towards a mastery, or a legitimised phallic position. The soul thus

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[62] Lorenzo Chiesa, 'Exalted Obscenity and the Lawyer of God: Lacan, Deleuze and the Baroque', in *Lacan and Deleuze: A Disjunctive Synthesis*, ed. by Bostjan Nedoh (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 141–63 (p. 152).
[63] Matthew Sharpe, *Žižek and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 205.
[64] Olivier Julien, '"A Lucky Man Who Made the Grade": Sgt. Pepper and the Rise of a Phonographic Tradition in Twentieth-Century Popular Music', in *Sgt. Pepper and the Beatles: It Was Forty Years Ago Today*, ed. by Olivier Julien (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), pp. 147–71 (p. 160).

becomes a lost fetish object that signals completion rather than a sign of internal failure. The same can be said of the separation between live and recorded performance in the Beatles. Here, the album form becomes a pure beyond separated from the abject hysteria of their fans. It is thus a medium that creates a fantasy of overcoming the failure of a full expression evident in the band's relationship with the live audience.

To reiterate, the basic definition of fantasy is a mechanism of projecting a properly functioning symbolic order to gain a distance from anxiety. As Harari states, 'The phantasy is found in a place where its stability and persistence and its apparent immediate and volatile summoning guarantees the subject a situation in which lack is veiled or made up'.[65] Lacan gives a formula of perversion as a type of fantasy that ensures the production of enjoyment by making the agent active in maintaining the discourse of authority. If we view the Beatles' turn away from live performance as designed to gain back some control over their presentation, then we can call this a perverse strategy. In Lacan's terms, the basic formula of fantasy works by effectively bringing the imaginary to the place where the real invades the symbolic. Fantasy is a narrativization of the subject's relation to anxiety by giving an image in the place of lack, which acts as a way out of the threat of anxiety. Lacan gives a precise formula for fantasy:

> I intend simply to situate the fantasmatic effect at this point - barred S in relation to small a. It's characterized by being an articulated and always complex relation, a scenario, one able to remain latent for a long time at a certain point in the unconscious, even as it is organized nevertheless - just as a dream, for example, can only be conceptualized if the signifier function gives it its structure, consistency and, thereby, its insistence.[66]

To simplify, the logic follows that the structure of fantasy holds the function of showing the subject's path towards overcoming a castration anxiety. This is through finding an answer to anxiety through a supplementary object. Lacan uses the matheme, a symbol of demonstration, to account for how fantasy is structured in differing ways. The basic formula of is fantasy is represented as, $ <> a (barred s in relation to small a), which puts into relation three elements. First, we have the $, which stands for the castrated or split subject in language, we then have the <>, which is a stand in for a distance towards the other and we have the *object a*, which is

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[65] Roberto Harari, *Lacan's Seminar on Anxiety: An Introduction* (Other Press, LLC, 2001), p. 59.
[66] Lacan, *Formations of the Unconscious*, p. 388.

the object of fantasised enjoyment that lies beyond the other. In our example of the racist fantasy, we found this structure as the lacking subject ($) erecting a social obstacle (<>) in the figure of the racial other who has some privileged enjoyment (a).

The fantasy structure is only effective through some ideological maintenance. As Žižek states, 'One has merely to break the spell of object a, to recognise beneath the fascinating agalma, the Grail of desire, the void that it covers'.[67] This passage may conflate the position of the *object a* as the same as that of the fetish, however, Lacan would use the term *object a* to describe both the lost object that can never be found and the fantasised object that we place beyond ourselves. This gives us the logic of the *object a* as like that of the soul, as either an object beyond or as an internal symptom. Lacan gives a specific twist to the pervert as he operates in the maintenance of this structure.[68] The fantasy structure that lies at the heart of the perverse subject and dictates the direction of desire relies on a special type of conservation of the *object a*. In this respect, the pervert's fantasy is an inverted version of the basic formula. The pervert holds onto being *a* (supplement for) <>$ (castration). This is the formula of perverse fantasy: a<>$. In this reversal, the pervert gains control of the fantasy. They become either a sadistic or masochistic agent who props up the smooth running of the fantasy by ensuring that the *object a* remains in a position beyond the subject.

To exemplify our logic of the fetish further, the voices of Lennon and McCartney provide evidence of a growing division as the band's career developed. A growing difference in their general styles as they matured signals a shift from a dialectical tension to a dualistic competition between voices. At its most antithetical, this can be summed up as a classic geno/pheno song tension. Freya Jarman-Ivans comments: 'The idea of language *outside* of its communicative dimension recalls what Roland Barthes calls "geno-song." In contrast to "pheno-song," which refers to "everything in performance which is in the service of communication"'.[69] We can add the geno/pheno categories to our series of body and soul, heaven and earth and recording and live performance. Like these previous examples, they can be viewed as either qualitative categories that progress in a process of gradual change, from

[67] Slavoj Žižek, *Incontinence of the Void: Economico-Philosophical Spandrels* (MIT Press, 2019), p. 220.
[68] Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan* (Wiley, 2016), p. 49.
[69] Freya Jarman-Ivans, 'Queer(Ing) Masculinities in Heterosexist Rap Music'', in *Queering the Popular Pitch*, ed. by Jennifer Rycenga and Sheila Whiteley (Taylor & Francis, 2006), pp. 199–221 (p. 205).

geno to pheno, or as a dialectical tension where one forms the indivisible remainder of the other: the *object a*.

Although both Lennon and McCartney had dynamic ranges that could cover a wide array of songs, we can sum up their general singing styles. Lennon's singing is at times strained and has bluesy elements. It is a voice that speaks of his rock-and-roll roots and is often at the limits of his range: a geno voice. McCartney is generally fuller and cleaner in his delivery, using rock-and-roll embellishments as a supplement rather than the core of his timbre: a pheno voice. In the early singles, the tension in these styles served to anchor each other. McCartney's harmonies tamed Lennon's roughness and Lennon's roughness of delivery provided the drive, or grain, behind McCartney's more dynamic range. Walter Everett identifies as a key feature of the Beatles early sound, 'a polyphonic melody with two "voices," both performed by one singer who alternates between the pitches of one line and those of another'.[70] This observation suggests that the dynamic worked with Paul's melodic singing style delivering simple, familiar motives, as John's ability to ground his voice in the body, gave the material room to move outside of familiar parameters (this is not to say that Paul couldn't sing in a rock-and-roll style or that John wasn't a balladeer).

In the close harmony singing of the early Beatles, we get an effect like what Michel Poizat identifies in 16th century liturgy singing:

> when the quintessence of the religious spirit was distilled in a polyphonic singing in which the intermingling of voices and even texts eventually dissolved the intelligibility of words altogether. It is as though once *jouissance* comes into play, regulatory mechanisms have difficulty holding their own.[71]

We can follow an idea of a communication between the subjective (geno) and objective (pheno) surpluses that meet in this dialectic as creating an enjoyment through limits. Take, for example, the song 'Love me Do',[72] the two melodies intertwine in such a way that it's hard to define the lead vocalist. The melody only exists between the two voices and never settles definitively.

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[70] Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver Through the Anthology* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 59.
[71] Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera* (Cornell University Press, 1992, p. 48).
[72] The Beatles, 'Love Me Do', *Love Me Do* (Parlophone - R 4949, 1964).

This is an example of the *object a*, a remainder both within and without each voice that is never quite grounded in the symbolic. If we accept this line of thought, two voices give birth to a partial object, and it is impossible for either of the two lead voices to establish themselves fully in the symbolic order. As with Elvis's obscene gyrations, it was the dialectical tensions within these voices that created a hysterical reaction in fans. This is demonstrated by the points where the voices come together in the signature rock-and-roll 'Whoo-oo's' of the band. It is in these moments when the failure to establish a consistent symbolic identity overpours into an overtly sexual enjoyment for the audience.

In later years, the position of mutual symbolic castration was disavowed through the pushing of the personalities of the band in their individual roles as auteurs over the group dynamic. The competition between Lennon and McCartney resulted in the band moving apart as individuals. The siblings in the Beatles fraternity were perhaps moving through feelings of love and hate. In the later stages, elements such as rock-and-roll style close harmonies were reduced in favour of many features that can be considered hallmarks of progressivism. Everett highlights this stylistic shift; earlier features, 'are occasionally revisited in their later work, but generally decline in importance in the face of greater interests in more inscrutable poetic images, more imaginative sound colors, and more original tonal and formal structures'.[73] We have here a lack created by a stylistic change, and a struggle between competing artists to overcome that lack.

This movement is an oscillation between two discourses: from the symptomal true infinity to the progressive bad infinity. Žižek highlights a similar passage to that of the Beatles using two composers, Schonberg, and Stravinsky. In a *Guardian* live web chat, he answers the simple question: Stravinsky, or Schoenberg?

> I am against Stravinsky, for Schoenberg. I think that when we get a breakthrough in art, like with Schoenberg, we always get then accompanying it, a figure like Stravinsky. Renormalising the breakthrough. Cutting off the subversive edge of the breakthrough. And I think again the same goes for other arts, for example, in modern painting, it would

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[73] Walter Everett, 'Voice Leading and Harmony as Expressive Devices in the Early Music of the Beatles: "She Loves You"', *College Music Symposium*, 32 (1992), 19–37 (p. 35).

have been Picasso vs Braque. I think Picasso is Stravinsky in painting, with his eclecticism, while Georges Braque is the thorough modernist ascetism.[74]

In the Beatles, we can trace a similar movement, from a hysterical tension of the early material to a renormalisation through a fetishist displacement. In later years we can see that the tension moved from one within the music to one without, where McCartney and Lennon clashed on exactly what the Beatles' overriding fantasy should be. Terence O'Grady comments on the tensions amongst the band:

> Lennon's efforts to adapt his ideas to McCartney's 'show within a show' concept were half-hearted at best and frequently subject to harsh self-criticism after the fact. While it is always possible to hear Lennon's contributions to *Sgt. Pepper* as fully compatible with the album's innovative thrust, the fact remains that his aesthetic had diverged sharply from McCartney's by the conclusion of the *Pepper* sessions, never to converge completely again.[75]

If we return to the pheno/geno song analogy, we can say that the band moved on from voices in a dialectic, to forming a dualism. This is where we see competing fantasies coming into play. Their artistic and literal voices could still exist in song but as two separate subjects rather than negatively giving rise to a lack. In other words, a baroque moment of failure, the earlier dialectical voices, are disavowed. Or to put it another way, instead of a musical dialectic where radicality is produced through a mutual failure to exist fully in the symbolic order, there is a process where individualism takes precedence over the community; this eschews the mediation of the partnership.

Prog as a Negative Dialectic

A glaring omission in our discussion of music and fetishism thus far has been Theodor Adorno. Adorno's identification of popular music places it as part of a culture industry that operates through the fetish. His thoughts form a critique that has had a lasting provocative effect on

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[74] 'Slavoj Žižek Webchat – as It Happened', *The Guardian*, 8 October 2014, section Books <http://www.theguardian.com/books/live/2014/oct/06/slavoj-zizek-webchat-absolute-recoil> [accessed 16 September 2023].
[75] Terence O'Grady, 'Sgt. Pepper and the Diverging Aesthetics of Lennon and McCartney', in *Sgt. Pepper and the Beatles: It Was Forty Years Ago Today*, ed. by Olivier Julien (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), pp. 23–33 (p. 32).

popular music studies. Adorno's general idea places the fetish as the privileged device of alienation within modern society. Following Marx, he sees commodity fetishism as the way in which we, as consumers, do not recognise our own hand in the making of value in the commodity. Adorno comments: 'Marx defines the fetish-character of the commodity as the veneration of the thing made by oneself which, as exchange value, simultaneously alienates itself from producer to consumer'.[76] This translates to the veneration of a cult-value within commodities that, as a way of covering up the process of production, places them as things of value in themselves. This relates to a more general accumulative drive in capitalism towards an endless creation of needs towards fulfilment.

Adorno's own musical expertise leads him to privilege a very narrow conception of art music as the exception to the repetition of desires for new pleasures gifted by the capitalist economy. In his logic, there is a negative core of meaning that language cannot articulate through concepts. Tia DeNora argues, 'Adorno's critique of reason centres on the idea that material reality is more complex than the ideas and concepts available for describing it'.[77] The theoretical continuation of this view dictates that in this non-conceptual excess, we can locate where instrumental reason cannot reach: a negative dialectic without a final concept that fulfils this critical gesture. This gesture follows a logic where, 'If negative dialectics calls for the self-reflection of thinking, the tangible implication is that if thinking is to be true…it must also be a thinking against itself'.[78] A thinking that enacts a gesture against itself, or its own understanding, can be equated with an aesthetic theory that privileges the abject and hard to digest artworks of modernism. It can also be seen as a form of masochism. Thus, the argument we will explore is whether Adorno's solution to perversion is based on another form of perversion, moving from fetishism to masochism.

A defence of popular music that is often repeated is to place Adorno within his specific historical moment and supplement his critique with examples that do not conform to his own choice of privileged music. Considering the problems of fetishism, this can lead to writers arguing for a deconstructive, rather than constructive force within progressive rock. However, as we have argued through the differences between punk and prog, this turnaround is not an

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[76] Theodor w. Adorno, 'On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', in *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert (University of California Press, 2002), pp. 288–318 (p. 296).
[77] Tia DeNora, *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 4.
[78] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (A&C Black, 1973), p. 365.

assured way to form a resistance. To sum up the general idea, Adorno's basic critique of modernity is used to find a solution to the problem of commodity fetishism through carving a position for popular music as capable of a radical deconstruction. Scholars who affirm Adorno's sentiments about popular music must, by association, hold the notion of a contrarianism as existing within the popular sphere. This is to paint popular music as having blossomed as a site of resistance in the years after Adorno had written his most scathing critiques.

To outline several examples, Edward Macan draws a line from Schuman to Adorno to progressive rock in counteracting mainstream criticism of the genre.[79] For example, where critics see the bombastic elements of prog aligned with a cynical attempt to prop up an essential class difference within rock music, Macan sees a negative synthesis where progressive rock reflects a wider political project of progress. Of the historical and stylistic fusion of prog, Macan states: 'Even though it's likely the founders of progressive rock never heard of Adorno, they saw in their difficult, knotty, music a kind of negative dialectics set against the purely cliched'.[80] In this the author sees a reflection of modernism within progressive rock that shares the enactment of a negative dialectic, which finds a pathway out of the repetitions of capitalist reproduction. Similarly, John Sheinbaum places the high/low value systems of music criticism on a spectrum and argues for the undercutting effect of progressive rock, 'The progressive rock repertory does not construct a synthesis at all but, instead, occupies the spaces between these value systems'.[81] Sheinbaum views prog as contradictory in its finding ways of including elements from differing value systems; it is thus read as a negative dialectic without synthesis. John Covach also follows this path in his interpretation of 'Close to the Edge'[82] by Yes.[83] Here he follows the line of a maintenance of an unsurpassable negativity within the dichotomy of value systems, 'It is rather, the maintenance of this very tension between the two widely disparate styles that accounts for the compelling aesthetic effect of 'Close to the Edge'; a

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[79] Edward Macan, 'The Music's Not All That Matters, After All: British Progressive Rock as Social Criticism', in *The Routledge History of Social Protest in Popular Music*, ed. by Jonathan C. Friedman (Routledge, 2013), pp. 123–42.

[80] ibid., p. 128.

[81] John J. Sheinbaum, 'Progressive Rock and the Inversion of Musical Values', in *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, ed. by Kevin Holm-Hudson (Routledge, 2002), pp. 21–43 (p. 30)

[82] *Yes,* 'Close To The Edge', *Close To The Edge* (Atlantic - K 50012, 1972).

[83] John Rudolph Covach, 'Progressive Rock, "Close to the Edge", and the Boundries of Style', in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, ed. by Graeme MacDonald Boone and John Rudolph Covach (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 3–33.

reconciliation of those forces that would surely weaken the dynamic effect of the song'.[84] Finally, Jerome Melancon and Alexander Carpenter argue for the subversive nature of progressive rock in comparison with both Adorno's definitions of serious music and popular music.[85] Here progressive rock is given a position apart from the serious, as it stays within the capitalistic notion of historical progress, and apart from pop because it breaks away from alienating repetitions of kitsch light music. By giving progressive rock this position, it, 'expands from within the music industry, to push forward attentive and even structural listening, to bring attention to the alienation of everyday life'.[86] Structural listening, in its most basic definition is a listening without pre-conceived ideas; a listening that promotes the unfolding rather than synthesis of a musical work.

In these critical marriages of progressive rock and negative dialectics, we can surmise that the authors want to give the music a subversive edge in relation to both low and high value music. This is not a unique or uncommon move as any critic will venerate their own object of interest to justify its study. However, we need to question both the suitability of progressive rock as an object aligned with Adorno's own examples of modernist artworks, those that refuse symbolic definitions, while also questioning the method of the negative dialectic itself as one that may not escape the perverse nature it seeks to critique.

To answer the former question, the above critiques amount to a strategy of consciousness raising amongst a commercial audience through the creation of what Bill Martin terms, 'popular avant-gardes'.[87] This is something Adorno himself criticises. Although the idea of a higher form of knowledge, or a position outside of the mainstream might seem achievable through the appeal to the serious within the popular, Adorno states:

> The ambivalence of the retarded listeners has its most extreme expression in the fact that individuals, not yet fully reified, want to extricate themselves from the mechanism of

[84] John Rudolph Covach, p. 23.
[85] Jérôme Melançon and Alexander Carpenter, 'Is Progressive Rock Progressive? YES and Pink Floyd as Counterpoint to Adorno', *Rock Music Studies*, 2.2 (2015), 125–47 <https://doi.org/10.1080/19401159.2015.1008344>.
[86] Melançon and Carpenter, p. 143.
[87] Bill Martin, *Listening to the Future: The Time of Progressive Rock, 1968-1978* (Open Court, 2015), p. 93.

musical reification to which they have been handed over, but that their revolts against fetishism only entangle them more deeply in it.[88]

When we find arguments such as, 'progressive rock does from inside capitalism what Adorno wants serious music to do outside of capitalism: offer the possibility of structural listening to the listener',[89] we fall into cycles that conform to Adorno's own warnings about becoming deeper entangled in fetishism. The point here is that if structural listening can be accommodated by the capitalist economy, then it becomes a tool for a smoother running capitalism rather than a tool to avoid reification.

In highlighting the argument that Adorno's negative dialectic applies to much of progressive rock, we are forming a position that, on the surface, deviates from our previous discussion of prog as a meta-language. Adorno foresaw the problems with meta-language being framed as a counter to commodity fetishism in his critical concept of the phantasmagoria. This concept is applied to the music of Richard Wagner to describe the manipulation of music and audience alike through the fetishist effacement of the labour of production.[90] Andreas Huyssen comments further, 'the modernity of allegory and dissonance in Wagner's work is consistently compromised by that "universal symbolism" which simulates a false totality and forges an equally false monumentality'.[91] In Wagner's work, the universal symbolism is the use of ancient mythology. It is a pre-cursor to the top-down logic that is found in the reification of the commodity. The logic presented sees the subsumption of dissonant elements (often eulogised in Adorno's aesthetics as non-reified) under the imaginary phantasmagoria: a projected meta-language of authorial totality that leaves the radical elements of the music redundant. Richard Leppert comments: 'Under these conditions, art doesn't reveal; it obfuscates and regresses to the status of the fetish'.[92] The use of mythical figures within narrative relates to the commodity form; its basic fetishist displacement of labour into the fascination of the excessive object of a past or future utopian moment. The Wagnerian phantasmagoria and the meta ideas assigned to progressive rock are both reminiscent of Lacan's male formula of sexuation. To recall its logic, this follows that in response to a fundamental contradiction in ontology, masculinity reacts by

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[88] Theodor w. Adorno, p. 308.
[89] Melançon and Carpenter, p. 144.
[90] Theodor W. Adorno, *In Search of Wagner* (Verso, 2005), pp. 74-86.
[91] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 39.
[92] Theodor Adorno and Richard Leppert, *Essays on Music* (University of California Press, 2002), p. 533.

positing that for all men to exist, there must be one who does not conform: this is a figure of exception. If the phantasmagoria is the imaginary position of exception, a regressive myth of a time before the age of modern music, its function is to totalise a field with a fetish covering a position of inconsistency. For Wagner, the overarching idea in his oeuvre is his total artwork (Gesamtkunztwerk), which becomes a meta-language. Adorno states:

> Both the phantasmagoria and the rhythm of its dissolution have to be articulated in a large scale epic work of art. The overarching structure that results is the Gesamtkunztwerk – or as Wagner preferred to call it, the 'drama of the future' – in which poetry, music and theatre were united.[93]

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However, we may be missing the theoretical significance of the concepts of the phantasmagoria and the negative dialectic. Rather than arguing that these are differing critical views, applied to progressive rock this would be to think of prog as a meta-language or prog as a negative dialectic, we can also argue that the latter is a way to cover up the failure of the former. Thus, the negative dialectic itself can be viewed as a further regression into the fetish. The turning of thinking against itself and latching onto an image of permanent effacement is a definition of a masochistic act. The choice in progressive rock in the above criticism is thus between the fetish and its false escape through an act of masochism.

To bring these ideas together, we must consider Freud's early theory of the superego. Both the phantasmagoria and the negative dialectic contain some form of unsatiable demand. The demand to construct a total artwork and the demand to deconstruct all objects to a point of non-synthesis both place a huge pressure onto those who attempt to live up to these ideals. For Freud, the agency of the superego is also a demand, one internal to the subject. His formulation for the creation of the superego is, 'instinctual renunciation (imposed on us from without) creates conscience, which then demands further instinctual renunciation'.[94] To unpack this idea, the instinctual renunciation can be thought of as a sacrifice in the name of becoming a social being, for example a child will renounce an anti-social behaviour for fear of losing the love of the parent. This takes a minimum of reflection on the child's part, which is an internal criticism

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[93] Theodor W. Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, p. 86.

[94] Sigmund Freud, 'Cilvilisation and It's Discontents', in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol.21: The Future of an Illusion-Civilization & Its Discontents & Other Works* (Random House, 2001), pp. 64–149 (p. 129).

of the ego. The ego must live up to the expectations of the demands of this inner agency for fear of losing love. If we again remind ourselves of Lacan's triad of need, demand, and desire, we know that demand creates an excess. There is always a gap between a demand and how we interpret what the other wants from us. It is the superego that censors this gap by giving a path for its overcoming. In this sense, the superego is a kind of fetish object. It displaces our symbolic castration into the gap between societies demands and our failure to meet these demands without creating a surplus of enjoyment.

To move onto our critique of the negative dialectic itself, we can argue that Adorno falls into his own fetishist trap by unknowingly developing a notion like that of a theoretical masochism. To develop this critique, we can consider the negative dialectic as a counter to commodity fetishism. Adorno's system is an epistemology that is insufficient in capturing the concepts of the world. Fredric Jameson aligns this thought with the position of the sceptic. His definition of negative dialectics is as follows: 'a negativity that ceaselessly undermines all the available positivities until it has only its own destructive energy to promote. It is a process with its own striking resemblance to that ancient skeptiscism so important for Hegel'.[95] Hegel places the skeptic in a trio of positions: the stoic, skeptic, and unhappy consciousness.[96] These are the living results of his famous concept: the master/servant dialectic. Contrary to common belief, the master/servant dialectic is not a theory of mutual recognition or synthesis, but one of a failure of recognition. As Kojève's famous interpretation of the struggle concludes: 'The Master has fought and risked his life for a recognition without value for him. For he can be satisfied only by recognition from one whom he recognizes as worthy of recognizing him'.[97] In short, the struggle for power, the phallic position, can only end in failure. The servant is castrated in a position of servitude while the master is castrated in a phallic position that is ultimately empty. To reiterate, the phallus, in raising itself above signification as a privileged signifier ultimately signifies nothing, it is a signifier without a signified.

In reaction to this state of universal castration, or realisation that we are non-all within the symbolic order (the servant is alienated from its mythical full enjoyment while the master finds its full position alienating through its emptiness), is where Hegel presents the stoic, skeptic, and the unhappy consciousness. The stoic is the one who, in failing to be recognized, retreats

[95] Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (Verso Books, 2010), p. 56.
[96] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 119-139.
[97] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 19.

into an internal world in lieu of faith in the outside symbolic order. Stoics exist in a monk like contemplation that seeks a purity of the inner world as a meta-language. The ideal position for the stoic is a pure world free from the corruption of the outside. The skeptic recognises a flaw in the stoic position, that to speak of an inner life, free from the external world, takes its concepts from that same external world. Thus, the skeptic goes further than the stoic in rejecting the fitness of concepts themselves in capturing our inner life. In following a skeptical position, Adorno is admitting the impossibility of reaching a unity of thinking and external object in full agreement: there is no final synthesis in his method. This is something of an endpoint and perceived victory as the sceptic has knowledge of how the system of language, and by extension ideological interpolation, will be forever insufficient. If we align Adorno with the position of the skeptic, his project follows that the recognition of alienation in an insufficient knowledge of concepts is taken as a form of critique; only this constant non-synthesis will leave a gap within the process of reification. However, Henry Cavell identifies a major problem in skeptical approaches to knowledge:

> skepticism's repudiation of knowledge is merely a function of having set the sights of knowledge too high: of course if you impose the idea of absolute certainty on knowledge, you will not find that we know anything (except perhaps mathematics, together with what, if anything, is given to the senses); of course if you try to turn induction into deduction, induction will seem wanting; of course if you demand that in order to see an object you have to see all of the object, then we can never really or directly or immediately see an object.[98]

Applied to the skeptiscism evident in our musicological analysis, we can say that in arguing for progressive rock as a meta-position or negative dialectic in the wider field of rock music, we are setting an impossible aim and exerting a damming superegoic pressure onto the music and its listeners. Thus, under a skeptical analysis, progressive rock will never be progressive enough.

 In what may seem contrary to our common-sense view, the skeptic is a figure of conservation. In short, while we can admire the scope of argumentation that pushes through to a limit beyond

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[98] Stanley Cavell, 'Poe's Imp', in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism*, ed. by Morris Eaves and Michael R. Fischer (Cornell University Press, 2019), pp. 214–26 (p. 216).

language, it is only from within language that such positions can be articulated: symbolic castration is an imminent condition rather than an external hindrance to being. To develop this idea, Robert Solomon states: 'The sceptic/skeptic claims the independence of consciousness but in fact employs presuppositions and considerations drawn from the very world it claims to deny'.[99] In other words, in rejecting our systems of knowing based on their insufficiency Adorno, and by extension our progressive rock critics, are making presumptive denials and assumptions on which the final system of the negative dialectic rests. Žižek sums up Adorno's position as one, 'in love with explosions of negativity…but unable to overcome its own parasitizing on the preceding positive order'.[100] The ultimate end of this position is one that falls into the classic superegoic trap. This is in attempting to fulfil a notion of impossible purity, which is the classic imperative of the superego; we only produce guilt in our inevitable failure to live up to this ideal. This is how we arrive at Hegel's final position: the 'unhappy consciousness'. To produce guilt is also the position of sadomasochism; it is here that we can connect Adorno's position of the negative dialectic to that of the pervert.

Deleuze develops a detailed account of perversion based on the position of the subject towards the superego.[101] For Deleuze, the superego is a sign of a weak authority that must be supplemented for social space to run smoothly. To counter this, he imagines a mythical partnership, or a full enjoyment in a direct mother/son relation, which is embodied through a masochistic theatre. A provocation is directed towards the oedipal father where we find the masochist in a privileged position that bypasses the father's injunction by finding an incestuous sexual relation free from prohibition. Deleuze comments: 'The masochist experiences the symbolic order as an inter-maternal order in which the mother represents the law under certain prescribed conditions'.[102] The logic follows that a myth of a new type of relation makes up for the absence of the forbidden sexual relation in a post-oedipal subject. The second stage of the masochist act is given over to the suspension of the superego and the instigation of a new ideal that functions outside of patriarchal structures. This follows the same path as the negative dialectic as a fantasy of a liminal position that resists patriarchal structures.

[99] Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G.W.F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 465.
[100] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (MIT Press, 2009), p. 5.
[101] Gilles Deleuze and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism* (Zone Books, 1989).
[102] Deleuze and Sacher-Masoch, p. 63.

Deleuze outlines the complete process of masochism, 'Disavowal is a qualitative process that transfers to the oral mother the possession and privileges of the phallus. Suspense points to the new status of the ego and to the ideal of rebirth through the agency of the maternal phallus'.[103] On this point, we can see the divergent paths that both Deleuze and Lacan take when developing masochism. For Deleuze, the implication of a law that bypasses the figure of the father fits in with his anti-oedipal stance.[104] In effect, the movement is a separation of enjoyment from desire with enjoyment becoming an independent force outside of the symbolic order. If we momentarily return to our example of the progressive turn in the Beatles, we can argue that to purify enjoyment in their artistic vision from the desire of their audience, or ideal which forever undercuts a phallic position of mastery, is akin to this masochistic avoidance of the castrated or weak father. Again, if we also accept this as Adorno's position, we can see critics who utilize the negative dialectic in progressive rock as falling deeper into perversion, rather than finding a freedom separated from the logic of the fetish. To follow this logic to the end, Bostjan Nedoh states, 'the desexualisation of the libido - which is the same as the separation of the drive from the realm of sexuality - is, for Deleuze, a necessary condition for the mutual independency of sadism and masochism'.[105] From this, we can deduce a position in Deleuze's thought for perversion as a primary, pre-sexual form of repetition that holds a vitalist function. Rather than primal repression and an originary split at the core of ontology, what the vitalist position argues for is a univocal drive that persists before the sexualisation of the subject. In Lacan, this is a primal myth that is retroactively posited from the seat of symbolic retroactivity. A vitalist theory of masochism would think the perversion as a gateway towards the realisation of a mythical space or freedom. However, on masculine fantasy, Lacan makes the assertion that 'What was seen, but only regarding men, is that what they deal with is *object a*, and that the whole realization of the sexual relationship leads to fantasy'.[106] In this respect, Deleuze's realisation of a non-oedipal sexual relation that bypasses the superego, and to add, Adorno's negative dialectic, are no more than masculine fantasy structures: bad infinites.

The Musical Box

[103] Deleuze and Sacher-Masoch, p. 127.
[104] Gilles Deleuze and FeÌlix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (A&C Black, 2004).
[105] Boštjan Nedoh, *Ontology and Perversion: Deleuze, Agamben, Lacan* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), p. 63.
[106] Jacques Lacan, quoted in Nedoh, *Ontology and Perversion*, p. 86.

To give a more in-depth example of the link between progressive rock and masochist perversion, we can turn to the Peter Gabriel fronted era of the rock band Genesis. For Genesis, there is a prevalence of fantasy and childhood nostalgia within their music, which acts as a stage for diverted expressions of enjoyment. Kari Kallioniemi attributes this to, 'a distinctive Victorian mystique of bourgeois Olde English romanticism of the nineteenth century and Angelo-Saxonry that lurked behind the bands early music'.[107] In a typical classic era Genesis performance, there is the feeling that we are placed into a fantastical existence, a phantasmagoria; another name for this is a theatre of masochism.

There is evidence that Peter Gabriel was familiar with perverse structure and that the band's early music was invested with a knowledge of theatrical masochist fantasies. First, there are several lost Genesis songs from the period before they recorded their debut album, one of which is listed as having the title, 'Masochistic Man'.[108] This song no longer exists and was perhaps renamed and recycled later. The second piece of evidence is more direct. There is an interview, where a question is asked about a then recent music that Gabriel recorded for a television program about fetishes and fetishism, Gabriel states:

> I'm interested in all perversions. This friend of mine used to get particularly turned on by ladies shoes. I don't get particularly excited about those although trees I can find erotic. There's nothing like a good oak tree - which is something strange I suppose. I find with anything it's much more interesting to look at the extremes of things on the outside rather than the centre when people can look at these things objectively.[109]

'The Musical Box', serves to exemplify the perverse elements in the Peter Gabriel era of Genesis. The song takes place in a half-world between fantasy and reality. Through this setting, Gabriel presents several unsettling characters reminiscent of those found in Victorian childhood literature. The story is a 'making strange' through the violent underside of the fairy tale world. As Chris Welch states:

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[107] Kari Kallioniemi, 'Peter Gabriel and the Question of Being Eccentric', in *Peter Gabriel, from Genesis to Growing Up*, ed. by Michael Drewett, Sarah Hill, and Kimi Kärki (Ashgate, 2012), pp. 31–43 (p. 38).

[108] Steve Aldous, *The Songs of Genesis: A Complete Guide to the Studio Recordings* (McFarland, 2020), p. 313.

[109] Jerry Gilbert, 'Peter Gabriel', *Sounds*, November 1972 <https://www-rocksbackpages-com.libproxy.ncl.ac.uk/Library/Article/peter-gabriel-2> [accessed 17 September 2023].

The whole piece is full of repressed sexuality and violence, and Gabriel toys with the lyrics with fastidious fascination. The most simple lines about 'Old King Cole', are rendered chilling, and phrases like "and the nurse will tell you lies', leap out from a nursery room drama that builds up in tidal waves of manic energy.[110]

A centre piece of classic era Genesis, the song developed in several different iterations over a long period. As a true band effort, the ideas presented show precise composition and an eccentricity as a trademark of their collective sound. As with much progressive rock, the central story is enigmatic and suggests meaning in several superimposed layers. According to Covach, the song, 'weaves a dark, mischievous, and surreal tale of Victorian perversity among the British aristocracy'.[111] We are overloaded with meaning coming from the song lyrics, the *Nursery Cryme* album cover art, Gabriel's live narration and acting out and the written fairy tale version of the story. This gives ample material to construct a commentary on the piece.

To give the original Gabriel penned story of the song, as printed on the original album:

While Henry Hamilton-Smyth minor (8) was playing croquet with Cynthia Jane Blaise-William (9), sweet-smiling Cynthia raised her mallet high and gracefully removed Henry's head. Two weeks later, in Henrys nursery, she discovered his treasured musical box. Eagerly she opened it and as 'Old King Cole' began to play a small spirit-figure appeared, Henry had returned - but not for long, for as he stood in the room his body began ageing rapidly, leaving a child's mind inside. A lifetimes desires surged through him. Unfortunately the attempt to persuade Cynthia Jane to fulfil his romantic desire, led his nurse to the nursery to investigate the noise: instinctively Nanny hurled the musical box at the bearded child, destroying both.[112]

This bizarre tale centres on several themes that can be interpreted from the most innocent of childhood games, to both paederast and masochistic fantasies. In placing perverse acts at the centre of this deceptively innocent Victorian fairy tale setting, we can develop a commentary that follows a masochistic social link. Žižek frames the masochistic social link as functioning

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[110] Chris Welch, 'In The Beginning There Was... Genesis', *Melody Maker*, 24 April 1971 <https://www-rocksbackpages-com.libproxy.ncl.ac.uk/Library/Article/in-the-beginning-there-was-genesis> [accessed 17 September 2023].
[111] John Covach, p. 76.
[112] Genesis, *Nursery Cryme* (Charisma - CAS 1052, 1971).

by assuring that guilt is produced via the staging of a fantasy. In masochism, 'the satisfaction is provided by imagining the future scene in which the beloved other, who has unknowingly injured him, will deeply regret his unjust accusation'.[113] As 'The Musical Box' narrative is abstract, we must do a little interpretation to bring out this masochistic dimension. If we begin with the observation that there is an absent father in this tale, the lack of paternal authority pertains to a trouble in instigating the law. The limit to the enjoyment performed in the murderous games of these children is instigated in the figure of the nanny who, when the game goes too far, sets a limit, and stops things going too far outside of theatrical space. Thus, the relationship between the characters in 'The Musical Box' can be read as the classic masochistic pairing: the subject reduced to being tortured in an organised game by the contracted torturer. The masochist manipulates this scene until the point that things go too far. Here, a limit is set by superego guilt, produced on the side of the torturer. This is where the figure of the nanny functions, she breaks up the incestuous play and instigates the missing paternal law.

A further link in the connection between the song and masochism comes from the influence of Victorian literature, where perverse childhood dramas can be abundantly found. It serves to mention the most apparent influences on 'The Musical Box' from this cannon, as Gabriel states:

> One of the influences on *Nursery Cryme* was the dark childhood of *The Turn of The Screw*. Also *Great Expectations*. These are very English and evocative. One of the reasons, I think, that films and programs about school are of interest to people is because that is when so much of your interface with the world gets formed.[114]

The affiliation with Henry James's Victorian ghost story, *The Turn of the Screw*,[115] seems to be in line with Gabriel's own childhood memories of Victorian architectural relics. Growing up in the countryside, he would often stay in old manor houses and estates owned by aging relatives.[116] These settings are affiliated with the stories of haunting, popular in the Victorian era. If written in its short story form 100 years earlier, 'The Musical Box' may well have appealed to this same sensibility.

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[113] Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (Verso, 2000), p. 281.
[114] Peter Gabriel, quoted in Mat Snow, 'Peter Gabriel Feature', *Mojo*, 29 April 2010
<https://thegenesisarchive.co.uk/mojo-april-2010-peter-gabriel-feature/> [accessed 17 September 2023].
[115] Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw (Legend Classics)* (Legend Press Ltd, 2021).
[116] Daryl Easlea, *Without Frontiers: The Life and Music of Peter Gabriel* (Omnibus Press, 2018), ch. 1.

'The Musical Box' follows this same form and is homologous with one of the central themes in *The Turn of the Screw*. This is the idea that there is an uncontrollable excess within children's games and children themselves. Henry James manifests this in the extimate ghosts of former abusers and their ambiguous relationship to the novel's children. A masochistic reading of Henry James's tale sees young Miles, an abject character who has become ejected from his upper-class education, enter contracted games with his new nanny. The aim is to enter her into a seductive primal scene where she will take the position of a dominating image from his past; a ghost with whom there is an ambiguous suggestion of a sexual deviancy.

The drama places the child in a liminal space, between anxiety and acceptance of symbolic castration, which is the space of perversity. There is a connection between the discarded toy in the Musical Box and liminal space found in fantasy and children's literature. These are spaces where a child can enact a type of senseless drama of violence in the process of learning to become a social being. J.R.R. Tolkien makes a similar point in the connection between children and fairy stories:

> Actually, the association of children and fairystories is an accident of our domestic history. Fairystories have in modern lettered world been relegated to the "nursery", as shabby or old-fashioned furniture is relegated to the playroom, primarily because adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused.[117]

This corresponds to a masochistic structure where a degree of self-punishment happens in the movement from a babbling to fully speaking subject. Tolkien's old furniture is meant to be abused in the culturing of children. There is a reflection in the use of childhood themes such as nonsense and fantasy and the liminal space of perverse development. The child left without a strong sense of parental authority will utilize this liminal space to narrativize the passage of instigating the law in a staged dramatization.

To begin our analysis, the musical feature that is most analogous in building a masochistic narrative for 'The Musical Box' is the song's harmonic fragility. There is a definite gravitation, throughout the song, towards what will become the tonic of F# in the final 'seduction' section. This is through several failed attempts to establish the tonic. If we are to equate this with our

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[117] J.R.R. Tolkien, quoted in Harvie Ferguson, *Essays in Experimental Psychology* (Springer, 1983), p. 56.

fantasy, or fairy story setting, we get an underlying musical structure that holds us within the uncertainty, or what we might call the liminal middle of the story.

Table 1: The Musical Box

Section	Timeline	Harmonic Map	Features
Introduction	0:01 – 0:12	A#m/C# - Bm/D – A#/C# - G#/B – A#m/C# - Bm/D – A#m/C#	Played on multiple guitars in differing registers in open tuning (G# drones throughout)
Verse 1	0:12 – 0:42	Bm – F# - Bm – F# F#m/A – D/A – A6	Vocals enter, guitars play alternating ascending and descending arpeggios.
Verse 2	0:42 – 1:12	Bm – F# - Bm – F# F#m/A – D/A – A6	Slide guitar plays call and response lead lines with vocals
Chorus 1	1:12 – 1:26	E – F#	Backing vocals become more prominent with echo effect. F#m Medieval guitar lick played in a high register.

Instrumental 1	1:26 – 1:42	F#m – Gdim F#m - Em	Lower register guitar. Flute enters. High hats enter.
Bridge 1	1:42 – 2:02	F#m	Tension builds on single chord. La La backing vocal pan left to right.
Instrumental 2	2:02 – 2:59	Am – G – Am D – G – D – G D Am – F#m A	Hi hats and vocals intermittently drop out and Flute and Guitars play descending major lines, then trade minor solos.
Bridge 2	2:59 – 3:21	Dmaj7 – E – Dmaj7 – C#m – F#m C#m	Half-time. Full band enters with majestic chords and full drumkit.
Chorus 2	3:21 – 3:38	E – F#	Repeat of chorus one.
Guitar Solo 1	3:38 – 4:48	E – F#m F#m - E D – E – F#m – E	Distorted guitars and Organ enter. Heavy drums and lead guitar solo. Bass becomes prominent.
Old King Cole	4:48 – 5:46	F#m – B – D – F#m – B F#m – B – D – F#m	Strummed guitar and distorted woodwind

		F#m - E – Bm – D E	enter under nursery rhyme lyrics.
Guitar Solo 2	5:46 – 7:38	F#m E – F#m B – D – E	Heavy guitars back Hammond organ and lead guitar solos.
Seduction Scene 1	7:38 – 9:00	F#m D#m7 – F# - B – F# - E	Sparse instrumentation. Light guitar arpeggios and vocal in the round with softly played drums.
Seduction Outro	9:00 – 10:16	F# - D#m - F# - E B – F# B – C# -F# F# - C# F#	Organ enters. Song dynamically builds, all instruments gradually re-enter towards Beethoven like extended cadence.

The introduction is played on a guitar, possibly in an open tuning. It is in the key of F# and consists of 3 chords in inversion, which alternatively ascend and descend around the first chord. The short intro finishes on the A#m/C#. This creates an un-rooted feeling as the intro is essentially a pattern of shifting major 6ths.

The key changes at the beginning of the verse to Amaj, with the vocal melody starting on the D. The song harmonically gravitates in these early sections to an F#maj, which is the parallel major to the corresponding minor key in A (F#m). The basic progression moves from Bm to F#, alternating back and forth for four bars, before moving to an F#m/A - D/A resolving into an A6 chord. There is a contrast between the first and second half of this progression that

reflects the lyrical theme. The initial lyric, 'Play me Old King Cole, that I may join with you', seems to be an attempt for the little creature inside the musical box to re-establish its mortality by setting up a little scene, a piece of contracted masochist theatre. The melody contains an A# at the end of the first line, which creates the effect of shifting between F#m and F#maj. This forms a cycle of tension and release, in which we can see the play of liminal space. The second line is a resignation to the position of abjection, 'All your hearts now seem so far from me, it hardly seems to matter now'. This is where we get a weak resolution of with a VI - IV - I cadence. Each chord in this second half has been perverted in some way. The F#m is played in first inversion, the D in second inversion, with a Lydian raised 4th passing note, and the tonic played with a major 6th. Both the first and second half consist of musical material that points us to either an unattainable beyond, or a trodden ground that seems lifeless. Again, this is either a transitional liminality or a purgatory like existence, highlighted by the line, 'lost inside this half world'.

There is a short chorus/refrain that seems to gravitate towards a more solid articulation of the F#major. The progression moves from Emaj to F#maj. As in the previous section, we get the melody shifting from A to A#, but in this instance it becomes repeated in a manner that suggests an attempt to resolve into the F#. This is accompanied by the line, 'Play me my song', which descends from the A to E, then the line, 'Here it comes again', which repeats the melodic phrase but with the first note raised to the A#. Rather than a cadence this effect is of a dynamism. The A and A# push and pull.

We can see the development of a musical narrative in the instrumental passages that follow the chorus. Where in the initial sections we get meandering passages that seem slightly ambiguous harmonically, with there being a gravitational pull towards the thwarted F#, here we get an attempt to establish a proper ground through a build-up of dynamics. These are focused on the introduction of the flute in the initial instrumental section.

If we look at the overall dynamic shape of 'The Musical Box', there is a gradual development in introducing certain instruments. The progression is from an acoustic/vocal song to fully electrified solos. There is a flute section which seems to lightly play around and challenge the acoustic guitar for space, a heavier electrified solo section that repeats the wind/guitar divergence on an electric guitar and organ (an electric organ, but still representative of a wind instrument), then finally a coda that comes out of the remnants of a battle for auditory

dominance. This gives some resolution to the dynamics. In arguing for a perverse narrative, we can use the specific introduction of the brief flute solo into the song as something that lessens the impact of the guitar, and hence limits the scope of what can be thought of as the patriarchal. In the context of a rock band, the flute is an instrument that has a scattered history. It makes some appearances as central piece of the rock band's musical expression, but it is not an instrument that has been fully established.[118]

We continue with a little development section, this prepares us for a key change to G major with a repeated sequence of F#m - Gdim - Emin, finger picked on a guitar. The flute is softly introduced with a very subtle 4 bar solo over this progression, which plays around the A major scale. This creates a little tension with the guitar pulling towards a minor progression with the addition of the Gdim, and the flute staying firmly within the Amaj key. The vocals then re-enter over a repeated F#m progression, which builds towards our key change. This is a subtle shift that is achieved by the vocals moving up the F#minor scale and landing on the C instead of the C#. It is here the beginnings of an Apollonian guitar battle begins. There is a repeated Amin transition into a Gmaj via a short, one bar unison phrase, where the song breaks down into just guitar and flute. This follows an oscillating I - V progression. These harmonic turnarounds establish the unsettled nature of the song's ground. Although we have made it to the Gmaj, these diversions attempt to create a strong cadence that just misses our eventual home key of F#.

From these short unison passages, the guitar and flute split, and we get alternating solos. First, there is the flute solo, which is only prominent for two bars before being pushed into the background. There is a sense that the flute lays down a challenge by extending the second bar of its solo by two beats. We get a bar of 6/4, which seems to stretch towards an emotional peak, which is quickly quelled by the guitar. We then get a dexterous guitar solo over a more regulated chord pattern. The final four bars of this section seem again to find some resolution, or rather non-resolution, to the interplay between the flute and the guitar. Here the Gmaj key is abandoned, and we get a series of long held chords, that take us back into Amaj. This suggests a failure, or incompatibility, between these two instruments.

[118] R. Guy, 'Pipe up the Volume : The Role of the Flute in Progressive Rock', 2007 <https://salford-repository.worktribe.com/output/1389579/pipe-up-the-volume-the-role-of-the-flute-in-progressive-rock> [accessed 6 October 2023].

After another chorus there is a recital of the children's nursery rhyme 'Old King Cole'. This is accompanied by a fast strummed guitar, which represents time speeding up. Further elongated guitar sections resemble a fight for mortality before the song ends on a scene of seduction in a children's nursery. This is where we find our masochistic fantasy.

In the seduction scene, we finally reach the key of F# with a simple 4 bar cycle. The scene consists of Gabriel acting as a boy in the body of an old man; an abject figure who tries to seduce a young girl. The song builds to a scene of masochistic beating, as the old man/boy begs the girl to touch him. The word 'now' is repeated with growing intensity, the words cutting into the skin and finding enjoyment in the wounds. The song ends with the nanny murdering the abject figure, which in turn leads to a full Beethoven like cadence moving between the V and I in F#major. Two mythical figures are successfully produced; thus, the song ends with a community of the girl and nanny with the masochistic abject figure cast out of the scene. The perverse fantasy is thus complete, we have achieved a world cleansed of the *object a*. The repeated V - I cadence into the F# represents the closing of the scene, a bringing down of the curtain on the theatrical game. We have finally reached the home key at the expense of a sacrifice of the masochist.

Gabriel the Eccentric

The masochistic theatre of 'The Musical Box' is generally reflective of Peter Gabriel the performer. Gabriel's sideways view in the music of Genesis can be aligned with a stereotypical aspect of English society: eccentricity. Adorno states, 'Sense can only endure in despair and extremity; it needs absurdity, in order not to fall victim to objective madness'.[119] In this sense, the figure of the eccentric plays the same role as the liminal object; a figure of perversity who props up the law through self-sacrifice. The concept of eccentricity is not foreign to rock music and can be thought of as an essential feature. Kallioniemi describes this position:

> The ironies and contradictions of Englishness were represented in the form of rock-theatre, which both attacked bourgeois values and celebrated the remnants of Victorian culture. This structured, traditional and conventional side of the Victorian world was questioned by a culture of liminality, in which the outsider, the rebel and the deviant were

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[119] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (Verso, 2005), p. 199.

heroes, the self was exalted, spontaneity was everything, and rules, restrictions, conventions and traditions, both in art and life, were ditched.[120]

The historical figure of the English eccentric functions as a figure that mocks and critiques the ridiculousness of certain English traditions and customs from a position within. This is through acting-out and surreal humour. We can see this in early progressive rock where the humour in playing the fool was a way of attaching a quirkiness to a perceived serious and complex music. As Greg Walker states, 'Progressive rock can appear a curiously British eccentricity: almost exclusively white and male in inspiration and appeal, and steeped in a largely incomprehensible or (insofar as it can be comprehended) pernicious class system'.[121] Musicians such as Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers and Syd Barrett were half a decade ahead of Genesis and from a similar upper-middle class background. From wealthy rural Southern English homes, they used this position to write a rock music of surreal humour and fantasy, fuelled by dissatisfaction with the relative luxury of middle-upper class educational privilege. Of these figures, Ian Ellis states that each, 'invariably indulged either in their own personal oddities or in esoteric myths of bygone ages. Each crafted a distinct wilful escapism, and was as playfully innocent as children in their whimsical methods of delivery'.[122] The position of English eccentricity became a mediator for access to popular culture. It was in this respect a specific form of distancing that rendered class position less antithetical. Peter Gabriel followed this ideal in his tenure with Genesis.

We can follow this connection between eccentricity and rock music through Genesis. The band formed at the Charterhouse Public School; an upper-class institution that held Victorian ideals well into the middle of the 20th century. Paul Hegerty highlights the possibility that, 'the group's shared origin, in the shape of one of class-ridden Britain's most exclusive fee-paying schools, might limit the possibility of Genesis being able to express the suffering of the oppressed and exploited'.[123] However, rather than this limit of class presenting a barrier, we can read it as something of a creative limit that fed the idiosyncrasies of the band. Peter Gabriel's own brand of English eccentricity ran along the dividing line of class politics and youth culture. This

[120] Kallioniemi, p. 37.

[121] Greg Walker, 'Selling England (and Italy) by the Pound: Performing National Identity in the First Phase of Progressive Rock: Jethro Tull, King Crimson, and PFM', in *Performing National Identity: Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions*, ed. by Manfred Pfister and Ralf Hertel (Rodopi, 2008), pp. 287–307 (p. 292).

[122] Iain Ellis, *Brit Wits: A History of British Rock Humor* (Intellect Books, 2012), p. 42.

[123] Paul Hegerty, *Peter Gabriel: Global Citizen* (Reaktion Books, 2018), p 16.

position gave the upper-middle class Gabriel a way of including himself and his band within a music that was often antithetical to class structures. Henry Hemming comments: 'Labelling an individual eccentric does not turn them into an outcast, however. Instead, it draws them in and renders them less oppositional or less of a threat'.[124]

We can ask of how Gabriel the eccentric fits with Genesis. It is easy to see a split in the band between Gabriel, who was a limited musician but brilliant conceptual thinker, and the rest of the band, who were well practised and focused musicians. These differences are apparent in the look and feel of the Genesis live show. Where the band was happy to sit and play with a minimum of showmanship, Gabriel performed with outrageous costumes that were often looked down upon by his band mates. Of one such incident, where Gabriel appeared on stage wearing a red dress and Foxes head without the band's prior knowledge, friend of the band, Richard Macphail, states:

> He knew if he'd told Tony he would have vetoed it...What could Tony do? Walk off, stop playing? He probably would have thought of it...They all wanted to play behind a black curtain, they wanted the music to do it and gradually, Peter realised it wasn't going to go anywhere unless somebody, him, started to put on a bit of a show.[125]

Kevin Holm-Hudson develops the antithetical relationship between Gabriel and the rest of the band in terms of a distinction between categories of totalist and particularist theatre.[126] For the totalist group, there is a tendency to place importance on the group over any display of virtuosity. For example, Macan states that against the individualism of some prog bands, who put virtuosic soloing at the forefront of performance, Genesis saw themselves, 'avoiding drawn-out solos over a repeated bass line or chord change in favour of thematic ensemble interplay that is often of considerable complexity'.[127] The particularist, on the other hand, takes the centre stage as a persona, either as a character or virtuosic soloist, against the totalist idea of group wholeness. These categories place Genesis as organised around Gabriel who undercuts the aesthetic aspirations of the band through an eccentric acting out. Through a disavowal of the point of antagonism between these categories the band largely pushes both

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[124] Henry Hemming, *In Search of the English Eccentric* (Hachette UK, 2009).
[125] Richard Macphail, quoted in Easlea, ch. 7.
[126] Kevin Holm-Hudson, *Genesis and The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), p. 32.
[127] Macan, *Rocking the Classics*, p. 108.

categories to the forefront of the performance without one overtaking the other as the primary focus. Going back to Lacanian theory, we can see both these positions as using the other as a defence against a more fundamental truth, that both categories are symbolically castrated. As Hudson states:

> Gabriel's use of make-up, body language, masks, etc., was decidedly different from his progressive-rock peers (including those in his own band), placing him in a particularist theatrical aesthetic that worked as a foil (or a source of dialectical tension) with the totalist theatrical approach of the band as a whole.[128]

To develop this idea through psychoanalytic theory, we can think of the idea of humour as a form of censorship in an association between humour and the superego. Freud states, 'We obtain a dynamic explanation of the humorous attitude if we assume that it consists in the humourist's having withdrawn the psychical accent from his ego and having transposed it on to his superego, thus inflated, the ego can appear tiny and all its interests trivial'.[129] We can see a further analogy with Alenka Zupančič's example of the jester, not as a figure of comedy, but as a figure of censorship that protects the dignity of the situation that they mock. Zupančič's example is a serious philosophical debate that collapses into a ridiculous exchange under its own petard.[130] Here, under the weight of a perverse investment in knowledge, the ideal of learned philosophers collapses into a parody. The function of the jester is to intervene in this imaginary scene and create a lewd diversion; a masochistic sacrifice to distract from the failing philosophical debate. Thus, the jester acts in the service of interrupting the debate's impossible resolution. As Zupančič states:

> What is at stake in this gesture is not at all what one might call "making comedy"; instead, the gesture is one of *exposing* the "comedy" of the existing situation, with the aim of condemning it as such and putting an end to it. What is intolerable to the jester is precisely the implicit "comedy" of the situation, with its "embarrassing" pretension to seriousness.[131]

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[128] Holm-Hudson, p. 33.

[129] Sigmund Freud, quoted in Ronald Britton, *Sex, Death, and the Superego: Experiences in Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2018), p. 133.

[130] Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (MIT Press, 2008), pp. 88-109.

[131] ibid., p. 102.

In this sense we can put Gabriel and his eccentric performances into a relation with a perverse fantasy. Like the jester, and the abject creature in 'The Musical Box, Gabriel becomes the little sacrificial object who uses himself to uphold the aesthetic ideal of the band. This is a theatrical misdirection that, again, displaces the castration of the band as a total entity. Thus, the specific mode of perversion that the identification with eccentricity follows is masochism. In the comic suspension, Gabriel's identification with eccentricity enacts an element of sacrificing by assuming the position of the *object a*: the lost object that keeps the drama moving through the desire it causes. Lacan theorises that this type of identification is one where the subject identifies with the common object; for the masochist, 'embodiment of himself as object is the declared goal - whether he becomes a dog under the table or a piece of merchandise, an item dealt with a contract, sold amongst other objects put on the market'.[132] We can read this as the formula of masochistic perverse fantasy: the masochist takes up the mantle of the common object by becoming a passive thing to be consumed and enjoyed. If we consider the overt example of perversion in sexual acts, it exists under socially contracted conditions where a perverse drama is staged. In effect, the masochist subject, in becoming a common object for the social to abuse, produces the feeling of guilt in and through the transgression of the abuser. In the case of a progressive rock band, the very overidentification with a position of mastery can, as with any phallic identification, spill over into parody and display an unintentional castration. The eccentric sacrifice is one of censoring the nullity of power structures by pre-empting its display and grounding it in a single figure of ridicule. This again is the logic of exception. In sum, Gabriel props up Genesis as its excessive surplus; he ensures that the phallic position is maintained by becoming a differential other and object of sacrifice. In this respect, by putting himself in the position of the abject or the jester, Gabriel becomes a scapegoat for derision, which, in effect, forms the bonds of a fraternal community. This exemplifies that the status of a masochist pervert is to serve the social order; to prop up the master.

Conclusion

Our exploration of progressive rock and perversion has demonstrated the many ways in which the masculine logic of exception finds its way into theory as both a problem and perceived solution. To re-iterate the ground covered in this chapter, in the binary logic in criticisms of prog and punk we found a mutual reliance between genres in giving consistency to one another

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[132] Lacan, *Anxiety*, p. 105.

through differing reactionary genre ideals. In the Beatles, we found a fall into transcendental ideas forming the core of a utopianism that relied on the establishment of a meta-position: a fetish. In the negative dialectic, we found a notion of freedom that tried to argue for a position beyond the symbolic order, which proved as reliant on its enemy as any other masculine fantasy structure. In Genesis, we found the masochistic sacrifice, which is an assurance that the social found its exception in and through the agency of the pervert. With these examples, we have exhausted the ways in which a libidinal attachment to the other, a figure of exception, serves the wider logic of the bad infinity of capitalism. With their common signifier of progression, each example repeats a logic that follows the push and pull of dissatisfaction and satisfaction, of deconstruction and construction or of erecting a masochistic theatre that ends in sacrifice.

We have now arrived at a position where we can take the other, feminine, side of Lacan's sexuation and afford it an in-depth theoretical analysis. Our next chapter will move from the logic of the fetish to that of the symptom. This is from a symbolic order that supplements itself with an imaginary object, to a symbolic order that finds within itself a real object. We must now offer solutions to the exclusionary fantasy, with the logic of the feminine non-all.

Chapter 3 – David Bowie

Introduction

Thus far, in our study of Lacan and rock music, we have concentrated our efforts on the masculine logic of fantasy. This logic has emerged in critical attempts to theorise both race and capitalist progression. In these studies, we have found fantasy as embedded unconsciously as a mechanism for delivering the promise of a utopian deferred enjoyment. It is the task of the next two chapters to offer some solutions to our critique of fantasy by presenting ways to traverse its inherent logic of exception. As critics, finding examples that go some way into rejecting masculine fantasy can help us locate privileged sites in popular music that salvage the artform from capitalism's violent reliance on discrimination. De-valuing fantasy thus provides the basis for giving popular music a renewed purpose past its commercial utility. We have already outlined the thrust of this movement in differing forms; from the masculine exception to the feminine non-all and from the bad to the true infinity. In the following chapter we will trace this again in the movement from the fetish back to the symptom.

In David Bowie, we find an example who differs ideologically from his progressive peers. Although finding initial success in the early to mid-1970s, Bowie would covet artifice rather than the serious art aspirations found in prog. In performance, Bowie was famous for utilizing a cast of alter-egos including the alien Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane, the blue-eyed soul singer, and the domineering Thin White Duke. Through this cast of characters, he would present fringe elements of society, carving out an acceptable space for them in his art. Previously, we argued for the perverse strategy of progressive rock in its connection to capitalist notions of unlimited progression. In the following chapter we will explore Bowie as a disruptor of this same fantasy. This is not to place Bowie in a friend/enemy dynamic, but to locate in his music a site of truth that speaks of the inoperability of the capitalist progressive fantasy. This is through the logic of the symptom as that which resists progressive politics.

The symptom, in psychoanalytic terms, is a compromise formation that bounds traumatic affect as a defence mechanism. As cultural theorists, we can find value in the symptom as a social idea, which finds a place for outlaw enjoyment to exist in social space, without the need for a figure of exception. For example, in Bowie's alter-egos, we find differing forms of sublimated

antisocial enjoyment including madness, disability, drug addiction and anorexia. The symptom, as a social mechanism, sublimates these destructive facets into an artifice, a compromise formation. Thus, rather than a progressive narrative that sees social aberrations as traumatic excesses to be either overcome or denied through the fetish, the symptom finds a place for these others in a symbolically castrated social space. This is the space of the non-all that, rather than deferring enjoyment, shares the suffering of the social by finding a space for its structural abjections without exception. Rather than a progressive narrative, the aim of this chapter, and the next, is to develop the symptom and ask how in its social articulation, it finds a way towards an inclusive society based on the acceptance of symbolic castration.

We will proceed by locating Bowie's alter-egos in a genealogy of disruptive literary figures that begin with the classic monster of Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. In the monster we find an abject figure who does not fit into the social world. From this we will develop similar figures such as the alien and the social outsider, who provide the function of introducing the radically different, into progressive history. From this framework we will develop a theory of Bowie's alter-egos based on the psychoanalytic logic of the symptom. We will build the logic of the symptom as a counter to Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which we will argue often repeats our previous critique of masochistic construction and deconstruction as a deeper form of masculine fantasy. In contrast to theories that place a progressive deconstruction of the symbolic as an end goal, our theory of the symptom will continue a previously outlined position of salvaging structure, while rejecting the phallic signifiers of masculine fantasy. To this end, we will frame Bowie using the Lacanian concept of the *sinthome*. This is a special type of symptom that becomes a quilting point in the social; it carves out a symbolic position for enjoyment that is usually deferred in the fetish. Our examples will come from Bowie, firstly in the aberration of his damaged eye, which subsequently becomes a vital feature in his image, then in the Thin White Duke alter-ego, a container for Bowie's descent into madness and emaciation during his American years.

Bowie in Context

To begin creation with the recognition of our self-limitations is to think retroactively, not progressively. In music, rather than following a genre ideal, or pre-existing idea, to think retroactively is to think from the perspective of the symptom. We can frame this by saying that in removing a final aim or goal, an artistic project will naturally find an ending at the limits of

its potential. We can evoke the Hegelian response to progressive aesthetics, 'in asking 'What is the aim?' retains the accessory meaning of the question, 'What is the use'?'.[1] Retroactivity is also the basis for one of Lacan's methods in moving a patient towards a traversal of fantasy in analysis. This is the famous introduction of the short session into the clinic. Rather than a set time, Lacan's idea was to quilt a session at a point where he thought a patient found a limit in their transference to, 'reduce the negative effects of protracted attempts at enhanced self-understanding'.[2] It is at this point, the limitation of meaning, that the patient reflects retroactively on the session. This is also something that can be said of the career of David Bowie as he moved through projects, changing and punctuating to leave his audience guessing whether he was an outré artist or a charlatan. For Bowie, the most famous short session in his career came on July 3rd, 1973, where he would retire Ziggy Stardust, his alien alter-ego, live on stage at the height of its popularity.[3]

The alien character of Ziggy Stardust was the most famous of David Bowie's alter-egos. In rock-and-roll, the themes of extra-terrestrial visitors, be it in songs about UFOs or alien encounters, are a popular narrative device. David Bowie's most famous alien character took influence from an uncountable number of cultural sources and expanded into a theatrical live show and album, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*.[4] Ziggy also formed the basis for two further albums recorded with his backing band, The Spiders from Mars. The image of Ziggy, a red-headed alien wearing a blue skin-tight body suit with a white painted face is presented as a Frankenstein like assemblage. Bowie gives a description of the character: 'I mean he was half out of sci-fi rock and half out of the Japanese theatre. The clothes were, for the time, simply outrageous. Nobody had seen anything like them before'.[5] Judith Peranio introduces the term *poseur* to describe Bowie, 'a term of behaviour, "posing" connotes mimicry, imposture, bound up with colonization of culture itself'.[6] Posing is a way of constructing a chimerical identity from existing sources, a stuffing the body with signification and turning the surface into a wall of artifice. *The Rise of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from*

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[1] Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, p. 61.

[2] Jacques Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', in *Écrits: A Selection* (Routledge, 2001), pp. 31–106 (p. 48).

[3] Simon Goddard, *Ziggyology: A Brief History of Ziggy Stardust* (Random House, 2013), p. 287.

[4] David Bowie, *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* (RCA Victor - SF 8287, 1972).

[5] *David Bowie on Stardust | Blank on Blank*, dir. by Blank on Blank, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lFIDXXDsxAo> [accessed 27 September 2023].

[6] Judith A. Peraino, 'Plumbing the Surface of Sound and Vision: David Bowie, Andy Warhol, and the Art of Posing', *Qui Parle*, 21.1 (2012), 151–84 (p. 159) <https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.21.1.0151>.

Mars can be considered Bowie's biggest commercial breakthrough album.[7] McLeod provides a pithy description, 'The story of this bisexual alien rock superstar who ends up a victim of his own success and commits rock-and-roll suicide'.[8] This condenses the loose story arch of the album.

We can see artificiality through Bowie's personal aloofness and his attitudes towards authorship. He was happy to admit his postmodern manipulation of existing works, leaving the final product with an openness to different interpretations. We can give an insight into some of these working methods through fragments of interviews. In a conversation with William S. Burroughs, Bowie provides his own thoughts on the Ziggy story with an eye towards adapting it for television:

> The time is five years to go before the end of the earth. It has been announced that the world will end because of lack of natural resources. Ziggy is in a position where all the kids have access to things that they thought they wanted. The older people have lost all touch with reality and the kids are left on their own to plunder anything. Ziggy was in a rock-and-roll band and the kids no longer want rock-and-roll. There is no electricity to play it. Ziggy's adviser tells him to collect news and sing it, cause there is no news. So Ziggy does this and there is terrible news. 'All the Young Dudes' is a song about this news.[9]

This near incoherent description may be down to the fact a writer he very much respected put Bowie on the spot, or we can surmise that Bowie was trying to justify himself at the level of Burroughs own high concept science fiction. Either way there is a hint of manic avoidance that leaves Bowie sounding castrated in his abstract elision of sense. Burroughs questions him further and after a description of black hole jumping infinites who implant the prophecy of a 'Starman' inside Ziggy's dreams, Bowie continues:

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[7] Peter Doggett, *The Man Who Sold The World: David Bowie And The 1970s* (Random House, 2011), p. 10.
[8] Ken McLeod, 'Space Oddities: Aliens, Futurism and Meaning in Popular Music', *Popular Music*, 22.3 (2003), 337–55 (p. 349) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143003003222>.
[9] William Burroughs and Craig Copetas, 'Beat Godfather Meets Glitter Mainman: William Burroughs Interviews David Bowie', *Rolling Stone*, 1974 <https://www.rollingstone.com/feature/beat-godfather-meets-glitter-mainman-william-burroughs-interviews-david-bowie-92508/> [accessed 27 September 2023].

Now Ziggy starts to believe in all this himself and thinks himself a prophet of the future starmen. He takes himself up to incredible spiritual heights and is kept alive by his disciples. When the infinites arrive, they take bits of Ziggy to make themselves real because in their original state they are anti-matter and cannot exist in our world. And they tear him to pieces on stage during the song 'Rock 'n' roll suicide'. As soon as Ziggy dies on stage, the infinites take his elements and make them visible.[10]

These descriptions were from 1974, a year after the infamous incident where Bowie retired Ziggy live on stage, never to return to the persona. They provide a rather convoluted version of the Ziggy concept. Although Bowie sticks to some characterisation, it is an embellishment from the narrative on the album. The curious thing about this version of the albums story is that Bowie focuses on two songs and gives them retroactive significance. First, 'All the Young Dudes'[11] was recorded in May 1972, 3 months after the last of the Ziggy sessions, and written for the band Mott the Hoople. A more accurate analysis of the genesis of the song may have come from Lou Reed, 'It's a gay anthem, A rallying call to the young dudes to come out in the streets and show that they were beautiful and gay and proud of it'.[12] A quick glance at the lyrics gives Lou Reed, a friend of Bowie in the period of writing, a bit of gravitas:

Now Lucy looks sweet cause he dresses like a queen

But he can kick like a mule it's a real mean team

But we can love

Oh, yes we can love

And,

Now I've drunk a lot of wine and I'm feeling fine

Got to race some cat to bed

Oh, is there concrete round my head

Yeah I'm a dude dad.[13]

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[10] Burroughs and Copetas.

[11] Mott The Hoople, 'All The Young Dudes', *All The Young Dudes* (CBS - 65184, 1972).

[12] Lou Reed, quoted in Goddard, p. 226.

[13] 'Mott the Hoople - All the Young Dudes Lyrics, *musiXmatch* <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Mott-the-Hoople/All-the-Young-Dudes> [accessed 27 September 2023].

It would appear from that last verse, the line, 'Yeah, I'm a dude dad', is a synonym for coming out. By 1974 Bowie was becoming somewhat more introverted and in interviews would shy away from previous proclamations of bisexuality. Whatever his reasons for hiding this interpretation of 'All the Young Dudes' in the Burroughs interview, his attempt to drop the song into the Ziggy narrative seems forced and nonsensical.

The song 'Starman'[14] is also given central importance in Ziggy's story as the re-telling of a scripture from another world. The song was written after Bowie had thought the album was finished. Upon hearing his completed work, the record company asked him to write one more song to release as a single. Bowie improvised a melody based on the octave jump at the start of 'Over the Rainbow'[15] and 'Starman' was born with no mentions of black holes or infinites.[16] The song was one of his biggest hit singles, but very much an afterthought in the Ziggy project that was rarely played live. Going back to an interview given just before the release of Ziggy in 1972, Bowie sheds some light on his working methods and perhaps the reasons for the disparity between this and his 1974 interpretation:

> What you have there on the album when it does finally come out, is a story which doesn't really take place, it's just a few little scenes from the life of a band called Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars, who could feasibly be the last band on Earth, it could be within the last five years of Earth. I'm not at all sure. Because I wrote it in such a way that I just dropped the numbers into the album in any order that they cropped up, It depends in which state you listen to it in. The times I've listened to it, I've had a number of meanings out of the album, but I always do.[17]

There is an agenda that emerges from these fragments that differs from the mastery we find in our previous examples of progressive rock. Bowie appears to be working with the middle, rather than the end in mind. It is this openness to retroactivity, to refuse a progressive narrative

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[14] David Bowie, 'Starman', *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* (RCA Victor - SF 8287, 1972).

[15] Judy Garland, 'Over the Rainbow', *Over The Rainbow / The Jitterbug* (Brunswick, 1939).

[16] Dylan Jones, *When Ziggy Played Guitar: David Bowie and Four Minutes That Shook the World* (Random House, 2012), p. 70.

[17] *David Bowie Early US 'Ziggy' Radio Interview Early 1972.*, dir. by HJ84Esquire, 2012 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPbZgVi7czo> [accessed 27 September 2023].

that renders Bowie a contrarian of his time. The idea of retroactivity, as central to Bowie's shifting persona, presents his history as open to change and re-interpretation.

Bowie the Monster

Bowie's shifting of persona demonstrates a connection between the rock star as a fringe subject and the literary theory of the monster. On glam rock, a genre that Bowie is heavily associated with, Jon Hackett states:

> Glam rock…can be seen to have an affinity with Frankenstein and his monster, which extends further than their presence in music and song titles. Both the musical form and the cultural myth involve a bricolage of existing cultural detritus fashioned into new and rapidly proliferating forms.[18]

Bowie himself identifies with this comparison, while commenting on his Ziggy Stardust persona, he stated, 'I feel like Dr Frankenstein. What have I created'.[19] Although seen as a figure of horror, the monster can demonstrate a subtle theoretical position as a political and ethical figure. This casts the monster as an outcast or disenfranchised being that also speaks to a universal human condition of non-belonging. The contradictory position of being excessive and absent from the cultural mainstream is one that should be familiar as a position of enjoyment. This is the site for a Lacanian intervention into a wider politics of identity surrounding theorisations of Bowie. As Gladen comments:

> *Frankenstein* explores themes that while emblematic of second-generation Romantic writing, speak to engagements and experiences that are enduring, if not universal. The centrality of these themes to works by Bowie…demonstrates their currency in the late twentieth and early twentieth centuries.[20]

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[18] Jon Hackett, 'The Platformed Prometheus: Frankenstein and Glam Rock', in *Scary Monsters: Monstrosity, Masculinity and Popular Music*, ed. by Mark Duffett (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2021), pp. 87–109 (p. 108).
[19] Roy Hollingworth, 'David Bowie: Cha…Cha…Cha…Changes — A Journey with Aladdin .', *Melody Maker*, 12 May 1973 <https://www-rocksbackpages-com.libproxy.ncl.ac.uk/Library/Article/david-bowie-chachachachanges--a-journey-with-aladdin-> [accessed 27 September 2023].
[20] Samuel Lyndon Gladden, 'Manner, Mood, and Message: Bowie, Morrissey, and the Complex Legacy of Frankenstein', in *Rock and Romanticism: Post-Punk, Goth, and Metal as Dark Romanticisms*, ed. by James Rovira (Springer, 2018), pp. 145–63 (p. 156).

The main thematic developments in Mary Shelley's proto monster novel, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*,[21] have been mythically played out repeatedly in modern science fiction. As the novels subtitle, *The Modern Prometheus*, suggests, Victor Frankenstein is an outsider character who wants to transgress the laws of nature. On the surface, what we get in the Frankenstein story is an idealist genius with an immature outlook on life who, in a pre-emptive reflection on the capitalist fantasy and its denial of limits, seeks to bring about a cycle of eternal life. The scientist has an unbound utopian desire, spurred on by the death of his mother, in which he aims to satisfy his own ego through a megalomaniacal scientific leap towards immortality. It is in inner loss, in the form of a bereavement, that we see the impetus for the fantasy of overcoming finitude. In this sense, Mary Shelly was an early critic of the logic of the bad infinity. In the novel, life is created from death in a short circuit of the dialectic of nature and culture. To quote a line spoken by Frankenstein: 'Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me'.[22] The outcome of this unethical scientific exploration is, 'The fallen angel becomes the malignant devil'.[23] The unleashing of a monster into society is an allegorical theme. We can utilize Shelly's modern myth to show the relationship, or non-relationship, between antagonisms such as man and his fellow man (class struggle), man and woman (sexual difference), or man and his environment (modern science).

The allegory for class struggle can be seen in the general language of monstrosity applied to revolutionary movements. The terror evoked by the monster can be seen as the potentiality within any society to create a despondent class ready to claim restorative justice. For David McNally, Shelly, 'reconstructs the process by which the working class was created: first dissected (separated from the land and their communities), then reassembled as…that grotesque conglomeration known as the proletarian mob'.[24] McNally also argues for the novel's grotesque element of grave robbing as a direct critique of the then modern scientific practise of experimentation on plebian corpses, as a wider metaphor for the creation of the working classes.[25] In the exploitation of the dead, there is a metaphor for the hidden labour behind the

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[21] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Random House, 2013).
[22] Shelley, p. 46.
[23] ibid., p. 229.
[24] David McNally, *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism* (BRILL, 2011), p. 95.
[25] ibid., pp. 51-59.

progress of scientific invention: the monster that becomes a return of the negative entropy of a social system.

Read as an allegory for sexual difference, although not an explicit reflection of the author's life, Victor Frankenstein's dealings with the monster gave a conduit for something to be revealed of the author that otherwise would go unheard against the social background of the day. This is the contradictory nature of femininity that Shelly, as a woman living in 19th century England, bridges in her dual role as an active author and passive figure of domesticity. The monster as an intelligent, speaking body, articulates these figures together, which betrays the masculinised fantasy of woman as an object of desire. Barbara Johnson reflects on an act of censorship of the sexual metaphor by husband Percy Shelly in his edited version of the novel, she states, 'what is being repressed here is the possibility that a woman can write anything that would *not* exhibit "the amiableness of domestic affection," the possibility that for women as well as men the home can be the very site of the *unheimlich*'.[26] This is a reference to the Freudian notion of the uncanny, where what is most at home is most hidden, and in a dialectical turn, what is most hidden is the most terrifying aspect of the subject. By giving a vehicle for this uncanny dimension through the monstrous figure, Mary Shelly finds a way to express a truth of what we have previously identified as the impossibility of the sexual relation: the monster's surplus enjoyment.

As an allegory on modern science, the Frankenstein myth can be seen as an intervention into the manipulation of nature for human ends. The commentary is perverse as there is an overestimation of the powers of the imaginary in the creation of a seamless immaculate conception through science. As David Collings states, 'Thus the monster finds his origins in a kind of anti-Symbolic story, indeed an anti-story, which confusedly tells how bodies come from bodies without the need for sex, how no parent claims the child, in effect how the monster has no origin worthy of the name'.[27] In modern terms we can think of a direct link between the Frankenstein story and ethical arguments surrounding cloning and other forms of genetic manipulation. Here, biological sex is seen to come with a self-destructive element that is unpredictable without scientific intervention. The limits to progression in this example come from genetic conditions and cancerous growths that come with natural conception. The fantasy

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[26] Barbara Johnson, *A Life with Mary Shelley* (Stanford University Press, 2014), p. 26.
[27] 'D.Collings - The Monster and the Imaginary Mother'
<https://drc.usask.ca/projects/frankenstein/collings.htm> [accessed 28 September 2023].

of removing these limits to mortality forms the bad infinite of the genetically modified pregnancy. This fantasy is named 'replicative technofuturism' by Howard V. Hendrix, and repeats a yearning of a complete enjoyment through a nostalgia for single celled reproduction.[28] This is a biological fundamental fantasy of a time before becoming alienated as sexed beings, thrown out of a scene of identically perfect generation-to-generation reproduction and renewal. However, this remains a fantasy, as to cross the limit into a pure repetition is to enter a monadic effacement of difference. However, the monster signals this possibility must remain in the progressive future (or nostalgic ancient past), as its realisation signals a closure of being.

What is demonstrated in these examples is the status of the Frankenstein story as a myth. Central to these metaphorical adaptations is the idea of a story resistant to the normalised masculine fantasy structure. The crux of this translatability is developed by Laura Collier and Marium Gerzic in their study on modern adaptations of the story: 'Due to its implicit examination of human anxiety, Frankenstein lends itself to perpetual revivals and reworkings in adaptations which often each reflect and comment upon particularly timely political and social issues'.[29] The power of the myth comes from a feature of the story that may be taken for granted, yet is repeated frequently in socialist critiques; this is the act of the monstrous figure speaking back. In each example, the monster is akin to a particular refuse produced in the name of a utopian fantasy. These refuses are impossible objects that should no longer exist, yet still haunt the progressive social space. The failure of capitalism to provide equality produces the proletariat, the masculine fantasy of the courtly woman produces non-conformist woman as a threat to masculinity, and the fantasy of replicative technofuturism produces a monadic cancerous growth on humanity itself.

This metaphor can be extended for our purposes into the central antagonism in the career of David Bowie. Where the story played out between Victor Frankenstein and his monster serves as an archetype for the modern monster narrative, it is also a myth that frames the postmodern

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[28] Howard V. Hendrix, 'Millions Seek Th Egg: Replicative Technofuturism in *Ready Player One* and *Armada*', in *Science Fiction and the Dismal Science: Essays on Economics in and of the Genre*, ed. by Gary Westfahl and Gregory Benford (McFarland, 2019), pp. 67–81 (p. 71).

[29] Laura Collier and Marina Gerzic, 'It's (Still) Alive!: Re-Imagining Frankenstein on Page and Screen', in *The Routledge Companion to Global Literary Adaptation in the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2023), pp. 54–70 (p. 56).

enactment of assembling cultural influences, including David Bowies use of alter-egos, framed under the notion of identity politics.[30]

Bowie and Performativity

To comment on Bowie's performance style further, we must consider the subtle difference and wild divergence between the prevalently used theory in identity politics of performativity and a psychoanalytic approach that centres on retroaction. As one of the champions of performativity, Judith Butler gives a reading of the monster as a figure who embodies an antagonism between normative heterosexual gender and homosexuality; the monster, 'may well be carrying the excess of gender that fails to fit properly into "man" and "woman" as conventionally defined'.[31] With this, the conflation of gender construction and the constructed monster are analogous: in these figures we perceive a radicality that confronts reified power structures. Butler's wider theory, as developed in her much-discussed book, *Gender Trouble*,[32] sees heterosexuality as a fictitious structure. In this view the body is seen as a site of inscriptions of gender norms made to appear natural through repetitions of regulation and disciplinary procedure. As Butler states, 'In effect, the law is at once fully manifest and fully latent, for it never appears as external to the bodies it subjects and subjectivises'.[33] This is aligned with a biopolitical view of the (Lacanian) symbolic order as a law that directly effects the body as a site of political struggle.

For Butler, the fiction of a naturalised gender is deconstructed through the example of the drag performer. She identifies three levels of sexuality within the drag performer that interact, 'anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance'.[34] Against the view that the drag act degrades women, Butler views the category of gender performance as undermining normative gender by creating a space where imitation disproves any notion of an original relation between anatomical sex and gender identity. '*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*'.[35] In effect, the flow of performance time

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[30] Toija Cinque and Sean Redmond, *The Fandom of David Bowie: Everyone Says 'Hi'* (Springer, 2019), pp. 111-131.

[31] Judith Butler, 'Judith Butler, Afterword. Animating Autobiography: Barbara Johnson and Mary Shelley's Monster', in *A Life with Mary Shelley* (Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 37–53 (pp. 47-48)

[32] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1999).

[33] ibid., p. 183.

[34] ibid., p. 187.

[35] ibid.

cuts into the reified gender roles assigned by repetition. With performativity we get a double movement of interruption: an interruption of the symbolic law that founds the subject in its reified social position (Oedipus for example) is itself interrupted by a more primary state of disorganised multiplicity of open-ended identity.

There is a tendency in popular music studies to identify Bowie with the notion of performativity as attributed to Butler. Patrick Glen uses Bowie's coming out as bisexual in an interview with journalist Mick Watts as an example of a performative challenge to gender norms.[36] Watt's recourse in upholding the perceived gender norms of the *Melody Makers* readership was to comment on Bowie's seemingly heterosexual family life; this caveat giving doubt to Bowie's assertions as nothing but the stirrings of controversy. Aside from the sincerity of Bowie's act, which can be doubted based on the notion of parody, the very mention of homosexuality causes an anxiety in the interviewer. Glen comments on the act of reactive censorship by Watts,

> Watts rehearsed deterministic psycho-physiological notions of sexuality when Bowie was knowingly undermining the notion of a coherent sexual identity; Bowie illustrated that the performance of gender and sexual orientation is mimetic rather than a pre-discursive certainty.[37]

In this interview a tension is created between a movement to normalise parts of Bowie's eccentricities under certain signifiers that keep him within an established gender identity and his assertion of bisexuality that places him under the ambiguity of gender performance.

The implications of Bowie's coming out in the public sphere are trace by Peri Bradley and James Page as they argue for a slow challenge to normative masculinity across Bowie's life and career.[38] In reference to Butler, they frame him as enacting, 'a complex mediation between concepts of post-modernity, gender theory and performativity, capitalism and commodification and cultural regulation'.[39] With changes in Bowie's persona, from the cover art of *The Man*

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[36] Patrick Glen, '"Oh You Pretty Thing!": How David Bowie "Unlocked Everybody's Inner Queen" in Spite of the Music Press', *Contemporary British History*, 31.3 (2017), 407–29 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2016.1261696>.
[37] ibid., p. 114.
[38] Peri Bradley and James Page, 'David Bowie – the Trans Who Fell to Earth: Cultural Regulation, Bowie and Gender Fluidity', *Continuum*, 31.4 (2017), 583–95 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2017.1334389>.
[39] ibid., p. 587.

Who Sold the World[40] album, which saw Bowie in drag, up to present day, this mediation encompasses shifts in both the impact of cross dressing performativity and accepted gender norms of men. The argument follows that when the Ziggy Stardust character was popular in 1972, the legalization of homosexuality in Britain in 1967 was still relatively fresh in the cultural imagination. Although the precedent for expressions of homosexual masculinity had been made available in mainstream discourse, it took figures such as Bowie to spark the re-negotiation of cultural norms after the legal act. A particular example of successful gender performativity, according to Bradley and James, came from Bowie's ability to attract heterosexual women. This gave legitimation to Bowie as a figure of female desire and made his Ziggy persona an acceptable model of male imposture, 'This female adulation of the sexually ambiguous Ziggy, then allowed Bowie's male audience and fans to become far less concerned about being associated with his gender fluid appearance and behaviour'.[41] This turn in masculinity is traced throughout the rest of Bowie's career with the authors arguing that Bowie either became the ideal or representation of a wider shift into the figure of the 1980s 'New Man'. Against the grain of classical butch stereotypes, this modern figure indicated a formal shift in the discourse, challenging the gender binary on the grounds of what it meant to be a man.

Lisa Perrot uses the Bowie song 'Boys Keep Swinging'[42] as an example of Butlerian performativity.[43] She traces a single gesture, that of Bowie smearing lipstick across his face while in drag, as an example of the transmissibility of gender performance. Perrot follows the argument with the belief that, 'the affective intensity of bodily communication through movement, stasis and kinaesthetic recognition is a primal vehicle for transgression'.[44] The gesture has obvious sexual connotations and confronts the audience as a sign of post-coitus dishevelment. Borrowed from drag performance, it challenges normative male fantasies of active sexual virality, with a sign of oral passivity. Repeated across different Bowie music videos, this gesture is given different connotations by Perrot. In the video for 'China Girl',[45] actress Geeling Ng repeats this gesture, seemingly in, 'an act of defiance to the racial

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[40] David Bowie, *The Man Who Sold The World* (Mercury - 6338 041, 1971).

[41] Bradley and Page, p. 589.

[42] David Bowie, 'Boys Keep Swinging', *Lodger* (RCA Victor - PL 13254, 1979).

[43] Lisa Perrott, 'Bowie the Cultural Alchemist: Performing Gender, Synthesizing Gesture and Liberating Identity', *Continuum*, 31.4 (2017), 528–41 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2017.1334380>.

[44] ibid., p. 529.

[45] *David Bowie - China Girl (Official Video)*, dir. by David Mallet, 1983 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YC3sTbAPcU> [accessed 14 October 2023].

positioning of the exotic other'.[46] Perrot thus finds in performativity the royal road for resisting normative structures.

Performativity is not, as might be suggested by the above interpretations, an easily fought resistance. Although these examples highlight single events and moments, it is through their repetition in media and reception as coded transgressions that they hold value. Butler develops a more refined theory of iterability that treats the symbolic norms of gender binaries as deep-seated fantasies that produce power via a fetishist reversal. In her understanding of Lacan: '"Sex" is always produced as a reiteration of hegemonic norms. This productive reiteration can be read as a kind of performativity… Paradoxically, this productive capacity of discourse is derivative, a form of cultural iterability or rearticulation, a practice of resignification'.[47] The reverse of this process is the deconstruction of normalised gender binaries through the performativity of its abjected gender positions, which Butler uses as her response to the phallic economy. However, even though we get a qualitative difference through differing sexual positions, with those entering social space as newly non-abjected, we are still faced with the further problem: a new binary between new and old sexual divisions, created through this very process of re-iteration. This proves to be the limit of Butler's theory in its replacing one bad infinite with another.

To outline this process further, Butler identifies the infinite deferral that authority enacts within the symbolic order. This follows that, as nobody pre-exists the law, its authority is only ever contained in some past or future figure who embodies authority directly. However, with her movement between abjected and phallic gender norms, the re-iterative power struggle offers no way out of this fantasy of authority, only a further fantasy of an eternal becoming, which is structurally identical to an authoritarian deferral as its mirror image in non-authority. This keeps the process of identity politics as a dualistic progressive struggle between binary and non-binary sexuated positions. Both are as invested in the myth of an infinite symbolic order of endless re-iteration as the other. Žižek highlights the outcome of Butler's theory:

> It is thus Butler herself who ends up in a position of allowing precisely for marginal 'reconfigurations' of the predominant discourse - who remains constrained to a position

[46] Perrott, p. 539.
[47] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (Routledge, 2014), p. 107.

of 'inherent transgression', which needs as a point of reference the Other in the guise of a predominant discourse that can be only marginally displaced or transgressed.[48]

If we proceed with our analysis of Bowie without considering this criticism, we are missing out on a dimension of radicality that aligns his artifice with something more than just a repeat of a common fantasy structure, albeit in a different guise. The understanding of sex as symbolic is a major point of contention within Butler's theory. In her reading of Lacan, she forgoes to develop the notion of the Lacanian real as anything other than imaginary. Joan Copjec provides the most concise criticism of Butler with the comment, 'Sex is, then, the impossibility of completing meaning, not (as Butler's historicist/deconstructionist argument would have it) a meaning that is incomplete'.[49] In this statement, Copjec is making a vital distinction between the status of sex as a positive identity, something Butler understands as constructed, and sex as the very failure of any identity to be complete, something real that undercuts our attempts to fully mean what we say. It is only with the later definition that we can de-legitimize the symbolic itself, rather than fall into games of resistance and a reliance on opposition for consistency. This is the same difference that we demonstrated with the masculine fantasy where an internal limit is displaced onto the external world. In seeing gender construction and deconstruction as a symbolic resistance to sex, it becomes a progressive idea always pointing towards a beyond. We can see this where Copjec agrees with Butler, that woman is, 'a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or end'.[50] This is close enough to our definition of the Lacanian non-all in that woman does not rely on the exception, a racial or any type of other, to gain a consistency of meaning: incompleteness is the very thing that completes her. Woman is complete in her very acceptance of the internal limits of the symbolic order, its castration. However, after identifying this point, Butler goes too far into transposing it as an exclusive problem of language, not of the subject's limitations. In this view, woman becomes infinite in her never being able to fit, her performative ever changing gender roles cannot be fully captured into a power structure that fails to cover the whole field of this excessive meaning. In this view, the symbolic order becomes just another external limit on the way to a utopian free flow of performativity: a bad infinite.

[48] Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, p. 314.
[49] Copjec, *Read my Desire*, p. 206.
[50] ibid., p. 204.

To return to Bowie, the divergent ideas of a Butlarian meaning that is incomplete and a Lacanian impossibility of completion, can give us two terms in which to analyse him: hope and hopelessness. We can determine the hope of a meaning that is incomplete and the hopelessness of the impossibility of completing meaning. Although these terms, hope and hopelessness, can be read as positive and negative respectively, when attached to our Lacanian categories of sexuation, they give us the masculine hope of finding the lost object in fantasy and the feminine hopelessness, or acceptance of being non-all within the symbolic order. Against the common understanding of these terms, it is hopelessness that offers a freedom and resistance as it is a sign of disinvestment in the promise of the social fantasy. In hopelessness we are free in knowing that the 'big Other', the social guarantee that offers us hope, only offers a constant deferral of promised enjoyment. Whereas hope is a bad infinite, this latter position of hopelessness, of traversing the fantasy of hope and realising that you are in no worse a position, is the true infinity.

In his study of Bowie, Alex Sharpe argues the monster as a figure of hope.[51] He conflates the figure of the monster and the outsider as an ideal that people draw hope from in projecting an image of an alternative future. As with Butler's position on gender, he associates the monster with an excess of meaning, something that language cannot capture: 'It is because monsters represent an excess of signification…being simultaneously human and non-human, that gives them value. It is precisely their irreducibility that speaks to each of us, and to our collective parts'.[52] In this logic, the monsters excess is seen as a form of outlaw *jouissance*, a forbidden enjoyment. However, this places the monster as another fantasy object; an externalisation of internal limitations onto the hopes of a full enjoyment.

The alternative, hopeless, position is provided by Ronjaunee Chatterjee, who analyses the monster as a non-progressive figure of hopelessness: 'Frankenstein further invites us to reconsider teleologies of progress that ground themselves in the past, present and future of the liberal subject. Its final image – the "darkness and distance" of the icy waves that bear the away – is its own singularity, a black hole of novelistic closure'.[53] We can call this example a true infinity as the monster has come to terms with its own limitations; there is no final closure to

[51] Alex Sharpe, *David Bowie Outlaw: Essays on Difference, Authenticity, Ethics, Art & Love* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).
[52] ibid., p. 17.
[53] Ronjaunee Chatterjee, *Feminine Singularity: The Politics of Subjectivity in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Stanford University Press, 2022), p. 160.

the story, only the reverberations of serial events. In psychoanalytic terms, singularity is not used in its popular scientific definition as a technology driven collective conscious. The term is rather one reserved to signify our singular mode of failure to belong fully to the symbolic order. It is in finding a place for our hopeless singularity, our fundamental way of relating to the world around us as unique, self-limited beings, that we draw idiosyncratic and novel ways of creating art. To evoke Joan Copjec, singularity is a synonym for our sexuality, our unique way of failing to live up to symbolic ideals and the very limit of language itself. In terms of David Bowie, we can see his affinity with the monster in the figures open ended past and future. As it has lost hope in finding a place in the world, it finds limitless ways to fail, of being a singular subject. In Bowie's changes, his serial alter-egos, we can argue for him following this true infinite of self-limitation, of failing in interesting and provocative ways, rather than painting him into a corner as a progressive artist.

As it does not offer a teleology, an encounter with a monster, be it friendly, hostile, or indifferent, reveals an aspect of the human condition born from the unassimilable enjoyment of the subject. The figure of the alien, the most associated monster with Bowie, as derived from Shelly's classic literary monster, can be represented in many ways. Grotesque insectoids, weird flora and fauna, humanoid visitors and uncanny doubles can all become the antagonist or protagonist against a human hero or anti-hero. In the simplest analysis, what each type of alien representation gives is a projection of otherness onto a fictionalised body. This can be as a metaphorical fear of a different race, class, sex or species, or an internal otherness. In this sense, the alien takes its form metaphorically by narrating a position of impossibility within the social field. Through the alien encounter, something repressed in the realms of language often finds its articulation as an uncanny presence.

The novum is a concept that we can apply to the monster. It describes an event or material introjection where a new element changes the parameters of an existing world. As a type of material messianism, a novum appears in an extreme form as a miraculous subject that can arise as an excessive element in lived history. Derived from the biblical eschatological new, Wayne Hudson states of the novum: 'This is the concept of the radical new brought about by the acts of God. God acts to fulfil his promises in a way which goes beyond what was expected, and which introduces something which could not be extrapolated from what is already at

hand'.[54] In terms of religious storytelling, the novum can be found to introject into a series of progressive events that seem to move towards a determinate end. Within these coordinates something new happens that appears to retroactively change those determinate factors. This leaves open the near limitless possibilities of a material life world being interrupted.

To bring this concept into a materialist framework, we can move away from the direct religious metaphor and substitute God for our symbolic order of language. Walter Benjamin's concept of messianic time, as opposed to linear history, is exemplary in demonstrating this substitution. If we return to the notion of progression, messianic time can be viewed as an interruption. As Benjamin states, 'Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock'.[55] It is Benjamin's famous example of the Klee painting 'Angelus Novus' that narrates a general resistance to the messianic event under social democratic ideology. Here the angel of history faces a catastrophe of cumulative history as it gets helplessly blown into the future by the 'storm we call progress'.[56] We can of course cast a wider net and use this example in our general criticism of capitalism, which defers the interruption of progress through perverse accumulation. A novum is then this figure of the messianic angel as it returns, or finds a way back through the storm of history as an interruption of its forward motion.

Applied to David Bowie, we can adapt the notion of the novum to explain the artist's appeal. In music or any popular artform, we must see value in giving a site of universal contradiction, which is a common, non-progressive, space that belongs to no one and hence can become an eventual site for the (non) all. The novum can be called a new symptom formed as an internal resistance to progressive ideology. In this figure a subject is invested with a piece of the Lacanian real and becomes a sublime object. With this, in the terms of a popular drama, the novum is akin to a point where a non-sensical figure such as a monster introjects into the smooth running of things as a return of the repressed.

A basic definition of the formation of the psychoanalytic symptom comes from Daniel Bristow, he states:

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[54] Wayne Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (Springer, 1982), p. 117.

[55] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations* (Random House, 2011), pp. 245–53 (p. 254).

[56] ibid., p. 249.

in Freud's later topography - that of the id, ego and superego - we see the symptom as the manifestation of repressed content (in the id) by the ego, made in deference to the superego. In effect - if we could discuss these constituents independently - if it could, the id would display its content uninhibitedly, but the ego realises that the superego would look down upon this, and thus it represses this content, by taking it into itself, which forces its re-cathexis - makes *it* (Lacan's word for 'id') *speak* - through another channel.[57]

Thus, in Freudian terms, we have the notions of the id, ego, and superego. Following maturation, the child who is alienated in its enjoyment with the mother enacts a separation into an alternative form of alienation through identification with the father (name-of-the-father). This is the resolution of the Oedipus complex. The goal is for the child to become part of a wider social order. Because identification with the father is always tricky (or impossible), sons rarely live up to the expectations of the father and vice versa, because of the imposture of the phallic signifier. The symptom is a means to hold on to, or hide away a part of the mother, the subject's own singular form of enjoying, into language through repression. In a capitalist system ruled by the imperative to Enjoy! holding onto a symptom is paradoxically an alternative form of enjoyment, one that hides from the progressive demand of accumulation. As we saw in the developmental drama of the pervert, this symptom is something that can cause the subject to prop up the maturation process by acting as a supplement, an active agent in covering it over. This is where narratives of progression and fantasy seek to disavow the symptom with a fetish to prop up a secondary form of imagined enjoyment. This is the logic of the bad infinite and the exceptionalism of the masculine solution to symbolic castration. The novum, however, proves to be a differing way to maturation; it is a re-doubling of the symptom into a positive form. Instead of a deferral or avoidance of the symptom, the narrative of the novum plays out its integration into social space as an unavoidable limit: a true infinite.

Androgyny, ambiguity, allusion, and artifice are terms that can describe this act of hiding something from the superego and are synonymous with Bowie. It is in these notions we can find a starting point in analysing his work through the logic of the symptom. Patricia Gherovici frames the relation to the symptom as, 'something that may allow you to exist in the world –

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[57] Daniel Bristow, *Joyce and Lacan: Reading, Writing and Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2016), p. 70.

in other words, your idiosyncratic, creative strategy of survival'.[58] The basic premise is that alter-egos help form this creative strategy by becoming a way of framing and finding a place for hidden outlaw enjoyment within performance, without resorting to scapegoating. Rather than a logic of exception that pushes enjoyment onto a fetishised other, performance becomes a channel for the symptom to speak in the here and now. Contrary to a Butlarian play of alternate narratives that endlessly move, we get the undermining of narrative from within: the symptom is the unassimilable cause rather than the effect of performativity, its internal limit.

In this respect we can see science fiction as a genre of the symptom par excellence. It is the material function that gives the science fiction genre one of its key critical aspects. In keeping within the confines of a scientific explanation (even pseudoscientific) the symbolism is drawn closer to a realism than other forms of imaginative literature such as fantasy. This gives science fiction its socio-political critical perspective, which, through a metaphorical significance, can speculate on current material conditions. As Adam Roberts states:

> Ordinary fiction introduces 'symbolic' devices, various imaginative strategies to provide 'discontinuities' with our experience of the world, without thereby becoming science fiction. But the textual function of these nova in SF sets them apart from other usage. In other words, SF gives us a unique version of the symbolist approach, one where the symbol is drained of transcendental or metaphysical aura and relocated back in the material world.[59]

There are many types of novum in science fiction that fulfil the function of representing a lack in the social order. Examples can be anything unaccounted for by a particular universe but still of material origin. They are a surplus in that they don't belong, but still have a logical explanation emanating from either biological or technological laws. These are material objects, or outsider characters that effect the political and/or physical makeup of their respective narratives. Along similar theoretical lines, we can argue for Bowie's cast of alter–egos, while not always drawing from science fiction, as posing themselves around the embodiment of lack as outsider figures.

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[58] Patricia Gherovici, *Transgender Psychoanalysis: A Lacanian Perspective on Sexual Difference* (Taylor & Francis, 2017), p. 23.

[59] Adam Charles Roberts, *Science Fiction* (Taylor & Francis, 2006), p. 15.

To get a wider picture of what it means to be an outsider, we must consider both the official written law in any society and its obscene underside, the superego imperative that bonds people to the written rules and regulations. Todd McGowan develops a position for the true heretic when discussing the impossibility of recognition by a known social authority.[60] Alongside the written laws, there is the unwritten pressure to identify in the correct manner. For example, to revisit an idea from chapter two, a genre ideal dictating how a subject should adhere develops alongside the notion of genre as an organisational principle. How we choose to follow a written path is accompanied by the enigma of how the social authority wants us to conform. Recognition by the social order is the reward for those who find a way to conform. Under these terms, the position of the outsider is not so much a classic figure of rebellion. McGowan gives his account:

> Even those who disdain popularity most often align themselves with some other source of recognition and thereby invest themselves in another form of it. The outsider who completely rejects the trappings of the popular crowd but slavishly obeys the demands of fellow outsiders remains within the orbit of social recognition.[61]

A true outsider goes a step further because it hasn't got a frame of reference for how the unwritten codes that hold together a society work. In other words, where the superego imperative to Enjoy! gives a society a means of interpreting the written law at the limits of transgression, the outsider doesn't know the conventions of how the society enjoys. They sidestep the imperative and hence act as agents of social transformation. Again, in an analogy with our development of genre, a tortured genre would be one where the ideal is inoperative because a certain idiosyncrasy, a style/symptom approaches the law from a personal, non-social position, which in turn undermines its authority. A separation is enacted when a subject disinvests from fantasy and concludes that there is no substantial authority. For the true outsider, this separation is always already implied as alienation into a set of social conventions has never taken place. Alien outsiders have attached to them a form of personal enjoyment where the superego's agency is missing.

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[60] Todd McGowan, *Enjoying What We Don't Have: The Political Project of Psychoanalysis* (U of Nebraska Press, 2013), p. 88.
[61] McGowan, *Enjoying What We Don't Have*, p. 88.

To give an example of this personal enjoyment that bypasses the ideals that attach us to law, we can return to the idea of performativity. When we read the chimerical body of Bowie as an ambiguity that functions as a protest to normative gender, there is the temptation to contain ourselves within a dualistic reasoning. This is a logic that Phillip Auslander falls into by introducing a Butlarian performative framework in analysing Bowie's performance style:

> His performance of a gay or bisexual identity did not express some essential quality of his person; it was, rather, a performance of signs that are socially legible as constituting a gay identity. In Butler's terms, the question 'is he, or isn't he?' is the wrong question because it cannot be answered.[62]

There is a counter analysis that would subvert this view of 'is he or isn't he?' that maintains the unanswerable nature of the question, yet uses this as the identification of the symptom as the impossibility a full identity. This is the Lacanian turn around as identified by Joan Copjec, that sex, or the symptom makes meaning impossible rather the meaning being incomplete. In other words, although this question has no definite answer, it is in this question that we find the very point of the symptom. This undecidable equivocity within the question acts as a point of 'difference-in-itself' within language.[63] Rather than the superego injunction of free play of metonymic performativity (or in psychoanalytic terms repression with an enjoyed return), in the equivocity of the ambiguous statement, we get a point of stoppage within free-flowing discourse: a disinvestment. It is the identification with the stoppage, or symptom, that forms an alternative pathway in reading the significance of Bowie and the wider play of alter-egos that persist within his music. In other words, refusing the binary law, as a Butlarian perspective does, places us in an anti-social psychotic position without the freedom of expression that an organisational principle provides. If we refuse the ideal that connects us to that law but retain its structuring as a negative space for new types of social connections, we enact a new type of freedom based on the refusal to legitimate the law to any one authority. In this sense the refusal to answer to the binary ideals forms an answer, which is a third possibility: to be included as an excluded possibility. This is where we can bring together the novum and the outsider: they

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[62] Phillip Auslander, 'Watch That Man. David Bowie: Hammersmith Odeon, London, July 3, 1973', in *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time*, ed. by Ian Inglis and Philip Auslander (Routledge, 2017), pp. 70–81 (p. 74).

[63] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), pp. 37-93.

mutually occupy this position of refusal to answer to an ideal, while still being part of social space as its symptom.

We find in this drive towards ambiguity Bowie's trajectory through several singular alter-egos. Rarely settling on one character for too long before killing them off and moving on to new musical ground, within this gap of the 'is he, or isn't he', we find the very openness for this possibility of constant renewal. This is the hopeless position as a form of subjective destitution that maintains the possibility of retroactively changing the past. In refusing the ground of an 'authentic' self, in favour of artifice, or the possibility of idiosyncrasies, Bowie creates the conditions for letting the truth, or fault, that leaves his equivocal body free to speak. Simon Critchley comments on the relationship of Bowie to his own effacement as a relationship to death, 'It is as if Bowie, almost ascetically, almost eremitically, disciplined himself into becoming a nothing, a mobile and massively creative nothing that could assume new faces, generate new illusions, and create new forms'.[64] This drive to identify with nothing, or one's own effacement, is paradoxically a means of gaining resolution as a subject.

To demonstrate the connection between the alien novum and the symptom, we can use the (non-musical) alter-ego of the alien Thomas Jerome Newton, played by Bowie in Nicholas Roeg's, *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.[65] Playing Newton became a turning point in Bowie's career, becoming something of a blueprint for some of his post Ziggy characters. Thomas Seabrook states:

> He retained Newton's wardrobe–which, as part of his contract, he had a hand in choosing for the film – and his striking dyed-red, centre parted hairdo. Newton's air of lonely dislocation and icey paranoia stuck with him, too, and clearly informed Bowie's next (and final) onstage character, The Thin White Duke.[66]

Bowie also revisited the character in later life in Lazarus, a 2015 stage production, which he co-wrote. The play features Bowie's music and serves as a retrospective of his career. It was, along with the Album *Blackstar*,[67] the last project that Bowie completed in his lifetime.

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[64] Simon Critchley, *On Bowie* (Serpents Tail, 2016), p. 41.
[65] *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, dir. by Nicolas Roeg (British Lion Film Corporation, Houtsnede Maatschappij N.V., Cinema 5, 1976).
[66] Thomas Jerome Seabrook, *Bowie in Berlin: A New Career in a New Town* (Jawbone Press, 2008), p. 44.
[67] David Bowie, *Blackstar* (ISO Records - 88875173871, 2016).

Andrew M Butler draws a comparison between Newton and other alien figures in relation to the biblical narrative of the messiah: 'As alien, stranger, orphan and widower, Newton is clearly othered, and his innocence, naivety and physical weakness situates him as Other. As the film's characters encounter him, they have an encounter with the idea of the infinite and a sense of messianism'.[68] This infinite is the true infinite of an outsider, which over the length of the film, becomes corrupted as Newton falls deeper into the ideals of society.

Originally a 1963 novel written by Walter Tevis,[69] T*he Man Who Fell to Earth* gave Bowie a leading role as an alien who goes through a biblical fall. Throughout the film, we see a narrativized version of the outsider figure, a novum, causing a rupture in society, only to be subsumed by capital. Director Nicolas Roeg identified the character with his own outsider status, he saw the alien, 'as a surrogate of himself, an Englishman with a piercing eye in an awesome American environment, who as it were loses sight of his goal'.[70] To give a brief synopsis, the film follows Newton as he crashes on Earth, seemingly on a mission to find water for his home planet. He raises money to build a spaceship by selling patents for inventions. This culminates in the founding of World Enterprises Corporation, a company that is to become a threat to the U.S. government in its sheer limitless potential to accumulate capital. On the day of the launch of his spaceship, Newton is betrayed and sectioned by the government, who kill his closest ally, Dr Farnsworth. This effectively ends World Enterprise Corporation. After years of experimentation on Newton, the government sets him free as they no longer see him as a threat, he is fully interpolated as a human being.

Newton can be seen as an embodiment and critique of the capitalist fantasy. He is ambiguous and cannot be easily assimilated into a single reading. He is either an example of a capitalist so intrenched in the fantasy of accumulation, that a combination of state and private intervention is needed to maintain some limits for fear of the ultimate destruction of the system; or he is an alien with an ethical imperative to save his home planet, who gets corrupted along the way. Bowie himself makes an astute observation on the character, 'There's something awkward

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[68] Andrew M. Butler, 'The Man Who Fell to Earth: The Messiah and the Amphicatastrophe', in *Heroes, Monsters and Values: Science Fiction Films of the 1970s*, ed. by Michael Berman and Rohit Dalvi (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 179–97 (p. 188).

[69] Walter Tevis, *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (Oxford University Press, 1979).

[70] John Izod, *The Films of Nicolas Roeg: Myth and Mind* (St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 59.

about it, gawky; there's something not right about that person's purity'.[71] In this sense Newton is a contradiction, an impossible being. Newton's home planet has presumably already succumbed to the crisis of endless progression. Yet, his solution is ultimately to repeat the previous failures. It is because of this that the government censor him, as he embodies the impossibility of the capitalist fantasy: its symptom.

As Newton does not age, the real indicator of time passing comes from the ageing of two other central characters: love interest Mary Lou and Nathan Bryce. It is through the relationship with both characters that we get a sense of Newton as an extraordinary individual whose fall to earth is de-sensationalised in toxic human relationships. Mary Lou, Newton's earthly love interest, is first introduced as a naïve young girl who finds Newton passed out in the elevator of the hotel where she works as a cleaner. Carrying him to his room, she takes care of Newton, who is obviously still having trouble physically adjusting to his new environment. It is in this scene that we also see a corrupting plot device as he is offered a gin and tonic to help him recover by Mary Lou. The introduction of alcohol in Newton's life highlights a nature/culture divide between his own barren planet and Earth. Water, his drink of choice and the reason he has come to earth, is replaced by gin, which is cultured by humans. In early scenes, Newton also psychically observes the casual sex that companion Nathan Bryce partakes in with students at his university. We can consider these experiences of sex and alcohol as superego imperatives: Enjoy! the obscene internal attachments to American society.

Although the film traces a linear progression, for the most part there is a disjointed sense of time passing. Of Roeg's direction, Izod states, 'The spectator is left with work to do, work which makes the process of bringing fragments of the films together to form meaning comparable to finding a way through a maze'.[72] The movement to different times represents an interruption that acts as a symptomal point in the film's direction. Although in the novel Newton's planet is a post nuclear war wasteland, Roeg's interpretation is more ambiguous. The impression of Newton's species is that they exist as a non-verbal shared consciousness; their barren planet seems to have no signs of any lasting civilisation or exterior expression of culture, just desert. Communication between Newton and his wife (although the word wife seems under-determined in describing this relationship) seems to be made of a psychic connection

[71] David Bowie, quoted in Michael Watts, 'Bowie Golden Years', *Melody Maker*, 18 February 1978 <http://www.bowiegoldenyears.com/press/78-02-00-melody-maker-1.html> [accessed 7 October 2023].
[72] Izod, p.15.

rather than external language. Like the non-linear time of the narrative, a distance to this mythical full communication represents Newton's symptom. In Freud's terms, internal flashbacks to the scene of a mythical full enjoyment are akin to a small trace part of the id (Lacanian real) hidden away from the superego. In this marriage, enjoyment takes precedence over the signifier to confirm the impossibility of the sexual relation. Alfredo Suppia argues that Newton's, 'capacity to embrace different "timescapes" in a singular experience is an additional attribute which renders him superior over humans as well as alienated from them'.[73] Newton's status as a novum rests on this singularity, by being a symptom at the heart of progressive time he can experience an alternative to the enjoyment of the bad infinite.

This is to be confirmed in a later scene after Newton reveals himself to Mary Lou in his alien form. Here he embodies the true outsider, the alien figure who enjoys singularly, 'Newton's represents an abnormal sexuality through his non-gendered body, feminine features and inability to engage in procreative heterosexual encounters'.[74] After running hysterically away from the naked Newton, a figure with reptilian eyes and no sexual organs, Mary Lou eventually calms down and lays next to him on the bed. In this Mary, who is experiencing the trauma of an uncanny alien figure is also experiencing the anxiety of the symptom. It is accepting the alien aspect of the sexual relation that forms the condition to having a relationship with Newton. This is a traversal of the sexual fantasy into a mutual castration. It is when Mary Lou begins to run her hands over his body that she sees a sexual encounter between Newton and his wife. This encounter is of the two alien bodies covered in fluid caressing each other and dancing as water splashes around them. It appears as a literal fluidity of a choric fantasy; pure a-historical sex. So singular are his sexual fantasies that the impossibility of finding a sexual relation is clear for Mary Lou. This is Newton's power as a novum, although this example is a one-on-one encounter, it is demonstrative of the wider function of the messianic introjection: to confront people with the inevitability of the symptom.

The narrative of sexual encounters in the film follows Lacan's logic of sexuation. We begin with an impossible relation between singular beings, a social link of the non-all, to a further sexual encounter that enacts the censorship of the non-all through a fetishist logic. Thus, from

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[73] Alfredo Suppia and Ewa Mazierska, 'Aliens in an Alien World: The Portrayal of the Aliens and Humans in the Man Who Fell to Earth by Nicholas Roeg and Under the Skin by Jonathan Glazer', *Open Cultural Studies*, 2.1 (2018), 285–95 (p. 288) <https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2018-0026>.

[74] 'David Bowie: The Extraordinary Rock Star as Film Star', in *David Bowie: Critical Perspectives*, by Julie Lobalzo Wright, ed. by Eoin Devereux, Aileen Dillane, and Martin J. Power (Routledge, 2015), pp. 230–45 (p. 237)

the initial sexual encounters between Mary Lou and Newton we can trace a second fall of Newton as he becomes interpolated into the capitalist bad infinite. A final sexual encounter serves to contrast Newton's use of his pre-earth sexual encounter, his symptom, to support an initial (non) relationship with Mary Lou. Later we get a wild encounter with an older Mary Lou and an alcoholic Newton. This act involves Newton who appears naked with a handgun, a fetish object. The gun is an obvious symbol of phallic power, which is literally firing blanks as the two engage in a perverse sexual act together. Here we get a debased sexual scene of pure fantasy. Newton has given up his singular sexual enjoyment and fallen to earth.

We should now be familiar with the difference between the fetish and the symptom. Where the fetish covers over our castration, the symptom confronts us. There is however a further concept related to the symptom that adds another structural aspect to it, this is the *sinthome*.

Bowie and the Alter-Ego

From the analysis of the symptom in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, we can return to a term mentioned above: singularity. Rather than a term for a collective dissolving into a single entity, our psychoanalytic definition of this term is the mutual, singular way that subjects fail to adopt the ideal of a social position. As Colette Soler defines it: 'Where can we find the remains of this singularity? In the failures of one's actions. Singularity is obliged to manifest itself through the failure of common action'.[75] To explore this concept of singular failure, in relation to Bowie, we can turn to the alter-ego and its construction.

The notion of the alter-ego in rock music can be thought as a type of defence mechanism. It is formed as an organisational principle that we either adopt as a notion of self or as a projected ideal of what we want to be for others. This difference follows the same divide as two Freudian concepts, the ideal ego, and the ego ideal. The ideal ego has a narcissistic function, it is the personal reflected image of ourselves as perfect, complete beings. Freud states that the, 'ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, finds itself possessed of every perfection that is of value'.[76] On the other hand, the ego ideal forms at the level of the social. When placed in society the

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[75] Collette Soler, 'The Symbolic Order (I)', in *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, ed. by Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus (State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 39–47 (p. 45)
[76] Sigmund Freud, 'On Narcissism: An Introduction', in *Freud's on Narcissism: An Introduction*, ed. by Joseph Sandler, Peter Fonagy, and Ethel Spector Person (Karnac Books, 2012), pp. 1–33 (p. 24)

subject measures his ideal ego during, 'the awakening of his own critical judgement, so that he can no longer retain that perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal'.[77] Inevitably, because both these ideals are imaginary, they are impossible to adopt fully, this is where a gap of castration comes in. It is in the very way in which we fail to live up to these ideals, our attempts to close the gap between ourselves and an ideal, that we find our singularity.

To return to a generic example, Paul McCartney gives an interview regarding the development of the Beatles personalities, he states:

> I don't want to bring in the violins, but we all came from hardship...All of us except George lost someone. I lost my mum when I was 14. John lost his mum. But Ringo had it worst. His father was gone; he was so sick they told his mum he wasn't going to live. Imagine making up your life from that, in that environment. No family, no school. He had to invent himself. We all had to come up with a shield, but Ringo came up with the strongest shield.[78]

There is a common story here where each of the Beatles had a personal trauma and looked to an ego ideal, that of the rock-and-roll star, yet each developed a distinct idiosyncratic persona based on the way in which they attempted to identify with this ideal. Katie Kapurch comments on this identification against the backdrop of their mutual image: 'the Beatles' well-known marketed personas offered a stark contrast to uniformity: the smart one, the cute one, the quiet one, the funny one'.[79] Thus, there is a function in persona that is linked to the everyday cathexis of anxieties. We can also generalise the idea of persona, while the stage persona is a blown up, exaggerated version of a personality, its structure is not a huge deviation from our day-to-day adoption of social characters. In this sense the persona is not a primary function, it is something adopted as a defence against a more primary castration anxiety. From the above example we can see that loss is processed through taking on characteristics of the outside world. In Ringo Starr's case, his self-invention is a way to sublimate personal loss into the social world as a singular idiosyncratic way of being. By relating to a trauma, a persona is thus something out in

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[77] ibid., p. 24.

[78] Paul McCartney, quoted in Stephen Rodrick, 'Ringo, Seriously', *Rolling Stone India*, 2015 <https://rollingstoneindia.com/ringo-starr-ringo-seriously/> [accessed 29 September 2023].

[79] Katie Kapurch, 'Crying, Waiting, Hoping: The Beatles, Girl Culture, and the Melodramatic Mode', in *New Critical Perspectives on the Beatles: Things We Said Today*, ed. by Kenneth Womack and Katie Kapurch (Springer, 2016), pp. 199–221 (p. 212).

the world that, as with the psychoanalytic symptom, both hides and lets us hold on to our singular enjoyment. In short, our singularity comes from how we fail to negotiate these differing social ideals successfully. This singularity is also a point of universality, as we all universally fail in this same task.

We can expand on the idea of a singular way of failing through the proliferation of subject positions that make up a stage performance. Rather than a singer performing a song exclusively through one persona, there is always a gap enacted that puts the performer in a position of minimum reflection. Simon Frith develops this consideration through the notion of the double enactment. This is the performer split between two positions, 'they enact both a star personality (their image) and a song personality, the role that each lyric requires, and the pop star's art is to keep both acts in play at once'.[80] Like the symptom, which is a compromise formation between the Freudian sensical ego and non-sensical id, in the stage performer, something resists a full identification within the persona. What complicates this identification is when the notion of a surplus bodily gesture or voice is added. With these excesses, concepts in play alongside Frith's personalities, we get the subject of singular voice and bodily movements who break through the song persona, revealing something of the process, or rules of the performance game. This complex network of subject positions is centred around an enjoyment given in the unconscious as a tortured excess of style. Again, we have come back to Copjec's assertion that sex, the bodily and vocal excesses, render meaning incomplete.

Bowie's early ego ideal came in the form of his older brother, Terry Burns. In chapter one, we outlined the fraternal society that finds individual freedom in an identification with the sibling. In Bowie's case, this literal ideal of the brother figure is not so much a fetish object, but the confrontation of a form of castration through the brother as symptom. Like the example of the Beatles, Bowie's upbringing brought with it some traumatic formational barriers. Although he had a stable father, his family had a history of schizophrenia, which led to several of his close relatives being institutionalised. His half-brother, Terry, 10 years his senior, was one of the defining relationships of his adolescence. Bowie's cousin recalls this relationship:

> The relationship with Terry mattered so much to Bowie because he was the only person
> in the household to whom he felt physically close. During Bowie's early life and his

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[80] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 212.

teens, Terry was also a vital stimulus for Bowie's imagination. They played exciting games, and he was a key source of playfulness in the household.[81]

Throughout Bowie's career we can find traces of Terry Burns, songs have passing references to him. Bowie reflects on this early identification: *'I think I unconsciously exaggerated his importance. I invented this hero-worship to discharge my guilt and failure, and to set myself free from my own hang-ups'*.[82] Bowie, in this quote, hits upon the function of the ideal, as a fetish object that off sets personal castration. This early identification would prove to be a fleeting one as Burns would ultimately betray his status as fetish object and become a hopeless figure of abjection. Ultimately, Burns would go the same way as much of the rest of his family and end up in an institution. In this sense, Bowie experienced the failure of the ideal: symbolic castration.

The song in which we find this misplaced hero worship is 'The Bewlay Brothers'.[83] This song acts as a surreal eulogy in the face of Terry's failing mental health (Burns eventually committed suicide in 1985 after a life of mental illness). Lyrically, the song is almost indecipherable, there are moments of semblance, but mostly Bowie is feigning poeticism. Of the lyrics, Bowie would later state: *'I wouldn't know how to interpret the lyric of this song other than suggesting that there are layers of ghosts within it. It's a* palimpsest'.[84] Although the lyrics are nearly non-sensical, we do find a way through the nonsense with the central identification of the brother. We can trace the song as moving from an initial identification towards closing the gap between Bowie's ideal ego and ego ideal. This resolves in a failure of closure between these ideals and a fall into a singular enjoyment.

Table 2: The Bewlay Brothers

Section	Timeline	Harmonic Map	Features
Introduction	0:00 – 0:16	D – Em - A	Strummed acoustic guitar accompanied

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[81] Kristina Amadeus, quoted in Oliver James, *Upping Your Ziggy : How David Bowie Faced His Childhood Demons - and How You Can Face Yours* (1st edn; London: Routledge, 2018), p63.

[82] David Bowie, quoted in 'All The Madmen | The Bowie Bible', 2020 <https://www.bowiebible.com/songs/all-the-madmen/> [accessed 29 September 2023].

[83] David Bowie, 'The Bewlay Brothers', *Hunky Dory* (RCA Victor - SF 8244, 1971).

[84] David Bowie, quoted in 'All The Madmen | The Bowie Bible'.

			by a melodic electric guitar improv.
Verse 1	0:16 – 0:56	D – Em - A	Vocals enter over acoustic and electric guitars.
Chorus 1	0:56 – 1:28	Bm – A – G – F# - F#sus4 – F# Asus2 – G – G G/F# Em – C	Bass and mellotron enter, Acoustic guitar played with aggressive strums. Vocal harmonies with reverb introduced.
Instrumental 1	1:28 – 1:37	D – Em - A	Acoustic strumming becomes lighter, acoustic melodic improv replaces the electric guitar.
Verse 2	1:37 – 2:17	D – Em - A	Monotone speaking voice doubles the main vocal melody.
Chorus 2	2:17 - 2:50	Bm – A – G – F# - F#sus4 – F# Asus2 – G – G G/F# Em – C	Backwards guitar lines enter.
Instrumental 2	2:50 – 2:58	D – Em - A	As with previous instrumental

Verse 3	2:58 – 3:37	D – Em - A	Instruments become sparser. Doubled vocals gain greater independence.
Chorus 3	3:37 – 4:09	Bm – A – G – F# - F#sus4 – F# Asus2 – G – G G/F# Em – C	As with previous chorus with slight melodic variation in main melody.
Coda	4:09 – Fade out	Bm – C – F – Bm Bm - F	High backing vocals sound like children singing nursery rhyme. Alein voice enters as call and response during fadeout.

The initial identification with the brother comes with a shifting perspective within the lyrics. In the first verse, we get the viewpoint of a third person, 'they', 'And so the story goes, they wore the clothes, they said the things to make it seem improbable'.[85] Then from the first chorus we get a shift into the first person, 'our' and 'we', 'In our wings that bark, flashing teeth of brass, standing tall in the dark, we were so turned on'… The perspective shift enacts a friend/enemy mentality. On this shifting perspective, Kenneth Reinhard states, 'The friend and enemy form twin imagos… figures of positive and negative…by which the interior 'we' (the 'I' and its friends) is identified as such, as distinguished from the exterior 'they'".[86] Metaphorically, we could say it is the identification with Terry Burns that protects Bowie from the fate of his family's collective castration. This is through providing an imagined stable brotherhood, a fraternal bond.

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[85] 'David Bowie - The Bewlay Brothers Lyrics', *musiXmatch* <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/David-Bowie/The-Bewlay-Brothers> [accessed 15 October 2023].
[86] Kenneth Reinhard, 'Toward a Political Theology of the Neighbour', in *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek and Eric L. Santner (University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 11–76 (p. 16).

The brother as the point of identification is also confirmed musically with the build towards the song's chorus. The song starts with a repetitive 3 chord pattern, D - Em - A, which continues in the verses. Over this, there is a half spoken, half sung melody, which is a trademark style for Bowie. The melody is based around a D major scale. Initially, it has a playful feel, Bowie starting on the root, then moving up the D pentatonic to the sixth, B, and then gradually moving down an octave, before resolving the first two lines on the F#. As the verse progresses, the movement in the melody starts to tighten, with the last few lines centred on an E, with Bowie almost speaking in a tonic rhythm. This focus, and the tension created by the E pre-empts the key change to B minor, which comes with the line, 'The Bewlay Brothers'. What is conveyed here is a sense of the voice closing in towards a focused melody. The general rise of melodic material paves the way for identification with a fraternal partnership. It is at the mention of this brotherhood that the song changes key to B minor. The melody on the last line of the verse, leading into the first line of the chorus, also pre-empts the descending harmony of the chorus. With the line, 'Sighings swirl through the streets like the crust of the sun, the Bewlay Brothers', the melody descends from the F#, down the D major scale, to the D. This descending movement is then taken over by the harmony, which descends from B minor, in a stepwise motion to F#. What we get is the identification with an object, the 'I', looking out in the third person, now becomes a 'we'. The harmony takes over from the melody, laying a new ground, providing a friend/enemy dynamic, from where the melody then rises again on top of this descending harmony.

At the start of the second verse, the melody is now doubled with a lower speaking voice. The brothers are speaking as one, as if the gap between the ideal ego and the ego ideal is closing. We can add to this a basic premise of sibling relationships, as Bruce Fink states, 'it is the boy's sibling who he genuinely loves as himself, the siblings image showing him who and what he is'.[87] At this stage we can think of the doubling as an attempt to instigate a fetish object, a censorship of the failure to collapse the brotherhood into an immediacy of full identification. The end of this song enacts the impossibility of this immediate closure and descends into a strange psychotic breakdown, where several paranoic voices descend into nonsense. The line, 'Lay me place and bake me pie I'm starving for me gravy', is an expression of undercutting

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[87] Bruce Fink, *Lacan on Love: An Exploration of Lacan's Seminar VIII, Transference* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), p. 77.

any feigned sincerity. It is here that a failure of this partnership speaks, it is betrayed by an expression of enjoyment. After an organisation that sought to reach identification, Bowie effaces this work. The final section is a descent into an enjoyment that accounts for the impossibility to close this gap between ideal and ego. It is this gap where Bowie's castration as a singularity, or symptom, appears. Thus, the song demonstrates a dialogue around symbolic castration that gives us the options of either accepting the failure at the heart of ontology, the primally repressed missing signifier that must stay lost, or the fate of going mad in trying to find this lost object.

In discussing the brother as ideal, we can introduce another uncanny figure that demonstrates this line between acceptance and madness. 'The Bewlay Brothers', places Bowie and Burns together as uncanny doubles. The double, or doppelganger, is a classic literary figure of horror. When discussing the double, an example most people can relate to comes from sibling rivalry. Otto Rank comments, 'considered externally, the double is the rival of his prototype in anything and everything, but primarily in the love for woman - a trait which he may partly owe to the identification with the brother'.[88] This comes in the form of the obvious vision of the favoured child who has the object that fills the mother's lack. The relationship with the first rival often oscillates between an infantile competition for the mother's affection and a fraternal banding together against those outside of the familial relationship. As we have covered previously, the brother in this scenario becomes a phallic signifier, an ideal of a complete enjoyment. However, there is something more than the imaginary ideal to be loved and hated in the narrative of the double: in literature it often reveals a 'real' dimension.

The double is central in a form of paranoic drama, popularised by the French writer Guy De Maupassant in *La Horla*.[89] Lacan finds in Maupassant an example of his imaginary order and its limitations:

> The specular image becomes the uncanny and invasive image of the double. This is what
> happens little by little at the end of Maupassant's life, when he starts failing to see himself
> in the mirror, or when he glimpses something in a room, a phantom that turns its back on

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[88] Otto Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study* (UNC Press Books, 2012), p. 75.
[89] Guy De Maupassant, *The Horla* (Melville House, 2012).

him, whereupon he knows it to be something that bears a certain relation to himself, and when the phantom turns round, he sees that it is he.[90]

This example blurs fiction and reality and serves to highlight the minimum distance between these two states. Apart from fiction, another inspiration for *La Hora* comes from psychotic episodes experienced by author De Maupassant.[91] To give an example, one evening while writing at his desk, he was confronted by himself, a doppelganger. As a young man, the writer contracted syphilis, a disease that results in cognitive deterioration if left untreated. This would give some credence to the subjective experience of seeing his own doppelganger. The experience of seeing a vision or a hallucination of oneself is called autoscopia. In Maupassant's autoscopic episode, the doppelganger would enter the room and dictate a short story, which would become the published work *Le Hora*. In summary, this story takes the form of a diary where the diarist accounts for an uncanny double who haunts his life. This double is a shadow that is perceived as taking away something from the diarist. It is an exterior that invades with an over proximate emptiness. This leads to the degeneration of the diarist's mental state and eventual suicide.

This represented sequence of events can be thought through Lacan's notion of 'the mirror stage'. To summarize Lacan's most famous theory of narcissism, the confrontation with a double relates to the fundamental misrecognition of the ego that comes with Lacan's mirror stage.[92] Elizabeth Roudinesco comments: 'Lacan bases his idea of the mirror phase on the Freudian concept of primary narcissism. Thus, the narcissistic structure of the ego is built up with the *imago* of the double as it's central element'.[93] In mirror identification, an effect of depersonalisation comes with an over proximity of the imaginary without a consideration of the symbolic. We can put this in our previous terms of an overidentification with an ideal ego at the cost of the distance of the ego ideal. Over proximity of the ideal produces an anxiety based on the closure of being. The double is a symptom defence, or a minimum difference between the subject who, because of an overreliance on the imaginary, is either a psychotic or

[90] Lacan, *Anxiety*, pp . 98-99.
[91] 'The Literary Leanings of Maupassant's Doppelganger', *EsoterX*, 2016 <https://esoterx.com/2016/04/17/the-literary-leanings-of-maupassants-doppelganger/> [accessed 8 October 2023].
[92] Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytiv Experience', in *Écrits: A Selection* (Routledge, 2001), pp. 75–82.
[93] Elizabeth Roudinesco, 'The Mirror Stage: An Obliterated Archive', in *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*, ed. by Jean-Michel Rabaté (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 25–35 (p. 30).

tending towards psychosis. The result of 'getting lost' in the imaginary is the equivalent of a psychotic narcissistic death. For Mladen Dolar: 'the double is that mirror image in which the object a is included. So the imaginary starts to coincide with the real, provoking a shattering anxiety'.[94] In other words, it is the *object a*, an unexpected surplus out of our control, that we find uncanny in the double.

In our previous example of the small other we found a distancing effect, such as nostalgia for the bluesman. This distance is what begins to close in our uncanny double as the mirror image come to life. In the exact copy of ourselves, what is anxiety inducing is seeing our unconscious, or how we really appear to the outside world. The unconscious is what is most intimate to us, yet something we cannot identify fully with; it is thus uncanny. The double is a last line of defence against psychosis, a reflection of ourselves with our symbolic castration on display. This also applies to the alter-ego, something more than the artist speaks through it; a singularity that cannot be reduced to the ideal ego. It is in giving voice to this singularity, in accepting the double as our castrated intimate self, that we find a relief from the demands of the superego and its social imperative.

In the alter-ego, something other than the ego is given a platform to speak. David Jones (Bowie's birthname), and any author or artist who utilizes a character, speaks through layers of alter-egos that project ambiguity. Who or what part of the author or character audiences are tuned into is subject to debate. To return to Mary Shelly, Barbara Johnson explains the effect of uncertainty over the point of enunciation by arguing for the autobiographic effect of the novel. Johnson states, upon reading the novel's introduction, 'the reader begins to suspect that there may perhaps be meaningful parallels between Victor's creation of the monster and Mary's creation of her book'.[95] The monster, Victor's double, encompasses the idea of the 'it' (Freud's id) speaking through language or finding an alternative channel in which to manifest outside of the social superego. This can be demonstrated through the notion of the prosopopoeia. We can think the prosopopoeia as an experience in language in which a dead object or thing speaks. For example, Paul De Man finds the prosopopoeia in the autobiography.[96] Autobiography is part recollection and part performance and cannot be assigned to the position of the subject's

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[94] Mladen Dolar, '"I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny', *October*, 58 (1991), 5–23 (p. 13) <https://doi.org/10.2307/778795>.

[95] Johnson, p. 22.

[96] Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 67-83.

consciousness alone; the id can always find new fictions in which to speak. As De Man states, 'the interest of autobiography, then, is not that it reveals reliable self-knowledge - it does not - but that it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization'.[97] In terms of music, Dietrich Barthel has identified the sister term *pathopoeia*, where, 'The "inanimate object' of the prosopopoeia becomes the affection which is given life and action through the music'.[98] The affective suggests the ambiguous notion of 'music speaking' as a reaction outside of intellectual engagement. In other words, the underlying emotive effect of music can be linked to the stirring of libidinal or id energies. The example of a prosopopoeia that Lacan uses is to compare the ego to a benign object, his desk.[99] In his desk are the elements of his ego: his papers, his diaries, his ideas, yet this information does not encompass him. Lacan states, 'The ego is a means of the speech addressed to you from the subject's unconscious, a weapon for resisting its recognition; it is fragmented when it conveys speech and whole when it serves not to hear it'.[100] To modernize this example, Lacan's desk can be thought as the equivalent of today's digital subject, collated through collections of data, then spoken back to through advertisements. In this process what goes missing is the subjects desire, something more than knowledge speaks through these organs, or egos. This impossibility of self-knowledge is a point where a person does not recognise itself in its own image or voice, thus the prosopopoeia is the subject itself as what cannot be reduced to knowledge alone.

Žižek elaborates further with his discussion on the necessity of the prosopopoeia in psychoanalysis.[101] The analyst in discourse takes the position of the *object a*, which acts as a cut leaving the analysand's language, or statements about him/herself lacking. The prosopopoeia results from this as the analysand comes to identify that there is another speaking through its own ego, its unconscious. This is the difference between the place of enunciation, or the seat of the conscious subject, and that which is enunciated by way of the symbolic order unconsciously. Ultimately, in analysis the subject is left in a place where they no longer identify with the ideal ego. This is a subjective destitution: the act of accepting that they will never master the unconscious. As Žižek states, "When I speak, it is never directly "myself" who

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[97] De Man, p. 71.

[98] Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (U of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 360.

[99] Jacques Lacan, 'The Freudian Thing, or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis', in *Écrits: A Selection* (Routledge, 2001), pp. 334–65.

[100] ibid., p. 355.

[101] Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel And The Shadow Of Dialectical Materialism* (Verso Books, 2013), pp. 513 - 520.

speaks – I *have* to have recourse to a fiction which is my symbolic identity. In this sense, *all* speech is "indirect"'.[102] If the subject is alienated in language or has no recourse to speak outside of the big Other, then a fantasy enacts a return to dis-alienation. However, true dis-alienation is not a process of finding a true self underneath an ego, as there is nothing outside of this fiction. In this respect, the prosopopoeia is an act of ventriloquist deception. The thing that speaks is nothing but the subject of the unconscious given form through a symbolic position. Žižek shows this through the play of masks as forms of ego and alter-ego.[103] Beyond the impossible abolishment of the gap of alienation, there is the idea of the true subject as existing not in a progressive beyond, but in the masks themselves. Within our social fiction we construct an alter-ego, or secondary mask, that hides our forbidden enjoyments. Žižek continues, this is, 'a mask which we can put on only exceptionally, in those carnivalesque moments when the standard rules of interaction are suspended. In short, what if the true function of the mask is not to be worn, but to remain kept hidden?'.[104] In this, there is a construction of a symptom in which truth speaks only through the mediation of a fictional construction.

In viewing Bowie's alter-egos as transcendent figures, Alex Sharpe states:

> through his "highly referential", though often cryptic lyrics, and his eclectic music, he seemed to point to something beyond, to some palpable truth behind the appearance of things. And while Bowie "moved relentlessly from illusion to illusion", he always seemed to get closer to a felt corporeal truth.[105]

However, our counter argument is to view this elsewhere as something intimate and in effect devoid of greater meanings. As listeners we can read our own desire into something meaningless and it is these points where the unconscious desire is given a channel to speak, this is why we can call the ego a symptom. We can now see how Bowie's construction of characters follows this logic of the prosopopoeia. In his wild constructivism the impression of an affective voice is the constant element; something internally alien is speaking.

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[102] ibid., p. 515.
[103] Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, p. 516.
[104] ibid., p. 516.
[105] Alex Sharpe, p. 33.

There is more to be said through Bowie's artifice than a pointing beyond to a transcendence. To develop this idea further, our analogous example of the symptom gains a fundamental position in psychoanalytic treatment as both the cause of neurotic behaviour and a way of dealing with this cause. This is through the subject's realisation of the symptom as central to subjectivity. Here we find the difference between the classic idea of the symptom as those moments which undercut, or return to sabotage any ideal of complete meaning, and Lacan's use of the term *sinthome*, which is a special breed of symptom that offers only a separation from completion and acceptance of the impossibility of complete meaning through an act of naming. Rather than a familial or given name as imaginary ideal, this new signifier is a naming of a specific singularity. This singular is the name for the unique way in which every subject structures the id through the symptom. It is through finding a position, or name for a singular organisation of the id, that we find a fundamental symptom that must remain as a fundamental structuring principle in our subjectivity. In this formulation the three Lacanian registers, the imaginary, symbolic and real, become tied together through a supplement, or fourth tie. The *sinthome* is a type of symptom that, rather than pointing towards a complete meaning, gives a space for the fault in consciousness and corrects any need for completion.

There is a tendency, identified by Mari Ruti, to mis-interpret the idea of *sinthome* with a position of complete social exclusion.[106] In a critique of Lee Edleman's notion of the *sinthomosexual*,[107] she gives the *sinthome* a position of an alternative future. Whereas Edleman's use of the *sinthome* gives queerness a place of such singular identification that it eschews any utopian fantasy. His is a vision of a no-future and no-past construction of subjectivity that is too close to capitalist limitless progression, Butlarian performativity and Deleuzian masochism, for comfort. Rather than a beyond, we find here a present where the subject, rather than finding a way to sublimate castration through an empty position in the symbolic, identifies with itself as symbolically castrated. For Ruti:

Because the future is, by definition, open-ended, it is not merely an illusory return to an imaginary state of wholeness where "being meets "meaning," but rather what guarantees that the two can never coincide. It does not suture our identity by closing the lack within

[106] Mari Ruti, *The Singularity of Being:Lacan and the Immortal Within: Lacan and the Immortal Within* (Fordham Univ Press, 2012), pp. 59 - 83.
[107] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Duke University Press, 2004).

us, but rather ensures that we keep translating this lack into ever-renewed forms of meaning.[108]

Here we find a model that we can assign to David Bowie: rather than a constant enactment of difference, we can say that from alter-ego to alter-ego, he was finding different ways to frame his singularity. Each new form is a translation of lack where something very consistent, Bowie's *sinthome*, was able to find its way into the symbolic.

We can say that if the future is written as a progressive fantasy of a lost past into a future of wholeness, the symptom also projects a leftover of enjoyment that leaves the future forever thwarted. In this sense the *sinthome*, rather than being a point of complete loss, is an empty place where enjoyment is contained in the symbolic order without the need for disavowal of either symbolic castration, or in Edelman's case, a perverse disavowal of the symbolic altogether. A *sinthome*, is thus a quilting point that lets us see the crucial structural position of enjoyment in a form of masquerade, without a complete psychotic identification or perverse negation of its vital necessity as a feature of human subjectivity.

Lacan's major example of the *sinthome* is an aesthetic study where he makes a link between psychosis and artifice through the author, James Joyce.[109] Genevieve Morel develops the *sinthome* through Lacan's writing on Joyce; an author who suffered from a dysmorphic relation to his own body, '*Writing about the body* allowed Joyce, rather than identifying with the image of his body, to have a body'.[110] Apart from the image, it was the symbolic, or writing, which formed an alternative ideal for Joyce. A name took the place of the image (fetish) in giving consistency to the bodily ego. Morel continues:

Lacan's idea, therefore, was that the ego (art) repairs the fault not by getting rid of it but by *reinforcing it*. The work consists in taking up the imposed speech in writing, and reinforcing it, accentuating it, in a continuous effort that becomes more intense over time. What has a tendency to slide is the imaginary relation to the body; that which, on the

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[108] Ruti, p. 65.
[109] Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII* (Wiley, 2018).
[110] Geneviève Morel, *The Law of the Mother: An Essay on the Sexual Sinthome* (Routledge, 2019), p. 119.

contrary, stabilises the imaginary is the ego as the idea of the body, constructed through writing.[111]

In other words, the *sinthome* finds a place for part of the real, usually covered by the imaginary fetish, within the symbolic; it thus ties these three registers together. On this point, Critchley argues for a connection between the artifice of Joyce and Bowie: 'It has often been said that there is something of the psychotic in Bowie, which I rather doubt. Bowie was not a lad insane. If such psychotic tendencies exist, then - as with Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* or with Artaud in his theatre of cruelty - they are sublimated into art'.[112]

We can return to Thomas Jermone Newton to demonstrate how art acts as a place of sublimation. There is the obvious comparison of Newton's fall to earth and the story of biblical Genesis. Moral states that, 'Lacan rewrote *Genesis* as a paternal metaphor turned completely upside down: in the beginning there was certainly God the father, but he was later overtaken by the mother with her illicit desire'.[113] Lacan writes about the biblical fall in relation to Joyce, he notes that the word *sinthome* includes the English signifier 'sin', and he relates this to the original sin from Christian doctrine: 'This is the fault, the *sin*, which my *sinthome* advantageously starts with. In English, *sin* refers to the trespass of original sin, hence the *necessity* of the fact that the fault-line that is always growing *doesn't stop*, unless it should undergo the stop of castration as possible'.[114] This 'possible' refers to the impossible guarantee of meaning with a fully recognised master signifier. Lacan, however, proposes, 'a discourse such that might not be a semblance',[115] this is a discourse that belongs to the non-all of woman. Žižek makes this point through Lacan's formulas of sexuation:

there is no discourse which is not a discourse of "semblance" implies that "not-all discourse is a discourse of semblance. This indicates how we are to reach a "discourse which is not semblance": not through the exception (one discourse which is not...), but

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[111] ibid., p. 121.
[112] Critchley, p. 89.
[113] Morel, p. 84.
[114] Lacan, *The Sinthome*, p. 5.
[115] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On a Discourse That Might Not Be a Semblance, 1971* (Norton, 2002).

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through treating the multiplicity of discourses as "non-All,", through discerning their inconsistency.[116]

This inconsistency is found in the figure of Eve who in her speaking from a place of sin, speaks a language of enjoyment over meaning. If woman can pass through the fall while still speaking the original sin, then she is forever falling. The *sinthome* is central to a masquerade that marks out a place in the symbolic for this forever falling enjoyment. This is the sublimation that we find in Bowie's singular consistency across differing alter-egos; something singular falling from ego to ego. We can say that this initial fall of Newton is the fall into being a subject of the unconscious. Rather than being marked with a phallic signifier, there is a mark of excess enjoyment, which holds the place of original sin. In this sense we can use Joyce's androgynous pun, 'Adam, as his name indicates well enough...was a Madam'.[117] Bowie's art thus follows the process of sublimating the fall, its singular enjoyment, into the artifice of the *sinthome* as organising principle. This is a display of symbolic castration that renders Bowie's art non-all.

Bowie's Gaze

We can think of the distinction between symptom and *sinthome* in terms of perspective. The symptom is over proximate and requires interpretation, whereas the *sinthome* solves this problem of perspective through becoming a container for invasive enjoyment. There is no qualitative difference between these terms, only an acceptance in the latter that the former is not a problem to be solved, but is already its own solution. We can follow this logic in one of Bowie's most famous lyrics, 'Turn and face the strange'.[118] With the idea of making-strange, there is a temptation to align Bowie with the idea of a Brechtian distancing. On this, Paul Morley states, 'Bowie identified with how Brecht was interested in provoking an audience into new decision making, a desire for further knowledge'.[119] This view would place Bowie in the same position as our progressive rockers, that of pointing to a meta-language beyond his performance. However, to counter this view, there is an element to Bowie that seems to refuse the audience's deeper engagement with his works. With this, we can say that a part of him sought to provoke enjoyment rather than knowledge. Here we can follow an idea that the status

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[116] Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, p. 47.

[117] Lacan, *The Sinthome*, p. 5.

[118] 'David Bowie - Changes Lyrics', *musiXmatch* <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/David-Bowie/Changes-1997-Remaster> [accessed 15 October 2023].

[119] Paul Morley, *The Age of Bowie* (Simon and Schuster, 2017), p. 417.

of a passive enjoyment gives access to an ethical re-alignment in the listener, which is non-progressive. Bowie's performances would thus present everything on the surface with no need for a deeper knowledge implied. This is a sign that there is no big Other beyond Bowie's artifice, and the signifier for this castrating lack within the symbolic is the *sinthome*. In sum, where Morley gives Bowie the task of provoking knowledge, there is a counter argument that non-knowledge, or enjoyment is the prevalent feature in Bowie's music and persona.

To develop this point, we can return to the idea of a monstrous outsider who fails in integrating into social norms. This figure marks a place of singular enjoyment in the social, which is an enjoyment that bypasses the mandate of the superego. With the *sinthome*, we find a similar monstrous dimension not only outside, but at the level of the physical body. Žižek's analysis of the sinthome develops this analogy by giving it the status of a physical aberration that functions autonomously from the body, he states:

> In so far as the *sinthome* is a certain signifier which is not enchained in a network but immediately filled, penetrated with enjoyment, its status is by definition 'psychosomatic', that of a terrifying bodily mark which is merely a mute attestation bearing witness to a disgusting enjoyment, without representing anything or anyone.[120]

David Bowie had a 'terrifying bodily mark' that is inescapable in his captured image. Throughout every change of appearance, the aberration of a permanently dilated pupil is a central feature. This lends itself as a lure in his non-conventional, but striking, appearance. The story of Bowie's eye is attributed to a childhood scrap gone awry. In a fistfight with school friend George Underwood, a punch to the left eye put a young David Jones through 4 months of hospital treatments.[121] This ultimately left him with his signature 'Bowie eyes'. We can call these a signature as some of the most memorable of his album covers have comprised nothing but a close-up portrait, highlighting this aberration. Kevin J. Hunt attempts to give an account for this through Freud's notion of the uncanny:

> Part of the uncanniness transmitted by Bowie's eyes is due to the simultaneously mixed messages they appear to impart: dilation of one pupil potentially signifies attraction,

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[120] Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 82.
[121] Pat Gilbert, *Bowie: The Illustrated Story* (Quarto Publishing Group USA, 2017), p. 16.

whilst contraction of the other more likely shows recoil of interest. Bowie's anisocoria therefore contains within it the possibility of contrariness.[122]

If we consider disability as part of an aesthetic, it comes with a castrating effect on the consumer. George Mckay comments on disability in pop music performance, 'Pop and Rock are too drawn to the freak show, and there is also in some popular music forms the physical display of effort'.[123] The idea of the disabled musician being visible, or putting an aberration as central to performance, enacts a dialogue with the audience based on an impossible becoming. Displaying physical effort presents a limit, which forms the core of a fascination and repulsion towards overt disabilities.

In the history of popular music, there have been a fair number of virtuoso musicians who have had eye problems and have provided a source of intrigue.[124] Guerino Mazzola gives some explanation of an investment of fantasy into the vision of blindness.[125] This follows a feedback circuit between audience and performer, which becomes broken by a bodily aberration. This creates a displacement where the fetishist audience filters musical affect through the disability, rendering it a mysterious cause of the musician's talent. Mazzola states: 'That circuit, however, is problematized by the complications that arise from one of its terminals - the blind artist - being perceived as "other", as paranormal - gifted with special *insight* while lacking *sight*-by an audience that understands itself as normative'.[126] The process is of sustaining a fetish that sustains the disability as a source of positive mastery, this is through a disavow of its true castrating effects. There is an investment in the dead object of the non-functioning eye as somehow giving access to another way of seeing. In this assertion, a veil of fetishism compliments the disability's manifestation both aurally and visually with a reversal of cause and effect. For example, a singular technique born out of necessity, which by chance creates a novel approach to music making, is viewed as innovative thinking rather than a necessity of the disabled body.

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[122] Kevin J. Hunt, 'The Eyes of David Bowie', in *Enchanting David Bowie: Space/Time/Body/Memory*, ed. by Toija Cinque, Christopher Moore, and Sean Redmond (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), pp. 175–97 (p. 182).

[123] George McKay, *Shakin' All Over: Popular Music and Disability* (University of Michigan Press, 2013), p. 90.

[124] McKay, *Shakin' All Over*, p. 13.

[125] Guerino Mazzola and others, *The Topos of Music III: Gestures: Musical Multiverse Ontologies* (Springer, 2018), pp. 886 - 887.

[126] ibid., p. 886.

In the consumer, there is a desire for mastery, which is reflected in the disability as fetishised. David Bolt uses the term' 'Spectacles of Blindness'[127] in his study of the discourse of blindness in relation to the visually impaired subject in a social group. In a group setting, the blind subject becomes the excluded object when a fetish dictates the unseen gaze as a superior form of perception. As Bolt concludes, 'As a controlling presence, the unseen gazer may be said to personify occularnormativism. He or she regards the gaze as something of a spectacle, an object of not only astonishment but also pleasure, both of which are derived from asymmetry'.[128]

Hunt, argues for this same transcendental blindness as part of Bowie's appeal:

> Bowie's myriad persona as the starman, the alien, the outsider, is constructed around an animistic mythology. Such associations are given an aura of authenticity by the physical discordance of his eyes because their otherworldly appearance is a biologically 'real' part of his body, not part of a show or act, even though they are frequently highlighted within his performance of a character.[129]

A reading that considers the aberration as *sinthome* rather than fetish, puts us on a different path to that of avoiding castration. Rather than imposing either meaning or exclusion from the blind eye, we can treat it for exactly what it is: the dead object that survives in the form as an impassable drive. The lack, as a meaningless thing, leads us on a path where we can call Bowie's permanently dilated pupil, an empty *sinthome* invested with nothing but an anti-social enjoyment.

From the dialogue around Bowie's facial aberration as enjoyment, we arrive at the concept of gaze. Theories of looking and being looked at are often adopted to explain power structures; of the master holding the gaze and the servant resisting through returning it onto the master. According to Laurence Senelick, in theatre and film studies classic theories of gaze, 'accepted the traditional definition of the theatre as speculum mundi and so inquired into who is doing the looking and at whose reflection'.[130] This is akin to a theory of performativity that subverts existing codes by reversing power structures. For example, on Bowie, Lisa Perrot states:

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[127] David Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Re-Reading of Twentieth-Century Anglophone Writing* (University of Michigan Press, 2014), p. 120.
[128] Bolt, p. 109.
[129] Hunt, p. 184.
[130] Laurence Senelick, *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre* (Routledge, 2002), p. 6.

'Traces of Dietrich, Greta Garbo and Katherine Hepburn collectively haunt the cover for Hunky Dory – trademark Hollywood poses and feminine self-touching further objectifying Bowie and playing with the possibilities of Laura Mulvey's… concept of the gaze'.[131] Similarly, Judith A. Peraino uses the concept of the gaze to argue for Bowie's subversive posing in contrast to overt displays of masculinity, 'Within this theory of visual pleasure, male objects of the gaze cannot escape a degree of feminization, frequently compensated for by an overt phallic display'.[132] From a cinematic perspective, Rosalind Galt reads Bowie's performance in *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* as an example of the returning of the gaze. A film about a captured soldier in a Japanese prisoner of war camp where, 'his being the object of an Asian man's gaze proposes a loss of mastery that makes white viewers uncomfortable'.[133] Here, in positioning a figure of masculinity, a soldier, in a position of weakness, this performance challenges conceptions of phallic power.

Joan Copjec's interjection into Lacanian cinema theory argues for a shift away from a fetishist panoptic view towards a theory of gaze as an *object a*. On early Lacanian film theory, she states, 'Believing itself to be following Lacan it conceives the screen as mirror, in doing so, however, it operates in ignorance of, and at the expense of, Lacan's more radical insight, whereby the mirror is conceived as screen'.[134] In the 'screen as a mirror' of early Lacanian film theory, mastery is thus only an imagined possibility through a voyeuristic perversion. The reverse, 'mirror as screen', thus sees not just a reflection, but a screen in which we project our own desires, including those that prop up an imagined phallic power. Copjec's re-formulation considers cinema theories over reliance on Lacan's early mirror stage essay, which reads as a simple movement from fragmentation to an imaginary semblance without remainder. This forgoes the dimension of the aberration as *sinthome*. The position pushed by early Lacanian film theory, under the influence of Laura Mulvey, gives a gendered view of the spectatorship of film as adopting the position of the male gaze.[135] The spectator adopts a masculine position and gazes upon the object on the screen, which is feminine. This adoption of the male gaze is seen as a form of total mastery over the female object. We can equate this to the experience of

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[131] Lisa Perrott, 'Time Is out of Joint: The Transmedial Hauntology of David Bowie', *Celebrity Studies*, 10.1 (2019), 119–39 (p. 127) <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2018.1559125>.

[132] Peraino, 'Plumbing the Surface of Sound and Vision', p. 156.

[133] Rosalind Galt, 'David Bowie's Perverse Cinematic Body', *Cinema Journal*, 57.3 (2018), 131–39 (p. 134).

[134] Copjec, *Read my Desire*, p. 16.

[135] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (1975), 6–18 <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6>.

blindness, the blind subject becomes the sacrificial object of the gaze, sparing the fully sighted subject's castration. Lacan's later re-formulation of the term gaze positions it as an example of the *object a*.[136] This takes the concept away from the position of giving mastery over what is gazed upon, into one where the subject can never master the image because the gaze acts as the very obstacle to a total mastery.

A simpler way of putting this is to say that in an artistic narrative, the position where non-knowledge exists is the place where we are forced to re-position ourselves by either constructing a fetish or accepting the symptom. The gaze is not something we can master, but a point of impossibility, it is a stain that makes any position of power incomplete. Todd McGowan states:

> No matter how much power one acquires, one always feels oneself missing something— and this something is the objet petit a. Even those who are bent on world conquest nonetheless feel the allure of the hidden enjoyment of the Other, and they locate this enjoyment at the point where power seems most absent. This explains the master's secret envy of the slave. Through the act of mastery, the master hopes to appropriate the slave's enjoyment, but this appropriation always comes up short.[137]

The *object a* as a lack is what the *sinthome* finds a place for within the symbolic. Another name for this is an object of drive. We open a different viewpoint through giving Bowie's artistic representation the status of drive, a *sinthome*, as opposed to an object of desire, a *fetish*. Desire is the search for a lost object that will fill a lack, whereas drive is the enjoyment of the lack itself without the need to fill it with an object of desire: a *sinthome*. Thus, if we consider Bowie's alter-egos as screens, rather than mirrors, we can find a consistency in his aberration; his eyes as *object a*, dead objects that place his symbolic castration on display as a meaningless enjoyment.

Bowie the Hunger Artist

The Thin White Duke is perhaps Bowie's most enigmatic creation and will be the final alter-ego we explore. This figure exemplifies the fine line between the alter-ego as a narcissistic

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[136] Lacan, *Anxiety*, pp. 213-230.
[137] Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan* (SUNY Press, 2008), p. 16.

construct or as a *sinthome*. While living in Los Angeles in the mid-1970s, Bowie was hampered by a monstrous cocaine addiction and formed an unhealthy interest in the underbelly of popular culture. At his lowest point, this included meetings with the occult and a Nazi fixation.[138] These influences are apparent in the figure of the Thin White Duke. Hugo Wilken describes this character as, 'a chilly, Aryan elitist with Nietzschean overtones, and the morbid self-absorption of a nineteenth-century German romantic'.[139] In these terms, we can see the character as an extreme projection of a sovereign narcissistic ego.

In his post Ziggy period, many of Bowie's visual cues were taken from expressionist art and cinema, with musical cues from German rock and early ambient music. Will Brooker states, 'Bowie had contracted a private academic tutor while in New York in 1974 to teach him cinema history, and would spend days watching a rewatching cult films from the 1920s'.[140] The album *Station to Station*[141], which was the vehicle for the character of the Duke, was something of a quilting point for both Bowie's American years and metonymy of characters. Of the music Bowie states, 'I think the biggest influence on that album was the work of Kraftwerk and the new German sound'.[142] This account places the Duke as a transitional character, one documented as helping Bowie move on from his American excursions and to return towards Europe, where he would record his famous 'Berlin Trilogy'.[143] Mirroring our account of James Joyce, if we follow the logic of the *sinthome* as an artifice, we can find a sublimation of Bowie's personal struggles into this Germanic figure. These struggles came as the results of a hedonistic process of cumulative emaciation through elective malnutrition and drug addiction.

Bowie's mental state was in question during the time of *Station to Station*, with interviews revealing a paranoid figure lost in a narcissistic bubble. Cameron Crowe, the teenage *Rolling Stone* journalist, caught an insight into Bowie's bizarre behaviour in a 1976 interview. During a routine question he noted:

[138] Doggett, pp. 240 - 252.

[139] Hugo Wilcken, *David Bowie's Low* (A&C Black, 2005), p. 24.

[140] Will Brooker, *Forever Stardust: David Bowie Across the Universe* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), p. 123.

[141] David Bowie, *Station To Station* (RCA Victor - APL1 1327, 1976).

[142] David Bowie, quoted in Ulrich Adelt, *Krautrock: German Music in the Seventies* (University of Michigan Press, 2016), p. 144.

[143] Sean Albiez and David Pattie, *The Velvet Underground: What Goes On* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2022), p. 140.

Suddenly - always suddenly - David is on his feet and rushing to a nearby picture window. He thinks he's seen a body fall from the sky. "I've got to do this," he says, pulling a shade down on the window. A ballpoint-penned star has been crudely drawn on the inside. Below it is the word "Aum." Bowie lights a black candle on his dresser and immediately blows it out to leave a thin trail of smoke floating upward. "Don't let me scare the pants off you. It's only protective. I've been getting a little trouble from ... the *neighbors*.[144]

We cannot be certain if Bowie may have been hamming things up for the interview by playing the character of the Duke, with the adoption of his alter-ego making it hard to fathom the extent of this paranoic display. However, whether or not this interview was a true expression of Bowie's mental state, we can pose the Duke character as an artifice that tied together a flirtation with madness and sublimated it into a musical creation.

Although there is little footage of the Thin White Duke performing, we can find the roots of the character in Bowie's previous incarnation as a blue-eyed soul singer on the album *Young Americans*.[145] In 1974, a performance of the album's title song and interview on the *Dick Cavett Show* presents a desperate figure.[146] Paul Morley describes Bowie's appearance:

Bowie is worn down to the bone. He is clinging on to a black cane in place presumably of a constant drag on his life-saving cigarettes - which he seems to need to balance even though he is sitting down...he just about has skin, but he might have nothing inside. He looks as though he belongs to Dr Caligari's Travelling Carnival.[147]

This appearance exemplifies a process of self-destruction. It is here where we can locate the 'Thin' element, sublimated into the artifice of the Duke character. Bowie's cadaver like appearance in this performance, and during this period generally, reflects a wider trend amongst rock musicians: the desire for an impossible thinness. In Bowie's image we see a skinny frame hidden beneath a boomer suit, a body reminiscent of an anorexic. In his appearance his sharply

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[144] Cameron Crowe, 'David Bowie: Ground Control to Davey Jones', *Rolling Stone*, 1976 <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/david-bowie-ground-control-to-davy-jones-77059/> [accessed 30 September 2023].
[145] David Bowie, *Young Americans* (RCA Victor - RS 1006, 1975).
[146] *David Bowie on The Dick Cavett Show 1974 (Whole Show)* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eVjk8uO6P4> [accessed 30 September 2023].
[147] Morley, p. 295.

sticking out shoulders, gaunt expression, receding gums and tiny waist speak of somebody who had an atypical relationship with their own body. Based on anecdotal evidence, we can read Bowie as going through a period of anorexic behaviour. During his mid-1970s American period, those around him noticed his peculiar eating habits. Bowie's bodyguard during this time comments, 'many days he would go without eating, then he couldn't get any food down. We had to fix Complan [a nutritional food supplement] and make him eat'.[148] There are further reports of Bowie's diet during the mid-1970s as comprising a few very selective elements. On a 1977 image of Bowie, David Buckley comments, 'not bad from someone who only a year before had been surviving on a staple diet of cocaine, red peppers and milk slugged straight from the carton'.[149] Dorothee Legrand uses the term 'constitutive self-negation' to describe, 'a process of constituting oneself through a process of negating oneself, or a process of negating oneself in order to constitute oneself'.[150] In this sense, we can frame anorexia further by introducing similar Lacanian terminology as a process of becoming a signifier without a signified, or an exceptional body as an empty master signifier through the purging of any bodily surplus from an ideal image. When Lacan states, 'In anorexia nervosa, what the child eats is the nothing',[151] he is referring to the *object a*, or gaze as a surplus within the mirror image which, for the anorexic, must be irradicated.

We can develop the wider idea of being impossibly thin amongst performance artists by highlighting a connection to the image as a commodity. Mark Radcliff observes:

> if you want to be a rock star, like David Bowie or The Rolling Stones, be prepared to be hungry a lot of the time. Richard Ashcroft of The Verve was once reputed to eat a small can of ravioli every other day. He's now a well-adjusted, happily married family man. But he's still thin. He's worked at it all his life and if you don't think you have this kind of dedication and discipline, choose another career.[152]

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[148] Stuey George, quoted in Doggett, p 219.

[149] David Buckley, *David Bowie: The Music and The Changes* (Omnibus Press, 2015), p. 60.

[150] Dorothée Legrand, 'Ex-Nihilo: Forming a Body out of Nothing.', *Collapse. Special Issue on Culinary Materialism. Vol. VII. 499-558*, 2011 (p. 504) <https://www.academia.edu/3801387/Ex_Nihilo_Forming_a_Body_out_of_Nothing> [accessed 30 September 2023].

[151] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 104.

[152] Mark Radcliffe, *Reelin' in the Years: The Soundtrack of a Northern Life* (Simon and Schuster, 2011), p. 333.

The image of the stick thin rock frontman can be seen as either an expression of non-conformity amongst typical images of masculinity or as a fashionable uniformity amongst certain masculine subcultural groups. Jessica A. Holmes develops a double distinction with the term *Manorexia*, which describes the uniform ideal of, 'idealization of childhood and youth, one achieved through a renunciation of food, exercise, and outdoor activities'.[153] The preservation of youth can be seen as a reflection of the capitalistic drive towards the new. Thus, there is a further distinction that gives this drive towards thinness a commercial expression. Here, 'emaciation symbolizes the physical extremes of the music industry's self-destructive economy enacted on the body of the musician'.[154] The latter example relates to a constitutive self-negation, the capture of the body image as the manifestation of a subjectivity through a refusal of outside objects.

It is easy to observe in small children, as they experiment with food, an accepting and rejecting certain foodstuffs for no other reason than to get a response from the mother. In this refusal to satisfy a bodily need, the body is literally marked as something beyond needs: a meta-body. The anorexic commits to a process of casting off outside objects, reducing the body to an expression of a fantasised purity. It is a process of extreme masochism, or a negative dialectic, whose end is not annihilation, but to cast off the body as inanimate and to maintain a fantasy body that is autonomous from the dead world of objects. This is to overcome the symptom into a fantasy of an impossible pure form of subjectivity. Bowie's diet, rich in cocaine, a substance that stimulates while reducing the body as it becomes a substitute for calories, would fit in with a process of constitutive self-negation. However, the body will inevitably fail to contain this negativity, or negative dialectic. In this process, we can see a reflection of the superego trap of reaching for a progressive ideal which only strengthens the hold of the imperative over the subject. In this case the quest towards an ideal body purged of excess leads the subject to emaciate themselves to the point of death, the limit over which the ideal can never be reached. However, in this refusal of objects we can place a further type of refusal, which acts as an unconscious resistance against the superego. This is the acceptance of symbolic castration, a shift in perspective that finds a way to symbolise the surplus enjoyment of the body in a *sinthome* that renders the superego impotent. Of this process Kevin Murphy states: 'The

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[153] Jessica A. Holmes, '"The Dress-Clad, Out Loud Singer of Queer Punks": Bradford Cox and the Performance of Disability', *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 14.3 (2020), 250–79 (p. 259) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S175219632000019X>.
[154] Holmes, p. 262.

symbolic is embraced but its phallic content is annulled and so there is a sublimation of the drives into the order of the signifier aimed at a non-phallicised object. It could also be argued that Lacan's concept of the *sinthome*…is operating on similar terrain.[155] Rather than the pure master signifier of 'thinness', in the *sinthome* we form a new signifier that admits our castration. In the *sinthome* as a container of enjoyment, we find a social space quilted by a singularity of the non-all, rather than another progressive fantasy of a mastery over the body.

The latter idea is a form of refusal that can be thought of under the Freudian term *Versagung* (frustration). Žižek develops this term in reference to the character Sygne from the Paul Claudel play *The Hostage*.[156] Sygne's final refusal comes in the form of a sacrifice that she, in turn, refuses to invest with any material cause other than the act of refusal itself. This character gives us a division of refusal in the form of the word "No". The "No" can be both a moral refusal in the form of a sacrifice for some imperative or another, or in Sygne's case it can take on an ethical dimension where a "No" refuses any demand that would admit the superego imperative. The former becomes a conservative act that preserves some formation of the demands of the law, a fantasy of a better system that might cure the symptom, where the latter is an identification of the *sinthome*. As Žižek states:

> Even at the abstract level, the difference between the two is clear: while the paternal "No" is purely formal, Sygne's "No" is on the contrary, a "No" embodied in a little piece of the Real, the excremental remainder of a disgusting "pathological" tic that sticks out of the symbolic form. The two "No"'s are thus like the same X on the two opposed sides of a Moebius strip: if the paternal "No" is the pure form, an empty place without content, Sygne's "No" is an excessive element that lacks its "proper" place.[157]

In this ethical 'No', we can think of a subject becoming its own cause by accepting that the symptom will remain, even in annihilation. If this process is successful, we can call it a traversal of fantasy. Another name for this refusal is the unconscious, as that which undercuts mastery. In this sense, the *sinthome* is another way of accepting that we are all subjects of the unconscious. In Sygne's case, the pathological tic refused the social mandate of her fate, not

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[155] Kevin Murphy, 'Asexuality, Absence, and the Dialectic of Substitution', in *Studying Lacan's Seminars IV and V: From Lack to Desire*, ed. by Carol Owens and Nadezhda Almqvist (Routledge, 2018), pp. 63–74 (p. 71).
[156] Žižek, *The Parallax View*, pp. 81-85.
[157] ibid., p. 83.

from a position of some hard, authentic core that could not be broken, but by a broken unconscious thing, that was never, and could never be mastered. This is the strength of the *sinthome* as an ethical concept: although it is most apparent in those who suffer through bodily aberrations, at the core of all subjects is a universal aberration that was identified by Freud: the parapraxis that refuses to conform, which shows language itself as symbolically castrated.

In the previous example of Bowie's *Dick Cavett* performance, we can find this ethical refusal in a moment where Bowie's voice breaks apart. It is here that we find in the anorexic purging of the *object a*, its re-doubled return through the emaciated body as that which cannot be consciously irradicated. Richard Middleton argues for the mobility of the vocal phallus as the marker of an auditory oedipal drama, gendering and placing the singer in a specific position in relation to an imagined norm: 'Where rock music pertains to a masculine object status, 'any "misfire" may well summon up the figure of the Oedipal or phallic mother, holder of the law in that "other time" before parental "castration"'.[158] We can take as an example the irony of the line, 'Ain't there one damn song that can make me break down and cry',[159] from this television performance of 'Young Americans'. Ademo D'Adamo comments:

> In dramatic effect it feels as if the listener personally meets Bowie in a sonic close-up at a moment of his most bare soul-searching. This plea, this existential question, is met by a short but powerfully dramatic beat of silence. The answer is...no, it seems there is no such song; if this acidic account of innocence and hope destroyed won't provoke real authentic emotion, then nothing will.[160]

In its enunciation, both Bowie's voice and body literally break down. On this line, we get a glimpse into the process of the artist. A gesture finds its way onto the surface of the body and speaks for itself as a moment of auto-erotic independence free from the diegetic of the performance. It's a moment of self-reflection within the song that isn't fully given over to the public as a fantasy object: a moment of voice and gaze as the *object a*. Here, a small glimpse

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[158] Richard Middleton, 'Mum's the Word: Men's Singing and Maternal Law', in *Musical Belongings: Selected Essays*, 1st edition (London New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 271–93 (p. 273).
[159] 'David Bowie - Young Americans Lyrics', *musiXmatch* <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/David-Bowie/Young-Americans> [accessed 15 October 2023].
[160] Ademo D'Adamo, 'Ain't There One Damn Flag That Can Make Me Break Down and Cry', in *Enchanting David Bowie: Space/Time/Body/Memory*, ed. by Toija Cinque, Christopher Moore, and Sean Redmond (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), pp. 119–53, (p. 136).

of subject as a symptom realigns the frame of the performance's fantasy. There are layers to this moment in the performance; something 'real' emerges in the organisation of the performance as it shifts from the diegetic to a moment of the non-diegetic. There is also a moment where the form, the shift in the harmony, finds a presence in the lyrical content and we are left with something with no meaning that seems to transcend the narrative and stand out as a moment of poignancy.

To re-iterate the point, we can say in such moments of non-diegetic appeal that the form returning in the narrative is a *sinthome*. The performance has the further dimension of what George Mackay terms 'the *Mal Canto*' voice:

> the disabled body sounds the corporeal and cognitive experience and knowledge of its own disability through its strained, damaged or disfluent voice, in *mal canto* style. There is a continuity between the peculiar sounds of the voice and the peculiarities of the singer's disabled body or mind.[161]

This is a term which generalises the thin voice as a malformation, aestheticized in popular music. More commonly this effect may be homologous with the Roland Barthes term *grain*.[162] In short it brings to our attention that in failing to reach a desired note because of a bodily limitation, in this case Bowie's diminished vocal abilities due to emaciation, we get the effect of the failure (the Lacanian unconscious) talking: a prosopopoeia. The insight to be made is that through a personal project of emaciation, which is a refusal of surplus objects, there is a further refusal that undercuts this progressive constitution. This is the surplus itself in the form of Bowie's strained voice as a redoubled refusal.

We can highlight a further example regarding constitutive self-negation as connected to capitalist fantasies of progressivism. In referencing the singer Lena Zavaroni, a child star who died after years of self-starvation, Su Holmes argues for a general connection between the female performer and a sublimated aesthetic of hunger.[163] It is insensitive to state that psychoanalysis may have saved Zavaroni, however, there is a relevant theoretical point in the

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161 McKay, p. 85.
162 Roland Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980* (Northwestern University Press, 2009).
163 Su Holmes, '"Little Lena's a Big Girl Now"', *Feminist Media Studies*, 15.5 (2015), 813–28 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.995117>.

difference between abandoning the symbolic order in a progressive suicide or finding a compromise formation: a *sinthome* within. On this latter point, we can see a connection between the ideal of the feminine as one who is not seen to be eating, or as self-sustained, and the media driven ideal of thinness as a desirable body image. Holmes states:

> It is widely noted that prior to the transition from a religious to a medical authority, and the medical 'discovery' of anorexia in the late 1800s, fasting women and girls were positioned in relation to sainthood...It is thus unsurprising that the dichotomy between abstaining/gorging mapped neatly onto the historical archetypes of female sexuality: the Madonna and the Whore.[164]

The account above places the saint as an ancillary of the courtly woman: a fetish. However, the saint is a figure that Lacan uses as a homology with his own position as an analyst in a different guise. Contrary to being a pure, or holy being, the saint developed by Lacan is the abject figure who causes desire: an *object a*. As we have seen with the examples of Bowie's eye and anorexic frame, he routinely presents a masquerade through alter-egos, such as Ziggy and the Duke, by framing an aberration. Rather than the masochist who exists as the abject object, the type of aberration Bowie embodies is an abject subject. This presents a difference between two articulations of Lacan's *object a*. The former is the object that covers desire, or the fetish object beyond a fantasy frame. The latter is the object as a gap, which undercuts and traverses the fantasy: a *sinthome*. Where the masochist puts himself at the other side of this fantasy frame, the abject saintly figure, rather than the saintly fetish beyond the social, collapses this frame in a traversal that gives the gap back to the subject as non-all. Lacan sees this as the true infinity. He states, 'The more saints, the more laughter; that's my principle, to wit, the way out of capitalist discourse - which will not make up progress, if it happens only for some'.[165] We can read this as a positioning of the abject saint as a figure of universality. Thus, progressivism is thwarted under the emancipation of a universal castration.

Conclusion

Through David Bowie, we have argued that his use of artifice presents a way of bringing the abject into the social by carving out a symbolic, rather than imaginary, position for

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[164] Su Holmes, p. 821.
[165] Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment* (W. W. Norton, 1990), p. 15.

outlaw forms of enjoyment. The political weight of this concept is to present an abstract social position that, retroactively, will bring the dis-advantaged and the monstrous, into the symbolic order through a type of symptom, which is an accepting of singular idiosyncrasies. In our counter example of Butlerian performativity, we found a fetishist position; this is to deconstruct progressively towards an ideal. In this respect, performativity proves to be another articulation of a fetishist logic. In Bowie's alter-egos, rather than seeing a deconstructive performativity, we must see a constant rearticulation of a singular enjoyment. This frames Bowie as a radical figure whose shifting personas are a constant re-articulation of a lack, a *sinthome*, which brings symbolic castration into the social without the need for fetish objects. In this regard, we can argue for Bowie as a figure of the feminine non-all.

The next chapter will bring this thesis to a close by developing the non-all society as a viable alternative to capitalist progression. This will be through an exploration of musical communities of singular enjoyment.

Chapter 4 - Hawkwind

Introduction

The Altamont festival and its disastrous events are often placed as the symbolic end of the 1960s countercultural experiment.[1] Because of Altamont, the Grateful Dead cancelled a gig at the Roundhouse venue in March 1970, which led to a unique series of concerts known as The Atomic Sunrise. Although not a historically impactful series of gigs, it does hold relevance for our thesis and for where rock music would journey in the 1970s. On a single night, the line-up consisted of a trio of acts who would go on to burn their own unique paths: Genesis, David Bowie and Hawkwind. While we have analysed Genesis through the fetish, and Bowie through the symptom, Hawkwind act as a further example of how a symptom can be a point of collectivity. Although they are the least well known of this trio of acts, we will argue that they present the most radical political example. The focus of this chapter will be to ask how we can form a community through a mutual negativity, rather than through a fetish image of a deferred future. Again, this is to align Hawkwind with the now familiar category of the non-all. While for Genesis, a countercultural event was something the band quickly left behind, and for Bowie, something eulogised, yet passed over in his song 'Memory of a Free Festival',[2] these events became a way of life for Hawkwind.

We will develop the position that space rock band Hawkwind exemplify anti-progression and an embracing of symbolic castration through the symptom. Hawkwind's legacy in the general cultural imagination is as a 'one hit wonder' band, with their anthemic, 'Silver Machine'.[3] However, if we dig a little deeper into their career, we find a noble attempt at creating an alternative mode of organisation, apart from their rock peers. As a live act, the band embraced an ethos of free music and of building communities based on the surplus, or non-belonging members of society. Through Hawkwind, we will demonstrate an alternative to the subject alienated through fantasy with the continued notion of a community of the non-all as an answer to the imaginary fraternity. The idea of an alternative to capitalist society, exemplified through Hawkwind, becomes enriched through our previous consideration of the development of a

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[1] Bill Owens and Jonathan Blaustein, '50 Years After Altamont: The End of the 1960s', *The New York Times*, 15 April 2019, section Lens <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/15/lens/altamont-1969-bill-owens.html> [accessed 15 October 2023].

[2] David Bowie, 'Memory of a Free Festival', *David Bowie* (Phillips - SBL 7912, 1969).

[3] Hawkwind, 'Silver Machine', *Silver Machine* (United Artists Records - UP 35381, 1972).

singular subject, without a reliance on fetish objects. The singular, non-all community, creates a space for anyone to act out their personal idiosyncrasies, to find an acceptable symbolic position for their symptom, and enjoy this castration rather than deferring it through the fetish.

In this final chapter, we will continue the theoretical direction of the symptom and show the diversity of ideas that follow a singular organisation. We can present a summary of our theoretical developments in this thesis thus far. The previous chapter outlined the *sinthome* as an organisation of enjoyment that follows a logic of singularity. We are revealed as singular beings by traversing a particular fantasy and finding a place for its point of inconsistency. In this we get a place that, rather than filled with a particular signifier, becomes filled with enjoyment directly. This singular enjoyment is a form of universality as it is common in all subjects as their mark of symbolic castration. Žižek identifies a politics of the singular through a collective based on mutual castration; he states, 'This identification with the Universal is not the identification with an all-encompassing global Substance ("humanity"), but the identification with a Universal ethico-political principle'.[4] An ethical principle is one of drive, or singular enjoyment, rather than an identity politics of desire, which relies on the maintenance of master signifiers. In place of a master signifier, which holds its power via the masculine exception (as covered in chapter one), we have come to the feminine logic of the non-all (via a critical analysis of fetishism and progression in chapter two). In chapter one, we summed up the position of the non-all through a statement regarding the sexuated position of woman for Lacan: not one is not castrated, but not-all are castrated. If we take this statement to mean that because not one woman is not castrated, they are all within the symbolic order, not-all are included in the symbolic as incomplete, we can thus read the not-all, or non-all, as a form of community of singular people connected by a mutually empty *sinthome*. This is rather than a community of individuals who can only consist through the disavowal of incompletion.

We will proceed with an overview of Hawkwind's formation as part of the Ladbroke Grove underground, before focusing on a single event, The Isle of Wight Festival in 1970. This will demonstrate how the organisation of the band differs from its more mainstream peers. In a reflection of our previous criticisms of theories of dualistic resistance, through the festival, we will demonstrate the logic of the community based around a mutual singularity, and spontaneous organisation, which can exist without the phallic or master signifier. From this

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[4] Žižek, *The Parallax View*, p. 10.

idea of a central negativity, we will move through Lacan's concept of the death drive to frame differing types of social organisation: the friend/enemy dualism and the collective based on mutual castration. It is the latter form of organisation that we will align with Hawkwind as one different to the imaginary fraternity and to show the potential of this form as an ethical concept. This will lead to the further example of Hawkwind's 'Silver Machine', which will be used to demonstrate how the death drive enters the social. Through the example of the childhood fort-da game, we will argue that a position of symbolic castration can be a communitarian concept by elevating negativity, or the symptom, as an avowed symbolic castration. This will form our final position in critiquing masculine fantasy and its alignment with capitalist perversion.

Space Rock in Context

There are several branches to the progressive era that produced differing cultural projects as rock developed into multiple new styles and genres in the 1970s. Space rock is a genre of science fiction influenced hard rock that creates a musical and lyrical dialogue through introducing electronic music technologies and space age themes. Developing alongside the progressive music of the late 1960s, space rock offered its audience a platform for inner and outer explorations of personal and communal space. Jonathan Weinel states:

> In space rock, the cosmic journeys into outer space became analogous to psychedelic voyages into inner spaces of the mind. This was not pure escapism, as speculative science fiction provided an arena in which alternative notions of culture and society could be explored.[5]

We can trace the roots of the genre to the UFO, Marquee and Middle Earth rock clubs, and other countercultural events that were popular gathering points for music fans in London in the late 1960s. As Britta Sweers recalls, London's rock clubs offered, 'rooms for "Happenings", which were a mixture of jam sessions, film events and costume parties'.[6] The idea of multimedia events that brought together differing artistic mediums into the same performance space, became the grounding for the space rock ethos and aesthetic.

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[5] Jonathan Weinel, *Inner Sound: Altered States of Consciousness in Electronic Music and Audio-Visual Media* (Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 69.
[6] Britta Sweers, *Electric Folk: The Changing Face of English Traditional Music* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2005), p. 115.

For example, the early performances of Pink Floyd provided an archetype for space rock. They utilized electronic noise and rhythms like those found in the Velvet Underground, but with an emphasis on space age themes. This type of presentation became central to the band's popularity and performances at the UFO club and associated rock venues, which helped to build a space rock scene in London during the late 1960s. Multimedia performances using space themes were used in songs such as, 'Astronomy Domine'[7] and 'Interstellar Overdrive'.[8] When combined with lightshows during live performances, these songs became multi-sensory epics. Critic, David Sinclair summarises 'Interstellar Overdrive' as, 'the track which signposts their collective interest in a textual, impressionistic approach to rock that often dispensed with the conventional requirements'.[9] Both songs show a type of performance for which the early Pink Floyd became known: quirky songs that descended into avant-garde group improvisation. Benjamin Halligan comments on Pink Floyd's early performances:

> The quasi-religious live performances of psychedelic drone music often emphasised this consciousness - enveloping aspect: the singer as shaman, the music as ceremony, the concert as collective happening. Liquid light-shows used to accompany the music have an affective aspect in this endeavour: inducing a seeming slowing down on cognitive functioning, and with this a lowering of defences in the face of the engulfing nature of the music.[10]

Further, the music has an association with psychedelic drug experimentation and the exploration of subjective effacement. It gave the platform for types of musical performance that played with the temporal and visual ideas of a traditional rock performance. As Sheila Whiteley states, "'Space rock', with its exploration of alternative experiences, locks into the psychedelic, the effects of acid and the emphasis on being spaced out, the escape from a rational time sense".[11] In sum, the format of 3-minute pop hits sung to a room of fans singing their favourite choruses was replaced with the effacement of the star performer through lightshows

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[7] Pink Floyd, 'Astronomy Domine', *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* (Columbia - SX 6157, 1967).

[8] Pink Floyd, 'Interstellar Overdrive', *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* (Columbia - SX 6157, 1967).

[9] David Sinclair, 'Pink Floyd: Inter-Planetary', *Q*, April 1988 <https://www-rocksbackpages-com.libproxy.ncl.ac.uk/Library/Article/pink-floyd-inter-planetary> [accessed 1 October 2023].

[10] Benjamin Halligan, 'Shoegaze as the Third Wave: Affective Psychedelic Noise, 1965-91', in *Resonances: Noise and Contemporary Music*, ed. by Michael Goddard, Benjamin Halligan, and Nicola Spelman (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2013), pp. 37–64 (p. 40).

[11] Sheila Whiteley, *The Space Between the Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture* (Routledge, 2003), p. 33.

and spontaneous music. Pink Floyd would move on from these beginnings to become a much more polished and commercial act with a larger global audience. However, in their wake, a much more local and devoted scene developed that took these musical ideas and gave them a political outlet.

In the 1960s, Ladbroke grove and wider Notting Hill area of London produced several collectives, bands, magazines, artists, political groups, and authors who had a footing in the space rock genre. Geographically, the area is a 20min walk from London's West end with its universities and art colleges, as a result it was popular with students who were housed in post-war slums and squats. The cheap housing and location also attracted immigrants, dropouts, and an artistic community, creating a counterculture of collaboration. Hawkwind emerged from the Ladbroke grove underground scene in late 1969 as an ever-rotating collection of musicians, artists, writers, and dancers. Harry Sword describes the band in relation to Ladbroke grove: 'Sitting atop the fusty, patchouli-scented scene were Hawkwind. Their black cosmic chug was the very soul of the grittier end of early seventies London counterculture, marrying epic sci-fi conceptualism to a street level sensibility'.[12] They took the space rock elements of what we find in early Pink Floyd and formed a band with an emphasis on collectivity, inclusion, and political activism.

Over the years the line-up of Hawkwind has had a single mainstay, guitarist Dave Brock. The beginnings of Hawkwind were a continuation of the already decade long amateur music career of Brock. He'd tried his hand as a jazz banjo player, professional busker and guitarist and singer for a blues rock band (The Dharma Blues Band).[13] His experiences included tours around Europe, recording a session for the BBC, playing the Albert Hall, and contributing to a compilation album, *The Buskers*.[14] It was after seeing acts such as Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, and Arthur Brown in London's rock clubs, and familiarising himself with the German band Can, that Brock started writing space themed music. Brocks's experience as a busker continued into the band's early days, which saw them play free gigs in and around Ladbroke grove and become a popular act at free festivals.[15] To give a broad definition of the band, Hawkwind were hippies, but from the beginning they seemed slightly out of time as leftovers from a very recent

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[12] Harry Sword, *Monolithic Undertow: In Search of Sonic Oblivion* (Hachette UK, 2021), ch. 4.

[13] Ian Abrahams, *Hawkwind: Sonic Assassins* (SAF Publishing Ltd, 2004), pp. 8-20.

[14] Various, *The Buskers* (Columbia - SCX 6356, 1969).

[15] *Dave Brock Interview 2002 History of Hawkwind Etc*, dir. by Simon Trenholm, 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WH3EkOAjNE> [accessed 1 October 2023].

era. They were a dystopian continuation of the aesthetics of the 1960s counterculture, creating music that was designed to accompany an acid trip. On the band's early direction, Brock states: 'The Floyd and Velvet Underground were on a similar thing, but they changed. I think someone's got to see it through'.[16]

To highlight some of the key figures in what would form the band's 'classic era', we can include improvisational saxophonist Nik Turner, sci-fi writer Michael Moorcock, schizophrenic South African poet and singer Robert Calvert, Projection artist Liquid Len and conceptual artist Barney Bubbles, former Amon Duul II Bassist Dave Anderson, a pre Motorhead Lemmy, 6-foot-2 naked girl dancer Stacia and non-musician audio generator operator Dik Mik and synth player Del Dettmar. The list demonstrates the idiosyncrasies of the group. As a collective without a continuity between members, Sword gives the band the status of an 'anarchic rabble howling at the cosmos'.[17] Rather than including only musicians, the band was open to collaborators from all artistic mediums.

In their lengthy career, Hawkwind experimented with several different musical styles. However, the core of their sound has always been a mixture of psychedelic noise, repetitive riffs, and space age lyrics. Lester Bangs describes the experience of listening to Hawkwind's 1971 album, *In Search of Space*:[18]

> The synthesisers warble, woof and scream and gurgle like barfing computers, the drums pound, and the singers chant Unknown Tongue rebops reminiscent of such blasts from the past, present and future as the first Mothers album, Hapshash and the Colored Coat featuring the Human Host and the Heavy Metal Kids, and Germany's great psyche-overload band Amon Duul II.[19]

Here Bangs places Hawkwind's music as lying somewhere in between the more experimental side of American psychedelia and early atmospheric German rock. This separates Hawkwind

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[16] Dave Brock, quoted in Jerry Gilbert, 'When It Comes To Mind-Blowing, Hawkwind Are Really Into It', *Sounds*, 17 October 1970 <https://www-rocksbackpages-com.libproxy.ncl.ac.uk/Library/Article/when-it-comes-to-mind-blowing-hawkwind-are-really-into-it> [accessed 1 October 2023].

[17] Sword, ch. 6.

[18] Hawkwind, *In Search Of Space* (United Artists Records - UAG 29202, 1971).

[19] Lester Bangs, 'Hawkwind - In Search Of Space', *Rolling Stone*, 22 June 1972 <https://www.superseventies.com/sphawkwind.html> [accessed 1 October 2023].

from the popular hard rock and prog bands emerging in Britain during the early 1970s. There are the standard blues and folk influences that were a hangover from the 1960s, but what we also find on the early albums comprises largely improvised electronic jams that have more in common with krautrock and the early German electronic composers such as Stockhausen. It is the cold mechanical repetition of these German influences, combined with more traditional blues and rock, which gave them the sought-after acid trip effect.

Hawkwind were also an influence on later musical genres. By the early 1970s, space rock was something of a fringe pursuit compared to the contemporary trend of progressive rock. However, there is the temptation to call some of the band's rougher and heavier elements proto punk. John Robb states that the band, 'had a far bigger influence on the punk scene than is generally acknowledged'.[20] There are similarities in the approach to the music and performance, such as DIY sensibilities, anarchistic overtones, and the devaluing of musical technique in favour of volume and raw aggression. Also, going further into the development of punk, Mimi Haddon argues that post-punk music was more influenced by the ambient synth noise of bands such as Hawkwind than its punk predecessors: 'Music journalists recognised Hawkwind as an important stylistic precedent for the use of the synthesizer by both Pere Ubu and Cabaret Voltaire'.[21] Another genre to consider is the development of modern electronic dance music. Much of the aesthetic of the U.K. rave or club experience comes from the lineage of bands like Hawkwind, via the 1970s free festival scene. Dave Brock summarises the band's initial run of popularity, and its simultaneous existence alongside the latter punk and rave scenes: 'the thing about Hawkwind is that we were always fond of repetitive riffs, really chugging fast stuff and I think that's why the punks didn't mind what we did. In a sense it was early dance music. Driving, highly repetitive rhythms - we've always had that strong foundation'.[22]

Apart from a musical influence, a further connection between space rock and the rave scene comes from the fundamental way in which both are organised from a position of temporality and spontaneity, rather than commercial foresight. Both scenes began from the position of fringe interests before reaching a mass or mainstream audience. This suggests that a form of

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[20] John Robb, *Punk Rock: An Oral History* (Random House, 2010), p. 128.
[21] Mimi Haddon, *What Is Post-Punk?: Genre and Identity in Avant-Garde Popular Music, 1977-82* (University of Michigan Press, 2023), p. 150.
[22] Dave Brock, quoted in Sword, ch. 6.

organisation, which is commonly thought as an underground or alternative form, was transmitted from scene to scene. Christopher Partridge makes this point through his observations on free festivals and Goa trance music, where both share a similar psychedelic iconography and culture of free experimentation, he comments: 'in this early shift from free festival culture to Goan free party culture, while the music changed a little – as popular music does – the psychedelic, spirituality eclectic culture remained intact'.[23] The similarities between these temporally separated scenes suggests an organisational principle based on the continuation of an alternative time. This is of a fleeting ritualistic repetition of the symptom at the centre of a community, rather than a progressive teleology.

Hawkwind and Festivals

Hawkwind's preference for playing free festivals and non-profit events can be theorized as an alternative form of musical organisation to the commercial mainstream of 1970s rock music. This is an organisation based on a mutual positioning between musician and audience rather than that of the rock star as an exceptional ideal. In this regard, the band went against some of the dominant trends of the commercial side of the music industry. Devon Powers argues that the 1970s was a period where the business side of the music industry learned from commercial mistakes in the 1960s, and formed a system based on oversupply of product, which created hype around artists: 'music was an oversupplied market, and labels both combated this problem and perpetuated it as they sought more and more artists to sell. In such an environment, only colossal success could buoy the investment sunk in unsuccessful recordings'.[24] This bet on achieving colossal success with a few artists created a culture of the millionaire rockstar as an ideal. Surrounding the marketing of the rock star was the creation of mythologies that put the musician in an exceptional position. For example, the mythologies that surround a band such as Led Zeppelin place them as holding some forbidden enjoyment.[25] The idea of the next big thing went hand in hand with placing the new star as a missing piece within the consumers life. Along with the rock star as an exceptional figure, the consumer was treated as alienated,

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[23] Christopher Partridge, 'The Spiritual and the Revolutionary: Alternative Spirituality, British Free Festivals, and the Emergence of Rave Culture', *Culture and Religion*, 7.1 (2006), 41–60 (p. 47) <https://doi.org/10.1080/01438300600625408>.

[24] Devon Powers, 'Bruce Springsteen, Rock Criticism, and the Music Business: Towards a Theory and History of Hype', *Popular Music and Society*, 34.2 (2011), 203–19 (p. 206) <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007761003726472>.

[25] Andy Greene, 'The 10 Wildest Led Zeppelin Legends', *Rolling Stone*, 2019 <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/the-10-wildest-led-zeppelin-legends-fact-checked-153103/> [accessed 9 October 2023].

'consumers were viewed not as a truth to be lived with but rather a problem to be repaired'.[26] We thus get the music industry acting as perfect capitalists, of creating both the obstacle and its solution for the consumer. As with the figure of the small other, the ideal of the rockstar produces the fantasy of a full excessive enjoyment, unavailable in the day-to-day life of the consumer.

In contrast, Hawkwind and their audience follow an organisation of idiosyncratic individuals connected by a mutual negativity, rather than a shared ideal. In Hawkwind's festival performances and later rave/dance culture, we can find a similarity between the position of the performer relative to the audience, mutual to both. In the figure of the rock star, we find a very strict divide between the performer as an excessive figure, and the audience as belonging to a fraternal community through a belief in a meta-position of stardom. Our present examples demonstrate a different way of theorising collectivity. Roxy Robinson states, '1990's DJ and rave events were thought to offer a meaningful relief from theatrical spectacle…DJs, unlike watching live bands, did not seem to be predicated on watching stylised personalities on stage'.[27] In this we don't find a reversal from the power of the stage performer to that of the audience, but a re-distribution of the very meaning of an event based on its lack of a positive ideal as a central point.

If we return to Lacan's formulas of sexuation, a community of the non-all is indifferent to master signifiers. This is a different mode of organisation to the masculine exception that lets a community bond through an enjoying other. In the non-all community the definition of a performance becomes a retroactive process that only holds meaning until the next musical event re-articulates the collective: 'in such a community different ideas and laws are born, live their life and die. The process of becoming and constant change continues and never stops in its movement of invention and reinvention'.[28] Because there is no central ideal, the meaning of the community is open ended and always open to re-articulation. We have already demonstrated two differing ways to focus on music as an object of interpretation; either as a fetish or symptom. In Lacan's differentiation between the male and female formulas, the male fantasises

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[26] Powers, p. 207.

[27] Roxy Robinson, 'No Spectators! The Art of Participation, from Burning Man to Boutique Festivals in Britain', in *The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media, Culture*, ed. by George McKay (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2015), pp. 165–83, p. 178.

[28] Andreja Zevnik, *Lacan, Deleuze and World Politics: Rethinking the Ontology of the Political Subject* (Routledge, 2016), p. 195.

through a fetish object and the female traverses this fantasy in rendering the fetish inoperative through a symptom. It is in relation to the symptom, which finds a way to bring the excluded into social space, that the non-all community constantly re-orientates itself around, without the pressure of a teleological end. The basis for this community is the acceptance that the fantasy will never cure the symptom as it manifests as a shared negative object of social space. As Bjorn Schiermer states:

> The production of collective sentiments and energies needs to happen 'outside' of 'the individual minds' for all to see; they develop around a shared focus, around which the individuals gather and synchronise their behaviour. Ritual in this very wide, non-prescriptive and non-formal sense is essentially a form of collective entertainment around (and about) a shared object.[29]

Another name for this shared object is Lacan's *object a* as a 'real' object. If we remind ourselves of Lacan's formulations, in this (feminine) community, there is not one who is not subjected to symbolic castration. In this case, the universal is formed of a non-all that are universally subject to symbolic castration. To simplify these statements, we could say that because there is no exception, social space finds no way to totalise itself. In effect, this community is formed of subjects who experience the place of negativity, the *object a*, without course to its displacement through the fetish.

Žižek highlights a common misinterpretation of the feminine non-all as signifying a privileged jouissance belonging to the feminine subject, giving her less than a full symbolic position. This misinterpretation follows that, 'feminine jouissance does not exist in the strict sense of symbolic existence – it is not symbolised, it just ex-sists outside speech'.[30] If we reintroduce our prominent example of the racial other, this is an interpretation that gives a mystical enjoyment to another subject, which in turn positions them as an *Anstoss*, an obstacle that both creates the fantasy and becomes a barrier to full enjoyment. From this perspective the whole of Lacan's sexuation becomes subsumed under the masculine logic of the male exception. Žižek continues:

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[29] Bjorn Schiermer, 'Enacting the Music: Collectivity and Material Culture in Festival Experience', in *Youth Collectivities: Cultures and Objects*, ed. by Bjørn Schiermer, Ben Gook, and Valentina Cuzzocrea (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), pp. 87–113 (p. 90).
[30] Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2003), p. 68.

The feminine "non-all" does not mean that there is a mysterious part of a woman outside the symbolic, but a simple absence of totalisation, of the All: totalization takes place through its constitutive exception, and since, in the feminine libidinal economy, there is no Outside, no Exception to the phallic function, for that very reason a woman is immersed in the symbolic order more wholly than a man – without restraint, without exception.[31]

The community that arises from this logic of full immersion in the symbolic is one that does not shy away from the fact that the symbolic functions as a necessarily incomplete system where symptoms interrupt the possibility of a full meaning. Because there is no exception, or scapegoat for this community's failings, suffering and enjoyment are divided as the negative bonding agent; everyone is mutually responsible and influences how this collective functions. The community of symbolically castrated, and paradoxically, symbolically complete non-all subjects, form a collective who are ultimately responsible for their singular symbolic castration. Rather than relating through a common exceptional object of love or hatred, they relate to each other through a mutual idiosyncrasy, or *sinthome*, that each member forms in reaction to this incomplete symbolic order.

Music as fetish or *sinthome* can be thought along a further dividing line of politics. A fetishist politics is a right-wing structure whereas a symptom structure is a leftist structure. This assertion is exemplified in Todd McGowan's analysis of jokes that respond to the political contradictions inherent to the left and right division.[32] A right-wing joke functions through a fetishist displacement of stupidity onto another and finds a sense of mutual belonging through this exclusion (laughing at another), 'Through the insistence on belonging, rightest enjoyment depends on the enemy that its jokes turn into a source of mockery, a mockery that correctly identifies the lack in the enemy but that leaves the friend unstained with contradiction'.[33] In contrast, a left-wing joke follows the structure of finding humour in our very non-belonging, which is another way of reconciling oneself with the symptom that undercuts any sense of mastery (laughing through our mutual stupidity with the other): 'Because contradiction extends everywhere, this enjoyment is not exclusive. No one need be barred from it. Some don't suffer

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[31] Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, p. 68.
[32] Todd McGowan, *Enjoyment Right & Left* (Sublation Media, 2022), pp. 47 - 51.
[33] ibid., p. 48.

so that others can enjoy. All suffer so that no one is excluded from enjoyment'.[34] It is from this position, one of a non-all community where what bonds people is a mutual non-belonging, that we must proceed with when thinking about Hawkwind.

For Hawkwind, the event that brought them attention outside of the Ladbroke grove scene was the third Isle of Wight Pop Festival in September 1970. According to Phil Hardy and Dave Laing, the event, 'confirmed Hawkwind as the mascots of Britain's underground media and burgeoning alternative society'.[35] This was due to a splintering between the original planned performances, which were ticketed, and a series of makeshift events that popped up outside the gates by those who could not afford or refused to pay the entry fee. When we consider our right and left structures of enjoyment, we can outline the official event as following the rightest structure of belonging while the outside events followed the leftist structure of a collective based on non-belonging. This was also a watershed moment in British counterculture where leftist self-organisation led to a scene of national free festivals. Andy Bennet states:

> The subsequent legacy that Hawkwind was to establish in many ways speaks to a parting of the ways between mainstream rock festivals and politics as the 1970s wore on and the establishment of a fringe festival scene that served to preserve, at least at some level, the countercultural zest of the Woodstock blueprint.[36]

The first Isle of Wight festival in 1968 was a small affair with around 12,000 attendees, organized to raise money to fund local services on the island. The 1969 festival saw a huge step up in size and notoriety with Bob Dylan returning from one of his many career hiatuses to play to around 100,000 people. The event was a commercial success and for the organizers, Ronnie, and Ray Foulk, became an incentive to make the next year's festival bigger and better. In seeing the success of the Woodstock movie that same year, the model of creating a film of a British Woodstock equivalent became a goal.[37]

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[34] McGowan, *Enjoyment Right & Left*, p. 50.

[35] Phil Hardy and David Laing, quoted in Lucy Green, *How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education* (Routledge, 2017), p. 25.

[36] Andy Bennett, 'Woodstock 2019: The Spirit of Woodstock in the Post-Risk Era', *Popular Music and Society*, 43.2 (2020), 216–27 (p. 220) <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2019.1687672>.

[37] Patrick Glen, 'Hippy Dream or Total Nightmare? The Untold Story of Isle of Wight 1970', *The Guardian*, 25 August 2020, section Music <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/aug/25/hippy-dream-or-total-nightmare-untold-story-isle-of-wight-festival-1970-hendrix> [accessed 1 October 2023].

By focusing on expansion and accumulation, Foulk raised the festival to the level of a desirable commodity, which by default relied on some degree of exclusivity. Against the spirit of the times, exclusion was the basis for a belonging based on an exclusivity of ticket buyers over those expecting a free event. Over the course of the five-day Festival over 50 acts played including A-list bands and musicians such as Jimi Hendrix, The Who, The Doors, Miles Davies, Leonard Cohen, and Joni Mitchell, amongst others. However, the scale of the festival was met with cynicism amongst the burgeoning Ladbroke Grove underground scene. As printed in *Frendz* magazine, one of the biggest underground presses of the time, 'Obviously the biggest rip off of the festival is the £205000 in fees to the performers. Most top line acts were paid around £10000 for a one or two hour performance with additional payments from any film or record made'.[38] These initial fees would also spiral on the days of performances with many acts; most notably Leonard Cohen holding the Foulks to ransom by demanding bigger fees to go onstage. Added to this was the cost of the festival site itself including fees to the landowner, the local council, event staff, the stage area and fences, and advertising and marketing fees. By Ray Foulk's own admission the festival needed to sell 170,000 tickets to break even.[39]

Desolation Row or Devastation Hill were the names given to the area of hillside that surrounded and overlooked the festivals East Afton Farm location. This became the sight for the splinter events held outside of the ticketed festival. Although considered an unsuitable piece of land, as from the Hillside the concerts could be viewed for free, after a public backlash from the island residents it was the only place on offer from the council. The splinter events were a continuation of the Phun City music festival, which was held a month earlier in Worthing, Sussex. Organized by some of the Ladbroke Grove's Alumni, Phun City was conceived as a paying festival but had been transformed into a free event, 'there was free music, free food, even free drugs: at least one dealer sold dope until he had covered his costs. Then he gave it away'.[40] The status as a free event was due to a growing scene of young politically aware hippies and freaks who wanted to claim back rock music from its commercial leanings and purposefully liberate festivals from commercial interests. Roxy Robinson comments:

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[38] 'Article 4', *Frendz*, 4 September 1970.

[39] Sharif Gemie, 'The Case for a Free Festival (199-1974) Hippy Culture and Pop Festivals', in *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*, ed. by Maria Nita and Jeremy H. Kidwell (Springer Nature, 2021), pp. 45–65.

[40] George McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties* (Verso, 1996), p. 13.

Festival-goers turned up and began to challenge the concept of narrow ownership as large swathes of land outside the festival gates turned into a site of protest. Many believed they had a right to free entry and free food as the communitarian ethos of free festival culture came into direct collision with the isle of wights economic function.[41]

Many people travelled from Phun City and set up camp on the hills of East Afton Farm. The first to arrive were able to see the construction of the festival site and ultimately the building of a 20ft fence that was to stop those without tickets from attending. By the time the festival had officially started on, Wednesday the 26th of August, the hills were inhabited by a mass sea of people. According to Patrick Glenn, the estimated number of tickets sold to the event was eighty to ninety thousand, however over the course of the 5 days the population of the island had increased by up to six hundred thousand people.[42]

Where most of Devastation Hill's temporary population was made up of freaks, hippies and kids who just wanted to be part of the action, the groups that politicised Phun City were also in attendance. These were minority offshoots of the '68 Paris student movements: White Panthers, Hells Angels and a mix of anarchists and political activists who would lead the drive to liberate the festival. Throughout there were clashes between these groups and the organizers as they demanded that the fences be torn down, they were met with hostility as scuffles broke out between the anarchists and security who were equipped with Alsatian dogs. Over the course of the weekend, these scuffles would result in an all-out occupation where the festival site was effectively won in a mock war for its liberation.[43]

Chris Anderton defines the festival through the idea of the liminal space: 'The concept of limonoid is relevant to those music festivals and events characterised by an anti-mainstream attitude: for instance, anti-war protests and illegal raves are both constructed as oppositional and involve intense or communal feelings'.[44] Although we can see this oppositional move clearly in the Isle of Wight festival, we must separate the concepts of opposition and communal feelings. In collapsing the political relevancy of a festival or communal event into a dualism, we miss the dimension of mutual non-belonging that can only arise if we abandon the concept

[41] Roxy Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation* (Routledge, 2016), p. 21.
[42] Glen, 'Hippy Dream or Total Nightmare?'.
[43] McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty*, pp. 11-45.
[44] Chris Anderton, *Music Festivals in the UK: Beyond the Carnivalesque* (Routledge, 2018), p. 105.

of opposition. If we bear in mind the Lacanian aphorism, 'there is no sexual relationship', things become more complicated than just oppositional sides competing for the same space. In the attempt to liberate the festival, we are still within the rightist political position of belonging through an exception. Here we find the oppositional splinter group enjoying its anti-commercial position through an over attachment to the enjoyment that comes from hating the representation of its antithetical ideological position.

In relation to this same underlying logic, Derek Hook theorises this shift through the logic of perversion as it marks a form of anti-racist thought:

> An attitude that condemns racism is thus in fact perfectly compatible with racist jouissance. The two are dynamically interrelated, mutually reinforcing. This stands to (psychoanalytic) reason: The more a subject deplores and rejects racist thinking, the more perverse the enjoyment at succumbing to such thoughts.[45]

Applied to an anti-consumerist rather than an anti-racist situation, we can say that in accepting the duality of competing positions, we fall into a game of hegemonic ideological struggle. Although this can result in an alternative content, the political ground of what produces the societies enjoyment is left untouched. If the fantasy of those that belong and those that don't remains the unconscious form of movements towards resistance, we are still left with a particular exclusion rather than the feminine social structure of a mutual non-belonging. The violent clashes between those on the inside and outside follows the logic of competing master signifiers, commercial and anti-commercial, that are given consistency through a mutual erection of the other side as its exceptional obstacle. By investing in master signifiers, we find no admission of the weakness of phallic positions and no place for the negativity that opens a mutual communal space.

The divide between the main festival and Devastation Hill was evident in the behaviour of the organizers themselves. Understandably they were protecting their investment and trying to maximize profits at the gate by sending out pleas to the audience that they were at risk of shutting down the festival if the breakeven number of 170,000 attendees wasn't met.

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[45] Derek Hook, 'What Is "Enjoyment as a Political Factor"?', *Political Psychology*, 38 (2017), p. 610. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12417>.

Oppositional acts such as shining the stage lights onto the hill to 'dazzle' the onlookers to block their view and sending out empty threats such as letting the dogs loose did little to send the non-paying observers either towards the ticket stalls or back home. Perhaps this hostility is best demonstrated by head promoter Rikki Farr's tirade directed towards the hill, he shouted, 'We put this festival on, you bastards, with a lot of love! We worked for *one year* for you *pigs!* And you wanna break our walls down and you wanna destroy it? Well you go to *hell!*'.[46] These antagonisms and political tactics highlight the lack of solidarity and culture of blame among these two distinct facets of counterculture, the mainstream and the underground.

After days of these back-and-forth petty exchanges of vandalism and threats, on the Sunday, after realizing that there was no chance of turning a profit from the gate receipt, Fiery Creations conceded to the outside pressure and declared the festival free. Perhaps this was a little late in the proceedings to be anything other than a symbolic gesture as the major stars had already been, taken their payday, and jetted back off the island, along with a huge number of paying ticket holders. Overall, the festival was considered to have been a disappointment from both an organizational and a performance standpoint. Hendrix was off his game, Jim Morrison played from the shadows on a badly lit stage, and Joni Mitchell's performance suffered countless interruptions from acid head activists trying to steal time on the mic. The Who were perhaps the saviours of the festival due to bringing a touring sound system with them that dwarfed an underperforming house P.A., which had been subject to technical problems for the whole festival. They could be heard by the entire audience. Any plans to create a British Woodstock through releasing a film of the event also went up in smoke. Rejected by the major film studios and unable to find the financial backing to release it independently, it took 27 years for the resulting film to finally appear.

Mick Farren sums the 5 days up:

> The Isle of Wight Festival, to me, seemed a practical demonstration of the way the wealth of the underground is at present distributed: a V.I.P. enclosure surrounded by fences and protected by guards: Kids walking into the medical tent in a state of collapse because they hadn't eaten for 2 days: Illustrations of a culture which, although paying

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[46] *Message to Love: The Isle of Wight Festival*, dir. by Murray Lerner (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Castle Music Pictures, Initial Film and Television).

sanctimonious lip service to the concepts of love and equality, manifests an inequality of rank and money as brutal as that of Czarist Russia. It is a society where a man can be paid £500 a minute for playing guitar, yet protests that people need to be fed are shouted down: "You're spoiling a groovy scene: shut your mouth".[47]

This story of activists attacking and liberating a mainstream festival is just one way of looking at the event. Within the population of devastation hill there is a counter narrative of an autonomous makeshift festival that was running parallel to the main site, which can be considered an important countercultural event in-itself. Hakim Bey talks of the differences between an uprising and a revolution, where the former is temporary and the later permanent.[48] He states that it is in moments of uprising, or insurrection that we find, 'an unforgivable denial of the dialectic',[49] or in our Lacanian terminology, a perverse disavowal. The Temporary Autonomous Zone, or T.A.Z, is the name Bey gives to networks of constantly mobile pirate utopias, 'The T.A.Z is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the state, a guerilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to reform elsewhere/elsewhen'.[50] For our purposes, rather than the state acting as the oppressive force, it is the capitalist structure of fantasy that must be disinvested through finding a temporal organisation that privileges the process of its own happening rather than investing in some teleological project reliant on master signifiers. We can see in this vision a similarity to the leftist community of non-belonging.

While a minority of anarchists were causing trouble at the Isle of Wight there were thousands of people living peacefully on Devastation hill, setting up makeshift camps with stalls and their own entertainment including spontaneous, and now folkloristic (amongst certain New Age Traveller communities), appearances by Hawkwind. As Ian Abrahams states, 'Hawkwind's devotion to playing for free would pay its own dividends and elevate them above their peers and into rock legend over the traditional August bank holiday weekend at the famous Isle of Wight festival – and they weren't even on the bill'.[51] As they were accustom to around their Ladbroke Grove stomping ground, Hawkwind (and an amalgamation of musicians who were

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[47] Patrick Glen, *Youth and Permissive Social Change in British Music Papers, 1967–1983* (Springer, 2018), p. 95.
[48] Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (Autonomedia, 2003), p. 98.
[49] ibid., p. 98.
[50] ibid., p. 117.
[51] Abrahams, p. 30.

associated with the band) turned up at the festival uninvited and asked to be added to the bill. When this request was rejected, they made their own opportunities by playing, or busking around Devastation hill and at several guerrilla stages that had been set up in and around the festival's car park area. These gigs were unplanned and very loose with different musicians dropping in and out as they saw fit. Bassist Thomas Crimble recalls one performance, 'Terry Ollis, Huw and myself set up on a stage, started playing late evening, when we finished it was eight in the morning – we'd played for about eight hours, Nik came in, played some sax and flute, then wandered, as did Dave Brock'.[52] This type of attitude, going with the flow of the festival and being open to playing anywhere for anyone cemented Hawkwind as a people's band and champions of the underground, critics calling them, 'A British version of the Grateful Dead'.[53] Even on stages where organizers were charging admission the band negotiated to waiver their fee, having it spent on providing hot meals for the audience.

Comparing official performances with what was happening outside the fences, one hour sets by stars demanding huge fees as opposed to one band playing eight hour sets and busking round the site, refusing money even when offered it, it is easy to see the split that would result in the free festival scene and new aged traveller movement. The founders of three of the major free festivals of the 1970s were also in attendance; Andrew Kerr (Glastonbury), Ubi Dwyer (Windsor) and Wally Hope (Stonehenge). These events became a way of life for several groups of new aged travellers as they would spend the summers on a nomadic trail across the U.K. and Europe, stopping at free festivals to meet up with friends and exchange goods. Kevin Hetherington comments:

> Free festivals developed not only as a critique of the larger commercial festivals but also as a utopian model of an alternative society, aiming to offer an ethos of freedom from constraints and an economy based on reciprocity giving and around principles of mutual aid rather than money…they were also seen as a free space in which land could be squatted so that people could experiment with new forms of communal activity.[54]

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[52] Thomas Crimble, quoted in Abrahams, p. 31.
[53] Phil Hardy and Dave Laing, *The Faber Companion to 20th-Century Popular Music* (Faber & Faber, 1995), p. 350.
[54] Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travelers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity* (A&C Black, 2000), p. 48.

Throughout their career Hawkwind were the band, above all others that were synonymous with these events, carrying on the trend they set at the Isle of Wight. To theorise Hawkwind and their commitment to the non-all community further, we will consider the idea of drive in psychoanalysis as a differing organisational principle to that of desire. In short, where a desiring community has an end goal, in capitalism this is a utopian progression towards mastery, the community of drive is content on reproducing itself in relation to its own limits. This later model is one followed in both the free festival and in Hawkwind's general ethos during the early to mid-1970s.

Entropy and Science Fiction

The position that we are mapping out for Hawkwind is that of an organised surplus, as their organisation does not fully fit into the dynamics of a goal ended progressive fantasy. In effect, we can say that the political space of the band doesn't have a strong attachment to an overarching phallic or master signifier. In relation to this position, we can introduce the concept of entropy as a negative surplus of energy. Lacan states: 'it is only through this effect of entropy, through this wasting, that *jouissance* acquires a status and shows itself. This is why I initially introduced it by the term "*Mehrlust*", surplus jouissance'.[55] We can find an equivalence between the surplus enjoyment (*jouissance*) that comes from the failed satisfaction of a phallic position and the surplus labour that forms an entropy within the capitalist economy. In the capitalist economy, the disavowal of entropy is necessary for the fantasy of limitless accumulation. As Alenka Zupančič frames it, capitalism offers, 'entropy-free enjoyment, enjoyment as pure value'.[56] Thus, capitalism relies on the ideal of limitless progression or unlimited enjoyment, which in turn relies on a fetishist disavowal of its useless lost entropy. However, as we have previously learned, this is a self-sustaining fantasy that can only promise a smooth-running social space, while leaving the population in a position of dissatisfaction. Our argument is not that with those not fully invested in this capitalist fantasy, we find a path to a satisfaction. The point is that if we recognise that symbolic castration is an inevitable fact of any organisation, then dissatisfaction is something to be lived with, and thus the capitalist fantasy of an entropy free space seems a redundant and pointless level of symbolisation. In

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[55] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysisi, p. 50*.
[56] Alenka Zupančič, 'When Surplus Enjoyment Meets Surplus Value', in *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII, Sic Vi*, ed. by Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg (Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 155–79 (p. 173).

other words, we are dammed if we do, and damned if we don't, so why invest in false promises that delay this fatalist revelation?

Science fiction writer, Michael Moorcock, was a central figure in Hawkwind's mode of rock storytelling, he was also a writer who used entropy as a major theme in his works. Joe Banks comments that when Hawkwind formed, 'New Wave SF was at its peak, and its epicentre – Moorcock's *New Worlds* – just happened to be in the same place as the bands own base: Ladbroke Grove'.[57] The relationship of the band and author saw Moorcock write spoken word poetry and lyrics, perform live with the band, and release albums under his own name (in collaboration with various members of Hawkwind). In return, the band became characters in several of Moorcock's novels. Moorcock sums up his work: 'It is speculative about science, religion, art, anything treated in a fresh and imaginative way… The emphasis can be psychological, sociological, metaphysical, the treatment can be surrealistic, realistic, or deliberately extravagant'.[58] There was a fatalism shared by both Hawkwind and Moorcock's contributions to what is called the 'British new wave' of science fiction. This would mark a transition between the end of the countercultural dreams of the 1960s and the dwindling mass popularity of hopeful ideas in the 1970s.

In the first half of the twentieth century, through two world wars, it was demonstrated that progressive ideas put into practise could prove devastating to humanity. In Ladbroke Grove's underground scene, apathy towards the previous generations fed into the hands of a youth movement in search of alternative societal structures. On the fatalism evident in Moorcock and his new wave peers, Colin Greenland comments:

> In…Heidegger's phrase, the Dreadful has already happened. SF passes out of fandom's walled city and into general circulation, with exchanged values. Its unknown landscapes, alien races, robots and gadgets, global disasters and ruptures in space time provide extreme symbols for elusive aspects of our situation.[59]

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[57] Joe Banks, *Hawkwind: Days of the Underground: Radical Escapism in the Age of Paranoia* (MIT Press, 2020), p. 327.
[58] Michael Moorcock, quoted in Jeff Gardiner, *The Law of Chaos: The Multiverse of Michael Moorcock* (SCB Distributors, 2015), ch. 2.
[59] Colin Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition: New Worlds, 1964-70 and the Literary Development of Science Fiction* (University of Oxford, 1981), p. 65-66.

The fatalistic view constructs a world where the worst has already taken place. Here, through a primordial trauma, a symptom has invaded the world. Finding novel ways to deny giving this catastrophic entropy a symbolic place in a social system result in strategies of perverse deferral. Stories of entropy direct us towards an acknowledgement of the past catastrophe, which cannot be ignored without further catastrophic results. Another name for this lost entropy, in a social sense, is enjoyment. In this we can see science fiction as a mode of storytelling that plays out the consequences of a capitalist system based on a denial of lost entropy.

Hawkwind released a concept album, *The Machine Stops*,[60] based on E. M. Forster's 1909 short story of the same name. [61] This story exemplifies the type of community built upon a capitalistic deferral of negative entropy through technological means. The setting of Forster's story is a future where human beings have retreated from the surface of the earth into an underground of homogenised cities. Each city is composed of identical cells in which people live largely in isolation. 'The Machine' is the name given to this dystopian network of humans who survive under a technological prosthesis. John Rieder states:

> Forster constructs the Machine's rationalized, sterilized domain, a conscious parody of Well's socialist utopias, as the actual interior of the planet, and places that unified, conflict-free world in opposition to the natural light and unconfined space of the forbidden exterior of the planet's surface.[62]

This dualism of a conflict free internal world, in opposition to the dangers of the outside reflects our entropy free fantasy in capitalism. Far from a satisfying life, existence in the machine is a solitary and paranoic affair. Almost all aspects of contact come through multiple video links to other cells. Confined to their small spaces, people are weak through a lack of physical movement; those who show signs of physical strength are culled at a young age. This culling is perhaps the first example of a surplus, or entropy, in this society. In a metaphor for capitalism, it is those who disinvest from being reliant on the confines of the machine who are seen as a useless surplus. They have traversed the need for the fantasy of reliance on a prosthetic (phallic) machine and are of no use to this society under its dominant fantasy.

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[60] Hawkwind, *The Machine Stops* (Cherry Red - CDBRED688, 2016).
[61] E. M. Forster, 'The Machine Stops', in *The Eternal Moment and Other Stories* (Courier Dover Publications, 2023), pp. 1–30.
[62] John Rieder, *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (Wesleyan University Press, 2008).

Along with the culling of people, the banishment of dissenters leads to the myth of makeshift outcast communities. Outcasts live on the surface of the planet where they face a certain death from exposure. The idea of a homeless people without territory, or nomadic collective outside of the machine, can be taken as allegorical of migrant, vagrant, refugees, and other mobile people in the modern world. It is also reminiscent of our non-all free festival community. Both versions of society, internal and external, are subject to an existential torsion. Either we have an internal society that suffocates itself with an impossible imperative to belong, which completely negates any notion of freedom, or an outside society who have no master signifier, or no machine to regulate their utopian goals.

The story takes place between a mother, Vashti, and son, Kuno. Separated at Kuno's birth, their relationship exists through the machine's communication network. After a rare face-to-face meeting with his mother, Kuno reveals he has visited the planet's surface, a crime punishable by permanent banishment. After months of gaining physical strength through walking from level to level of the city, he tells of breaking through an air duct and experiencing the surface first-hand. On the surface, he meets an alternative society. This is a community based on a universal mutual exclusion, an organisation of negative entropy. This visit to the surface co-insides with the machine slowly malfunctioning, which leads to the complete meltdown of this underground utopia. As it collapses its weakened population, completely reliant on the machine, are wiped out. It is with the story's last moments of dialogue between a dying mother and son that we find the allegory of the disavowed position of entropy:

> But Kuno, is it true? Are there still men on the surface of the earth? Is this — this tunnel, this poisoned darkness - really not the end?" He replied: "I have seen them, spoken to them, loved them. They are hiding in the mist and the ferns until our civilization stops. To-day they are the Homeless - to-morrow -" "Oh, to-morrow — some fool will start the Machine again, to-morrow." "Never," said Kuno, "never. Humanity has learnt its lesson.[63]

In our free festival example, we have outlined a similar community to this story's society of surplus leftovers. If we can draw a political point, it is that the community who admits their

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[63] Forster, p. 29.

castration both precedes and outlives the community held together by an imagined master. We can say that the leftover part is only a symptom of a more fundamental negativity; the result of a primal repression that forms the very condition of any social space. Another concept that explains this leftover, which is oblivious to progressive fantasies or master signifiers, is the death drive in psychoanalysis. The overall message here is that we don't have an inside and outside dynamic. The very possibility of an exclusion from society based on becoming a surplus element indicates that we are all always already outcasts caught in a shared fantasy.

Death Drive

We can elaborate on the political and sexual difference that structures a community of leftovers through the Lacanian formulation of the Freudian concept of death drive. Žižek formulates death drive as an, "'undead drive' which persists beyond ordinary death; death is the symbolic order itself, the structure which, as a parasite, colonizes the living entity".[64] As undead, the death drive is a compulsion to repeat that, paradoxically, only repeats as a failure to repeat (to become complete in the symbolic order without a gap of desire) successfully. It is also a concept that dictates how a community can reproduce itself through differing modes of repetition. Between desire and drive there are differing ways of re-finding the consistency that defines a community based on either accepting or trying to overcome this repeated failure. It is this repeated failure to belong to a complete community that forms the basis for our outside, splinter communities of non-belonging.

In a discussion of Žižek's preference for a communist social bond, Marika Rose outlines the social aspect of Christian love (agape) as forming a community relating to the death drive: 'to love according to the drive is to love the other not from a desire for wholeness, completion, or safety, but precisely in their incompleteness and imperfection'.[65] In this view the death drive, as that which unbinds the subject by failing repeatedly, becomes the very reason for loving somebody. There is a satisfaction in love and being loved that identifies with how we fail. This forms a communist ethics of liberation from the cycles of desire and guilt we find in the capitalist fantasy of accumulation. In our example of the non-all community at the Isle of Wight, we can see this logic. Rather than an enjoyment based on the overcoming of an

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[64] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (Verso Books, 2009), p. 89.
[65] Marika Rose, 'Slajov Žižek', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Radical Theology*, ed. by Christopher D. Rodkey and Jordan E. Miller (Springer, 2018), pp. 479–97 (p. 487).

opposition, the unofficial festival became a place for people to enjoy without the pressure of an end goal. Without the pseudo revolutionary goal of liberating the festival, satisfaction comes from there being no pressure to overcome the lack within the community. This is an alternative liberating satisfaction of embracing lack and forming a community based on a universal mutual love of this lack. However, there is a difference between this understanding and a common view of death drive, which is stuck in an antithetical dualism with life (Eros and Thanatos). Before we can arrive at the death drive as the basis for an ethical social imperative, we need to work through this concept from Freud to its reformulation in Lacan.

Freud's invention of death drive is a theory born of a unique position. As both the creator and internal critic of the discipline of psychoanalysis, Freud was in a constant process of revision in his writing. When we read Freud, we often find an author in conflict with himself due to the symbiosis of his theory and the very ground on which that theory is applied. For Lacanian theorists, the breakthrough in his work comes in the discovery of the death drive, a concept that undercuts much of his early development of a pleasure/reality system. To outline this undercutting, Freud's pleasure principle is a system of the lowering of excitation in the psyche. For Freud, this principle follows, 'the hypothesis that the mental apparatus endeavours to keep the quantity of excitation present in it as low as possible or at least to keep it constant'.[66] We can make a simple analogy by aligning this with the structure of desire and the pleasure that comes from gaining an object of desire. We achieve a momentary lowering of the tension of desire when we consume an object; be it a desirable commodity or personal fulfilling conquest. Death drive is conceptualised from the simple observation that humans do not always follow the conservative principle of the lowering of tension. The repetition of behaviours that go against the subject's best interests are prevalent in observations of the psychoanalytic clinic in the form of traumas and unconscious behaviours that go against the best interests of those affected. Applied to the arts, Freud observes that, 'the artistic play and artistic imitation carried out by adults…do not spare the spectators (for instance, in tragedy) the most painful experiences and can yet be felt by them as highly enjoyable'.[67] From this short glimpse into Freud's observations, we can see the beginnings of differing theories of how we produce enjoyment. We can go as far as saying the example of tragedy links the notions of loss and enjoyment to what Lacan formulates as the *object a*, the lost object. However, Freud ultimately

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[66] Freud, *Modern Classics Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 47.
[67] ibid., p. 53.

positions these formulations into a dualism, competing life and death drives, which have no place in Lacan's dialectical thinking. It is this dualistic conception that we must argue against if our previous example of the non-all community as existing outside of our competing dualistic factions during the Isle of Wight festival is to have a theoretical pertinence.

Lacan's reformulation rejects the dualism of life and death drives to place the death drive as primary: it is the form that all drives take. Lacan rejects the biological implications of the concept and places drive as a symbolic/economic system of repeating an original formative loss in the symbolic. As Richard Boothby argues: 'The question of the death drive in Lacan will take us to the heart of his theoretical innovations insofar as he links the meaning of death in psychoanalysis to the faculty of speech and language, on the one hand, and to the fate of desire, on the other'.[68] This passage suggests that death drive is an internal condition of the desiring subject and the social symbolic order. Rather than a force that opposes life, it is the internal symptom that is part of life and becomes the condition of both desiring and language. However, because the drive is related to a loss, it is a tricky concept to articulate. As soon as we speak of it through positive examples, it is too easy to fall back into a logic of desire that seeks dualistic opposition.

In music studies, it is often a dualistic notion of the drive that we find. When authors use the term in passing, it is often used to describe a destructive impulse directed from one genre or scene to another. If we fail to proceed with a Lacanian concept of death drive as that which undercuts both the subject and the social, we are destined to fall into a logic of rightist division. We will outline examples of the dualistic notion of the death drive below.

Kieron James positions the death drive in a dualistic power struggle in his study of the heavy metal band Cannibal Corpse; a band known for its explicit lyrics that overflow with sexual violent imagery.[69] He demonstrates the death drive as it proceeds from the subject as a form of social violence. James asks: 'could shocking lyrics…in the early Cannibal Corpse canon, simply acknowledge the repressed Freudian death drive we all share, if only we are willing to

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[68] Richard Boothby, *Death and Desire (RLE: Lacan): Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud* (Routledge, 2014), p. 12.

[69] Kieran James, 'From "The Undead Will Feast" to "The Time to Kill Is Now": Frankfurt School and Freudian Perspectives on Death-Metal', *Musicology Australia*, 31.1 (2009), 17–39 <https://doi.org/10.1080/08145857.2009.10416578>.

admit it?'.[70] James is an apologist for the band's theatrical violence against women under the tedious theorisation of gender as a hegemonic battle between men and women. He thinks death drive as a biological impulse to commit violent acts and argues that because this is instinctual, it is an unconscious possibility for anyone to commit anti-social violence. For James, a song such as 'Fucked with a Knife'[71] can be positively articulated if we balance it through a responsible ego and superego, such as that found in the group and audience within a rock performance. This view of death instinct as a natural violent impulse towards a repressive society falls into the most childish form of antithetical thought. Using woman as a fantasy object to be mutilated, and to find enjoyment in this fantasy while calling it liberatory, renders Lacan vital in the understanding of the death drive as an ethics of personal responsibility.

Christopher Partridge takes a similar misstep, but rather than a violence directed at social space, he outlines death drive directed inwards through acts of suicide.[72] Of suicide within the music industry, he states, 'musicians have found the force of the Freudian death drive too difficult to resist'.[73] As with our previous example, Partridge uses the performance space as one that mediates suicidal thoughts. His solution to succumbing to the death instinct is, again like in our previous example, to find a balance with the ego by mediating suicidal thoughts and stories through narrative, 'Music allows us to explore feelings of rejection and self-loathing by coming alongside us and reflecting what we feel'.[74] We get here another simple dualism between the increasing tension in the suicidal feeling and its reduction through the finding of a commodity that articulates or helps us to release these negative emotions.

Even when we embrace Lacan's reformulation of drive as non-dualist or non-biological, there is still a tendency to slip back into a dualist way of thinking. Robert fink uses the example of the repetitions of both disco and minimalism to outline a version of Lacanian theory that reformulates the Freudian death drive in name only. His stance against non-teleological music as viable turns into a projected theory of *jouissance*. For Fink, 'jouissance, the pleasure outside of discourse, effectively checkmates any attempt to understand music as a discourse of pleasure. It forecloses in advance any musical erotics, any discussion of how tonal and

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[70] Kieran James, p. 18.
[71] Cannibal Corpse, 'Fucked With A Knife', *The Bleeding* (Metal Blade Records - CDZORRO 67, 1994).
[72] Christopher Partridge, *Mortality and Music: Popular Music and the Awareness of Death* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).
[73] ibid., p. 116.
[74] ibid., p. 111.

rhythmical syntax constitutes desire'.[75] This cack-handed Lacanian criticism places *jouissance* as a radical outside. Finks theoretical solution to this assignment of psychotic foreclosure to non-teleological repetition employs a Butlarian performativity in systems of meaning that exceed our perception of musical structures: 'there is in fact no non-teleological experience of music in Western culture, only new recombinations of technology not yet recognised as transformations of goal-directedness'.[76] This places desire in the mode of the limit to understanding, the failure of our understanding to reach the full scope of musical structure. This is to completely miss the Lacanian real as an enjoyment that is not only outside but is radically present.

With Hawkwind, we can identify that it is this circuit of drive that we find in the community that follows the logic of the non-all. If the circuit of death drive only has the aim of continuing its circuitry, rather than a following of a dualistic struggle, then there is no need for a figure of opposition to gain consistency. At the Isle of Wight, rather than one side of the festival against the other, we can identify activities that follow a circuit that only relies on itself for fulfilment. Drive is an internal obstacle to the community's totalisation because it does not aim for any finality, it only aims to begin again on its circuit around a loss that has no need of being fulfilled. In Nick Kent's comments on Hawkwind we can see an enactment of this drive circuit:

> Every day was a new adventure for Hawkwind and those who happened to find themselves in its giddy orbit. No one at this juncture was in it for the money or nurturing any kind of fame-seeking agenda. If the group were offered the choice of playing for free in a field somewhere or performing at a paying venue, they would almost always go for the cash free option.[77]

Although this might be an idealistic summary, we can see that the aim was to keep the community going from one day to the next. Lacan's aesthetic vision of the drive can be seen in Hawkwind's approach to music. Lacan finds in the montage, as a non-progressive form of art, something that has no definitive beginning or end, but is stuck in the middle of a narrative form. As Lacan states: 'The montage of the drive is a montage which, first, is presented as

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[75] Robert Wallace Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice* (University of California Press, 2005), p. 39.
[76] ibid., p. 43.
[77] Nick Kent, *Apathy for the Devil* (Faber & Faber, 2010), p. 56.

having neither head nor tail—in the sense in which one speaks of montage in a surrealist collage'.[78] Thus, the montage is a middle that seeks nothing but to reproduce itself as middle.

Another concept that describes the montage form in aesthetics would be to think in terms of seriality, rather than of a complete narrative. The serial presents an open-ended possibility for events to take place, without the commitment to an overarching end goal. Although written as a critique of the serial, Jean Paul Sartre gives the example of the bus stop as a serial collective of individuals.[79] He writes, 'reciprocal isolations, as the negation of reciprocity, signify the integration of individuals into one society and, *in this sense,* can be defined as a particular way of living'.[80] Where Sartre sees a collective of individuals with no sense of connection to each other, our analysis would frame this same orderly cue at the bus stop as a collective of idiosyncratic singular beings. The bus stop itself is an example chosen for its everyday mediocrity, however Sartre fails to see the potentiality for a novel collective based on a mutual difference. There is no perfect ideal attached to cuing for a bus apart from turning up and waiting, this however is also the strength of the example as a serial montage of singularity with no set teleology. As Ryan Engly puts it: 'where the Sartrean account sees the serial as coercive and limiting, as ceaseless sameness, Lacan shows how serial discontinuity and repetition are the precondition for the new'.[81] The serial is a name for events that happen in between the beginning and the end, those moments of the day that we don't think of as evental. If we add up all the bus cues over time, they will not form a complete series or have any deep ideological meaning, they just form a montage of idiosyncratic beings. However, the point is that life events, such as falling in love or dying happen at bus stops every day. This is also true of a festival or spontaneous Hawkwind concert, it didn't matter who turned up, or why they were there, things just happened, and meaning was retroactive rather than progressive. In this sense the serial organization has the potential to be politically radical as it has no need of the fetish, or capitalist ideal of accumulation, to produce enjoyment.

To move on from the idiosyncratic example of the bus stop, we can demonstrate the serial/montage as an approach in the early period of Hawkwind's history (1970-1974), which

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[78] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 169.
[79] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol. 1* (Verso, 2004), pp. 256-270.
[80] ibid., p. 257.
[81] Ryan Engley, 'Psychoanalytic Seriality as Media Theory: From Freud's Couch to Yours', *Continental Thought & Theory*, 3.2 (2021), 319–45 (p. 333) <https://doi.org/10.26021/12242>.

culminated in the live tour and subsequent live album *Space Ritual*.[82] By playing gigs anywhere and everywhere and being open to collaboration, the show became a testament to the rabble of oddballs and misfits that the band had collated over its career. The show, and subsequent album, came at the peak of Hawkwind's popularity. After gaining a surprise worldwide hit with the song 'Silver Machine', the band decided to re-invest all their money back into the tour to realize the potential of the whole collective that surrounded them. With the combination of Liquid Len's lightshow, the band created a touring performance that brought their idiosyncratic (serial) organization to concert halls around the world. They became, for a short time, a travelling space rock carnival. Compiled from several live gigs, the only audio evidence of these performances is on record. There are few photographs and only one video recording: a single song for *Top of the Pops*, rather than a full show. The shows themselves were multimedia spectacles, but because of the lack of recorded evidence are lost to time. Emilia Simao describes the events:

> The Space Ritual show was a complete audio-visual experience, incorporating concepts pioneered by Barney Bubbles and Robert Calvert which featured travel through space and time. The concerts featured dancers (Stacia and others), a lightshow by Liquid Len and poetry recitations by Calvert. On entering the venue, audience members were given a joss stick and a programme featuring a short sci-fi story by bubbles and the lyrics from the show.[83]

While the utilisation of multimedia performance and science fiction were also central to the themes of prog rock, Hawkwind differed in its mode of presentation. The difference is that between the serial/montage and the progressive concept. Prog was progressive with fetishist attitudes towards the spontaneous where space rock followed the montage, with little investment in the phallic signifiers of linear progression. Pink Floyd are marked under the title of both genres and exemplify this difference between their early experimental (montage) and later concept periods (progressive). There are also some major differences in how these two styles, which developed in parallel lines, were digested by their audience. To re-iterate a few general insights, prog became the music of the individual intellect, something to be contemplated by rock experts. Hawkwind's performances were designed to break down individual egos through a communitarian simplicity and serial openness to letting things

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[82] Hawkwind, *Space Ritual* (United Artists Records - UAD 60037/8, 1973).
[83] Emília Simão, *Exploring Psychedelic Trance and Electronic Dance Music in Modern Culture* (Information Science Reference, 2015), p. 41.

happen. As argued above, the music and relationship of the band Hawkwind with their audience goes some way to offering an alternative form of community akin to the universal outsider position. (This is not to eliminate a further point; we could also learn to listen to prog serially without the weight of its overt ideology).

To sum up our discussion on the Lacanian death drive, when we talk of the difference between the concepts of drive and desire, we must be careful not to see them as antithetical forces. If we are to find differing ways in which a community can form a bond, to choose sides and create a camp of desire and a camp of drive can only result in a logic of dualistic competition. There is no difference in form, only content in the formation of a community that can only gain consistency through forming an enemy. This is where we must form a subtle argumentation that refuses to demonise the logic of desire and enact a dialectical move that retains fantasy, but with a shift in perspective where we can see drive as ever present as a traversal of fantasy's grip on our enjoyment. In this movement both drive and desire work towards the same end.

Žižek frames this as the, 'classic Hegelian reversal: what at first appears as an impotence or limitation in our knowledge, as the impossibility of our grasping the wealth of natural phenomena conceptually, is turned into an impotence in nature itself'.[84] We can think this reversal as a shift of perspective from there being a gap in knowledge, or a supplementary enjoyment that is inaccessible, to this lost enjoyment as what completes a system as its self-limitation. Richard Middleton highlights this reversal in a discussion of music and repetition: 'As Lacan argues, the unconscious (site of *jouissance*) is not the formless jumble of vulgar pseudo-Freudianism but is structured, there is no need to limit *jouissance* in music to a level somehow beyond structure, to an assertion of materiality against form'.[85]

The movement between the Freudian and Lacanian notion follows that the death drive is not a separate entity from desire, but its cause. Because death drive repeatedly fails, it causes the subject to desire beyond its circuit of failure. Alenka Zupančič states, 'In this precise sense, and as paradoxical as it may sound, the death drive as first introduced by Freud is in fact simply another name for the "pleasure principle"'.[86] In this view, Freuds life and death drive are in fact

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[84] Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards A New Foundation Of Dialectical Materialism* (Verso Books, 2015), p. 108.
[85] Middleton Richard, *Studying Popular Music* (McGraw-Hill Education (UK), 1990), p. 228.
[86] Zupančič, *What IS Sex?*, p. 95.

two articulations of the same principle; it is only a shift in perspective that takes us from desire to drive. This shift is from drive, which circulates around a loss, or lost object, and desire, which circulates around a substitute object that will overcome repetition in a fantasy of complete enjoyment. This formula replaces a dualistic notion of drive as, initially, where Freud develops his pleasure principle as a lowering of excitation in the psyche, he misses that the lowering of tension towards death follows this same logic: if death drive is just a reversal of life drive, we find its function to be identical to its negative image.

Zupančič highlights a key feature of the death drive through a discussion of Deleuze, 'He explicitly suggests that the death drive is the transcendental principle, whereas the pleasure principle is only psychological'.[87] For both Lacan and Deleuze, although they have different ideas on its ontological positioning, there is one drive, not a dualism of Eros and Thanatos, experienced in two different ways. Death drive is for Lacan a fundamental self-regulating negativity that circulates around a lost object and gains satisfaction from its object always being lost. Because death drive circulates around a lost object, the missing piece of enjoyment that can only be touched in fantasy, its satisfaction comes from the very repetition of this loss. As Lacan states: 'If the drive may be satisfied without attaining what, from the point of view of a biological totalization of functions would be the satisfaction of its end of reproduction, it is because it is a partial drive, and its aim is simply this return into circuit'.[88] Since this drive functions if we erect a fetish or not, its acknowledgement avows the unconscious enjoyment of the *Anstoss*.

Fort-Da

We can criticise the dualistic view of the drive further with the example of Freud's famous story of the fort-da game.[89] This is a game Freud's grandson plays by throwing a cotton reel over the side of his crib while mouthing fort (here), da (gone). This game is often read as a way of mastering the mother's absence as she leaves and returns. As a game of mastery, we can see it as a form of signifying the mother's presence and absence, of finding a way to substitute the mother for an object that comes under the control of the child. However, the fort-da should not

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[87] Alenka Zupančič, 'The Death Drive', in *Lacan and Deleuze: A Disjunctive Synthesis*, ed. by Bostjan Nedoh and Andreja Zevnik (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 163–80 (p. 166).
[88] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 179.
[89] Freud, *Modern Classics Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 53.

be viewed as a manifestation of a dualistic struggle or attempt to master the mother's absence. This is due to the impossibility of the mother forming a complete object for the child, as Kaja Silverman states: 'Viewed from the site of the unconscious, the image of the infant held within the environment or sphere of the mother's voice is an emblem of infantile plenitude and bliss. Viewed from the site of the preconscious/conscious system, it is an emblem of impotence and entrapment'.[90] This suggests that the mother's presence or absence always comes with some remainder of enjoyment. In the physical mother's presence, there is a failure to live up to the fantasised primal mother, something is lacking that doesn't live up to the fantasy of a complete relationship. In the mother's absence, we feel an enjoyment in the very fact that she is no longer smothering us with *jouissance*. It is this impossible remainder that the child processes through the game of fort-da. It is not that the child is replicating the mother coming and going, but that she is both fort and da. In her negativity she is present, and in her presence, there is something missing. To evoke Hegel, she is subject as substance (in her absence) and substance as subject (in her presence). In sum the child's relationship with the mother is a failure, it always comes with something either too much or not enough that leaves the mythical status of a full relationship with the mother always lacking. Thus, the fort-da game is nothing but a repetition of this failure that satisfies the child only as a repetition of a circuit as death drive. Lacan comments on the fort-da game: 'This reel is not the mother reduced to a little ball…it is a small part of the subject that detaches itself from him while still remaining his, still retained'.[91] In other words, the reel is an *object a*. This *object a* forms the contradictory notion of the woman and the child as not-all, there is always a surplus enjoyment that by undercutting, completes the picture as fully symbolic.

Simon Frith addresses the status of a surplus, or the impossibility of achieving a pure presence or absence, in a discussion of musical time:

> Nothing done in music is ever "purely" rhythmic: even the simplest percussive instruments have pitch or timbre; even the most boring rock drummer has an individual percussive movement. And nothing is completely unrhythmic - the human brain has a

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[90] Kaja Silverman and Professor of Rhetoric and Film Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 73.

[91] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 62.

wonderful capacity for perceiving regularity in even the most randomly distributed noises.[92]

We can demonstrate the results of a dualistic notion of the fort–da game through musical examples, which take the idea of mastery to the very end. This is by trying to argue that the aim of the game is for either the fort or the da to win. This ends in either a pure positivity: a presence, or pure negativity: an absence. The problem, however, is that these examples are stuck within a dualism and do not take account of the surplus enjoyment in play as an indivisible remainder that makes any full relationship, either positive or negative impossible.

The first of these cases, one of a pure positivity, is exemplified by Eugene Holland.[93] His hyper-critical account of Freud considers the status of the fort-da as a misrepresentation of what is observed in the game. Arguing for the fort-da as a Deleuzian return of a positive univocal substance, or 'refrain' in Deleuzian musical terminology, Holland places the o-o-o-o-o that Freud interpolates as the word fort, as nothing but a pure articulation of musical pleasure. Rather than fort-da, the child is only affirming the 'here' with a physical gesture and a positive musical excretion. This, in effect, becomes a form of creation without the negative space that drives the creative process through sublimation. As Holland states, 'this would be life lived to the fullest, life lived on the edge: the hazard an improvisation, perpetually leaving 'home' (homes of many kinds) on the thread of a tune'.[94] It is difficult to separate this strategy from a perverse disavow of the negative and an impossible closure within the pleasure principle without remainder.

Lawrence Kramer has the reverse view to that of Holland.[95] In his discussion of compositions that undercut their own teleology, he uses a piece by Mozart that houses an inner tension, placing separate temporal gestures up against one another. One is pathological, a full theme, the other not so, a repetitive trill figure that never develops. It is differing modes of repetition that are represented in this piece. There is repetition-in-itself as a, 'raw vitality of unrationalized pleasure',[96] and repetition with a teleology, 'the incorporation of the same pleasure in the

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[92] Frith, *Performing Rites*, p. 151-152.

[93] Eugene Holland, 'Jazz Improvisation: Music of the People-to-Come', in *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New*, ed. by Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008), pp. 196–206.

[94] ibid., p. 206.

[95] Lawrence Kramer, *The Thought of Music*, pp. 65-89.

[96] ibid., p. 74.

rational order'.[97] These different registers can be seen as metaphors for a historical shift from classical to enlightenment thinking. However, there is a more primal scene of the 'fight' of the negative. This is a refusal of the closure of negative space through sublimation. This fight is identified by Kramer as the reversal of the fort-da, the trill figure acting as an indivisible stain on the piece. As Kramer states: '*da-fort*, not *fort-da*; and hence no act of symbolic appropriation. The action is one of flinging outward, of releasing the here to the there rather than of recouping the there for the here. So the erroneous formulation is the right one'.[98] What this analysis attests to is the weakness of the signifier to do its job and bar the enjoyment of the trill. In this respect, we can see manifest the singularity of the 'thing' on the surface. The mobius strip seems to momentarily 'flatten'. However, by proposing we go all the way to the end in negativity we fall into a psychotic foreclosure that effaces musicality altogether.

What both Holland and Kramer have in common is that in pushing the fort-da to the extreme of either a pure positivity or pure negativity, a construction or deconstruction, they attempt to solve a contradiction by eradicating the surplus enjoyment inherent in both presence and absence. This is a repeat of the fetishist displacement of trying to find a substitute object for the mothers lack. It is rather in trying to embrace this contradiction, that women, and by extension all beings, are both too much and not enough, that we can find a way out of the masculine logic of the fetish.

Jonathan D. Kramer approaches this by naming several terms that help in distinguishing approaches to music making through a discussion of musical time.[99] For example, the classical sonata form has a definitive beginning, development, and resolution. We can call this linear time; it is close to a narrative or storytelling. In contrast to this, post-classical or modernist composers that experiment with non-narrative music explore the non-linear. Here we draw concepts such as moment and vertical time. Kramer states:

> A proper moment form will give the impression of starting (at least on a middleground
> level) in the midst of previously unheard music. It will break off without reaching any

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[97] Kramer, *The Thought of Music*, p. 74.
[98] ibid., p. 75.
[99] Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (Schirmer Books, 1988).

cadence that provides total closure, as if the music goes on inaudibly, in some other space or time after the cessation of sound.[100]

Music in this vein exists for the spontaneous within the progressive narrative, or contradiction. The epiphany, or moment of recognition in an idea, does not depend on the contemplative or intellectual capture of the entire piece, but when the intellectual falls into enjoyment. Moment time acts as a symptom, it is connected to both the fort and the da as the surplus that interrupts or highlights the contradiction of progression. In sum, the contradiction is that without non-progressive elements, we lose enjoyment altogether through ending up at a psychotic end where we've foreclosed meaning.

The concept of psychosis can be found in the idea of schizophrenic time, which forecloses the line between the time of the vertical performance and reality altogether. This is a defence mechanism against the potential of the event demonstrated in our previous two examples, 'Society seems to demand that we either accept absolute time, with all its limitations and contradictions, or else that we remove ourselves from the social conventions we call reality and enter a schizophrenic world with its own time'.[101] Where, as we have seen, the linear time of progressive rock ends in perversion, schizophrenic time may be another dead end. An example of this type of schizophrenic foreclosure comes with musicians such as Syd Barrett, Peter Green, and Robert Calvert, who collectively lost their lives in music through a demise into psychosis. The potential for an alternative model of listening comes with the event concepts of vertical and moment time working together, where a collective based on a mutual disarming of the ego can take place through a gesture of interruption, while maintaining the symbolic as a negative container for singularity.

We can develop the fort-da as an instance of death drive in music by returning to Hawkwind and a discussion of the song 'Silver Machine'.

Table 3: Silver Machine

Section	Timeline	Harmonic Map	Features

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[100] Jonathan D. Kramer, p. 221.
[101] ibid., p. 165.

Audio Generator	0:00 – 0:23	No harmony	Whirring electronic noise from noise generator
Introduction	0:23 – 0:47	Ab – Bb – Dd - Eb	Band plays Heavy rock riff around a four-chord pattern under whirring noise.
Verse 1	0:47 – 1:30	Ab – Bb – Db – Eb Eb - Db	Lemmy's lead vocal enters. Riff remains constant with improvised noise dynamically moving from softer to louder.
Chorus and Improv 1	1:30 – 2:33	Eb - Db	Call and response vocals and harmonies sing chorus line repeating a two-chord pattern. Chorus transitions into a group improv as guitar and saxophone play simplistic solos.
Verse 2	2:33 – 3:45	Ab – Bb – Db – Eb Eb - Db	Lead vocal's re-enter and verse instrumentation of heavy riff and

			improv noise continues.
Chorus and Improv 2	3:45 – 4:37	Eb - Db	Call and response vocals re-enter, with high mocking voice. Song fades out on guitar solo and crowd noise.

One aspect of Hawkwind's music, which separated them from their peers, was the introduction of the motorik rhythm (Figure 2); a common feature of German rock music. With this rhythm, something novel developed in rock-and-roll. The motoric rhythm is an anti-backbeat, which has the basic structure of an 8-quaver rhythm in 4/4, where only the third beat is articulated. What we get is the effect of a long tension in between strong beats, which is often associated with states of flow or trance. David Stubbs describes the effects of this rhythm:

> The dingerbeat just breathes out – a single line, a constant process. Not circular but driving from A to wherever. With its tantric build-up of intensity and fast-moving, picaresque backdrop, the motorik beat offers a thrillingly accessible alternative to the old model. Play motorik and you can hurtle past the old necessities of bridge and chorus like so many turn-offs and service stations.[102]

The assertion of a 'new beat' may sound like a piece of hyperbole, however at the level of structure, introducing a divergent movement into old, repeated gestures of musical time promotes a new perspective of enjoyment. For example, there is a subversion in the Hawkwind song 'Silver Machine' between the traditional backbeat and motorik beat. This shows the affective difference of the motorik rhythm in the context of rock music.

[102] David Stubbs, 'The Quietus | Opinion | The Quietus Essay | How Motorik Infected The Mainstream, By Future Days Author David Stubbs', *The Quietus* <https://thequietus.com/articles/15929-david-stubbs-krautrock-motorik> [accessed 1 October 2023].

Figure 2: Motorik Rhythm Notation

'Silver Machine' encompasses the scope of Hawkwind's idiosyncratic music, reduced into a pop single format. The recording of a 1973 performance of the song for *Top of the Pops* is also the only filmed evidence of the band's early period stage performance that is in public circulation.[103] The song enacts a transition from what we would consider a typical rock song into a piece of free form improvisation. Over the standard motorik beat, bassist Lemmy plays a typical boogie bassline, which doubles the meter of the groove, (with the riff starting on an offbeat). This doubling of the beat's duration gives the effect of a standard rock-and-roll backbeat. There is then a shift to a free improvisation within the song that gives us a different perspective on the backbeat. By the bass dropping out and the guitars playing an even 4 quarter note rhythm, the motorik is enacted. The effect is that instead of progressing away from the standard backbeat, we fall into a deeper repetition, in this sense the motorik functions as a fort-da: rather than resolving contradiction, it holds us within the song as its symptom.

Mark Abel develops a theory of syncopation based on levels of articulation, starting with the basic 4/4 pulse.[104] Moving in larger units away from this central point, we get longer bar phrases and repetitions of entire sections of songs. But moving in smaller units, we get subdivisions, from quavers, to semi quavers and so on. At the level of smaller units, the strong beats shift position and hence we get the illusion of a shift in time where there is only a shift in the surrounding rhythms which frame an unchanging meter. The logic is that because the coordinates of the meter are moving at a higher rate, the strong beats move position relative to the basic meter; in this case 4/4. In this schema (Table 4) we could call the motorik a basic backbeat, which has been transposed from a quarter to an eight-note meter (with the second quaver of the backbeat not articulated), and then subsequently transposed back into a quarter note meter.

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[103] *Hawkwind - Silver Machine (Top of the Pops 1972)*, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NysxdHSIs4I> [accessed 27 September 2023].
[104] Mark Abel, *Groove: An Aesthetic of Measured Time* (Brill, 2014), pp. 31-42.

Table 4: Motorik Rhythm and Backbeat Comparison

Key	Beat	Graph
| = Barline		
- = weak beat		
+ = strong beat,		
	Backbeat	|- + - +|
	Backbeat in transposition	|- - +- - -+-|
	Motorik	|- - + -|- - + -|.

What we find is that the effect is an elongation between articulations; we now have a strong beat every three quarter notes instead of every two. This means our time between waves becomes increased. The focus thus moves towards spaces of non-meaning within the song's rhythm.

Elizabeth Margulis clarifies this effect in her discussion of states that exist within this elongated wave effect, such as trance and flow, 'Because repetition allows the sequence to be gone through automatically, without attentional control, a person is free to marvel at the non-verbal, physical response she is sustaining in response to objective sound'.[105] The song presents time as divided between two states, the narrative of the backbeat and the flow state of the motorik. In this statement we find a surplus within this rhythm; a singular failure to reach the level of meaning. This is the *object a* that haunts in its absence yet becomes the structural principle to be either overcome or embraced. It is this point of failure that death drive circulates around: it is thus a musical fort-da.

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[105] Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* (OUP USA, 2014), p, 68.

Thus far, one theme in this thesis has been differing ways of organising music around either the logic of the fetish or symptom. We can also frame these signifiers as differing modes of repetition. Where the blues and prog rockers propped up master signifiers through perverse strategies, we can say that they repeat towards a full meaning or mastery. Bowie and Hawkwind, on the other hand, enact a symptomal logic that undercuts notions of mastery. In a repetition of failure, a fort-da that realises a failure inherent to the symbolic order appears. Here we can link these forms of repetition to our masculine and feminine sides of sexual difference. The masculine form of repetition is an attempt at finding the lost object through believing in a phallic or master signifier that occupies a position of one who knows. The male repeats in erecting obstacles in the form of others. Again, this is the *Anstoss*, which quilts social space by holding the outlaw enjoyment in an identifiable position beyond the social. Through consuming these lost objects, the male repeats a satisfaction through directing desire away from the negativity inherent in repeated failure. Alternatively, the satisfaction on the feminine side is a satisfaction of drive. It comes from the repetition of the failure itself without course to an exception who acts as a conduit for enjoyment. To return to McGowan's definitions, the male side finds satisfaction in a temporary fantasy of belonging through a belief that mastery of failure can be achieved, whereas the female side enjoys through its non-belonging as a universal condition of repetition.

We can give a further, and final, literary example of the figure of non-belonging, Franz Kafka's *Josephine the Singer; or, the Mice People*.[106] This story takes place in the animal world where mice, who all sing, or pipe, are collectivised around Josephine the singer. Piping is the everyday excess noise of the mice folk, a surplus devoid of meaning. Josephine is not a spectacular vocalist; she is the embodiment of the ordinary status of piping, but when she sings, the mice folk are rendered silent. Mladen dollar equates this to the found object that is raised to the level of art by being placed in a gallery. On Duchamp's *Roue de bicyclette*, he states: 'There is an act of pure *creation ex nihilo*, or rather, *creatio ex nihilo* in reverse: the wheel, the object of mass production, is not created out of nothing; rather, it creates the nothing, the gap that separates it from all other wheels'.[107] For the mice folk, this is a very specific process of elevation. Josephine herself is of no importance, only the negative space that she creates through performing. As enjoyment is always too much or not enough, Josephine is an

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[106] Franz Kafka, *Josephine, the Singer Or, The Mice Folk* (Press Intermezzo, 1997).
[107] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, p. 185.

embodiment of symbolic castration. She enacts the position of negativity through the *object a* of a surplus voice. Although she thinks herself a star, her only function is to render the gap of the castrated voice apparent. The story reflects the galvanising of a community, not based on the exception of an outsider, but by raising one of their own into a position of a universal castration. Josephine thus universalises the position of negative entropy as the condition of the community. Rather than a gap between the outsider and community belonging to a master signifier invested with difference, this is a community sublimating one of its own, only to find an internal difference between itself and itself: a symptom. A pure gap is opened as a castrated space where any full identity is impossible. The space between the community and its own identity is no longer to be disavowed. Žižek theorises Josephine as a master signifier: 'deprived of its fetishistic effects'.[108] In other words, rather than a master signifier that is invested with an image, or identity through ideology, we have a master signifier invested with a gap. This is, in effect, something of a master *sinthome*. Žižek states, 'So the logic is not even that of the Leader who, with her exceptional position, establishes and guarantees the equality of her subjects (who are equal in their shared identification with the Leader) – Josephine herself has to dissolve her special position into this equality'.[109] Another name for this community that dissolves equally into equality is, again, the non-all. To re-iterate, the equality here is not one of particular or individual complete subjects. The gap enacted through the difference between a community and itself is a place of non-identity, or *sinthome*. Through Josephine, this community finds a symbolic position for its negative entropy. This is where we can return to the idea of singular idiosyncrasy. A community can form without a master signifier because the very gap of non-identity can become permeated by a singular idiosyncratic organisation of enjoyment and become a place of a universal non-belonging. At their best, this is also where we can locate Hawkwind and their following's ultimate value.

Conclusion

To act as a Lacanian is to perform as a contrarian in relation to much of what is taken as common knowledge. In giving Hawkwind the final word in the main body of this thesis, we have positioned them as our most radical example. Through Hawkwind, and Bowie previously, we have developed an organising principle that separates them from the capitalist fantasies found in some of their progressive contemporaries. The communitarian spirit of the band

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[108] Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (Verso, 2011), p. 370.
[109] ibid., p. 368.

uncovers the possibility of an organisation from a position of symbolic castration. This is a mutual non-belonging that reproduces negativity through the death drive. For the music theorist, Hawkwind provides a model to retroactively look at overlooked and ignored parts of popular music history, useless surpluses, to find a new source of value in their excluded position. The political weight of such ideas offers a relief from the specific form of enjoyment in the superego imperative, which produces dissatisfaction through its insatiable nature. It is in finding places of mutual idiosyncrasy, in singular enjoyment of one's own castration, that we can traverse fantasies of progression that leave popular music as an exclusive pursuit based on accumulative imperatives. Thus, we have demonstrated that Hawkwind's career exemplifies a radicality in the surpluses of a society, its leftovers.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This thesis aimed to re-introduce Lacanian thought to popular music studies, seeking to re-ignite theoretical approaches. Through an intervention into late 1960s to mid-1970s rock music, our goal was to uncover new areas of inquiry, addressing places in music scholarship where Lacan's influence is often overlooked. We can begin this conclusion by reflecting on some of the theoretical movements and developments, as each chapter unfolded.

Chapter One

Our exploration began with the issue of race and racism in British blues rock. With a focus on Eric Clapton, we aimed to uncover a contradictory relationship towards the figure of the racial other, characterized by a closeness between the notions of love and hate. From this, we introduced two pivotal concepts for our thesis: the *Anstoss* and Lacan's structure of fantasy. Through the philosophical insights of Todd McGowan, we theorised a libidinal connection that operates unconsciously, generating a sense of enjoyment. When applied to the racial other, as venerated in the blues, the logic of fantasy allowed us to develop an original interpretation of British blues and racism. This interpretation demonstrated that an attachment to an ideal, whether positively or negatively, can be inherently racist. This is because we unconsciously generate enjoyment from a fictional attachment to an imaginary image of the racial other. In introducing racism as an unconscious libidinal attachment, this theory contributes a differing way of understanding why we enjoy music, even if we have knowledge of discrimination within its production.

With a survey in the field of popular music, a critical analysis of existing studies revealed significant shortcomings in addressing both the production of enjoyment and the unconscious libidinal attachments associated with race. These studies followed a mutual dualistic framework of power and resistance, which we identified as influenced by a biopolitical structure. In these studies, the racial other was viewed as a figure of resistance who could challenge a dominant discourse by deconstructing the hegemonic symbolic order. This resistance was articulated through strategies of conscious raising or affective change. However, we identified a flaw in this recurring theme in popular music studies: it tended to overlook the libidinal attachments that render racism a matter of unconscious enjoyment rather than conscious knowledge. By introducing Lacanian fantasy into the discourse, we were able to

produce a contrary reading that can be taken forward in popular music studies generally. Thus, we can redefine racism, recognizing it as more than just a discourse surrounding the racist's lack of knowledge. Through our study we can define racism as an attachment to unconscious enjoyment based in a libidinal connection with the concept of race.

Our study of the racial other in the British blues led us to an underlying structure elucidated by Lacan's formulas of sexuation. Here, we identified two distinct approaches to the notion of symbolic castration. Our main concern in this chapter was the male side, where we found that enjoyment, or symbolic castration, was processed through displacement. This is akin to an act of imposture. We saw racism following this same pattern: the racist displaced enjoyment onto the racial other and either idolized or hated this same figure as an ideal phallic signifier, envisioning the image as a means to overcome castration. This underlying fantasy structured various forms of discriminatory love and hate, offering a significant contribution to our thesis, which we took forward as one of our main theoretical developments. Through the general structure of fantasy, we highlighted that many emancipatory struggles are interconnected through their following this organization. We were also able to argue that the community formed through this masculine fantasy was the fraternity. This insight encourages critical reflection on notions of freedom closely aligned with resistance and power struggles, which often mirror the same logic as a liberal capitalism characterized by exceptional discrimination.

Chapter Two

Our initial exploration found the structure of fantasy as shaping many forms of symbolic organisation. In chapter two we aimed to explore this logic further in the ideology of progressive rock, with a focus on a connection between the ideas of progression and perversion.

In our first analysis, we positioned this argument through an ongoing discourse within popular music studies that finds an antithetical dynamic between progressive rock and punk music. Within this dialogue, we found the presence of the masculine logic of exception, as developed previously in our study. This logic was found to structure a tendency in criticism to juxtapose music genres, like progressive rock and punk, to establish value through a fetishist reversal.

From the notion of fetishism, we introduced the Hegelian concept of the bad infinity. This gave us a discursive tool to highlight that ideological progression in both the realm of music and capitalism tend to follow this same concept. The bad infinity manifests as the disavow of an

internal limit. For progressive rock, this was found to be the unbridled pursuit of aestheticism, while in the context of capitalism, this manifested as an insatiable accumulation of capital, regardless of worldly constraints. We discovered an important interplay between fantasy, fetishism, and the bad infinity, which was thus placed as central in our exploration of the relationship between progressive rock and a perverse ideology.

With this discovery, an important claim lies in the assertion that ideas of liberation, as found in progressive rock and consumer capitalism, are inherently tied to an exclusivity in the form of the meta-position. Against a survey of critics advocating for this as the central feature of progressive rock, our exploration into general theories of genre revealed that this position is rooted in fetishism. It was thus demonstrated that the meta-position relies on a disavow of the intricate relationships between various music genres to determine value. This finding highlighted a key idea for the domains of progressive rock and capitalism, which challenges any claim to liberation and highlights the exclusivity inherent in these systems.

A further development, in reaction to progressive rock criticism, was to study a counter-position to that of the fetishist, or meta-structure some critics claim. This was the aligning of progressive rock with Adorno's negative dialectic. Through an examination of Hegel's concept of the skeptic, we unveiled that this position conserves, rather than counters a fetishist logic. This led us to a connection between Adorno and Deleuze, who gives masochism a role as transcending a patriarchal modernity. From here, we were able to highlight Lacan's most relevant insights in this discussion. This was that the notion of 'beyond', whether in a constructive or deconstructive mode, adheres to a masculine fantasy structure. We thus developed our major criticism of the negative dialectic, or masochistic freedom, presented within progressive rock criticism: to seek to overcome fetishism, without addressing the inherent castration within the field of study, brings critics into a more complex discourse of perversion.

In our concluding section, we presented Peter Gabriel and Genesis to illustrate Lacan's underlying masochistic structure. In the song 'The Musical Box', and in Gabriel's portrayal of an English eccentric, we demonstrated a masochistic theatre in action. In his role within the band, we claimed to find a perverse function: Gabriel, akin to a court jester, became a figure of derision as a means to divert attention from symbolic castration, and uphold the progressive fantasy that the band projected.

Chapter 3

In our investigation of David Bowie, we aimed to move on from the logic of the fetish and find an alternative organisational principle in the symptom. In doing so, we brought together ideas from Lacanian theory and constructs from science fiction and horror to demonstrate how the symptom functions socially.

Bowie's shifting alter-egos were framed through the monster, a true outsider who demonstrates the psychoanalytic symptom within the context of society. Through this figure, we argued for an original reading of Bowie's artistry. This deviated from the popular narrative of a performativity of novel reinvention and argued that Bowie followed the logic of the symptom: an inarticulable form of enjoyment within the symbolic order. This new perspective painted a picture of Bowie's shifting alter-egos as engaged in a constant repetition of a singular idiosyncrasy. We found this singularity as common to each alter-ego. This was in answer to a more common investment in the shifting alter-ego as performative of a negative dialectic of constant deconstruction.

To arrive at this original interpretation, we were critical of Judith Butler's performative theory, a framework often applied to Bowie's work. We observed that this theory, while rightly critiquing binary logic, remained ensnared within a further binary, which concealed an underlying masculine fantasy of transcending the symbolic order. We were thus able to place Butler in a growing series of theorists who, while differing wildly in content, follow a similar logic as identified by Lacan's male sexuation. While we fully support enactments of performative gender, we recognized that Butler's theory misses the Lacanian 'real', which added a further emancipatory dimension to performative acts.

To counter Butler, and theorists who use her in discussing Bowie, we introduced an alternative logic to the fetish and its deviant manifestations. This alternative was the symptom and Jacques Lacan's later concept of the *sinthome*. The symptom functioned as an interruption of enjoyment in the linear progression of time; the *sinthome* provided this interruption with a signifier, which enables us to gain enjoyment from the symptom itself. This was as opposed to fantasies of the symptom's avoidance in a deferred figure of exception.

In applying the logic of the symptom to Bowie's alter-egos, we were able to develop the concept of singularity, defined as the unique way in which each individual fails to conform to the

progressive fantasy and, in effect, finds a way to traverse the exclusionary fantasy enjoyment of an exceptional other. In contrast to Butler's constantly deconstructing performativity, our original Bowie reading thinks a singular individual who repeatedly returns to the same symbolically castrated point in the *sinthome*.

The *sinthome* was demonstrated through Bowie finding in alter-egos an artifice for his anorexic frame and fractured gaze, this was framed as a masquerade. These observations led us back to Lacan's formulas of sexuation and the category of the non-all. The non-all was shown to be a collective of mutually castrated/singular beings, which is a kind of universality. We thus arrived at our major theoretical development in this chapter, that symbolic castration is a universal of a shared human experience of singular failure.

Our final words placed Bowie as an abject saint, as outlined by Lacan. Contrary to a saint that enjoys beyond societal boundaries, the abject saint masquerades in society, displaying the reality of symbolic castration, which is a source of enjoyment free of the fetishist displacement. Thus, in our singular reading of Bowie, we arrived at the true infinity of an infinite number of ways of failing to be a complete being.

Chapter Four

In our final chapter, we aimed to further developed the ideas of chapter three, to highlight an organizational structure based on the idea of a mutual community of singular, castrated beings. This was to fully develop the feminine non-all, as highlighted in chapter one as a primary form of organisation censored by the masculine logic of fantasy.

Our initial study outlined an unconventional aspect within the band Hawkwind, which positioned them under a differing organisational principle to that of the masculine fraternity. This was to argue for their status as a non-all collective of idiosyncratic artists embracing spontaneity and anti-commercialism, without any strong connection to a phallic, or meta-position. The Isle of Wight festival served as an illustration of Hawkwind's organisational principle, bringing together our previously discussed ideas of dualistic resistance and offering an example of what a Lacanian non-all community might look like in response.

By revisiting our initial Lacanian methodology of treating the real by the symbolic, in analysing the symbolic narratives of resistance retroactively, we identified the fringe events outside the festival as a symbolic organization that oscillates around the real. This stood in contrast to the

exclusionary fetishism we found in a more active political resistance of trying to make an enemy of the main festival organisation.

This community, in opposition to the capitalist progressive logic, incorporated an entropy, creating an organization of the true infinite. This is to reject the capitalist disavow of entropy, which in the ideology of infinite accumulation, sees it as an external limit. We illustrated this through a social theory of the death drive. We developed a mature theory of death drive as a form of repetition that, much like a montage or serial organization, focused on the middle rather than seeking progressive endings.

Applying the circuit of the drive to Hawkwind, we observed a musical and social organization that provided space for society's excluded and surplus elements. This approach avowed the fetishist effect of the *Anstoss* and eliminated the need for fetish objects. We termed this a community of 'non-belonging', as opposed to a community of 'belonging'. Our major contribution, in this final chapter, was to highlight a universality in the death drive that gives us the status of mutually idiosyncratic, non-belonging subjects.

Reflections

In staging Lacanian interventions throughout this thesis, we've observed a recurring pattern in various debates within popular music studies, such as race, resistance, anti-capitalism, gender performativity, and community. These debates often lack the inclusion of Lacanian and dialectical thinking generally. This raises questions for future considerations in these areas. For instance, after our thesis, when discussing race, we can question the production of enjoyment; in anti-capitalist thought, we can inquire if we're ensnared in the logic of fantasy; in debates about gender performance, we can explore how the Lacanian real functions and ask questions of the stability of identity; in questions of community, we can ask how collectives are formed and if we need strong ideals and progressive goals to satisfyingly exist.

In the broader context of the thesis, we started with one type of musical organization, the masculine fraternity in blues rock, and concluded with another, the feminine non-all in Hawkwind/free festivals. Although this was originally a contingent outcome of our investigation it did shape the work into a coherent narrative form. When setting out to champion a non-progressive thinking, it is difficult not to, ironically, fall into a form that progresses into a grand conclusion. However, the success of this thesis is that we began with music that is often

placed into discourse as either authentic or aesthetically valued, and after criticising these views, we moved through artifice to find our most radical example in a band, Hawkwind, who may be seen as a novelty act in some circles. We reached this realization through an extended study that traced the evolution from the masculine fetish in fantasy to its transformation into the primary feminine form of the symptom. This journey involved shifting from the attempt to displace castration onto others and forming an exclusive fraternity to acknowledging castration as a universal condition of being, uniting a community through shared non-belonging.

The lasting impact of our thesis is that we have discovered the worth within the marginalized, the abject, the undesirable, and the excluded elements of our society. Our work has argued that the political agency of these marginalized aspects often goes unnoticed, overshadowed by the grand narratives that excessively elevate popular music's role in shaping active politics. In our theoretical exploration, we have conveyed a consistent message: it is imperative to find enjoyment in symbolic castration, for grand narratives do nothing more than defer the gratification of our desires, perpetuating cycles of jealousy, narcissistic love, and hate. This revelation challenges us to reassess our understanding of social dynamics and the significance of what society chooses to overlook, inviting us to uncover the latent potential in the seemingly insignificant. Thus, as musicologists, we should embrace the fact that popular music is symbolically castrated and recognise this as both its primary, non-all state, and its greatest strength.

For popular music studies, we have laboured, and sometimes tortured, its presuppositions by finding a way to present a version of Lacanian theory to produce a critical survey of some existing ideas. The major limits to our thesis were a huge gulf in Lacanian music studies, with almost nothing said of our chosen period, and the general inaccessibility of Lacanian theory. While the former of these limits presented and opportunity to intervene in existing scholarship, and contribute excluded ideas, the latter proved difficult in finding the right concepts that would translate into a musical praxis.

To present recommendations, we can identify the immense opportunities in popular music studies to stage similar interventions. Although history tells us that Lacanian music studies exist on a rarely visited island, our thesis has demonstrated that sometimes, the greatest resistance is to the most intimate truth of a given field. By retroactively assessing popular music from the perspective of an internal negativity, a symptom, we can test our presuppositions about both theoretical frameworks and musical objects. Our methodology is a contribution that we

can present to musicology as a viable framework for future study. We began with a single idea of Lacan's, to treat the real by the symbolic. This presented a definition of the real as existing within, not beyond, the symbolic, and worked this premise through Lacan's dense works. The formulas of sexuation became the pivotal concept in digesting both Lacan and the debates we positioned him against. The simple division, women, treat the real by the symbolic, while men, through fantasy, treat the symbolic by the imaginary, became a cypher for our tenacious intervention into different issues and musical styles. This crucial concept also helped us read much of Lacan's notoriously confusing jargon terms, under the division of whether they demonstrate the real or the imaginary at work within a symbolic order of ideas. Through this, we have been able to intervene in debates where Lacan has been previously absent. Thus, we can recommend that future research in popular music begins with the most pertinent critical question developed in our thesis: are we willing to traverse the fantasy structure of our own critique? In response, we will find a more considered account of cause, or presuppositions, rather than effects, or progressive narratives.

We introduced this thesis with a discussion on revolution and active political engagement. In Jacques Lacan and John Lennon's responses to the countercultural events of May '68, we found an attitude of passive disinvestment. Rather than seeing this position as a dead end, we considered its potential as a way of intervening into music and politics. The significance of John Lennon's lyric, 'you can count me out (in)', perhaps takes on a new significance considering our championing of the non-all, the position of non-belonging, which can form a community without need for discrimination. Being counted out, yet being included in, would thus form a politics of symbolic castration.

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