

Voicing the Popular

On the Subjects of Popular Music

Richard Middleton



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If my last book, *Studying Popular Music*, was in large part a product of my time at the Open University, this one is my “Newcastle University book.” It is difficult to find words to express what I owe to colleagues at the International Centre for Music Studies at Newcastle since I moved there in 1998. (“International Centre,” by the way, although an accurate enough label in many ways, is neo-Blairite waffle for what was previously a “Music

Department”; but “departments” are so last year.) Certainly the book would be very different without the impact of their eye- and ear-opening intellectual companionship and the benefits of working with them in such a creative and collegial setting. If I single out Ian Biddle, David Clarke, Bennett Hogg, and Goffredo Plastino, it is because they work in areas close to mine and I owe them quite specific debts; but I would want to acknowledge the profound effects that all ICMuS staff—and students too—have had upon my thinking, often to an extent and in ways, I suspect, beyond anything they realize. Particular thanks are due, too, to our two Visiting Professors, Phil Bohlman and Larry Kramer, who have read or heard several parts of the book, and whose own work and presence in Newcastle have been an inspiration. I hope the book will be seen as a component in a broader scholarly, pedagogical and creative enterprise which is taking shape at Newcastle in what I believe is a quite remarkable way (I can say this in a semi-detached spirit since, as I write, I have just retired).

This debt sits at the tip of a pyramid whose foundations go deep and wide. My most obvious intellectual obligations are documented in the endnotes; but who could draw, in all their detail, the full dimensions of his biographical intertext? I have been thinking a lot recently about the significance of such interconnections and dependencies. It is a significance germane to the politics of this book. At a time when the word “socialism” has been consigned to museums or reduced to distorting mythologies, many people—and not exclusively the young—need reminding that our lives actually contain important pockets and models of socialistic practice. To adapt Marx: we may not know it but we are doing it. While academic and intellectual life is of course often sullied by petty competition, egotism, and assertion of property rights, there is here as well, at best, a collective network—a commons of the mind—within which we not only stand on the shoulders of giants but work with them daily. Given the reifying effects of “isms” and “ologies,” and the totalizing “solutions” to which they have often led, perhaps we would indeed do better to put the word “socialism” to one side, look to and engage with the multifarious desires teeming around the political unconscious, and concentrate on the laborious critical work of transforming practice in specific spheres.

As important an arena for this as any is the home. My largest debt of all is to my dear wife and partner, Jane, who has responded with good humor (and sometimes with humor) to an assortment of often bizarre ideas, sprung on her at the least predictable moments (including the middle of the night); at the same time, getting on with her own work, which has probably achieved more good than I could ever claim.

Introduction

“We’re Low, We’re Low, We’re Very, Very Low”

“The voice of the people is the voice of God:” so proclaimed the British Chartists in the revolutionary year of 1848.¹ The singularity of the grammar — one god, one people — obscures the political reality of contestation: where was this voice to be located, who owned it? While for many Chartists the slogan no doubt simply implied that “God is on our side” — a position memorably satirized a century later by Bob Dylan — or perhaps that democracy can claim divine inspiration, readers today can hardly fail to note the motif of usurpation: the authority vested in what the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan called the “Name-of-the-Father” is claimed by a new god, the People, a transposition concretely pursued by many post-Chartist socialists and communists.² But not always with one voice; nor, often, without drowning out alternative sounds. Who, then, is entitled to this voice of the people? And what do they have to tell us?

Ernest Jones, the “Chartist poet laureate,” was one who certainly laid claim to it, for instance, in the political soirées (or “evenings for the people”) he organized in London in 1856, at which such pieces of his as “The Song of the Lower Classes” were sung by his composer friend John Lowry.³

We plough and sow — we’re so very, very low
 That we delve in the dirty clay,
 Till we bless the plain — with the golden grain,
 And the vale with the fragrant hay.
 Our place we know — we’re so very, very low,
 ‘Tis down at the landlord’s feet:
 We’re not too low — the bread to grow,
 But too low the bread to eat.

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Chorus: We're not too low — the bread to grow,
But too low the bread to eat.

Down, down we go — we're so very low,
To the hell of the deep sunk mines,
But we gather the proudest gems that glow,
When the crown of a despot shines.
And whenever he lacks — upon our backs
Fresh loads he deigns to lay:
We're far too low to vote the tax,
But not too low to pay.

Chorus: We're far too low [etc.]

We're low — we're low — mere rabble, we know,
But, at our plastic power,
The mould at the lordling's feet will grow
Into palace and church and tower —
Then prostrate fall — in the rich man's hall,
And cringe at the rich man's door:
We're not too low to build the wall,
But too low to tread the floor.

Chorus: We're not too low [etc.]

We're low — we're low — we're very, very low,
Yet from our fingers glide
The silken flow — and the robes that glow
Round the limbs of the sons of pride.
And what we get — and what we give,
We know, and we know our share:
We're not too low the cloth to weave,
But too low the cloth to wear!

Chorus: We're not too low [etc.]

We're low — we're low — we're very, very low,
And yet when the trumpets ring,
The thrust of a poor man's arm will go
Thro' the heart of the proudest King.
We're low — we're low — our place we know,
We're only the rank and file,
We're not too low — to kill the foe,
But too low to touch the spoil.

Chorus: We're not too low [etc.]

Version 1

We're low, we're low, we're so ve - ry, ve - ry low That we delve in the dir - ty

Version 2

Marcato

We plough and sow we're so ve - ry, ve - ry low that we delve in the dir - ty

4

clay, Till we bless the plain with the gol - den grain, The vale with the new mown

clay, Till we bless the plain with the gol - den grain, And the vale with the fra - grant

8

hay. Our place we know, we're so ve - ry ve - ry low, 'Tis

hay Our place we know we're so ve - ry low, 'Tis

11

down at the land - lord's feet; We're not too low the bread to grow But too

down at the land - lord's feet, we're not too low the grain to grow, But too

15

low the bread to eat.

low the bread to eat.

Chorus

We're not too low the

18

bread to grow, But too low the bread to eat.

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'We're Not Too Low'. It features two versions of the melody and accompaniment. Version 1 is a simple melody in G minor, 3/4 time. Version 2 is a more rhythmic and accented version, marked 'Marcato'. The score includes lyrics for both versions and is divided into systems with measure numbers 4, 8, 11, 15, and 18. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb), and the time signature is common time (C).

Example 1.1

The discursive territory is familiar, and was so at the time Jones wrote, organized as it is around the opposition of rich and poor, property and labor. While it would have had enormous resonance in the 1840s, the theme was ancient (as John Ball's couplet from the time of the fourteenth-century Peasants' Revolt put it, "When Adam delved and Eve span/Who was then the gentleman?"), and there is nothing in the words to tie it specifically to the turmoil accompanying the birth of the world's first industrial working class: none of the categories of work (farming, mining, building, weaving, soldiering) is new, and the language is hardly "proletarian," rather "poetic," even biblical. Similarly, the style of Lowry's tune, as János Maróthy points out, derives from that of the bourgeois marches that developed out of song-types typical of the vaudeville, comic opera, and pleasure-garden repertoires of the late eighteenth century. (Papageno's music in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* offers the most familiar example today.) At the same time, the initial \hat{s} - \hat{i} upbeat — a call to attention, or to arms — recalls the beginning of the *Marseillaise* (a model followed by innumerable other marches and political songs of the nineteenth century). Moreover, Maróthy argues that the lyrical, balanced shapes of the melody — typical of song patterns in the emergent bourgeois culture — are broken up rhythmically and energized by slogan-like repetitions ("we're low, we're low"), internal rhyme and variation, and "heavy," even "stamping," or "smashing" crotchets ("our place we know"), which, as a musical tactic, he finds to be at the same time characteristic of nineteenth-century worker's song and typical of a plebeian song lineage traceable as far back as the Middle Ages. The figure of the Low conjured up here, then, faces in several directions: towards the people constructing themselves as the revolutionary citizenry of the *Marseillaise*; as an emergent working class, poised to smash the bourgeois system; as representatives of long-suffering yet resilient plebeian forces recently conceptualized by Romantics like Jones as a *Völk*.⁴

Interestingly, Maróthy takes his version of the song (Version 1 in Example 1.1) from a Workers Music Association pamphlet published much later. Comparing this to the first song sheet (Version 2), we find that the "smashing crotchets" are less evident in Lowry's original tune (see bars 8–10, for example), which contains a level of lyrical decoration that is simplified out in the later version (bars 6–7, 15). Presumably a process of folklorization has taken place. The slogan-like rhymes and heavy rhythm on which Maróthy comments are certainly present in Jones's text, and it is as if the music — probably as a result of its performance history — has been made to "catch up" (most of Lowry's other extant compositions fall into the category or style of drawing-room ballad). Perhaps this is also why the chorus indicated in the original publications — implying solo performance of the verses — has disappeared in the WMA version: by now, the music suggests collective delivery throughout.⁵

Still, even if we detect a slight mismatch in the original between text and tune, the prettiness of the melody finds its complement in Jones's romanticized language and imagery. As a comparison between the "dynamizing" dotted notes of the *Marseillaise* [— ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ —] and the Mozartian lyrical quavers of "We're Low" suggests, this "people" is, whatever qualifications might be entered, quite well-bred. Jones's "evenings for the people" were, as he put it, "an attempt to combine elevating Recreation with Political Instruction — to raise Politics from the Sphere of the Tavern, by associating them with the refinements of Music of the choicest character, the finest Professional Talent, Vocal and Instrumental, being engaged for each Soirée."⁶

Raised and educated in rural northern Germany, Ernest Jones was deeply influenced by *Völkisch* conservatism, and by the German and English early Romantics on whom, in diluted forms, this tendency drew. On his return to England in 1838, he studied law, moving in aristocratic London circles, and also broke through as a writer of verse and romances. An increasing sense of social mission in the early 1840s led to his conversion to the Chartist cause, but, despite a friendship with Marx and Engels (beginning in 1847), Jones's basic historical picture, rooted in a vision of lost pastoral harmony, disrupted by industrialism and a ruling-class usurpation, never left him. It was a mythic construction not untypical of the Chartist leadership. "If these histories had a 'people' as their subject, then the people were simple peasant folk. . . Primitive rebels perhaps, but nothing more."⁷ In the early 1850s, as some elements in a now declining Chartism were moving left, Jones's main cause, promoted in novels and in the newspapers he was producing, was land nationalisation; and by the 1860s he had moved into mainstream reform politics.

This is not to denigrate Jones's devotion to the people's cause, which was generous and unstinting. Rather, this example draws attention to some important scene-setting points. First, "the people" was searching for, and to some extent, finding a voice. In the era of democratic and industrial revolutions, this was not surprising. Second, this voice was *plural*; it was, implicitly or explicitly, internally contested. In a period when social and political formations were in flux, this too was not surprising. Third, this contestation was overdetermined by the effects of the larger social nexus, which we can begin to think of in terms of *class*; most notably, the people's voice was often, to a greater or lesser extent, spoken for it from elsewhere — or, at least, was forced to move within an orbit conditioned by "higher" cultural forces.

None of these features, considered separately, was completely new. What was novel, in the century or so leading up to 1848, was their combination, which was both the result and the motivating force of a new sense of *social space* — a space we must understand as "theatrical," that is, set on a stage peopled by social actors whose self-presentations can be grasped only in terms of their interactions. On one level this trend finds its manifestation in

the new or reformed political assemblies, and the theories of, and debates over, representation of the various social interests that accompanied them. In the cultural sphere, the key genre was musical theater: opera, of course, but also lower forms such as pantomime and then music hall and (in the United States) minstrel show, and even pleasure garden and dance hall, where, in a sense, patrons, with the aid of the musical and other entertainments, “played themselves.” Small wonder that nontheatrical popular songs in the nineteenth century often drew on musical theater repertoires for their tunes, a tendency that continued in the relationship between Broadway and Hollywood on the one hand, Tin Pan Alley on the other, in the earlier part of the twentieth century. It is on this stage — a social stage in a broad sense — that the “Song of the Lower Classes” airs its voice.

What was developing was a new type of musical semiotics of the social, a new mode of musical representation, replacing even as, to some extent, it drew upon, the older, more abstract codes associated with the relatively enclosed worlds of court and church music. The principal source, from the early eighteenth century, lay in the range of comic opera genres — *opera buffa*, ballad opera, *opéra comique*, *Singspiel*, and so on — genres which opened up the possibility, and also required, that composers should develop ways of putting “low” characters and situations on the stage and of representing their relationships with their betters. Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* provides the classic case.

First performed in 1791, a mere two years after the beginning of the French Revolution, Mozart’s *Singspiel* is shot through with ideals of deistic rationalism and universal fraternity; its hymn-like moments, indeed, can be heard as transposing the voice of God into a context marked by visions of secular illumination: enlightenment, potentially, for all. But the work does much more. In peopling his stage with representatives of interlocking social hierarchies — of gender and race as well as class — Mozart not only tells a story with universalistic claims, he also points (at least for those familiar with twentieth-century deconstructions of Enlightenment narratives) to the contradictions and foreclosures on which these claims were built. For there is, it seems, only one way to the truth and it comes from on high. I have written elsewhere⁸ on the way that Mozart constructs, through musico-narrative structure and contrasts of musical style, a series of intersecting, alteritous relationships in which identities (of class, gender, race) are represented in terms of their others; for example, the birdcatcher Papageno is presented not only as a peasant simpleton (in relation to the heroic Tamino) but also as “girlish” — and yet at the same time capable of both learning (from his betters, the female heroine Pamina as well as Tamino) and of achieving patriarchal normality (marrying the equally low-class Papagena in the end), and also of mastering *his* other, the Moorish villain Monostatos and his black slaves.

The ideal selfhood, to which Tamino and Panima ultimately win through, is possible only through a set of distinctions which at the same time function as constitutive relationships: hierarchies that are always tending towards binary simplification. Crucially, the terms that occupy the “other” positions in this formation — the multivalent yet interlocking voices of what has been called the Low-Other — are portrayed as attractive as well as dangerous, enticing as well as subordinate. They possess magical powers, alien to Enlightenment norms, and yet require magic, good magic, to control them.

We have arrived here at a fairly developed stage in “the formation of the cultural Imaginary of the middle class in post-Renaissance Europe,” a process involving (especially by the late eighteenth century) “an internal distancing from the popular which was complex and often contradictory in its effects.”⁹ Internal distance of course assumes external contiguity, that is, a shared social theater — a condition that the liberal bourgeoisie of Europe, watching as the events of the French Revolution unfolded, hearing of the world’s first black anti-colonial revolution (led by Toussaint L’Ouverture in Haiti in 1791), reading Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), could not escape.

Mozart’s opera was only one in a huge repertoire of racy, spectacular, and exotic entertainments popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, drawing on many of the same themes. *Omai, or A Trip round the World*,¹⁰ produced in London in 1785, shifts its focus further towards the black-other (not surprising in a country now confident of its status as the world’s leading colonial power), and locates this figure not in Mozart’s “Moorish” orient but in the South Seas — specifically Tahiti, recently explored by Captain James Cook. *Omai*, a proto-operatic masque-cum-pantomime, was a collaboration between the Irish playwright John O’ Keeffe, the composer William Shield, and the designer Philippe de Loutherbourg, whose extraordinarily elaborate sets and apparatuses, bringing together innovatory design, lighting, sound effects, and theater machinery, were already celebrated; they gave “natural motion to accurate resemblance,” according to one contemporary description.¹¹ The eponymous hero was based on a real Omai — a “prince” from Tahiti, brought back and shown around England by Cook’s colleague, the botanist Sir Joseph Banks, in 1774–76, and quickly feted as a perfectly gentlemanly Noble Savage. Tahiti, discovered in 1768, had been speedily assimilated to existing images of exotic paradise. But in *Omai* the exoticism is presented as not only titillating but also dangerous: there is black magic as well as white. This exoticism is one side of a coin whose verso portrays the island’s politics, of both statecraft and gender, as surprisingly similar to those of Europe, and gives to its leading characters — the king, Otoo, and the witch/goddesses, good and bad, Towha and Oberea — musical styles drawn from European high-art genres.

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Otoo (in unison with instrumental bass)

God of Bo - la Bo - la hear! Ac - cept this plan - tain, yam and
 Hog, well roast - ed, ac - cept this plan - tain, yam and Hog well roast - ed
 off - 'rings to - thy God - head dear,

Example 1.2

Consider, for example, the Purcellian mode of awestruck grandeur in Otoo's initial appeal to his gods (he wants them to confirm his son Omai as his successor). (See Example 1.2, above.)

Or Towha's response, after the high-flown manner (one that can be found in Mozart) of Italian *opera seria*. (See Example 1.3, below)

Towha

My A - riel Band art rea - dy to run to swim to fly at
 my com - mand to run to swim to
 fly at my com - mand

Example 1.3

Whether we are to attribute this connection to natural good breeding (as in Rousseauian ideas of primitive nobility) or to Europe's civilizing mission is a question decided in this musical assimilation as much as in the opening and closing set-piece tributes to Britannia's benign political role. At the start, Omai, appointed his successor by Otoo, is sent off to Britain to claim his bride Londina by a vision of Britannia conjured up by the goddess Towha.

Britannia: Mark, votive Islander, thy fate is mine
 For mine
 The Queen of Isles, the mistress of the main!
 Upon my sea-girt shore, by Neptune fenc'd,
 Kind greeting, pleasure, welcome sweet receive;
 Still shall my sons, by Cook's example taught,
 Thy new-found world protect and humanise,
 In soft alliance bound, this British maid
 Be thine, and Love, a radiant throne shall fix
 Firm as my rock, where sits bright Liberty.

And in the final scene, as Cook's death is mourned (by a Chorus of Indians) and his immortality saluted, the imperial assimilation is completed.

Captain: Accept of mighty George our sovereign lord,
 In sign of British love, this British sword.
 Oberea: Oh joy! Away my useless spells and magic charms,
 A British sword is proof against the world in arms.

A sentiment sealed in the Captain's final air.

He [i.e., Cook] came, and he saw, not to conquer, but save;
 The Caesar of Britain was he;
 Who scorned the ambition of making a slave
 While Britons themselves are so free.

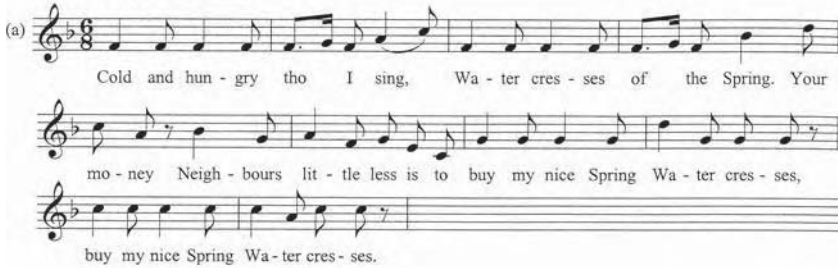
Within three years, William Wilberforce would establish the British movement to abolish slavery. But the rulers of Britain, flushed with their emergent European hegemony, would resist both French and American ideas of freedom, and would impose their patronage on many millions overseas; mastery, liberty, and difference were not so easy to conjoin — a point that would shortly be given theoretical richness by the philosopher Hegel in his discourse of master and slave.¹²

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the representations of the lower characters in *Omai* are more interesting than those of their masters; nor that the musical styles chosen for examples of British low-life and for foreign others tend to run together. In the songs of a comic Water Cress Woman and Raffling Toy Shop Man, there is an alternation between a “folky” style, indebted to the contemporary taste for “Irish” music, and a pared-down “clockwork” style similar to that in some of Papageno's songs.¹³ (See Example 1.4 and Example 1.5, next page.)

In the closing “English Sailor's Song,” these two lineages fuse in a way that both harks back to an existing national-patriotic (“roast beef and naval

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Old Water Cress Woman

(a) 

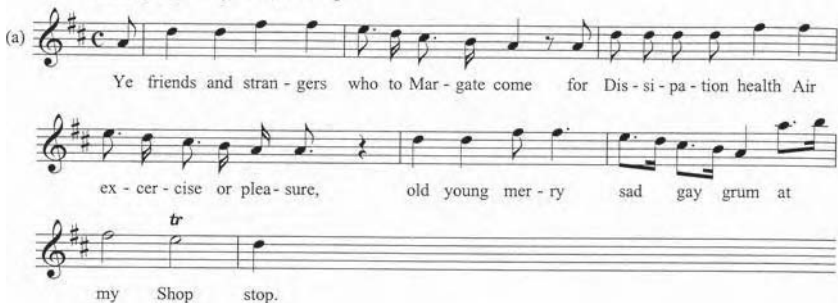
Cold and hun - gry tho I sing, Wa - ter cress - ses of the Spring. Your
mo - ney Neigh - bours lit - tle less is to buy my nice Spring Wa - ter cress - ses,
buy my nice Spring Wa - ter cress - ses.

(b) 

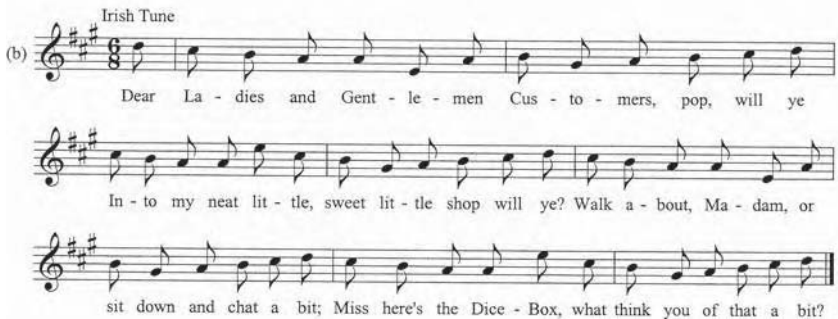
Keep it pri - thee keep it, My kind my gen - rous Boy, And feat - ly nimb - ly use it, Should
sure - ly care an - noy, Quick pos - ting on a Sun - beam, Here po - tent Tow - ha sent me, His
charge take care of Har - le - quin, And pow'r - ful spells he lent me.

Example 1.4

Raffling Toy Shop Man, at Margate

(a) 

Ye friends and stran - gers who to Mar - gate come for Dis - si - pa - tion health Air
ex - cer - cise or plea - sure, old young mer - ry sad gay grum at
my Shop stop.

(b) 

Dear La - dies and Gent - le - men Cus - to - mers, pop, will ye
In - to my neat lit - tle, sweet lit - tle shop will ye? Walk a - bout, Ma - dam, or
sit down and chat a bit; Miss here's the Dice - Box, what think you of that a bit?

Example 1.5

Old Tune

When I come back to bon - ny Shad - well Dock. Fol de rol lol de ra Fol de
rol lol la How the Girls will stare at their friend Jack Block, with his
chip chow, Cher - ry chow, Fol de lid - dle la de do, Fol lol la.

Example 1.6

supremacy”) repertoire, and outlines the route that would carry us to the world of the “Song of the Lower Classes” (note the $\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ upbeat). (See Example 1.6, above.)

Compare now two songs heard during Omai’s return from London to the South Seas, courtesy of a geographically bewildering but no doubt scenically entertaining itinerary (a Cook’s Tour, one might say); first, a Chorus of Villagers of the Friendly Islands (see Example 1.7, next page).

And second, a song of an Otaheitean Traveller (see Example 1.8, page 13).

The latter, like the second strain of the “Toy Shop Man’s” song, is described explicitly in the score as an “Irish Tune”; but its style — with its lopsided harmonic grammar (chord-changes in the “wrong” place) and unfinished structure, which refuses a perfect cadence — also looks forward to a song-type that would shortly become familiar in the blacked-up voices of the minstrel show: a connection cemented further by the equally cock-eyed grammar of the lyrics (“Teach me sail no paddle”) and their liberal use of caricatured pronunciation (“de” and “den”; and later in the lyrics, “dis” and “dat” too). In the final verse, the Traveller, telling of his stay in London, describes how his attempted wooing of a “lady fine” (who called him an “ugly devil”) was interrupted by her husband, who “give my head a tump” crying “get out dam Negar.” Admittedly, these two songs move somewhat more unequivocally towards the folky end of the spectrum (even though this is “Irish” as much as “black”); but this marks a relational difference within a structure of family resemblance: a powerful alteritizing impulse brings together the English street, Ireland, the African diaspora, and the exotic South into an interchangeable cast of others.¹⁴

Within this structure, the triangular trade linking Africa, Europe, and America is particularly interesting. The blackface performance genres of proto-minstrelsy would not get under way in the United States for another fifteen years or so; but the representational mode heard in Shield’s “Traveller’s Song” was already familiar, both in Britain and in America. Charles Dibdin’s

12 • Voicing the Popular

(a)

Plen - ty gives and for - tune smiles O'er our hap - py friend - ly Isles,

Drums (simile...)
Naffas Paggas etc...*

While so blest what should we do, But Sing oh sweet Ton - ga - ta boo, But

sing oh sweet Ton - ga - ta - boo.

* It is not known what 'Naffas' or 'Paggas' were - probably some real or imitation South Sea percussion instruments.

(b)

On this green and fra - grant spot, Down we here to - geth - er squat,

(simile...)

With our scar - let plu - mage crown'd, while the Ka - va

bowl goes round while the Ka - va bowl goes round.

Example 1.7

Irish Tune

In de big Ca - noe I o'er o - cean swim me, Jack and mer - ry crew Give good li - quor - to me.

O - ver sand and rocks Teach me sail no pad - dle; Teach me den to box, So to use my dad - dle.

Tol lol lol lol li Tol lol lol lol lod - di tol lol lol lol li lol lol lol lol lod - di.

Example 1.8

The Padlock was the first opera to feature a blackface character — Mungo, whose two songs are in the clockwork style previously described¹⁵ — and this crossed the Atlantic only a year after its London premiere (1768). The transatlantic traffic in musical theater was brisk (as far as we know, *Omai* was not performed in the United States, but fifteen other works by Shield were); and, given the huge amount of blackface performance in the American theater following *The Padlock*, it is tempting to speculate that the influence in this specific respect may have traveled westward as well as eastward. The musical similarities between the style of many early minstrel show songs and that of contemporary “Scots” and, especially, “Irish” songs has often been noticed; Shield’s “Irish” “Traveller’s Song,” for example, inhabits the same musical world as the famous “Jump Jim Crow,” introduced by Thomas D. Rice around 1828 — provocative travel indeed!¹⁶

This connection can be explained away as a product of white bourgeois condescension: a self-consciously crude style doing service for a whole range of backward cultures, whose differences are too trivial to require representation. But, while such assimilation may indeed have served bourgeois purposes, we should be careful about reducing agency too far: W. T. Lhamon sees the early minstrel style as marking the formation of a “plebeian Atlantic,” and Dale Cockrell, who agrees with Lhamon that the songs were performed

and enjoyed by a cross-racial proletariat, argues that “the meaning of ‘Jim Crow’ is thus slippery — all contestation and ambiguity”; Eric Lott suggests that “It was through ‘blackness’ that class was staged . . . blackface . . . *figured* class — . . . its languages of race so invoked ideas about class as to provide displaced maps or representations of ‘working-classness.’”¹⁷ For Lhamon, “blackface developed distinct responses to ‘amalgamation’ — not by attacking but by enacting miscegenation.” Is this how we should interpret English music hall singers, Joe Cowell and his son Sam, singing blackface songs in the United States in 1829–30 and then taking them back to Britain; in which direction was this trade running?¹⁸

The interface of race and class is not the only ambiguity within the exchange economy of *Omai*. The Water Cress Woman is the only solo female role, except for Towha and Oberea — whose contending magics pursue Omai on his journey home — and the rather pathetic Oedidee, Omai’s childhood (male) friend and rival for the kingship, whose part is marked to be sung (pantomime-style presumably) by a woman. Thus the space of Woman is either filled by the supernatural, the comic, the sentimental (Oedidee’s song of friendship and submission, “O’er Groves of Coral,” is close to the low style already described), or is left blank.¹⁹ Interestingly, the character of Omai is also something of a blank: throughout the work, he never speaks or sings. In a provocative reading, Christa Knellwolf²⁰ suggests that, although the story presents his visit to Britain as a civilizing process, the context of pantomime laughter would have rendered any exoticism unstable; his silence, then, is deliberate, “demanding that the audience should acknowledge its inability to understand who he is and what he stands for.” We should note, however, that, like most pantomimes of the time, *Omai* was a harlequinade, and in this tradition Harlequin was always played as a silent mime. Yet in the sources, it is Omai’s servant (it is he who is addressed by the Water Cress Woman in Example 1.4b) who is given the role of Harlequin; presumably, then, Omai acts as his double, mimicking his appearance and behaviour, silenced to the power two. The *commedia dell’arte* character of Harlequin had always been played in a black mask, and Knellwolf argues that Omai must have blacked up, too; thus “he acquires Harlequin’s uncanny power to play with make-believe.” But this power is at one remove, relayed through his *Doppelgänger* servant. By mingling with characters from English low-life and European fantasy (not to mention women and cross-dressers), Omai becomes an odd one out who is at the same time familiar; he takes over “their carnivalesque right to challenge hierarchies,” and so, while subsumed by the end into “a celebration of Cook and by extension, the British Empire,” he also retains “a subversive presence.”²¹ This problematic, in which the low-other questions its place and *answers back* — whether in play, on license, or for real — would go on to have a long history, even if, at times, it is dumbness or a loud invisibility which bespeak its presence.

The role of magic, in both *Omai* and *Die Zauberflöte*, is telling. It is as if reasonable men can banish the old superstitions, and safeguard their own identity and power, only through a superior magic, while restricting these transactions (so it seemed) to the fanciful spaces of art and entertainment. Thus in Mozart's opera, the manly magic of the Enlightenment sees off the black arts of the Queen of the Night, while in *Omai* the battle of unreason is removed back to the South Seas, where it serves to usher in Britannic rule. Marina Warner notes that within the genre of fantastic entertainments to which *Omai* belonged, great play was often made of the theme of the *genie*, the "slave of the lamp" in the highly popular pantomime *Aladdin* (first staged — in a work by, once again, Shield and O'Keefe — in London in 1788).²² This figure, devoid of will and feeling, was often compared adversely to the free citizens of Europe and just as often transmutes, in the imagery, into a caricatured African. In *Omai* the magic talisman given to Omai by Towha, which causes involuntary sneezing, yawning, whistling, laughing, and crying, serves a similar role. In societies building their identity on the basis of forced labor, at home and abroad, to imagine summoning a slave by rubbing Aladdin's lamp, and banishing him at will, must have possessed striking symbolic value — even if, for later observers, it brings out the irony of a lamp of enlightenment guaranteed by irrational belief and imposed at the point of a sword. This is the mark of what Slavoj Žižek has called the "invisible master" — the belief that "behind the public Master (who, of course, is an impostor), there is a hidden Master who effectively keeps everything under control."²³ Indeed, as Warner explains,²⁴ this is exactly how it works in the Aladdin stories, where the ultimate master of the genies rarely appears. But if this Master is invisible, he is by no means silent. As "dictator" — the voice of authority within the subject (in the unconscious) — he runs the show, the author-function in *Omai*, for example, working its magic through a complex series of relays enabling it to stand in not only for the bourgeois self, but for a spectrum of positions with the imperatives of the British state at one end, the otherness of the South Seas (Africa, blackface, the Celtic margins) at the other. Yet, as Steven Connor reminds us, this manifestation of ventriloquism assumes a relationship that is potentially bidirectional: Omai the ventriloquist's dummy (not invisible but silent) asks of his masters if they are not also dummies, not only pulling the strings but also being pulled.²⁵

In a sense, then, theatrical magic mirrored the magic of enlightenment — and also, we might add, of capitalism. The extraordinary development in the theater of mechanized effects such as Loutherbouurg's conjured up, and controlled, nature — and at the same time exploited this entertainment as a newly accessible leisure commodity. The term "phantasmagoria" was coined to describe a new, more sophisticated type of magic lantern show put on in London in 1802, with immediate success. The name was subsequently applied widely to a variety of illusionist entertainments, and, metaphorically,

to other phenomena with similar features: hallucination (usually with the frisson of the supernatural — spectre and ghost) and mutability (shifting, dissolving images).²⁶ But such entertainments had an ancestry going back as far as the sixteenth century, part of a broad, developing interest in representational technologies that were not without their religious ambivalence: the Devil was supposedly a skilful mimic, and image-making itself could be considered problematical, yet representation — producing accurate, useful or affecting maps of reality — might also be considered an important part of secularizing humanity's increasing mastery of nature. Small wonder that Marx would take up this discourse in order to probe the seemingly magical representational system of the commodity form under capitalism:

The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists... simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labor themselves... It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the phantasmagoric form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own... So it is in the world of commodities... I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labor as soon as they are produced as commodities...²⁷

We can pursue the lineaments of this phantasmagoric economy, in which a magical movement of exchange via processes of representation courses through the production apparatuses of human subject, social body, and political economy alike, back to an earlier emergent moment: back to the England of the South Sea Bubble of 1720, followed a few years later by a musical theater work that sketched many of the elements of the new economy — John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* of 1728.²⁸

Gay's work was the first ballad opera, remaining popular and influential throughout the eighteenth century (and beyond).²⁹ At this early stage in the development of the new representational economy, differentiation of social personae is much less than would become possible later. Indeed, by setting the whole of the opera in the criminal world of London low-life, while at the same time holding this world up as a mirror of the corruption of contemporary high society, Gay leaves the parallelisms between high and low that we observed in *Die Zauberflöte* and *Omai* — the “similitude of manners in high and low life,” as his Beggar describes it — at a largely implicit level. The plot — revolving around the betrayal and imprisonment of Macheath, leader of a band of thieves, and the competition between the jailer's daughter, Lucy Lockit, and the fence's daughter, Polly Peachum, for his affections — mimics

typical operatic narrative *topoi*. But all the music for Gay's songs comes from preexisting sources, the majority from popular songs current at the time, to be found on song sheets, broadsides, and, in many cases, two famous published tune collections from the seventeenth- and early-eighteenth centuries, *The Dancing Master* and *Wit and Mirth: Or Pills to Purge Melancholy* — the popularity of which already reflected a burgeoning aristocratic and bourgeois interest in vernacular music.³⁰ The vigor and expressive simplicity of these tunes must have seemed attractive across the political spectrum of elite society, even though Gay's purpose in deploying them to attack the skulduggery of the Whig ascendancy as it cashed in on economic expansion exemplifies a specifically conservative/aristocratic mode of identification with the common people (Gay moved in Tory circles).

If this is an appropriation — an opera that we must imagine written and put on by beggars — it is one that works by a sort of inversion: the audience must locate itself wholesale in the rough and salacious world of thieves and whores, from where it is then invited to appropriate — or de-appropriate? — at any rate, lampoon itself. Only, of course, to distance itself at the play's end, for this is but make-believe, as the Beggar's ironic introduction and closing scene make clear. Although, he says, "I have not made my Opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue," he has included the poetic language and "pathetic" prison-scene required by the genre, and consents at the end to the necessary "absurdity" of a happy ending, for "an opera must end happily . . . to comply with the taste of the town."³¹ The audience, then, is a character in the drama, which, on one level, is *about* the technology of representation; and in this sense, it is what Jonathon Swift suggested his friend should write, a "Newgate pastoral," the arcadian pretenses of court ritual transposed to the grubby world — and urban romanticism — of mercantile capitalism.

From this perspective, Gay's musical strategy, bringing together popular tunes from a range of contexts — dance, theater, ballad — and periods — from the sixteenth century to the present — is holistic: they are all tied together to form one world, whose ambivalence — is it high or low? — is unsettling only up to the limit imposed by the sense of cultural closure. Nowhere is this unifying move clearer than in the remarkable medley of song-fragments sung by the (anti-) hero, Macheath, as he meditatively contemplates his expected execution. He segues quickly (Airs 58–67) through snatches of recent theater song tunes, Carey's "Sally in Our Alley," sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ballads, including "Chevy Chase," dance tunes based on sixteenth-century grounds, such as the *passamezzo antico*, ending with the immortal "Greensleeves," in a scene that works both as stream of consciousness and as a fantasy of national cultural identity: the internal structures of self and of society are conjoined.

Perhaps it is not quite so simple, though. It appears that the songs had very

simple accompaniments — continuo, including new bass parts written by the composer Johann Christoph Pepusch, together with violins doubling the voice — and this arrangement continued to be popular, despite the subsequent appearance of more elaborate settings, right down to the early nineteenth century. The contrast between this sound-world and that of contemporary *opera seria* may have had something of the same impact as that associated with the top-and-bottom crudity of rock 'n' roll textures in their confrontation with the more harmonically filled out arrangements of Tin Pan Alley ballads. At the same time, Pepusch did “civilize” the tunes. For the later music historian, Charles Burney, writing in 1789, he “furnished the wild, rude, and often vulgar melodies with bases so excellent that no sound contrapuntist will ever attempt to alter them.”³² This suggestion of ambivalence between high and low is intensified by the fact that Gay uses, alongside all the vernacular tunes, a few by contemporary opera composers, Italian as well as English. Admittedly, these seem as a rule to have a satiric purpose: a heroic march from Handel’s *Rinaldo* serves to carry our troop of thieves into action (Air 20); and aria tunes by Handel, Bononcini, and Sandoni are used for Mrs. Peachum’s meditation on female love (Air 4), Lucy’s fury at Macheath’s betrayal of her (Air 28), and Polly’s despair at his betrayal of her (Air 34); but this mockery of high-flown sentiment begins to open up the social space.

Of the many “Scottish” tunes, several (including some of the most Scots in character, melodically and rhythmically) are reserved for Polly and Lucy at poignant moments of lament and parting (Airs 17, 40, 49, 52).³³ (See Example 1.9, below.)

Air 49. O Bessy Bell

A curse___ at - tends___ that wo - man's love, who al - ways would be pleas - ing. The

pert - ness of___ the bill - ing Dove, Like tick - ling is___ but tea - zing. What

then___ in love___ can wo - man do? If we___ grow fond they shun us. And

when___ we fly___ them, they___ pur - sue. But leave___ us when they've won us.

Example 1.9

The first (17) is part of a triptych, Lucy's lament being preceded and followed by duets with Macheath, the second of which is, again, to a Scottish tune, the first to the very modal "Over the Hills and Far Away," with imagined exotic settings summoned in the words ("Were I laid on Greenland's coast..."; "Were I sold on Indian soil..."). Similarly, a sexy pastoral of cock and hens (Air 23) is set to "an excellent North-Country tune," "All in a Misty Morning" (also known as "The Fryar and the Nun"), while by contrast (or perhaps not), female comedy (Air 36 for Lucy and Polly: "I'm bubbled — I'm bubbled. Oh how I am troubled! Bamboozled, and bit! — My distresses are doubled") is given an "Irish Trot" ("a Scotch Song made to the Irish Jigg").

It seems that for moments of lament, of ribaldry, or of comedy (especially if associated with women), Gay looks to the uncouth margins of the British state. If so, this might prompt an ethnic interpretation of his use (Air 44) of the anti-papist tune, "Lillibulero," favorite song of the Whiggish Glorious Revolution, to lampoon the "modes of court" under the Whig government: who is speaking here through this "new Irish tune" (perhaps, though not definitely, composed by Purcell)? It might even license an interpretation of Lucy's "South Sea Ballad" (Air 42) that links the tune to the "Irish blackface clockwork" style found in many of the "low" songs in *Omai*, with which it shares technical characteristics:

Air 42. South Sea Ballad

My love is all mad - ness and foll - y, A - lone I lye, toss, tum - ble, and cry. What a
hap - py crea - ture is Pol - ly! Was e'er such a wretch as I! with
rage I red - den like scar - let, That my dear in - con - stant Var - let, Stark
blind to my charms, Is lost in the arms of that Jilt, that in - veig - ling Har - lot! Stark
blind to my charms, Is lost in the arms of that Jilt, that in - veig - ling Har - lot! This,
this my re - sent - ment a - larms.

Example 1.10

Several songs had been written on the subject of the South Sea Bubble, and Gay's lyric implicitly compares losses in love with those in business: immediately before, Lucy's father, the jailer Lockit, has told her, "If you would not be looked upon as a fool, you should never do anything but upon the foot of interest. Those that act otherwise are their own bubbles";³⁴ and the tune's mechanical but hypnotic circulation of the same interchangeable figures might be read as an image of exchange — of both wealth and of transgressive subjective desire — the two sides brought together in the trope of the "inveigling Harlot."

It is at this point of convergence between the registers of representation and commodity that *The Beggar's Opera* becomes particularly interesting to us. For Marx, commodities represent the social relations of their production in phantasmagoric form. In Gay's work — itself a successful commodity — all social relations are reduced to the status of property, as the whole of society, including its musical representation, is brought under the rule of exchange. Stolen goods make the opera's world go round (as, by implication, they do the capitalist world of elite society), including even the relation of love, persistently figured in terms of profit and loss: as Mrs. Peachum puts it, "All men are thieves in love, and like a woman the better for being another man's property," immediately following up with a song: "A wife's like a guinea in gold,/Stamp't with the name of her spouse;/Now here, now there; is bought, or is sold;/And is current in every house."³⁵ The circulation of women mirrors that of property and of money — and of *tunes*. As Marx's metaphor suggests, this movement, mediated by the high/low reflection, works by illusion, the mechanism of *exchange* necessarily leaving behind (hidden, masked) what its representations (its "autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own") cannot admit: its dependence on a parallel mechanism of *exploitation*, productive labor enslaved by its masters, difference forced into equivalence. It is this apparatus that lies at the heart of Gay's musical appropriations, while at the same time providing novel means to energize the flows of bourgeois subjectivity. Little wonder that, two hundred years further on in the historical cycle we see starting up here — and at a crisis point for systems of both capitalism and representation — Brecht and Weill reworked Gay's project in their *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928), marking the depth of the crisis by ratcheting up Gay's irony to the level of *Verfremdungseffekt* — a systematic disruption, at the level of artistic production, of the mechanisms of identification, the passages of exchange, themselves.³⁶

No doubt Brecht and Weill hoped that this method would enable their low-life to *answer back* to their betters. Similarly, Gay's work is of course a *beggar's* opera, voiced (it seems) from below.³⁷ But where do these answers come from? From "the people"? Surely, it might be objected, ventriloquism is at work — just as, in *Omai*, the potentially subversive blank space occupied by

our dumb hero is provided by Shield and O' Keefe, and is at the interpretative mercy of his audience; just as the low-others of *Die Zauberflöte* are ultimately Mozart's creatures; just as the Chartists' song of the lower classes is put into their mouths by the well-meaning but inevitably superior Ernest Jones. Is this all that answering back can amount to? The question should not be taken to disparage the bourgeois populism of these pieces, nor to dismiss the progressive potential of their multivalent voicing, which, as we have already begun to see, takes on a particular richness if the directionality of the ventriloquial state — who speaks and to whom? — is made an issue.

The blank space surrounding Omai is particularly interesting. William Shield was a Tyneside man who, after his move to London in 1773 (he became house composer at Covent Garden in 1784), continued with an active interest in the popular songs of his native North-East England. He helped his friend Joseph Ritson — lawyer and antiquary — with his song-collecting and publishing work, almost certainly providing tunes for Ritson's *A Select Collection of English Songs* (1783) and for *The Bishoprick Garland; or Durham Minstrel* (1784). Ritson's inclusion in his collections (to a small extent, admittedly) of songs collected orally from working people was innovatory; both he and Shield were political radicals (they visited France together in 1791 and found the revolutionaries "more than a match for all the slaves in Europe."³⁸) *The Northumberland Garland*, which came out in 1793, at the height of Jacobin agitation in the North-East, contained three such songs, associated with the miners ("The Collier's Rant") and the keelmen ("Weel May the Keel Row," "Bonny Keel Laddie"). In his theater work, Shield undoubtedly drew on the vernacular repertoires that his association with Ritson, and others (O' Keefe, for example) opened up; but, this music is placed into contexts that would attract his bourgeois audiences: contemporary songs of industrial workers could not yet be voiced on the London stage. It is tempting to hear Omai's blank space as filled in, on his behalf, by the sounds of the array of exotic others the work contains; but might we go further and imagine them as standing in for that other voice — the one that would have been the most transgressive of all — which Shield could not represent? To place the work in its political context in this way is to reveal Omai's silence as positively deafening.³⁹

Still, silence, however resonant, might seem second best. Steven Connor, though, makes a crucial point which we can use to link the ambivalence inherent in the ventriloquial relationship (as manifested in the "blackface exchange") and the structure of the new representational economy itself. Before the eighteenth century, Connor argues, ventriloquism was largely to do with "possession" — the subject divided by an invasive supernatural voice. Now, however, there was a shift — prompted by a scientific interest in the body as a "talking machine" — to the idea of the *projected* voice, the voice

thrown elsewhere; translating the technology of vocal appropriation into a clearly spatialized social theater — the voice, so to speak, presented to and by the gaze — “the ventriloquist [now] effects his art by taking on invisibility, and by abstracting himself from the scene of which he is the unrecognised dramaturge.” Yet the exchangeability of interior and exterior locations remains. Indeed, far from the Master’s invisibility allowing him really to leave the scene, the new techniques were connected to, precisely, a rising interest in, and demand for, self-performance: “a new social dramaturgy, and . . . a performative understanding of selfhood.” It is the contemporary debates over representation — political, social, cultural — that provide the essential context for this new sense of ventriloquism. Connors’s discussion of the English entertainer Charles Matthews is particularly interesting here. Working in the theater from around 1795, Matthews evolved a highly successful one-man show format from 1818. This combined elements of impersonation, mimicry, and ventriloquism, including — once Matthews traveled to the United States in 1822 — influential “nigger” imitations. In these performances, a range of characters came and went, sharing space on and off stage with their Master, the circulation of voices raising the question whether he was playing them or they him. “In a sense . . . the monopolylogue [Matthews’s term for these shows] reduces all the characters to the condition of dummy”; yet at the same time Matthews was celebrated as a performer who could *animate* his characters, not just mimic them.⁴⁰

These developments mightily complicate our understanding of the social-semiotic space within which popular voices circulated. We can be certain that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Low was not without its own voices. But they come to us through the screens of class and historical distance, and may often seem hard to hear; all that is documented are hybrids and mediations. This is true even when the lower classes appear to speak, in a less equivocal way, on their own account — in “The Collier’s Rant,” for instance — as, over the course of the next century (in music hall, industrial song, minstrel show, vaudeville, and Tin Pan Alley song, blues, jazz, and rock ’n’ roll), was increasingly the case. Even here the positions occupied have always already been infiltrated by forces from outside, defined by their location in the field as a whole and by the interplay between them and their socio-musical protagonists. This is as true for the seemingly most archaic “folk song,” which will generally turn out to have among its ancestry connections with the print world of the towns, as it is of the *Dreigroschenoper*’s jazzy lumpen-cabaret knowingness. The well-known couplet Brecht gave to his Peachum — “We would be good instead of so rude, if only the circumstances were not as they are” — is not only wonderfully cynical (the Low excusing its vulgarity with a deft appeal to vulgar-Marxist theory) but also realistic: We are here, and like this (so rude, so low), because, perforce, we are *here*.⁴¹

Four crucial points follow:

- There is no pure popular music; rather, the voice of the people is always plural, hybrid, compromised.
- This is so because this voice's identity is defined in relation to its position in a broader field, within which its starting-place (to put it no higher) is always one of subservience, its mode of existence one of dialogue.
- Indeed, this voice owes its very existence, and historical potential, as "popular" to a machinery (economic, cultural) put in place by those superiors whom it would then want to usurp: Show business shows us ourselves (in some imaginary guise) but must also show value for money.
- The voice of the people, then, is best conceived (to draw on Paul Gilroy's terminology) as a "counterculture of modernity"; it is *constitutive* of modernity itself (modernity as it actually developed), its role not only reactive but also productive, not only responsible to but also responsible for (that is, dialectically implicated in) its own apparent negation.

Thus this structure does not silence the Low — not even when it is silent — nor prevent the activation of (to use Cockrell's happy phrase) its "demons of disorder."⁴² Answering back cannot happen from a self-sufficient position but only in dialogue with a protagonist. For "popular music" even to have an identity within the semantic space which it has come to inhabit under modernity *means* that it takes up a place within this formation. In this sense, popular music only exists when it *knows its place*; only on that basis can it then consider answering back (the move is some sort of shift from an in-itself to a for-itself state, as dialecticians would put it). Moreover, as it progressively struggled towards a greater prominence in the field — its quest for mastery going in conjunction with the waves of democratization marking, however ambivalently, the history of the past two centuries — it took over many of the same representational techniques as its superiors had used, and continue to use, to imprison it, appropriating, exploiting, distancing itself in its turn from its own others.

Much of the interpretative challenge for understanding twentieth century popular music is to find ways of confronting this complex field of forces of power and identity within which "the people" can be figured as both servant and master. For if, in the broader politics, the claims of popular hegemony have been made — "we are the masters now," to quote a member of the 1945 British Labour government — this is necessarily to reintroduce the question of representation (for who is this "we"?). If popular sovereignty has appeared only in mediated form, sited in the reifying figures of Party, Nation, Leader, Class, Market (etc.), and equally cited through the foreclosures of musical style, cultural location, star-persona, and vocal positioning, this returns us

to the Lacanian issue of the “voice of God” — a vehicle of invisible authority, claims to which might seem to install the people musically as heirs to an old foundational fraud. Is this where voicing the popular ends up — mimicking a premodern imperium, “people” and “market” conflated as sovereign representative of divine law, the bathetic echo of Gay’s knowing swagger all too aptly cashed in, in the two-bit cheapness of such early twenty-first century pop names as those of bling rapper 50 Cent and Tory boy band Busted?

But this is to move too fast. And is also more pessimistic than I want to be. This book is certainly about the popular music of the twentieth century — or, at least, some aspects of it. So why, then, start off so far back? My purpose is to establish the importance of that moment — a moment focused in the later eighteenth century, but reaching somewhat further back and forward, as we have seen — and to sketch the new regime of representation that emerged at this time.⁴³ My argument is that this moment saw both the “invention” of the people — as political subject, as economic agent, as cultural actor — and the working out of a new apparatus that enabled its (self-) representation. In essentials, every later development in the popular music system stems from this.

To suggest that this regime was the product of an economic as well as a discursive machine is not new. In Jacques Attali’s political economy of music, the moment of what he calls “representation” is described in just this way, so that the new “theatrical” mode of musical production not only exemplifies the system of commodity production itself — for “already in the eighteenth century, music-turned-commodity was announcing the future role of all commodities under representation: a spectacle in front of silent people” — but at the same time generates its own, equivalent aesthetic, in which the functions of tonal harmony represent the new order of exchange:

The entire history of tonal music, like that of classical political economy, amounts to an attempt to make people believe in a consensual representation of the world... music became the locus of the theatrical representation of a world order, an affirmation of the possibility of harmony in exchange... [It] is exchanged for what it is not and is used as a simulacrum of itself. All of the rest of production is also a simulacrum of order in exchange, of harmony... [For] representation leads to exchange and harmony. It requires a system of measurement, an autonomous value for the work, and hierarchy.⁴⁴

And, Attali goes on, the same principle transformed political theory:⁴⁵ as we can readily agree, from Locke to Montesquieu, Condorçet and Sièyes, Jefferson, Madison, and Paine, the question of how disparate social and economic interests should be represented (and reconciled), in parliamentary

assemblies and in other ways, was at the forefront of radical thought, just as — in a parallel movement on the level of political economy — Adam Smith showed how “to make the well-being of private individuals coincide with the public interest, reducing all social functions and labouring activities to one measure of value . . . The political transcendental of the modern state is defined as an economic transcendental.”⁴⁶

Attali’s stress on harmony can mislead unless we add that harmony comes at a price, in the musical as much as in the political-economic realm, for difference must be refused (assimilated, smoothed over, foreclosed, repressed, projected elsewhere) in the interest of identity. This is as true internally — for the subject — as externally — for society. The modern subject coming into being in this way is defined precisely through such splitting processes, just as their externalizations — on the stage, in the concert hall, in the commodity exchanges, shopping arcades, and political assemblies — actually create the picture of “society.” To put this in psychoanalytical language, representation, like any act of foreclosure, inevitably leaves a residue: something (whatever will not fit) is left out, and this must be dealt with somehow — displaced, suppressed, sublimated, or shifted into a counter-representation (an other, which guarantees, through difference, the subject’s integrity). The secret of modern subjectivity, from this point of view, is that what seems to be inside has already happened outside — and vice versa. And on both territories, residues are not destroyed: they are always liable to return, often unbidden and unrecognized — and in any case their unbound or at least incompletely assimilated energies arguably constitute a sphere that actually underpins, *drives*, the symbolic work of the representational machine.⁴⁷

In Attali’s historical phase of “representation,” one such residue, we might suggest, is *repetition*, which in Attali’s scheme becomes the name of the phase that succeeds it, organised, he argues, around mass reproduction, especially through recordings. He offers each of his four phases as to some extent interpenetrating the others. Yet it is clear that there is an irreducible sequentiality in his scheme. Although it is true that repetition became problematical in the era of representation,⁴⁸ and that representation no longer means the same thing under the rule of repetition, it is vital to hang on to an awareness of their inter-relation throughout the modern age. Thus, just as eighteenth-century representations such as *The Beggar’s Opera* were churned, repetitively, out of the printing presses, so the moments of repetition that remained in the music were made to signify: to represent subjectivity to itself, in a movement of what has been called the “acoustic mirror” — the capacity of sound to double back narcissistically from mouth to ear, re-presenting imagined identity to itself. Similarly, Attali’s argument that the repetitions inherent in mass reproduction technology destroy use-value completely — that “the stockpiling of use-time in the commodity object is fundamentally a herald

of death⁴⁹ — disregards the psychoanalytic insight that, although repetition indeed rides on the death-drive, it does so in incessant negotiation with Life: a negotiation between the spheres of eye and ear, gaze and voice, within which records endlessly spin out a supply of sightless but lively voices in contrary motion with the specular (and deadening?) mirror-economy of the representational work.⁵⁰

It is easy, perhaps too easy, to reduce the operation of this economy to a function of reification: Across the spectrum of scientific, social, political, and aesthetic epistemologies, “nature” is captured, pictured, laid out for display — systematically re-presented. To summon the eighteenth-century language of Sièyes, the image of the *ré-publique* (public thing) slips readily into that of the *ré-total* — a move that is “fatal for freedom,”⁵¹ and which would subsequently be theorised in relation to the reification of consciousness itself by Lukács and, under his influence, by the critical Marxists of the Frankfurt School. In a longer historical perspective, however, representation should be seen as part of a much broader epistemological economy, which, after Michael Taussig, we might refer to as mimesis. For Taussig, “the mimetic faculty” is “the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become other.” Mimesis takes us into alterity, and it does this through a “chain of sympathy” — “bodily involvement . . . in the image,” or “sympathetic magic” even — which potentially has the effect of “reanimating” the object-other. But mimesis, in this large sense, even if it may be a human universal, has a history. An important moment in this history comes with the Enlightenment impulse to bring multiplicity into generalizing systems of abstraction — precisely the movement seized upon by Adorno and Horkheimer in their critique of Enlightenment Reason: mimesis as a “practice for living with nature” turns into “an instrument for dominating nature, the ‘organisation of mimesis’ necessary to that long march culminating in Enlightenment civilisation”; and this is inseparable from the hegemony of commodity-form: “Before, the fetishes were subject to the law of equivalence. . . . Now equivalence itself has become a fetish.” Still, the “magic” does not disappear. Pushed underground, it persistently shows its albeit hidden power, most obviously in modernity’s obsession with primitivisms of various kinds — with its Low-Others, we might say; popular voices — “the ape aping [elite] humanity’s aping” — touch precisely those “magical” (and often repetitive) springs that circulate identity and difference.⁵²

An important issue throughout this book is the question: what might music be like “after representation”? I will not answer the question, at least not directly; but I strongly suspect that the key lies in the territory figured in the Gramscian notion of *articulation*, developed further by Hall and by Laclau and Mouffe, and which responds to the sense of fixity in the concept

of representation with an emphasis on *connectivity*: which in turn brings back an interest in the full range of mimetic technologies.⁵³ But it is impossible to engage adequately with this potential without a grasp of what it would seek to supersede. Even if we accept Bruno Latour's critique⁵⁴ of the particularistic claims of modernity — on the grounds that the “purity” and “objectivity” of the representational systems (political and scientific) could only maintain their distinctiveness by denying the messy hybridities that underlie them, which actually link modern culture to every other, and which continue, although suppressed, to work their mediating magic — it remains the case that this economy of separation, with all the psychocultural distortions that come with it, does constitute the modern moment as specific. Hybridity was *ordered* in accord with a hierarchy of social interests: “From the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, the great historical constructions of gender, race, and class were embedded in the organically marked bodies of woman, the colonized or enslaved, and the worker”⁵⁵ — bodies whose voices would struggle to be heard outside the roles which the representational schemas had prepared for them. This is Teresa Brennan's point too. “Modernity,” she suggests, is “the ego's era,” marked by the ego's quasi-psychotic “foundational fantasy” of complete self-containment on the one hand, complete mastery of nature, made possible by technology, on the other, and finding a point of focus in the commodity, where “the social and psychical converge.”⁵⁶ The pac(ss)ification of nature is most obviously engineered through the fantasy of Woman, but other lower forms figure as well. Brennan looks to Lacan's idea of the mirror-stage for an appropriate psychoanalytical theory. What is striking here is the emphasis on *spatialization* in the historical development, at the expense of the temporal: for the ego, the world is laid out for control by the gaze, both inner and outer (as well as for exploitation by capital).

Here is a clue to understanding an otherwise paradoxical move in the contemporaneous musical history. Along with the new regime of representation comes the rise of so-called absolute music — music which, supposedly, offers the play of pure sounds, portraying nothing external at all. The problem vanishes if we grasp this shift as an attempt to *spatialize* and *interiorize* the social theater, displacing the drama to the sphere of silent listening, laying out the sound-architecture for compositional control, and shifting the attention to the internal flows of idealized feeling — abstract subjectivity, or subjective flow as such. This move is part and parcel of what Friedrich Kittler calls the 1800 discourse-network, in which, in the context of the expansion of literacy, the *Bildung* of bourgeois society was organized around the silent reading and educated interpretation of literary texts — preeminently poetry; “if one reads in the right way,” Novalis wrote, “the words will unfold in us a real, visible world.”⁵⁷

But the modelling of absolute music after poetry was only one pole of

what was happening. At the other pole we find the displacement of what the absolute could not admit, and its projection onto a range of others — exotics, women, peasants, and workers — whose voices (however qualified, mediated, appropriated) gave expression (in program music as well as in the popular genres) to what was suppressed in the nineteenth-century concert-hall and drawing-room repertoires of *Symphonischerkunst*. On both sides, the apparatus of control is patent: what on one side acted as an absolutely concrete supplement doubled back to function as supplement in the Derridean sense as it forever threatened to disturb the “harmony” of abstract representation with a transgressive proliferation of possible selves.⁵⁸ What had in the eighteenth century been socio-musical theater had turned into drama of the soul: the bourgeois subject’s fantasy of origins and self-development.⁵⁹ When Adorno proclaimed that after Mozart high and low impulses in music split apart into separate spheres — “the last instance of their reconciliation, utterly stylised and teetering as on a narrow mountain bypass, was *The Magic Flute*”⁶⁰ — he was only partly right. More to the point is to grasp both the whole musical field after Mozart and the inner workings of subjectivity itself as constituting an intricately warren-ed territory on which high and popular would work through their relationship in new ways.⁶¹

The question might be asked whether it is legitimate to deploy psychoanalytic concepts in discussing historical developments up to a hundred years and more before Freud (this is of course part of a wider issue of hermeneutic method). While the discursive integrity of specific historical (and cultural) moments should be respected, I am impatient with attempts to push this argument to the point where it forecloses on the possibility of dialogue and critique. The idea that pre-Freudian society possessed a political and cultural unconscious with which we can engage is an intellectual advance that we owe to Freud, even if at the same time it illuminates (backwards, as it were) the conditions out of which Freudian (and Lacanian) thought could emerge. The *longue durée* of the “ego’s era” laid down the soil that he would till for us, revealing (to use psychoanalytic language) an “always already” which (putting to one side the intriguing question of human constants, absolute or relative) we can ascribe (using Benjaminian language) to the need to “brush history against the grain.”⁶² The significance of Freud — like that of Marx — lies less in any new dispensation that might be implied by the theories than in the defensive stratagems summoned up at “a moment of danger”;⁶³ as Hegel put it, the owl, Minerva, flies at dusk (and not before).

This tutelary role shared by these two architects of modern self-understanding finds a crucial point of convergence in the concept of *symptom*, a concept “invented,” according to Lacan and Žižek, not by Freud but by Marx.⁶⁴ (“If... Marx invented the symptom,” asks John Mowitt, “might it not also follow that capitalism invented psychoanalysis? In this sense, capitalism also

invented Marxism . . .” Yes, and yes.⁶⁵ In Žižek’s Lacanian reading of Marx, money — the most abstracted form of the exchange function of commodities — operates as a “real abstraction;” that is, as a framework for social interaction whose “misrepresentation” of social relations is the very condition (albeit a repressed condition) for social activity. Moreover (under capitalism), the same structure produces subjects: the “real abstraction” of social exchange, situated in the unconscious, generated by something like Althusser’s apparatuses of interpellation, creates the illusion of subjective autonomy (hence the “ego’s era”).⁶⁶ The fetish-quality of both commodity and the social authority modelled upon it — the irrational “belief before belief” on which subjective consistency under this regime depends — is what constitutes this structure as ideological symptom, “a formation whose very consistency implies a certain non-knowledge on the part of the subject.”⁶⁷ Freud then picked up the idea of this structure — in which the fetish (now a sexualized object) stands in for, represents, a socialized human labor (of desire) that cannot be recognized — and situated it within his symptomatology of transgression, neurosis, and perversion. It is entirely appropriate, then, that Hayden White’s virtuosic reading of *The Communist Manifesto* as a theatrical “scene” points to the importance of the idea that the downfall of the bourgeoisie will come at the hands of the commodified “refuse” of the system — the low, the dirty and transgressive, the proletariat, “recruited from all classes of the population,” the wretched of the earth, “in a condition of total dispersion.” Moreover, this historical “plot” (White suggests) hinges on an analogy between the structure of representation (ideological mystification of real relations) and that of the commodity, in which the role of labor *as* commodity, whose destiny is to throw off the shackles of this structure, will be crucial.⁶⁸

In Freudian theory fetishism is primarily a male condition, and the fetish is, ultimately, a substitute for the maternal lack: the mother’s missing penis. Here there pretty clearly is a historical specificity masquerading as normative theory, all the more so if we follow through on Lacan’s rereading of Freud, which is more concerned with the (symbolic) phallus than the (real) penis, and which correlates this phallus with authority as such — the real abstraction of the Name-of-the-Father. Potentially this “phallic” authority might be thought open to contestation, although Lacan does not raise this possibility: indeed, for him the asymmetry of power that it inhabits — either *having* or *being* the phallus — is mapped conclusively to the hierarchy of sexual difference: man has it, woman is it. At this point in my argument, the interest of this formulation lies in the way that this structure of property and being — production/reproduction, penetration/penetrated, active/passive, capital/labor, master/slave, or at bottom of course, culture/nature — dramatized by the representational work of the exchange economies, can be seen to traverse the whole range of social registers: not only gender but also race and, needless

to say, class. If this is a universal, it took the “theatrical” epistemology of modernity to show it to us.⁶⁹

I puzzled for some time over why, in the design of this book, I did not seem to want a separate chapter on class. Here is the answer (I think). It is not (only) that class has become, notoriously, difficult to theorize, with the blurring of distinctions between production and consumption, productive and nonproductive labor, and economic and other registers of inequality; nor (simply) that the extradiscursive reality of objective class positions can no longer be credibly maintained.⁷⁰ Class still matters; but its dispersal across the social terrain, as one key formulation of a broader having/being dichotomy, points to a condition that was always already there, but had been obscured by the nineteenth-century rigidifying movement towards a potentially apocalyptic bifurcation of capital and labor (with its own specific discourse of class). What tended to disappear behind this movement was an earlier more fluid and contested moment, with a discourse centered more on a concept of “people” — a concept, nevertheless, which itself was not immune from similar reifying pressures. For Hobbes, as Hardt and Negri point out, “the people is somewhat that is one, having one will, and to whom one action may be attributed; none of these can be properly said of the multitude.”⁷¹ Thus the potential openness of the democratic multitude would become fixed — “Married to the concepts of nation and people, the modern concept of sovereignty shifts its epicenter from the mediation of conflicts and crises to the unitary experience of a nation-subject and its imagined community”⁷² — a shift that would in its turn be followed by an assault on this community on behalf of the new sovereignty of “class,” either bourgeois or worker/proletarian. But if the discourse of class points beyond its own historical specificity, towards a more deeply embedded nexus of power, it also expresses the particular democratic gamble inherent in the Enlightenment stress on human production and self-production — the sense that the individual human subject, the subject as such, might be capable of transcending the fetters of racial and gender subjectification, of actualizing an equality beyond kith and kin, an international brother (and sister) hood of labor superseding the psychosocial attachments of family.⁷³ While the fact that these attachments are always already inscribed explains precisely why “class” in this pure sense can never exist, this *Telos* also explains (I hope) why this book, with no class chapter,⁷⁴ is nevertheless all about class.

It is also — and this follows — all about slavery. In an era that insistently thematized freedom, it is hardly surprising that the *topos* of slavery, and the anxieties that surrounded it, should be central to many of the discourses of modernity. “Britons never shall be slaves” ran the song, and Americans neither, as their revolutionary war attested; yet “industrial slavery” — labor as, inevitably, forced labor — powered economic transformation, mirror-

ing within the body politic proper a relationship more starkly configured without, in the juridical category of slave, a category which in turn was often compared to the status of women.⁷⁵ Slavery through surveillance, exemplified in nineteenth-century panopticism,⁷⁶ led to ever growing anxieties for the subject, as the seemingly deterministic implications of the ideas of Darwin, Freud, genetic science, and artificial intelligence seemed to reduce agency to mechanism. With the secularization of authority and the dramatization of the quest for freedom, it was inevitable that these questions — whom would the subject serve? How would he master himself? Could he escape his own (imposed) representations? — would become the very questions at the center of modernity. Small wonder that the slave must at all costs continue to be controllable by Aladdin's lamp! Yet paradoxically (or perhaps not) the society within which the freedom discourse took this crisis turn was of course *built* on the profits of slavery.

At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the products of slave labor in the Americas amounted to around one-third of the value of European commerce, while at the same time the “purity” of national identities was dependent on its alteritous protagonist: “The dark Other of European Enlightenment stands at its very foundation just as the productive relationship with the ‘dark continents’ serves as the economic foundation of the European nation-states.”⁷⁷ The slave is the ultimate commodity — freely exchangeable labor-power, naturalized completely (slave as beast), reproduced at the lowest possible cost; at the same time, as embodiment of nature, enslaved labor-power is *itself* treated here as a mysterious fetish standing in for: *itself*, for it is this circle of reproduction which constitutes the commodity-process as natural.⁷⁸ Bearing in mind the dark secrets of primitive cross-racial desire within which this reproductive process went on, the fetish-theories of Marx and Freud converge again. Moreover, for Americans especially (but perhaps not exclusively) this slave was *within* — within the social system, and even the blood (it may be that for Europeans too, their slaves were felt to be within the national-imperial families); this was a *verna*, a native-born slave, the subject-other within the household itself, the supplement who made it possible to think both “family” and “fraternity” at all. From this point of view, the discourse of class represents a distorted writing of a myth that would overthrow this family in the name of “the people:” a fantasy to explain the (utopian) idea of freedom — a new twist to the Freudian “family romance.”

For “the people” is also a *verna*, and “popular music,” the music of the vernacular traditions, is a slave music, the voice of the skivvy within the household — or perhaps more precisely, of the slave who longs to be free, or even, to be master. I suggested earlier that popular music only exists when it knows its place. But in the light of this state of radical indeterminacy, one

might add, perhaps: *and not even then*. Following Žižek's deployment of Lacan's rather notorious aphorism about the (non) existence of Woman, we might say that actually "(The) popular music does not exist." The logic here (which Lacan derives from Hegel) is that of the "non-all" set as it operates in a social field structured by antagonism. (Non-all set: a set which, so to speak, posits itself as universal — a move that, paradoxically, depends upon the expulsion of a particularity (here "popular music") to act as a boundary-forming exception.⁷⁹) Of course, this does not mean that individual beings/objects/practices (women; popular songs) located under the relevant concept do not have empirical existence, but that the category as such covers over an internal blockage (it can never fully be what its nominalization would want to be, as it were); this lack stands in for the equal (but disavowed) lack of its antagonistic Other ('Man'; 'Music'), and is hence in some sense always spoken from the position of that Other, from elsewhere. (My parenthesis around the definite article — in Lacan and Žižek it is a bar through the word — marks this structure of lack.) Žižek often also uses the example of the class struggle. This can never appear as such, as a social totality, but only in terms of its effects which go to produce antagonistic and incompatible modalities.⁸⁰ The idea of "the people" (and hence of "popular music") operates within a similar field.

But although these antagonisms are mobilized by an absent cause (that is, an impediment in the symbolic system which prevents totalization), this does not rule out a bid for mastery, on the part of the bourgeoisie (positing itself as the universal class) or of "art" (hence "art music"), any more than an analogous move is ruled out on the part of "man" (in the field of sexual difference), or indeed of "white man" (in the field of race). This is why, just as (in another notorious Lacanianism) "Woman is the symptom of man," so popular music is the symptom of its Other, and the moment around 1800 when this relationship emerges can be regarded as a pre-echo of that symptomatic structure which Marx and Freud would go on to theorize.⁸¹ On one level, there is a symmetry and in principle it is possible to try to invert the relationship (thus feminists can say, "Man is the symptom of woman"), but such inversions do not destroy the binary structure, which, for Žižek, is in any case at bottom asymmetrical: one side (the Master) is constructed as universal, the other (the Slave) as that particularity which makes the Master possible. Whether this position should be read as tough-minded realism (which would help explain, for example, why feminism has not yet triumphed and why most university music departments and degree courses are still given the universalistic title "music" while "popular music" courses have to be given their own marker) or as a problematic foreclosure of politics is an important question to come back to. In any case, just as significant are slippages round the chain of subaltern positions: as Woman is to Man (i.e.,

symptom), so Popular is to Elite, and Black to White — a triangular trade indeed (sometimes rough, sometimes conducted with feminine smoothness). What “stands up” here? An (exchangeable) master-signifier (together with its lacks) with distinctly phallogocentric overtones? But which should also be thought in the context of what, in later Lacan, is considered to “stand out,” to “ex-sist” (stand out[side]): a meaningless bit of the Real, that grit in the symbolic system which, he argues, is the foundation of the subject as such.

Interestingly, we have in a sense been here before — in Adorno’s celebrated aphorism, to the effect that “popular” and “serious” musics are “torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up”.⁸² not as in a simplistic reading (the two sides have split apart and for historical reasons cannot be stuck together again) but in the sense that they represent mutually contradictory conceptualizations of *the same field*. How appropriate, then, that at a crucial moment Adorno’s theorization of popular music should itself live out this dialectic. As is well known, in Adorno’s standard (not to say, classic) text of 1941, “On Popular Music,” the standardization he finds in popular music is what excludes it from the field of good music, which is defined, in his view, by a commitment to the production of freshly-composed, individuated works.⁸³ Buried away in a footnote, where Adorno gnominically alludes to the definitional difficulties around the terminology of “standard/ization,” we find a reference to a 1939 text, *How to Write and Sell a Song Hit*, which, it seems to me, may well be the source of many of Adorno’s views, but which anyway certainly presents a pre-echo of them, as it were, by inversion.⁸⁴ Silver and Bruce, the authors of the 1939 book, accept completely the terms of Adorno’s comparison (“the melody and the lyric of a popular number are constructed within a definite pattern or structural form, whereas . . . a standard number [they mean here a ‘serious song’] has no structural confinements . . . [and] allows the composer freer play of imagination and interpretation”); but they invert the perspective: formulaic construction is not only *natural* to the popular song (“a popular melody, if properly constructed, should naturally conform to one of . . . three patterns”), but, because “a popular song is, in its broad sense, a musical composition whose words and melody appeal to the people as a whole,” this makes it *better* (“A popular song is sold on its own merit . . . The names of the writer and publisher of a standard composition, on the other hand, constitute two of its greatest selling points”).⁸⁵

The binary division of the musical field also mirrors Adorno’s method, in which any genre or practice failing to gain admittance to his category of “serious music” is lumped together as “popular” or “commercial;” thus, for Silver and Bruce, “Popular music has already been defined . . . Standard music is everything else” (and they mean *everything*: from symphonies to instrumental tutors, from church music to opera).⁸⁶ It hardly comes as a surprise, then, to find that all the main qualities that Adorno attributes to

popular song — simplistic harmonies, over-regular melodic shapes, purely decorative orchestration — are described in the earlier text in almost identical terms, but with a positive rather than negative spin. Might we see Silver and Bruce, presented in Adorno's article "below stairs" (in a footnote), as servants in his patrician household, even (perhaps) doing his listening for him? When we bring the two pictures together, they appear clearly as mirror-images which are however quite incompatible: each is the supplement of the other, each from its own point of view stands the other on its feet (or head), while taken together they strenuously voice particular positions that attempt to cut up in antagonistic ways a neutral field which could not exist outside the perspective of an impossible totalizing gaze. In this world, (the) popular music can indeed not exist.

Is this Žižekian position, then, simply a rerun of the cul-de-sac we find in Adornian negative dialectics? Žižek does not seem to think so: for him, the "negation of the negation" does not freeze the dialectic but reveals negation as a sort of positivity referring back to the constitutive contradiction in the object itself; "synthesis" repeats "negation" but with a twist of perspective which locates it as what positively enabled the original problem.⁸⁷ Does this answer the question of how political movement might be possible? I suspect the answer is to found, somehow, in the status of that void — that lack which lies behind Adorno's "do not add up," that which "falls out," which cannot be symbolized when the constitutive antagonism forms — which Žižek presents as a condition of subjectivity itself.

However "popular music" is articulated, whatever we try to make it mean, the people as subject is embedded somewhere within it, and with an emotional charge that will apparently just not go away. We need to account for that investment as well as the (necessary) mutability of content. And here the word itself must come to the fore. Žižek's position is grounded, more broadly, in an anti-descriptivist theory of naming. Names ("the people," "music," "popular music"), he argues, do not acquire meaning through reference to given properties but through a "primal baptism" followed up in a "chain of tradition." To the question, what is popular music? the answer in the end is indeed: "I know it when I hear it!" — or rather (since hearing is not necessary), "I know it when I know it." (This is testable: are there any properties whatsoever that would rule out by definition a given musical experience from the category "popular music"? I think the answer is: no.) Thus, "popular music" is just: *that*. But the moment of the baptism is mythical: it appears with the act of naming itself, an always already, implied retroactively by its effects once we are in the Symbolic. The name, qua master-signifier (the Lacanian *point de capiton*, or quilting-point), is *empty*; yet it does have a sort of objective correlative, namely, the famous Lacanian *objet a* — Žižek's "sublime object," a little bit of the Real, what is in the object more than itself, what the symbolic process

must exclude if it is to function at all, the object-cause of desire. This object corresponds, on the side of the subject, with the “belief before belief” which makes subjectivation (the articulatory play of contesting subject-positions) possible. Popular music interpellates its listeners (at least it does if they turn round when it says “Hey!”); but why should they *want* to turn — or, more precisely, *what* is it that turns? Žižek’s answer is: that meaningless piece of stuff, that object in the subject, which alone ensures its consistency; it is the Real which responds.⁸⁸

What, in our context, is this object-cause of desire but “the people” — or rather, that meaningless and impossible site of *jouissance* underlying and supporting all social fantasies of the popular?

But where does this leave politics? Lacan’s answer is: traverse the fantasy; the final stage of ideological critique is to “go through” the fantasy, achieve distance from it, and identify with its underlying mode of *jouissance* (the “*Sinthome*” as Lacan neologistically calls it, to distinguish it from the ideological symptoms which it supports). A radical politics of the popular might require a more precise theorization of the relationship between symptom and *Sinthome*. It could, for example, work at the possibility that rearticulation of meaning might be able to transform the stratum of meaninglessness on which, according to Žižek, it depends; that Symbolic work could change the Real, that (to use older, Freudian terms) consciously articulated activity might restructure the (social and political as well as individual) unconscious, not just identify with it.

What follows falls into four lengthy chapters, each focusing on what I take to be a key aspect of the overall topic of the book. The first two are organized around specific social registers of analysis — first race, then gender — while the second pair tackle more general issues of subject construction, first the subject conceived as a structure of repetition, then questions of authenticity, truth, and ideology. Most music examples come from the first three decades of the twentieth century or from the 1960s and 1970s, but the significance of this is purely that these are periods of intricate resettlement in the musical field, following moments of profound change. Thus this book is in no sense a history. (A comprehensive history of the popular in music in the period of late modernity is a definite lack; but it will not be written in one volume, nor, probably, by a single author.) I would be happy if readers responded to the structure in the same way as Ernesto Laclau responded to that of Žižek’s *The Sublime Object*. This

is certainly not a book in the classical sense; that is to say, a systematic structure in which an argument is developed according to a pre-determined plan. Nor is it a collection of essays, each of which

constitutes a finished product and whose ‘unity’ with the rest is merely the result of its thematic discussion of a common problem. It is rather a set of theoretical interventions which shed mutual light on each other, not in terms of the *progression* of an argument, but in terms of what we could call the *reiteration* of the latter in different discursive contexts . . . But as this process of refinement is not the result of a necessary progression, the text reaches a point of interruption rather than conclusion, thus inviting the reader to continue for him- or herself the discursive proliferation in which the author has been engaged.⁸⁹

As to theory, I hope that this has by now come sufficiently into view that further (no doubt tedious) scene-setting is unnecessary. I can again do no better than quote a model, this time John Mowitt’s remarkable book, *Percussion*, which seems to me to outline in exemplary fashion a method I was trying to follow myself (although not necessarily with the same success):

What is at stake in putting it [theory] to work? How must it be written when it responds to the call of musical practice . . . ? . . . I want to stress the importance of proliferating and diversifying music’s claims on theory. Specifically, what is going on in music . . . must be granted the authority to provoke theorizing – that is, to provoke a reading of theory that challenges its integrity, that obliges theory to submit to the same, often violent scrutiny that its detractors claim is visited on those practices to which it has been applied. In this sense, theory ‘responds’ to the ‘call’ of music not by smothering it like a salve, but by discovering in this encounter other possibilities of elaboration, other orientations . . . By the same token, if what is going on in musical practice solicits the work of theorization, it is because music, too, is in need of the diversification of critical attention that theory can provoke as well as the conceptual rigor with which judgments about it can be debated.⁹⁰

Such diversification should not be random. Historical writing (and, even more, images) has placed before us a range of views of “the people.” Pictures of, say, Chartist marches, placed alongside photos of recent manifestations of “the people in motion” (the *mobile vulgus*; e.g., anti-war demonstrations), embody many differences of course, as well as certain commonalities. However, such sightings taken as a whole inevitably tend to freeze the action, silencing the protagonists, or at best translating their voices into words on a page. This is where songs can come to the fore — especially once the new reproduction technologies of the twentieth century prolong and renew their sounding lives. If songs do in some sense voice the popular, how are these voices to be understood? Where do they come from and what do they have to say?

CHAPTER 2

Through a Mask Darkly

Voices of Black Folk

Chicago, 1893: the World's Columbian Exposition (or Chicago World's Fair), celebrating (if a year late) the 400th anniversary of Columbus's "discovery" of a new world. Drawing visitors from even the remotest parts of the country to gaze in wonder at the marvels of contemporary knowledge, industry, and culture, the Exposition stands as a convenient marker for the decisive transformation of a rural, premodern society into a unified, powerful state dominated by urban, modernizing trends — a "flight," as the later African-American writer Alain Locke would put it, "not only from countryside to city but from medieval America to modern."¹

The World's Fair was seized upon by many African Americans as an opportunity to proclaim their own part in — and claims on — this advance. Although many of their leaders (e.g., the aged Frederick Douglass) were there, it was difficult for black musicians to make much headway on the official program. The musical content of Colored American Day was organized by the young composers, Harry T. Burleigh and Will Marion Cook, among others;² but the program they designed was dominated by opera. The Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Hampton Quartet were prominent, and their cultivated performances of spirituals were well received by both blacks and whites. What was probably the first musical show with black performers, *The Creole Show*, was on at the Opera House (though it drew on blackface minstrelsy conventions). Otherwise African-American musicians seem to have been confined to the peripheries of the entertainment area (the Midway Plaisance), where there was a vibrant red light district. This was where ragtime "got a running start," according to Cook — we know that Scott Joplin, among many other piano players, was there — and it is hard to believe that

“cakewalks” and “coon songs,” genres just emerging into mass popularity, were not heard in the bars, streets, and brothels (even though the whole idea of a Colored American Day had been opposed by many African Americans precisely because they feared it would include such “demeaning” music as the cakewalk — “race luggage,” as one reverend described it). There would not have been blues — but blues-ballads, one of this new-genre-in-waiting’s progenitors, would surely have drifted in from St. Louis, Memphis, and more remote spots lower down the Mississippi Valley.³ (And Hawaiian musicians *were* there: the fashion for Hawaiian guitar often supposed to have influenced slide guitar techniques in blues.) There was a concert by jubilee singers from South Carolina with their own orchestra of “way-down-south fiddlers and a double bass that rasped like a Kansas cyclone”; they performed “characteristic camp meeting and plantation ballads, queer of dialect and jamful of jumpy music.” And there was African music. Among the many foreign pavilions was a “Dahomey Village” where a company of Fon from West Africa drummed, sang, and danced, to the fascination of anthropologist Franz Boas, folklorist Henry Krehbiel, and some African-American musicians — Will Marion Cook, for example (though most middle-class blacks, seeing danger to their modernizing ambitions, appear to have been at least as dismissive of these backward primitives as whites). Among the most popular exhibits were phonographs and gramophones, which were already beginning to disseminate all these musics (or some of them; others would have to wait for their market) in quite new ways. Many of the visiting musicians, including some from the “South Sea Islands,” were recorded, the 103 cylinders that resulted being the first recordings ever made of “world music.”⁴

Fast forward to New York, February 1919: the troops coming home from the War in Europe, the parade up Broadway led by James Reese Europe’s all-black Hellfighters Band, key protagonists in the transition from ragtime to jazz. Andy Razaf, who would figure prominently in the renaissance of black musical theater set off in 1921 by the show, *Shuffle Along*, and who wrote lyrics for Eubie Blake, James P. Johnson, and Fats Waller among others, composed a song in their honor: “The 15th Regiment.” Two days later, the writer, scholar, and political leader, W. E. B. Du Bois, whose 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, had cemented the idea of the “sorrow songs” as the folk heritage of the race (but whose own musical tastes ran for the most part to German classical music), opened the Pan-African Congress in Paris.⁵ A year later, the first blues record by a black singer was issued; but three years before, the all-white Original Dixieland Jazz Band from New Orleans, now working in New York, had put out the records that first placed jazz on the popular musical map. Back again in 1919, George Gershwin had his first song hit with “Swanee,” a catchy number redolent with the blackface myths of the minstrel-show South. Accompanying these developments were the

most serious race riots yet to have taken place in U.S. cities, the worst being in Chicago in 1919. But they could hardly stop the initiation of the “jazz age,” an explosive culmination of three decades of musical activity in which music by, appropriated from, influenced by, or otherwise about “black folk” redrew the picture of what a modern popular musical culture might be.

These snapshots — for they are little more — at least point towards the main issues for any consideration of the development of “black music” in the early twentieth century: issues that would reverberate throughout the century. First, at the heart of this development lay a racial encounter: white investment and participation in, and response to, black music helped delimit, define, and valorize it. Second, this encounter — which was also a symptom, at the level of world (post)colonial history, of a larger tension — was heavily mediated by class difference, not least on the African-American side, and this variously affected the range of genres as these were aligned with distinct social groups and cultural and political positions. And third, this generic network was significantly organized and differentiated by a divergence of racial imagery, one lineage — quintessentially represented by the spirituals — projecting the suffering nobility of an ill-used, backward but resilient folk, the other — an entertainment tradition, rooted in the nineteenth-century minstrel show — disseminating a repertoire of caricature centered on stereotypes of sensuality, violence, indolence, and grinning stupidity, the legacy of which spread through vaudeville, theater and film, jazz, and even blues. Although this bifurcation was real, it was not absolute, partly because of cross-influence (spirituals, for example, were often performed in ways that drew on blackface convention), and partly because the two discursive clusters were equally mythological, owing their origins and power to structures of white desire, fear, and self-defense, that is, to their unasked-for place as Others of white subjectivity in a great drama of “love and theft.”⁶

Du Bois’s celebrated notion of African-American “double consciousness” laid out the ground on which these relationships operated: “the Negro is . . . born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world,” he wrote, “a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.”⁷ But the veil is also a (blackface) mask — and mirror, in which what is double on the black side is reflected, in distorted form, in a doubling structure on the white. It is as if a hybridity that cannot be admitted is forcibly refashioned as a hegemony (which, in spite of itself, will be a sort of hybrid anyway): “Produced through the strategy of disavowal, the *reference* of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something *different* — a mutation, a hybrid.”⁸ At stake in our particular case is the question just how

a modern self, in a (post)colonial Western society, could speak; what sort of voice(s) might represent it?

A good place to start is with the blues, a genre commonly regarded as central to representation of African-American experience but also one with huge significance for whites. Consider three events from the beginning of the twenty-first century:

First, the White Stripes, a guitar-based duo from Detroit, emerge as “the most exciting rock band in the world” (*The Guardian*, March 29, 2003), on a platform of emotional truth, pared-down simplicity, recall to tradition. Their style is centered on musical influences and an aesthetic of authenticity drawn from blues; their first two albums are dedicated to blues singers Son House and Blind Willie McTell, respectively. The White Stripes are only the most prominent of a number of likeminded bands. We seem to have yet another blues revival on our hands.

Second, in 2002 Alan Lomax, arguably the first significant folklorist to look for blues in the field (as distinct from tripping over them among other types of song), dies, and his book, *The Land Where the Blues Began*, which recounts his fieldwork experiences in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, is republished.

And third, the Coen Brothers' movie, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, set in the 1930s and organized around the nostalgic appeal (but also the political potency) of “old timey” music, is an unexpectedly huge hit.⁹ Although the focus of the soundtrack is on early hillbilly music — and it triggers another revival, this time of bluegrass — a racial theme, with a blues strand, is crucial. Early in the film, the three white heroes led by Everett Ulysses Grant are joined on their travels (which are part escape from prison, part search for “treasure”) by an African-American singer-guitarist modeled on a real bluesman of the time (whose name he carries), Tommy Johnson. Part of the fun is that the initial meeting takes place at a crossroads, where, paying due homage to legend, Tommy has just met the Devil (he was white and had a “mean look”) — and, presumably, traded his soul for musical prowess. Tommy is on his way to Tishomingo; the real Johnson would more likely have been on his way to Jackson — but close enough.¹⁰

Our four heroes miraculously form themselves into a band, and their version of “Man of Constant Sorrow,” featured on local radio, is a smash hit, subsequently securing their pardons after they perform it at a political campaign rally in support of Governor Pappy O' Daniel. This song is a “white blues”: the standard I-IV-V chord-sequence is truncated into a ten bar verse, with a four-bar refrain after each two-verse segment; the vocal follows familiar melodic shapes and drips with blue notes; Tommy's bluesy, riff-heavy guitar anchors the song “down home.” In another important episode in the film, Tommy is rescued from the clutches of the Ku Klux Klan; the KKK's Grand

Wizard is revealed to be O'Daniel's racist political opponent, who, appalled, describes our boys as a "miscegenatin' band." (The point is confirmed when, in the performance at the rally, Tommy's guitar fits effortlessly into the marvelously intricate textures of a full bluegrass band sound — a sound which, by the way, did not yet exist, any more than did the label "bluegrass.")

These three events, though distinct in many ways, have several aspects in common. First, "revival:" the past is conjured up, brought into the present, re-configured (reinvented even, as the point about bluegrass dating suggests). At the same time, this past is a "folk" past: what is conjured up is "tradition," a home that has been lost. And finally, these transactions are unavoidably racialized: white rock musicians, white scholars, white filmmakers drawing on black roots — only to find (at least in the movie) a white investment already in place, right back down home.

Much is at stake in this way of picturing the blues past, as we can see if, approaching from a different direction, we take up Charles Keil's scandalous suggestion¹¹ that, far from fitting the "folk" paradigm, blues in its origins was urban and modern rather than rural and archaic, was circulated and developed on records as much as (perhaps more than) through live performance and oral dissemination, and was from the beginning an interracial phenomenon — that, in a sense, it was even a white invention, with which black musicians then had to come to terms, which they reconfigured. Writing at a time when the claims of African-American identity politics were being shouted from the rooftops, Keil would probably be less than surprised that his speculations have not been widely pursued.¹² Of course we know (e.g., from the work of Tony Russell¹³) that in the vernacular musical practice of the South there was a cross-racial "common stock" of tunes, songs, and vocal and instrumental techniques going back at least to the nineteenth century and including features and songs that we would now associate with blues (hence, for instance, "Man of Constant Sorrow"). But although this is important and relevant (it provides the broader historical backdrop to Keil's more specific point), it is not the same argument. We may quibble with the idea of origin (where in the endless relays of cultural practice does anything begin, and how could such an *ex nihilo* claim justify its authority?), but nevertheless when a genre is *named* and a certain cultural place discursively established, then we identify a moment possessing a particular historical power.

There is no significant historical evidence for the existence of a discrete blues genre before 1902–03, the period when Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Jelly Roll Morton, and W. C. Handy all claim to have heard (or in Morton's case, made up) blues songs for the first time; all, however, were speaking (and naming the genre) with the benefit of hindsight.¹⁴ During the next few years, several folklorists included verses resembling blues in published collections,¹⁵ but they did not identify them as such nor show any special

interest in them. The big moment came in 1912 with the first publications of blues compositions, including Handy's "Memphis Blues." In fact, Handy (a trained, middle-class musician, far from "the folk") had put together his tune in 1909, as "Mr Crump" (as yet without words), for his band to play in a political contest (another!) in Memphis; but he was beaten to publication by the white bandleader, Hart Wand, with his instrumental, "Dallas Blues" — just as he was closely followed in 1913 by Leroy "Lasses" White's "Nigger Blues" (White, who was also associated with Dallas, was, ironically but appropriately, white and a blackface minstrel), which in turn became one of the first blues to be recorded (in 1916).¹⁶ A torrent of publications followed.

From the start, the blues craze set off by these publications involved white bands as well as black, and (preponderantly) white singers — Gilda Gray, Blossom Seeley, Marion Harris — until Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" of 1920 (which is as much a torch song as a blues, actually). The female black singers following in Mamie Smith's wake, singing "vaudeville blues," were part of this rich interracial culture of commercial song, including but not limited to blues, and they also, arguably, played the single biggest role in establishing a black performing presence within it, touring the South and disseminating their records there as well as in the Northern cities. But in the 1920s blues were also a key part of the repertoires for many white singers, for dance bands, both black and white, and for theater and jazz musicians. The first significant blues recordings by a male singer came out in 1924, from the banjo-playing, minstrel-show songster, "Papa" Charlie Jackson. No "folk blues" records appeared until Blind Lemon Jefferson's in 1926, and, although his success initiated a down-home blues recording boom during the late twenties and early thirties, the most commercially successful male blues singers at this time were the jazzy Lonnie Johnson, and Leroy Carr — sophisticated in a different way, based in Indianapolis, with a style locating itself far from the cotton fields and levees.

This story is familiar enough. But the inferences that Keil would draw are less so. What had happened, it would seem, is that whites (together with a good number of middle-class and ambitious blacks such as Handy and Perry Bradford, composer of "Crazy Blues"), working in a context defined increasingly by a sequence of black-tinted music fads — coon song, ragtime, jazz — and by conventions of blackface performance, had crystallized a new commercial song genre out of their appropriations of a bundle of African-American vernacular practices. As part of this process, white singers, drawing on images of black style, had created models of blues vocalicity, which black performers could not evade.

From this point of view, "Nigger Blues," usually dismissed as a wooden travesty, becomes interesting. Recorded by an up-market white "character" singer from Washington, D.C., George O'Connor, its meanings flow when

placed where it belongs, in a metropolitan drawing-room.¹⁷ Like many of Handy's compositions, White's song jams together an assortment of lyric clichés, familiar from many other songs, and puts them to a formulaic blues melody over the standard twelve-bar changes. It is O'Connor's delivery that speaks to the regulative norms of the culture within which "blues" would now exist. Whose voice(s) do we hear? Two at least, I would suggest, or even three: the singer's, itself split between that of the white elite, to which he belongs and which he addresses, and that of an imaginary object that he strives to imitate; and second, that of the object itself — or rather, the object wanting to subjectivise itself, to make its own desire heard, conjured up in our imaginations now. Here is the "plantation South" transplanted to the white drawing room (and then to our ears), the exotic reified (in dialect, in rhythm, in melodic gestures): desire, and lack, coursing through the gaps between the voice we actually hear, the voice O'Connor wants us to imagine, and the voice blotted out but that we know is there, somewhere, could we but find it.¹⁸

The "nigger" has been, precisely, folklorized, a blues revival set in train even before its source has been sufficiently established to copy. (Cecil Sharp, who would shortly make his fieldwork visit to the Appalachians, where he would collect, among many other songs, a version of "Man of Constant Sorrow," would certainly have recognized what was going on.) The full blues folklorization process comes later, however, starting in the 1950s. Thus the historical schema that follows from pursuing Keil's proposal is striking. The blues Golden Age¹⁹ — when black reappropriation gives the music sufficient relative autonomy to produce its moment of condensed historical force — is very short, running from the 1920s to the 1950s. It is preceded by a period when blues as an emergent pop fad covers over, but at the same time provides a hazy refraction of, a no doubt rich, multivalent vernacular practice. It includes two even shorter peaks of down-home assertiveness (Mississippi, late-'20s/early '30s; Chicago, late '40s/early '50s), which would subsequently provide the core sources for the (mostly white) pattern of folklorization and revival that constitutes one pole of the afterglow, the other pole marked by the marginalization of blues for African Americans. The Golden Age coincides with a period of enormous tension, shaped by forces promoting the modernization of the South on the one hand, and explosive racist reactions, centered on such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan, on the other. *O Brother* sits in the middle of this period, exploring the tensions with a comedy as black as it is hilarious. "Real" blues, it confirms, is a construction always mediated by white desire — which thus also enfolds blacks within this structure. Despite the pressures of identity politics, this position does not rob blacks of the blues: the music's political potential as a cultural resource remains, but inescapably embedded in a larger racial dialogue.²⁰

In *O Brother*, Governor O'Daniel, rushing into the radio station to do a show immediately after our heroes have made their record there, declares excitedly for modernity: he is "mass communicatin'," he boasts. Communicatin' what? Well, the past: "culture 'n' heritage," to use a well-worn and rather suspect Southern phrase, also deployed by O'Daniel's KKK opponent, disgustedly describing the "miscegenating band": "This ain't *my* culture 'n' heritage," he asserts. Blues too points both forward and back; it is modern, as we have seen, but from the start also sounds old.

As a genre, blues comes into being with sheet music and records, and registers the social effects of Reconstruction and its failure, followed by the profound economic shifts — industrialization, urbanization — of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries. It speaks of culture shock: mobility, deracination, alienation, freedom — both sexual and more general. Even in the core of down-home territory, the Mississippi Delta, the social and economic geography was the result of quite recent developments — large-scale migration from the surrounding hill-country, drainage projects through levee building, settlement of new land, the coming of the railways, producing "the conditions of an urban ghetto spread out over a rural landscape."²¹

Yet from the beginning blues *sounds old*: "back then" is built into its aesthetic ("Times ain't now nothing like they used to be... I done seen better days but I ain't putting up with these...": Rabbit Brown's "James Alley Blues" (1927)); and "going back" (to that same old used to be, etc.) is as common as "going to" (Chicago, Kansas City, etc.). As Tommy Johnson puts it, "Crying, Lord, will I ever get back home" ("Cool Water Blues" (1928)), and "Well, I'm going back home, gon' fall down on my knees" ("Lonesome Home Blues" (1930)). The motif is still there — indeed, not surprisingly, intensified — when Muddy Waters records such songs as "I Believe I'll Go Back Home" in Chicago in 1948. At the same time it cannot be entirely separated from a much older trope: the mythological "dear old Southland" of the minstrel-show plantation, still clearly present in many early commercial blues songs (for example, Spencer Williams's "Tishomingo Blues" (1917) and "Basin Street Blues" (1928) and Handy's "Way Down South where the Blues Began" (1932)).

From this point of view, blues, as Houston Baker puts it, is the "always already" of African-American music: "the song is no stranger... I been here before"; and blues offers an ancestral voice, "an anonymous (nameless) voice issuing from the black (w)hole."²² In Paul Oliver's words, "Blues had come from way back, but no one knew then, or even knows now, quite where, when or how they sounded."²³ And blues is "always already" revived, bringing back up something already lost. Race record marketing commonly appealed to an "original" authenticity. For example, Paramount advertised Blind Lemon Jefferson's first release as "a real old-fashioned blues by a real old-fashioned blues singer... old-time tunes... in real southern style," while earlier, in 1924,

they had announced the first issues by Ma Rainey in a style that reads like an ethnographer's celebration of finding a lost tribe: "Discovered at Last — 'Ma' Rainey, Mother of the Blues!"²⁴ A 1923 advertisement in *The Metronome*, probably placed by the music publishers E. B. Marks, states that "Mechanical companies are tumbling over each other in their eagerness to discover 'real blues.' There are bushels of inferior compositions on the market labeled 'blues,' but the genuine article by born writers of 'blues' is as scarce as the proverbial 'hen's teeth.' A 'real blues' . . . sways the hearer almost with every note, and underneath it all there is the wail of the aborigine."²⁵ In his Introduction to W. C. Handy's 1926 anthology of blues music sheets, white enthusiast Abbe Niles, while locating blues as a new genre, insists on its status as folk music, and describes his task as digging out "their folk source," hidden in a range of previous folk genres, from beneath their popular success.²⁶ Handy himself, in his autobiography, consistently portrays these pre-blues folk materials as "rough diamonds," which he, as a skilled composer, had refined into more rounded and varied pieces; blues, then, is part of his "mother tongue" and writing blues songs "cannot be delegated outside of the blood."²⁷

First-generation blues singers interviewed later in life sometimes bring out the moment early in the century when they encountered the new genre. Tommy Johnson's brother, LeDell, recalls family music-making in the early years of the century as based on "love songs" and "jump ups," but "when all these late blues come out, that's all I studied"; similarly a blind Clarksdale songster told Alan Lomax how his repertoire of the early 1900s, jump ups and reels, gave way to blues: "we were entering the jazz age and the old world was being transformed." Just as often, however, they refer to deep, mysterious pre-twentieth century origins: thus, for Memphis Slim, also talking to Lomax, "Blues started from slavery," while for John Lee Hooker, "it's not only what happened to you — it's what happened to your foreparents and other people. And that's what makes the blues."²⁸ No sooner had blues exploded into popular consciousness, it seems, than it was mythologized as "old time." The interplay of "modernity" and "folkloric" deeply embedded in blues discourses maps this dialectic of old and new.

The folklorization process assumed the force of a movement in the 1950s and '60s, but this is prefigured by the collecting and publishing work of John Lomax, and especially his son Alan, in the 1930s and '40s, and to some extent, with a rather different sort of focus, by activities associated with the Harlem Renaissance of the later 1920s. There is a clear lineage, constructed through the wider "folk revival", via the Lomaxes, the Seegers, and their associates, leading to young revival singers of the 1960s such as Bob Dylan, along with the British "blues boom" of the same period.

The iconic figure of Leadbelly has an important transitional status. Discovered in 1933 by the Lomaxes in Angola state prison, Louisiana, his songs

published three years later,²⁹ promoted as a “folk singer,” Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter) became a key point of focus within the early white American folk revival. Leadbelly was a songster, but he sang blues and, so he claimed, had worked with Blind Lemon Jefferson; more importantly perhaps, he seemed to carry a disappearing culture (the Lomaxes’ aim in 1933 was “to find the Negro who had had the least contact with jazz, the radio, and with the white man”).³⁰ Moreover, he had charisma, not least because of his fearsome reputation for violence, which had led to several imprisonments for assault and murder.

It is hard not to suspect that, for many middle-class whites, here was the body of a noble savage on to which forbidden desires and anxieties could be projected,³¹ a suspicion intensified by many of Alan Lomax’s later descriptions of similar experiences to those on the 1933 trip. His romantic account of a Son House performance at the moment of his “discovery” in deepest Mississippi in 1941 (actually House had made commercial records some ten years earlier) can stand for many:

His voice, guttural and hoarse with passion, ripping apart the surface of the music like his tractor-driven deep plow ripped apart the wet black earth in the springtime, making the sap of the earth song run, while his powerful, work-hard hands snatched strange chords out of the steel strings the way they had snatched so many tons of cotton out of brown thorny cotton bolls in the fall. . . . Son’s whole body wept, as with eyes closed, the tendons in his powerful neck standing with the violence of his feeling and his brown face flushing, he sang in an awesome voice the *Death Letter Blues*.³²

Alan’s father had described his response to the music at a Texas dance on their 1933 field trip: “I felt carried across to Africa, and I left as if I were listening to the tom-toms of savage blacks.”³³ But Leadbelly was no savage, nor a rural simpleton. He actually discovered blues (as distinct from other song genres) in the early 1900s, working in the red-light district of Shreveport; and at the same time he was picking up contemporary vaudeville and Tin Pan Alley songs as well, a process that continued throughout his career: established as a folk singer, he added pop, jazz, and country songs to his repertoire, including Jimmie Rodgers yodels. The Lomaxes tried to dissuade him, arguing that he should stick to “older folk songs.” For John Lomax, Leadbelly “was a ‘natural,’ who had no idea of money, law or ethics and who was possessed of virtually no self-restraint” — which posed both a problem and an opportunity, for “his money value is to be natural and sincere”; unlike contemporary commercial African-American singers, “Leadbelly doesn’t burlesque. He plays and sings with absolute sincerity. To me his music is real music.” On the occasion of Leadbelly’s folkloric debut — at a Modern

Languages Association conference in Philadelphia in 1934, at which he was scheduled along with a performance of “Elizabethan Ayres to the virginals” — Lomax was complimented on his “talented aborigine” who produced “a treat of uncontaminated ‘original’ music.”³⁴

Such primitivism was there from the time of the first surge in white enthusiasm for “authentic” folk blues in the mid-1920s. Carl Van Vechten — critic, writer, socialite, “undisputed downtown authority on [black] uptown night life”³⁵ and tireless supporter of all forms of African-American culture — begged blacks to pursue the “primitive” blues back to their sources in the South, to value their “wealth of eerie melody, borne along by a savage, recalcitrant rhythm,” rather than reject these in the interests of upward cultural mobility; his description of a Bessie Smith concert homes in on her “rich, ripe beauty of southern darkness,” “the monotonous African pounding of the drum,” “her strange rhythm rites in a . . . wild, rough Ethiopian voice, harsh and volcanic, but seductive and sensuous too.”³⁶

A little later, Big Bill Broonzy, though a very different character from Leadbelly, underwent a similar transformation. Mississippi born, Broonzy moved to Chicago as early as 1920, and played a key part in the evolution there, in the 1930s, of a citified, commercially orientated band-based blues style. With his career in decline after the war, he was picked up by the revivalists, toured Europe, and was remade as a “folk” artist. In Lomax’s account, based on interviews with Broonzy, his 1930s trajectory was a forced response to the demands of “villainous” and “vulgar” record company bosses demanding “slavish and uncreative imitation,” “cheap ‘novelty’ blues,” “drowning the poignant and often profound poesy of the earlier country blues in oceans of superficial swill.” Charles Edward Smith’s picture in his Foreword for the 1964 edition of Broonzy’s memoir is similar, presenting the singer’s later career as a *release* into renewal of an earlier rural identity that mentally he had never left. Yet, as Charters points out, this renewal was *also* a response — a response to Broonzy’s sense of a new market, and many of his new recordings were transformations of songs that had first been recorded in band formats, or even picked up from records by others or from songbooks.³⁷ What is interesting here, though, is that in both his Lomax interview and his own memoir Broonzy goes along with the revival narrative. He defends his “old time blues,” describing them as “the real blues,”³⁸ and traces many of his songs back to youthful experiences in the South; it is as if he himself is “inventing” a musical past that would substantiate his folk persona.³⁹ There is, it appears, a double consciousness at work here — a mask that can always turn but that, from both directions, casts a particular light on the more obvious screen constituted by the blackface cork.

Black involvement in the folklorization process can be traced back to the early decades of the century. As mentioned previously, at that time folklorists

(including a few African Americans as well as whites) paid little attention to blues, despite booming interest in African-American folk song. This is not surprising. Conceptions of folk culture were conventional. Dorothy Scarborough's viewpoint, though perhaps rather cruder than most, gives the drift: she writes of songs with a "rough, primitive charm," which "show us the lighter, happier side of slavery, and recreate for us the rustic merry-making of the slaves"; this results from the fact that the Negro "is closer to nature" — but this will not last, and there is an urgent need to collect these songs "before the material vanishes forever, killed by the Victrola, the radio, the lure of cheap printed music." It was hard to fit blues, "that peculiar, barbaric sort of melody . . . sung in vaudevilles everywhere," into this paradigm.⁴⁰ The usual line was that blues were a regrettable commercial product with buried folk origins, but this product could in turn be taken back and folklorized. As Newman White put it, blues, "which were originally folk material but which come back to the Negro, through phonographs, sheet music, and cabaret singers, as a factory product whose dubious glory may be attributed to both white and Negro 'authors,'" have now reached a stage where the "folk blues and the factory product are . . . almost inextricably mixed." White also points out that African Americans, as they emerged from the folk stage (that is, as an aspect of modernization), were starting to appreciate their own folk heritage — but so far their perspective was little different from that of white folklorists.⁴¹

A shift in educated African-American attitudes only came with the Harlem Renaissance, although it was the subject of fierce dispute. By now, spirituals had been accepted as folk heritage; Roland Hayes and the young Paul Robeson (who was friendly with Van Vechten and his circle, and with many Renaissance figures) were singing them, along with other black folk songs, on the concert stage. As we have seen, W. C. Handy, with Abbe Niles's support, insisted on the folk sources of blues but also on the need for professionals to aestheticize these sources. (George Gershwin was pursuing a parallel policy — Paul Whiteman's celebrated Aeolian Hall concert, which included the premiere of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, took place in 1924 — a policy congruent also with the "uplift" approach to folk materials of Renaissance vanguardist, Alain Locke.) Renaissance intellectuals such as Sterling Brown, Waring Cuney, and Langston Hughes began to deploy phraseology, themes, and diction drawn from blues in their poems. B. A. Botkin's *Folk-Say* (1930) included several of these and also Brown's critical study, "The Blues as Folk Poetry," perhaps the first fully worked out scholarly attempt by an African American to assimilate current recorded blues to the criteria of folk song. (Van Vechten had followed a similar line, although in much less detail, in an article published in 1925, and the white scholars, Howard Odum and Guy Johnson, put the same argument in their 1926 book, *Negro Workaday Songs*;

much the same turn is apparent in Langston Hughes's poems and supporting critical writings from the same period, although Hughes was more interested in the urban realism of the blues than in any romantic folk origins.)⁴²

Brown describes the border between "authentic" blues and "urbanized fake folk things" as vague, the work of Rainey and Bessie Smith as "of the folk," and current blues songs in general, "at their most genuine," as "accurate, imaginative transcripts of folk experience."⁴³ By the time of the appearance of *The Negro Caravan* (1941), a landmark collection of African-American literature of all kinds, partly edited by Brown, we find not only spirituals, traditional ballads, work songs, and two of Langston Hughes's blues poems, but a whole section devoted to blues which includes examples by Handy and Morton, songs drawn from the Lomaxes' Leadbelly collection, and also transcriptions from records by Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Bill Broonzy, Lonnie Johnson, Memphis Minnie, and Ida Cox. In a move typical of a modernist outlook, blues has been situated as on the one hand, folk culture, on the other, a source for art.⁴⁴ Around the same time that *The Negro Caravan* came out, Harry Smith was starting to assemble the interracial repertory for his celebrated *Anthology of American Folk Music*, a collection that would act as a basic archive for the 1950s/1960s folk revival, documenting that "old weird America," as Greil Marcus has called it.⁴⁵ In effect, Smith turned earlier entrepreneurs like Ralph Peer into folklorists, for, in an innovative and revealing move, he sourced his anthology from (by then almost forgotten) commercial records of the pre-Depression era.

In fact, this moment (the moment that Smith and *The Negro Caravan* can stand for, running from the late 1930s through the 1940s, roughly speaking) saw a veritable explosion of revivalism (down-home blues, in Chicago; "traditional" jazz; bluegrass; folk-blues and other folk musics), although in a sense the moment simply folds a further phase into an already established recessive pattern. This is also the moment in which *O Brother Where Art Thou?* is set, and, as far as the structure of revival is concerned, the film is exemplary: it enacts through its own success a revival of a culture that is already, in the film narrative, reviving its own past. The story seems to be set around 1937, but O'Daniel's campaign-song, "You Are My Sunshine," written in 1940 by country musician Jimmie Davis, was actually used in Davis's campaign for the Louisiana state governorship in 1944.⁴⁶ By contrast, an unknown Tommy Johnson is most likely to have been encountered traveling to Tishomingo (Jackson) during his early period of recording, in the late '20s or early '30s. Like a dream, then, the film diagesis condenses several periods in a historical transition on to a mythical moment, which can then serve as a node within an even longer pattern. The lynchpin song, "Man of Constant Sorrow," is "traditional." It had been first published around 1913, in a pocket songster by the blind (white) Kentucky singer, Richard Burnett, collected in the field

in the Appalachians in 1918 by Cecil Sharp, who published it as “In Old Virginny,” and first recorded in 1928, by hillbilly singer Emry Arthur (who knew Burnett). It was revived by bluegrass group, the Stanley Brothers, and influentially recorded by them at the Newport Folk Festival in 1959, which led to a spate of revivalist versions in the early 1960s, by Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul & Mary, and others. In the wake of *O Brother*, it became a hit all over again, together with the elderly Ralph Stanley himself. In this structure, the object of revival forever recedes from view.

Ironically (it might seem), this lost object is disseminated in the film by *modern* technology. However, records, far from destroying what we have lost, are better seen (like photographs) as producing this loss itself — or rather, as contributing to a momentous reconfiguration of the interrelations of loss, memory, and presence. Records circulate disembodied voices: spectral emanations that at one and the same time seem to come from *beyond* (beyond the grave?) and to be contained *within* an object, reanimating it in a novel form of mimesis. Friedrich Kittler among others has exhaustively explored the associations of the early phonograph and gramophone with figures of death, memorial, and the supernatural — and the striking conjunction of the technological changes with the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis (in which the unconscious is taken to write itself, its losses, memories, and desires, in an equally uncanny way).⁴⁷ Ethnographers were quick to take up the new technology, and tales of their subjects’ uneasy reactions to its supernatural power are legion.⁴⁸ Both Erika Brady and Michael Taussig, though, note that urbanized Westerners were equally likely to fall into a magical interpretation, suggesting a projective/introjective structure that reflects a strange reciprocity between primitivism and modernity.⁴⁹

But if records refigured otherness — the rush to preserve creating the very gap it recorded, in a move that Lacan’s neo-Freudian theory would shortly enable us to interpret in terms of the “object voice,” that voice situated uncannily outside any locus of subjectivity⁵⁰ — they built on long-established foundations. The link between disembodied voice (as in echo, for example) and supernatural power is an anthropological commonplace; the use of totemic ritual masks designed to enable the actor to represent godlike authority not only visually but also vocally has been widely documented. “Primitive” responses to the new technology from rural African Americans actually seem to be rather rare: Alan Lomax tells of an old farmer who, on hearing the recording of his friend that Lomax has just made, exclaims, “That’s a ghost . . . It purely a ghost”; but he is immediately slapped down by the musician as “old-fashioned.”⁵¹ Was this acceptance because, even in remote areas of the South, blacks were actually *moderns*? Lomax’s anecdote is set in 1942, but even in the late 1920s, when the first blues recordings to be made in the South were produced, people were familiar with technology (railways,

steamboats, cotton gins, radio — and phonographs).⁵² In Ma Rainey's stage act, she used to emerge from a huge cardboard Victrola, reconnecting the voice to the body and marking this easy acceptance.⁵³ Or was this acceptance a residue of neo-African superstition — voodoo voices, hauntings, and the familiarity of the doubling strategies offered by masking (not least in the secular parody laid out by blackface performance)? Or a combination of both, perhaps? On this account, Edison's "fugitive sound waves"⁵⁴ — always receding from grasp — represent a reconfiguration of an old dynamic, whereby fetishes externalize human powers (at the same time as making nonhuman nature speak). When, in *O Brother*, as the moment for Tommy's lynching approaches, the Grand Wizard mimes Ralph Stanley's spine-chilling song, "Oh Death," through the mask of his (oh-so-white) shroud, the layers of cultural meaning run very deep.

This structure — the lost object forever fleeing through the psychocultural strata — maps precisely to the structure of nostalgia. Densely layered, without clear origin, or else with an origin repressed from view, the nostalgic moment in its typical obsessive repetition may be identified, using Freudian-Lacanian terminology, as a species of *fantasy*, its object located within the acting out of a *fantasy scene*. In this sense, nostalgia is actually emblematic of modernity, for it is the fracturing of tradition that brings forth this particular figuring of loss, even though the effect when it emerges, as part of the psychoanalytic excavation of the modern subject, is to reveal what was always already there — a structure built around a lost object, which is in one form or another a human constant. (For psychoanalysis, the quintessential mark of this structure is of course the metaphor of castration which in turn stands as a model for a range of other separations [from the breast, the womb, etc.]: a point not without specific interest given the importance in blues of the thematic interplay between phallic insistence and its defeats.) The novelty brought by recording technology is that the object lost is now itself objectified, fetish fetishized, the commodity-totem supplementing a already existing phantasmatic cathexis. And this process happens — time is compressed — with such force that the investments are at once obscured and placed at exceptionally high risk.

But what exactly is the object of nostalgia in blues? *Loss* is the genre's main topos, usually *a propos* of love or a lover. But this is widely understood as a metonym for a broader loss — a "defiant discontent,"⁵⁵ or a "state of being as well as a way of suffering" in the words of Alan Lomax, who acutely links this both to alienation and racial terror in the Deep South in the early twentieth century and, more broadly, to the rootlessness of modern life.⁵⁶ In this context, even the more celebratory aspects of blues — sexualized boogie-woogie rhythms, the ribald fun of "hokum," the rock-solid grooves of later, urbanized musicians like B. B. King, even the good-humored dance-

rhythms of jump bands such as Louis Jordan's — take on a quality of fragility: almost an out-of-time, out-of-place “as-if,” experienced against a background of historical flux and racio-sexual neurosis. If the blues is “devil music,” the loss it figures has the familiarity of the everyday — it is accepted, even embraced — while at the same time inhabiting a marginal moment, forming an endless dialogue of disempowerment and self-assertion. For Tony Russell, blues offers, for whites as well as blacks, an invitation to enter a different space: “to step out in the guise of the blues is to step out of line. Blues confers a license to break rules and taboos, say the unsayable, create its own dark carnival.”⁵⁷

One way into this territory is via the classic “bad man” ballad, “Stagolee,” based on real events taking place in St. Louis in 1895, which, however, quickly formed themselves into a legend generating hundreds of song versions, associated with both blacks and whites, and a myth with a potency, especially for African Americans, that has lasted to gangsta rap. Common to most versions is that Stagolee shoots his antagonist in cold blood over the theft of his hat, and that the bragging machismo of this anti-hero produces awe-struck respect. Cecil Brown stresses the racial dimension.⁵⁸ The real murderer, Lee Shelton, was a black pimp working in a red light district of St. Louis, a marginal area where blacks and whites could mingle, and was also involved in political struggles around the issue of the black vote. Attempts by “progressive” politicians to clean up such areas went side by side with exoticising descriptions by slumming white journalists, drawing on blackface discourse (for instance, the “razor-toting coon”). It is easy to see why Stagolee could be a hero to the growing black lumpen class; but many early versions were associated with whites (including the first recordings), even though Brown traces the main thematic elements back into stories about anti-slavery rebels, and points out that many black versions end with the hero's descent into hell, where usually he throws out the Devil (variably figured as a white man or another “bad nigger”) and takes over. Shelton knew Tom Turpin, composer of the first published rags, and Brown speculates that Turpin may have created the first “Stagolee” song, but it first surfaces as a holler from ex-slaves moving into Mississippi levee camps; although not formally a blues, it is often described as such in song titles, and its macho theme certainly fed into blues traditions.⁵⁹

It seems possible that the blues nexus emerged in the early years of the century precisely through a graft of such highly charged and often morally ambivalent themes on to the evolving pool of proto-blues vernacular and commercial musical developments: a “dark carnival” indeed. Mississippi banjo player Lucius Smith, who started performing in 1902, playing old-style (pre-blues) dance music with Sid Hemphill's string band, had fascinating views on the advent of blues:

The blues done ruined the country . . . It just make 'em go off at random, I'd say, frolicking, random, you see. More folks have got killed since they start playing the blues than ever been. It's just a, you know, just a out of order piece . . . the "Memphis Blues" and all that, it done brought about a whole lots of it, you know, I'd say, trouble . . . Makes a racket, you know, with young folks, you see . . . The blues ain't nothing but a racket. A whole lot of drunk folks, you know, don't care for nothing, and they just bring eternity, the blues do. Heaps of folk love to hear it, but it just brings eternity . . .⁶⁰

Intriguingly, this sort of historical shift is exactly what Newman White outlined in 1928: he saw Handy's mediating role as crucial, but "folk blues," he speculated, originated in the "Negro underworld" of cities like Memphis and St. Louis, from where it passed through the streets and levees to construction gangs and rural workers.⁶¹ In "Stagolee," the fixing of the themes of loss, race, and violence to the specific topos of sex is still loose; the hero fights over a symbol of his manhood, his Stetson.⁶² In blues, this knot is tied, with a vengeance. Blues foregrounds the knowledge that human beings have always needed, tried, sometimes failed to learn, that the sexual relationship always falls short (in Lacan's more radical aphorism, "There is no sexual relationship.")⁶³; quarrels, mistreatment, break-up, absence dramatize this essential core, which situates the sexual act as always a species of nostalgia, a reference to a fulfillment forever lost — a reference, therefore, that can stand in for all other disappointments and deprivations. The obsession with sex in blues marks out a territory where a particular topology of desire and rupture (specified culturally and historically) overlays and stands for the founding deprivations of subjecthood itself — at the limit, the cry of the fallen creature as such. As in all manifestations of nostalgia, the true object of desire is veiled — an absence fantasized as a presence which, however, is never quite there. The blues condition is often personified ("Mr. blues, how do you do?"), but comes upon the singer unawares, appears behind one's back, in dreams, a ghostly presence; it is a specter — a *conjuración*. (Some singers, including Tommy Johnson, have described their music as "air music," referring to its mysterious, apparently supernatural source.)⁶⁴ In Lacanian terms, it is an *objet a*, object-cause of desire, around which actual movements of desire can only circle, which will always be missed.

Does the blues drama truly represent a desire to confront the loss on which it is built? For Lacan, the fantasy scene functions as a repetitive image, protecting the subject from trauma (ultimately, from the terror of castration). It is located in a framed, theatrical space (that is, within the sphere of the Symbolic), which, however, invokes an unknowable Real, a space lying beyond the frame; and it is "acted out" (performed) in response

to an alienation — the other's refusal to listen (that is, it stands for a blockage). What is the trauma that is silenced here? Surely, the murderous scene "down home."⁶⁵ For blacks, this is obviously rooted in the history of slavery and since, but for whites too there is an investment via mechanisms of guilt, projection, and appropriation. But for both groups, might not these specific symptoms also be standing for something deeper — for a primal structure, made raw by the effects of modernity that find their point of most intense focus in images of black bodies, commodified by capitalism in its crudest form (slavery) and now at one and the same time simulated, evacuated, and fetishized all over again in the objects of mass reproduction technology?⁶⁶ This scene is a family scene, and the structure is of course oedipal; but it is also fratricidal (Cain and Abel, black and white, Oh Brother!), rooted in a particular horror, fear, and guilt engendered by a competitive resistance, but also a secretly complicit accommodation, to the primal castration threat: a sado-masochistic fratricidal embrace, for "there is no *racial* relationship" either, and blues is devil's music because, in its exemplary determination to stare secularity straight in the face, the "Name-of-the-Father" is forever at issue, forever displaced. After all, the union of these United States had been consummated through the fratricidal strife of the Civil War, within which African Americans were located as both object and subject (at least in part, or in waiting). At the same time, on a broader historical canvas, brother-trouble, along with the woman-problem that is its inevitable issue, surely stands at the core of a key cultural problematic of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its stain running through a range of fractures constituted by racial, colonial, and class difference as well as by the alienated psychologies of the urban masses. Blues trauma stands for no little local difficulty.⁶⁷

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 sexualized metonym that in turn relates to a network of racialized projections, introjections, and abjections. If, after the fashion of Lacanian algebra, we write nostalgia as N, this is to locate it as a specific aspect of O — the Big Other, the Symbolic system as such. But N is forever fractured by the impossible claims of O (because there can be no final signifier, justifying its authority), forever as a result splitting off symptoms of *n* (*object petit n*) in the incessant coursing of subjective desire: unassimilable, spectral, allied to the founding trauma located in the Real. Thus:

$$\frac{\emptyset}{N} \rightarrow n(\$)$$

that is, N, "divided into" the barred (incomplete) Big Other, splinters off infinite numbers of *n*, which in turn help structure the barred (split) subject:

a formula that should be given the dynamics of a vortex in which intersecting tropes of modernity, tradition, and subjectivity pull us giddily towards an uncertain future.

N can be privatized, that is, move towards purely personalized lament; this is what happens in some white song genres (Broadway/Tin Pan Alley blues, torch songs), so that, where personal loss in blues is understood to stand for a larger structure, it now takes center stage. The reverse trajectory is what produces (the mythical) “real blues,” the howl of down-home melodrama. Actually existing blues (black and white) are then squeezed out between these two pressures.

How might we read these processes in songs? I will focus my brief excursus on one particular moment — the first down-home peak in the late ’20s and early ’30s — when the spread of a recording culture had enabled the down-home style to take its place within a broad, intricately differentiated blues territory. First, though, I will outline a hermeneutic model appropriate to the cultural analysis offered already.

Fantasy-scenes, we might suggest, are animated by attaching “looks” and/or “voices” to other subjects, creating imagined dialogues, and hence symbolic fictions. This process involves also eliding, repressing, or misrepresenting object gaze and object voice: symptoms of the Real. But if the pressures are sufficiently strong, subversions of the scene and its dialogues may appear, bending them to the force of the *objet a*, disrupting consistency. Slavoj Žižek theorizes two particular fantasy-modes, each of which skews these mechanisms in a distinctive direction.⁶⁸ In *pornography*, he argues, the viewing (and, we may add, the listening) subject assumes the position of object of instrumentalized arousal, that which is acted upon for the pleasure of the other. In *nostalgia*, by contrast, the subject, rather than being objectified, is *over-subjectified*, or, to put it another way, doubled: the viewing (and listening) subject half-identifies with (but also distances itself from) a mythical, naïve viewer who we can imagine still believes in the fantasy that at the same time we know to be impossible. (This is how *O Brother* works: our self-conscious retrospective knowledge acts as a bracket as we allow the characters to watch for us; the bracketing devices — the naiveté of many of the songs (as they sound to us now), the cartoon-ish, slapstick gestures, the various framing techniques that locate the action in an inaccessible past — are the source of the humor.) In both cases, however, these structures can be disrupted, subverting the pleasure of perversion (in the first case), unveiling hidden trauma (in the second). For Žižek, discussing film examples, disruption is produced through a surplus of the Real left over from the operations of montage — that is, a space implied by, but left out of, the screen image, something “uncanny” that “sticks out.” In songs, the equivalent is voices (sung or played) that do not belong.

To the degree that blues references a mythic source, a lost state (that is, approximates the structure of nostalgia), the blues listener follows the singer in, as it were, inhabiting that gap, watching that gaze and imagining it, in an act of appropriation, as the (illusory) object gaze itself (this is what the famous “objectivity” of blues, identifiable even in the most fraught of songs, amounts to). But the moment an unexpected or dissonant voice enters the scene, the fiction may unravel. In George O’Connor’s “Nigger Blues,” this dissonance is conjured up in relation to an absence; it is the product of the listener’s retrospective knowledge (which stands in for the putative black response — if there was one — in 1916). By the late 1920s, when the “montage” of blues repertoire had developed a much bigger (interracial) range, the issues had become starker and more convoluted.

From 1928, when he recorded “How Long, How Long Blues” with guitarist Scrapper Blackwell, through to his death in 1935, pianist and singer Leroy Carr was commercially the most successful bluesman of the period.⁶⁹ The tone of his best-known records — “How Long,” “Midnight Hour Blues,” “Blues Before Sunrise,” “Hurry Down Sunshine” — has often been described as, in a straightforward way, nostalgic:⁷⁰ his warm, lyrical singing, suffused with a mood of introspective melancholy, the typically slow, rather dragging tempi, the warm, blurry piano chording, combine to create an effect analogous to that of an old photograph, an effect given precise expression in many of the lyrics — “My mind is running back to days of long ago”; “I’ve been sitting here thinking with my mind a million miles away”; “How long has that evening train been gone?” — to the last of which the follow-on point is that his departed lover will be sorry someday, but “it will be too late”: it is, so it seems, always too late in Carr.

Yet, at the same time, Carr is an intensely *modern* artist. A key influence on the emergence of a citified male blues in the 1930s, especially in Chicago, he is notable for the regularity of his musical formats (square phrases, clearly measured time, square melodic shapes with “rhyming” cadences, and a focus, often, on major-pentatonic or triadic arpeggios with few blue notes). Of course, it is ironic that the modernity implied by this move towards Tin Pan Alley norms is fixed to themes of loss — as if it were always a mirage. Moreover, it is for ever going awry — in guitar figures that do not quite fit harmonically or rhythmically, and lyric phrases that Carr struggles to fit into the metric scheme (unlike a down-home singer, he is not able to stretch the rhythm to accommodate the words) — while at the same time it is undercut by elements of bluesiness and of boogie-woogie rhythm.

As has often been pointed out, these latter elements are particularly associated with the contribution of Blackwell, whose incisive guitar lines offer an astringency that acts, perhaps, as an ironic commentary on Carr’s daydreams. They do more than this, however. Blackwell’s riffing around blue

notes and his typical triplet-based phrasing, conjuring images, at whatever distance, of dancing bodies, reference somewhere down-home — an “if only” (we could remember, could get back there . . .). Carr is not deaf to this other voice. There are faster pieces — “Barrelhouse Woman,” “Good Woman Blues,” “Sloppy Drunk Blues” — in which, despite the tone of regret still there in the voice, an energy associated with the memory of an older culture is summoned. But this energy does not just operate as a contrasting backdrop to the core repertory; it crosses the gap. Quite often there are hints in Carr’s piano of (as-it-were almost forgotten) boogie rhythmic and bass patterns — as if glimpsed through a veil — and, most movingly, on occasions these gather themselves into halting, transient double-time passages in a boogie rhythm; the codas of “Blues Before Sunrise” and “Hurry Down Sunshine” are examples. Listening to Carr’s music against a knowledge of these examples, one starts to hear the piano as “wanting” to break into a boogie shuffle, even when it fails to do so. In two of his last recordings, made just two months before his death, “Going Back Home” and “Six Cold Feet in the Ground,” the intense melancholy at very slow tempos does not prevent the inclusion in each piece of a solo piano chorus with hazily contoured double-time boogie effects; the eroticism for which boogie-woogie rhythm stands will not be stilled, even by the grave.⁷¹

The tissue of voices in Carr’s songs is still more intricate, however. In his most lyrical records, the vocal timbre together with the phraseology and intonation often suggest comparison with contemporary white hillbilly singers. (His recording career coincides almost exactly with that of Jimmie Rodgers, the first hillbilly star, who was equally prominent and influential within his own musical milieu; perhaps it is no accident that some of Carr’s tunes carry hints in their shapes of white folk tunes.) At the same time, the intimacy of his vocal production — unlike many down-home records, Carr’s sound as if they come out of a studio and there is no attempt to “transcribe” live performance — also brings to mind the approach of contemporary crooners. In “Prison Bound Blues,” for example, as his eloquent farewell to his sweetheart moves towards the privatized nostalgia of straight-forward romance, one could almost identify the missing voice — spectrally invoked but hardly available to an African American at this date — as that of Bing Crosby.

To fully grasp the “scene” within which Carr’s records were heard means to place him within this network of voices, another strand of which was the “hokum blues” initiated by Tampa Red’s enormous hit, “It’s Tight Like That,” recorded (like Carr’s “How Long”) in 1928.⁷² This genre of good-time, humorous party blues, with lyrics that were usually ribald going on obscene, became a second important foundation for emergent city blues (and, as that tradition developed in the 1930s, there are occasions when — recalling Žižek’s terms — nostalgia moves towards pornography). Tightly written and performed,

produced in response to a new, urban market, this song-type was, again, a clearly modern one (and the flood of covers and imitations of Tampa Red's song speaks to the effects of commercial music production norms); yet, as Davis has argued, it also has an intensely nostalgic air: the rhymes and risqué humor go way back, the ambience of good-humored nonsense suggests roots in minstrelsy and coon song (the stereotype tempered, as so often by mirth), and the raggy, happy-go-lucky performance style locates us at an imagined country dance as much as a city rent-party.⁷³ This is music that was *meant* to seem old: the couplet-and-refrain form points back towards the disappearing world of the songsters, while the rigid instrumental formulae, especially at turnarounds, not only fit right into the requirements of commercial mass production but also add to the sense of eternal repetition associated with social dance-song; but of course it is this — the music's nostalgic always-already quality — that gives away its modernity. The apparent naiveté of the musicians only half-masks their self-awareness — less than that in the remake of the initial hit, a few months later, by the Hokum Jug Band, in which Tampa Red's guitar and Georgia Tom Dorsey's piano are supplemented with washboard, kazoo, and jug, the lyrics are cut right down, and the "live" social context is knowingly represented by background chat and laughter. Pointing themselves to a "dialogue" with Leroy Carr, the same band also recorded a version of "How Long How Long Blues." The jug band accompaniment puts flesh on Carr's skeletal pointers to a disappearing culture. But the most striking feature is the extraordinary vocal by female impressionist Frankie "Half-Pint" Jaxon, whose falsetto plaint to "her" missing "daddy" reverses the gender positioning of Carr's original — but with a twist: as Jaxon's technique moves increasingly towards grotesquerie, he speaks also, and perhaps out of a moment that was particularly fraught for urbanizing masculinity, to the female blues singers of the time, satirizing it would seem (with a comedy that is quite scary) their sexual demands.⁷⁴

Of course, the contribution of those female singers constitutes an essential backdrop to the work of all the male blues performers of the later 1920s, even though their popularity was beginning to fade by the end of the decade. They had dominated the process of establishing blues as a commercial song genre, set many of the structural and performance norms, and disseminated a good deal of repertoire. They dominated partly because they were *there*; that is, there was an established tradition of female professional popular singing, available to black women, within which songs of romance featured heavily (by contrast, commercial singing for black men had typically been limited to comic roles). Moreover, even within blackface contexts, women could offer strong personae (however caricatured); this was a lineage that was there to be exploited. (The racial negotiations were actually quite delicate: it was risky for black men to sing about sex unless the object of their desire were clearly

designated as black, whereas black women could be less inhibited. Indeed, for white listeners an enjoyable frisson might attach to racially ambiguous expressions of their demand.) This structural difference between the genders meshed neatly with the upheaval in sexual mores in the earlier part of the decade (which in turn may help explain why the female repertoire tended to shift subsequently towards torch song, as this upheaval was quashed). Thus, to the extent that the women were at the forefront of representing pent-up feelings of sexual desire and demands for greater independence — the most forthright of them, such as Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, certainly were — they can be seen as asking questions with which, in one way or another, all the male blues singers of the time had to come to terms.

Rainey and Smith — Southerners, schooled professionally on the Southern minstrel show circuit — also mediated between the cultures of the down-home South and of Northern big-city vaudeville. When Mississippi singer, Charley Patton, recorded his song about the widespread floods of 1927, “High Water Everywhere” (1929), he would certainly have had in his mind Bessie Smith’s 1927 hit on the same subject, “Back Water Blues.” Similarly, he clearly modeled his “Tom Rushen Blues” (1929) and “High Sheriff Blues” (1934) on Ma Rainey’s “Booze and Blues” (1924). Both Smith and Rainey sang humorous songs and hokum, too. Ma Rainey, who often included Tampa Red and Georgia Tom in her bands, also recorded vaudevillian duets with Papa Charlie Jackson (“Ma and Pa Poorhouse Blues,” “Big Feeling Blues,” both 1928), not to mention the ribald “Shave ’Em Dry” in 1924. “Nobody in Town Can Bake a Sweet Jelly Roll Like Mine” (1923), “Put It Right Here (or Keep It Out There)” (1928), and “I’m Wild about That Thing” (1929) exemplify similar categories for Bessie Smith. Convincing anecdote, for both Smith and Rainey, suggests that their sexual appetites were stimulated by women as well as men, a sisterly deviation celebrated in riotous fashion in the latter’s “Prove It on Me” (1928). If the fantasmatic exchanges articulated in blues dialogue are taken to reference, at one level, the dynamics of a (racially distorted) brotherhood, the precarious foundations of this fraternal struggle are exposed by any threat of exchange between (rather than with or of) women. But the racial warping of any sisterly embrace is signaled in turn by the shift from blues to torch song — or, to put it in explicitly racial terms, by the “transfer” from Ruth Etting, Helen Morgan, Libby Holman, Fanny Brice (all white) to Billie Holiday.

Within this wider, always gendered context, blues dialogue between men — among “brothers” — could only be multifaceted. Carr and Blackwell could do hokum as well as their more celebrated lyrical numbers (“Papa Wants a Cookie,” “Carried Water for the Elephant”), though there is always a suspicion of incongruity between the material and Carr’s vocal aesthetic. These songs function as yet another aspect of what, in Carr’s universe, can only be invoked

in fantasy. Indeed, in “Papa Wants,” the perfectly tuned (rather than blue) flat thirds and sevenths sound like nothing so much as what we might hear in a concert rendition of a published blues (one of Handy’s, for instance) or even, the reified form they assume in O’Connor’s “Nigger Blues”: an extraordinarily ironic allusion across the blackface mask. In fact, hokum — or what “hokum,” once designated, grew out of — featured in many blues singers’ repertoires — even those categorized as the most intense, emotional, and uncompromising of down-home singers, such as Charley Patton, the personification of Mississippi Delta blues for subsequent blues folklorists, and a mentor for a whole group of influential musicians, including Tommy Johnson. Patton’s “Shake It and Break It,” for example, with its seemingly never-ending supply of verses, happily lewd lyrics, and a dance rhythm with suggestions of raggy fiddle and banjo, locates us in the world of a country picnic. Yet its style is what lies behind the extraordinary “Spoonful Blues,” which is structured like a country rag (an endless circle of VI-II-V-I chord-changes), but played on slide guitar with a lurching, other-worldly effect, and “sung” in a multiplicity of voices, sung and spoken, delivering fragmentary, often uncompleted lyrics. This is a drug song (the “spoonful” is of cocaine — although as the song goes on it appears to stand in as well for any desirable intoxicant, such as sex), and if it presents a nostalgic fantasy scene, this is a surreal nostalgia passed through the eye of a decidedly modern form of alienation.

This marks Patton as a modern. And his most celebrated recordings, with their musically very different style, confirm it. This style is often described as the most “primitive” of all recorded blues styles. And to be sure, in such songs as “Pony Blues,” “Down the Dirt Road Blues,” “Screamin’ and Hollerin’ the Blues,” “High Water Everywhere,” and “Green River Blues,” the harsh, abrasive vocal tone, held vowels often tightening into a rasp, the guttural diction with words sometimes indecipherable, the percussive accompaniments (the guitar body often used as a drum), the flexible treatment of chord changes and metre, the treble guitar figures often running in almost heterophonic parallel with the voice, challenge the norms of contemporary mainstream popular song to their core. But the *rage* this style portrays (an emotion plentifully documented in Patton’s own life) delineates a very modern sense of alienation — one encapsulated as well in his deployment of multiple voices.⁷⁵

It is impossible to pin down the Patton persona. In addition to the spoken asides and falsettos, even his “own” voice possesses such extreme timbral shifts, as vowels mutate, that it is as if there were another voice inside there somewhere. This technique reaches an extraordinary pitch in “High Water Everywhere,” where the voice is pushed so hard that we seem to hear a chest voice plus a tighter throat voice an octave higher in an uncanny doubling effect, as if imitating the kazoo he liked to play (though not on records), and which we might link (according to David Evans) to the use of such instru-

ments in Africa to supply a voice for masks in ritual performances.⁷⁶ It seems highly appropriate that at one stage Patton was marketed by Paramount as “The Masked Marvel”; examining his masked portrait, customers were invited to compete to name his identity.

Patton’s ancestry was racially highly mixed (African American/white/native American). His performances were popular with many whites and he was well respected by some of them. He was ambitious as artist and entertainer, and Evans suggests that he saw an international reputation as not beyond him. His outrage at the inescapability of his racial categorization was, not surprisingly, as acute as his insistence on an independent life was unshakable. He was the epitome of marginality: his “niche” in the system consisted of placing himself *outside* the system and actually *avoiding* a niche, never permanently accommodating...⁷⁷ He recorded some songs that seem to derive from pop numbers. But “Runnin’ Wild Blues” turns Tin Pan Alley’s “Runnin’ Wild” into something midway between a hymn and a country dance, while “Some These Days I’ll Be Gone” puts words stemming from Sophie Tucker’s hit, “Some of these Days” to a lyrical, hymnlike melody invoking hillbilly. Both are extraordinarily evocative, melding contemporary pop and an image of a (cross-racial) folk past into an ambivalent whole in which the elements refuse to separate out. Patton’s output is full of archaic references (“Frankie and Albert,” “Elder Greene Blues,” which is the old rag “Alabama Bound,” popularized by Charlie Jackson — not to mention his many spirituals and gospel hymns), and when he incorporates contemporary material, it turns into something already past; it is as if *this* sort of modernity refuses to “come out.” Similarly, in “Tom Rushen Blues,” Patton can sing a tune that Leroy Carr would appreciate (it is in fact very similar to “Midnight Hour Blues”), but his vocal timbre drags it back to the Delta. His very status as an entertainer — he was famous for his clowning — looks both back and forward, speaking to his commercial nous but at the same time conjuring memories of minstrelsy, just as the hybridity of his repertoire links him, as a songster, to a pre-blues world “before history” but also to the exigencies of modern cultural markets.

The extent to which things do not fit in Patton is very high, and this is perhaps as close as blues comes to unveiling the trauma underlying its fictive landscapes. Yet his determination to survive in this new, modern world renders complete “honesty” — which after all would implode the subject — impossible, while on the other hand old worlds, layer upon layer, are constantly brought up through the mists of cultural memory. There is always another voice, another position, threatening to disrupt the scene, but at the same time confirming the essential ambivalence of blues fantasy; and when Patton, as he often does, leaves lines in his lyrics unfinished or completes them with a guitar phrase, he reserves both a position and a distance (for us,

for himself): He assumes we know the missing words for they have already been heard, the original has already gone (a nostalgic naiveté, this, which is more knowing than Žižek's theory can allow). And, on a broader level, this exteriority is then doubled, as Patton plays the missing other to Leroy Carr and Tampa Red — just as they do, in return, for him.

Further out still, what do we hear, faintly but insistently, but “white blues”: above all Jimmie Rodgers, the rambling “singing brakeman” from Mississippi, whose “blue yodels” established the genre in country music. In, for example, his first blue yodel, “T for Texas” (1927), his singing sounds rather like a more nasal version of Leroy Carr's — or, more precisely, like a cross between this and the sound of Tommy Johnson. Small wonder, perhaps, that Rodgers started off his career in blackface, playing traveling medicine shows (was *he* the Masked Marvel? Well no, but . . .). Debate over the origins of yodeling in country music shows no sign of concluding, but is immaterial here: in the context of blues singing in the late 1920s, Rodgers's blue yodels could hardly help but suggest distorted images of the falsetto effects common in black blues. (Tommy Johnson was well known for this device; it occurs in, for instance, his “Canned Heat Blues” and throughout “Cool Drink of Water Blues.”) More interesting for us is that in African-American blues singing falsettos are almost always transient effects, usually at the end of a phrase, whereas Rodgers constructs entire yodeled refrains. The difference is between a hint of another voice *within* (perhaps with implications for gendering) and a throwing of the voice, as it were, *without*: a ventriloquistic objectification (as with alpine yodeling, one of the putative sources of the technique). Is this the mark of a power differential — the white voice assuming an alignment with the authority of the object gaze — or, to the contrary, a shriveling of the self virtually to the status of thing (as, perhaps, in the tradition of the black field holler, one of the other putative sources)?⁷⁸ Or both (a play with the longing for a reciprocal exchange of masks)?

What is in any case clear is that this network of blues voices constitutes an intricately tied cultural knot in which racialized identity is continually at stake, both for blacks and whites, the knot always at risk of unraveling.⁷⁹ A similar analysis could no doubt be applied to the second great nub in the history of the blues Golden Age — the '40s and early '50s. The down-home passion of the Mississippi “deep blues” was revived by Delta émigrés, Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf; Leroy Carr's position was occupied by B. B. King (who acknowledged Carr's influence on his singing, along with that of Lonnie Johnson and country star Gene Autry); hokum took on a new lease of life in the good-time R&B of Louis Jordan; while white investments were represented by, for example, Hank Williams in country music and, above all, if a few years later, by Elvis Presley. In both cases, what is at issue is the dialogue of voices, including voices from elsewhere, which may indeed not

even be heard: the absences without which the songs would shrivel. These dialogues together with these absences — interruptions and prompts from off stage — constitute the theatrical field for the *always already blackface subject*, through whose circuitry blues is unavoidably mediated.

For Žižek, following Lacan,⁸⁰ such absence, the mark of the object gaze, is a “blot,” “stain,” or “spot” on the image, the gaze’s implied point of origin which, by definition, the subject — limited to a specific perspective — can never see. By analogy, the object voice is inaudible, forever located outside that scene within which voice began to carry meaning, to function for a subject. In “miscegenating” blues, this spot, this impossible trace, is surely the “mark of Cain,” whose hermeneutic shiftiness — is it black or white? a mark of authority, exile or guilt? what governs its visibility? how does it relate to the mask? — has been outlined by W. T. Lhamon in his wonderful book *Raising Cain*. The significance of this figure to the fratricidal conflict of the blues family is clear. But in a wider context, it goes far beyond the historical specifics of Southern racism. In *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, the cross-racial band of Odysseans are saved in the end by a flood which perhaps represents modernity (it initiates a hydro-electric scheme: “the South is changing,” as Everett tells us), or equally, in the longer perspective of mythological history, a broader moral challenge. This challenge is surely to be located in the perpetual (always transmuting, always reviving) need to dislodge the (political and representational) colonial state — the dialectic of slavery.

Blues was far from being the only musical arena within which the interconnected dramas of black and white, and of modernity and tradition, were played out in the 1920s and ’30s. In 1927, a show opened in New York which, one could imagine, might have been called “O Sister, Where Art Thou?” if its authors, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, had not more conventionally followed the title of the 1926 Edna Ferber novel from which they drew their story — *Show Boat*. Like the novel, the musical is explicitly concerned with history, nostalgia, and modernity, and also with race: it is a miscegenating story, both in theme and, as it turned out, in production, for not only does it, unusually for the period, contain significant roles for black characters, it also includes black and white choruses which at times sing together — a move that was probably without precedent.⁸¹

The central storyline of *Show Boat* is conventional enough. Magnolia Hawkes, daughter of the showboat’s owners, falls in love with the Southern aristocrat, Gaylord Ravenal, whose looks and manners are as convincing as his fantasies. She achieves success on the stage, but the marriage collapses as Gay’s gambling ruins them — only for this to be reversed in a final reunion, accompanied by the stage success of their daughter, Kim. But this is “make-believe,” to quote the words of the show itself — “Only make believe I love

you,” as the duet that initiates the romance puts it. On this level, *Show Boat* is about the mechanisms of representation itself (Attali’s *faire croire*), together with the strategies of performance through which (self-) convincing identities can be presented. To an extent this is generic to the musical as such, of course, but Hammerstein seems to have believed in the truth-content of fantasy for particular reasons as well: “the enchantment of theater, however primitive, is what holds a community together,” he thought; “theater is good for democrats.”⁸² The question that follows, though, is what the price of such “truth” might be; what might be the incongruities, the too-real elements that refuse to fit, which have to be excluded if make-believe is to weave its spell? Here the subplot — the doomed relationship between Julie and Steve, the initial leads in the showboat cast, who are replaced by Magnolia and Gay, and whose story forms a distorted mirror-image of their narrative — will be crucial.

Romance here (as in blues, although in a context governed by very different generic conventions) is a metonym standing for the wider theme of “history.” The plot moves through half a century, starting in the late 1880s (on the riverside at Natchez Mississippi, and in the showboat tied up there to put on performances), through the World Exposition in 1893 Chicago, and Chicago some years later (1904), to end back in Natchez in the present (1927). Nostalgic appeal was built in, for showboat theater, which dated back to the early nineteenth century, enjoyed its golden age in the period from the Civil War to the First World War, and by 1927 it was all but dead. The narrative articulates an interplay between the resulting sense of loss and a sequence of historical shifts that continually push the characters into modernity. (By bringing together in the figure of the showboat the themes of *mobility* and of *show* [representation, especially performative self-representation], it also encapsulates a central American dynamic of the period — as, in its own way, blues did too.) It maps this structure to both geography (from South to North and back again: a projected unity but also a tension) and to the generational rhythm lived out by the Hawkes-Ravenal family, in which cultural shifts are projected against the backdrop of a mighty continuity, that of “Ol Man River” (the Mississippi) itself. This historical layering follows, once again, the structure of nostalgic fantasy.

The musical depiction of this historically mutating landscape is neatly done.⁸³ The overture and opening chorus intersperse the expected Romantic style markers with off-beat banjo plunks, pentatonic melodic figures, oompah, slightly syncopated two-four rhythms, and “barbershop” chord-slides, conjuring up memories of minstrelsy, ragtime, spiritual, and work-song.⁸⁴ (The words with which black Natchez welcomes the showboat — “Niggers all work on the Mississippi” — contain potential political ambivalence; but if the 1936 movie is any guide, the overall atmosphere is jolly, with only the most cursory push on the odd cotton bale: the happy Southland [so far].)

The “glittering” orchestration suggests comparison with the similar effects that Gershwin uses for exoticising scene-setting in *Porgy and Bess*, and the prominent tuba bass (march, rag, early jazz) helps confirm the specific cultural location.

Similarly, our move to the Chicago World Exposition is authenticated by two slices of appropriate exotica: “Fatima’s Dance,” a piece of orientalism actually popularized at the Fair by the dancer “Little Egypt” for the “Streets of Cairo” pavilion; and Kern’s own “In Dahomey,” a “barbaric” dance for the “Zulus” [*sic*] of the Dahomey Village, whose pounding drum-beat, relentless ostinati, modest dissonance, and mumbo-jumbo lyrics suggest a kind of Everyman’s *Le Sacre*. Later (in 1904), the scene is set for Magnolia’s audition at the Trocadero (Gay has left and she needs to find work again) by Sousa’s *Washington Post March* (1889); and she is asked to update her test-piece by “ragging” it. In the following scene (which stages her first Trocadero performance), the music is almost all diageitic. Magnolia sings an “old favorite”: Charles Harris’s “After the Ball” (1892). She is preceded by her old colleagues from the showboat, Frank and Ellie, performing the coon song “Goodbye My Lady Love” (Joseph E. Howard, 1904) and the cakewalk “At a Georgia Camp Meeting” (Kerry Mills, 1897), and the scene is closed out with a snatch of “(There’ll Be) A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight” (Theodore Metz, 1896). Finally, towards the end (in 1927), Queenie, the showboat’s black cook, sings a hot “flapper” number; and Kim performs a jazzed-up version of her parents’ earlier romantic “Why Do I Love You?”⁸⁵

This “music history” works. As one reviewer in 1927 put it (somewhat simplistically), “he [Kern] has blended the Negro spirituals of the Southland with jazz of today . . . he has caught the subtle distinction that exists between jazz and the ragtime of twenty or twenty-five years ago . . .”⁸⁶ But there are interesting creaks. The opening overture and chorus certainly position us “back then” and “down there,” but the style specifics are mashed together: this is *mythic* history. The key song, “Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man,” is presented, even when set in the late 1880s, as embedded in black tradition; to Kreuger, it is a “pseudo-Negro folk tune.”⁸⁷ Yet it actually sounds like a 1920s torch song (which is, indeed, what it is). Immediately before Magnolia’s Trocadero audition, her old friend from showboat days, Julie, tries out a new number. This is “Bill,” actually written by Kern, but with P. G. Wodehouse, in 1918. Again, especially in performances by the first Julie, Helen Morgan, this comes over as a torch song. The initial version of “Why Do I Love You?” (set in 1893) is performed first with prominent banjo in the accompaniment (historically fine), then transformed into a waltz (okay), but then into a foxtrot (which did not emerge as a dance genre until about 1912).

Perhaps there is a clue to the ground of these vacillations in Kern’s World’s Fair exotica. These function as historical color, clearly. But at the same time,

they may be regarded as embedding the work's racial theme in a broader structure of neo-colonial exoticism, within which historical accuracy is of distinctly secondary importance. The Zulu/Dahomey dancers, once they have frightened the whites off the stage, switch musically to ragtime and lyrically into English, identifying their real home as New York; this is an amusing deconstruction (although the ragtime style is about a decade before its time), but in its equivocation (a primitivism within modernity? modernity's construction of primitivism?) it points, I think, towards a deeper ambivalence around the representation of black otherness.⁸⁸ There is an added piquancy here. Kern's piece is, we can surely assume, making reference to the highly successful, all-black 1902 musical show, starring the celebrated vaudeville blackface team, Bert Williams and George Walker, and composed (mostly) by Will Marion Cook, *In Dahomey*. The plot of this show satirizes a contemporary interest among some blacks in returning to Africa (it is set partly in Florida and partly in "Dahomey"), lampooning both African-American class pretensions and myths about savage Africa — not to mention white ambivalence. ("On Emancipation Day," runs one song, "All you white folks clear de way/ . . . When dey hear dem ragtime tunes/ White folks try to pass fo' coons/ On Emancipation Day.") Compared to this, Kern's piece, while on one level shifting the theme back ten years to populate the (real) Dahomey Village in 1893 Chicago, appears from the standpoint of 1927 as a weak echo, turning sly comedy into assimilated nostalgia.⁸⁹

For the *Show Boat* "make-believe" is fantasy for *white* folks. Blacks have a role — if whites are to progress into modernity, this role, it turns out, is indispensable — but it is presented as basically supportive; it can be read in the gaps of Kreuger's enthusiastic endorsement: "The depiction of the innocent South of the nineteenth century, the roistering gaiety of old Chicago . . . and the depiction of the modern theater all rang true . . ." ⁹⁰

The miscegenation theme is key to understanding these gaps. Julie (emotionally the real heroine of the show, it might be argued) has racially mixed parentage. Her marriage to the white Steve is illegal in the state of Mississippi, and they are forced to leave the showboat. But not before she has passed on what she knows — and she "knows more than she should"⁹¹ — to the youthful Magnolia. In the pantry scene, early in Act 1, Julie launches into "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," a song she should not know (because, according to Queenie, it is a "colored folks" song), but which, Magnolia tells us, Julie often sings on their walks together. Queenie takes up the song, and then the whole group (including her husband, Joe, and the other black servants, male and female), while Magnolia performs a (black) "shuffle" dance. A transfer of knowledge, a cultural and racial relay, is put in motion here, that will reverberate through the entire work; and this knot is pointedly tied at the beginning of the song verse, when Julie sings (by implication to Queenie) "Oh, listen sister."⁹²

Ironically, “Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man” is musically a “white woman’s blues.” The main chorus strain starts off with pentatonic, yet richly harmonized phrases (with innocent Nature imagery: “fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly”⁹³), but ends with a chromatic lurch in the harmony and a blue (that is, minor) third in the tune (to represent the irrational, aching inescapability of love).

The image shows a musical score for the song "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the chorus, with lyrics "Fish got to swim and birds got to fly, I got to love one" and chord symbols E^b, Cm, Fm, B^b, E^b, Cm above it. The second staff contains the melody for the second line, with lyrics "man till I die, Can't help lov - in' dat man of mine." and chord symbols A^b, A^bm⁶, E^b, Cm, C^{b7}, B^{b7}, E^b above it.

Example 2.1

This language shifts us into torch song territory — and it is, in part, the cultural bridge-crossing that moves us there.⁹⁴ The verse is a “Tin Pan Alley blues”: a twelve-bar structure with chromatic passing chords and written-in “blue notes” (that is, major/minor oscillations or even clusters) in both vocal and accompaniment. (Once again, we think of “Nigger Blues” — although specifics of performance are important. In the 1936 movie, Morgan uses plenty of pitch inflection — and not just on the third — and [the very black] Hattie McDaniel as Queenie takes this even further.)⁹⁵ There is a mapping together of (irrational) love, blackness, and Nature — Queenie loves Joe despite his “shiftlessness” and liking for gin — a conjunction sealed in the concluding ensemble choruses, which “un-torch” the mood. The men join in with the women (replacing torch-song gendering with a universalizing shrug: love, with all its problems, is just *natural*), and the tempo increases to create a feel (with forceful tuba bass) of a rather jolly marchlike dance: a further naturalization effect (love is in the body, after all). Magnolia’s shuffle, with prominent banjo in the accompaniment, signs off the transaction that has taken place with a blackface flourish.

In the film, the dance transformation starts early, as Queenie’s body begins involuntarily to twitch to Julie’s singing. Magnolia starts her shuffle with an almost catatonic air, as if absorbing this cultural knowledge into her very body. At the same time, we see shots through the windows of onlookers on the levee gradually gathering to listen, and by the final chorus joining in. As the camera takes us in closer, we see a crowd of blacks, singing, swaying, dancing, hand-clapping (on the back-beat, of course); torch song has turned into something more like gospel. The viewpoint then switches to outside and,

as we see the characters emerge from the boat (and *into* the broader black culture that has been laid out for us) to take a bow, a network has been put in place, visually as well as musically: Magnolia connected into a layered structure (Julie — Queenie/Joe — the black South) that will in due course carry her to success.

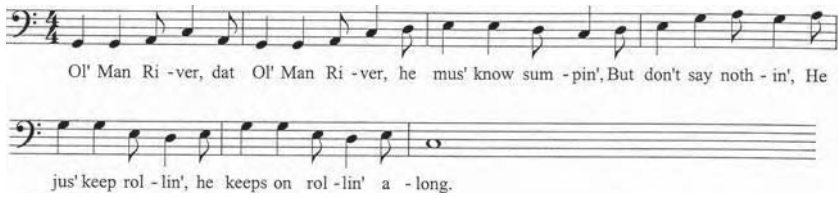
After Julie's forced departure from the boat, Magnolia takes over her lead role in the company (while Ravenal takes over as leading man), and their rise to success begins. We are shown part of a performance (typically for showboat theater, a melodrama), given some three weeks later. It is followed (equally typically) by an Olio, that is, a sort of variety sequence, derived from the minstrel show. What we see, in the original production, is a "Villain's Dance" for Frank, but by the 1936 film this has been changed to "a little Southern song" for Magnolia. It is a coon song, "Gallivantin' Aroun," which she sings in full blackface and "plantation" costume, pretending to accompany herself on banjo, ending with a cakewalk-style dance with a blackface group. This builds a springboard that will catapult her to Chicago and the next stage of the "blackface cycle."⁹⁶ In the original stage show, much the same function is served by the Finale to Act 1, where the marriage festivities for Magnolia and Gay are twice interrupted: once for a "buck and wing" dance, accompanied by syncopated banjo, and again by a full choral version (for both blacks and whites) of "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," an apotheosis that wonderfully maps the romance theme to that of racial transfer. (Mordden asks⁹⁷ how a song that is supposedly hidden black property can now be sung by everybody, whites and blacks, together; but that is precisely the point of the cultural work that is being done.) For her audition at the Trocadero, Magnolia, who specializes, she says, in "Negro songs," sings — yes, "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" ("one of the songs I taught her," comments Julie, who, unknown to her protégé, is listening in). Her attempt to modernize (rag) the tune is half-hearted, despite the frantic encouragement of the dancing Frank, whose robotic twitching in the 1936 film recalls Magnolia's earlier catatonic shuffle, the auto-motoric body acting out modernity's imitation of the primitive. But she gets the job, and, although her triumph at her first appearance is with the old-time "After the Ball," this is encased within blackface numbers, as we have already seen; from this point, her career is unstoppable, a point amplified by yet another generational transfer, when at the end Kim demonstrates the hot style of "today." Meanwhile, Julie — down and out, drinking heavily — has consciously sacrificed her career to give Magnolia her chance (again); as she slips from the stage in the audition scene, she also disappears from the story (the only important character not to be involved in the final reunion).

But although Act II is largely about white folks moving into the modern world, Julie's disappearance does not mean there is no longer a black

presence; indeed, this (but black, not miscegenating) is a constant. After the Trocadero, we move back to Natchez, and forward to 1927 — only to hear Joe still singing his key song, “Ol’ Man River,” first heard back in Act I Scene I: for “New things come, ‘N ol’ things go, But all things look de same to Joe”; or, as a 1928 newspaper cartoon put it, “Despite ragtime and jazz music, poor old Joe sings ‘Ole Man Ribber’ right through the years from 1880 to 1928.”⁹⁸ And it is this tune, hummed by Joe and the chorus, that closes the show, behind the final reunion of Magnolia and Gay. (The film ending is different, but still the reunion gives way to a concluding snatch of “Ol’ Man River” in voice-over to a shot of the Mississippi.) Indeed, this tune accompanies many of the crucial moments of the story, for example, Ravenal’s proposal of marriage (an off-stage chorus humming the tune, Magnolia having just identified herself by whistling a phrase!), and Julie’s departure from the show-boat. (In the movie, it replaces “Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man” in the wedding festivities, and features in the montage that bridges Acts I and II, replacing the World’s Fair scene.)

Joe’s part is relatively small (it is extended somewhat in the film through the addition of a new song, “Ah Still Suits Me,” which also features in this montage; this is a “ragtime-blues,” minstrelized, with banjo accompaniment, a hymn to Joe’s good-natured laziness); but his role is crucial. It is easy to see that the river (and by extension, Joe) represents constancy (as against the flux of modernity), reality (as against white folks’ fantasies), Nature (as against the stresses of labor, the anxieties of change, the traumas of culture). For Mordden, “The musical harmonizes the races, perhaps because music is the only language both white and black can speak. The very center of this transaction is ‘Ol’ Man River;’ a white man’s spiritual — written by white men out of a white woman’s book, to be performed by a black character.”⁹⁹ Again we need to ask, however, what the price of such harmony might be. The part of Joe was written for Paul Robeson, and, although as it turned out he did not appear in the first New York run, he took the part in the London production, followed by the 1932 New York revival and then the 1936 film; “Ol’ Man River” quickly became, indelibly, his song. Robeson was emerging at this time as perhaps the outstanding, multiply talented young African-American male of his generation — an heroic figure indeed; but, as Joe, he was Natural Man incarnate, whether he liked it or not.¹⁰⁰

Joe introduces the song at the close of the first scene. He has just observed Magnolia falling for Ravenal and scents trouble ahead. The main strain of the tune (a hymn to the river’s eternal qualities) is a plausible spiritual imitation: pentatonic, with modest half-beat syncopations, set very low in the bass register for (one imagines) exotic manly “depth” (in the film, it is transposed down a further tone, to intensify this effect).



Ol' Man Ri -ver, dat Ol' Man Ri -ver, he mus' know sum -pin', But don't say noth - in', He
 jus' keep rol -lin', he keeps on rol -lin' a - long.

Example 2.2

But this strain is folded into a standard Tin Pan Alley 32-bar structure, with modulating bridge and preceding verse (it is a “white man’s spiritual”). Admittedly, the bridge, and the second verse, are concerned with human troubles — specifically the tribulations of labor and racialized economic injustice — but the function of the main chorus theme is to absorb these worries and sublimate the emotion into quasi-religious ecstasy. As the choir takes it up, in jubilee style, with Joe first interpolating comments between their phrases, like a preacher, then joining in with them, the music swells to deliver a vision in which the Mississippi turns into “dat stream called de river Jordan, Dat’s de ol’ stream dat I long to cross.” One might say that in a way this representation is accurate for a certain strand of nineteenth-century black sentiment. Yet to set this in the late 1880s, after the failure of Reconstruction (even bracketing, for the sake of the nostalgic view, the audience perspective from 1927), is, to say the least, *partial*. The concluding musical apotheosis performs out Joe’s initial wish — “Dere’s an ol’ man called de Mississippi, Dat’s de ol’ man dat I’d like to be”; history has been frozen as myth, and Joe as it were *becomes* Ol’ Man River — the ceaseless and unchanging current of black labor on which white civilization is built, in eternal dialogue with the consolations of Nature and religion.

The 1936 film’s take on this moment supports this interpretation. The camera first makes a slow, almost complete circle round Joe, lingering longingly on Robeson’s impressive body, before closing in on his face. This both places this body in its context — the river and the naturalized world of black labor — and locates it as what houses this voice (equally impressive: deep, manly, reverberant — a force of Nature). In the bridges, montages are cut into the visual flow, showing off-stage scenes of (mostly male) black labor. The loads are superhuman, the movements almost in slow motion, the figures huge, shot from below in semisilhouette; these are moments “out of history,” their nobility — produced by mapping the dignity of labor on to the almost fetishistically shot heroic physiques — as much a constant as the river. During the second verse, a chorus of (male) workers assembles to form a backdrop for Joe — a frieze (it is almost frozen, like a social-realist tableau celebrating collective labor) — and for the final chorus, the film cuts between shots of

this frieze, closer images of Robeson (often shot from a low position, looking up at his heroic head and torso), more montage of off-stage labor, and shots of the river; a filmic semiotic chain, running: Joe — the black male body — manual labor — Nature seals the music's message. The final shot is of Joe smiling, trouble all washed away.

We understand now what is necessary if whites are to enter modernity: first, blacks must continue to function as an Other — a constant river that (second) must continue to supply cultural food for white consumption; and third, they should then disappear — either metaphorically (by accepting a supporting role) or, if necessary, literally: Julie (the sister who goes missing) refuses to follow the code encapsulated in the first and second injunctions, she *comes between*, muddying the racial water, and consequently must be written out. What would happen, one wonders, if an audience tried to experience the final scenes of *Show Boat* from Julie's point of view? Her absence during these scenes, pressing on the spectator, is the "blot" without which the fantasy cannot function: without this disappearance, the happy ending will not come out. Her off-stage gaze, we can imagine, stands for the impossible object gaze: she would see *everything*, including what we are not allowed, within the confines of the show, to more than glimpse. Similarly, her silenced voice, standing in again for the impossible (vocal) object, is heard now only spectrally, through the ventriloquisms of Magnolia and Kim. And within that silence we may also hear the ghostly strains of those voices that Kern could not, it would seem, find any way at all to represent: the blues that, actually, were all around Natchez in 1927; the music that, really, meant it was "getting hotter in the North" in the late 1920s — not the imitations of "symphonic jazz" that Kern produced for his final scene but the work of Armstrong, Ellington, and Waller.¹⁰¹

I have written elsewhere about the role of George Gershwin's "folk opera," *Porgy and Bess* (1935) in this same apparatus of negotiations with the black-other.¹⁰² I approach the structure of relations there through the concepts of *assimilation* (which I would now prefer to write as the politically stronger *appropriation*) and *projection*, the first pursuing mastery of the other by incorporating (digesting, reconstituting, refining) it, the second by locating it (or rather, what is both forbidden and desired in it) elsewhere. Through this "here and there" formation, "the aim of both . . . strategies is to manage the threat posed by potentially infinite difference to the authority of the bourgeois self, by reducing such difference to a stable hierarchy."¹⁰³ It is not difficult to think of "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," as it effects its transfer through the racial categories, in terms of appropriation, and "Ol' Man River," with its mythic images of natural man, in terms of projection. But each song contains aspects of the other concept too; and because we are exploring musical (and

dramatic) texts, which by their very nature project aspects of authoriality while at the same time offering these back for appropriation as figures of identity, meaning, and control, a hermeneutic based on figures of dialogical circulation seems entirely apt.

The concepts of appropriation and projection can be found in several different areas of theory, but stem most clearly from the psychoanalytic pair, introjection and projection (which are themselves linked to the operations of condensation and displacement respectively in the Freudian dream-work, and thence to the distinction between the functions of metaphor and metonymy within the processes of signification). While in Kleinian theory, projection and introjection are regarded as related by reciprocity, Lacan insists that they operate in different registers. Projection, he suggests, is part of the mechanisms of the Imaginary whereby the ego defines its identity in relation to its ideal image and its others; introjection, by contrast, works on the Symbolic level, in relation to superego functions of Law: it “is always the introjection of the speech of the other.”¹⁰⁴ While we do not need to follow this dichotomy rigorously — if songs, for example, stage fantasy scenes, and fantasy, by Lacan’s own argument, deploys images in the service of signifying structure, then imaginary and symbolic functions are always intermingled — it offers a useful corrective to facile “market equality:” the dialogic exchange here is always skewed by power, and what is at stake is not just imagined identities but the right to lay down the Law — the “paternal” authority of the Master.

Operas and musicals — songs too, for that matter — are multiauthored texts, more especially so in performance. In *Show Boat* there are not only Kern and Hammerstein, and behind them, Edna Ferber, but also conductors, designers, and producers, including the impresario Florenz Ziegfeld, and (for the movie) film director John Whale — before even the singers get to work (not to mention the orchestra). *Porgy and Bess*, I suggest, is unified by Gershwin’s intense authorial control, linked to the constraints of genre and historical period: it “both exposes and exploits to the utmost the limits imposed on its project by genre convention and cultural situation,” with the result that, despite the dialogic potential offered by the elements of stylistic eclecticism, in the end “difference was effaced, as projection and assimilation merged in the assertion of authority: he had to be master.”¹⁰⁵ *Show Boat* is a bit looser, and there are certainly possibilities for subversion; but the work’s reputation as the first American musical to subordinate dance, song, and spectacle to coherence of plot and theme tells its own story. The themes picked out above, and their foundations in the racialized cultural architecture I have described, are without question those of the (white) authors. Still, the uncertainties surrounding several moments in the work, manifested in the many cuts and changes made between 1927 and 1936, suggest a lower level

of confidence than Gershwin's. The conclusion, for instance, was always a problem, either taking us (along with New York, symbolically) back to Mississippi or (in the movie) taking us and the South (in the form of "hot music") to New York, and running in successive productions through a series of musical numbers, none of which seems quite to work (perhaps because the symphonic jazz with novelty effects — trombone and clarinet glissandi, for example — which is common to most of them fails to convince us of its cultural *savoir faire*).¹⁰⁶ For the film, Kern planned a grand set-piece, based on the music of "Gallivantin' Aroun," which would demonstrate the history of "jazz" from the 1860s to the present through a sequence of stylistic shifts with appropriate accompanying dances; but almost all of this was cut. The overall aim — to find a way of carrying us confidently into the modern world, and to do it through a trajectory based on "black" music — is clear, but the uncertainty as to how exactly to make this credible is revealing.

The key *Show Boat* songs appeared quickly on records, casting interesting light on the opportunities for performers to intervene in the construction of meaning.¹⁰⁷ Helen Morgan can be heard singing "Bill" on records from 1928 and 1932, and an air-shot from 1938; and she put out records of "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" in 1928 and 1932. In both cases (and bearing in mind the 1936 film as well), there is a clear trajectory. Morgan sings quite straight in the early versions but becomes gradually freer in later ones: the tone becomes more "colored" and variable, the phrasing and tempo more fluid, even fragmentary, and pitch inflection much more widespread. In relation to blues aesthetics, this represents a sort of privatization — exactly what torch song was about — but, for those with knowledge of Julie's story on the one hand, Morgan's personal decline and foreshortened career on the other, was there also a way of reading this shift in terms of the broader context of the racialized structure of song culture in this period? Comparison with Billie Holiday is inevitable.

In Holiday's 1937 recording of "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man,"¹⁰⁸ she sings only one chorus (none of the verse), and literally recomposes the tune; the pentatonic folkiness is obliterated, while the "blue" effects are de-localized and spread right across the performance. No longer a "white woman's blues," this is now a bluesy ballad, presented, in an act of de/re-appropriation, through a particular jazz optic with its home far from the plantation. The contrast with the 1928 releases by English music theater star Marie Burke (from the London cast) and by Tess Gardella is startling. Burke gives a suboperatic performance, with trilling vibrato, dramatic surges of articulation, and elongated English vowels ("that m-e-e-n"), blue effects smoothed over as far as possible; Deep South becomes Home Counties, any signs of blackness entirely picturesque (her "Bill" is similar). Gardella sings with a well-trained (Italianate) voice, which is "blacked up" with the occasional effect — an extravagant smear,

a telegraphed blue note — and commercial blues cliché. Her novelty jazz accompaniment orients the record as a sort of Dixieland tribute to the blues women of the 1920s: all sisters behind the mask.

Norma Terris, the original Magnolia, described Robeson's Joe as "brooding," Jules Bledsoe's (in the first production) as "happy,"¹⁰⁹ but this is hard to square with the available recordings of "Ol' Man River." Bledsoe's 1931 release is sung very straight, in terms of voice production and pronunciation, but the approach is much more dramatic than Robeson's: this is an operatic rather than a concert performance. Robeson's first version (one of the London cast recordings) came out in 1928 and is simpler but also comes across now as very straight, virtually with Received Pronunciation. If the song as composed is regarded as a projection of exotic otherness, then arguably such a classicizing performance (lifting the Race, as discourse of the time might have had it) could be heard as subversive; yet there is evidence to suggest that Robeson's approach was heard at the time as refreshingly "natural." According to his wife, Essie, his "regal, 'typically Negro' physique, his 'unspoiled Negro voice . . . full of over and undertones,' and its 'peculiar husky coloring,' enabled him 'through some deep racial instinct' to identify more deeply with the spirituals than could other black singers of the day, whose overly cultivated technical training and repertoire of European art songs kept them at a distance from those 'simple songs.'"¹¹⁰ Robeson himself seems to have believed, certainly at this stage, in a sort of African essence with which American blacks could (and should) connect. A few months later, back in New York, Robeson recorded another version, with Paul Whiteman's orchestra. His two choruses are sung much the same as before, but they are accompanied, and indeed encased (at length), by Whiteman's orchestra at its most gimmicky: multiple arbitrary tempo changes, sophisticated chromatic harmonies, expanded orchestral palette (vibraphone chords, fast banjo versions of the tunes, a "heavenly" backing choir), a quotation of the famous "New World Symphony" theme. Whatever he does, Robeson cannot escape being presented as an exhibit in Whiteman's modernistic symphonic jazz (perhaps the sort of "jazz" that Kern was aiming at in his initial endings for *Show Boat*).

Robeson's subsequent records (1932, 1936) follow a similar trajectory to Morgan's: both phrasing and pronunciation become more flexible. The meaning of this shift is hard to read. But perhaps it amplifies the sense one has in watching his 1936 film performance of a certain tension between a dignity, even an assertiveness, which wants, but is not quite sure how, to come out (there is more "dat" and "dere" and "de" than on the 1928 records but even so the "d"s are unobtrusive, as if resisted), and the filmic and musical processes that are inescapably objectifying him. According to Duberman, by 1935 Robeson had taken to singing (in concerts, presumably) "There's an ol' man called the Mississippi; that's the ol' man I *don't* like to be" (my

emphasis); he does not do this in the film performance. In public, he was skilled at “dissembling” performances of race (to both whites and blacks), and seldom dropped the mask of amiable respectability — but could do so in private, when comfortable. At the same time, he was ambivalent about the roles of “training” and of “instinct” in his own theater and musical work, sometimes complaining that he was portrayed as nothing more than an instinctive performer (because he was black), at other times falling back himself — perhaps as a preemptive move — on the image of a “mere” folk singer, noble but simple.¹¹¹

These tensions take on extra meaning when Robeson’s performances are heard in the context of two extraordinary versions released in 1928 by Bing Crosby and Al Jolson respectively. Crosby sings one chorus with Whiteman’s orchestra, at a swinging dance tempo twice that favored in Robeson’s 1930s recordings. He croons his vocal, with an uninvolved, light, intimate sound and some jazzy phrasing; the effect is of technical mastery. In that sense, Crosby fits right into Whiteman’s modernistic approach, projection definitively re-appropriated into “something that would show that jazz had progressed”¹¹² — although an alternative interpretation, drawing on contemporary objections to crooning as representing the “emasculatation” of the male voice, might hear it differently.¹¹³

Al Jolson’s approach is at an opposite extreme, or so it seems at first hearing. Over a more conventional accompaniment, designed to showcase his voice, he turns the song into a piece of wildly emotive rhetoric. All his typical vocal features are here: strangled vowels, overextended and articulated consonants, sense-disrupting (but heavily emoting) breaths and breaks, extravagant glissandi and vibratos, mordents on climactic notes, heightened (quasi-cantorial) parlando effects, his trademark phrase-end (sliding $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{1}$ descent on the final strong beat). This is “Yiddish-blackface”: Jolson used the cork mask to mediate his own sense of (Jewish) marginality, creating room for “feeling” by associating himself with, but at the same time distancing himself from, a space identified with the irrational black other. One can readily imagine him singing this song, on his knees, beseeching — who? His “Mammy”? “Ol’ Man River”? (are they the same?). This is an appropriation that appears to be at the other end of a spectrum from Crosby, folding an insistent spotlight assertion of self back into a narcissistic projection of need on to a feminized Other;¹¹⁴ and yet both might be heard, in their different ways, as raising those questions about noble black masculinity that seem to have troubled Robeson but that he could not settle.

As with blues, *Show Boat* gives up more meaning when placed within this broader network of voices. Indeed, ideally, it should be understood in the context of the lengthy process of African-American assimilation into show business, and particularly musical theater, since the late nineteenth century

(in fact, since the minstrel show). We should imagine the relationship between the “plantation ballads” of the white songwriter Stephen Foster (1826–64) and those, slightly later, by James Bland (1854–1911) — the first black song composer to achieve commercial success — as a dialogue. Similarly, in the sphere of coon song, Ben Harney, self-styled “inventor of ragtime” (in 1897), speaks to Ernest Hogan, black composer of the hit, “All Coons Look Alike to Me” (1896). (There is an added piquancy here, in that, although Harney passed for white, there are many reports of his mixed-race ancestry. Meanwhile, Hogan refused to use cork.) Around the same time, Bert Williams became the first black vaudeville star, drawing on performance patterns rooted in the caricatures developed in the minstrel show; and from 1910 for ten years, he appeared annually in Florenz Ziegfeld’s *Follies* revues. We can imagine him in dialogue with white vaudeville singers like Jolson and Sophie Tucker — all three performed in blackface — and all of them with “the Black Patti,” Sissieretta Jones, whose touring company, the Black Patti Troubadours, offered programs mixing opera extracts, skits, and popular songs for about twenty years starting in 1896.¹¹⁵ Bob Cole (musician, writer, actor, playwright) put on the first all-black full-length musical comedy, *A Trip to Coontown*, in New York in 1898 (he appeared in *whiteface!*);¹¹⁶ and Will Marion Cook followed with *In Dahomey* (starring Williams and his vaudeville partner, George Walker). Both Cook and Cole (the latter often in collaboration with composer J. Rosamund Johnson and his brother, James Weldon Johnson, writer and later politician) went on to produce many musical shows and hit songs (the Johnsons also published key collections of arrangements of spirituals in 1925 and 1926). Many of these songs found their way into the repertoires of white vaudeville singers. White songwriters, such as Irving Berlin, responded to the stimulus. From 1905, James Reese Europe was giving concerts of syncopated dance music in New York with all-black bands, and in 1910 he founded the Clef Club, which organized and provided black dance bands for all purposes; we should picture the hugely successful Europe during the subsequent dance-crazy decade as in dialogue with white peers such as Vincent Lopez.

This sketches something of the ambience within which the theatrical success of Kern and Hammerstein’s *Magnolia* is to be imagined — and, as already pointed out, which provided the context for the early development of blues. (W. C. Handy was involved in many of its strands, for instance, as minstrel-show performer, band-leader, song composer and publisher.)¹¹⁷ The racial dialogue was at the core of popular music history in this early twentieth-century period — a feature only intensified by the successive waves of ragtime and jazz — bringing with it, always, an acute psycho-cultural charge related to the particular configuration of power by which this dialogue was structured. By the 1920s, the black influence within mainstream popular song

was almost too obvious to need mention; and, rightly, Alec Wilder makes this a defining quality in the emergence of a specifically American style. Charles Hamm's criticism of Wilder's argument is based on an untheorized hierarchy of musical parameters — black features such as syncopated rhythm are described as “exotic seasoning,” while the “chief stylistic features,” notably harmonic structure, are ascribed to Euro-American sources — but also fails to register the *charge* that must have accompanied such “miscegenation,” however it is described technically.¹¹⁸

Given the effects of postcolonial historical revisionism (such as Paul Gilroy's), one would think this dispute settled by now (in Wilder's favor), were it not that Hamm's argument was in effect reproduced more recently by music theorist, Allan Forte.¹¹⁹ Forte is more inclined than Hamm to acknowledge the significance of African American sources in the style of the mainstream popular ballad, but his characteristic gesture is to efface the element of dialogue (or even, as it sometimes appears, of shock) by stressing the *integration* of these elements into an overall coherence — a gesture to which he is predisposed by his neo-Schenkerian analytical assumptions (and the aesthetic that goes with them: he sees these songs as “American Lieder”). Thus the shift from pentatonic to bluesy in the main phrase of the chorus of “Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man” is interpreted in terms of how the melodic moves fit into the overall voice-leading structure of the tune, and the *frisson* of this moment is lost. (Forte does not even discuss the verse, an important element in some recorded versions of the song, as we saw earlier; but he is not particularly interested in performance anyway.)¹²⁰

African-American musical theater was reborn after World War I through the spectacular success of the Eubie Blake/Noble Sissle revue, *Shuffle Along* (1921; including the young Paul Robeson), which was followed by a host of black shows, including Sissle and Blake's *Chocolate Dandies* (1924) and James P. Johnson's *Runnin' Wild* (1924). In 1926, two white writers, Lawrence Stallings and Frank Harling, brought out *Deep River*, a “native opera with jazz” and an integrated cast including Jules Bledsoe; and in 1927 DuBose and Dorothy Heyward put on their dramatization (with music) of *Porgy*, based on the former's 1925 novel, with Bledsoe playing the part of Crown (until replaced by Robeson in 1928). The revue, *Blackbirds of 1928*, by white writers Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields (who over the next few years also wrote material for the Cotton Club, with house bands led by Duke Ellington and then Cab Calloway), included a host of black stars, and a *Porgy* sketch. “It's fascinating to consider what might have happened if not Gershwin [who no doubt was familiar with all these shows] but the authors of *Shuffle Along* or *Blackbirds* had written *Porgy: The Musical*.”¹²¹ Or, indeed, if Paul Robeson, to whom Gershwin offered the part of Porgy, had not turned it down.

In my discussion of Gershwin's opera, I argue that his need finally to con-

trol the black-others to which he was so attracted wins the day. The structures of cultural power predispose the blackface mask to turn in that way. But I also explore ways in which black subjects could seek to “answer back,” the subaltern find ways to “speak” (to use Gayatri Spivak’s terms),¹²² notably in the contemporaneous music of Duke Ellington. Partly this revolves around the subversive potential of performance, for if representations have to be continually performed in order to maintain their credibility, there is always the possibility they might be de/re-formed; we found glimpses of this potential in some recordings of songs from *Show Boat*, and the entire blues tradition, on the black side oriented strongly towards a performance aesthetic, can be seen in this light. But this is an aspect of a deeper problematic, in which the performance culture of Afro-diasporic groups — now theorized in terms of Gates’s Signifyin(g), itself a rewriting of Du Bois’s concept of “double consciousness”¹²³ — connects up to the still broader currents of modernism *tout court*, with its predilection for “doublings” of various sorts (alienation, irony, hybridity, etc.). I want to suggest that “Harlem modernism” (it is not limited to Harlem, but this was its spiritual center in the 1920s and ’30s) constitutes a particular variant within these currents, one indelibly marked by the specific doubling mechanisms of the blackface mask, which, as a species of what Homi Bhabha calls “colonial mimicry,” are “constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference . . . [It is therefore both] a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriate’ the Other . . . [but] also the sign of the inappropriate, a difference or recalcitrance which . . . poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalised’ knowledges and disciplinary powers.”¹²⁴

But slippage may push further. According to Houston Baker, what is at work in this modernist variant is a continuous interaction of two strategies: on the one hand, *mastery of form* — the “liberating manipulation of masks” — and on the other, *deformation of mastery* — an act of deterritorialization, an assertion of selfhood that is “never simply a coming into being, but always, also, a release from a BEING POSSESSED” — and a release into what Baker calls “new territory” — a place that “exists on no map.”¹²⁵

In 1932 Brunswick put out what amounted to the first album (four two-sided records) devoted to music from a single show: *Show Boat*.¹²⁶ They followed this with a twelve-sided set featuring numbers from *Blackbirds of 1928*, including performances by the Ellington and Calloway bands, the Mills Brothers, Ethel Waters, and Adelaide Hall, among others. Not surprisingly, the Ellington recordings draw from the aesthetic developed over the preceding five years at the Cotton Club, where fashionable white negrophiles were offered an oh-so-up-to-the-minute pseudo-primitive revue-style ambience.¹²⁷ They are not among his key records, but they do broach many of the core issues in Harlem modernism. “Diga Diga Doo” is an up-tempo dance tune

in the “jungle” style that was so important to Ellington’s emergent originality at this time; yet its repeated minor-key chords and pounding beat stand in a (blackface) history going back to *In Dahomey*, as we have seen. Ellington’s innovation (actually the contribution of trumpeter Bubber Miley and trombonist Joe “Tricky Sam” Nanton, interpreting blues vocalism with the aid of the plunger mute) is the “growling” brass, heard here both in ensemble and in Cootie Williams’s trumpet solo. The Mills Brothers sing the trite lyrics in their first chorus straight, in innocent close harmony, but in their second, move into scat, locating a connection between this modernistic technique and “jungle” instrumentalism on the one hand, the mumbo jumbo lyrics of the cod-African tradition on the other.¹²⁸ The blues/jungle elements permeate even a straightforward love-song like “Baby,” which Adelaide Hall sings as if it were a blues, backed by bluesy trombone commentary from Lawrence Brown, and followed by another growled Cootie Williams solo.

More striking, though, is Hall’s torch song, “I Must Have that Man.” Her first chorus, sung beautifully but fairly straight, is preceded by a double-time introduction from Ellington and saxophonist Johnny Hodges and followed by an interlude with double-time stride piano from Ellington; this leads to her second chorus which is comprehensively scatted (the meaning scattered), over jungly muted brass chords, in a vocal displaying Hall’s extraordinary range together with occasional implied excursions into double-time phrasing, especially in her end-of-phrase breaks. Is it far-fetched to hear the tempo oscillations as a commentary (take-off? lesson?) on Magnolia’s failure to bring this off in her Trocadero “Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man” audition? Anyway, it sets up an internal dialogue (red hot mama/torch song victim?) that undercuts the song’s surface message (and offers divergent gender interpretations, no doubt), while at the same time delineating a particular modernistic territory (the body slipping through language).

Dialogue is even more overt (along with gender issues) in “I Can’t Give You Anything but Love (Baby),” sung by Ethel Waters. The first chorus is conventional enough, both in vocal and accompaniment, but the second is taken by an unidentified *male* singer (presumably one of the band), who however sings mostly in falsetto as well as introducing scat phrases and what sounds like occasional parodic diction (especially on the word “Baby”). This chorus (and the performance) ends with a surreal semitonal vocal ascent, in a clipped staccato, very high in register, over rising chromatic chords — a device that clinches what we have already been coming to suspect, that this is a dialogue with (parody of?) Louis Armstrong’s style, indeed of his 1929 recording of this song, which also contains a vocal full of surreal scat and which ends, in what was by now an Armstrong trademark, with a very similar ascent, on trumpet. But the dialogue may reach even wider. Ellington had recorded a version of this tune for Victor in 1928. Here (the male) Irving Mills

sings the first chorus and (the female) “Baby” [*sic*] Cox the second, with scat and growls, in a performance that is notably couldn’t-care-less up-tempo. (Similarly, there are two 1928 Ellington recordings of “Diga Diga Doo.” The Okeh version is relatively orthodox, with Irving Mills taking the vocal. But the Victor version is taken at a frenetic tempo; the vocal duo — Mills and the female Ozzie Ware — is less prominent than the extravagant growled solos from Nanton and Miley, the second over pounding four-to-the-bar slapped bass; and the performance ends with garishly voiced, wah-wah reed/brass interchanges: a jungle feast (as it were), which Ellington offers, one might think, with a knowing “Man, look how primitive we are!”)¹²⁹

We can now begin to sketch out the features of Harlem modernism: first, jungle instrumentalism; second, freak vocalism (as in scat, but going much wider in range of effects); and third, primitivist rhythm. This is a voice-plus-drums aesthetic, for which a key model is — blues.¹³⁰ But instrumental and vocal varieties of grotesque (or eccentric performance, as it was often termed at the time) share the same roots: semiotically, the prelinguistic voice; historically, blackface typologies of character portrayal, not to say caricature — laughing trombones, whistling coons, animal masquerades, etc.¹³¹ This ventriloquistic territory is also where blues makes its home; and it was precisely when Ellington assimilated the jungle gobbledy-gook of Miley and Nanton into the “high-class” perspectives of his Washington, D.C., youth and installed blues vocalicity at the heart of his style that he was enabled to set sail for new lands. Blues vocalicity, with its deeply-layered, uncompromising dialogics, pitched from the margin, a modernism in waiting that speaks from underneath: it is this location, not just the specifics of form, feeling, or articulation, that led jazz musicians to claim possession and to position blues at the heart of whatever gave their innovations a life outside the mainstream. The key moment for Ellington came in 1927 when (not long before the opening of *Show Boat*) he recorded the two classics, “Black and Tan Fantasy” and “Creole Love Call,” for the first time:¹³² the first with its definitive jungle instrumental solos, the second built around Adelaide Hall’s wordless vocal, full of scat, growl, smear, and blue notes; both, as it happens, constructed around twelve-bar blues sequences; both pointing to racial ambivalence. (“Black and tan” alludes to the racial mix in clubs like the Cotton Club as well as the cultural mix in music of the period, reflected in the piece itself when the “black” blues theme is contrasted with sweeter “tan” material; the “love call” was intended, apparently, as a tribute to [the very black] Bessie Smith, but Adelaide Hall, who came from a professional family background, sings in a higher register altogether, and is surrounded by clarinet, the quintessential instrument of New Orleans Creoles.)

This dialogic ambivalence could turn in many different ways, depending

on the material and the moment: this, after all, is what one would expect of an expressive mode that hides as it reveals, displays and displaces, seeks and secretes — an aesthetic of mask and mimicry. As Ellington explores its potential, through such pieces as “Jungle Blues,” “Jungle Nights in Harlem” (both 1930), “Echoes of the Jungle” (1931), and then longer pieces like “Creole Rhapsody” and “Crescendo and Diminuendo in Blue” down to the concert suite, *Black, Brown and Beige*, we should be ready to grant an equivalent degree of interpretative openness. White jazz critics of the time, for obvious reasons, found it hard to do this, but also hard to agree. As we read Roger Pryor Dodge’s view of jazz from 1929 — “It is a musical form produced by the primitive innate musical instinct of the Negro and those lower members of the white race who have not yet lost their feeling for the primitive” — we can imagine his response to “Black and Tan Fantasy”; yet his later analysis of the piece located a “purity” that he validated through reference to Bach and Palestrina. R. D. Darrell’s review starts by locating its blackface grotesquerie — “I laughed like everyone else over its instrumental wa-wa-ing and garbling and gobbling” — but then comes under its spell as “the whinnies and wa-wa began to resolve into new tone colours, distorted and tortured, but agonisingly expressive... a twisted beauty that grew on me more and more and could not be shaken off”¹³³ — new territory indeed.

Nevertheless, most Harlem modernists, including Ellington, produced some pieces where blackface deconstruction seems a clear intent. Ellington’s 1933 version of “Dear Old Southland,”¹³⁴ a 1921 song by the African-American writers Layton and Creamer that is based on the melodies of two spirituals, “Deep River” and “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” turns plantation fantasy and folk pathos into a rather woozy dream, extravagantly mellifluous reed voicings blurred by the merest of jungle hints from muted brass. Trumpeter Louis Bacon, buried deep in the texture, reduces the vocal (in the original, full of minstrellesque references) to a series of ruminations (“I want to be...”, “I love to see...”), each of which relapses into almost inaudible scat, their completions (but what do they mean?) to be heard in Nanton’s accompanying growled trombone commentary and the Hodges solo that follows. (Ellington’s recording dates from 1933, and can be heard now, piquantly, as a deconstructive pre-echo of George Gershwin’s evocation of Southern folk bliss in “Summertime” from *Porgy and Bess* — the melody of which was clearly derived from “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.”)¹³⁵ In 1938, Ellington followed up this tinted portrait of the “sorrow songs” with a more clearly tongue-in-cheek recording of “Ol’ Man River”; here, only two years after Robeson’s iconic film performance, an absurdly up-tempo rhythm turns nobility into slapstick, while Cootie Williams’s over-the-top jungle-trumpet growls its way through the lyrics at top speed and the vocal chorus (by the little-known female singer, Jerry

Kruger, all jaunty sweetness) comprehensively reconstructs them: not, for example, getting a little drunk and landing in jail but more a case of “smoke a little tea, and sing ‘O Sole mee-oh.”¹³⁶

Louis Armstrong was, it might seem, rather more accommodating to blackface convention; certainly he recorded — apparently fairly straight — several songs with demeaning lyrics, such as his theme-tune, “When It’s Sleepy Time Down South” (1931), and suffered criticism for apparently ingratiating performance behavior. But listen to his duet (a racial as well as musical interchange) with Jack Teagarden on another Deep South fantasy, Hoagy Carmichael’s “Rockin’ Chair” (1929): as they swap phrases, eliding words, moving towards scat, the caricatures offered in the lyrics splinter and they end the vocal almost in laughter. Or listen to “Shine” (1931), generically a coon song (by African Americans Ford Dabney and Cecil Mack), linking “Negro work” (shoe-shining) with Uncle Tomming (a shiny, ingratiating smile). As Appel’s excellent analysis points out, Armstrong’s vocal, after a straight first chorus, gradually leaves the words behind as it moves into ever wilder scat, setting up a coruscating trumpet solo full of wipe-the-floor, ground-clearing glissandi; and this de(con)structive tour de force takes place at doubled tempo, with a texture thinning out to emphasize Armstrong on the one hand, a powerful rhythm section on the other — voice and drums, “a sharp irony inasmuch as ‘primitive’ (nonverbal or preverbal) vocalizing [on voice and trumpet] has been able to dispatch ‘civilized’ (verbal) discourse.”¹³⁷

Armstrong’s friend, Thomas “Fats” Waller (in 1929 Armstrong had his biggest hit to this point with Waller’s “Ain’t Misbehavin’”), was less selective in his targets. As both Appel and Alyn Shipton have pointed out, anything with blackface content was fair game: “Mandy,” “Floatin’ Down to Cotton Town,” “Old Plantation,” “My Window Faces the South,” “Darktown Strutters Ball.” His lampooning could even extend to *blues*, its folk grittiness already stereotypical enough in some guises to warrant a parody in Waller’s “Original E Flat Blues,” where it is undermined by a loping piano bass shuffle, suggestive of Hollywood cowboys, and quite unsuitable pseudo-classical scale figuration behind the final riff chorus.¹³⁸

But Waller, the period’s greatest master of vocal masks — cross-cutting register, timbre, accent, articulation (sung and spoken), and expression — could take aim at *any* style, and is celebrated for his send-ups of Tin Pan Alley banality. Underlying this stance is a sideways look at modernity (including its entertainment) derived from the blues margins: black performers, positioned as “primitives,” can, once they have “seen through” this image, turn a gaze back on a lesser modernism than they are now entitled to claim. In the first significant (and highly influential) scat vocal, by Armstrong in his 1926 “Heebie Jeebies,”¹³⁹ he celebrates a dance (“do the heebie jeebies”) but

also a condition, one that is both modern (the term was recent coinage, for a tense, nervous, jumpy state) and primitive (“someone with juju,” according to the lyric): the body possessed (is this what Magnolia was after?). He does this by subverting (re-writing, by-passing) language, a technique inviting comparison with the Surrealists’ “automatic writing” and the Dadaists’ “word salad,” but, of course, with its own provenance too in a neo-African (whether historically real or not) double-take on the white man’s lingo and its black embodiment. But scat, as I have already suggested, is part of a wider “jungle” of vocal (and vocalizing instrumental) techniques. In “Mean Old Bed Bug Blues,” recorded by Billy Banks and His Rhythm Makers in 1932,¹⁴⁰ the monstrous beast at issue draws from Banks a high-register wail of a vocal; but this is topped by a female-impersonating falsetto chorus rumored (though never with confirmation) to have been delivered by Fats Waller, pianist on the date. Meanwhile, the scat is in effect transferred to Henry “Red” Allen’s fantastical trumpet commentaries.

Shipton has pointed out Banks’s stylistic debt to Cab Calloway. And certainly it is Calloway, more than any other performer, who brought together all the strands of Harlem modernist vocality.¹⁴¹ As bandleader, he was a showman extraordinary (his persona part clown, part streetwise hepster,¹⁴² pushing past minstrelsy resonances on both sides) and as singer, his exceptional range — from baritone up to falsetto — and capacity for mimicry enabled him both to lampoon and to create a sound-world whose enormous popularity is matched by its ambivalences. “Is That Religion” is spoof gospel, with preaching vocal and ecstatic vocal responses and spoken interjections (some in falsetto) from the band. But the parody is warm: nothing has been destroyed. Calloway’s “St. Louis Blues” puts Handy’s venerable tune through the mincer — his vocal cuts, often abruptly, between long held notes and quick-fire gobbled diction and scat, between high tenor and baritone registers, mixing in huge glissandi and gabbling imitations of freak instrumental techniques — but it comes up smiling if splintered into multiple dimensions. In the latter part of the piece, the band plays staccato chords in formulaic riff patterns, as if slicing up the tune, and ends each chorus with an extravagant, whinnying held chord, the false endings holding up the form to scrutiny, as if to say, “what on earth are we doing here?” This is cubist (or perhaps Joycean) blues. As Calloway sings, “I’m gonna leave this town, walking, talking to myself” — and he does, mumbling and shrieking (but who is this self and what world is he in?). Shipton suggests that Calloway’s gabbling-on-a-note is a takeoff of Jolson-esque cantorial chanting, and the declamatory register shifts and glissandi may reference this source too. In his recording of “Yaller,” an affecting plaint on behalf of the “miscegenated,” he sings in clear imitation of Al Jolson (given Jolson’s complex dealings with blackface, the

irony is exquisite); and his debt to Jolson appears elsewhere too, in ballads such as “So Sweet” and even in “Blues in My Heart,” a sinuously chromatic, Ellingtonian but heartfelt blues.

“Black Rhythm” is a blues telling of a red-hot piano player “down in Louisiana.” He plays, Calloway tells us, what may sound like a wonderful “symphony” but actually he is just improvising on a “Southern mammy melody”; still, “the blues that he’ll compose will thrill you to your toes,” because he has “black rhythm” in his hands (“he can lay on the white ones [keys], can play on de black ones with ease”).¹⁴³ Calloway’s vocal cuts between serious baritone and over-the-top high tenor bordering falsetto; and the arrangement again “cuts up” the piece with an assortment of sophisticated breaks, some in double-time, some with modernistic harmonies or modulations, others pointedly illustrative (stride piano, New Orleans clarinet, plunking banjo) — all of them caricatures in some sense of “black rhythm.” But when all the winks have been winked, damn it, the piece *is* hot: the swing is infectious, the interlacing of materials and splicing of rhythms so precise, so *masterful* (pregnant word in this context), that blues rhythm, blues voices, come out on top of all misuse. It is as if blackface has been picked up, given a good shake, and then, still spinning, re-turned under new management.

This is Calloway’s secret, and that of Harlem modernism as a whole. The middle section of “Black Rhythm” is in his “moanin” style — his version of the jungle mode. Calloway followed Ellington into the Cotton Club in 1930 and undoubtedly absorbed much from the Ellington model, although the band — known as The Missourians before Calloway took over its leadership — was already a “primitive” (noisy, hard-driving, bluesy) outfit from the way-out-west frontier jungle of St. Louis. The series of pieces he developed in this style, locating it in an exoticised depiction of a bohemian Harlem drug subculture, with its own esoteric practices and language, became the largest factor in his exploding popularity, disseminating a secret culture that was no doubt titillating for whites (even if one did not quite understand) at the same time as fitting perfectly with the equally secret languages of scat and jungle instrumentalism.¹⁴⁴

In the first of these pieces, “The Viper’s Drag,” the usual jungle features — minor key, heavy 4/4 beat and repeated band chords, growled solos, but with added “orientalist” chromatics in places — also incorporate a wordless Calloway vocal whose moans and shrieks, swooping eerily between registers, give them a real nightmare power. The classic “Minnie the Moocher” adds a (dreamlike) story to the mix. Each verse is followed by a refrain of responsorial gobbledy-gook between Calloway and the band’s blurry vocal echoes: and they *are* echoes, mimic-acts, an unconscious writing from a hallucinatory place that seems to ask just what “story” or “words” might be. In style, the song (and its successors in the “Minnie” series) recalls the blues-

ballads of the turn of the century (indeed, it is modeled on one of them, “St. James Informary,” which Calloway had recorded three months earlier).¹⁴⁵ It is as if, after the turbulent blues history of the intervening decades, with all its racio-sibling contestation, Stagolee reappears through a dreamlike haze: a knowing inversion (a bad man feeling good, in a telling reversal of blues cliché), which responds to the struggles of the disappearing jazz age with a surreal black comedy appropriate to the Depression.

Many of the elements in Calloway’s vocalism can be found also later in the 1930s in the work of Leo Watson, of the vocal/string group, The Spirits of Rhythm, and that of the idiosyncratic singer and multi-instrumentalist (and tap dancer), Slim Gaillard. Gaillard recorded mostly at this time in small bands including the remarkable bassist, Slam Stewart.¹⁴⁶ Like Calloway, Gaillard invented his own jive language (he called it “vout”), and his vocals present a surreal flow of nonsense, humor, and scat, set in a bouncing, boogie-influenced musical style that shows how small-group swing would move towards the 1940s rhythm ‘n’ blues of Louis Jordan on the one hand — an equally comedic, good-time style with clear proto-minstrellesque elements, but also links back to the legacy of hokum blues — and the hard-edged but often surreal modernism of be-bop on the other. (Gaillard recorded, briefly, with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie in 1945. Listen too to Charlie Parker’s “Now’s the Time” [1945] and then the R&B hit “The Hucklebuck,” based on Parker’s riff and recorded by several bands in 1949.) The first hit record by “Slim and Slam,” “Flat Feet Floogie” (1938), displays all these features, together with Stewart’s innovatory vocal harmonizing (an octave higher) with his own bowed bass playing, an effect that as it were seals the vocal/instrumental exchange at the heart of the jungle aesthetic at the same time as it renews the vocal multiphonics of blues tradition. (Recall Charley Patton’s kazoolike voices; or think of a weirdly pitch-shifted yodel, the distinct registers compressed into simultaneity.) Several of Gaillard’s pieces are about food: “Matzoh Balls,” “Tutti Frutti,” “Groove Juice Special” (“about” may be the wrong word — but anyway the food/music conjunction, located in the grooving body, gives a new meaning to “gob-bledey-gook”). Many play explicitly with language: “Boot-Ta-La-Za,” which sounds like cod-Greek; “My Chinatown,” which brings out the connection between scat nonsense and conventions of orientalist mumbo-jumbo. “Laughin’ in Rhythm” laughs *at* (or with?) the “rhythm changes” by superposing lyrics made up entirely of laughter.

The up-tempo quick-fire phrasing of Gaillard’s “Ra-Da-De-Da” points clearly towards be-bop. Dizzy Gillespie made his early reputation playing in Cab Calloway’s band (1939–41); the clowning showmanship he developed as a bandleader, and the scat vocals he introduced, come out of the Calloway/Gaillard lineage, just as be-bop’s esoteric hipsterism and surreal approach

to language (“be-bop spoken here” was the publicity tag) are inconceivable without it. This strand interlacing blues and jazz is sutured by an approach to voice (in the broadest sense) that body-swerves right through the caricatures rooted in blackface traditions; be-bop as a whole, with its expanded vocabulary of pitch-inflection, intensely vocalized concept of instrumental articulation, and para-linguistic sense of rhythm, is saturated with this approach. Gillespie is often described as not a natural blues player (unlike, so the story generally goes, the more “emotive” Charlie Parker).¹⁴⁷ It is truer to say that he played a splintered, modernistic blues, edgy with self-aware comedy, a blues that, like Ellington’s, Waller’s, and Calloway’s, locates down-home in a jungle that is urban as well as implicitly postcolonial.

It is the move represented by this multi-braided strand — a sort of double turn, first laughing at “folk roots” stereotypes, then exploiting the freedom which that creates to rehabilitate them — that powers the neo-African music Gillespie helped to pioneer, in collaboration with the Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo. “Cubana Be/Cubana Bop,” for instance, with its “African black magic chanting. Heavy mysterious folk music,” can accommodate Afro-Cuban primitivism because it grows out of, first, Afro-cubist blues.¹⁴⁸ Duke Ellington, having done his share of deconstructing pseudo-spirituals, was entitled to re-create (or create?) the “real thing” in the “Black” movement of his suite *Black, Brown and Beige*.¹⁴⁹ From this perspective, Louis Armstrong had earned the right to offer us his vision of “Sleepy Time Down South,” even with all the risks attached. This “new territory” could not be innocent or free of conflict, as the controversies surrounding all three of these examples indicate. The race-related struggles also mediate gender issues, as has become apparent at various points; and class tensions too: the role of blues here was to *ground* ambitious middle-class black musicians in a position far enough beneath the underdog (as the title of Charles Mingus’s autobiography has it)¹⁵⁰ to enable them credibly to talk black (and therefore back). It is worth comparing Ethel Waters’s bluesy recording of the Fields-McHugh ballad “Porgy,” accompanied by the Ellington band, with the more “cultivated” operatic music that George Gershwin composed for his Bess; and asking what effect it may have had that Paul Robeson would not (perhaps could not) sing blues (his one attempt at the twelve-bar form is an embarrassment).¹⁵¹ The Black-Other is never more a Low-Other than when it is blue.

Black, Brown and Beige sets out to tell the story of “the race,” an ambition that Duke Ellington had nurtured since the 1920s; one, indeed, that was deeply embedded in socially ambitious African-American circles in the early twentieth century, but that — not surprisingly, given its prominent up-from-slavery trope — could be traced back to the nineteenth, for instance to ex-slave autobiographies. (It is found too, in a rather different register, in

such shows as *In Dahomey*; and in the set of six songs by Cole and Johnson, frequently interpolated into their shows, entitled *The Evolution of Ragtime*, which also starts its history in Africa.¹⁵² This brings to mind as well Kern's original intention to tell the history of jazz in the finale of *Show Boat* — a work that, as a whole, could be regarded as offering a white gloss on these dark strivings.) But music not only played a part in telling the story; it *constructed* one (or rather, many), performing out the negotiation of desire, loss, and power. And such negotiation has continued: slavery is not so easily superseded (nor is mastery readily freed from its grip).

Voices of black(face) folk: out of the mouth of — *Elvis Presley*?! Whose “culture ’n’ heritage” was this? Elvis was at least dimly aware of what was at stake: as Robert Fink points out,¹⁵³ in his performances of, for example, “Hound Dog” he purposely exaggerated what he took to be typical black gestures to the point of caricature — part of an in-built ironic stance that allies him with a specifically blues comedy. By contrast, Mick Jagger, blessed with lips that rendered him born into blackface, was after a romanticized vision of “roots.” In “Jumpin’ Jack Flash,” the specter of Stagolee reemerges, but Jagger’s exaggerated vocal mannerisms — deeply serious and self-absorbed in their stud-hustler sneer — suggest a desperate search for authenticity, set off, however, by the rather crude half-beat guitar syncopations and almost marchlike up-beat figures: “square” and “hip” jammed (hardly jamming) together (does this help explain why in later years Jagger could accept the embrace of the white Establishment so easily?).

Meanwhile, Jimi Hendrix, at least in the early stage of his British career, was knowingly playing up to his hysterical media reception as “the wild man from Borneo,” performing out gestures of rapacious but ever so cool and dandified sexual power: a “psychedelic Uncle Tom” (for some), a “mirror-image of our own inner darkies” (for others). But he was also developing his own variant of that specific modernistic territory which enabled maneuvers behind and beyond the mirror. Listen, for instance, to “Voodoo Chile,” which traverses (as it constructs) a history linking Charley Patton’s guitar/vocal heterophonies to the rebellious noise of new wave jazz, passing the spectral shiver of its supernatural imagery through the landscape of a space-age jungle: “Delta blues . . . on Mars.”¹⁵⁴

Around the same time, a young Michael Jackson was starting out on a trajectory that would eventually give new meaning to the term “passing” (in relation to sexuality as well as race), exploring in much of his mature work some of the key tropes of blackface tradition (I will discuss this in the next chapter). But by this time, rap was already taking over the lead in articulating black folks’ concerns. Lhamon has drawn attention to the roots of much hip-hop performance gesture in minstrelsy,¹⁵⁵ and it is a commonplace to note the music’s debt to long-established blackface stereotypes of machismo,

male narcissism, and racially charged violence, not to mention heavy white investment, emotional and financial, in the culture, its styles and commodities. Class-related tensions within the African-American community emerge in differing hip hop attitudes to politics, life-style, and gender. Not the least irony is that one of the most impressive rappers at the turn of the century is poor white trash, Eminem — the Jimmie Rodgers (or Jimmie Davis) of his day? — among whose many voices is, appropriately, that of his alter ego, Slim *Shady*.¹⁵⁶ The irony only increases when Eminem duets with the black Kirk Jones on the latter's track, "What If I Was White," where race-linked stereotypes are gleefully gayed both in the lyrics and the music; rhythmically complex, multivoiced dialogues are contextualized by a painfully banal, martial four-four thump for the hook, "What if he was white" (Example 2.3a), which becomes a nightmarishly repetitive foreground in the refrains (Example 2.3b). Can white men (not) jump?¹⁵⁷

(a) Musical notation in 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: a whole rest, a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. Lyrics: "What if I was white" above the notes, and "He" below the notes.

(b) Musical notation in 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, A4, B4, C5. Lyrics: "What if I was white" above the notes, and "He" below the notes. A bracketed section follows: "[white, white, white, white]" above the notes.

Example 2.3

Early in *O Brother, Where Are Thou?*, the heroes (as yet only three, all white) meet a mysterious blind black prophet (Polyphemus in the Coen Brothers' Odyssean schema). He has no name (unlike the slaves, who lost their own and gained the master's; unlike Eminem, who hides the master's — Marshall Mathers — within his sobriquet, while adopting a shady substitute). On hearing that the heroes seek a treasure, the prophet — accompanied by a guitar blues — tells them: "You will find a fortune, though it would not be the fortune you seek." Many diverse fortunes have been sought by those writing (interpreting, constructing, performing) the history of the voices of black folk and their white others. Whether what was found was really fortunate depends on true recognition of the "moment of danger" on which, suggests Walter Benjamin, the writing of history rests. The moment of danger today is no less acute than it was a hundred years ago when blues (perhaps) began. Indeed, in many ways it is not dissimilar: a new phase in the reach of global capital, driven in part by a leap in technology (now digitization, which, among other things, enables Moby and Tangleeye to sample Alan Lomax's field recordings); labor divided by race, now on a global scale; the resulting

fractures finding a metonymic focus in the sexual relationship (e.g., in rap); in music a deluge of revivals, most notably in the new category of “world music,” into which blues and bluegrass are partly assimilated, and which, like early blues, constitutes itself as a revival without a source — or rather with a mythic source which world music itself brings into being.

The postcolonial fetters have been weakened — but how much? Would a new *Show Boat*, as one might assume, be impossible today? Homi Bhabha points us towards both the inevitability of rupture and the haunting uncertainties of the new: “The paranoid threat from the hybrid is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside. In the productivity of power, the boundaries of authority — its reality effects — are always besieged by ‘the other scene’ of fixations and phantoms.”¹⁵⁸ Beyond the mask — what?

Appropriating the Phallus?

Female Voices and the Law-of-the-Father

Voice; phallus: two radically distinct bodily objects (it would seem). What are they doing, coupled together here in this disorienting conjunction — one, moreover, that can hardly help but conjure up the couplings of sex?

The bodily locations and representations of popular voices situate them in an irreducibly gendered universe. Vocality is always sexualized, and this quality comes to us through the screen of gender difference, albeit a screen rendered less than stable in recent years through feminist and queer critiques. The discipline of popular music studies developed over much the same period as second-wave feminism, and it is not surprising that feminist perspectives have inflected a good deal of work in the discipline. Much of this has been pretty straightforwardly sociological. The question of how women's subordinate roles within the music industry and the social relations of popular music production can be addressed is indeed a vital one, alongside the equally important, and interlinked, question of how the stereotypes governing female participation can be countered.

But if the analysis is allowed to rest at that point, two dangers follow.¹ The first is that the work of songs in reproducing the broader structures of the symbolic economy is left unexplored; it is as if an old-style vulgar materialist approach is still in charge, assuming that if only the relations of production are revolutionized, changes in patterns of identity, representation, and expression will automatically follow.² The second danger is political and follows from the first: If social change fails to lead to radical change on the symbolic level, there is nowhere to turn for help. The stalling of the broader feminist project at the so-called postfeminist stage, with its concomitant in the musical sphere of Madonna-lite girl groups and scantily

clad wannabe-divas, suggests that this is the historical point we have reached in the early twenty-first century. The much advertised “crisis of masculinity,” with similarly confused relationships between the advent of “new men” on the social level and panics around representation (e.g., as in gangsta rap), points in the same direction. Even when scholars have paid more attention to performance images and strategies, and their related identity politics, the focus has often been on moments of allegedly subversive play — repertoires of cross-dressing and gender-bending — which, all too often, seem easily assimilable to mainstream music industry marketing. In this case it is as if the notorious banality of cultural studies translates quite readily into wishful victory claims in the gender wars.

While acknowledging the problems inherent in the psychoanalytic account of Woman, I aim to take seriously the argument that her subordination is deeply embedded in the historically constituted structures of socialized subjectivity and will not easily be overturned; “appropriating the phallus,” or indeed subverting its power, is an enterprise where much is at stake. As Barbara Bradby and Dave Laing point out, the “impossibility [apparently] of the female self within patriarchal society or phallogocentric discourse” still haunts the feminist imagination; “this ‘I who wants not to be’ of Kristeva’s (1974) essay on female suicides conflicts with the happy assertiveness that assumes we can restrain our selves, and sets up a powerful undertow of feminist nihilism.”³

“To approach woman as a symptom” in this way, according to Kaja Silverman, “is not to suggest that she is no more than the afterimage of male subjectivity . . . Woman is inscribed not only on celluloid [and on records] and on the surfaces of the male subject’s imaginary register, but in the psychic, material, and social conditions of the female subject’s daily existence.”⁴

But why look at women? Why not men? Carolyn Abbate pushes this question even further, skewering the “unappetizing figure of the male critic who takes up ‘feminist’ interpretation . . . as a politically correct or, more reprehensibly, professionally profitable move,” and reserving particular scorn for male critics’ interpretations of “phallic women.” My own investments, as a straight male, will, I hope, emerge in what follows (though not necessarily in ways I can predict). If to position “masculinity” analytically as *what comes after* risks, as a critical structure, perpetuating a political stasis — Woman as, still, the exception that enables male universalism — the contrary possibility, that such a move might have the capacity to put the gender structure, precisely, at risk, seems worth holding on to.⁵

I am interested here especially in voice. This focus straightaway lays out an insistently sexuated territory. Not only is the voice felt to be a key marker of identity, representing a person and (usually) carrying the machinery of (always gendered) subject-positions embedded in language, but its site of

production — mouth, throat, vocal tract — is associated with a range of sexing tropes. As an apparatus that organizes the passage of energy from inside the body to outside — “desire as articulated air”⁶ — this site bears obvious comparison to sexual organs. The mouth, from childhood an important erogenous zone, both sucks in and ejaculates, opens and closes, articulates flows and reproduces them endlessly. In this sense, voice can be figured as standing for, that is, metonymically representing, our sense of sexuality as such.

But the sexual positioning of voices is not fixed. Rather, as Wayne Koestenbaum points out,⁷ the ideology of voice works within a complex discursive formation where entry into the field of sex and gender is both represented and constituted on the level of vocal articulation, through the operation of sets of regulatory ideals that are powerful but never conclusive. Nevertheless, there are strong tendencies to think voice, on the level of the historical *longue durée*, in two overarching but apparently conflicting ways. In the first it is a site of masculine authority. Considered as a self-validating “fingerprint (or larynx-print) impossible to steal,”⁸ its role as carrier of spoken language marks voice within the traditions of Western thought as vehicle of self-authoring meta-physical presence, hence, as the special property of the patriarchal sources of *logos*. In the second tradition, by contrast, voice is persistently coded as female. This is partly because as an organ it is *inside*, hidden, indeed as a rule invisible, while at the same time the laryngeal organs (once they *can* be seen, via the nineteenth-century invention of the laryngoscope) might seem to have a structure uncannily similar to that of female genitalia; and partly because the movement of air through the vocal apparatus from deep within the body up to the head can easily be pictured as facilitating a two-way bodily traffic: either an escape from genital tyranny (where voice, “sublimely independent of the place below,”⁹ can be thought of as gender-free or androgynous, or, more commonly, can be associated with feminine lack), or, by contrast, an embedding of voice within the body’s reproductive machinery, an “invagination,” to use Derrida’s metaphor.¹⁰ Whether invaginated or phallicized, the site of vocal production can be imagined as a sort of “column,” or better, a “vocalimentary canal,” carrying energy flows between the head on the one hand, and, on the other, *that place down below*.¹¹

Of course, this ideology of voice needs to be overlaid on a different (but related) binary structure, that governing the relationship of language to *music*. Music here is persistently figured as language’s Other, in a familiar inside/outside, centre/margin topography, which, once again, is always gendered. How might singing be placed within this structure of interlocking binaries?

As Koestenbaum makes clear, it is important to register the intricate dynamics formed within this discursive structure by the intersecting metaphors of “nature” and “discipline.” One searches for a “true” voice — but this is an exercise in self-formation, requiring the acquisition of “control.” The voice

“natural” to a specific gender, age, race, class is, at least in a Foucauldian perspective, an effect of normative performance-acts “inscribed” on (and hence bringing into being) particular types of body.¹² Inhabiting and manipulating specific vocal registers (chest, throat, head); passing between them naturally (or not); deploying appropriate (or other) timbres and articulations: all contribute. Such frameworks are constituted, but can also be challenged, by particular cultural formations. Thus, while disciplinary norms are most clearly laid out in the textbooks of the classical (and especially the so-called *bel canto*) tradition, they can be put in question or even subverted by other vocal regimes, that is, through an articulation of class or ethnic difference. In her 1918 publication, *How to Sing a Song*, the French cabaret artist Yvette Guilbert presents not the system of technical (and moral) discipline familiar from the history of classical singing manuals but rather “guidelines for a kind of self-invention,” an explicit system of *mimicry* centered on portrayal of a range of personalities.¹³ This approach became an important strand in twentieth-century vernacular singing; but so too did a new kind of naturalism: the “true,” “authentic” voice of a rock or blues singer (male or female) forms its realism through very different techniques from those of the *bel canto* stars.

Performance acts; portrayal; mimicry: these terms point towards a further obvious factor — singers *perform*. All performers are, in a particular, codified way, on display, objects of consuming attention; but singers stand naked, their bodies not mediated by external instruments. *Display*, in this context, is an already sexualized site, heavily coded feminine (which means that men who sing, especially in live situations when their bodies are on display, are already in danger of being seen as feminized or queer). The signifying chain (voice–body–sex–woman–display–prostitute), although commonly activated via metaphoric links to the natural (embodiment, sexual availability, mother-love, etc.), fastens on a procedure of objectification, or alienation (in the philosophical sense) — one that Lucy Green discusses in terms of a *mask* separating but also mutually implicating performer and spectator/listener in a variety of relationships of power, desire, and imaginary identifications.¹⁴ Of course, masquerade has commonly been seen as the privileged strategy of female sexuality *tout court*. Indeed, as Abbate reminds us, Nietzsche saw Woman as precisely “a being without visible essence, an unseeable core, concealed by a sheen of adornments... you undrape her at your peril”; for what you may unveil, so fantasy suggests, is: a secret maleness! — a property that, in psychoanalytic terms, is no more than an inversion of that male lack which must on no account be revealed and which had therefore been displaced on to Woman in the first place.¹⁵ The female body is fixed in its place — as too are the bodies of feminized racial and class groups, such as dandified blacks and working-class teddy boys — through a technology of

adornment, which maintains a central, albeit ambivalent role for the imaginary, vivifying presence of voice.

Abbate's larger point is to argue that in opera (and by extension, we might add, in other genres where female singers deliver narratives typically scripted by male composers, such as popular songs) we find a certain dispersal of authoriality, as women performers, conventionally regarded as objects both of compositional manipulation and of audience spectatorship, in effect "re-sex" themselves into positions of creative agency. Although Abbate draws on Roland Barthes's theory of a "second semiology" of voice — a bodily (hence, by implication, female or perhaps castrated) voice in the performed text, as against the signifying voice of the (male-authored) work — her own approach to Richard Strauss's opera *Salome* is deconstructive, opening to view subversive voices hidden within the score, which singers can exploit. Indeed, a limitation of her analysis is that, against the drift of her own project, she does not discuss any actual performances; instead, the capacity of the character Salome to "slide[...] into the male subject-position"¹⁶ and compose her own trajectory emerges from fractures that, wittingly or unwittingly, have been composed into the work by the male author.

This issue becomes even more interesting when we consider recorded rather than live performance (bearing in mind, of course, that the recording has become the normative performance mode for popular music, to the point where the "Is it 'live' or is it Memorex?" question¹⁷ has become a permanently constitutive issue for listening, both to live and recorded musical sources). When we listen to recorded music, the sound of the voice is, obviously, separated from the body that is, putatively, its physical source, at once making available new routes of imaginary identifications and evacuating the too-easy conflation of sight and sound characteristic of live performance. Just as photographic and filmic images offer, it would seem, access to a reality that is in fact always elsewhere and is therefore at the same time withheld, so a recorded voice promises a body we can never hold, opening up a gap between desire and object that can never be closed. But this reveals what was always already there (albeit remediated, amplified, doubled): "the moment we enter the symbolic order, an unbridgeable gap separates forever a human body from 'its' voice. The voice acquires a spectral autonomy, it never quite belongs to the body we see."¹⁸ What, in performance, normally covers over this gap was in any case only a mask, a masquerade, which is now just given new and added powers (like the photograph, the recording cannot lie — which means that it lies more convincingly; like the photograph, it is both lifelike and already dead and gone).

The recorded voice is therefore particularly difficult to pin down in gender terms, stretched as it is on a screen framed by intersecting axes running between mask and realism, embodiment and virtuality, presence and

absence; which, however, makes it all the more open to gender trickery. If women traditionally have been positioned as objects of the gaze and men as those who both look and speak, then the upheavals in the interplay of the impulses of looking and hearing occasioned by developments in the mass media (film, records) restructure this nexus of semiotic and psychoanalytic interest as a site of intense ideological tension. What is important here is not only the parallels in the roles of voice and gaze — both act as *mirrors*, playing out the dramas of reflection, identity, and difference that construct subjects and their others — but also the differences — the “acoustic mirror,” as it has been called, loops back to the ears of the vocalizing subject in a narcissistic short-circuit — and the interplay between them. When, as with film and recorded music, representation is twice removed — a display of a display — this interplay takes on an additional intensity, even (or especially) when one aspect is left to the imagination.¹⁹

Both Abbate and Koestenbaum fix on the figure of the castrato to focus their arguments. For Koestenbaum, the falsetto voice, epitomized *in extremis* by the castrato, stands for whatever escapes the disciplinary codes of natural singing; its “effeminacy” is linked to the *frisson* aroused by fantasies of “the missing phallus,” and, as the result of “breath that took the wrong exit out of the body,” heard as “a species of ventriloquism,” it potentially queers any established settlement of the relationships of gender, sex, and body.²⁰ Abbate points out that this foregrounding of the *constructed* status of gender clears ground for assertions of a “maleness” within women. Drawing on Barthes’s analysis of the castrato disguised as a woman in Balzac’s *Sarrasine*, she suggests that to find female agency in opera, we should “look for the castrato” (that so-called man who sounds unnaturally like a woman). And her interpretation climaxes at the moment of Jochanaan’s execution at Salome’s request, when Salome’s voice is accompanied by a solo double-bass, playing unnaturally high and sounding (according to the composer’s instructions in the score) like “the suppressed groaning of a woman”; this “unknowable sound,” like “nothing (on earth),” represents, Abate argues, a castrato, “another singer inside *Salome*” (and inside Salome, surely) who mobilizes the possibility of un-manning/re-manning gendered subject-positions.²¹

Castration is, of course, one of the key metaphors for psychoanalysis. It is the incest-taboo accompanied by attendant threats of punishment differentially applied to males and females that initiates both the binary structure of sex (because all subjects, in order to function as subjects, are required — so it seems — to line up under one gender or the other) and the differential structures of what Lacan calls the Symbolic Law (because language, staging the encounter with the Other in exchanges of words rather than of women, forever seeks but fails to make good the originary loss figured in the cut of castration, at the same time positioning subjects by gender within its own

rules, and excluding what cannot be allowed to be even thought so that what is thereby included can function to reproduce meaning and identity). In this developmental logic, the phallus operates as a token of symbolic authority (the Paternal Law, for it is men who assume themselves to *have* it), although this can never be more than a ruse (for men are always afraid to *lose* it, and the forbidden zones of homosexuality are there, for both men and women, to shore up the link between sexual deviance and loss of symbolic identity). Within this perspective, women's quests to subvert or appropriate phallic power can never reduce to the question, who does the washing up — or who plays the guitar. Indeed, in the psychoanalytic tradition, the sex/gender cut (the nexus of male/female, hetero/homo oppositions) is implicated in, or even foundational for, a whole range of elaborated binaries: public/private, mind/body, lack/supplement, inside/outside (e.g., of culture), which consolidate a structure of symbolic as well as social power.

The possible historical contingency of this way of thinking is raised in many of the critiques of psychoanalysis (and I shall return to it). Koestenbaum, in a provocative excursion into cultural history, points out that the term *bel canto*, as a formulation nostalgically fixed to a lost vocal culture epitomized by the disappearing castrato, appeared at almost exactly the same time (the 1860s) that “homosexuality” as a sexual pathology was first named; and that both usages gave rise to intensely anxious pseudo-scientific medico-ethical panics — about “decadent” singing, “decadent” sexual behavior — climaxing in the 1890s and the early 1900s. Psychoanalysis and hysteria emerged as characteristic discourses during the same period — and so, we might add, did interlinked discourses of racial and class hygiene, as those with most to lose rushed to man [*sic*] the redoubts of elite, racial, and gendered power. This period (the 1880s to the 1920s) was also the moment of first-wave feminism; of recording and, towards the end, the sound film, putting the embodiment of voice in question as never before; and of new kinds of voice — from below (music hall, cabaret, and political song) and beyond (the dark continent of black America, not to mention the Jewish diaspora). Exploration of popular voices of this period from this point of view — female blues singers and other powerful “mammy” figures, blackface whites, male impersonators from Vesta Tilley to Marlene Dietrich, torch singers, feminized male heart-throbs (Al Jolson) and closeted puffs (Noel Coward, Cole Porter), yodeling cowboys (Jimmie Rodgers) — would pay rich dividends.

Equally inviting is the period of second-wave feminism, particularly the 1960s and 1970s when feminist critiques were becoming widely disseminated, in an intoxicating if uneasy relationship with the so-called counterculture, but when at the same time emergent rock music was, according to the terms of those very critiques, often re-inscribing the values of an entrenched male chauvinism within its expressive and representational repertoire. This was also

a time marked by class upheaval and resettlement, racial conflict (especially in the United States) and postcolonial struggle (Algeria, Vietnam, Congo, Ireland), and a renewed interest in psychoanalysis, especially re-readings, extensions, and critiques of Freud, by Jacques Lacan and many others. It is to this period that, bearing in mind the need to situate the gender issue within this broader context, I want first to direct my attention.

I will start with a record by the American singer-songwriter, Patti Smith, from her 1975 album *Horses*, a cover of Van Morrison's 1965 garage-rock classic, "Gloria."²² And although the thrust of my approach is Lacanian, I want to reckon with some of the issues in the psychoanalytic account by building the theory in historically evolving stages — as if, one might say, moving through three sessions on the couch, each superintended by a different analyst: Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Slavoj Žižek.

The original "Gloria," by the Belfast R&B band Them, with Van Morrison singing the leering vocal, is a classic example of what became known, after Frith and McRobbie,²³ as "cock-rock," in which a strutting male voice, dripping with demand, imposes his phallic authority on a female object of desire. While there may appear to be a certain passivity about the way he describes her approach to his room and what she does to him, this conforms to the pattern of male scopophilic control (she "make me feel so good"), just as his performance conforms to the cock-rock vocal conventions ("explicit, crude... aggressive... loud, rhythmically insistent, built around techniques of arousal and climax... shouting and screaming... swagger untrammelled by responsibility...").²⁴

Patti Smith's cover, as Mike Daley has pointed out,²⁵ comprehensively reworks the original.

Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine
Meltin' in a pot of thieves/ Wild card up my sleeve
Thick heart of stone/ My sins my own
They belong to me
People say beware/ But I don't care
The words are just/ Rules and regulations to me

I walk in a room/ You know I look so proud
I move in this here atmosphere where/ Anything's allowed
And I go to this here party/ And I just get bored
Until I look out the window see a sweet young thing
Humpin' on the parking meter leaning on the parking meter
Oh she looks so good/ Oh she looks so fine
When I got this crazy feeling/ That I'm gonna make her mine
Put my spell on her

Here she comes/ Walkin' down the street
 Here she comes/ Comin' through my door
 Here she comes/ Crawlin' up my stair
 Here she comes/ Waltzin' through the hall
 In a pretty red dress and
 Oh she looks so good/ Oh she looks so fine
 And I got this crazy feeling/ That I'm gonna make her mine
 And I hear this knockin' at my door/ And I look up at the big tower
 clock and say
 "Oh my god it's midnight/ And my baby is walkin' through the door"
 Layin' on my couch/ She whispers to me
 And I take the big plunge and
 Lord, she was so good/ Lord, she was so fine
 And I'm gonna tell the world/ That I just made her mine
 I said "Darling tell me your name"/ She told me her name
 She whispered to me/ She told me her name
 And the name is/ G-L-O-R-I-A (*Gloria*)

It was at the stadium where twenty thousand girls call their name
 out to me
 Marie Ruth but to tell you the truth/ I didn't hear them I didn't see
 I let my eyes rise to the big tower clock/ And I heard those bells
 chimin' in my heart
 Going ding dong ding dong...

Early the time when you came in my room/ When you whispered
 to me
 And we took the big plunge
 And oh you were so good/ Oh you were so fine
 And I gotta tell the world/ That I made you mine
 G-L-O-R-I-A (*Gloria*)

Oo the tower bells chime/ Ding dong they chime
 I say that Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine
 (*Gloria*) G-L-O-R-I-A (repeat to fade)
 [Italics = band responses]

Only the basic narrative shape together with a few key ideas (to do with feeling good and feeling fine) and the chorus line (G-L-O-R-I-A, *Gloria*) survive from Morrison's lyrics. Smith encases this in new material — actually a version of a poem she had written some years before called "Oath" — which foregrounds the moral dangers of her lustful desires; and she pushes her appropriation of Morrison's vocal persona to an extreme. Daley rightly brings out the way that Smith's vocal extremes — the switching of registers, which

confuses gender norms, the vast range of vocal effects, the barely coherent climaxes — seem both to parody the conventions of cock-rock and appropriate them, thereby inverting the traditional structure of sexual positioning. A straightforwardly feminist critique of oedipal norms, then?

There is no lack of biographical material to fuel a Freudian analysis. (I am putting on hold for the moment the familiar question of how the subject of the biography might be thought to relate to the subject of the song.) Brought up by a mother who was a religious fanatic and an atheistic, blaspheming father whom she adored, Smith rebelled as a teenager against her earlier religiosity, substituting the religions of art and of rock ‘n’ roll, particularly its sexual permissiveness. An unmarried mother at twenty-one, she gave the baby up for adoption — refusing, one might say, the Freudian cure for penis envy. Adolescent hallucinations appear to have mingled religion and sex: “I used to dream about getting fucked by the Holy Ghost,” she later said.²⁶ Although as a child she fiercely resisted feminine type-casting, subsequently, as she struggled to make it in bohemian New York in the years after 1967, she seems to have worked through relationships with a succession of father-figures, including artist and photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, Bob Dylan’s friend Bobby Neuwirth, playwright Sam Shepard, musicians Allen Lanier and John Cale, who produced *Horses*, and, at least in fantasy, Jim Morrison and Jimi Hendrix.²⁷ These men, she herself said, she looked to for “discipline.” Her performance style became celebrated for performative excess and sexual frisson, and among her specialties was the appropriation of songs associated with dominant male singers, not just “Gloria” but The Who’s “My Generation,” the Stones’ “Paint It Black” and Hendrix’s “Hey Joe.” Mapplethorpe’s iconic cover photo for the *Horses* album portrays her ambiguous in gender but undoubtedly masterful and in control. “I write to seduce a chick,” she said, “I write to have somebody.”²⁸ Plenty of evidence here, then, Freud might say, of unresolved oedipal business.

What Freud might have paid less attention to is the wider context. In the early ’70s, a specific New York rock music was coalescing — a sort of arty, avant-garde punk — built on foundations provided by the twisted street-realism of Velvet Underground, with John Cale and Lou Reed to the fore, and the tradition of mostly unknown garage bands of the 1960s, continued by MC5, and Iggy Pop and the Stooges. Backed by the writers of the new rock magazine, *Creem*, with writers like Lester Bangs, Dave Marsh, and Lenny Kaye (who became Patti Smith’s lead guitarist), bands such as Suicide, the New York Dolls, Wayne County, Television, Blondie, and the Ramones put together a provocative antihippie aesthetic characterized by noise, shock, avant-garde excess, and self-proclaimed trash. Important to them also were gender inversion and a playing with sexual marginalities — both Wayne County and the Dolls, for instance, cultivated transvestite imagery — which

were to feed through into later punk's gender-bending. Influential in the wider background were free jazz and the performance art of Fluxus, Lamonte Young, and John Cage — and indeed the whole bohemian New York scene: William Burroughs; Mapplethorpe, celebrating in his photos the gay S&M subculture; Andy Warhol, whose Factory was a center of a “postmoral” philosophy of sexuality and of a brand of performativity — a sort of cool, indeed blank narcissism — clearly influential on Smith.

The attempted shooting of Warhol in 1968 by Valerie Solanas, founder of SCUM (the Society for Cutting Up Men), reminds us that this was also the moment of second-wave feminism. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* had come out in 1963, and, much more radical in tone, Mary Ellman's *Thinking about Women* in 1968, Evelyn Reed's *Problems of Women's Liberation: A Marxist Approach* in 1969, and both Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* in 1970. The women's movement, intricately related to New Left politics and the civil rights struggles, was in ferment, especially in the United States, and was also entwined with the gay rights movement: the Stonewall Riots had taken place as recently as 1969; in 1972 David Bowie came out as a self-proclaimed bisexual, and by the mid-'70s an image of bisexuality was decidedly cool.

Notoriously, of course, feminists had (still have) problems with Freud — specially with his alleged phallocentrism. From this perspective, one can readily interpret Smith's “Gloria” as an attempt to rewrite the Freudian story: that is, as an attempt to invert the traditional relations of sexual power, and to lay claim to an active, quasi-masculine pleasure — with (assuming her vocal persona is unproblematically female — which we should perhaps not assume) a possibly lesbian tonality. (In the light of this latter strand, it is intriguing to note the interplay in the lyric between public and private spaces, whispered trysts and an exultant telling of the world, which it would be easy to interpret in terms of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's “epistemology of the closet.”) And listeners who know their Barthes will then have no difficulty in associating the fracturing of linguistic coherence, the extravagant graininess of the vocality, as symptoms of *jouissance*.²⁹ This analysis would certainly go with the historical grain. The 1966 book *Human Sexual Response*, by Masters and Johnson, setting out the results of their exhaustive research into sexual practice in the United States, seemed to establish “the myth of the vaginal orgasm,” a conclusion seized upon by feminists, including Anne Koedt in her book with that title published in 1970, and Shere Hite in her best-selling *The Hite Report on Female Sexuality* (1976).

But if the clitoris were now the thing, this upset Freud's theory, according to which infantile genital activity common to little boys and girls must give way, in the female, to acceptance of lack and of a proper sexual passivity. In this theory, female adolescent fantasies of masochism or narcissism are

assuaged only when vagina replaces clitoris as focus, and impregnation and motherhood come to provide a substitute fulfillment for the lost phallic object; continuing clitoral activity, by contrast, produces neurosis or perversion. Millett's critique of Freud argues for an "equalling up" of sexual autonomy (later twists to this approach would theorize a "lesbian phallus");³⁰ Greer's proposes rather a softening of penile aggression and a rehabilitation of vaginal authenticity — a sort of generalizing of Eros, after the manner put forward in Herbert Marcuse's sociological revision of Freud, *Eros and Civilisation*, which, in its 1966 second edition, had become a core text for both feminists and the New Left in general.

Either way, on this reading, Patti Smith's "Gloria" has Freud — at least the Freud of caricature — retreating in some confusion; although he is probably muttering as he goes something about hearing signs of anxiety as well as lust in her performance, and speculating about neurotic tendencies.

On this first level of analysis, the exchange taking place — the appropriation — is figured as one simply of a body part. But surely sex happens (also) in the head? For Freud, sexuality is always psycho-sexuality, and the phallus functions on the symbolic as well as the biological level — an approach pushed much further in Lacan's rereading of Freud.³¹ We might ponder whether the analysis so far is adequate to the sense of religious angst in Smith's recording — or indeed, to its representation of sexuality. Is there not something deeper than we have grasped? Desire seems both *overcoded* here — almost hysterically insistent — and *undercoded* — not quite there musically, as if, in line with the Warholian voyeuristic tendencies of the New York avant-garde, it is being "looked at" rather than felt gesturally, "acted out" rather than grooved out. These are terms that might point towards one of Lawrence Kramer's "hermeneutic windows."³² With the help of Lacan, let us see if we can push through it.

Lacan's concept of the phallus is complex and by no means stable. The key point, though, is that, although he does keep a place for the real phallus — the penis as it functions in the register of the Real — in his mature thought this is far less important than the phallus as *image* (in this Imaginary register, it mirrors or reflects back desire) and as *symbol* (in the register of the Symbolic, it comes to stand for the whole structure of Law, the Law of the Signifier). Simplifying, we may locate the phallic image in the sphere of Lacan's *objets petits a* — the famous Freudian part-objects, for Lacan, object-causes of desire; and the phallic symbol in the sphere of the Lacanian Big Other — that radical alterity, the locus of language, culture, law, which precedes all individual subjectivity. The importance of *castration* is as a marker of the paternal threat. This is not necessarily associated with a real person but is a metaphorical function, which Lacan therefore calls the Name-of-the-Father. The threat — whose authority is essentially a sham, because there is no final

signifier in the Big Other — institutes the superego and founds culture itself; and is mapped, in an asymmetrical structure, on to the field of sexual division: the possession or lack of a real phallus is taken retroactively as a figure for the unequal positioning of men and women in the symbolic field. Sexual difference, on this account, is thus entirely contingent — it stands for an inscription of a differential schema of subjection to a phallogocentric law — but it is nonetheless deeply rooted in history.

The figure of *jouissance*, for Lacan, stands for a quasi-orgasmic bliss, a transgressive ecstasy, which it is the role of the normative pleasure-principle inscribed under the sign of castration to forbid, and which is therefore also associated with pain. For Lacan, as for Freud, *jouissance* is essentially phallic; perhaps we may think of this powerful image-fantasy as standing at the head of the whole family of part-objects — *objets petits a* — and in that sense the signs of *jouissance* we noticed earlier in Patti Smith's vocal mark the coursing of her desire around Gloria's "bits." Indeed, "voice" — along with "gaze" — is Lacan's addition to Freud's list of part-objects; and the "object-voice" is defined precisely as that impossible (because inaudible) surplus left over when the symbolic stratum of the vocal stream has been accounted for — the excess, the "indivisible remainder," which can be at best disturbed when the subject is temporarily not at home, the signifiers not in place. To the extent that Smith's vocal performance approaches objectivity in this sense, it is the terrifying *jouissance* associated with an invocation of the object-voice that is at issue. Most revealing in this respect, perhaps, are the high-pitched octave leaps into a sort of female falsetto with which she sprinkles her performance, most notably on the final "A" of her spelling out of Gloria's name; in these "impossible" sounds, "ventriloquized" (to use Koestenbaum's term), the subject we expect to be inhabiting our image of Smith's body definitely seems to be missing, and what unsettles it, we might imagine, is something like the castrato within it.

Applications of the *jouissance* idea usually link it to subversion of patriarchal law — the law of the Symbolic. This is the drift of Barthes's theory of geno-song — and still more of Julia Kristeva's theory of a presymbolic level of "semiotic," which she associates explicitly with a prephallic developmental phase centered on the mother. These applications arguably oversimplify their Lacanian source, even though in his later years Lacan himself came to speculate about the possibility of a specifically feminine *jouissance* — a rather mysterious bliss "beyond the phallus" that women may experience but know nothing of; and that is the point: this *jouissance* can appear only through breaks and slippages in the order of knowledge, only as a fantasy projection. For Lacan, there is no prediscursive reality, no presymbolic body; for him, *jouissance* (what escapes in sexuality) and *signifiance* (what shifts within language) are inseparable, and the excess is therefore radically

undecidable in its orientation. It can subvert the Law but it can also stick to it, the terrifying, superhuman, disembodied voice of the patriarchal god acting precisely as what lends a spurious authority to the dicta of the superego — “*le-père-jouissance*,” as Lacan calls it — the obscene ecstasy of control as such.³³ It seems there are two object voices, “voice against voice,” as Mladen Dolar puts it. Or rather, because we are here in the territory not of complement but of supplement, “the secret is maybe that they are both the same; that there are not two voices, but only one object voice, which cleaves and bars the Other in an ineradicable ‘extimacy’”³⁴ (“extimacy” being Lacan’s coinage for the “outsideness” of the “inside,” in the final analysis, the lack in the big Other that voids its guarantee of self-sufficiency). This means, Lacan speculates, that one might “interpret one face of the Other, the God face, as supported by feminine *jouissance* . . . [and] while this may not make for two Gods, nor does it make for one alone.”³⁵

Even so, we might think, this does not entirely answer all our questions about the meaning of Patti Smith’s “Gloria.” We are left wondering whether the glimpses of object voice mark a *subversion* of the phallic order; or rather an attempted *theft* of the phallus, an *appropriation*; or again, an eruption — between the lines — of feminine *jouissance*; or alternatively, a same-sex masquerade traversing the routes between all of these (on a relatively banal level, the repeating-climax structure of the recording, a common technique with Smith that she herself compared to the rhythms of female orgasm, might be taken to back up the apparently lesbian narrative setting).³⁶ In one sense, these choices can readily be left open for listeners to respond. The ground they sketch out organizes itself around a series of tactics of subversion which may not be mutually exclusive alternatives: *occupation* (of the place of the phallus); *displacement* (of this place to other sites); *disruption* (of the phallic system as such). The issues involved have often been articulated, with acute insight, by Judith Butler; for example: “What is ‘forced’ by the symbolic . . . is a citation of its laws that reiterates and consolidates the ruse of its own force. What would it mean to ‘cite’ the law to produce it differently, to ‘cite’ the law in order to reiterate and co-opt its power, to expose the heterosexual matrix and to displace the effect of its necessity?”³⁷

But although such choices — of interpretation and of political tactic — may be undecidable in the abstract, our excursions around the landscape of Patti Smith’s “Gloria” have exposed something of the forces shaping this field, hence revealing more pressingly what could be at stake. This is a song of desire, but also one of *blasphemy*: the Law-of-the-Father is rejected (or, perhaps, co-opted, the phallus appropriated), but the looming tower, the tolling bells (“ding dong”), the half-time day-of-judgment moment are marks of terror and guilt, and the initial declaration of moral autonomy is delivered in tones that manage to suggest both the cocky, more-than-human

self-staging of the rock god,³⁸ and, it would seem, the barely suppressed sense of trauma marking an awareness of what is being hazarded; the defenses against the void opening up beyond the Law itself are only just maintained. “Extimacy” is also excommunication — even if we cannot be sure whether the abyss is a site of patriarchal anathema or of the horror lying beyond Law *tout court*.

Lacan has been little better received by feminist critics than Freud.³⁹ But psychoanalysis stands not for utopias but for understanding. It is this realism — its “always already” is its reading of original sin — that prompts Lacan’s notorious aphorism, “Woman does not exist:” by which he means to point to the particular subjected status — her unavoidable “bar” or split veiled in the interest of male hegemony — of the discursive figure Woman, qua phantasmatic Absolute, within the phallogocentric symbolic order.⁴⁰ While criticism of this position, on both theoretical and political grounds, is entirely in order (and I will return to it), for the moment this clarity has the merit of enabling us to recognize the sheer weight of *risk* entailed in Patti Smith’s performance. This is no simple claim for equality of sexual pleasure; to challenge the ordering of desire is to challenge also the authority of Law itself.

Does this mean that biology is irrelevant? By no means. Lacan’s point here is precisely that deadlock in the symbolic order — the asymmetrical layout of masculine and feminine modalities — is grafted in an entirely contingent way on to the “facts” of anatomy and reproduction (although these facts, as constructionist commentators have pointed out, are themselves constituted in this graft, as the subject’s bodily morphology takes on a particular, culturally sanctioned identity). Sexual difference is a nonnatural suture sited at this point of disjunction. At one and the same time, this widens the space available to cultural work, including interpretive and political critique, both for Smith and for the listener, and enables a proper respect for the ambition, the sheer *danger*, of the performance.

And what about the listener? So far, the performative dimensions of the recording have been somewhat underplayed; I have discussed “Gloria” essentially as a text — to use a linguistic terminology, as an *énoncé*. But there is also an *énonciation* — albeit, as a recording, this is a complex type, its staging of a quasi-live performance at the same time objectified by a technology that mortifies as it disseminates. There is a literature about this deadening quality of the phonograph, notably Friedrich Kittler’s book *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*: the phonograph, this medium which brings up ghosts, voices of the living dead, disembodied traces of an uncertain humanity, an *énoncé* always carrying the label, “anon”; and, as suggested earlier, it surely can be no coincidence that this medium achieved a cultural centrality over the same period as Freud and Lacan were developing the theory of the part-object, the *objet petit a*, including most importantly here, the object-voice. But this

mortifying effect is to be read always in its dialogue with the vivifying quality of the *énonciation*, the performance-act as such.

In this intricately structured listening experience, then, who speaks? And to whom? And also, who looks? In both Van Morrison's original and Patti Smith's cover, "Gloria" has an intensely filmic quality; the story is told through the scopophilic gaze of the singer. We might recall that voyeurism was very much a theme of New York art-rock, probably derived in part from Warhol, whose description of visual images as "shots" testifies to more than just the standard photo-technical language: It is also a symptom of his general alienated and voyeuristic approach to both art and stardom. In this sense Valerie Solanas's shooting of him can be regarded as an attempted phallic reversal via an example of what Lacan calls a *passage à l'acte*; real gun replaces symbolic photo images, just as, in the Lacanian *acte*, an impulsive, quasi-psychotic action carries the subject temporarily out of the Symbolic altogether into the dimension of the Real, reaching for the status of an object. Although some moments are suggestive (what might happen after the final fade?), "Gloria" as a whole does not go that far — even if, according to one biographer, Smith welcomed the suggestion that she might become a "sex-object."⁴¹ Lacan makes a distinction between "act," where the subject qua subject goes missing, exiting the theatrical set-up of reality, and "acting out," which takes place within the scene. Smith's track has very much the structure of *fantasy* as Freud and Lacan describe it: a quasi-theatrical staging of a scene within which the subject's unconscious desire is obsessively acted out, and which functions as a defense against trauma — veiling the unavoidable insatiability of desire, ultimately the lack in the Other.

To explore this further, we turn to our third shrink, Slavoj Žižek; but, because much of his writing focuses on analyses of film, he will probably take us for our consultation to the cinema (not inappropriately, given that in a way this darkened fantasy-space relocates the individual psychoanalytic transference as a mass cultural practice). Critical theory has been here before, notably in Laura Mulvey's classic but much-criticized article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,"⁴² in which Mulvey draws on Lacan's account of the origins of the Imaginary order in the child's so-called "mirror phase" to offer a gendered theory of the pleasures of the cinematic gaze in terms of relationships of identification and scopophilia. But Žižek, like Lacan, insists that fantasy, including film fantasy, inscribes images in structures of meaning as well as identification; and that this operation must be understood in terms of the interplay of *énoncé* and *énonciation*, and its role in the splitting of the subject. *Énoncé* writes the subject into existence through the structures of the text, while *énonciation* points to the site from where the unconscious speaks — the place where the leftovers of the subject's encounters puts identity at risk.

In a first approach, we could draw on Brian Currid's adaptation of Barthes's theory of photographic pleasure in his book *Camera Lucida*, for his discussion of house music.⁴³ For Barthes, the pleasures of authorship (the Operator) and of reception (the Spectator), which in any case implicate and configure each other, are "triangulated" by a third position, that of the Spectrum, "that which is photographed, which serves as the ghostly materiality of the pleasures of both the Operator and the Spectator."⁴⁴ Currid gives as an example of Spectrum pleasure the "spectacular" consumption of the house club scene (the interplay of authoriality and listener/dancer participation being conceived as a "cruising of the other in the space of the dance floor"),⁴⁵ and compares this with Kobena Mercer's analysis of Robert Mapplethorpe's photos of black men, where an initial fetishistic structure is supplemented by a deconstructive "third gaze" from the position of a black queer.

In "Gloria," the interplay of voices (both vocal and instrumental) and the gazes they suggest can, at one level, certainly be thought of as helping to put in place the structure of the fantasy scene, constructing that symbolic fiction which we know as reality, speaking for characters to imaginary listeners whose putative replies can be felt as citing those normative responses which in turn help constitute the stage from which the voices speak. (This might represent a circulation of the phallus.) And we could then imagine a position further beyond this, a metalevel, from where this dialogue is queered. But arguably, Currid's interpretations overpositivise this position, falling slightly short of the full scope of Barthes's suggestion — the *objectivity* of the Spectrum (which is therefore also spectral). On this level, that of object-voice, the voices in "Gloria," and their imagined visual positions, disrupt the fiction of the fantasy-scene. With Lacan, Žižek argues that, as objects, both voice and gaze occupy a place from which the subject is always already excluded, simply by virtue of his partiality of positioning; rather than a "thing that sees" or a "thing that sounds," he has become an "I," a looking, vocalizing subject. Žižek's advance is to suggest that these two partial objects can supplement each other, the one filling the hole left in the field of the other, acting as the other's *objet petit a*: "we hear things," he says, "because we cannot see everything,"⁴⁶ and vice versa. And in film, he argues, this can happen when the structure of montage — the network of intersecting gazes — necessarily implies a missing space — what has been excluded — which may be filled by an uncanny, unexpected voice, a sound that does not belong, or even a voice we strive to hear but cannot.⁴⁷

It is easy enough to hear the interplay of Smith and the boys in the band as they combine to name Gloria in terms of an exchange of voiced gazes: a phallic exchange, centered on their joint, almost pornographic objectification of Gloria.⁴⁸ In terms of film theory, we expect the boys to come on as though off-stage — authoritative deployers of disembodied voiceover — and this is

indeed how their measured “Gloria” riff strikes us; while Smith’s gabbled, falsetto-ing responses insistently raise the question of how to see her (castrated?) body. But where is Gloria herself? She is “veiled” (as women should be) and silent (or almost: she whispers — or so we are told; that is, not to us). In the network of “camera angles” created by the exchange of voices and instrumental figures throughout the song, she is present only in her gestures — a moving point or “spot,” covering a hole in the recording space, a hole waiting, perhaps, for its voice. Is she, then, the surplus left over from the montage process, her voice traceable only in the senseless scream stratum of Smith’s vocal, or alternatively in the force of her own voice’s almost palpable absence — as that silent scream which, for Žižek, represents object-voice in its purest form? Or, is she to be read, again within Smith’s vocal itself, but simply as a symptom of narcissistic (perhaps homosexual) fantasy; and, by extension, as the sound of voiceless feminine *jouissance*? (The “big plunge” is seen — that is, described — but not heard, in an inversion of the patriarchal norm, which generally authenticates female orgasm through sounds, in both porn and dance music.)⁴⁹ Or, given that the boys unveil her, speak for her, name her, is she standing for the passages of subjectivity itself?

Silverman, writing about the (male) voice-off in classic cinema, talks about its “theological status.”⁵⁰ Žižek, following Hegel, regards the naming power of language as the very mechanism whereby “pure self” — the void that represents the “night of the world” — moves into the symbolic order and assumes the trappings of subjectivity.⁵¹ But what frightening figure is unveiled, and where does it live? Behind this process, it would appear, sanctioning it through the figure of castration, stands the Big N, the Name-of-the-Father, which Smith tries to, but cannot, speak coherently, which the recording makes to fragment and to circulate inside and outside of the (gendered) subject, but which is written unequivocally in the song title in an appropriate theologic: “Gloria in excelsis deo.”⁵²

In a song called “Ain’t It Strange” from the 1976 album *Radio Ethiopia*, Smith challenges God: she sings, “Turn around God, make a move!” In an interview she said of this, “I wanna be God’s daughter. No . . . I wanna be God’s mistress . . . I wanna be fucked by God. Not just once, a thousand times.” On January 26, 1977, while singing this song — “its after a part where I spin like a dervish and I say ‘Hand of God I feel the finger, Hand of God I start to whirl, Hand of God I don’t get dizzy, Hand of God I do not fall now.’” — she fell dangerously off the stage, seriously damaged her neck, and was laid up for three months. “I fell . . . I did feel the finger push me right over . . .”⁵³ And her music started to become more subdued, less turbulent, more feminine.

In 1979 Smith retired and married ex-MC5 guitarist Fred “Sonic” Smith. She raised a family and lived quietly, in apparent domestic tranquility, for some years amid persistent rumors of how she was subservient to Fred,

deferred to him in everything, and even whispers that she suffered domestic violence.

In terms of conventional therapy, this might look like some sort of cure. In terms of gender politics, it looks like a relapse. From the point of view of the analysis presented here, though, its most important meaning is surely to signal the pressures attendant on Smith's challenge and the difficulties, at the level of localized cultural activity, of sustaining this challenge. Yet it is worth adding to this halfway judgment Judith Butler's broader challenge to the foundations of the Lacanian position.⁵⁴ While castration stands as a powerful metaphor for the prohibitions necessary to human sociality and culture, for Butler, Lacan's mapping of sexual division — itself universalized out of historical contingency — to a master-slave dialectic taken from Hegel serves to immobilize identity and meaning in a "structure of religious tragedy" rooted in Old Testament guilt and played out between nostalgia for a lost plenitude on the one hand and a masochistic idealization of failure before the Law on the other. This morality play — which Lacan, if guilty, would appear to share with Patti Smith — should, Butler argues, come under a Nietzschean critique, in which a deconstructive will-to-power uncovers the perversions underlying the creation of an externalized theocratic Law: an intoxicating prospect, no doubt, but one where the outcome of Nietzsche's own project, not so much in itself as for what it may symbolize of the moral and epistemological crises afflicting modernity as a whole, might give us reason for caution.

Patti Smith is not only female but white (and Van Morrison is not only male but white);⁵⁵ yet "Gloria," in both versions, calls up references to African-American music.⁵⁶ How, if at all, might this affect our understanding of its sexual politics, and how might we position this racial dimension within the cultural economy of the period? Van Morrison and his band, Them, emerged out of British R&B, and this movement, as well as cock rock as a whole, in its sexual politics as well as in many other respects, looked back to African-American models, particularly the reformulation of blues machismo carried through in postwar Chicago, most influentially by Muddy Waters ("I Can't Be Satisfied," "Mannish Boy," "Hoochie Coochie Man," "I'm Ready," etc.). Patti Smith, brought up in a predominantly black area in New Jersey, worshipped American performers in the same lineage (Hendrix, Morrison) as well as the Rolling Stones⁵⁷ — although the New York white rock scene to which she came to belong developed a notable ambivalence towards black influences, especially to rhythmic grind and groove (widely thought in the white popular culture as a whole to offer models of sexual freedom); and this ambivalence was part in fact of its critical stance towards traditional gender representations. The "hermeneutic window" offered by her "Gloria" recording, with its

under/overcoding of sexual desire, probably has its source in this problematic, and this may provide the essential context to the ambivalences we have located in the performance.

Relations between the black civil rights and feminist movements in this period were much debated but difficult — and indeed in much of the Black Power movement of the time attitudes to gender roles and sexual politics were equally as unreconstructed as in most of the contemporary white counterculture: the message for black women, according to bell hooks, was that they should “breed warriors for the revolution.”⁵⁸ At the same time, the idea of a structural correspondence between the subordinate positions of blacks on the one hand and women on the other (not to mention homosexuals) was widespread, cropping up in such varied sources as Marcuse, sociologist Gunnar Myrdal, feminist readings of Genet, and John Lennon (in his song, “Woman is the Nigger of the World,” from 1972).⁵⁹ When Patti Smith took on a song like “Gloria,” therefore, she was inescapably engaging a point in the contemporary culture that was particularly fraught, as well as a long history in which specific patterns of African-American gender roles and sexual attitudes were inextricably entangled with white investments in images of black sexuality. The uncertainties over sexual representation in the recording speak to the freight carried in this engagement as well as the specific ambivalences foregrounded in New York rock — just as my own silence so far on the racial dimension no doubt reflects a linked anxiety.

Breaking this silence is difficult. If Woman is, according to Lacan, the symptom of Man, then Black Woman, from this perspective, could be regarded as the symptom not only of Man but of Black Man and, with variants, of White Man too (and indeed of White Woman). Black female voices come bearing the marks of the stereotypic positions in which their history has located them, and it is just as foolish to ignore the discursive force of this positioning as to fail to engage the deconstructive efforts provided by feminist and race-theoretic critiques. Hortense Spillers acknowledges the inescapability of the images — “Let’s face it. I am a marked woman . . . ‘Peaches’ and ‘Brown Sugar,’ ‘Sapphire’ and ‘Earth Mother,’ . . . [etc.] . . . a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments . . . My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented.”⁶⁰ — even as she notes that this is the effect of a *mis*-naming. And in a similar way, Nina Simone in her song “Four Women” paints in the historical realities behind the stereotypic figures — “Aunt Sarah,” “Sweet Thing,” “Saphronia,” and “Peaches.”

It seems hardly possible to discuss Simone’s voice — that large, rich chest voice, resonant, sometimes enveloping, sometimes intimidating, throughout her entire range — without resorting to the trope of “maternity.” It is not just a question of voice quality but also of the cultural lineage centered around figures of the powerful black matriarch, which, as manifested through sing-

ers, runs from Gertrude “Ma” Rainey and Bessie Smith, through “Big Mama” Thornton, Rosetta Tharpe and Mahalia Jackson, to Aretha Franklin and Simone herself. As these names suggest, the lineage has both secular and sacred (blues and gospel) wings; and Simone was often described in both hieratic terms (“high priestess of soul”) and Amazonian metaphors (Bernice Johnson Reagon, herself an African-American singer, described the “warrior energy” of her sound).⁶¹ But if this is a maternal sound, it is one of a very specific sort, both from the point of view of cultural history, and musically. There is always an *edge* to Simone’s voice as well as a resonant power: one is not allowed to just sink into it, and it certainly does not summon up fantasies of comfort, safety, or womblike bliss. At the same time, on a more generic level, the “powerful cultural fantasy” of the maternal voice, “first voice of love,” prefiguring and potentially subverting the phallic authority of the symbolic sphere, has been foregrounded by feminist psychoanalysis as a politically empowering trope for women.⁶² Within the matrix formed through these intersecting discourses, and against the background of Patti Smith’s ambivalent relationship with the phallus, it becomes intriguing to consider Nina Simone in the context of the function of what Lacanian psychoanalysis has termed the “phallic mother.”

The story of an African-American matriarchate is well entrenched, with sociological research apparently confirming populist stereotype, the message widely accepted within black culture as well as white. As a result of the slavery system and experience, backed up subsequently by the economic effects of racial discrimination — so the story goes — black women were forced to take on huge responsibilities, both as workers and in the household, while their men were on the one hand often separated and exiled from them, and on the other demeaned and emasculated by white oppression. With men often a weak influence or absent, women assumed a headship role in the family — and in strong versions of the myth, they appear as a castrating force. For conventional political wisdom in the 1960s, encapsulated in Daniel Moynihan’s widely influential *The Negro Family* (1965), the moral to draw was that the problem of the “dysfunctional” African-American family could be solved only if it acceded much more to the norms of (white) patriarchy. And black (male) radicals largely agreed; indeed, many black women seem also to have done so.

Black nationalists, needing to reject the heritage of slavery, accepted the historicity — and also the destructive effects — of the matriarchate, constructed a masculinist myth of Africa, and stressed the need for strong black men. Angela Davis, herself a revolutionary closely involved with the Black Panther Party, was forced to confront its masculinism and, in her letters to the imprisoned George Jackson, challenged his male chauvinism.⁶³ Amiri Baraka stressed the need to address the “separation” of black men

and black women not through the “devilish” idea of “equality” but through “complementarity” (“the divine complement the black woman is for her man”) — a complementarity rooted in “nature.”⁶⁴ Malcolm X justified his time as a pimp as a way of asserting his masculinity. And Eldridge Cleaver called for the rape of white women as an “insurrectionary act”; “four hundred years minus my balls” must come to an end: “we shall have our manhood.” It is Cleaver who offers the clearest example of how such “radicalism” could accede to both the myth of the emasculating black matriarch and that of the super-virile black male. In “The Allegory of the Black Eunuchs,” he lays the blame at the door of the “nigger bitch [who] seems to be full of steel, granite — hard and resisting, not soft and submissive [like the white woman]”; and in response to the white man’s confident expression of superior (brain) power — “My prick will excel your rod... [your] big Nigger dick” — asserts a Lawrenceian faith that his phallic power will prevail, “if I never betray[...] the law of my rod.”⁶⁵

Clearly this late 1960s moment was one of extreme racio-sexual tension. But it was also the moment when feminist critique of precisely the positions outlined above began.⁶⁶ Angela Davis was driven by her militant opposition to black patriarchalist attitudes to embark on historical research into African-American women under slavery, and first published on the subject in 1971.⁶⁷ Her example was followed a few years later by bell hooks.⁶⁸ For both writers, black women’s resilience was resistant, not compliant; they held families together rather than acting as agents of their disruption, and were forced by economic circumstances to become community leaders. Fault for the plight of their men should be laid not with them but squarely with white racism. Nevertheless, the degree of strength and relative autonomy exercised by many women, no matter how historically contingent, was real: hooks approvingly quotes Maya Angelou on how African-American women’s social leadership roles create a distinction between black and white American communities; and Davis, with similar approval, quotes the eminent African-American leader and philosopher, W. E. B. Dubois: “Our women in black had freedom contemptuously thrust upon them.”⁶⁹ But these were not signs of a matriarchate, for which the requirements of social and economic power were quite lacking. Rather, what we see is a pattern of gender relations that is in one way an inversion of the white norm and in another its diseased extension (we might say that here the Law-of-the-Father is over-determined by the Law-of-the-Man), with the matriarchy theory developed as an ideological distortion to cover for this situation.

Despite their critiques, both Davis and hooks see the feminist potential of the historically constituted role of African-American women. In a more recent work, on female blues singers, Davis links this tradition of relative economic independence with the capacity of Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith to

act as social role models — “Sexuality and travel provided the most tangible evidence of freedom”⁷⁰ — and with the vocal modalities of their songs. By this time she is also prepared to connect a gender politics that was “radically different from those operating in the dominant culture” with the Mother trope; she quotes jazz musician Danny Barker on Ma Rainey: “Ma Rainey was *Ma* Rainey. When you said ‘Ma,’ that means mother. ‘Ma’ that means the tops. That’s the boss, the shack bully of the house, Ma Rainey. She’d take charge. ‘Ma.’ Ma Rainey’s coming to town, the boss blues singer. And you respect Ma, Grand ‘Ma,’ my ‘Ma,’ and ma ‘Ma.’ That’s ‘Ma.’ That’s something you respect. You say mother. That’s the boss of the shack. Not papa, ma-ma.”⁷¹

But it is Hortense Spillers who pursues the political potential of these links most imaginatively. Accepting the thrust of the Davis/hooks critique, she nevertheless faces the effects clearly: “the ‘Negro family’ has no Father to speak of — his Name, his Law, his Symbolic function... and it is... the fault of the Daughter, or the female line. [But] This stunning reversal of the castration thematic, displacing the Law of the Father to the territory of the Mother as Daughter” offers fruitful ground for the cultivation of radical possibilities, both for men and women:

the African-American male has been touched... by the *mother*, handed by her in ways that he cannot escape, and in ways that the white American male is allowed to temporize by a fatherly reprieve... the African-American woman, the mother, the daughter, becomes historically the powerful and shadowy evocation of a cultural synthesis long evaporated — the Law of the Mother — only and precisely because legal enslavement removed the African-American male not so much from sight as from *mimetic* view, as a partner in the prevailing social fiction of the father’s name, the Father’s law.

Spillers’s program is to build on this historically contingent heritage, to seek “the *insurgent* ground as female social subject. Actually *claiming* the monstrosity (of a female with the potential to ‘name’), which her culture imposes in blindness.”⁷² I want to suggest that within Nina Simone’s musical trajectory is to be found something analogous to the conjoining of race and gender critiques initiated by Angela Davis and carried on by bell hooks and Hortense Spillers — and even, perhaps, something comparable as well to Spillers’s adventurous political project.

Clearly we have moved close here to the territory marked by the psychoanalytic concept of the “phallic mother” — dangerous territory indeed. When Peter Antelyes writes about the “red hot mama” of the 1920s, exemplified by Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, as “‘red hot’ in her sexual appetite, and maternal in her authority, her allure, and her dangerously enveloping possessiveness,” it is hard not to feel the force of familiar patriarchal fantasies; and when

he quotes musicians Art Hodes and Danny Barker to the effect that Bessie Smith “don’t need a mike; she don’t use one . . . she could fill up Carnegie Hall . . . she could fill it up from her muscle and she could last all night,” the conflation of voice, mike, and (phallic) muscle is equally telling.⁷³ As Judith Butler points out, male anxieties around figures of phallicized femininity often construct the phallic mother misogynistically as a terrifying, devouring (castrating) force;⁷⁴ and mothers who “will not let go” are also implicated strongly in homophobic panics (although this does prevent the “omnipotent, unknowing mother” assuming, perhaps by way of reaction, a deeply rooted function in gay culture).⁷⁵

For psychoanalytic theory, though, the phallic mother does have an important, albeit circumscribed role to play in “normal” (heterosexual) development. Lacan’s view of the preoedipal stage, the initial phase of the mother-infant relationship (which he often calls the “first time” of the Oedipus complex), appears to grow out of his interest in the picture of the mother as a devouring, engulfing force developed by object relations theorists such as Melanie Klein. In this first stage, the mother’s attempt and failure to satisfy her desire through the child, and the child’s attempt and failure to satisfy that desire, sets up a reciprocal movement that Lacan characterizes as the circulation of an imaginary phallus. The mother seems to the child to be omnipotent — at this point she is the Law — yet she is also patently lacking (otherwise she would not desire). The entire game can be thought of as an oscillation of having and being the phallus for the other (a binary which, according to Lacan, will later come to settle, albeit asymmetrically, on the partners of the heterosexual couple). In any case, this phase is destined to come to an end, through the intervention of the (imaginary) father — that is, via the incest taboo — who “castrates” the mother (that is, forbids access to and by the child), enabling the child’s entry into the social (symbolic) world. From this point of view, later appeals to images of a maternal phallus can only have the status of regressive fantasy.

Arguably, if ironically, feminist constructions of a presymbolic maternal voice offer no challenge here. According to Silverman, whether such constructions are marked positive (Guy Rosolato’s “sonorous envelope,” Didier Anzieu’s “bath of sounds,” Julia Kristeva’s “mobile receptacle,” or *chora*) or negative (entrapment in “umbilical night”: Michel Chion), they stand together in infantilizing the mother (displacing childish babble to her), and transferring her symbolic power to the father, whose intervention is installed as an originary moment restricting the role of the preoedipal phase to what becomes forever lost, and that of the mother to a purely foundational function (invisible, underneath the ground on which the Symbolic is constructed).⁷⁶ Kristeva in particular is taken to task for positioning the presymbolic *chora* where, whatever its disruptive potential subsequently, it must constantly be

abjected by the mature subject (although we might also note in passing the resonance between her notion of a “homosexual facet” to the “choric fantasy,” that is, a narcissistic transfer of desire/knowledge between the female generations via the cycle of birth, and Spillers’s thematizing of the “female line”).⁷⁷ By contrast, Silverman draws attention to the *symbolic work* performed at the preoedipal stage, particularly by the voice. Its role as acoustic mirror, circulating aural images between mother and infant, initiates the identity work subsequently taken up on the visual level in Lacan’s mirror stage (and one wonders how this relatively unrestricted circulation of voice, later of course to be much more tightly disciplined and gendered, relates to circulation of the imaginary phallus).⁷⁸ The maternal voice, considered as an *objet a*, represents an early splitting of self, standing for rupture as well as bliss, and hence functioning as an early “voice-off” (in Silverman’s theory of film voices, the abstracting, disembodied voice-off will normatively be identified with a (phallic) male).⁷⁹ And even the superego, already understood by Freud as formed through the internalization of authoritative voices (in contrast to the spatial imaginary associated with formation of the ego), can be regarded as beginning its life in the imperatives the child absorbs from the (phallic) mother.⁸⁰ Small wonder, perhaps, that the “voice of the law” we detected in the vocal *jouissance* of Patti Smith’s “Gloria” proved so difficult to gender!

Silverman’s critique is congruent with several other feminist receptions of Lacan. Judith Butler, for instance, focuses on the way that Lacan fixes the *process* of castration, conceived metaphorically as the figure of lack, hence as the inescapable gateway into subjectivity, to a specific *moment*, which, through its oedipal structure, fastens subject-position inexorably and asymmetrically to a heterosexual binarism. He does this, she argues, through an unacknowledged slippage of registers, from (real) penis to the (imaginary) phallus, as guarantor of bodily totality, and then to the (symbolic) phallus, as “privileged signifier”; “what operates under the sign of the symbolic may be nothing other than precisely that set of imaginary effects which have become naturalized and reified as the law of signification,” for “by changing the name of the penis to ‘the phallus’ . . . the part status of the former [is] phantasmatically and synechdochally overcome through the inauguration of the latter as ‘the privileged signifier.’”⁸¹

But if the phallus/castration matrix is regarded as the effect of a continual performatively maintained imaginary (which is Butler’s position), then it becomes potentially mobile, as between genders and sexualities, as among imagined body parts, and as instantiated in a variety of moments. And this, in a way, is no more than to follow up the hints in Lacan himself: the metaphoric (rather than purely developmental) status of castration is clear, and so is that of the Law-of-the-Father (it is a “paternal metaphor,” which is not

dependent on any actual father). Indeed, the circulation of the phallus in the preoedipal phase implies, for Lacan, that the symbolic father is already operative there; thus (for example) the *fort-da* game, which Freud interprets as the young child's dramatization of the mother's absence, is seen by Lacan as an early (preoedipal) point of entry into the structure of signifying lack which is constitutive of the symbolic itself. These materials provide internal deconstructive pointers, one might think, although this potential is at the same time disavowed by Lacan's core insistence on the importance of the oedipal moment, which forever ties (hetero)sex and symbolic positioning together. It is a matter of interpretative choice whether one sees this disavowal as a phallogocentric relapse (perhaps with theocratic overtones, as Butler does) or a "realistic" acceptance of a relative universal grounded, however contingently, in anthropo-historical phylogeny.

Whichever way that argument goes, we are certainly entitled by the debate to envisage the return of the phallic mother from her dismissal as no more than regressive fantasy, and to put her, very definitely, in question. And the point is in the question: it is a matter not only of how, in what guise, with what associations and authority, this persona might appear, might construct herself (including her voice(s)), in relation to her others, but also how the sex of this persona is articulated with other markers of identity — here most especially with race. If, tententially, "the symbolic is not merely organized by 'phallic power' but by a 'phallicism' that is centrally sustained by racial anxiety and sexualized rituals of racial purification,"⁸² how would this articulation play out in the work of an African-American "ethnic maternal" voice fighting both to confront and to draw sustenance from a collective history deeply embedded in quite specific racial as well as gender myths?

There is suggestive biographical material in Nina Simone's life and career (although one would not want, any more than in the case of Patti Smith, to allow suggestion to turn into psychologistic explanation: I am trying to position both life and music, considered as performed texts, within a set of partly intersecting, partly overlapping, constitutive discourses).⁸³ Its trajectory can be regarded as being articulated around motifs of ambition, success, and failure: from a middle-class family, she learned classical piano and aimed at the concert platform, failed, became an entertainer, succeeded, aligned her work with the burgeoning civil rights/black nationalist movement, which by the end of the 1960s seemed to her a failure, moved abroad, where, for the rest of her life, a combination of exile, neo-Africanism and diva-like remoteness seems to have resulted both in a sense of personal confusion and a reputation as difficult and demanding. These motifs were mediated by an oscillation of private and public energies: a succession of relationships and sought-after relationships with men intersected (at least in her self-construction) with her discovery and assertion of public authority (musical and political: it was a

revelation when she realized the political utility of the “power and spirituality,” the “state of grace,” she could create in performance, and she compares this to her memory of revivalist church services in childhood).⁸⁴

These processes were always mobilized in contexts structured by gender and race: for example, her rejection as a piano student by the elite Curtis Institute was, she was convinced, motivated by racial prejudice; and by the early 1960s she “started thinking about myself as a black person in a country run by white people and a woman in a world run by men.”⁸⁵ Class was important too. Starting out with a “superior” attitude to popular music and the venues and audiences she encountered (they are “dumb,” “stupid,” “disrespectful”), she realized with her first political songs, such as “Mississippi Goddam” (1963), that she could direct this “dirty” quality into political persuasion; and this propaganda for “freedom,” this pulpit as it were, this “insurgent ground” where, to recall Hortense Spillers’s words, she claimed “the monstrosity of a female with the potential to ‘name,’” made the music more worthy of her respect, even, than the elite music she preferred aesthetically.⁸⁶ All this seems to have resulted in a persona that was intensely *mobile*, even marginal — she crossed musical, social, and racial borders readily — but the sense of directed self-production is tinged with regret: “Sometimes I think the whole of my life has been a search to feel the one place I truly belong.”⁸⁷

Simone’s mother was a powerful figure — a church minister — but also somewhat forbidding; she found it difficult to acknowledge Nina’s success, and as a child, Nina felt she lacked mothering, regarding her piano teacher as a substitute “white momma.”⁸⁸ It seems possible that the melancholia induced by this early withdrawal from the maternal scene resulted in a phantasmatic self-identification with the lost (internalized) phallic mother, especially because her father, though worshipped by Nina when a child, appears to have been an at times remote and even “weak” presence. Later, Simone “disowned” him after overhearing him apparently lying about the centrality of his family role; and an almost Old Testament ruthlessness stopped her from responding to his deathbed appeals to see her again: “I was helpless because of the vow I had made, the vow I had to obey.”⁸⁹ The personal and the political ran together as she contemplated exile: “America was Daddy, and he got under my skin.”⁹⁰ Reconciliation came eventually, at least with Daddy (or rather his “spirit”), but only with the intervention of an African “witchdoctor.” Meanwhile, she still got swept off her feet by other men, for example the seventy-year-old Liberian C. C. Dennis (who told her, “In Africa men are the boss,” to which she responded that “Faced with a man like this, I had no choice; he was my Liberian Rhett Butler”),⁹¹ though at the same time they never lasted: “Malcolm [X]; Martin [Luther King]; Daddy; C. C.; all the greatest men I have known have died, taken away before I was ready to leave them.” “Daddy,” she concludes,

“would be my only companion until a man his equal came along, and we both knew that meant I might have to wait a long, long time.”⁹²

During this wait (which in truth lasted the whole of Nina Simone’s career), she filled the gap with a “vocal phallus,” circulated between herself and her listeners; but this, as the ambivalences of her life suggest, could never be more than part of a story within which the figures of a normative sexual-symbolic matrix constantly exerted their own pressures. The qualities of the voice itself are pretty well a constant, traversing a wide range of material. Much of this was composed by others (often, almost by definition, male), so this transfer can be regarded as already a kind of authorial gesture, pulling the material into her own orbit where it very much circles round this voice. But the material comes from right across the spectrum of African-American genres — spiritual, gospel, blues, jazz, soul — and to some extent, too, from black-influenced genres (popular standards, rock), building up a sort of composite black music tradition on which her persona sits, drawing on the authority invested in that history and in the contribution to it of strong women singers.

Simone’s usual performing style produces an intensely *focused* tone with minimal (sometimes effectively no) vibrato (which is usually a vibrato as much of rhythm as of pitch). The effect is to center the performance on her, claim attention, demand the “camera” — and for listeners there is, one might think, nothing to do except to return this gaze. Although in one sense this might seem to entrap the voice in a normative position — adapting Kaja Silverman’s model of cinematic voice, we could see the voice as fastened to (our strong imaginary projection of) Simone’s body, contained there in the standard female performance position, ceding ultimate authority to an unseen, disembodied male source — Simone’s refusal to play along with the usual concomitants of this structure (markers of feminine lack, subjection, or a mindless erotic) suggest that an inversion is in train: a phantasmal investment in a quasi-maternal *objet a*, which, as it sites the phallus in another place, the mouth, might also be thought to cite the dynamic of what Judith Butler calls the “lesbian phallus.”

Indeed, the edge in the voice, forever standing in the way of maternal envelopment, is also continually to be reckoned with: this rattle in the throat, this grating in the vocal stream. On one level, this can be read as a mark of a refusal — a refusal of complete identification with the material; it opens a space for reflexivity, for critique, but also for representations of dissatisfaction, anxiety, loss, rupture. It is this that stamps Simone as a “jazz” or “blues” singer (even though she objected strongly to the label “jazz singer” on the grounds that this typecast her racially: the refusal, then, is doubled), rather than a more straight-ahead “soul” singer. On another level, this edge can be read in relation to the inheritance of phallic motherhood, that is, as the remainder

of an old ejaculate, a marker of penetration, tongue and teeth working within the (quasi-vaginal) mouth. If we are hearing a maternal voice, it is one whose antipaternal music, “at once dispersed and unary,” according to Barthes, is turned in the direction of critique, becoming — as Barbara Engh’s extrapolation from Barthes has it — “distorted, displaced, noisy, activated, put into discourse.”⁹³

What is in play seems to be a grating of the Symbolic against a too easy completion of an Imaginary, but interpretatively what is at issue is where this phallic content is located and how it is deployed — and the latter condition varies with the musical material. In ballads and torch songs, for example, where Simone is placed in relatively conventional feminine positions (“I Loves You Porgy,” “Ne Me Quitte Pas”),⁹⁴ the impetus is towards a realizing, a making-real, of our fictive expectations — bringing home to us, as good jazz singers do, what this ache of desire and lack feels like. In political songs like the excoriating “Mississippi Goddam,” by contrast, the edgy authority is turned in the direction of political work. The historical irony in this song is hard to miss: this is a “show tune” — Simone tells the (live) audience this, and it is confirmed by the soft-shoe shuffle of the piano vamp, summoning up images of blackface Uncle Toms and accommodating mammies. But the drive of the vocal performance, with stabbingly clear diction and unapologetic blasphemy (“Goddam”), performs out an ethico-political inversion, and this is pursued to the extent that at times her normal unity of vocal persona fragments momentarily, or rather collectivizes, demanding antiphonal responses from the band (“too slow!” they shout, in relation to faint-hearted moves towards racial equality). What happens here, it would seem, as our identification oscillates, is a circulation of (maternal) Law around the introjection/disavowal chain typically put in place by superego demands. (How many mothers have not commanded “Hurry up! You’re too slow!” The disavowal may be heard in the audience’s embarrassed laughter.)

There are many songs in Simone’s repertoire where this *vocal command* is directed in more straight-forwardly positive ways to (often cultural-) political ends. Many fall into what may be termed her black power style, which draws on soul-jazz models (“Work Song,” “I’m Going Back Home,” “Gimme Some”), and the whole category is grounded culturally in a display of mastery of the tradition: spiritual (“Take Me to the Water”); blues (“Backlash Blues,” “The Gin House Blues”); even “Africa” (“See-Line Woman” is an ecstatic hymn to black female sexuality which brings together minor-pentatonic holler, similar flute responses, vocal antiphony and 3+3+2 dance-rhythm percussion: it is as if Simone had been listening to the “neo-African” fife-and-drum dance music that Alan Lomax had recorded a few years earlier in the Mississippi hill-country).⁹⁵

Sometimes this *négritude* style is explicitly coded to “freedom.” This is the case in her version of Billy Taylor’s “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to

Be Free” and in her appropriation of “Ain’t Got No — I Got Life” from the rock musical, *Hair*. The latter is particularly interesting here, considered as a parable of new, politicized identity-formation. After listing all the possessions and social goods that she lacks, Simone enumerates what she does have, namely the parts of her body; and taken together — and given life by galvanic rhythm and gospel phrasing — these add up to, precisely, *life*, or, as she immediately translates this, freedom. But how exactly is this body (this life, freedom) to be grasped? After all, it is not really there, in the sounds — and nor was it really there, for the audience, in live performance (for it was “displayed,” acted out). Judith Butler is helpful: “The linguistic categories that are understood to ‘denote’ the materiality of the body are themselves troubled by a referent that is never fully or permanently resolved or contained by any given signified. Indeed, that referent persists only as a kind of absence or loss . . . This loss takes place in language as an insistent call or demand that, while *in* language, is never fully *of* language.”⁹⁶ The song lyric works like a mirror-scene, in which the *corps morcelé* is gradually brought into an apparent whole: even though the genitalia, indeed none of the traditionally eroticized body parts (except, significantly perhaps, the mouth), or even any definitely gendered body parts, are named. The completion of the body-image, its sense of reality, is an illusion brought about by the gaze, which the recording process attracts squarely on to Simone; but the focal point of that gaze is of course the *voice*, which here performs the phallic gesture of control and unification. It is an acoustic mirror that carries out the conjuring trick, gendering an identity (which, as Butler reminds us, also implies a loss of a possible identity), and assuring us that in this case the body in question is not castrated.⁹⁷

In this repertoire, Simone appears to offer an authority that a Patti Smith could only pitch for. But at least as interesting are the songs where the ambivalences inherent in the maternal legacy come to the fore. I will concentrate on two stunning, and contrasting, recordings: “I Put a Spell on You” (1965) and “Sinner Man” (1967).

Like Patti Smith’s “Gloria,” “I Put a Spell on You” is a female cover of a male R&B song, in this case written and first recorded by Screaming Jay Hawkins in 1956.⁹⁸ Hawkins’s song is itself a parody (to a manic extreme) of a strand of “magic phallicism” deeply embedded in blues history, a strand which in the 1950s was most strikingly cultivated by Muddy Waters (“Got My Mojo Working” “Hoochie Coochie Man”; not surprisingly, this rhetoric is normally male-oriented — although there is at least one female example, in Bessie Smith’s “Red Mountain Blues”).⁹⁹ In Hawkins’s hands, this voodoo machismo goes completely maniacal, with bizarre screams and ghoulish laughter, accompanied (in live performance) with a surreal takeoff of horror-film rituals (flaming coffins, etc.). At first sight, then, Simone’s appropriation is akin to Patti Smith’s; and we notice that, not only do Smith’s lyrics “put

my spell on her,” but also her triumph (or fantasy) — “I made her mine” — is paralleled by Simone’s “Because you’re mine.” The property thematic is familiar enough: it is after all what normatively positions women under the exchange economy of the oedipal system. What is striking here is, of course, the inversion, and also the religious reinforcement. Once again, Law (here property law) is its own (superstitious) justification — perhaps because, in a way, what is “mine” is actually *mine*, that is, introjected, inside as well as out, and the *jouissance* is sado-masochistic.

To *hear* Simone’s recording, however, comes as a shock. Far from following Smith’s disruptive, transgressive strategy, she turns the song into a slow, intense blues-ballad, accompanied by large orchestra complete with “romantic” (if bluesy) strings. The voice is its usual huge, resonant, centered self — but its authoritative command in the first verse (her lover is “running around,” but she has put a spell on him, “because you’re mine”) incorporates in the second an element of torch song submissiveness (“I love you . . . I don’t care if you don’t want me . . . I’m yours”). Just who is in control? The first half of verse two is given over to a tenor sax solo which clearly is imitating her singing in its tone, phraseology, intense centrality. From here to the end, instrument and voice chase each other in imitative, intertwining phrases, the doubling effect made all the more striking by the way that Simone’s occasional excursions into intricate jazzy scatting (a technique she had already introduced in verse one) bridges the relationship, as language is temporarily evacuated. The effect is not so much of call-and-response as a splitting identity — indeed, a mirror. And the ecstatic sound of Simone’s scat phrases suggests nothing so much as that “jubilation” which, according to Lacan, accompanies the child’s first sight of (what he thinks is) himself in the mirror phase — unless it be the wordless “semiotic” associated with the (allegedly) presymbolic mother. But which mirror? What bubbles up here, one might think, is a tension associated with the relationship between an acoustic mirror — which, particularly in the preoedipal stage, produces a quasi-narcissistic circulation of pleasure and desire between child and phallic mother — and the visual (glass) mirror, which, as it sets up the ego, its ideal, and its others, introduces the child to the sexuating problematic of completion organized around the unifying phallus or its lack. An adult sexual anxiety, codified musically in the ballad/torch/blues conventions, overlaid on an “earlier” (maternal) nexus, throws up a fantasy deeply marked by the sado-masochistic impulses associated (at least by Lacan) with the most archaic functions of voice in its guise as irrational authority (its command after all devolves to the law of pure magic), as these are displaced to a “later” scene of recognizable heterosexual trauma.

The terrifying “Sinnerman” is quite different, musically and (it would at first seem) thematically. But it is also rooted in trauma, and acts as a religious

complement to the previous song's secular setting. Based on a traditional spiritual, "Sinnerman" is a parable of judgment running with apocalyptic imagery (rivers that bleed and a sea that boils), but crucially the identities of those populating this last-day drama are never entirely clear. The sinner begs God for help; God is implacable. The sinner runs to "the rock," to the river, to the sea, and (at God's command) to the Devil, who is "waiting" (but who, judging by what happens subsequently, provides no lasting respite). But, although for most of the song Simone takes the sinner's part, as an "I" in the lyric, she not only reports God's responses in the third person ("He said go to the Devil," for instance) but also appears to assume his persona at the beginning and end: at least, she voices there an impersonal, god-like presence that one feels should have been a voice-off ("Sinnerman, where you gonna run to," "Sinnerman, you oughta be prayin").

While the most obvious interpretation, within the recording's late-1960s historical context, is that the "sinnerman" stands for the forces of (especially male) white racism (and there is textual evidence to support this, which I will come to in a moment), Simone's own apparent involvement on that side of the dialogue seems to push her vocal performance to an extreme unusual for her. She is much less consistently centered, in tone and in intonation, than normal; the edge sometimes turns into a snarl; and occasionally her voice shoots upward in falsetto breaks reminiscent of those in Patti Smith's "Gloria." It might seem fanciful to see the rock and the river/sea tropes as images of paternal and maternal refuge, respectively. But the whole thrust of the performance is to set up an imaginary place for a Law that lies beyond the relatively feeble law of the secular Symbolic: as if to say, no matter how much you seek to transgress, there will always be a limit beyond which what is foreclosed is not to be questioned. The implacable effect of the repeating I-♭VII piano vamp, almost unbroken throughout the recording, and of the ruthlessly on-the-beat rhythm section, forces the pressure of this image on the listener.

The performance is divided into two, each part giving way to an extended break that stands outside the narrative recounted in the traditional lyrics. The breaks certainly situate us in a different place, summon up a different scene; it is as if there are two fantasies colliding, but also intersecting, commenting on each other. Each narrative part is organized around a build-up in emotional tension, produced through gradual increases in dynamic, texture, and vocal tessitura (upwards). In the first break, we hear — over the vamp — a repeated vocal interchange between Simone and the (male) band, a shouted statement (demand?) of "Power." Whose power is at issue? Black Power, and/or its white antagonist, we think ("It was certainly time for some Old Testament justice," Simone remarked of the mid-1960s)¹⁰⁰ — though feminists or queers might have heard it differently, even in 1967. Yet the exchange is abruptly terminated with a dissonant piano crash, followed by

what sounds like a new start: a fragmentary guitar riff and solo, then, as the band reduces almost to nothing, handclaps and a foot-stamped beat, over which a freely improvised piano solo enters — leading via wordless gasps from Simone to an “Oh Yeah,” and then to part two. The music has been pared back to the sounds of — the *body*; with Simone almost certainly (although one cannot be sure just from a recording) starting the handclaps off and “handing” them (as Spillers might say) to the men, like a mother teaching a clapping game to her children. Something dramatic has surely happened in this moment, though it is hard to be certain what it is, exactly. In the second break, the “Power” interchange returns and this time is interrupted by an out-of-time wordless shriek, crashing piano, then an extended passage in free rhythm with occasional dissonant, free-jazz style piano flurries supporting an extraordinary improvised vocal which can best be described as *glossolalic*: speaking *in* tongues rather than without one. Occasional words pop out of the scat babble, eventually culminating, as language reemerges, in the distraught demand, “Don’t you know I need you, Lord?” — answered only by a drum-kit conclusion of Old Testament severity. Again the drama is palpable — but to what effect?

The song presents a “show” — a show that (as Simone remarks in “Mississippi Goddam”) has not been written yet, but on another level one that, so the performance suggests, we are condemned to live anyway. The specifics are as important as the broader readings that emerge so readily. God and the Devil change places (there is a long tradition in African-American folklore of the Devil as an admirable trickster figure who can be lined up against a white God); there is both patriarchal and matriarchal imagery, in the music and in the lyrics. The song is certainly about Law — its imposition, dissolution, occupation, renovation — but also, it seems, its multiple sources. As such, its pleasures are harsh indeed. If the spirit of “Daddy” hovers over the question, “Don’t you know I need you, Lord?” — his loss and the empty place this left forcing a prolonged take-up of the maternal phallic baton — the lesson is one not only of political empowerment (an “insurgent ground”) but also of accompanying loneliness and pain.

It would be simplistic to reduce the tactics considered so far to two positions — occupation/appropriation of the locus of a male phallus on the one hand, exploitation of a maternal phallic legacy on the other — and to distinguish rigidly between them, let alone to suggest that subsequent excursions by female singers can be clustered neatly into these two categories. Nevertheless, it is useful to think of them as influential models to which many late-twentieth century repertoires can be related. They are often associated tendentially with the garage/punk/metal and soul/funk/dance lineages respectively, which, on a broader level of genre topography, comprise the two most prominent routes

of insurgence within Anglo-American popular music of the later twentieth century. This already begins to suggest how, in this context, a class-linked insurgence — energies inseparable from representations and experiences of some sort of social Low — is always seen through optics formed on registers of race and gender.

But with some performers, it is often impossible to separate out definitively signs of the two models. This is the case, I think, with Diamanda Galás. Although Galás is often thought of as an avant-garde figure or (to her annoyance) a “performance artist,” she draws deeply on vernacular, especially African-American, materials and techniques, and could be considered as standing in a place towards which both Patti Smith and Nina Simone, from their different starting-points, might have pushed had they worked in less commercially oriented contexts. Her album *The Singer*¹⁰¹ is a collection of blues, gospel songs, and originals built from similar materials. The blues are all songs associated with male singers, mostly in the down-home Chicago lineage, and Galás picks up the extreme vocality associated with this tradition and pushes it so much further as to disappear, virtually, over the edge of meaningfulness.¹⁰² What we hear is in effect an impossibility: the emotional insistence of this vocal tradition — embodied in its cries, moans, shrieks, noise — is not belittled, but it is rendered as if quite arbitrary, unhinged from its normal masculinist bearings. Her approach — an “unmatrixed production of vocal sounds,” as she calls it¹⁰³ — seems, as this rejection of any “matrix” suggests, to set out to establish lawlessness as a rule. And we are justified in linking this approach with her (anti-) theology: in response to Michael Flanagan’s description of her as in a sense on the side of the Devil, “as accuser, avenger of the oppressed, and anathema,” she points out: “When a witch is about to be burned on a ladder in flames, who can she call upon? I call that person ‘Satan’ . . . It’s that subversive voice that can keep you alive in the face of adversity . . . I am the shit of God! . . . I am the Antichrist . . . I am all these things you are afraid of.”¹⁰⁴

Galás’s material typically brings together an obsession with Old Testament themes of taboo and transgression, and the plight of contemporary oppressed groups: the mad, tortured, imprisoned, and socially exiled (especially AIDS victims). Flanagan describes *The Singer* as a “voodoo hymnal.”¹⁰⁵ Small wonder that in her version of “I Put a Spell on You” the unearthly quality of her extreme sounds enables her to comprehensively out-voODOO Screaming Jay Hawkins.

On one level, this clearly suggests a subversion, or inversion, of the authority of the patriarchal God. Extremes of register, timbre, and (dis)continuity (e.g., drastic disruptive vowel shifts within a long-held “note”) are put to work on “natural” sounds (shrieks, moans, rasps, etc.) and denaturalize them. They seem to come at us from all points of the sonic space, as if Galás were projecting her voice through the multiple points of an immense ven-

triloquistic apparatus — an object gaze we could never see but picked out in shards of sound. For such a palpable presence, the voice is rendered strangely bodiless — an “extroversion of the soul through the voice, so to speak.”¹⁰⁶ This is definitely a voice-off — a terrifyingly authoritative imposition — but if it is taken to be occupying the place of the phallus, what it finds there is a field that is both a wreckage (a modernistic deconstruction of “natural” male desire) and a madness. To quote Galás herself: “My vision is as cold as any man’s . . . I can take a situation and look at it as dispassionately as anyone. On the other hand, who is anyone to be able to say that he or she can look at a situation dispassionately, especially when attempting to be most dispassionate? So what the fuck does that mean?”¹⁰⁷

As this suggests, on a second level, this occupation is also part of a right of passage, a passing through; and this movement — a familiar quasi-maternal dispersal of phallic authority around the sonorous body — is mapped by the whirling mobility of vocal placement. This reading is authenticated not only by the African-American references in the vocal style but also by Galás’s acknowledged debt to traditional Greek women’s lament (*moirologia*), a genre that David Schwartz reads as a ritual assertion of female power (often incorporating calls for revenge), separated in gender terms from, and posited against, the patriarchal authority of the state.¹⁰⁸ We might think that the madness Galás’s voice seems to discover as it passes through the phallic site is given many of the conventional codings of *hysteria*, that disease produced, according to ancient Greek medicine, by the female seat of reproduction, the womb, wandering through the body, and classified by psychoanalysis as that neurosis generated (most typically in women) by the question of sexual position, that is, by the question, “Am I a man or a woman?” or, more precisely, “What is a woman?”¹⁰⁹ In “I Put a Spell on You” this sexual confusion is revealed to be the outcome of a misogynistic framing of female authority as witchcraft, and figured visually on the CD sleeve through a splitting of Galás’s image: she is dressed in black leather and appears on one side in a powerful, indeed intimidating head-and-shoulders shot, with the words “We are all HIV+” showing on the fingers of one hand, and on the reverse from the waist up, with her coat open to reveal, S/M style, tightly laced (abjected?) breasts. That the flow of phallic energy somehow goes “wrong” is suggested musically as well, especially by her piano self-accompaniment. Like the vocal stream, the piano takes familiar signifiers — here, typical blues melodic turns, rhythmic figurations, and harmonic moves — and refuses their projected continuities, splintering them into meaningless fragments through dissonance and disjunction, and detaching them from normal physical references through rhythmic dislocation (there is no groove) and “incorrect” registers, textures, and articulation (use of classical keyboard touch, for instance). Taking voice and piano together, the effect is of a body falling apart — a *corps re-morcelé*

— as if the mutation of phallic energy towards a quasi-maternal locus is at the same time problematized, even foreclosed.

Schwartz reads Galás's noise, transgressions of normal sound-categories and blurrings of sound/language boundaries as markers of abjection; but what exactly is abjected? Surely it is the "phantasy" of the maternal body, its symbolic power opened up at the same time as its messy sustenance is subjected to, imprisoned within, the force of dispassionate moral outrage. (Galás performs her *Plague Mass* naked from the waist up, covered in blood or stage blood; other works are performed surrounded by razor wire or from within a cage.) This is a *hystericized* abjection, neither the integrity seemingly promised in the bodily ego-image nor that associated with the memory of the matriarchal acoustic mirror proof against the pressures accompanying a re-imagined anatomy. The hysteric's typical loss of bodily synthesis and control — where has the phallus gone now? might be the question here — marks out the territory where, in Diamanda Galás's music, the consequences of the threat posed to the Law-of-the-Father are registered.

Galás's militantly antihomophobic stance, channeled especially though not exclusively through her interventions in the AIDS crisis, might remind us that an only partly visible narrative strand — that of gay transgression — has been running continuously through the discussion so far. It is intriguing to speculate what queer readings of the music considered here might look like, not least because Patti Smith has sometimes been claimed as an influence and inspiration by radical lesbian musicians and the diva tradition represented by such performers as Nina Simone and Diamanda Galás has attracted a large male gay audience for many years. On the other hand, maybe my readings already are queer in some respects; how might one tell?

The radical undecideability of this question, in the abstract, points towards the fact — too little noticed in the scholarly literature — that the entire history of modern popular music (i.e., since the birth of Tin Pan Alley) has provided privileged territory for posing the gender question, and for answering it in particularly complex and often disruptive ways. The potential is built into the nexus of typical subject-matter (love) and its modes of performance (body/voice/dance). At first sight, it seems surprising, given the prominence of gay rights struggles over the period since the 1960s, that relatively little music that one might describe as distinctive to gay sensibilities has emerged from out of its subcultural settings. Most prominent, at least in the Anglo-American world, would be the "women's (or rather womyn's) music" developed by lesbian separatists and the various manifestations of queercore. But even here, connections with mainstream styles such as folk and punk are evident — as, for example, in the politically and stylistically complex location of 1990s riot grrrl music.¹¹⁰ Much more audible has been a whole array of gay appropriations. Good examples can be found within gay

usages of dance music, where a dichotomy between masculinist styles and modes of consumption (high-energy, with fetishizing of the active, displayed male body) and feminized styles and consumption practices (identification with the emoting vocalizations of female diva-queens, for instance) is well developed.¹¹¹ What happens here seems to be a transplantation and distorted reproduction of familiar straight binaries — a “bad copy,” to use Butler’s terms, but one that, as such, exposes the fact that “gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original,” or in other words that its heterosexual source is itself a “bad copy” of what can be no more than a normativizing yet performatively anxious ideal.¹¹² A parallel strategy appears in the rise of apparently androgynous (cross-dressing, gender-bending) performance styles associated with such artists as Boy George, Annie Lennox, David Bowie, k.d. lang and Prince, except that here appropriation is left as more like ambivalence. An alternative strategy is to cultivate, not so much ambivalence, as ambiguity: associated mostly with “sensitive” male performers (the Pet Shop Boys, Michael Stipe of R.E.M., David Byrne, Morrissey), this tends to offer a clearly antimacho image of masculinity but one that leaves sexual identification blurred.¹¹³

But is this rather confused picture so surprising? If the normative mapping of heterosexual coupling to the stereotypical gender pair is no more than a performatively enacted fiction, held in place through foreclosures on alternative gender ideals and forbidden homosexual desires, it is predictable that subversion of the boundaries would lead not to the discovery of new continents but to permanent de-stabilization of what already existed — of the map itself. Sedgwick points out that we are dealing with the superimposition of two explanatory schemas. The first organizes the dynamic of hetero/homo desire around the relationship between a “minoritizing” view (there is a minority and it is really, intrinsically gay) and a “universalizing” view (desire is always, in every human subject, potentially ambivalent in its object); the second covers the relation of the structure of desire to gender and is again organized around a binary, this time of “inversion” (norms are unstable: a man may *feel* like a woman, or vice versa) as against “separatism” (each gender desires its own).¹¹⁴ That destabilization of the boundaries might involve both appropriations, subversions, inversions of familiar positions within the phallic economy and attempts to reshape, recenter, or even undermine that economy, with a multiplicity of effects on the mechanisms of symbolic authority as well as those of gender representation, was to be expected — all the more because the force of general social and cultural change was here reinforcing a long-established historical dynamic in a particular expressive sphere (popular music) where mainstream norms had been extensively shaped by modes of performative display predisposed to the attractions of camp.

A perhaps negative aspect of this predisposition, against which Bradby and Laing have already warned us (see p. 92), is that it is all too easy for the diversions of musical gender play to be safely corralled in places of licensed carnival, such as dance clubs. When feminist artists — Diamanda Galás, P. J. Harvey, Sinéad O'Connor — have “gone too far,” they have found the going tough. And the general drift, even within the context of postfeminist pseudo-liberalism (“whatever...”), has been quite sufficient to provoke the predictable backlash, most notably in the misogyny and homophobia found in a good deal of gangsta rap and dancehall, and, correspondingly, in the return of young female singers with love (that is, fetishized flesh) to sell. Desire and meaning are here buttoned back into their lawful places, the mechanisms of castration reasserted. What happened to the *castrato*? What happened to serious *drag*?

To explore the effects for men of female appropriations of the phallus, no more fascinating case exists in popular music than that of Michael Jackson. I want to consider briefly his identity shift from black child star, complete with giant Afro and angelic voice, to (so the images suggest) a simulacrum of white middle-class woman, a trajectory that can be seen as a dramatic and extended exercise in drag performance — and as a thematic transition to his trans-located apotheosis: the Israeli “transsexual,” Dana International.¹¹⁵

In point of fact, the childishness of the youthful Jackson voice in his Jackson Five period (late '60s/early '70s) can be exaggerated. It was not long before a strength, an expressivity and a rich vibrato were apparent, with a tone of aching desire in ballads, which positioned the voice within a category developed by the female singers of Motown (by the early 1980s, Jackson even looked like Diana Ross). With maturity, the fundamentals hardly changed, except for an extension of technical and expressive scope. The lower range reaches a bit further down; the spectrum of vocal effects broadens (to include a husky tone; a sharp, aggressive tone); he develops his characteristic (often off-the-beat) vocal “pops,” gasps, and squeals (they recall the conventional sonic markers of female orgasm), which sometimes shoot up into what, in the context, can only be conceptualized as a female falsetto. But nowhere does Jackson sound “like a man” (nor much like a phallic mother, for that matter). There is never, even in the low register, much depth of resonance; the sound comes from the top end of the body, suggesting perhaps the vocalizing phallus wandering experimentally up the body. Overall the markers of a “natural” voice are in place (that is, of a “natural woman”), but they are also classified, insistently, as *unnatural* (he is not a woman — is he?).

This weirdness should not surprise us: he is “wacko Jacko” after all. As Cynthia Fuchs has pointed out, his threatened transgressions, manifest in the surgical and cosmetic transformation of his body, his retreats to his “Neverland” ranch, the rumors and court cases concerning alleged abuse of

children, the gender-confusing gestures in his performances, the oscillation between imagery of violence and of innocence, find a thematic center in the inescapable, obsessive focus on his *penis*, represented equally in media discourse (What is his sexuality? Where does he *put it*?) and in his performances (notably his crotch-grabbing choreography).¹¹⁶ But this focus is on an absence as much as a presence: in the music as in his (hypermediated) life, it shrinks from view into an image of virginity. Fuchs, drawing on Homi Bhabha, treats this as a “productive ambivalence”: his crotch-grabbing is “a sign of autoerotic sexuality (read: perverse, unproductive, and homosexual), his unseen penis resists visibility, that prevailing emblem of Western Cultural Truth.”¹¹⁷ Jackson comes across, then, as in effect a transsexual — but one who cannot come out. For Fuchs, his repertoire of uncertainty, anxiety, perpetually repeating self-reference, strung out between registers of private and public, marks an “epistemology of the closet.” The “real” Michael Jackson promises to appear, in brackets between the endless mutations and dissipations of gender and racial identity, but promptly disappears, as just another image. He is best read, Fuchs argues, as a drag performance. But what lies beneath the drag is just another performance: “Under the binary phallographic myth by which Western bodies and subjects are constituted, only one body per gendered subject is ‘right’ . . . but Jackson never gets it ‘right.’”¹¹⁸ For Lacan, woman’s lack of possession of the phallus is itself a kind of possession (while actual [male] possession is always, through castration, already lost); in Jackson’s drag performance, though, the clarity of this symmetrical heterosexual logic goes wacko.

The penile focus is foregrounded in Jackson’s virtuosic dancing — not just the choreographed crotch-pointing and grabbing, which forms its gestural core, but the dance style as a whole. The pelvic movements, especially the typical forward thrusts; the body spins; the repertoire of leg kicks, bends, and walks, including the celebrated “moon-walk”; the “bicycling” side-shot; the X-shaped (crucifixion?) pose and the arm straight up in (self-?) salute: all cohere around a clearly outlined right-angled double axis, in which the vertical and horizontal axes cross at the hip area, dragging the eye to *that place*. The gestures are also often jerky and mechanical: the limbs move as if by themselves. (When asked to explain his crotch-grabbing, Jackson turned for answer to a song title by the equally queer disco-queen, Grace Jones, saying he was a “slave to the rhythm.”)¹¹⁹ One feels this is how a robot would move if programmed well (but not quite well enough) to look “natural.” Taking dance and voice together, we sense the construction of a perverse flow between phallic and vocal regions inscribed on a body that is never quite clear. Is this “sexy”? If so, it is a sexiness we can think of — by analogy with the cyborgian “fembot” — as that of a “queerbot.” And, of course, the queerness disrupts the boundaries of race as well as those of sex and gender.

Jackson's performances engage both sides of the myth of black male sexuality — on the one hand, rapaciously potent, on the other, an emasculated husk. His album titles (*Thriller*, *Bad*, *Dangerous*) form a context for his obsessive pointing towards the area of the black phallus, a theme colored in as well in such allegorical self-presentations as a black panther (“Black or White”), werewolf, and vampire (“Thriller”).¹²⁰ But this deep-rooted fantasy, at once satisfying and troubling, represents a transgression that is no sooner raised than erased; in a perpetual double movement, the threat is at the same time cancelled by images of Jackson's femininity, his innocence, the ubiquitous narrative of his victimization, confirmed by the embrace of his adoptive mothers: Elizabeth Taylor, Oprah Winfrey. Canceled too by his constant retreat along the chain of (dis-)simulacra (here, life and music constitute a single, multi-instantiated text): the lip-synching morphs in the *Black or White* video and the construction of narratives within narratives, here and in the *Thriller* video, always transplanting the “real” Jackson to somewhere outside the previous scene, somewhere other, provide compelling examples of a constant tendency in his work.¹²¹ It comes as little surprise that Jackson was involved with the film *E.T.* (he spoke the narrative on the soundtrack album) and was photographed with this other child-like alien of uncertain sex and gender. Fuchs reads this photo, of Jackson with his arm round *E.T.*, as resembling “nothing so much as a boy and his oversized penis” — a metaphor of his confused incorporation/excorporation of sexual difference; then revises this to a pose “with a big plastic dildo” — that is, to use Butler's terms, a lesbian phallus.¹²² But does Jackson *have* a phallus at all?

As we have seen, the signifiers — of desire, control, power, transgression — are ever-present, but always already disavowed, or barred: at the heart of Jackson's music is a curious blank, or passivity, an absence that cannot confess itself. There is, so to speak, a *missing organ* (one reading of the Lacanian “bar” is that it is the symbolic phallus; for Lacan, this can never itself be barred, or divided, but Jackson suggests otherwise). Might we sense here one of Kristeva's suicides (incarceration on child abuse charges has more than once seemed a possibility; but in any case the rhythm of the life — a procession of new selves, periodic disappearances to Neverland — points in the same direction)? It would be the suicide of a *male*: this particular “I who wants not to be” is perhaps macho man, specifically, the murderous black rapist of racist myth, and we might read the monstrous transformations in the *Black or White* and *Thriller* videos as attempts to exorcise this figure.¹²³ If so, Kobena Mercer's point, that *Thriller* in particular stands in the music-horror lineage initiated by Screaming Jay Hawkins's “I Put a Spell on You,”¹²⁴ suggests that what Jackson is about is putting a stake through that misogynistic persona and what, in the more general politics of gender, he might stand for. But, on the other side, Jackson's femaleness is illicit — virtual, queer, impossible to

verify; it has no real power. If he is a castrate, then, it is the woman (specifically, perhaps, the phallic mother) who has been castrated (and — biography again — the role of Jackson's allegedly violently abusive father might be relevant here). Which, within the economy in question here, leaves what? The phallus: the *infant* phallus or rather the infant as phallus, offered to the forever-absent mother, proving its presence through its always-traumatic cancellations, but somehow emptied out, pure metaphor circulating endlessly but hopelessly and meaninglessly around the repertoire of signifiers. If Michael Jackson is this phallus (rather than having it), it appears as pure supplement, desire with no definite object.

Who is this phallus for? In my fantasy, for — Dana International. (A more conventional answer would be, Madonna; but since she became a mother, her need — according to Dr. Freud — is less.)

If Michael Jackson “never gets it right,” Dana International would seem to have made every effort to do so. Born Yaron Cohen in Tel Aviv, and first developing a reputation in the early 1990s as a drag performer in the dance clubs of Israel's burgeoning gay music scene, s/he underwent gender reassignment surgery in 1993, changing her name to Sharon, enjoyed her first hits the same year under the stage name Dana International, and carried on to win, famously, the Eurovision Song Contest of 1998 in Birmingham.¹²⁵ A quick glance at the media reception for her E.S.C. win confirms — in every drooling cliché (“enviously curved,” “spectacular cleavage,” “luscious lips,” etc.) — perceptions of her womanliness. As a TV cameraman is reported to have commented, “We all agreed she was the sexiest singer. I can't believe she was once a bloke.”¹²⁶ At the same time, she has been careful to draw a veil over the precise details of her medical treatment and over her sex life (in one interview, she asserts she still has a penis),¹²⁷ as if to tease her multi-stranded audience about her sexual undecideability. The visual completeness — which, for the vast majority of her audience, is of course a media simulation-effect — is presented as a reality which, we know (don't we?), conceals a scar (how deep, in what zone of self-formation, we cannot tell); but what appears to traumatize Michael Jackson has here become a plaything.

The richness of the cultural setting belies the apparent superficial transience of the E.S.C. moment; play here has had real, if limited, political effects. The figure of Woman, in the Middle East, comes to us enmeshed in the trappings of orientalist myth, a trajectory with a particular sheen in the case of a Jewish tradition that combines a rigid patriarchalism with a specific sentimental place for the clichéd Jewish mother. At the same time, late-nineteenth century European racist thought created the figure of the feminized Jewish male: a (circumcised) “third” version of the masculine, not straight, not gay, but nevertheless predisposed to, and aligned with, homosexuality.¹²⁸ The overall picture is a distorted reproduction of that which sexed/desexed

the African-American family — a point, perhaps, of some significance for our understanding of the development of American popular music.¹²⁹ It also contextualizes the upsurge in queer politics in Israel in the 1990s along with the rabid response of the religious orthodoxy.¹³⁰ But the intersection of gender and sexuality with race goes still deeper: it is mediated by the racialized hierarchy well established in Israeli society — again a distorted reflection, this time of European imperialism — which places an Ashkenazi elite in charge and Mizrahi Jews almost at the bottom, with only Israeli Arabs below them.¹³¹ The class implications are unsurprising: the working class is dominated by Mizrahi and Arabs. Dana International's parents were working-class immigrants from Yemen. She was, then, a subalternized Other three times over: by race, sexuality, and class. Yet her music had a particular appeal — again, not surprisingly, perhaps — to (rebellious or bored) middle-class Ashkenazi youth, especially (but not exclusively) gays. At the same time, her initial celebrity was built just as much, maybe more, in the surrounding Arab world, especially Egypt, where (despite opposition from the cultural and moral elites) bootleg recordings sold by the million.¹³²

In Jewish religious tradition, the *Shechinah* or “feminine presence of God” arrives (metaphorically) in the synagogue at a specific moment on the Sabbath eve, transforming a masculine space into a feminine sacred space. Yemen is seen as the quintessential site of authentic tradition and Jewish difference — but has also given rise to a particularly strong women's song culture which, ironically, stresses themes of the secular everyday. For Philip Bohlman, this has given these women singers (with their “double doubleness”) a special role in subverting gender identities through popular song.¹³³ One way of reading Dana International would be that she appropriates and mangles the gendered significance of religious and musical traditions. On the one hand she challenges the Law: “They claim I'm an insult, corrupt, doomed to death. Well, then . . . let God do his work if I'm so bad. Let God deal with me. But if anyone laid a finger on me, millions of people would murder him.” (Murder whom? God?) On the other hand, “I do not need the rabbis to tell me I am acceptable to God. I have my own romance going on with the Lord.”¹³⁴ This might throw a new light on her status as diva — a secularized divinity. Her E.S.C. performance of the song, “Diva,” conforms to the stereotypes: glittery, figure-hugging gown, much sexy swaying and hip-wiggling, extending later in the performance to distinctly orientalist arm and hand gestures. One can readily understand the (racially marked) heterosexual appeal. But this is an *over*performance, surely, locating itself in the tradition of gay drag. Although the image — manufactured for and by the TV simulation-machine — might seem to pull towards “fembot” norms, we know (don't we?) that there is something *queer* going on, *really*, under the surface. Something we might

term “post-human,” perhaps. But “how exactly do the over-the-top sexual theatrics of the posthuman diva dis-organize gender?”¹³⁵

For Dana International’s second E.S.C. performance of “Diva,” to celebrate her victory and close out the show, she reemerged in a different, even more extravagant gown, designed by Jean-Paul Gaultier (whose previous subjects had included the equally though differently queer Madonna and Grace Jones). The surrealistically feathered arms, on her amazonian frame, could not help but suggest mythological alongside maternal themes (would this freakish mother-bird take flight?). Is this monster — her too-perfect, silicone-suggestive shape points this way too — one of Donna Haraway’s cyborgs: a nonnatural “creature in a post-gender world . . . a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and . . . an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings?”¹³⁶ We should take the outrage of the orthodox seriously (“an abomination,” “worse than sodomy,” “some kind of crossbreed,” “a mutant,” etc.).¹³⁷ Rather than look for Abbate’s castrato within, we recognize here the castrato without: the wound is broadcast (discursively) to the world. The lyrics of the song turn her body inside out: she is a body politic, “larger than life,” with “senses nobody else has,” on “a stage which is all hers”; she is “hysteria,” “an empire,” identifying with a string of mythic queens: Aphrodite, Victoria (the British Queen?), Cleopatra. The voice is flexible and powerful,¹³⁸ magnified by double-tracking, backing female singers, and, especially in an out-of-time break before the out-chorus, in massively reverberant, digitally echoing, repeats of “Diva!” This is not so much a patriarchal voice-off — it is presented as insistently if ambivalently embodied — but more the voice of a fantasy world-body which saturates the sonic space, voc-animating (vocalimenting) an imagined object gaze. Just as Homi Bhabha sees his gender (like the penis-phallus-dildo itself, we might add — not to mention the voice) as a prosthesis,¹³⁹ so we can sense (hear/see) in this performance an inversion (an intrathesis), the energy folded back, following new contours “down there” and emerging in a cyborgian phallus of a voice which — the prosthetic properties of recording technologies working at warp speed — forever problematizes its own fit in any particular gendered body. Of course, many of the musical details draw from a clichéd house music repertoire for diva deployment;¹⁴⁰ and no doubt a stereotypical straight “fembot”-oriented reception is available. But for most listeners, I think, the drama will be too camp, our intimate knowledge too pressing, for this; I hear Dana International saying, with Donna Haraway, “I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess.”¹⁴¹

If we return to Bohlman (the *agency* attributed to the *Shechinah*) and other commentators, it becomes clear why Dana International’s intervention could create such political waves, not only in Israel but in the wider Middle

East, where she was widely heard as offering an alternative modernity to that on offer from either the West or local state elites.¹⁴² In many songs, she hybridizes disco/house and Arab pop elements more obviously than in “Diva” (“Danna International,” “Sa’ida Sultana”). She “queers” romantic ballads. She performs soldiers’ songs tongue in cheek (“Yesnan Banot”) and parodies heroic nationalism (“Going to Petra,” where a motif of “penetrating” Asia is turned into a critique of Ashkenazi patriarchalism). In her unsuccessful entry for the 1995 E.S.C. Israeli preliminary contest, “Good Night Europe,” she celebrates Africa and America dancing and Asia “ascending,” but for (Ashkenazi) Europe. . . . By contrast, “Another Kind of Sex” and “Power” are musically more conventional house tracks, with “cyborgian” vocals. Often she mixes between languages (Hebrew, Arabic, English, sometimes with a bit of “esperanto”), producing a Babel that, as with other transgressions in linguistic clarity we have encountered, seems to stand for a relapse in symbolic authority — an insanity most fully realized in “Magnuna” (“Crazy”). Similarly, she exploits the potential for ambiguity created by the fact that Hebrew is a fully gendered language (e.g., there is no neutral pronoun). In “Danna International” the conflation of sexual and political border crossings is particularly clear, as a flight from Saudi Arabia to Israel is made to stand also for a sexual journey.¹⁴³

This, of course, is “cheap” (i.e., no expense spared) pop music — but its trashiness is the seat of a power seen in the Middle East as linked to subversive class and ethnic interests; laughing at or refusing the authority of the Father — “dragging” it down, one might say — appears to work well when covered in sequins. It is equally clear that the political point is blunted on the wider stage of the European Song Contest. The popular voice here (for the first time in 1998 the results were voted by the TV viewers) is squeezed through a paternally run imitation of “market democracy,” then broadcast back to an audience imagined as a convivial mass whose differences are reduced to friendly national rivalry, subsumed in a ubiquitous acceptance of African-American musical norms. Is this no more than play assimilated to the banal pleasures of titillating consumption?

Perhaps Dana International’s performance of “Diva” is best read as a *mime* of a certain kind of freedom (“freedom” was certainly the term she used when talking about the significance of the result). As Philip Bohlman explains, the Jewishness of the *Shechinah*, unlike that of the male sacred “that is ‘seen’ . . . that is ‘just there,’” is one “that is heard . . . that must be performed into existence”; like the singer in “Danna International,” it “returns like the Sabbath bride from exile,” over and over again — but now as a force for a new freedom in society.¹⁴⁴ Of course, as we know (don’t we?), Jews — like blacks, like women — have a special talent for mimicry; that is to say, what we all

must do, generally unwittingly, every day, is for them forced to the surface of their otherness.

Judith Butler, in her critique of Luce Irigaray's theory of femininity, seizes on Irigaray's concept of miming. This is seen as a tactic to expose what the binary distinctions and exclusions of the heterosexual gender system attempt to cover over, namely a deeper metonymy — "a closeness and proximity which appears to be the linguistic [and musical] residue of the initial proximity of mother and infant. It is this metonymic excess in every mime, indeed, in every metaphorical substitution, that is understood to disrupt the seamless repetition of the phallogocentric norm." But this tactic only doubles what is really there anyway; Irigaray "mimes mimesis itself," refusing "the notion of resemblance as copy" and promoting an erotics of contiguity and surface rather than one of repetition, penetration, and displacement. Butler rejects, on epistemological grounds, Irigaray's characterization of what the phallogocentric system excludes as the site of an unfigurable "feminine." (Her more open image of this "elsewhere," as an infinite series of displaced fore-closures has, to my mind — although she would reject this, I think — more in common with Žižek's understanding of the Lacanian Real.) Nevertheless, her preferred strategy of subversion is not dissimilar, installing permanent slippage along a long front of positions as the mechanism to deconstruct the heterosexual matrix.¹⁴⁵

For Lacan, the mirror phase marks a privileged moment in this mimetic drama. But Butler reveals the sleight of hand whereby a (real) body part, inflated into the imaginary phallus, is then translated into a status guaranteeing the authority of symbolic law as a whole; this is, precisely, performative mime cloaking its metonymic and metaphoric shifts under a rubric of developmental necessity. There are ample grounds — as Silverman too reminds us — for proposing to work back, and forward, along the lines of an ontology of the phallus that is broader and more variegated. We might end up doubting *any* originary moment for culture: Haraway's cyborgianization of man, and of woman ("It's not just that 'god' is dead; so is the 'goddess'"),¹⁴⁶ carries with it a denaturing of nature, embedding the symbolic all the way down. The role of sound has in general been underplayed. We notice, for example, that mime is *silent* (as is the imaginary phallus and its penile model). Voice, though, is of course *noisy* — and can vocalize the phallus as it traverses the routes offered (phantasmatic but also material) by the vocalimentary canal. But a visual emphasis rooted in the assumptions of Aristotelian and Cartesian science ensured that psychoanalysis hardly noticed. An aurally aware theory of miming might skip right past the accident of physical genital difference, all the way back to the sonorous symbolic of the (denatured) womb.

This might start to unpick the monolithic role attributed to sexual difference, which actually "is not prior to that of race or class in the construction

of the subject.”¹⁴⁷ Spinning between mirrors, the emerging subject grasps itself as not only gendered but also bearing the lineaments of race and of a class culture. Again, sound/music may show this more readily than language or images. If the heterosexual binary is read, not as foundational, but as symptomatic of a broader master-slave dialectic that at once permeates all levels of the subject’s economy (manifest in structures of activity/passivity, ingestion/excretion, desire/lack, *fort/da*, subject/object, production/reproduction, etc.) and brings into being a fantasized elsewhere of never-forgotten plenitude, then musical processes offer rich resources for articulating imagined subject positions within the fully delineated web of social and symbolic relations; for their basic mode of operation, arguably, is to articulate patterns of metonymy (repetition and resemblance) with hierarchies of difference, creating both an economy of desire and labor, and a skeletal framework inviting schemas of imaginary embodiment through attachments of voicing and identification. To think this through does not of itself clear away the long-accumulated effects of the heterosexual matrix on the resources and interpretations of popular songs. It does, however, reconfigure the territory for subversion, both multiplying the points of attack (dispersing the metaphorical phallus) and mounting a de-binarizing assault on the master/slave structure of position (having and being that phallus).

A political strategy might then revolve around an aim that we should work towards *being* the phallus for each other. But, so long as society continues to be structured in antagonism (that is, as far as we can possibly imagine), a topography of possession seems inescapable, especially while antagonism centers on a political and representational economy based on property. To put it this way represents a secularized (depatriarchalized) version of the Lacanian-Žižekian insistence that some- (metaphorical) one must wield the knife (and probably explains my choice — unconscious at first — of songs to discuss that have a thread of Old Testament reference). The best vision, then, is a *radical democratisation* of the whole having/being problematic, both dispersing ownership and continually displacing the bar. The root of domination remains deep and strong: my starting point in this chapter. Yet it seems likely that the vocal liberatory gestures identified here relate to social, economic, and ideological changes that are, in variable, uneven but noticeable ways, restructuring kinship patterns, feminizing employment, slowly decolonizing subaltern imaginations, and, as Haraway tells us, denaturing nature. Passive beings low in the gender, racial, and class hierarchies have begun to find voices. For Haraway, “the symbolic system of the family of man — and so the essence of woman — breaks up.”¹⁴⁸ Shaping the cultural work demanded of us devolves on to the negotiation of knowledge, specifically, the intelligent analysis of the differences on offer: “some . . . are playful; some are poles of world historical systems of domination. ‘Epistemology’ is about knowing the difference.”¹⁴⁹

Memories Are Made of This

On the Subjects of Repetition

Ceasing to repeat is to die: this is true for individual organisms, for genes and species, for cultures and languages. Yet repetition is also a kind of death: repetition extinguishes the original, and extinction (replication, fading, displacement, doubling) on one level is the condition for renewal on another. In Lacanian thought, reproduction represents the victory of the species over the individual — precisely the *subjection* of the subject to death, or, put another way, to the endless circulation of both the drive and the signifier, in a “topological unity of the gaps in play.”¹ Repetition, then, *grounds* us in more than one sense. And nowhere more than in music, the art of iteration, whose multiple periodicities choreograph our every level of self-reproduction, life and death. At the same time, it is a commonplace that, with the industrialization of culture, the mass reproduction of musical commodities takes the repetition process to another level. Increasingly, music’s cycling grooves are carried into every geographical, social, and psychic corner, and carried on the replications and exchanges inscribed in the commodity form itself. Thus, while musical repetition would appear to be a universal, there is a specific history of the recent period that has the effect of compressing both the temporal and spatial cycles of sociomusical practice with a quite particular intensity. Standing on this global ground, can we grasp what repetition is doing for and to us?

Starting from a different point, if we follow Judith Butler and other theorists of performativity, repetition is the mode of subject construction itself. The “original” (the subject) is produced in the process of its repetition, and we continually perform out (cite, quote, mime) the markers of gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, class and generation, sustaining subjectivity

through a “regularized and constrained repetition of norms.”² (This does not mean that the social relations configured through these norms are not real, only that to be configured at all — that is, to have meaning for us — requires internalization of discursively articulated formulae through which we can live them.) Conventionally, these normative matrices work through an either/or logic in which a series of excluded others sustains, by difference, the autonomy of the self. Equally conventionally, in the Western system, these others serve as marked inferiors, validating by contrast the un-marked self (its superiority taken as read: male as against female, white as against black, master as against slave, capital as against labor); and this schema (itself sustained through repetition) is grounded (rooted, planted deep) in the overarching binary of *having over being*, *culture* as against *nature*. From this point of view, what Butler does, drawing on Derrida and Foucault, is to deconstruct the either/or logic by problematizing the self-justification of the mimes — by, in a sense, inserting into the “gaps” in the “topological unity” an *excess*, an insistence of a repetition of a difference that turns either/or into and/and. At the same time, this reveals norms as fictions, nature as always already culture — that is, as *naturalized*. And as part of this, the binary construction of repetition with which we started — on the one hand, a ground, an aspect of nature, on the other, an apparatus of culture, indeed of an alienation inherent in culture, intensified through the circuits of industrialized mass reproduction — is itself revealed as a (repetitive) trope subject to the nature/culture schema.

Ironically, as Donna Haraway points out, the moment when this deconstructive momentum has appeared is also the moment when technological developments, particularly in relation to a “cyborgianization” of culture, threaten to tear man loose altogether from nature. “In a sense,” she writes,

the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense — a final irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic *telos* of the “West’s” escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space. An origin story in the “Western,” humanist sense depends on the myth of original unity, fullness, bliss and terror, represented by the phallic mother from whom all humans must separate, the task of individual development and of history, the twin potent myths inscribed most powerfully for us in psychoanalysis and Marxism.³

Is the binary logic of individuation/unity (for which read culture/nature; mind/body; *telos*/stasis; production/reproduction; renewal/repetition) giving way to a “permanent slippage along a long front of positions,” a tactic of *contiguity*? How then should we read the effects for musical processes of repetition? What attention should we pay to the contemporaneous shift in social and cultural theory whereby a political-economic category of (naturalistic)

need has expanded or even given way, via an intermediate biologicistic or part-biologicistic concept of *instinct* or *drive*, to the psychoanalytic category of *desire*: the multiply directed, always-already socialized, forever deferred and displaced movement around a *lack*?⁴ Is this a corollary of a shift in the prevailing social mode of production from a focus on, precisely, production to one oriented more obviously round the continual excitation of consumption? Does it mark the moment when the cement in the wall separating animal needs from the sphere of reason began to crumble, revealing the traverses of a single human economy in which the repeating springs of desire and lack, life and death, forever overflow?

I have written about repetition before,⁵ obsessively perhaps, to the point that one might suspect some Freudian compulsion to be in play. If I respond to this sense of neurosis with the Lacanian question, *che vuoi?* (what do you want from me?), this should be addressed above all to the discourse of the Other in its place nearest to home, that is, in the Unconscious: where the ceaseless insistence of the signifiers, and their equally inevitable failure to reach the mark, are at their most productive — but also, perhaps, their most traumatic. As with my discussion of “Gloria,” my discourse here must incorporate a stand-in role for the absent shrink, on to whom my obsession might otherwise be transferred. The structure of the chapter constantly folds back (or, more hopefully, spirals back) on itself — the only way I could find to write it.

Freud’s core understanding of repetition (his thinking on this develops an added complexity in the 1920s, a point to which I shall return) is that when we repeat psychic material it is as a defense. Especially when repetition is obsessive or compulsive (that is, more insistent than surrounding circumstances would seem to justify), it marks the repression of material that is too painful or troubling to remember. Repetition and recollection are offered here as alternatives, and it is the function of psychoanalysis to help the patient to work through the repetition compulsion and integrate what was repressed into memory.⁶ It is worth noting in passing that this conception seems at first sight to be diametrically opposite to the common sense picture derived from empiricist psychology according to which repetition of data (e.g., in rote learning) is seen as, precisely, a route to remembering. Even in this perspective, however, it turns out that the most successful aids to memory lie in the embedding of information in larger structures and schemata; the role of repetition here lies purely in enabling recognition by making the elements familiar.

In a sense, then, Freud and the empiricists agree: psychological maturity requires integration; repetition is at most a (childlike) tool or marks a relapse or problem. In this they stand in a venerable tradition: for ancient philosophers such as Plato and Pythagoras, the preservation of knowledge

through memory work was essential to avoid the blandishments of Lethe, to escape the cycle of rebirth, the flux of meaningless repetition, entropy into inanimate matter; only memory, honed by constant effort, enables ascent from base repetitive nature. At the same time, the explosion of interest in the repetition/memory *topos* in the late nineteenth century (when both psychoanalysis and the empirical study of memory began) is striking. It surely marks a cultural–historical knot; the infantilizing of “mere repetition,” for instance, would become a repeating [*sic*] trope of mass culture critique (so many identical consumer products pouring off the assembly lines; so many records, all sounding the same; so many people, all wanting an equal share . . .).

A plethora of other, related terms are tangled up in this knot: reproduction, regeneration, representation, and (coming further to the fore later in the twentieth century) replication, simulation, regulation (especially in the Foucauldian thematic) and Althusserian interpellation, with its concomitants of *misrepresentation* and *misrecognition*. Intense debates around these terms have characterized one strand by which we recognize the lengthy history of Western modernity itself, punctuated by particularly explosive moments (the Enlightenment; the moment of modernism and mass culture; more recently the moment of digitization and cyborgianization), and together have formed the contours of a politics of re-presentation⁷ as it has been configured in this lineage. The implications for science, philosophy, political economy, and the arts, in relation to epistemology (the subject/object dialectic), personal identity, social relations of the body politic, and the articulation of time and space, are familiar. As we note the historical contingency of this problematic, we might also note the irony — a true philosophical circularity — that “history” itself comes into being as one of its effects; but so too, on the level of spatial awareness, does the encounter with cultural others,⁸ others who dwell elsewhere (and put norms, identities, assumptions in question).

Within musical practice, this entire constellation revolves around articulations of time and of space within which a subject is positioned in relation to multiple elsewheres: what lies behind, ahead, beyond, within, without, now here, now there. And these movements operate both intratextually and intertextually (not to mention inter-generically and interrepertorially), marking the importance within the Western tradition of the concept of the musical work — conceived as the whole within which, normatively, the constellation of representation techniques are worked out, on a range of structural levels — and, along with this, the critique of the work concept coming from spheres of vernacular practice.⁹

Such critique (usually unwitting: scepticism, qualification, supplementation or substitution, sometimes autochthonous, would often be better terms) revolves to a significant extent around usages and understandings of repetition. Particularly since the establishment of Tin Pan Alley hegemony

and of recording technology in the late nineteenth century, with pressures on both the production and the stylistic sides towards the intensification of economies of repetition, popular music has been widely seen as the music that does the same again, over and over: “From Edison’s primitive phonograph cylinders all the way to popular music, the true poetry of the present, everything has gone like clockwork.”¹⁰ This may be presented as positive or negative; a force of nature (e.g., in the form of dance-groove) or a force of society (capital accumulation, serial production, passive consumption); as driven by technology (mass reproduction) or by culture (the decolonization — which can also be figured in this case as an exploitation — of the African diaspora and its characteristic modes of musical expression). In any case, the shortest of walks through today’s musical soundscape — physically, or figuratively through our home-based media — is sufficient to remind us of the inescapability of the multiple frames of repetition. Its grip is the only possible explanation for the otherwise extraordinary fact that the extraordinary quality of this triumph — in a world that seems in many other ways to be bent upon tropes of change (progress, individuation, modernization, and personal growth) — goes for the most part unnoticed.¹¹

It seems important to disentangle different moments of interpretation, levels of understanding, flows of causality; for instance, it is possible to distinguish, certainly for the period up to the most recent past, repetition in popular music at the level of signifiers (intratextual repetition) and repetition at the level of the song (intertextual repetition, which, as one manifestation, produces the practice of covering an existing record). However, developments since the 1980s have tended to render this distinction problematical. The rise of digitized sampling and looping techniques — borrowing within and between texts as a multi-faceted principle — appears to represent a new paradigm, marked by an increased blurring of the distinction between musical work and musical field. Similarly, while older analytical approaches, applied to Tin Pan Alley and rock songs, found little difficulty in distinguishing between the level of political economy and that of culture, including the effects that might be attributed to repetition on these different levels, it is no longer so clear how we might do this. Even models more subtle than vulgar Marxist perspectives — for example, Adorno’s critique of Benjamin’s account of the mass reproduction of art, where the nub is precisely that, for Adorno, consciousness *does not (nor should not) necessarily follow* where socio-technical relations point — fall short in the present stage of capitalist development, where digitally repeating musical loops feed back on the economic level (e.g., via Internet distribution and multiple mix production), stimulating new spirals of exchange value creation. “History” and “repetition” (each the alter ego for the other in the established system) continue, we might suspect, to intersect in the contouring of structures at every level

of both discourse and practice, across the configurations of both genre and performance, at both micro and macro levels; yet the suspicion is that they are increasingly crashing together. If repetition is both a salve of subjectivity (at once healing ointment and salvation ritual) and a symptom of its disease (forever threatening to open up its sutured wounds),¹² how can we assess its effects at a moment when the end of history has, it turns out, been indefinitely delayed?

Refrain 1¹³

That the history of repetition (constructed across the changing musical field) and the repetitions of history (constructed in the individual performance) constantly intersect, is a subset of a still broader nexus, in which history dances with re-presentation (or, to use Michael Taussig's term, with "mimesis"). If mimesis "is a faculty," Taussig suggests, "it is also a history, and just as histories enter into the functioning of the mimetic faculty, so the mimetic faculty enters into those histories."¹⁴ Whether and in what sense repetition is a form of mimesis, and/or vice versa, is itself an historical variable.

This historicizing impulse suggests an initial, simple point which may be introduced by reference to three examples. Susan McClary draws on Monteverdi's "Zefiro Torna" (1632) to illustrate her discussion of the *ciaccona* and the impact of its importation into Europe from the Americas in the early seventeenth century.¹⁵ She argues that the effect of the *ciaccona*'s repeating ground bass pattern here is orgiastic, not only for early-seventeenth century dancers (which she demonstrates) but also, it seems, for her: "the *ciaccona* proliferates its dance pattern with reckless abandon, each temporary conclusion breeding only the desire for yet another repetition . . . one truly does not want that groove to stop, even if civilization itself is at risk."¹⁶ Of course, the effect is created by the whole texture, not just the repeating bass (not to mention the words, which pit the poet's inner anguish against a repeating celebration of the joys of spring); but the repetition does seem to be inextricably tied to the sensuality: "What *compels* the repetitions is a groove of jazzy cross-rhythms that engages the entire body," and this repeating structure elides this body with "the carefree, seductive *ciaccona* rhythms of nature."¹⁷ Does a repeating bass always have this effect? No — and McClary does not say so. Indeed, she is careful to point out that, as Europeans modified the *ciaccona*, the genre came to be used for "static [i.e., 'timeless'] formal rituals" and for "depicting obsessive states of mind."¹⁸ Late in the seventeenth century, Purcell's "Evening Hymn," again with a repeating chaconne bass, creates an effect very different from that of Monteverdi's piece. It is about night, sleep, repose of the soul with God, and is usually taken by listeners to be elegiac, spiritual, perhaps even a farewell to bodily existence. Yet the rhythmic phrasing of the vocal

line, while lyrical, is sharp and (I find) energizing — a “good night” to the world, but also an ecstatic invitation to the arms of God. The differences of meaning between the two pieces need careful technical explanation, no less than the technical link, in the form of the repetitive structure, requires its significance to be theorized.

McClary also draws a parallel between the reception of the *ciaccona* and that of African-American music by American and European whites in the 1960s. Again the differences need as much attention as the similarities. Her example is Wilson Pickett’s “In the Midnight Hour.” But there are songs that are technically closer to the baroque genre: Percy Sledge’s “When a Man Loves a Woman,” for instance,¹⁹ which has a repeating bass that is very similar in shape to that of the “Evening Hymn” (in both cases the ground bass is a descending tetrachord, falling by step from tonic to dominant — one of the most common types). However, many listeners might hear links not only with Purcell’s piece but also with Monteverdi’s “Zefiro Torna” — soul ballads such as this are often considered both sexy *and* lyrical, sensual *and* spiritual, located in the sphere of the body *and also* in that of romance. Sure enough, Sledge’s song is about the obsessive romantic love of a (generic) Man for an (equally generic) Woman (she is so generic, so mysterious, so unreasonably demanding, as to qualify as an example of the Lacanian object of “courtly love”),²⁰ yet sets this to the triplid groove characteristic alike of the chaconne and the bump-and-grind of the African-American slow drag, here translated from blues dive to uplifting soul stage.

It would be bizarre to neglect those features of all three pieces that situate them in cultural and historical moments that are quite distinct. Yet something seems to hold them together: the repeating basses not only ground but also *bind* the different voices with which they are in dialectical relationship, subjecting them to basic discipline. A Lacanian interpretation might hear the ground basses as insistent, unrelenting representatives of the Other — for Monteverdi, Nature, for Purcell, God, for Percy Sledge, the unapproachable Lady — against which desire twists and turns. More specifically, they function perhaps as an anamorphic Object, standing in the place of an impossible totality (impossible because foreclosed by the “self-retracting Real which, in a way, grounds the Ground itself”); anamorphic because its true shape could only be perceived in an absent mirror, a possibility forever postponed by the diversions pursued in the rhythmic and melodic play of the upper voices. “This elevation of a particular moment of the totality into its Ground” represents a “hubris” perpetually unraveled by the play of desire and suffering that energizes the textures, resulting in a bittersweet pleasure with distinctly masochistic qualities.²¹

But still, this a-historicizing reduction is not quite right. After all, the poetic imagery and allusions are distinct in the three songs, the sound worlds are

different, and the conventions of phrasing and articulation are quite specific. Even on the psychoanalytic level, we might think that “Zefiro Torna” is oriented more towards Eros (the life-drives: the desire and desolation of the subject in the lyric are contrasted with the verdant fertility of Nature), the “Evening Hymn” more towards Thanatos (the death-drives), “When a Man Loves a Woman” more towards Masoch (standing for narcissistic accession to the will of the Other, in a particular intersection of life and death). Admittedly, located in our later-than-late-modern space, our three examples (and all the more so if we add to them from the huge stock of ground bass pieces available, through Bach’s chaconne for solo violin and the finale of Brahms’s fourth symphony to Procul Harum’s “A Whiter Shade of Pale”) feel as if they come to us in the guise of what Lawrence Kramer calls “revenants” — uncanny, spectral “returns” from who knows where, producing difference through iteration and supplementarity (*différance*), problematizing origin and all sense of linear sequence.²² In this sense, their relation to any (hidden) point of unity is itself a figure of “temporal anamorphosis,” one that Kramer represents in spatial terms in the *entrée* he metaphorically constructs for the ghostly “revenant” in the multiply mirrored changing rooms of the clothing store.²³

Yet, at the same time, history clings to them. “Zefiro Torna” comes from the early stages of a history when the problematic of “re-presentation” in music was forcing itself on to the attention. On one level the ground presents just itself, in a conventional introversively functioning figure of technical mastery, but it also affixes the sensuality of its dance-rhythm to particular images of Nature’s fertility in the lyrics, so that we are confronted with the question, “Whose bodies are seen to be dancing here?” The answer must encompass an awareness of those (just discovered) exotic bodies of the New World: sixteenth-century Spanish literary sources consistently associate the *ciaccona* with slaves, servants, and Amerindians, with an enticing if dangerous sensuality and hence with moral threat; small wonder that they also often describe the genre as “*mulata*” and “*amulatada*.”²⁴ McClary is, quite properly, keen to emphasize this history. But her description reveals more than the geo-historical facts, for her language (“proliferates . . . reckless abandon . . . breeding . . . desire . . .”) wants to associate the music with bodily gestures that are both “natural” and a threat to Western reason (they put “civilization itself . . . at risk”).²⁵ Her point subsequently is to link this threat with an analogous subversion coming more than three hundred years later. But Percy Sledge comes after in more than just chronological terms: by the 1960s the black body *knows* far more than anything that could be imputed to it by early-seventeenth century Europeans. How can we hear him without having this in mind?

In this light, what could be the force of McClary's use of the term "groove"? As a technical-cum-critical term, referring to the characteristic repeating rhythmic patterns that give a particular performance or style its distinctive gestural feel, this is familiar usage, among fans and critics as well as musicians.²⁶ It has rich associations and history, though. As a musical term, it originated in jazz slang of the 1930s and came of age in the esoteric hipster language coined by the be-boppers. (Dizzy Gillespie's tune, "Groovin' High," dates from 1944, for instance.)²⁷ From this context, it acquired connotations both of *fashion* (an up-to-date, often in-group cultural knowledge so cool as to require no spelling out) and *pleasure*, perhaps with narcotic connections (an ecstatic automaticity, halfway between "natural" and "mechanical:" in the groove, and *high*).²⁸ These associations spread out from musical reference to the spheres of culture generally and of the body; thus "groove," "groovy," or "grooving" could be applied to any activity or object regarded with approval or as chic, to social cooperation, or to making love. In the 1940s, it was also still possible for older, apparently contrary usages — groove as routine and by extension as suggesting staidness and lack of novelty or originality — to resurface: one of many criticisms of the allegedly over-repetitive riff style of the swing bands referred to "groove beat as an end in itself," and, in a similar vein, one writer celebrating the apparent death of swing applauded the end of "the Benny Goodman groove."²⁹

For centuries, the most familiar nonmusical examples of grooves would have been furrows in the ground — pregnant signs of potential new life, giving rise to a metaphorical linkage with processes of human procreation: male seed sown into female grooves. (Note, however, that in many early usages, from the fourteenth century, a groove is a seam or drift in a mine, and also that etymologically "groove" is linked to "grave"; the plough buries as well as cultivates, and the human relationship to the ground here is penetrative, extractive, reproductive, and deadly all at the same time.) In American slang from the 1920s, "groove" could refer to the vagina (compare earlier parallels: "furrow" from the nineteenth century, "agreeable rut" from the eighteenth, and of course "ploughing" this ground is a common metaphor in traditional song). But by the early twentieth century, an equally likely image would be found in the technology of recording: many early dictionary references are taken from record reviews, and by the 1960s one American meaning of a "groove" was as a synonym for "record."³⁰

Overall, the tenor of most music and music-cultural usages from the 1930s on suggests some sort of reproducing pattern, usually agreeable or even ecstatic, and the sense of a background in cultural awareness of technological reproduction is strong. The contemporary deployment of the term, which McClary's text exemplifies, stands in this lineage, summoning up a host of

images, not only, perhaps, of dancing bodies but also of circling discs and even the never-ending routines typical of both everyday life and popular culture under modernity. Here, where the stylus and with it the listener faithfully follow the spiral groove cut in the disc,³¹ is His Master's Groove, drawing the listening subject inexorably towards that central disappearing-point (which, in due course, the technique of the fade-out would attempt to deny), in a movement that irresistibly suggests both an auditory equivalent to the invisible but all-seeing gaze of Foucault's panopticism, and a Lacanian mirror-function, already foreseen in the 1920s by the young T. W. Adorno: "What the gramophone listener actually wants to hear is himself, and the artist merely offers him a substitute for the sounding image of his own person . . . The mirror function of the gramophone arises out of its technology . . ." ³²

McClary does not want Monteverdi's groove to stop. With modern recording technology, it need not. The panauditory discipline exerted by this technology — the source of the voice hidden from us, its power at once radiating out ubiquitously and drawing us in magnetically — is also an enticement to bodily fulfillment. The way that, in the record form, tropes of nature and of machine are overlaid — reification shot through with renewal, grave with reproduction, subjective death with cultural survival — is nowhere better caught than in Adorno's early writings on the subject.³³

For Adorno, the record has no form of its own. It is "empty," mirroring back the listener's often narcissistic needs with tedious fidelity and eliding authorial intention: "the 'modernity' of all mechanical instruments gives music an age-old appearance — as if, in the rigidity of its repetitions, it had existed for ever, having been submitted to the pitiless eternity of the clockwork."³⁴ At the same time, if the record tends to write out the authorial subject, it also writes in the music itself, or rather music begins to write itself, to reveal itself as akin to writing. In the indexical relationship of the record groove to the sounds — its status as a kind of encrypted repetition rather than a representation, image, or system of signs — Adorno (following Benjamin)³⁵ finds a utopian glimpse of what the Romantics had searched for: a way to understand the mysterious meanings of the hieroglyphs of Nature, lost with the fall into semiotic babel. Ironically, it is "merciless" technology that reveals music's own potential as a universal language: "this writing can be recognized as true language to the extent that it relinquishes its being as mere signs: inseparably committed to the sound that inhabits this and no other acoustic groove," this language attempts "to name the name itself," in a form of "demythologized prayer."³⁶

If Adorno seems, unusually, to approach here a kind of identity-thinking, this is forgivable: the risk of confusing — to use Lacanian terms — *objet petit a* and Big Other (here a quasi-theological naming power) is always hard to escape. McClary uses the language of "want" to describe her feelings about

the *ciaccona* groove. She is referring, it would seem, to subjective desire, and, truly, this is endless — a burden killing us slowly yet which, masochistically, we would not wish away even if we could. For Lacan, “want” expresses “appetite,” not “desire”; it works on the level of “need.” Adorno, though with opposite trajectory to McClary’s, speaks this language too (and in both cases, there is, it must be said, a danger of overreading the details of their rhetoric). “The phonograph record,” he writes, “is an object of that ‘daily need’ which is the very antithesis of the humane and artistic, since the latter can not be repeated and turned on at will but remain tied to their place and time.”³⁷ Both, perhaps, displace desire on to the level of “need/want,” where a mythology of Nature as Other (however technologically mediated) holds sway.³⁸ The subject stands or falls — or rather, stands *and* falls — in the shadow of this very modern problematic.

Any “archaeology” of the ground of musical repetition must, then, account both for historical and cultural difference, and for historical and cross-cultural links; but also needs to deal with the specific insistence of this *topos* itself in the twentieth-century structure of feeling and the shapes it has assumed in this structure: Adorno and McClary offer, as we have seen, two examples of how these pressures have been engaged. It is certainly the case (to repeat myself) that, across the board, repetition processes pick up a distinct charge in twentieth-century music; and this charge is negative as well as positive. In the vernacular genres, the cult of novelty progressively increases its grip and its velocity as the century unfolds — the industry obsessively searching for “the next big thing,” consumers for new distractions and stimulations — as if an inoculation is required against a disease of entropy: the awareness that actually songs are driven by groove and riff, repertoires by formula and intertextual reference, music cultures by social technologies of file-sharing.

On the other side of the High/Low fence too, where novelty is understood as a valorization of originality, and where individuation of technical profile, works, and artistic career development are given an enormous premium, these qualities can be grasped in terms of a terrified flight from the implications of techniques whose motif of stasis nevertheless cannot be gainsaid; they are there, for example, in serialism, in Stravinsky’s and Bartók’s neoprimitivism, in minimalist and process music, and even, in an inverted sort of way, in the apparently opposite tendency, the search for total differentiation — for instance, John Cage’s all-inclusiveness, where infinite difference ends up sounding all the same. For David Toop, this is an “environmental” tendency, originating in an ambient aesthetic and resulting in the replacement of an older style of artistic purposiveness with an “ocean of sound”: “Music not going anywhere . . . drifting or simply existing in stasis . . . is one of the most fertile developments of the twentieth century”; it “can suggest (on the good

side of boredom) a very positive rootlessness. At the same time, a search for meaningful rituals recurs again and again, surely a response to the contemporary sense that life can drift towards death without direction or purpose.” But drifting can also suggest a simple escapism: so the choice might be — to use Toop’s words — “blankness” or “openness”; though it is possible that such an either/or formulation is less than what is required by the politics of this situation.³⁹

As in popular music, this sense of stasis can be located in the overall style-formation as well as in individual pieces. Despite the continuing influence of modernism’s insistence, with Marx, that “all that is solid melts into air,” and that music must continually be made anew, the feeling that a purpose and a center have been lost, that a teleological sense of music history no longer holds, is widespread. Leonard Meyer has even given this situation a name, “fluctuating stasis, a sort of dynamic steady-state,” as well as his approval.⁴⁰ Similarly, standing back from the bewildering surface of style change in twentieth-century Anglo-American popular music and looking intently at the beginning and the end — at, for instance, ragtime, blues and coon song, on the one hand, R&B, hip-hop and “dance,” on the other — would the question, “How much has *really* changed?” necessarily have the apparently obvious answer?⁴¹

Twentieth-century music as a whole can be seen as obsessed with this problematic: doing the same, or avoiding it. Moreover, the obsession is replicated in critical theory, where topographical and cybernetic metaphors have tended to take over from temporal ones, fields and networks contending with logics and dialectics, the poststructuralist focus on infinite diffusion overshadowing Hegelian, Marxist or, for that matter, positivist teleologies. According to Gilles Deleuze, writing in 1968, “difference and repetition have taken the place of . . . identity and contradiction,” due to a “generalized anti-Hegelianism” which had by then become hard to miss.⁴² If the Dialectic were now our tottering Hero, his usurping Other could most obviously, in this sphere, be identified as Derrida (not to mention Deleuze himself) — though, to locate the debate in a somewhat longer-established trajectory, Bakhtinian dialogics had already set out important markers. Whether (once again) such a binary opposition is the most fruitful way of constructing the repeating antiphonies of theory is a question to return to, along with the contributions of Derrida and Deleuze (and we might note in advance that to Lacan and Žižek, both Hegel and — at least in Žižek’s case — Marx remain important). First, though, it will be useful to retrace our steps to the moment out of which Hegel’s dialectics grew — the beginnings of late modernity — and the distinct notion of history that accompanied it.

“History,” in the sense constituted by and constituting modern experience, certainly looks at repetition with a suspicious eye. This is hardly surprising:

the self-understanding of modernity cannot be grasped outside of the establishment of a dominant sense of time as sequential, Newtonian, linear, secular — a sense that *time has a direction*, which underpins the teleological project of Enlightenment Reason itself.⁴³ For traditional Western music aesthetics, as it emerged from the Enlightenment period, the individuality of each successive work should aim to guarantee what the artist's creative method is set upon, namely, a means of exploring, modeling, representing *development* — personal, social, technical.⁴⁴ This *Bildungsroman* mentality, not without power, still, even in pop music criticism, gave rise in the nineteenth century to two predominant interpretative models: music being related to *narrative*, on the one hand, *organicism* on the other, with both cases governed by the Leitmotif of evolutionary change. (Lyric moments in this repertory seem to be felt as an always subordinate Other: a dream of escape or a [feminized] domestic enclave marked by reproducibility.)⁴⁵

How could such teleonomic thinking deal with repetition — especially given the undeniable tendency of musical forms to articulate themselves through repeats, and listeners' equally undeniable fondness for such strategies? One way was to reject repetition as such. This was widespread in criticisms of the narrative absurdity of the Da Capo aria in opera (and one can see how this line of criticism would inform nineteenth-century attitudes to popular songs, where similar refrain-based repetition was commonplace). In the sphere of instrumental music, the force of the criticism was all the greater. As the composer, Grétry put it, "A sonata is a discourse. What would one think of a man who, after cutting his discourse in two, would repeat each half? . . . That is just about the effect repeats in music have on me."⁴⁶ Another response was to cover repetition up, to articulate it as much as possible through screens of developmental detail; this was common, especially in large-scale movements. A third approach is associated with Kant who, by inventing a *wallpaper* model of music aesthetics, discovered affinities between the patterns of instrumental music and the symmetries of decorative design which had the happy effect (for him) of confirming music's lowly placing in his aesthetic hierarchy.⁴⁷ Hanslich, similarly, compared music to *arabesque* and *kaleidoscope*. But wanting, unlike Kant, to save music for "creativity," he decided that it is "an arabesque that is not lifeless and static, but perpetually renewing itself . . . Thus the design grows steadily . . . [It is] the active production of an artistic imagination, ceaselessly transfusing its whole wealth into the veins of this organism"; it is a kaleidoscope of patterns that is "always self-consistent yet always new," rather than just "an ingenious mechanical toy." Symmetry on its own is "worthless," "lifeless," "hackneyed" (again a whole lineage of popular music criticism came to be built on such phrases).⁴⁸ At the end (perhaps) of this tradition we find Pierre Boulez justifying his compositional emphasis on processes of continual mutation through a

critique of the redundancies of previous European music, where repetition (such repetition as there was) “was plainly designed to support perception by ‘sedating’ it with memory.”⁴⁹ Truly, as John Chernoff writes in his book on African music, this European tradition is “not yet prepared to understand how people can find beauty in repetition” (of course, for Hegel, repetition in African culture was precisely what located it outside history).⁵⁰ To give a more concrete (if also slightly tongue-in-cheek) example: in a 1993 British court case, one Helen Stephens was jailed for the effect on her neighbors of playing Whitney Houston’s “I Will Always Love You” continually for six weeks. The testimony of a music psychologist, who said that the song’s four-chord structure, repeated day and night, could probably count as psychological torture, seems to have been decisive⁵¹ — although, admittedly, six weeks of repetitive groove might be excessive even for an African festivity.

The aesthetic discourse intersects with social and cultural criticism. From the later nineteenth century onwards, critiques of mechanized routines, formulaic production, the tedium and ennui associated with contemporary life, leisure, entertainment, and culture became commonplace, and they have not let up since. Of the many proponents, Adorno is one of the most formidable, particularly for musically focused investigations. Popular music scholars (including myself) have made us familiar with his (arguably rather blinkered) account of formulaic production in popular music, and its corollary, “fetishized” or “regressive” listening, which asks only for what it is going to get anyhow, resists whatever might disturb, consumes over and over what it has already been taught how to digest, indeed what has been predigested as part of the production process. In Adorno’s well-known phrase, this is repetition as “social cement.” But what is important here is that his account of popular music is part of a broader critique of modern music as a whole which, in turn, depends for its coherence on a still larger-scale intellectual position: a critical Marxism turned sour by the apparent endgame reached in the “dialectic of enlightenment” — the contradictions embedded in the historical movement itself reach their own limits — ruling out the promised outcome of revolutionary change. Thus, when Adorno writes, for example, of an “‘I know already’ [which] insults musical intelligence,”⁵² he could have been discussing not only Mahler’s resistance to such predictability (as he was), not only (from a different point of view) any number of types of popular music (such as “dances composed of dull repetitions filling dull hours”),⁵³ but also Stravinsky — or, much later, Steve Reich. Similarly, Adorno’s notorious alignment of Stravinsky’s “neo-primitivism” with totalitarian political impulses (via the “collectivism” and “sado-masochism” implied by his frenzied repetitions) could in essence have been applied as well to interwar popular music — and, in his writings on mass culture, it was.⁵⁴ But Adorno’s point was not that repetition should simply be abjured: he was well aware that music

could not help but respond to the repetitive qualities of contemporary life and social technologies (“the current historical state of the works themselves to a large extent requires them to be presented mechanically”).⁵⁵ The issue was the nature of the response.

Indeed, Adorno’s whole philosophy of music positions it in relation to a dialectic of Nature and History, which forms consciousness and shapes musical language precisely through the inter-mediation of sameness and difference. Nature is always presented as “second nature” — a historical construct standing for naturalized cultural convention, invariance, “what-has-always-been”: history is the qualitatively new, that which individuates. But as conventions are increasingly rationalized, instrumentalized, and commodified, ending up in a Weberian “iron cage,” the progressive composer, responding to the pressure of the historical demands of the musical material, accedes ever more rigorously to a “ban on repetition.”⁵⁶ Or more precisely, although “there is no lack of invariants . . . in serious music . . . in good pieces even the clichés acquire changing values, depending on the configuration in which they are placed . . . Eventually, in the historical unfolding of this tendency, the invariants kept dissolving more and more; in essence the history of great music over the past 200 years has been a critique of those very elements which complementarily claim absolute validity in popular music.”⁵⁷ For Adorno, the model for such critique was offered by Schönbergian serialism (where the row functions as a kind of “dissolving invariant”) and by the post-serial avant-garde; thus it remained true that “wherever music articulates itself meaningfully, its inner logicity is tied up with overt or latent repetitions,” but the contradictions must be faced: “the articulation of time through repetition, through stasis, and the Utopia of the unrepeatable penetrate each other.”⁵⁸ The key division is between those who face the contradictions and those who ignore them. By this point, under the reign of the culture industries, the musical field has split into “two torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up:”⁵⁹ modernism’s cult of extreme individuation on the one hand, the standardized clichés of commodity music — almost a “third nature” — on the other. Repetition, at least unmediated repetition, now stands for a self-willed conformism, a regression at once mechanized and pseudonaturalized, a closure of history. And, ironically, the dialectic as a whole appears to grind to a teeth-gritting, unreconciled stasis.

Adorno often tells this story in terms of a conflict between *production* and *reproduction*; and increasingly reproduction triumphs. One critical issue arises precisely here because, despite his dialectical conception of nature, Adorno does implicitly follow Marx and Engels in mapping a (heavily gendered) conception of the production/reproduction pair to the economic flows of culture. What difference might it make to his picture of (feminized)

mass culture if the increasingly mechanized nature represented by its invariances were to be refigured as, precisely, a *production* — if, that is to say, the status of reproduction as, not a passive escape from history, but a historically contingent discursive construct were to be taken fully into account?⁶⁰ As it is, reproduction in the mode to which it has been condemned in Adorno's system can only appear as one in which life-sustaining returns are reified into seriality, where the creative force of production is realized wholly in the fetishized form of exchange. Similarly, the cycles of daily life, as they previously appeared (however deceptively) under cultures of self-management, are transformed into the blank "routines" of "everyday life," according to Henri Lefebvre⁶¹ a category of experience quite particular to modern industrialized society. Routine harnesses body-cycles to industrial time-discipline — and the quiescent subject can do nothing except lie back in her allotted role — lie back to be grooved.

Refrain 2

In his specific discussions of popular music,⁶² Adorno's approach finds its focus in his concept of standardization. Modeled on his understanding of Fordist methods of assembly-line industrial production, this pictures popular song production as governed by all-powerful formulae, which generate their structures, thematic typology, rhythmic patterns, and harmonic frameworks; individual details possess no intrinsic necessity — they can be substituted by equivalents with no significant effect — and no structural relationship to the whole; any impression of novelty is the result of "pseudo-individualization," a sort of surface, ersatz differentiation that actually works through deployment of an equally stereotyped repertoire of gimmicks merely embellishing (and hence substituting for) the standard framework itself. In this picture, the subject of popular song — the sense of subjective consciousness located by producers and listeners in the song experience — is coextensive with the standardized schemas, and any diversions, mutations, subversions of this quasi-transcendental core are written off as symptoms of false consciousness. Production for the people (for the masses, as Adorno would have it) has been redrawn as reproduction *of* the people: "the tendency of an over-accumulating society to regress to the stage of simple reproduction" results in an image of the world "that enables it to serve as a mythical mirage of eternity."⁶³

It is worth thinking more closely about the term "standard/ization." A standard is, first of all, something that stands out, stands tall, ex-tends (a flag or other military standard; a tree left to grow tall). From this stems the sense of a standard as an exemplar, criterion, authoritative model, and thence as a level of excellence or basis for measurement or classification, at first physical, then moral and aesthetic (standards of taste). Already, at this

point (the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries), the particular, with its unique aura, its *extension* above the surroundings, is spinning off copies in a move towards universality; and this move is completed with the emergence in the nineteenth century of the sense of a standard form as a norm (often a prescriptive norm, as in “standard English”), and then, in the late nineteenth century and even more the twentieth, of standardization as denoting uniformity. It is not surprising that this shift should occur in association with the triumph of industrial production. In terms of music history, it is connected to the shift away from a sequential model, in which unique works follow each other in linear time, towards a genealogical model based on family resemblance. The transition is precisely caught in the tension within music-critical discourse between “standards” — original songs that stand the test of time and are worthy of frequent reperformance — and “standardization.”

The Adorno of “On Popular Music” was writing at a time when the transition marked by this tension was in full swing. He was aware of the shift. In the tantalizing footnote, already cited, referring to the guidebook, *How to Write and Sell a Song Hit*, he quotes the authors’ distinction between “popular songs” and “standard songs,” and remarks that what they “call a ‘standard song’ is just the opposite of what we mean by a standardized popular song.”⁶⁴ This is tantalizing because what might have functioned as a reminder to himself to historicize his analysis is not picked up. While there are occasional hints of historically aware interpretation in Adorno’s text (he explains standardization as a kind of monopolistic “freezing” of “standards” — successful innovations — previously established through competition, and argues that this explains the appeal of “revivals”: “the breath of free competition is still alive within them”),⁶⁵ for the most part he conforms to the category depicted in Raymond Williams’s ironic observation that those who resist standardization are often also the same as those who vociferously deplore the loss of “standards” (for Adorno, the standards set by Austro-German modernism), without acknowledging that “standards” here operates as what Williams calls a “plural singular”: a range of values (standards) in the actual history is surreptitiously reduced to a single, authoritarian measure.⁶⁶

We may regard the standard/ization nexus as marking an historical territory where a use-value (auratic singularities, repositories of cultural capital) and an exchange function (mass reproduction exerting market pressures on production) mediate each other, on the way to an economy of the simulacrum, where inter-penetration of the two (full inter/intratextual conflation) would in principle void the distinction. Except that simulacra — copies with no original, in Baudrillard’s celebrated aphorism — have to reckon with their continual *performance*: each copy can only be a re-presentation; and in the process “origins” (that is, locations where authority could appear — manifestations in the aesthetic sphere of the self-authorizing ruses employed by

the Name-of-the-Father) are also continually set up. Adorno was deaf to the significance of performance. Improvisation is his prime example of pseudo-individualization; it fabricates spontaneity in order to disguise the hegemony of the schema. And to be sure, in the era of recorded sound, the concept of performance needs to be widened so that it accommodates the full range of “instantiations” forming the economy of re-presentation: “networks of interconnected moments, coalescing into temporary hierarchies,” in which the sense of originating moments is regarded not as “a ‘first cause,’ more a transiently privileged *moment of departure* within networks of family resemblances.”⁶⁷ In this economy, the *cover version* plays an important role. If we attend to the function of covers, and the relationships they set up within the networks of family resemblance, what light might this throw on the question of standard/ization? And would the passages of subjectivity then appear less like moments of self-identical reification, more like a perpetual slippage “sideways” through the potential positions in the family networks?

Percy Sledge’s “When a Man Loves a Woman” became one of the most familiar soul standards, put out after its first appearance in 1966 on innumerable reissues and compilations, copied by innumerable tribute singers, used in TV commercials and film soundtracks. On this level, the repeated phrases and implacable bass ground of the song itself as it were spill out and spin off into the everyday patterns of the “simulaculture.” The song has also been covered by many other soul singers. Sledge’s vocal is a wonderful fusion of lyricism and passion, its cascading phrases full of Gospel-derived melisma. Some covers stay fairly close to Sledge’s original (e.g., Solomon Burke’s, recorded twenty years later), some move further away (Lou Rawls’s is much cooler, jazzier, more controlled), while at least one is intriguingly odd: James Brown incorporates a few phrases, delivered with characteristic screams, towards the end of a nineteen-minute live version of his own “It’s a Man’s Man’s Man’s World”; an intertextual scenario is thus brought inside the structure of the performance itself, and it is organized around the gender question, for “It’s a Man’s World” sets up the classic patriarchal binary in the context of which the interpolated phrases, pointing towards male *dependency*, can function only as a disquieting comment.

Interesting issues are bound to arise when female singers cover the song. Natalie Cole’s rock/R&B version leaves the lyrics intact, thus singing from a more definite third-person position, as if on the man’s behalf. Laura Lee, by contrast, prefaces her performance of the lyrics with a new introduction in which, explicitly addressing “girls” who have “taken enough,” she advises them to ditch unsatisfactory men; but then, having found a faithful lover in the main body of the song, she extends it with new material, encouraging her listeners to be grateful for this gift and to “treat him good”; so a moderately feminist inversion is re-assimilated into the old gender norm. Organist Shirley

Scott recorded the tune as a solo instrumental — slow, atmospheric, with funky right-hand runs. Is she appropriating the song for female instrumental prowess, demonstrating (rather than merely describing) female control?

The song has traveled much further stylistically, however. There are not only the predictable dreary easy-listening versions (from pianist Richard Clayderman to flautist James Galway, and even jazz guitarist Wes Montgomery, whose string-backed doodle is something he would want to forget), but also recordings by country musicians (Kenny Rogers's voice, for instance, replaces soul passion with country "honesty"), folk groups (De Danaan demonstrate that a pentatonic tune over a repeating chord-sequence can be turned readily enough into something sounding Irish), and singer-songwriters (Art Garfunkel's slow, meditative soft-rock performance, with breathy, double-tracked crooned vocal, removes all soul timbre and pitch inflection, locating the scene somewhere like a (white) New York City loft — surrounded, though, by atmospheric jungle noises from time to time!). Gregorian's chill-out version — with choral, pseudo-plainsong tune, backed by churchy strings and restrained dance groove — manages to turn the song into something "sexless." By contrast, Bette Midler produces a hysterically over-the-top live performance (for the film *The Rose*, in the persona of rock singer Janis Joplin), in a slick showtime arrangement (complete with tension-screwing key shifts), for an almost equally hysterical audience. She sings the lyrics pretty straight — but, given her status as gay icon, how straight is that?⁶⁸

These examples scratch the surface of what seems like a conversation (sometimes, admittedly, of the deaf) between family members. As Dai Griffiths puts it (with an appropriate allusion to the other worldly metaphors of old-time religion: it is easy to experience these records, especially when they emerge unexpectedly out of a radio, as *revenants* or specters): "The circle... seems unbroken, but the journey... says so much to the time and attitudes that these versions traverse — the cover version has become part of... a 'songline,'" the reference here suggesting a cartographic and navigational function which can point both forwards and — in moves of cultural archaeology — back as well.⁶⁹

One type of (particularly conversational) cover is the "answer song." Who knows if the writers of Percy Sledge's hit (Calvin H. Lewis and Andrew Wright) had in their mind an earlier song written in 1934 by Harold Arlen, Bernard Hanighen, and Gordon Jenkins, entitled "When a Woman Loves a Man," which was memorably recorded by Billie Holiday in 1938? But the link is irresistible — the, so to speak, inverted torch song theme of "When a Man Loves a Woman," with its love-struck, slave-like male, turns the traditional torch song pattern evident in Arlen's lyric upside down (and may thereby have something to tell us about shifts in gender rhetoric, especially among African Americans). Adorno would have recognized the earlier song's

dependence on “primitive harmonic facts,” just as predictable in their way as the later song’s bass line. This is a circle-of-fifths tune. The main phrase in the 32-bar structure (which, correctly, Adorno treats as the norm in this period) is organized around a VI-II-V-I approach to the cadence, and the middle eight extends this pattern further into a highly conventional III-VI-II-V bridge.

Rather than pursue this song further — the nagging discipline of the harmonic structure, forever circling round the same ground, seems highly appropriate to the fatalistic tenor of the torch song genre — I would like to move to a still earlier song which also relies heavily on a circle-of-fifths pattern but which, intriguingly, puts it to a different expressive purpose. This is “There’ll Be Some Changes Made,” put out by African-American writers Billy Higgins and Benton Overstreet in 1921 and first recorded in the same year by Ethel Waters. (See Example 4.1, next page.)

The tune of the chorus follows an earlier, but equally formulaic, pattern: a 16-bar AA¹ with two-bar extension, and the rhythms have a ragtime bounce familiar since the 1890s. The two cadences divide the structure conventionally into an open-closed (V-I) binary. But the circle-of-fifths formula, repeated in each eight-bar phrase, tantalizes the listener by starting out of key, on a chromatic G⁹, then working in an extension of the sequence: VI-II-III-VI-II-V-(I). The tonic chord is not heard until the final cadence, and this spins off the two-bar extension by immediately leaping again to VI and running once more round the VI-II-V-I circle. The effect of the chromatics (all the chords are of the dominant seventh type, each therefore pulling strongly to the next) together with the open quality of the cycle (the end of a chorus, in performance, leads straight on to the next, with a leap from the tonic B♭ to the out-of-key G⁹) is to modulate the repetitiveness with a refusal to stop and stabilize. At the same time, the melody focuses around the most yearningly dissonant notes — A (the ninth over the G chord) and D (the ninth over the C chord), creating plentiful opportunities for singers to smear the pitch. These notes “happen” to be the seventh and third of the key, that is, those notes most commonly smeared in blues: pools of potential bitter-sweetness tempering the bright-eyed bounce of the rhythm and the ever-onward cycling of the harmonies. The overall effect is of a quite particular take on repetition, one familiar in African-American ragtime/early jazz tunes, and which maps beautifully to the lyrics: human change is placed in the context of natural cycles (“change in the weather . . . change in the sea”),⁷⁰ and seems to be driven by a desire to make the most of the present before an equally natural cycle fulfils itself (“Cause nobody wants you when you’re old and grey”); but it out-reaches these cycles in scope (“My walk will be diff’rent, my talk and my name, Nothing about me is going to be the same”) and in

G⁹

For there's a change in the wea - ther, there's a change in the sea,

C⁹ D⁷

So from now on there'll be a change in me, My walk will be diff - 'rent, my

G⁷ C⁷ F⁷

talk and my name, Noth - ing a - bout me is goin' to be the same, I'm goin' to

G⁹ C⁹

change my way of liv - in', if that ain't e - nough, Then I'll change the way that I'

D⁷ G⁷

strut my stuff, 'Cause no - bo - dy wants you when you're old and grey,

C⁷ F⁷ B^bD⁷/A^b G⁷ C⁷ F¹³ B^b

There'll be some chan-ges made to - day. There'll be some chan-ges made.

Example 4.1

determined agency (“There’ll be some changes made”). Placed in an historical context when potential changes in race and gender relations seemed, however overoptimistically, to be in the air — and coming after the verse, in which the singer tells us she has been dumped by her long-time lover — the result is poignant.

Ethel Waters’s 1921 recording, accompanied by a small jazz group led by Fletcher Henderson, is polished but also decidedly feisty, confident diction, before-the-beat phrasing, and some semi-parlando throwaways producing the effect of a young woman’s (and an optimistic early jazz age?) performance.⁷¹ This seems to have established one strand in the performance tradition: Mildred Bailey’s 1939 version, although somewhat more laid-back and with a band playing in a swing style, is very much in the same mold. In between (in 1927) Sophie Tucker, bringing a blackface slant,⁷² gets to a similar place — but with more difficulty. Tucker’s first run through the chorus is slow, in free rhythm and with a piano accompaniment that interpolates strings of semitonally moving parallel seventh-chords, a technique that has the effect of subverting the “changes” posited by the harmonic structure: Can she actually do what she sings she will? The second chorus — up to tempo and with driving stride piano — suggests she can, only for the tempo to drop back again for the ending, which turns affectingly personal — “nobody wants *me* . . .” (rather than “you”); the “red hot momma,” vulnerable after all. Billie Holiday’s recording comes from her very last session (1959). But even without this biographical subtext, one would hear in the slow tempo, tremulous vocal timbre, and minimal change of register (it is all middle) a performance implying that she does not believe *anything* will change.

Holiday cuts the verse, as had become the norm for performance of standards (in this case, excising the then-and-now narrative has the effect of placing even more emphasis on the repetitiveness of the chorus). This is the usual practice when mainstream singers take on the song: Peggy Lee, for example, with a bouncy, up-tempo, confident version; or (in what might be heard as a riposte, in gender terms) Tony Bennett, who starts off slow and halting but then doubles the tempo and belts out the changes with supreme self-assurance. In this form (i.e., as a set of changes derived from the chorus) the tune became a jazz standard and can be heard in innumerable versions, down to Charlie Byrd’s virtuoso small-group version and Dave Brubeck’s accompaniment for Jimmy Rushing, which underpins his vocal with the percussive, syncopated, added-note chords typical of his piano style. Glenn Miller’s 1941 recording offers a rather surreal take on mainstream confidence (confidence in *change*). In this smoothest of medium-tempo swing, all smooching saxes and soporific four-to-the-bar, set in a context of war-time escapism, the signal is that nothing must be *allowed* to change.

In a way, a more recent equivalent to this, relocated into the territory of country music and from the register of gender to that of age, is provided by Chet Atkins's duet with Mark Knopfler. Jokingly rewriting the lyrics for an aging country star under threat from change (from youth, from rock), our two protagonists self-indulgently swap virtuosic guitar licks, smoothly absorbing the threat (maybe tomorrow, not today, sings Atkins) into the stereotypic conservatism of country. Sometimes this mood generates a full-blown retroactive move: change, yes, but backwards. Russ Conway included the tune in a medley of early Tin Pan Alley hits, feeding nostalgia through the high-octane Liberace-esque glitz of his "pub piano plus"; this is "more twenties than the twenties." Mezz Mezzrow's revivalist-jazz version, with a band including Muggsy Spanier and Sidney Bechet recorded live in 1947, also harks back to the twenties — in this case to New Orleans and Dixieland; but there is a racial misfire here, condensed into the contrast between Mezzrow's own well-meaning but static noodling (Mezzrow has often been described as the purest example of Norman Mailer's "White Negro") and Bechet's explosive playing, with modernistic touches, playing that surges out of the loudspeaker, forcing the past into the future. This blackface negotiation casts an interesting light on the fact that it is has often been white musicians who have made a point of exploring the bluesy elements in the tune. Italian-American guitarist Eddie Lang recorded it in 1928 under the name of Blind Willie Dunn (probably adopting this persona in order to allow him to target the race record market), turning it into a slow and melancholy rumination pervaded by blue notes. The Boswell Sisters's 1932 version, with the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, is even more remarkable. Their first chorus is sung in up-tempo close harmony, slowing to a half-time close; but this is followed by three slow twelve-bar blues choruses (published lyrics, new tune), which in turn leads to a final fast chorus in the minor mode. White girls singing (but also contextualizing) the blues — changes indeed.

For both "When a Man Loves a Woman" and "There'll Be Some Changes Made" the picture that emerges is far from the prefabricated stampers for the mass reproduction of reified subjectivity that Adorno imagines; rather, what we hear, flickering around particular constellations of historical time-space, at once exploding and imploding, is the continuous production of difference — of mutating subject potential — out of apparent repetition. At this point, the predictable, but nevertheless intriguing, move would be to wonder how Adorno's sparring partner, Walter Benjamin, might have responded to these examples. Writing in 1936, the Benjamin of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"⁷³ famously argued that the new technologies of mass reproduction and dissemination, and their feedback on to production methods, tended to dissolve aesthetic aura, that quality which, inverting

Baudrillard, belongs to an original without a copy. The result, Benjamin suggested, was to break the hold of tradition and install art in the sphere of politics, with the specific benefit — vital for him — that fascist appropriations of auratic techniques could be resisted. The limitations of this view have been well rehearsed, starting with Adorno's own critique: for example, a technologized form of aura is readily reinstated, with glossy, endlessly circulating star images mystifying ego-identifications all over again; not to mention the way that the cultic origins of aura, with their resonances of fetishistic authority, are drawn upon to power the phantasmagoric effects of commodity circulation itself. But the argument cannot be regarded as closed, especially given the vacillations in Benjamin's own writings.

In "The Work of Art," aura appears, one might say, on the side of the object: it is "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it [the aesthetic object] may be."⁷⁴ In Benjamin's classic study of Baudelaire, published three years later, the account is focused much more on the side of the subject. Now, aura is "the associations which, at home in the *mémoire involontaire*, tend to cluster around the object of a perception." This process is part of the dialogics of subject-construction: "The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return. This experience corresponds to the data of the *mémoire involontaire* . . . This designation has the advantage of clarifying the ceremonial character of the phenomenon. The essentially distant is the inapproachable . . ."⁷⁵ Moreover, as John Mowitt has pointed out, the political reading has changed.⁷⁶ Mass reproduction still destroys aura, but far from being politically advantageous this is now regarded as, on the one hand, something to regret, on the other, a process that the modernist artist (such as Baudelaire) can show us how to resist. The key seems to be that elements of aura, deposited in the unconscious (the *mémoire involontaire*) as fragments of socialized memory, can function as a kind of protection mechanism — a shield against the shocks of modernity. This begins to mesh with Benjamin's theory of reception as formed in the mode of *habit* (for "technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training");⁷⁷ that is, what constitutes the subject's dialogue with the world at the level where it is automatic.

We might think that something of an aporia opens up in Benjamin's thought here. For *habit* is precisely the mode he recommends for the mass reception of the new media.⁷⁸ And this mode is surely characterized precisely by its repetitive quality: the uniqueness of aura, in this sense, is a myth that must constantly be *performed*, and it is the function of tradition to sustain the originary fraud. Perhaps because his focus is on literary and visual works, Benjamin neglects the "repetition compulsion" necessary to sustaining aura even at its cultic stage, a mechanism which greater attention to the performed

arts, such as music, would have revealed. If aura is not so much repetition's opposite but is actually carried on the repetitive patterns of memory, then memory-traces can (*pace* Freud) be regarded as integral to the subject's perpetual self-reproduction. To be sure, this process would be mediated by the contingencies of changing technology. If, then, we attend to the antinomies of aura no less than to those that Adorno detected in the dialectic of reason (or indeed those of repetition), we will not miss the historical specificities of Benjamin's discourse. Writing (like Adorno) against the background of the fascist threat, he reads Proust (and Bergson and Freud) against the context of their early-twentieth century moment, and, through Proust, reads back to Baudelaire's mid-nineteenth century Paris. In doing this, his discourse itself works through (to use a Freudian phrase) a layered structure of memory — and, at the same time, lays out the method whereby we can extend it into the future.

Benjamin's sensitivity to this rhythm appears in his studies of nineteenth-century Paris, where teleology gives way to intricate interdependencies: the urban crowd and the solitary individual; ennui and compulsive novelty; the cult of fashion and social discipline; boredom and factory production; chance and mechanicity.⁷⁹ His understanding of repetition (not least his discussion of Nietzschean "eternal recurrence") is at once rooted in the precise moment — the moment we recognize as marking the beginnings of many of the still familiar patterns of modern life — and clearly prefigures twentieth-century developments. In the emergence of electronic techniques of reproduction — sampling, looping, remixing — we can identify a further stage in this narrative, with the saturation of the soundscape producing production itself as always already a sort of cover, together with a model of subjectivity in continual (cyborgianized) dispersion for which Freud's *Erinnerungsspuren* (to which Benjamin refers in his Baudelaire study) are no longer just traces (*Spuren*) but also spurs (tracks, branches) extending out into the social landscape.⁸⁰

The ambivalence is there, often enough, in Benjamin's formulations themselves. He writes of "novelty," "This semblance of the new is reflected, like one mirror in another, in the semblance of the ever recurrent"; and again, on progress and stasis, "The belief in progress — in an infinite perfectibility understood as an infinite ethical task — and the representation of eternal return are complementary. They are the indissoluble antinomies in the face of which the dialectical conception of historical time must be developed. In this conception, the idea of eternal return appears as precisely that 'shallow rationalism' which the belief in progress is accused of being, while faith in progress seems no less to belong to the mythic mode of thought than does the idea of eternal return."⁸¹ But it is his insistence on the ambivalence of his "interdependencies" — these "dialectical images," as he called them — that

frees them for historical thought and political work. As Benjamin puts it, “precisely the modern, *la modernité*, is always citing primal history. Here this occurs through the ambiguity peculiar to the social relations and products of this epoch. Ambiguity is the manifest imaging of dialectic, the law of dialectics at a standstill. This standstill is utopia, and the dialectical image, therefore, dream image.”⁸²

Ironically, while Adorno’s commitment to the historical logic of reason could result only in its negative moment, its freeze-up, Benjamin’s theory of history — opposed to all concepts of progress, drawing as much on Jewish mysticism as historical materialism, and hinging on the attempt to summon past moments into a timeless Now, whose “flash” of recognition is pregnant with potential for future action — built on the idea of history’s *end* through revolutionary rupture (almost a dream-equivalent of the Lacanian *passage à l’acte*). As Andreas Huyssen has noted, to read Adorno against the grain — following up the hints of historical flexibility mentioned earlier, levering open the occasional theoretical fissure — reveals more signs of hope there too than Adorno himself is ready to claim. “Because human beings, as subjects, still constitute the limit of reification,” Adorno wrote, “mass culture has to renew its hold over them in an endless series of repetitions; the hopeless effort of repetition is the only trace of hope that the repetition may be futile, that human beings cannot be totally controlled.”⁸³ And if repetition qua mechanism *were* to fail, this could breach the walls of the reified, self-identical subject which is its home and effect, “shak[ing] up that invariant of bourgeois society understood in its broadest sense: the demand of identity. First, identity had to be constructed, ultimately it will have to be overcome.” And at that point, Adorno even hazards, “The dawning sense of freedom feeds upon the memory of the archaic impulse not yet steered by any solid I.”⁸⁴ But these hints are stymied by the requirement of the theory for an *Aufhebung* which the theory itself has rendered impossible — a postautonomous subject generated out of autonomy, as if by virgin birth.

Of the two, then, it is Benjamin, with his greater sense of premodern, mythic residues within bourgeois subjectivity and his feel for the new contours of sociotechnological space in mass culture, who better helps us to grasp the spacious territory of repetition in modern societies: forever generating would-be standard(izing) models, standing proud of the field (but already strangely familiar), which however immediately copy with a programmed fidelity both built-in and impossible; auratic emblems (military and potentially militant) wanting to be sign machines, which are however doomed to misfire; and always flickers, coming and going, of memories, memories... (are made — where? — in the unconscious, wherever that is...), memories are made of this.⁸⁵ Perhaps, then, a politics of the *standard(izing) moment* — those moments which *ex-tend, ex-sist, stand out or up* (to be counted) within the

ceaseless circulating flow, and which, as such, are actually coextensive with the subject — would be one that enabled those moments to be productively articulated together.

These examples suggest something of the *complexity* of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of repetition. Yet this only fills out the more evident point that the cultural dominant of this period lies elsewhere: in, precisely, history; and against this background, repetition is positioned for hegemonic modes of theory as a subaltern figure. Although its challenge emerges more strongly as the twentieth century unfolds, its status as somehow other, backward, or negative has been hard to shake. Whatever reconfigurations can be detected, it is clear that overall the matrix of thought of which repetition is part under modernity continues in place; understanding repetition in this sociohistorical moment means, inescapably, grasping it in this matrix.

“Only modernity . . . gives ontological weight to history and a determining sense to our position within it,” writes Gianni Vattimo.⁸⁶ But the signifier “history,” within the self-understanding of modernity, has been by no means univocal, as we have seen — particularly once modernism began to enter its critical points of view. In cartoon sketch, we might register, on the one hand, the arrow of time, the telic imperative, the solid ceaselessly melting into air; yet, ironically, these are also bound by the conveyor-belt of capital accumulation and Fordist seriality into the reproductive treadmill of mass society — itself subjected, on both its time and space axes, to a remorseless succession of compressions suggesting a putative state of equilibrium.⁸⁷ On the other hand, modernist artists mark these features, however variably (in, for instance, an incessant quest for the new, a focus on the fragment or a flirtation, sometimes fascistic, with the aestheticization of stasis), yet at the same time are typically to be found rebelling against the predictabilities of normative culture — even if this might involve a provocative deployment of repetition, a rebellious refusal to rebel (as in Satie’s *Vexations*). In this (by no means monolithic) lineage, repetition as such is never innocent. Even when indulged, it is deeply scarred with marks of negation. From Baudelaire and Marx to Barthes and Baudrillard, the sign of freedom, the moment of *jouissance*, is (variably) critique, rupture, a break with the code, silence — at any rate, a *transgression*. The terms of debate are set, it would seem, with repetition at one side, shock at the other. Benjamin’s classic epigram about Baudelaire starkly outlines the typical modernist line: “He indicated the price for which the sensation of the modern age may be had: the disintegration of the aura in the experience of shock.”⁸⁸

But is repetition doomed to be a junior partner, a shadowy double, a disturbing symptom of a normativity that, for human fulfillment, demands to be unsettled? Is it only to be associated with a ground, a code, a predictability

(of the subject, of social formation, of the body, of a *plaisir* that can always be accommodated)? Or might this ground be susceptible to opening up, to a certain *loss*? The musical examples discussed so far, together with the historical, technological, and social variables surrounding them, certainly suggest that repetition is less an ontological datum than a discursively construed operability. And, while the historically constituted sphere of musical practice as such — based as it is, in striking fashion, in all its parameters, on periodicities — may be regarded as influential in the more general play of repetition going to form culture itself, at the same time it offers a quite specific case: for here repetition is always wanting to, as it were, put itself forward, through markers of iteration, transformation, variance and return, even while this very instinct lays the ground for an intensive variability of application (including, of course, resistance to this very instinct). Elsewhere,⁸⁹ I have tried to begin the task of analyzing types of musical repetition. One distinction I have put forward is between *musematic* and *discursive* forms, the first built on repetition of *musemes* — short units such as riffs — the second on repetition of phrases or sections. I suggested that such distinctions could be followed through at the level of subject formation, for example, in terms of affirmation or dissolution of subject identity, *plaisir* or *jouissance*. If we return now to the history of modernity's troubled engagement with repetition, we will find that such variability played a bigger role than we have recognized so far.

Poststructuralist *jouissance* is often indebted as an idea to the Romantic concept of the Sublime, influentially explored in the mid-eighteenth century by Edmund Burke and further developed by Kant. The Sublime offered a powerful opening to irrationality in which images of terror, awe, and natural grandeur invited readers, viewers, and listeners to an enticing but threatening pleasure of self-extinction. This was an aesthetic of excess, of transgression, its theatre constituted by figures that, in one way or another, lay beyond the norms familiar to predictive consciousness. But as early as 1805, the Kantian philosopher C. F. Michaelis saw self-loss in the musical Sublime as accessible not only through “too much diversity, as when innumerable impressions succeed one another too rapidly and the mind being too abruptly hurled into the thundering torrent of sounds” but also through “uniformity so great that it almost excludes variety: by the constant repetition of the same note or chord, for instance.” What most critics of the time would have read as tedious was here figured as offering entry to a particular pleasure, and the story of the mysterious link between boredom and ecstasy got under way.⁹⁰ More than a century-and-a-half later, minimalist composer Terry Riley struck a similar note: “You can get high by getting in one groove . . . You can get high by staying on one note, there's different ways but that's definitely a way to ecstasy.”⁹¹ In both examples, ecstasy-through-repetition is clearly thought of as signaling

abnormality; it gets you high. But the transgression motif itself (whether driven by rupture or repetition) may, at least in this rather melodramatic form typical of the Romantic-Modernist tradition, be historically contingent. To suggest that the whole bivalent *topos* of conformity versus transgression may now have had its day — is it perhaps analogous, and even linked, to other binaries, in such spheres as gender, sexuality, race, and aesthetic hierarchy? — would be premature, and certainly to jump ahead of my argument; but at least it enables me to emphasize the need to locate it, where it belongs, as specifically a trope of the modernity narrative.

This narrative is less unilinear than many accounts imply. It is particularly useful here to think modernity with full attention to the place within the modern Western world of the Afro-diasporic presence, notably, but by no means exclusively, in the Americas. Which requires us to double back to Paul Gilroy's influential argument⁹² that it is impossible to grasp adequately the shape of that history without understanding that this presence was integral; in other words, that black culture, far from being a purely foreign body, played a constitutive role in the evolution of modernity itself. At the same time, Gilroy insists on the specificity of African-American cultures, and this two-sided approach enables him to figure their role as that of a *counterculture of modernity* — dependent, participative but relatively autonomous — which significantly colors the whole to form a “black Atlantic.”

Writing before Gilroy, James Snead nevertheless is on a similar track, albeit focusing his attention specifically on repetition.⁹³ Pointing out that repetition is fundamental to culture as such, functioning as protection against disruption and loss of identity, but that different cultures vary in how they deal with it, Snead describes the European picture of African practice as an “absolute alterity” constructed against its own usages.⁹⁴ For Europe, repetition must be managed and controlled, worked into processes of growth and accumulation; for Africa (at least in this picture), it is celebrated, as equilibrium or apparently accidental “cut” (arbitrary return to a previous moment, as in James Brown's cuts).⁹⁵

The fulcrum of Snead's argument is provided by Hegel. He fixes Hegel's critique of Africa in his sights and then inverts it. Hegel, Snead points out, defines historical Europe through opposition to its Other — history-less Africa. For Hegel:

In this main portion of Africa there can really be no history. There is a succession of *accidents and surprises*. . . The Negro represents the Natural Man in all his *wildness and indocility*: if we wish to grasp him, then we must drop all European conceptions. What we actually understand by “Africa” is that which is without history and resolution, which is still fully caught up in the natural spirit, . . . [so] terrifyingly close to the cycles and rhythms of nature.⁹⁶

Inevitably, then, Europe — at the cutting-edge of the developing spirit of world history — is Master, Africa condemned to be Slave, in Hegel's notorious dialectical figure. But Snead argues that Hegel's description is right, and only his valuation wrong: "The written text of Hegel is a century and a half old, but its truth still prevails, with regard to the tendencies, in the present-day forms . . . , of the cultures that Hegel describes . . . Hegel was almost entirely correct in his reading of black culture."⁹⁷ The awareness and acceptance of the unavoidable repetitiveness of life is a wisdom: "everything that goes around comes around." This argument enables Snead to describe the widespread cultivation of repetition in black music, from Africa to James Brown, as a positive, and to welcome its influence on a twentieth-century West gradually releasing repetition from previous repression — for example, in Stravinsky: "The outstanding fact of late twentieth-century European culture is its on-going reconciliation with black culture."⁹⁸

At about the same time as Snead was writing, literary theorists Houston Baker (1984) and Henry Louis Gates (1988) were developing the theory of "Signifyin(g)," which is congruent with Snead's approach and also fleshes out Gilroy's.⁹⁹ Signifyin(g), as found right across black culture, is "repetition and revision, or repetition with a signal difference":¹⁰⁰ the continual paradigmatic transformation — inter- or intratextual — of given material, the repetition and varying of stock elements, the aesthetic of a "changing same," to use a phrase invented by Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka. The theory is a vernacular theory, derived from the cultural practice itself, and posed explicitly against the goal-oriented aesthetics of the official culture — even though Gates is at pains to stress that in essence it belongs to a broader practice: "all texts signify upon other texts."¹⁰¹ But Signifyin(g) has its own specificity: it also Signifies on the official process of signification, on its syntagmatic narrative chains — "The absent *g* is a figure for the Signifyin(g) black difference"¹⁰² — and it is thus "double-voiced," acting as oral subversion of the textual, in a process that constantly undercuts not only meanings but also meaning as such. So there is not only otherness but also relation: a running commentary, giving voice to those "outside the groove of history" and constituting Signifyin(g) as a strand of counterculture; a "slaves's trope" that contains but covers over the "master's trope" — a "trope reversing trope."¹⁰³

It is not difficult to see the force of the theory of Signifyin(g) for understandings of African-American music. For example, tonal chord sequences are often turned into riffs and looped to create repetitive frameworks, undercutting the received significance of such sequences as prime sources in European music of, precisely, sequential, goal-oriented logic. Blue thirds and sevenths probably stand in an analogous relationship to their diatonic equivalents. Arguably, this is exactly how the circle-of-fifths sequences in "There'll Be Some Changes Made," and the blue notes brought out in many performances,

function. This analytic potential has begun to feed through into musical interpretation, notably in David Brackett's study of James Brown's "Superbad," where Signifyin(g) is revealed as working on a host of levels: lyrics, textural patterns, vocal structure, harmony, rhythmic relationships.¹⁰⁴

Hovering around all these theories, sometimes explicitly, is the figure of Mikhail Bakhtin, who categorically rejected Hegelian dialectics, and for whom meaning lies in the dialogue of utterance and the always already said: no *Aufhebung*, only heterology — a double-voiced, or multi-voiced circling around changing sames. But we need to look further at the identity of these multiple voices.

Snead identifies a counter-current in Western thought, running from Vico through the Counter-Enlightenment, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, to aspects of modernism — a current where cyclic theories of history and valorizations of repetition can be found. But the *purchase* of this lineage on the surrounding culture is never really engaged. Similarly, Snead's treatment of repetition in the bourgeois music of this period is simplistic. On both levels, although he wants to insist that European music and thought could not avoid repetition and pursued a damage-limitation strategy of absorbing it into processes of differentiation and growth, he presents their relationship with black culture as a simple alterity. Above all, he makes nothing of the fact that, actually, Hegel was wrong, not right, about the history-less state of Africa, as actual historical work has shown; it is Hegel's picture, not its object, that is mythic. The dangers of a simple Nature/History dualism are manifest in Snead's account of the renaissance of repetition in twentieth-century music as a reconciliation, a simple return. Such thinking is not uncommon. Steve Reich, for example, connects process music to age-old, ritualistic, prehistorical compositional methods. He wants a dance music that rejoins an ancient consensus on the rhythmic regularity and predetermined structures of dance. He describes playing his own music as "imitating machines" but claims that this is akin to Yoga breathing exercises: "the kind of attention 'mechanical' playing calls for, which is related to sitting and counting one's breaths, is something we could do with a great deal more of right now."¹⁰⁵

Similarly, something of a consensus seems to have emerged within cultural studies over what is almost a *separatist* notion of black difference. Tricia Rose, in her book on rap music, rightly remarks on the essential role of repetition, often highly technologically mediated, in rap.¹⁰⁶ She reviews the Adornian view of repetition but plays down its relevance to black music, where repetition can draw on "long-standing black cultural forces" in order to function as "collective resistance" to industrialized patterns. The Adornian critique (whose tentacles she finds in Attali and Jameson as well) is a "massive misreading."¹⁰⁷ But this conflict of interpretation is not related to musical, social, or cultural mechanisms that could explain it. Rose asks the

very good question, “If we assume that industrial production sets the terms for repetition inside mass-produced music, then how can alternate uses and manifestations of repetition that are articulated *inside* the commodity market be rendered perceptible?” An equally good question, though, would be, if we assume that black difference sets the terms for repetition in black music, whenever it may occur, or even if we assume (as Rose does) the importance of attending to “multiple histories and approaches,” how can we demonstrate these terms, histories, approaches, unless we identify the factors that govern the interpretative choices (as Rose does not)?¹⁰⁸ Crucial here will be the recognition of black culture as, not separate, but a counter-culture, and the “black Atlantic” as always also a plebeian and contested one.

Of course, it is very hard to think past the baleful influence of alterity, with its essentializing structures of projection. Even Brackett, in his study of “Superbad,” ends up presenting the “critical difference” between black and European musics in a way that threatens (though he draws back) to absolutize it, rather than placing both dialogically within Gilroy’s transatlantic culture of modernity. In more recent work,¹⁰⁹ he has moved on, suggestively, to put forward a way of understanding black difference discursively, that is, in terms of a historically contingent sequence of constructs in which the structures of projection are animated by social changes. This advance is one that has yet to be engaged by most commentators, for whom — as the debates around hip-hop in fact attest — “black music” still occupies its traditional role in the theatre of alterity. It is a theatre summoned up, with different actors, by Seán Ó Riada, romantically describing the circular processes of traditional Irish music as “the graph of real life. Every day the sun rises, every day it sets. Every day possesses the same basic characteristics, follows the same fundamental pattern, while at the same time each day differs from the last in its ornamentation of events.”¹¹⁰ However apposite it may be on some level, a description of this kind is, one feels, mainly there to fulfill *his* mythology of a folk-other. How much use, if any, might such an image be to understanding the role of repetition today?

In many of these models, repetition is imagined as somehow natural — or at least it is close to nature, goes with the flow of natural cycles and limits, etc.¹¹¹ But repetition within a cultural practice is a *production*; it is, precisely, *practiced* and, equally, always *cultural*. And to emerge in discourse, including theoretic discourse, it has to be *recognized* — in much the same way that resemblance (acceptance or assertion of representational likeness) is not innate in the objects but is the product of a performative act.¹¹² (Discursive recognition is not necessarily conscious; it may even be that some sort of “dispersed” act of recognition performs repetition into existence at the level of somatic operations, and that the discursive consequences subsist at an unconscious level.) Just as “the folk” was invented (probably by Herder), along

with “savages” and “primitives” (in ancient Greece, in the Age of Discovery, in the Enlightenment, and so on — over and over), not to mention ideas of cyclic existence (which, within the West, may be traced back to Pythagoras and Ovid, and, according to Marina Warner, go on to form a constantly active quasi-pagan belief-system in continual tension with the Judaeo-Christian emphasis on the teleology of individual identity),¹¹³ so, as an identifiable issue within the context of aesthetic, political, and social philosophy, “repetition” had to be invented — performed into awareness by those who found it at once suspect and enticing: at any rate, who could imagine themselves as standing somehow outside its sway.

A spate of such recognitions emerged in the later eighteenth century. We might suppose that this represented [*sic*] a precipitation forced by the trajectory of Teleological Reason. It is therefore no surprise that repetitive qualities were so often projected on to subhuman, supernatural, or other inferior figures — machines, robots, zombies, women, primitives, puppets, and mimics of all kinds; that they became, precisely, objects of representation, while the voice of controlling, reasoning subjectivity went unmarked.¹¹⁴ Those positioned within the economy of repetition have little choice, for reasons of disparity of power, but to live within it, even if they struggle against its absolutes — that is, as others, strive to answer back. Meanwhile, as this historical trajectory continues, what is repressed (or projected out) by the dominant stratum will often return; we recognize it, for instance, in “civilization’s” perverted mime of the primitive, in that “organisation of mimesis,” that “mimesis of mimesis,” which Adorno identified in the magic of fascist rituals (or, we might add, those of the Ku Klux Klan).¹¹⁵

What happens in that eighteenth-century moment, at least in the musical sphere, is that relations of equivalence (an aesthetic of metonymic contiguities, recalling Irigary’s model of gender miming) are, so to speak, turned sideways, creating relations of metaphoric representation. Repetition is turned into representation — or rather, repetition is *represented*. The semiotics of this difficult intersection — representations are and need to be repeatable, but repetitions (including repetitions of representations) in a sense represent themselves to each other¹¹⁶ — calls for a historical anthropology of the entire nexus, which, as a totality, we scarcely yet possess, but which would surely agree on the specificity of the moment of modernity. What arises is a specific economy of reference — an attempt to *picture* something beyond the practice, whether internal emotion or external scene, story or object. As Heidegger puts it:

the fact that the world becomes a picture at all is what distinguishes the modern age... The word “picture” now means the structured image that is the creature of man’s producing which represents and sets

before. In such producing, man contends for the position in which he can be that particular being who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is.¹¹⁷

What is copied, that is to say, is brought under the rubric of a universalizing point of view, nature laid out for domination. Moreover (to expand Heidigger's point), the "nature on display" can be inner as well as outer, laying out the self rather than the territory of otherness for exploration and development (the bifurcation may be related to the twin aesthetic tracks in nineteenth-century art music — narrative, organicism — described earlier). In contrast, repetition as *practice* can be thought of as more like a facilitator of conversation or, in Michael Taussig's terms, an operator of mimetic magic, a "chain of sympathy."¹¹⁸ In so many descriptions of folk-repetition — whether celebratory or patronizing — what happens is precisely the turning of a practice (a performative) into a representation: a reified portrait of otherness. For those portrayed, such *misrepresentation* is, in this sphere, the inevitable concomitant of being a counterculture of modernity.

At the same time, the detailed history is complex and does not always fall into the simple alteritous structure that the protagonists often imagine. Warner's study of modes of metamorphic reproduction — mutating, hatching, splitting, doubling — argues that pagan themes continue to energize thought and expression in the modern West, mutating under the impact of successive waves of encounter with congruent tropes associated with colonial and imperial Others, drawing on old motifs to represent new conditions. But she resists the logic of opp/repression in favor of "more direct intellectual and cultural exchanges" that produced "rich new materials to think with."¹¹⁹ Although she arguably understates the effects of colonial power structures,¹²⁰ Warner's view of Otherness as a sign not only of "a cultural bipolar disorder" or "a return of the repressed, a counter-Enlightenment negation of sense and rationality," but also "an extension of the spirit of empirical inquiry," an "incubus" born of "the imperial enterprise itself,"¹²¹ produces rich interpretative dividends, especially in her explorations of "zombies" and "doubles" in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature (where they are usually linked to themes of alienation and fragmentation of subjective identity). Her accounts of Coleridge's "doubles" as phantasmatically traversing inner and outer space, and of "hatching" themes as a metaphor for narrative representation (like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, "doing the work of making the real, of making it up," bringing together apparently disparate moments into a "single creature"),¹²² offer stimulating ways into understanding nineteenth-century art-music. For this is a music where narrative often emerges out of reproductive mutation in exactly this way, and where a representational economy based on the transcription of subjectivity's inner movements and its external

portraiture, working through a deployment of repetitions, transformations, and detours, seems to be precisely how this repertoire acquired its reputation as the quintessential art-form of the period.

Against this background, it is instructive to read, say, Lawrence Kramer's studies of nineteenth-century music for the light they throw on modes of management of repetition. In *Musical Meaning*, for instance, chapters on Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Liszt can all be read this way.¹²³ Similarly, Anthony Newcomb sees the narrative in Mahler's Ninth Symphony as a "spiral quest" in which the multiple, often unexpected, even jarring repetitions (many of them of material with vernacular origins or allusions) fold the past, through strategies of recall and transformation, into a search in which "repetition has to do with finding the proper ending." Drawing on Freud's theory of repetition and memory, Newcomb argues that the key here is that "the past needs to be incorporated *as past* within the present, mastered through the play of repetition in order for there to be an escape from repetition."¹²⁴ Across the (black as well as white) Atlantic, and unknown to Freud no doubt, the case of Ives offers an American parallel to Mahler's (of course, different in many ways, including those that would have had Freud licking his lips). The sources of vernacular repetitions here lay in American white, and to some extent black, popular musics.¹²⁵

This Freudian moment, the moment of modernist crisis (not to mention of Proust, Bergson, and Einstein), presents us with the most fraught historical example to this point of the rewriting of the sense of time, against the clatter and chatter of the present, the felt loss of the past (this is the moment of the institutionalization and "mass production" of "tradition"),¹²⁶ and an insistent gaze at the future heightened by its threatened collapse. A key preliminary shift occurred, as Benjamin noticed, when the serialities of secular urban existence and mass production found that they had to realise themselves through the novel means of — *novelty*, "the quintessence of that false consciousness whose indefatigable agent is fashion."¹²⁷ The aimless circlings in the crowded Parisian Arcades marked a new sense of time — a kind of "industrialized eternal return." The inception of this self-validating "everyday life" coincided with what would shortly be termed the "death of God," one effect of which was to imply the secularization and politicization of cultural memory, as religious ritual began to give way to vernacular knowledges and institutions. Ian Hacking argues¹²⁸ that memory only became an object of scientific knowledge in the late nineteenth century, when the sciences of memory — including Freudianism — began to supplant the idea of the soul as the key discourse of the modern self. Modernism probed this cultural knot. At the same time, everyday men and women learned to live within its new structure of hopes and fears. The teleological journey of the soul, together with the ritual structures marking its passages, metamorphosed into the secular

dreams, memories, and self-constructions of contemporary experience; and, at the same moment, provoked by the tedium of their never-ending repetition, Nietzsche invented the secular religion of “eternal return.”

Stretched by the pressures of this extreme moment, the collective cultural psychology of the Western elites drew upon the full range of its traditional projections, helped as ever by the continuing presence of objects of dubious desire in the system itself: “imperial consciousness provided a screen on which these fantasies could be projected.”¹²⁹ African Americans could not help but assume their role as one such object, along with other folk-others. The “masses” and their culture, at once uncivilized and frighteningly modern, were also often figured in terms of repetition — as standardized workers, reproductive machines, unreflective consumers, devoid of historical grandeur — and so was Woman, so close, apparently, to the rhythms of natural cycles.¹³⁰ The sensual passivity attributed to “orientalized” exotics achieved a new level of potency within the European imagination.¹³¹ And giving an added twist to the explosive spirals of doubling were the new mass reproduction technologies. For Taussig, these “modern mimetic machines” kick-start a historical back-wave, “recharging and retooling the mimetic faculty”; the fact that Walter Benjamin, above all, registered its significance, was, he argues, what enabled him to identify primitive magic within the technologically modern.¹³² Warner traces the prehistory of the cinema’s mimetic “image magic,” through magic lantern, phantasmagoria, diorama, and photograph, back as far as the seventeenth century. But from the “mirror point” of 1900 — with film illusion supplemented by the acoustic mirror mechanisms of the phonograph, the Model T rolling off the assembly-line as if by mirror magic, psychoanalytic patterns of identification and splitting (which would shortly give rise to the theory of the mirror stage) finding an apotheosis in the fetishizing effects, conjoining Marx and Freud, of the glittering store windows, reflecting back to bourgeois, imperial subjects their colonial possessions — she also looks forward, putting the changes in the context of an overall theory of representation:

representation itself acts as a form of doubling; representation exists in magical relation to the apprehensible world, it can exercise the power to make something come alive, *apparently*. The figure of the other you inside you threatens to escape, not only in states of trance...but in actuality, and become another, usurping your being as someone else: the idea of the clone is probably most frightening because even if it looks and acts like a copy, it cannot and will not be one.¹³³

As this cyborgian trajectory suggests, replication is here installed at the core of representation, reproduction at the heart of production; we struggle to tell them apart, as they mimic each other.

African Americans were not spectators to these developments. As piano rolls and gramophones span out the “primitive” iterations of ragtime, coon song, foxtrot, tango, and early jazz, they played a leading role in the industrialization of repetition. And, as songwriters created ways of managing musematic repetition by folding it into longer-breathed formal articulations — a small-scale equivalent of the procedures in nineteenth-century art music — blacks were among them.¹³⁴ Characteristically modern themes of loss, nostalgia, and disruption helped form early blues (see chapter 2), while spirituals were historicized, creating the sense of a folk past within African-American music culture itself. Boogie-woogie overwrote its hypnotically repeating images of erotic body rhythms with those — congruent but other — of the railway, penetrating the folk hinterland even as it carried former slaves into modernity.¹³⁵ Equally, though, blacks could rarely escape objectification. Warner describes how the figure of the “zombie” was derived from Afro-diasporic sources and subsequently affixed to varied images of “possession” and slave-consciousness, often associated with exotic groups,¹³⁶ and this association can be traced through to popular images (including Adorno’s) of jazz.

Above all, the intricate maneuvers of blackface — a kind of reifying caricature of Signifyin(g) in which black and white alike looked into a mirror that both misrecognised and misrepresented each to the other — formed the inescapable framework for all black performance. From this point of view, Al Jolson’s blacked-up appearance in the first sound movie, *The Jazz Singer* (1927), represents a key moment, an iconic albeit “cracked” image reflected in multitudinous if equally crackly cinematic projections around the world. Another, perhaps, lay in Louis Armstrong’s indulgence (arguably) of stereotype when he adopted the 1931 tune “When It’s Sleepy Time Down South” as his theme tune, ensuring its continued recycling as a blackface standard (although he had undercut the image two years earlier in his moving recording of Fats Waller’s “What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue?” — and, as suggested earlier, there may be more, interpretatively, to his “Sleepy Time” than first hearing assumes).¹³⁷

But such twists and turns went way back. For example, to the early nineteenth century when the “blackface turn”¹³⁸ emerged in New York as a symptom not only of racist projection but also potential plebeian agency. W.E.B. Du Bois, whose theory of “double consciousness” underlies subsequent models of Signifyin(g), was in many ways a Hegelian — a tendency that in later years took him towards Marxism — and he developed the theory out of existing ideas in European Romanticism, American Transcendentalism, and late-nineteenth century psychology.¹³⁹ But, of course, the teleology of the master-slave dialectic would, for him, have to work itself out in a very different way from anything Hegel envisaged. As repetition began to be

commodified in the arcades of Paris, the view from the plantations of the South would have looked very different, even though the two sites were intimately connected economically: the slaves *were* commodities, objects (rather than subjects) of fetishistic effects both as factors of production and (as breeding machines) of reproduction. This gives the repeating cycles of work songs a very specific edge; and when those familiar pendular thirds (usually, though not always, joining tonic and minor third above) resonate through the riffs of later African-American song repertoires, the edge remains: in, for example, “Baby Please Don’t Go,” or, even more forcefully, Howlin’ Wolf’s “Spoonful,” where their ambivalent force (the body as it were imprisoned but — all the same — powerful) is transplanted to a sexual theatre; or Public Enemy’s “Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos” (1988), where a speeded up bass version of the riff underpins a transplantation to the fantasy-scene of a prison break-out (that is, an escape, as the lyrics put it, from “a form of slavery organized under a swarm of devils”).¹⁴⁰ What this lineage seems to point to is the inscription of repetition on a collective body that has been positioned in a place not outside the cycles of capitalist accumulation but, in a very specific way, right at their center.

As many of these examples suggest, however, Others can in principle “answer back.” Objects forced to reflect projections are not necessarily condemned to be forever dumb, and in speaking back, can Signify on, and in that sense work with, aspects of the myths. But in deconstructing the apparatus of projection, we need to recognize not only the right of its objects to self-definition but also the weight of historical interweavings which alteritous maps have misrepresented. Deconstruction — rather than simple negation — should lead not to the inversion of a previous duality but to the recognition of an open-ended *spread* of experience and position, defined through the specific vectors of historical pressures. Marina Warner notes a postcolonial twist to the figure of the zombie in which it is reimagined as a power, not an emptiness; as the spirit of dead slaves protecting their descendants, “a figure not of servitude, but of occult and diffuse potency for the very regions where the concept arose in its reduced, subjugated, even annihilated character.”¹⁴¹ Is this what Ishmael Reed is about when in his novel *Mumbo Jumbo* he answers back to white pretension: “They are after themselves. They call it destiny. Progress. We call it Haints. Haints of their victims rising from the soil of Africa, South America, Asia . . .”¹⁴² And among these Haints do we hear the figures conjured up by the uncanny, uncompromising declamations of both Howlin’ Wolf and Public Enemy: specters that, by virtue of special knowledge, haunt modernity from within? What might this tell us about the robotic qualities of Michael Jackson’s dancing, whether he is dancing with zombies or not?¹⁴³

In our own would-be postcolonial moment, it sometimes feels as if, at least in the developed societies, we are haunted *all the time*; the repeat/shuffle buttons are on full-time, and saturation via ring-tone, computer bleep, holding music, mall Muzak — as well as music in its more old-fashioned guise — approaches. If formerly repetition in music had to be *recognized* before it could be discursively linked to experience on other levels, now these levels are increasingly interpreted — apprehended, sorted, processed — in the light of the soundscape. Musical and nonmusical time slide together. Until relatively recently, music punctuated life; often the performed time of the musical event stood in a dissociated, even liminal relationship to the experienced time of surrounding existence.¹⁴⁴ The shift is not absolute: complete dislocation between music and life is impossible, and in general, we may surmise, to recognize in music the shape of temporal contours known from elsewhere is an experience equally familiar as to be carried out of any such contours into a distinct temporal realm. The second no more constitutes music as separate (cut off) from the rest of life than does the first: musicalized life and lived music interact. Nevertheless, the *specialness* of the musical event that we can recognize in many traditional contexts — its capacity to interrupt — has been attenuated by the vernacularization of musical experience in modern societies.

The transition from the bourgeois concert to today's pop-drenched soundscape reveals the auratic music-ritual as part of the historical wreckage that Benjamin's Angel of History leaves behind¹⁴⁵ — and the late-twentieth century "rave" as its after-shock. Even the tranciest techno-high bleeds out into secular life-values. The critical impulse that, typically, is attached to music's autonomy in the bourgeois aesthetic paradigm is, in post-Benjaminian culture, thoroughly dispersed and at the same time politicized: *representation* wants to turn towards *action*, recollection (in a reverse-Freudian movement) towards repetition, even as we cannot stop, in vertiginously compulsive images (a sort of generalized transference), watching each other act. But the objects of recollection (memories) are increasingly located *outside*, in mediated texts: whereas we used to hear our own voices, "media dissolve such feedback loops,"¹⁴⁶ recording these voices for us, placing the internal voice of consciousness in crisis. For the later Freud, the subject is in effect a prosthesis of social memory: "consciousness arises at the site of a memory trace"; "this is the temporal contradiction of the subject, its displacement by a reproductive apparatus that precedes it," and the discontinuity, Freud suspects, "lies at the bottom of the origin of the concept of time."¹⁴⁷ Today, more clearly than ever, these glints of consciousness cling to repeating flashes of technically mediated memory like clouds of gas to shooting stars, refractive shards in an ever mobile kaleidoscope. If in a certain light this might look a bit like

a technologized Spinozan pantheism, it stands to the philosopher's holistic utopia — with individual selves fading into a single mind/body *sub specie aeternitatis* — much like the market of consumer capitalism (to which it no doubt has a certain Benjaminian “correspondence”) stands to democracy.

In this conjuncture, the connections are multiple. Thought may mirror music as well as vice versa. Fed by certain strands in ecological and feminist thought, and by the sense of an end of grand narratives, there is certainly a renewed awareness of the relative constants of human limitations, death, and intergenerational repetitions. As Kierkegaard puts it, “every generation begins again from the beginning... No generation has learned how to love from another, no generation begins at any other point than the beginning, and no subsequent generation has a shorter task than the generation that preceded it.” This leads him to the view that “Repetition is reality, and it is the seriousness of life. He who wills repetition is matured in seriousness.”¹⁴⁸ Consider, in a similar vein, Nietzsche:

the world, as force, may not be thought of as unlimited, for it *cannot* be so thought of... Thus — the world also lacks the capacity for eternal novelty... [A]s a certain definite quantity of force... it must pass through a calculable number of combinations. In infinite time, every possible combination would at sometime or another be realized... And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place... a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated...¹⁴⁹

Or, in the twentieth century, Jean Wahl:

We are in this world limited in our very being. The only way to take our destiny upon ourselves... is to want ourselves to be limited by death. It is therefore by way of dread and the thought of death that we arrive at repetition. We must take what we are upon ourselves... [we must] live our own death in advance. We overcome our failure by becoming conscious of that failure.¹⁵⁰

Yet are Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Wahl altogether right? Wahl is glossing Heidegger, whose response to the speed-up of modern life was, it might be argued, to ontologise contemporary anxiety into a theory of human Being as such; which subject is it who is consumed by dread in this way? Nietzsche, arguably, confuses potential infinity with actual, historically contingent infinitudes in particular spheres, forgetting as well the determinate effects that one “combination” may have on the chances of a subsequent “combination.” Similarly, Kierkegaard's moving vision of human love catches the effort this capacity demands but absolutizes it. There is more than one kind

of beginning, and configurations and understandings of love are always historically contingent.

The conjuncture today — *our* combination — is in many ways unique. *Telos* collapses for the very specific reason that, so to speak, after Auschwitz it cannot face the world. At the same time, the ever accelerating tempo of “time-space compressions” fundamentally alters the social matrix within which repetitions take place. Benjamin’s flood of reproductions circulates in an ever-shrinking world, against an ever-shortening horizon, and by the time of the later Baudrillard appears (at least to him) to have left all distinction between original and copy behind, so that “simulacra surpass history.”¹⁵¹ But the collapse of *telos* does not require the end of history. The end signaled here is inscribed only in an ideology congruent, to say the least, with neoliberal apocalypics. And Baudrillard misses the Benjaminian insight that simulation not only uproots meaning but also, through the reinternalizing of repetition, the decontextualizing of representation, potentially frees practice.

Not the least singularity of the contemporary moment is what I think of as the “dual world system” governing today’s music regime: the astonishing confluence, in a twin triumph, of global capital circulation in the political economy, African musical diaspora in the sign economy — modernity and its counterculture, relatively autonomous still, but symbiotic. Is this a joke by the World Spirit at Hegel’s expense? Frederic Jameson’s concern¹⁵² that postmodern ecstasy represents a false Sublime, powered by the giddy cycles of commodity circulation, might worry us that the Slave is now complicit with the Master; but such either-or melodrama, itself complicit with an outworn paradigm, is sounding tired. Chernoff’s insistence¹⁵³ that the effect of multiple repetitions in African music is not frenzied but refreshing, that “ecstasy” would be seen as tasteless, is a useful caution. Similarly, Morton Marks, in his study of African-American religious music, takes issue with Victor Turner’s theory that liminality strips participants of their identities: the ritual structures he discovers do not disrupt but rather reconfigure existing systems of order; they are “rule-bound but liminal,”¹⁵⁴ their mechanisms depending on switching — successive or contrapuntal — between different repetition patterns.

Kierkegaard,¹⁵⁵ while carefully distinguishing different modes of repetition and recollection, nevertheless finds them overlapping. Similarly, Deleuze defines *true* repetition, counter-intuitively, as “repetition of difference,” which takes place in “another dimension, a secret verticality”; but it is always in disguise, intermingled with, on the one hand, “brute repetition” — what Deleuze calls mechanical repetition-of-the same — and, on the other hand, with resemblance: the grouping of differences under a concept, or in another word, representation: “It is always in this gap, which should

not be confused with the negative, that creatures weave their repetition and receive at the same time the gift of living and dying.”¹⁵⁶ Kristeva’s program for a reconstruction of “women’s time” promotes a tactic of interweaving the (male) cursive time of production and the (female) recursive, cyclic time of reproduction. This process, she argues, needs to be recuperated to the internal structure of the subject, in an “interiorization of the founding separation of the socio-symbolic contract”:¹⁵⁷ that is, in a shifting of socially oriented splitting, scapegoating and projections to the *interior* of identities, social or individual, putting them into a new fluidity.

We should be wary of totalizing visions. As a political tactic, Kristeva’s proposal is strong. Yet there is the danger of ontologizing the “founding separation” and leaving the female time of reproduction where the split forced it to dwell, *before* culture — a place from which it will be hard to rescue it. Similarly, applications of Deleuze’s metaphysics risk confusing an inspiring yet ultimately phantasmatic attempt to (in Lacanian terms) represent the Real — something that, inescapably, can take place only on *this* side of representation — with a political program. But memory, even if in shreds, is everywhere; repetition here has only a figurative link with Nature, and has, still, to be *produced*; difference, no less than repetition, can at this stage in history not operate — the machinery will not start up — except in relation to representations, including representations of difference and repetition themselves.

Refrain 3

What, then, does repetition-practice look like at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? An adequate answer would require an attention to difference of Deleuzian proportions. My snapshot from the 1990s selects a few examples that simply offer some interpretative contrasts, while locating popular voices in a musical context sufficiently broad to enable us to take a fix on them.

The Third Symphony (*Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*) by Polish “holy minimalist,” Henryk Gorecki, was composed in 1976 but achieved celebrity in the early 1990s, when it was heavily promoted by British radio station Classic FM and topped the classical album chart.¹⁵⁸ At the start of the second movement, we hear the hallowed tonic-subdominant move, repeating over and over, I and IV chords bleeding into and overlapping each other, the progression unclosed (it is followed by a setting of a text discovered on a concentration camp wall). The cadential pull alluded to maps a narrative structure (the *telos* of modernity?), while its religious associations (I-IV = Amen) root this narrative in its Christian sources. In a symphony linked to mourning for Nazism and the Holocaust, this is indeed historical debris; it

seems to summon up a skein of memory reaching right back into the heart of European civilization. What can the composer do with its teleonomic and at the same time ritualistic potential but rehearse and at the same time refuse it? — except, perhaps, use it for prayer: “... art is prayer,” says Gorecki, “... But it is difficult to understand: one has to mature to this thought. It seems to many people that prayer means to ‘recite the Hail Mary’ — but someone may recite ‘Hail Mary’ as many times as one wants and it will not be prayer.”¹⁵⁹ The old repetitions no longer work; the new will be at best tentative, built from the wreckage.

John Adams, who achieved considerable popularity around the same time, has also sometimes (if wrongly) been classified as a minimalist. His “On the Dominant Divide,” from his *Grand Pianola Music* (1981–82), scored for chamber orchestra with two pianos and voices, also deals in historical debris, in this case the I-V progression (there is also more specific allusion, in the piano figuration and the main theme, to Beethoven’s *Emperor Concerto* and *Hammerklavier Sonata*).¹⁶⁰ The initial dominant pedal is comically over-extended, and the repeating I-V chords of the theme are bathetic. Adams is obviously having fun at the expense of the hoary old perfect cadence (more particularly, its crucial role in the developmentalism of Beethovenian form); perhaps too at the expense of a particular grandiose nineteenth-century manner, and even the style of Hollywood epic theme-tune that grew out of it. But the naiveté seems to transfigure these overused materials, the aimless repetition to cancel the narrative weight of the cadence.

Yet if this suggests a historical burden lifted, Adams’s aim seems to have been far more than postmodernist goofing. He describes the composition as having “started with a dream image in which while driving down Interstate 5, I was approached from behind by two long, gleaming, black stretch limousines. As the vehicles drew up beside me, they transformed into the world’s longest Steinways... twenty, maybe even thirty feet long. Screaming down the highway at 90 mph, they gave off volleys of B flat and E flat arpeggios.”¹⁶¹ The conflation of mechanicity (the modern grand associated with military rounds [volleys], with a pianola-like automaticity and with time-space compressions induced by the effects of the automobile industry) and Beethovenian subjectivity (the *Emperor* and the *Hammerklavier* are celebrated warhorses of heroic pianism) is telling. It is not difficult to imagine the limos containing the specters of Beethoven and his retinue of history-making descendants (but is this a VIP convoy or a high-speed funeral?) and our Hero as given the impossible task of bridging the two sides of Enlightenment Reason, critical and instrumental. This, then, is a fantasy of Adornian negative dialectics turned sunny side up (and if the music celebrates its own “corn,” this is stylistic grist to a mill that — as it fed the magic music industry goose — had, over a long period, certainly resulted in many golden eggs).¹⁶²

Rock music dwells in a world that, while it overlaps and is inseparable from that inhabited by Gorecki and Adams, is not identical. The bourgeois concert hall, and its virtual simulations on radio and record, mimic an autonomy on one side of a divide that rock — situating itself in a mythical street-scene, at once everyday and impossibly highly colored — crosses only in ironic or mutant forms, if at all.¹⁶³ Lawrence Grossberg has argued that, given the transformation of the cyclicities of daily life into the *routines* of everyday life, rock for the most part lives within these routines, accepting them as a confining framework, but at the same time imagining the possibility of escape, if only through identifications with Others (especially black-Others). Thus the rhythms of routine are de-territorialized, serving as a way to imagine Saturday-night “fun” as permeating the everyday.¹⁶⁴ Reducing freedom to transient fun is the price paid to the forces of alienation and to the continuing potency of the structure of projections: the repetitions both set the limits of this strategy and point still, perhaps, towards a certain utopian moment. But this is, so to speak, a default position, from which individual instances may well stand out; it does not mean that repetitions in rock do not carry heavy and specific historical freight, all the more so because repetition is generally much more powerfully foregrounded here than in the musical lineages that Gorecki and Adams deconstruct. In heavy rock it is put to uses that, often, are not free from their own complicity with hegemonic discourse — particularly through its association with the grindingly insistent structures of patriarchal demand. How to deal with — rather than simply reproduce — this?

Earlier, we saw something of how Patti Smith addressed this issue, in her version of “Gloria”; the management of repetition there (particularly the harmonic underpinning: an unchanging I-♭VII-IV riff which emerges out of a slimmer I-♭VII introductory version) plays an important role in the representation of desire, its unresolvable frustrations, ecstasies, and terrors. P. J. Harvey, often compared to Smith and stylistically indebted in a similar ambivalent way to blues-rock’s hard men (Wolf, Hendrix, Plant, et al.), works much the same territory in her “blues album,” *To Bring You My Love* (1995).¹⁶⁵ The tracks reassemble a bagful of familiar heavy rock/R&B riff-types — harmonic, melodic, rhythmic — but the vocal focus (which, despite the generally low tessitura and excursions into shriek and growl, is clearly marked “female,” albeit often “phallic” in orientation) resexes them, leaving a thematic that combines sexual obsession, sado-masochism, religious imagery (“It’s my voodoo working”), and brazen boasting (“Laid with the devil”) to negotiate as best it can a territory deeply marked with raced and gendered histories. In “Send His Love to Me,” for example, the relentless harmonic riff (I-♭VII — again, although the tonic chord is broodingly minor) and repeating vocal phrases (breaks, whoops and growls fragmenting the chilling force of the core timbre) mark out a space where loss (“How long

must I suffer?"), religious appeal ("I'm begging, Jesus, please/Send his love to me"), and oedipal bewilderment ("Mummy, daddy, please/Send him back to me") combine to summon images of Nina Simone as much as Patti Smith and the "magic phallicism" of Muddy Waters. When backing strings enter, part way through, memories of ballad and torch song are added, and, as their repeated phrases fade out the track, the overall impression, in comparison to Smith and Simone, is of a controlled, hopeless anguish — a turn-of-the-century feminism that, however daunted, will not give up.¹⁶⁶

The contemporaneous album by trip-hop star Tricky — *Maxinquaye* — is also largely about love and is also dark and complex.¹⁶⁷ But in most other ways, it offers a radical contrast. This is very much a studio album, the vocals (by Tricky and girlfriend Martine) laid over textures produced mostly out of looped samples. In "Suffocated Love," for instance, this is made up of virtually unchanging drum and bass tracks, plus subtly varied string and guitar phrases, almost all descending, mostly chromatically, halfway between lyricism and the effect of fingers scratching a blackboard. The tempo is moderate, the mood subdued, the texture dense, intricate, mysterious. At this level, the track seems to pass a whole aesthetic tradition of atmosphericism, running from Romanticism and expressionism to pop ballad and ambient music, through the filter of trancy dance loops. The repetitions slip between images of relaxing physical gesture, everyday urban dread, and the babble of inner consciousness. A heritage of *angst* is relocated, but at the same time somehow dissipates between the multiple points in the texture with its varied positions for listener identification, its circling loops of reassurance.

From another point of view, the style constitutes itself as a response to American rap: laid-back rather than aggressive, implicit rather than explicit. In this sense, the cycles of repetition have the effect of a distorting mirror, angled across the black Atlantic.¹⁶⁸ At the same time, the sexual theater, while understated rather than militant, plays to similar themes as those familiar in American hip hop: Tricky raps (that is, deploys the controlling male power of speech) while Martine sings (lyrically, expressively, from the body), even though both seem to have much the same view of the sexual relationship as a space of suffocating love, a prison of misunderstanding and exploitation as much as a bed of pleasure. ("Will you spend your life with me/And stifle me?") It is as if the potential to pioneer an increased sexual equality which Hortense Spillers found in the distorted relations of the historical African-American family has been generalized, in the context of a widespread, late-twentieth century weakening of patriarchal family forms — albeit with negative as well as positive results (Tricky, it might be noted, seems much exercised by his mother's premature death when he was four, an event that perhaps created a powerful maternal fantasy).¹⁶⁹ This brings us to the specifically *black* dimension of the music, not only in many aspects of its style but

also its provenance in the black community of Bristol, a key center of the British slave trade, only recently starting to come to terms with its part in this history. One of the images on the CD sleeve, which overall presents a surreal collage depicting a “jungle,” part urban, part natural, shows the two vocalists (one assumes) roped together at the wrists, with overtones that are disturbing both sexually and racially. Once this aspect is raised, against the background of a musical style that is druggy while at the same time conjoining figures of black embodiment and of cyborgian production,¹⁷⁰ the trope of the *zombie* comes irresistibly to mind, albeit a postcolonial zombie in the business of inverting previous stereotype. A trip hopping across history indeed.

What does this highly selective group of examples have to tell us? I hear a range of “changing sames” as they intersect with the magnetic images — wired positive or negative — of varied historical force fields, themselves groaning with memory-traces. Freud might want to ask what traumas are being hidden beneath these repetitions. But the traumas emerge readily enough; indeed, it is more the case that the deployments of repetition here seem to usher them into the light. Listening in a world where we have, literally, repetitions constantly in our ears, we encounter a flow of memory that is both dispersed and temporally disjointed.

Yet *these* traces are for the most part disturbing ones. Are the hermeneutic windows I have tried to open dependent on an unacknowledged preference, a rubric of *critique*? Would this not be to take us back to the antinomies of Adornian critical theory, which, I have been suggesting, has grown cold? And in any case, under that rubric does the *popular acceptability* of these pieces not devalue them? This perspective seems wrong. Its plausibility arises in the first place, I think, because of the important role played here by familiarity — by historical debris, all of it pregnant with the wash of inherited representational fields. Yet to varying extents this debris is mobilized in forms of dialogical practice — while (also to varying extents) retaining and refracting the representational backwash. Besides, the binary logic of dialectical critique seems foreign to the giddy whirl of mimes flying about here. This is not to say that the spirit of such critique is dead in contemporary music, only that to find it, we must look elsewhere — to late-modernism.

Alastair Williams does precisely this,¹⁷¹ searching the post-Webern repertory for ways of working *within* the apparent impasse represented by Adorno’s road-blocked dialectic: a Hegelian dialectic with the *Aufhebung* missing, as Williams describes it. He finds them in Ligeti’s interanimations of stasis and movement, repetition and difference, which can be regarded, he argues, as a form of immanent critique; there is no *outcome*, but still we hear glimpses of the possibility of a utopian immediacy. That the critique remains immanent marks its limitations, however. In the third movement of Ligeti’s Chamber Concerto, multiple intersecting and overlapping clock-like

mechanical repetitions layer and cut up the otherwise fragmentary motion. The idea seems to be to signal at once the unacceptability of “the same” and the impotence of “difference.” But the music refuses the vernacular; any familiar gesture is treated as worn out, a frozen aesthetic mark, in a strategy that guarantees the really worn out ideology of musical autonomy; comprehensibility functions only as an ironic opposite to the modernist norms of dissonance and irregularity. The music’s bracketing of historical narrative cannot shake off the horror that results from an inability to break with the authors of the plot (from Hegel and Beethoven to Schönberg and Cage); its “contained extremism” forgoes the possibility of dialogue, to remain mired in a “non-supercessionary dialectic.”¹⁷²

Georgina Born points out that, as the negative becomes familiar, it always itself becomes repetitive. Moreover, it cannot explain the appeal of constant variation of the same. Most of all, it insists on structuring the musico-political field around a center, so that difference can only be heard as negative to a positive, rather than as difference-in-repetition — just “difference without any necessary antagonism, another form of positively constitutive identity.”¹⁷³

Even so (the argument might continue), the examples I have just discussed are all characterized by considerable compositional *finesse*, which arguably makes it easy to bestow approval. What about Deleuze’s “brute repetition”? What about music that just repeats — Satie’s *Vexations*, for example? Or where the change is minimal and, perhaps, governed by an apparent mechanicity — in early minimalism, for instance, or in some dance music? If we compare, say, Steve Reich’s *Come Out* (1966) and Prodigy’s “Everybody in the Place” (1992),¹⁷⁴ we find some technical features in common, in terms of the types of electronically mediated sound but also the repetition processes, built on looped chains of superimposed short riffs. (Of course, there is dissimilarity too, to do with the way difference is incorporated: Reich builds imperceptible change into the compositional system, while Prodigy cut arbitrarily from one textural matrix to another.) Is the effect likely to be an ecstatic loss of self or a state of boredom? How would one decide, and which is preferable? Reich has written about his music of that period in terms of its capacity to bring on a sort of “ecstasy” through subversion of “personality.”¹⁷⁵ Terry Riley, another minimalist (and one whose influence can be heard in some dance music), made similar comments, as we saw earlier. The discourse around dance is full of references to childlike, oceanic states which the music is supposed to induce.

Toop distinguishes within early minimalism between the “knitting-machine repetitiveness” that he hears in Reich and Glass, and the “more expansive” quality of the “more open” works of Riley and LaMonte Young. He relates techno’s “machine-age coldness” to an inhuman Fordist economy which, in its inevitable breakdown, created the urban wastelands of America’s

urban ghettos; and he has “serious doubts” about claims by some rave adherents that their music produces states equivalent to neoshamanistic trance. While welcoming an ecologically motivated return to “hearing the world,” he argues that a music based just on observing the periodicities of nature and “ignoring the social” is “oppressive”: its “rigid, formulaic exclusion of representation, drama, contrast, variety or direct reference” excludes “the wicked body, the human voice.” If human discontents are painted over in the interests of “white-light bliss, then the musicians are mere functionaries, slaves to cool the brows of overheated urban info-warriors... The demand that sound should bow to escapist needs is a rejection of the potential implicit in music’s unfolding permeability over the past hundred years.”¹⁷⁶

John Rahn goes further. Distinguishing between different types of musical repetition, he puts his faith in what he calls “lively” repetition, “whose telos is not given ... but is in the process of being formed.” Such repetition “is transformation ... and all transformation rests on the possibility of repetition, of repeatable qualities and patterns ... Sense is dependent on repetition, without which nothing can be recognized ... This process of continual repetition ... creatively folding a life back over its traces as it unfolds, is a source of great satisfaction ... for without this process, without hope of telos, there would be no life. Who among us is ready to die?” How, then, can repetition be *boring*? In two ways — either through a mode of “slavery” (repetition “without final cause; nothing is happening; they have no future, no exit”) or through the “wan glow of pseudo-life” produced by “repetition in the presence of a given global telos,” a preestablished schema (re-presentations are here just “re-animated, a zombie or *revenant*”).¹⁷⁷

I myself intuitively prefer to either Reich or Prodigy work such as Abdullah Ibrahim’s, about which I have written elsewhere.¹⁷⁸ Typically, an Ibrahim performance or recording grounds itself on a harmonic loop (often a two-bar sequence: I-IV-I⁶/₄-V, a cornerstone of the South African jazz/jive repertory, but also a favored cadential progression of composers like Mozart and Rossini), but then Signifies on this cliché of Western musical modernity, opens it up to process, repeating it as the foundation for lengthy stretches of improvisation, constantly sprouting forth new generations of melody whose ancestors we feel we have heard somewhere before. Rahn might account this no more than a “re-animation” — yet Ibrahim refuses the closure embedded in the cadential formula; closure — narrative control of difference, finding a “proper end,” the presumptions of *telos* — has become literally incredible. Paradoxically, the proposal here is that it is repetition — repetition-in-and-of-difference, representing nothing but itself — that can best open up the future, freeing difference from narrative and re-presentation from the Law of the Master.

What is at stake in these differences of preference? Is it any more than a case of three anachronistic critics — Toop, Rahn, myself — refusing to give

up humanistic remnants that have actually been rendered inoperable by technological, social, and epistemological changes?

For answers (assuming they are to be found at all) we might look again to the topology of contemporary subjectivity — perhaps to an imaginary conversation between Lacan, Derrida, and Deleuze (with interjections from others).

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud revisited his earlier theory of repetition, having realized that the idea of blockage seems inadequate. Repetition, he now observed, appears to be associated with a pleasure of its own, or at least, when carrying unpleasurable material, it appears to have a distinctive driveline character giving “the appearance of some ‘daemonic’ force at work.” Freud’s interpretation of the celebrated *fort-da* game, in which his grandson mimicked his mother’s disappearance and return in repeated manipulations of a cotton reel, attributes the boy’s pleasure to the “great cultural achievement” of instinctual renunciation; but the pleasure itself must have its source in a separate energy, which he christens the Death drive. This force — Thanatos — becomes the antagonist of the Life or sexual drives — Eros — in a redrawn psychic economy. It stands for an “inertia inherent in organic life . . . an urge . . . to restore an earlier state of things.” But Eros and Thanatos are intertwined in their operations from the beginning (“the aim of all life is death” yet Eros, through reproduction, ensures a “potential immortality”), and both are at work in the operation of the pleasure-principle, for instance in the repeating rhythm (excitation/discharge) of coitus.¹⁷⁹

Derrida’s critique seizes on the idea of repetition’s cultural work. Deconstructing Freud’s role (as *father* both of the boy’s mother and of psychoanalysis) in his description of the *fort-da* game, Derrida argues that Freud is himself playing *fort-da* in his text: “The writing of a *fort/da* is always a *fort/da*, and the PP [Pleasure Principle] and *its* death drive are to be sought in the exhausting of this abyss.”¹⁸⁰ But, while this has the merit of exposing the attempted closure in Freud’s analysis (which is grounded in the biologicistic remnant in his theory), it tends to bypass repetition’s psychic *threat*, which means that, for Freud, repetition is both a cultural mechanism and a figure of potential dissolution. Lacan is alive to both sides of this vacillation.

He stresses the *fort-da*’s ludic character. The reel is an *objet a*, a small piece of the subject, which functions as a mark of alienation but also a first step into the symbolic sphere, the shortest possible narrative. As Lacan puts it, “the game of the cotton-reel is the subject’s answer to what the mother’s absence has created on the frontier of his domain — the edge of his cradle — namely a *ditch*, around which one can only play at jumping . . . The activity as a whole symbolizes . . . the repetition of the mother’s departure as cause of a *Spaltung* [split] in the subject — overcome by the alternating game, *fort-da* . . . whose

aim, in its alternation, is simply that of being the *fort* of a *da*, and the *da* of a *fort* . . .”¹⁸¹ But repetition is part of a complex — repetition/remembering — which as a whole is concerned with recall up to a limit — the limit of the Real, defined as “that which always comes back to the same place” and which the subject can therefore never meet up with. Repetition here is an *act* (Lacan uses Freud’s term *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, interpreting this as what stands in for a [missing] representation, but we can also translate it as the performance [precisely the *act*] of a representation that has gone missing): an act of *resistance*, with a symbolic structure created through its relation to the Real. What looms is an “endless repetition . . . that . . . reveals the radical vacillation of the subject”; “if the . . . subject can practice this game . . . , it is precisely because he does not practice it at all, for no subject can grasp this radical articulation” — which is why the object, the *objet a*, is required. In the interplay between “the encounter with the real” and “the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs,” we find the structure of repetition; and while this rhythm marks the “pulsative function” of the unconscious as such, its insistence puts “reality” “in abeyance.”¹⁸²

It is an insistence of “something that occurs . . . as if by chance.” Rejecting any biologism, Lacan sees repetition in this sense not as “a return of need . . . directed towards consumption placed at the service of appetite” but as what “demands the new.” The strictest, most ritualized of repetitions proceeds on the basis that the presence (re-presentation) of sameness is impossible, and that at the same time mimetic variance (the play of memory and thought) conceals “the true secret of the ludic, namely the most radical diversity constituted by repetition in itself.”¹⁸³ Repetition on this account appears as “empty,” as an “emptying out” — or rather, as perpetually eluding the attempts of representation to “fill” it. One can see how music itself, especially “at the limit” of its repetitive tendencies, can be regarded as an (the?) exemplary *fort-da*, and hence how a Lacanian account such as Guy Rosolato’s can see musical repetition, at that limit, as a source of subjective rupture: “rhythmic obstinacy, reiteration to excess . . . obliterates organization and variety: a hypnotic abandon to this energy is also the expression of an energy” for “if the drive can be considered like the metaphoric play of music, the latter becomes the metaphoric representation of the drive substituted for the subject.”¹⁸⁴

There is much in Lacan’s analysis with which both Derrida and Deleuze would agree. For Derrida, repetition is the principle of the Symbolic — of signification — itself.

For us there is no word, nor in general a sign, which is not constituted by the possibility of repeating itself. A sign which does not repeat itself, which is not already divided by repetition in its first time, is not a sign.

The signifying referral must therefore be ideal — and ideality is but the assured power of repetition — in order to refer to the same thing each time. This is why Being is the key word of eternal repetition, the victory of God and Death over life.¹⁸⁵

While this account has general force, we might again regard music as possessing a certain privilege. As Paul de Man puts it:

On the one hand, music is condemned to exist always as a moment, as a persistently frustrated intent toward meaning; on the other hand, this very frustration prevents it from remaining within the moment. Musical signs are unable to coincide: their dynamics are always oriented toward the future of their repetition, never toward the consonance of their simultaneity. Even the potential harmony of the single sound, *à l'unisson*, has to spread itself out into a pattern of successive repetitions; considered as a musical sign, the sound is in fact the melody of its potential repetition.¹⁸⁶

But, as with Lacan, repetition is here a mode of difference — or rather, *différance*: that endless division, spacing, deferral in the signifier that makes of repetition both a condition of meaning and an impossibility: “This iterability (*iter* . . . comes from *itara*, *other* in Sanskrit, and everything that follows may be read as the exploitation of the logic which links repetition to alterity) structures the mark of writing itself, and does so moreover for no matter what type of writing . . .”¹⁸⁷

The effects for subjectivity are radical (and are related, we might say, to the relations of Eros and Thanatos, and the economy of *plaisir* and *jouissance*):

The same, precisely, is *différance* . . . as the displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to another . . . And on the basis of this unfolding of the same as *différance*, we see announced the sameness of *différance* and repetition in the eternal return . . . How are we to think simultaneously, on the one hand, *différance* as the economic detour which, in the element of the same, always aims at coming back to the pleasure or the presence that has been deferred by (conscious or unconscious) calculation, and, on the other hand, *différance* as the relation to an impossible presence, as expenditure without reserve, as the irreparable loss of presence, the irreversible usage of energy, that is, as the death instinct, and as the entirely other relationship that apparently interrupts every economy?¹⁸⁸

Derrida's answer — that we cannot because the unconscious always defers itself — is hard to deny, but also points towards the debilitating aspect of deconstruction itself, which exposes the false closures underpinning the traditions

of Western thought but leaves the matter there, with no more than a shrug, at the same time refusing to take seriously the necessity (but also the manifest impossibility) of deconstructing itself. Caught in an opposition (as negation of all systems of presence), which contradicts his own anti-foundationalist premises, Derrida (like Barthes, Kristeva, and so many poststructuralists) looks for a (partial) alternative only towards the transgressive, decentering refusal of repetition found in certain strands of avant-garde art.

We can pursue this a bit further through Derrida's own figure of the *hymen*, which for him functions as a double-sided organ, "at once screen and mirror,"¹⁸⁹ situated between the two aspects of mimesis in Western thought: on the one hand, a movement of memory (an unveiling of truth, a representation), on the other, a movement of simulation (a copy whose original has always been displaced, a repetition). Standing for both veil and closeness, deferral and promise of consummation, the hymen is precisely an *entre*; the mirror is never passed through, the veil never torn. But in the real social world, such passages *must* take place (*entre* doubles as *entrée*) — the Name-of-the-Father must be installed, the mirror must give back its object, castration must circulate, the Real will have its effects in its encounters with the Symbolic, Lacan's *points de capiton* must button down the circling drive at particular moments of meaning (however provisional) — if subjectivity is to function.

Thus, for example, the mirror function — remembering that all sorts of objects in the world can have this function — both repeatedly "plates" the subject within its identity-ideals and threatens their (mis)representations with dissolution in the territory of the Other. As we saw earlier, the Imaginary and the Symbolic twist and articulate each other in this operation, in a process reaching right back to maternal, indeed fetal territory, where the echoing dialogues of the acoustic mirror rule. The hymen opens the way to this territory — to the womb, "the mimetic organ par excellence, mysteriously underscoring in the submerged and constant body of the mother the dual meaning of reproduction as birthing and reproduction as replication."¹⁹⁰ Even the genetic inheritance repeats genealogical narratives that go back to the dawn of human culture (and still inform the kinship dramas of the psychic theater). But plenitude has always already gone. Just as, Taussig points out, the many origin myths that deploy the maternal body as the source of mimesis do so with immense variety — so that, "in bringing together . . . copying, reproduction, and origin, as so many moments of the mimetic, what we find is not only matching and duplication but also slippage which, once slipped into, skids wildly"¹⁹¹ — so musical repetitions not only switch us into these circuits, as on one level the "voice of the body" (the organs wired up, e.g., to cyborgian dance-beats), but also, as they do so, cannot help but invoke our bodily *mis*-identifications, the ego's imaginings represented to itself. And

as Lacan reminds us, “The ego is structured exactly like a symptom. At the heart of the subject, it is only a privileged symptom, the human symptom *par excellence*, the mental illness of man.”¹⁹²

In some ways this picture is reminiscent of Kristeva’s *chora*, a “rhythmic space,” “nourishing and maternal,” anterior to the Symbolic and to representation, where the maternal body mediates the play of primary drive-processes in an “infinitely repeated separability”:

The death drive is transversal to identity and tends to disperse “narcissisms” . . . But at the same time and conversely, narcissism and pleasure are only temporary positions from which the death drive blazes new paths. Narcissism and pleasure are therefore inveiglings and realizations of the death drive. The semiotic *chora*, converting drive discharges into stases, can be thought of both as a delaying of the death drive and as a possible realization of this drive, which tends to return to a homeostatic state.¹⁹³

But Kristeva not only genders the semiotic/symbolic dichotomy, fixing the heterosexual hierarchy as inescapable, but also installs what arguably are variable tendencies into an ontologically fixed developmental sequence. In a sense, Deleuze carries this ontologizing tendency still further.

As we saw earlier, Deleuze distinguishes between “radical” repetition — which is repetition *of* difference — and repetition-of-the-same, and between both of these and representation. He agrees with Freud that the source of repetition is to be found in the death instinct, which is a “transcendental principle”; but he thinks Freud wrong to associate this with the “brute repetition” of “inanimate matter.” Rather, “repetition is truly that which disguises itself in constituting itself, that which constitutes itself only by disguising itself,” and “natural phenomena are produced in a free state, where any inference is possible among the vast cycles of resemblance: in this sense, everything reacts on everything else, and everything resembles everything else,” in “a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences.” Hence “Eros and Thanatos are distinguished in that Eros must be repeated, can be lived only through repetition, whereas Thanatos . . . is that which gives repetition to Eros, that which submits Eros to repetition.”¹⁹⁴ This works itself out in the relationship of the two repetition types, for “brute repetition,” repetition-of-the-same, forms a sort of casing within which true repetition is hidden: “One is a static repetition, the other is dynamic. One results from the work, but the other is like the ‘evolution’ of a bodily movement.”¹⁹⁵

This is a picture that might be assimilated to the Lacanian *fort-da* (as well as Taussig’s mimetic “chain of sympathy,” which yokes together *copy* and *contact*, infusing the mimetic relationship with the “breath” of bodily participation), except that Deleuze seems to embed it in a theory of things as they really are:

in an ontological principle which, so he tells us, distributes difference between the two types of repetition, “a repetition of *ungrounding* on which depend both that which enchains and that which liberates, that which dies and that which lives within repetition”; for “The domain of laws must be understood, but always on the basis of a Nature and a Spirit superior to their own laws, which weave their repetitions in the depth of the earth and of the heart, where laws do not yet exist.”¹⁹⁶ But how could this “ungrounding” ontology be grounded epistemologically? And how could any human being survive, as a subject in any recognizable sense, in Deleuze’s world of wild difference, which, surely, constitutes itself as phantasy: language’s other, constructed, in language, by a subject on this side of representation?

What Lacan, Derrida, and Deleuze share is an opening up of the field of the Other — installing repetition somehow *there* — by so to speak clipping the wings of the over-mighty subject and his systems of representation. Uttopically, this might suggest the kind of “electricity” of which Taussig writes:

an ac/dc pattern of rapid oscillations of difference . . . a magnificent excessiveness over and beyond the fact that mimesis implies alterity as its flip-side. The full effect occurs when the necessary impossibility is attained, when mimesis becomes alterity. Then and only then can spirit and matter, history and nature, flow into each others’ otherness.¹⁹⁷

But, bearing in mind the historical moment — one of *crisis* for the subject — circumspection is in order. Would digital looping be likely to follow Taussig’s program, or to present itself as a limit case of Deleuze’s repetition-of-the-same? Warhol’s defense of boredom comes to mind:

I’ve been quoted a lot as saying “I like boring things.” Well I said it and I meant it. But that doesn’t mean I’m not bored by them . . . if I’m going to sit and watch the same thing I saw the night before, I don’t want it to be essentially the same — I want it to be exactly the same. Because the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away, and the better and emptier you feel.¹⁹⁸

Can the meaning go away? Derrida is content (nay, forced) to leave the question hanging, within the insubstantial traces — “memory” without origin — of the *archi-writing*. Deleuze, reversing Freud, declares that “We are not . . . healed by simple anamnesis, any more than we are made ill by amnesia. Here as elsewhere, becoming conscious counts for little . . . It is in repetition and by repetition that Forgetting becomes a positive power while the unconscious becomes a positive and superior unconscious.”¹⁹⁹

What is conspicuously absent in both Derrida and Deleuze is anything fulfilling the function of the Lacanian Real — the rock of the Real, as Žižek likes to call it, the hard kernel that resists both the Imaginary and the Symbolic

but, at the same time, is their source. The Real, Lacan suggests, is raw matter, unbounded and undifferentiated; yet as subjectivity emerges, erecting a barrier against the Real that is essential to normality, what is thereby excluded leaves a void which will be covered by the subject's *objets a* (gaze, voice, cotton reel — perhaps repetition as such), but which nevertheless cannot prevent the Real's subversive effects in the unconscious. The later Lacan, increasingly emphasizing the role of the Real, insists on its structural relation to the Symbolic both outside and inside the subject, suggesting that successful inter-subjective communication depends on an "answer of the real" (a "bit of the real" inside the subject guaranteeing its consistency). This "bit" equates to the subject's specific mode of *jouissance*: a meaningless "That," more than the subject itself (its *sinthome* — as distinct from its *symptom*, which by contrast operates in the Symbolic), an "open wound of nature," forever liable to throw up a proliferating "undergrowth of enjoyment."²⁰⁰

Is this what repetition brings back from its encounters with the Real — that element of "blindness" which guarantees "good faith"; a blindness dependent on pure chance, that is, on whether there is an "answer," as signifier binds on to a bit of real-stuff — a glob of memory, a floating image, a tremor of mimesis? Certainly Žižek's analyses (of films, Rothko paintings, fictions by Ruth Rendell and Patricia Highsmith) bring out the repetitive loops through which the Real — "that which returns as the same" — emerges. He also suggests that the *sinthome* manifests itself in *rendu*: moments (typically of acousmatic sound, detached from any visible source) that render reality directly, demonstrating the "lack of a lack" (that is, of castration) in the Real. However, this suggestion seems to run counter to the overall thrust of the Lacanian project, which found its final figure of the indissolubility of the three orders of the subject in the topology of the Borromean Knot. Indeed, in Žižek's specific analyses, mediated meanings of the *rendu* — interpretations of the representations that have apparently gone missing — instantly flood in.²⁰¹

In fact, the Lacanian theorization of this knot is, one might suppose, exactly what explains its relevance to the crisis of the contemporary subject, a subject which, for all the efforts of deconstructionists, has not yet effaced itself. As Taussig argues, in response to the theoretical advances of constructionism, subjectivity needs "more invention," not less.²⁰² We have seen that the moment of this crisis is historically contingent, as are the modes of its inscription within reconfigured understandings of repetition. Jacques Attali has expertly explained the undermining of the system of representation in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (though his dystopian picture of its replacement, repetition, is less convincing, outdoing even Adorno in negative focus); but this sweeps far wider than the two spheres he explores — music and political economy — covering literature and the visual arts as well as social and political formations, with effects that are still recognizable

today. (Where, after all, would we look to find modes of democratic representation adequate to the locuses of power in the ruthless neoliberal global economy of the early twenty-first century?) Yet arguably mimesis did not disappear so much as change its orientation and significance. The *fort-da* game could not have been recognized earlier; Freud's description marks a moment when mimesis begins to move towards a new self-understanding. Warhol's boredom is inscribed in and by an "I" who represents it for others. Toop's "wicked body" and "human voice" beg the question of their discursive construction. Rahn's "lively" repetition, "creatively folding a life back over its traces," and my own "improvisation, constantly sprouting forth new generations of melody, whose ancestors we feel we have heard somewhere before" betray historical debts to rich tropological complexes ("undergrowths of enjoyment"?) that demand redemption.

Subjectivity, to be sure, bathes itself in a sea of objects, circuits of simulation and mimicry, all speaking back, switching on and off, and requiring new modes of perception (Benjamin's assimilation by *habit*?).²⁰³ But, far from rendering memory anachronistic, this re-sites it in a hugely expanded sociotechnological extimacy offering the Real a global, multi-media archive (of both material subject-markers — voices of the "people," the "low," the "black," etc. — and object-images) to play with. The Real becomes at once more pressing (how could it not in an era of secularization, vernacularization, and totalitarianism, barbaric or apparently benevolent) and more elusive (hiding within the simulations of hyperreality). The repetition embodied in each encounter brings its inevitable miss providing the space where, precisely, consciousness continues to arise, memory to spiral, mimesis to explode... If quantum theory, with its uncanny metaphors of doubling, finally succeeds in reanimating nature for modernity, this space is where quanta must nevertheless turn into qualia.²⁰⁴

As we saw earlier (pages 103–4), the structure of *jouissance* is double, not only subverting Law but also supporting it: "while this may not make for two Gods, nor does it make for one alone,"²⁰⁵ and, like object-voice, repetition qua *objet a* possesses an orientation that is radically undecidable. As many of Žižek's examples demonstrate, for example, repetition structuring "mindless enjoyment" (that is, marking the passages of the *sinthome*) can underpin fetishistic, totalitarian authority as well as invoking the absolute alterity of the presymbolic object.²⁰⁶ If nature is to be reanimated, therefore, it will not be through a simple return to primitive "sympathetic magic"; more plausible, as Taussig suggests, is a future transformation of what has become mimetic magic's most characteristic modern form: fetishism of the commodity (a transformation foreseen, he argues, by Marx).²⁰⁷ The contemporary musical object, circulating magic in the forms of infinitely multiplying images and sound-loops, now accumulates copies and variants in such fast and complex

ways as to suggest it might approach a point where, paradoxically, it would begin to *deaccumulate* abstract exchange value, revealing the concrete life within (perhaps illicit copying and sampling — ghostly premonition of a future gift economy? — already point in this direction); once again, repetition, its “emptiness” laid bare, would so to speak undo itself, even while at its most powerful. What would it take for fetish-power to metamorphose into a figure standing in for this apparently missing (but in reality, spectral) representation? — a *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* which might take on the shape of Benjamin’s Angel of History, commodities endlessly emptying themselves out around her feet, whose very dumbness can be read as a plea to humanity to take up its proper burden. Here, beyond a *politics of the standard(izing) moment* proposed earlier, we glimpse its necessary supplement — necessary but always incomplete, as that Derridean term implies — namely a *politics of performance*, of *performance-work*.²⁰⁸ one that, in the course of articulating and rearticulating such (infinitely repeating) moments, would seek not just to follow Freud’s interpretative approach to the economy of “dream-work” and reveal their “attachments” (*Repräsentanzen*) but actively to attach and reattach these, to enact them (perform them out); to fill their “emptiness” with meaning, memory and life, their “blindness” with (yes) sound; and in so doing to pursue the essential if finally impossible goal of representing repetition to itself and thus, perhaps, bursting the carapace of fetishism.

(In Lieu of a) Final Refrain

At this point, musical evidence seems both obligatory and, in practice, no more than a token: any attempt at comprehensive documentation would betray the very density and mobility of the field — a representation too far! A sample, then (appropriately): a few moments in the life of one out of this cybeast’s many tentacles, and not in the form of argument so much as a tentative stream of feeling.²⁰⁹



Example 4.2

and so on . . . : the outline of the famous drum riff from “Funky Drummer,” recorded by James Brown and the James Brown Orchestra in 1970 (the drums by Clyde Stubblefield). James Brown, the most sampled musician in the world (so we are told); “Funky Drummer,” perhaps his most sampled figure (FD from now on). It’s *everywhere*, then, almost literally; yet in rhythmic outline

how many legions of ancestors, going back to who knows when or where — so a multivalent simulacrum, and how!

On the record, the drum riff only emerges after lengthy preparation: a long first part with a syncopated horn riff decorating a I-IV alternation enriched by several jazzy/bluesy instrumental solos (Abdullah Ibrahim would like this: Brown certainly does judging by his vocal effects, urging, responding, commenting); then cut to a second part over a different chord sequence (I-Vm-ish, but the voicing is obscure, the harmonic dimension fading from the attention) with rhythm riffs on guitar and organ, over and over: setting up — the drum break. So here's the famous loop, solo, then the band quietly reenters, mostly guitar, very rhythmic, but still drum and bass foregrounded, with Brown making sure we understand: "Ain't it funky? ain't it funky? ain't it funky?" ... and fade.

Now we can feel the journey we have traveled: starting out in a rich field of repetitions, soulful, embroidered, gradually narrowing the focus, until we end up with (almost) just rhythm, the nitty-gritty, the gesturing body, the wiring emerging, the cyborg connecting... From a field to a *spot* — inside or outside? — a self-mirroring acoustic trace pointing towards the impossible object-gaze. There's a blindness here, an emptiness, pulling us in towards the "radical diversity" concealed in the increasing identity of the repetitions. But hang on: *empty*? (Brown wouldn't think so. Just as his innovations, in shifting Soul towards Funk, towards a more pared-down rhythmic emphasis, brought criticisms of reductiveness, so, in a mirror-image, Brown himself criticized appropriations of his style in disco: "Disco is a very small part of funk. It's the end of the song, the repetitious part, like a vamp. The difference is that in funk you dig into a groove, you don't stay on the surface. Disco stayed on the surface."²¹⁰ Surface, depth, digging — what does he mean? Digging into a groove, ground, grave...? What's down there — a *sinthome*?)

So, is this really empty? "Funky Drummer": think of "drumming," think of "funky," and the rich discursive fields that open. Here, from whichever direction you look at it, is a *black body*; and the journeys of the sample take that imagery with them. They also carry James Brown's ego, as his concerns over widespread pilfering of his records in disco and then hip-hop demonstrate. Authorship in question; riffs as mirror-images sustaining ego. But what about Stubblefield, what about the other guys in the band? Brown, notorious for authoritarian control (you can hear it on the records, as he orders, organizes, directs out loud), his bands disputatious, forever subject to splitting; so, on another level, ego splits (clones?) musically, as bits of Brown circulate around the media-archive, most graphically in the myriad samples of his vocal effects (screams, grunts) — vocalized body-parts or *objets a* available to all. For a price. As an exemplary black capitalist, Brown — considered as fetish-object (visual, gestural, sonic) — focuses for us the

industry work going into extracting maximum exchange-value from his repetitions (his record company has an entire department devoted to tracing license infringements relating to Brown). As a black body, though, the weight of a certain inversion can be felt: might this fetish, emerging from within the bowels of capitalism, have the smell of a force that could have the wind of history in its sails?²¹¹

Particularly strong sightings of Brown samples appear in the early waves of hip-hop, thus enveloping them in the debates around rap politics (black power, misogyny, gangsta violence, parody consumerism). Public Enemy, for example, deploy the FD loop (admittedly, in slightly different variants) in several tracks, including “Bring the Noise,” “Terminator X to the Edge of Panic,” and “Rebel without a Pause.” (Public Enemy: first record, “Public Enemy Number 1” (c. 1984), the title also of a 1972 release by Brown. But the hip-hop soundscape here, with voice collage, aggressive scratching, and synthesizer noise, no longer funks but *screams*.) FD also finds its way into dance music, for instance, the Stone Roses’ 1989 acid-house hit, “Fool’s Gold” — speeded up, with added bongos and tambourines, plus “spaced out” vocal and wah-wah guitar (1960s psychedelia with a hint of Motown passed through the filter of ecstasy-driven Manchester hedonism); from where it was in turn sampled for Future Sound of London’s 1992 hit, “Papua New Guinea” (so-called “intelligent house”: the loop is placed in a context of vaguely exotic, vaguely other-worldly electronic collage; how to feel at one with the planet).

But in broad terms — thinking of the FD loop as parent of a whole family of rhythms — it’s pervasive in dance music vocabularies; many commercial presets — for example, the Propellerheads’s Reason software — although they cannot include the actual FD break for obvious reasons, contain an emulation of it.²¹² The genre of Drum ’n’ Bass as a whole can be heard as a hyper-speed mutant (again evading simple imitation for financial reasons). For a different way to out-manuever the cycle of capital accumulation, listen to electronica artist John Oswald’s *Plunderphonics* CD (1989). On “black” and “brown” [*sic*], Brown samples, including FD, are splintered into fragments, mixed into high-speed collages with guest appearances too from Prince, Charlie Parker, and others; a sort of modernism, but one that reassembles tradition (here “black music”) rather than dynamiting it, denaturing grooves, so to speak, before good-naturedly replacing them on the archive shelves, but at the same time evacuating a sense of authorial center just as it deconstructs the Brown ego. Oswald sought no copyright permissions, offered the disc free, with encouragement to copy, but was forced to withdraw it under threat of legal action; you can still download it from the Web, however.²¹³

Meanwhile (1990), Sinéad O’Connor was recording “I Was Stretched on Your Grave”: drum track constructed entirely from the FD sample; dub-

reggae bass from Jah Wobble; newly composed vocal melody very much in an Anglo-Irish tradition (formally that old AABA, with its “discursive repetition,” summoning memories of Tin Pan Alley ballads but also of long lineages of folk tunes, probably influenced by earlier bourgeois variants of this structure),²¹⁴ sung with decorative melismata very much in an Irish style (but also blue notes) — then giving way to a fiddle melody, with more closely focused repetitive figures, the various repetitive schemas (drums, bass, fiddle) then proceeding in parallel and in cultural diversity not to a fade but an arbitrary cut finish. A track full of references, then, exploding with memory traces, outlining one might say the shape of a black-Irish Atlantic; and full too of historical depth: the source of the lyric is a twelfth-century Gaelic poem, and in the mysterious narrative the protagonist (who is she?) grieves for someone (who?) on a grave that is also implicitly a bed in a text full of nature references (“I smell of the earth”). Knowledge of O’Connor’s fraught negotiations around religion, gender, nation, and maternity might color our feeling that the FD groove, along with the deep dub bass, is pulling us through the hymen of the grave, while the angelically pure vocal floats soul-like above and the dancing fiddle reminds us of what has been lost. Eros and Thanatos, in a somber but somehow restful *jouissance*.²¹⁵

And so the mimetic spiral goes on. And all the examples I have picked out, one might say — playing with difference as they do — seem to position themselves in a field constructed against a most pressing absence; which I hear as the *reductio* of the hardcore techno beat, machine-tooled out of the four-beat framework of funk and disco, originating in the *Bladerunner* wastelands of post-industrial Detroit, matured in turn-of-the-century European nihilistic hedonism. Here we find an uncanny alliance (which is at the same time a shift) between James Brown’s “The One” (its significance both sociopolitical — everybody together — and musical — on the first beat of the four) and the late Lacan’s “*Y a de l’Un*” — a one “which is not one-among-others” but “precisely the One of *jouis-sense*, of the signifier not yet enchained but still floating freely,” the *sinthome*, “nucleus of an enjoyment that simultaneously attracts and repels us.” Entrance via the *Abfahrt* — which “in German techno slang means immediate abandon, the inescapable command of the music, the brutal violence” of pounding beat plus industrial noise: “Submission as the realm of freedom, in which one breathes, dances, works, lives and loves to the beat, and in which one becomes a slave to the rhythm.”²¹⁶ But, listen again to “Everybody in the Place.” Long stretches of four-four techno kick drum, certainly. Submit? To sameness? Or to a deferral hinting at a diversity then elaborated by the rich surrounding polyrhythmic layers, the sectional cuts ushering in material we have heard before but not quite like this . . . ?

This radical interpretative uncertainty has the feel of collective fantasy into which the individual listener intrudes. Has this whole discussion perhaps

been a dream? If so, how should we read it, what would it mean to “go through,” to “traverse” the fantasy? More specifically, how would we identify the missing *Repräsentanz* of this *Vorstellung*? What ghostly representation lies hiding, threatening to return? Mediator between “reality” and the Real, repetition is both subjectivity’s greatest support — its mimetic screen — and the ground of its self-questioning. In our time of crisis, what manner of subject might be emerging from this vacillation?

CHAPTER 5

The Real Thing?

The Specter of Authenticity

“Rock ’n’ roll was real, everything else was unreal . . . You recognize something in it which is true, like all true art.” John Lennon’s *cri de coeur* says something about the 1960s of course, and, more broadly, about certain strands in popular music culture developing out of rock ’n’ roll; but his language has much deeper historical roots. Here is Henry David Thoreau, writing in 1854:

Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance . . . till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, This is, and no mistake . . . Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business.¹

The idea of the rock of reality would no doubt summon a different interpretation from Žižek than was Thoreau’s intention (I will return to this), just as the suggestion of a death-or-life-drive antinomy would interest psychoanalytically inflected criticism generally (the drives too, as always, will return). But the genealogy goes back as well as forward. Thoreau — his withdrawal to Nature and his civil disobedience alike built on opposition to both consumerism and slavery and, overall, on a characteristic individualism of the unfettered self — appealed to many twentieth-century counter-culturalists, at the same time as calling up legacies of earlier Romantic subjectivities, of Enlightenment quests for genuine rather than false knowledge — and, indeed, of an insistent concern with the troubling relationship between “reality” and “truth” going back to ancient philosophy.²

If this is the background to Lennon's rhetoric, it is worth picking up his key terms and applying them to concluding moments in previous chapters. If it is the case, then, that "the postcolonial fetters have been weakened," revealing new fractures and hybridities, what is it exactly that is uncovered, "beyond the mask," and in what sense is it real? If "passive 'beings' low in the gender, racial and class hierarchies have begun to find voices," demanding of us "the intelligent analysis of the differences on offer," how can we *know* which voice is true? If the nexus of differences and repetitions in the music mediate "between 'reality' and the Real," what manner of subjectivities are conjured up, "what would be the missing *Repräsentanz* of this *Vorstellung*"? Or are popular music's reality-effects — its "collective fantasy" — no more than illusion, devoid of aesthetic veracity, epistemological credibility, and political efficacy alike?

It is not as if truth is a foreign concept here. Within popular music culture, the discourse of authenticity is familiar. Typically, it is taken to mark out the genuine from the counterfeit, the honest from the false, the original from the copy, roots from surface — oppositions which in turn often map on to further distinctions: feeling as against pretence, acoustic as against electric, subculture as against mainstream, people as against industry, and so on. As Simon Frith has shown,³ the roots of this discourse lie in the bourgeois appropriation of folk music, constructed as an Other to commercial pop, and in debates over jazz and blues, where, in a similar fashion, "authentic" strands were promoted over allegedly ersatz derivatives. On the level of scholarship — within cultural studies, subcultural theory, ethnic studies, and ethnomusicology — the music features within grids of distinction and political position clearly indebted to older discourses in folkloristics, anthropology, and Romantic *Kulturkritik*. Throughout this history, both people and music were involved: authentic music came from (perhaps even generated) authentic communities; the bogus stuff was produced by cynics and aimed at (perhaps even created) consumers mired in false consciousness — dope for dupes.

Feedback between the spheres of interpretation on the one hand, and music production and dissemination on the other is common. Indeed, we might say, in Foucauldian fashion, that music industry institutional practices — distinctions between record labels, music genres, radio channels, sales charts, and within the discourses of artist and repertoire departments and popular music journalism — make it almost impossible to think outside the terms of this problematic. We can see John Lennon as an exemplary figure. Almost as soon as the Beatles became successful, Lennon was beginning to formulate his creative ambitions along the lines of a search for the "real me" — "John Lennon" as opposed to "John Beatle," to use his own labels, an authentic self as opposed to the commodified, fetishized icon that he came to loath. Musically, culturally, politically, this search was articulated through a

set of oppositions in which a series of Others was lined up against the inauthentic. As we have seen, this started with rock 'n' roll, but this was already being linked to a larger topography of difference, because rock 'n' roll, in Lennon's words, "is primitive enough and has no bullshit . . . Go to the jungle and they have the rhythm and it goes throughout the world and it's as simple as that." So "rock and roll was real, everything else was unreal. And the thing about rock and roll, good rock and roll, whatever good means, is that it's real, and realism gets through to you despite yourself. You recognize something in it which is true, like all true art. Whatever art is, readers, OK? If it's real, it's simple usually, and if it's simple, it's true, something like that."

Subsequently, in Lennon's musical trajectory, the search took in singer-songwriter honesty and psychedelic visions, avant-garde iconoclasm and conceptual art, transcendental meditation and primal scream therapy, political anthems and politicized happenings, hymns to feminism and to black pride. The search for the real Lennon, it would seem, could only proceed through the cultural peripheries — through the Other. In a familiar figuration, these Others were conceived as attractively unreflective — models of *action*, in the face of over-intellectualized sophistication: the blues, for example, is better [than jazz] "Because it's real, it's not perverted or thought about, it's not a concept, it is a chair, not a design for a chair, or a better chair, or a bigger chair, or a chair with leather or with design . . . It is the first chair. It is a chair for sitting on, not chairs for looking at or being appreciated. You sit on that music." This simplicity, this cult of origin ("the first chair"), is then linked, intriguingly, to the music's aesthetic challenge, its modernity: "'Tutti Frutti' or 'Long Tall Sally' is pretty avant-garde."⁴

Lennon's 1970 album with the Plastic Ono Band⁵ stands as a highpoint in the articulation of this dialogue between self and other, inside and outside. Consider, for example, his song "God," which is actually, in a fairly direct way, *about* authenticity. The lyric lists a collection of authorities and myths, including religious icons (Jesus, the Buddha, the Bible, the I-Ching), secular leaders (kings, Kennedy, Hitler) and even rock musicians (Elvis, Zimmerman — i.e., Bob Dylan) whose god-claims are punctured, climaxing in: "the Beatles." "The dream is over" (a statement with both a historical reference — the '60s counterculture that is finished — and an epistemological claim); and what is left? "Me," sings Lennon: the self — or the loved self: "Yoko and me"; "and that's reality." But this inner reality is secured through a musical reference outwards to a "real" music — a self-grounding through the Other, here a black-Other speaking in the signifiers of Gospelized Soul, marked most obviously by the slow twelve-to-the-bar groove, Billy Preston's piano phrasing, and Lennon's vocal melismas, but going right down to the "Stand by Me" chord-sequence used as the main harmonic foundation for the verse.⁶

The negotiation of authenticity implied by the inner/outer dialogue is paralleled rhetorically, negation (the lengthy recital: “I don’t believe in . . .” — all the discredited authorities) giving way, at the crucial hinge of the song’s form, to affirmation: “I just believe in me,” sung unaccompanied, close to the mike, previous reverb stripped away — the voice (this tells us) of a real person, singing direct to us.⁷ Yet the shift is hardly straightforward. For his refusal of external authority, Lennon chooses a musical style more resonant with religious connotations than any other in twentieth-century popular music; and his quasi-liturgical recitation of anathemas (to a repeated phrase of a “marking time” character, moving harmonically between VI and IV, a giant interrupted cadence, building tension) resolves into revelation, if only of the self: stand by *me* indeed. As part of this process, the voice quality shifts too, at the same point, from throat-tearing rock ’n’ roll shout (the old religion?) to Lennon’s ’70s soul-ballad voice, the voice of “Imagine,” silky, fluid, intimate, domestic. Which me, then?

In “Working Class Hero,” from the same album, the vocal ambivalence is harder to tease out, though no less suggestive. The complex of authority and authenticity is again split. It is represented here partly by those oppressive forces — bitterly rejected by Lennon — destroying working-class culture and hopes, and partly, if only by hesitant implication, by the class itself and its demand for leadership, a role that — Lennon’s experience equally bitterly tells him — can only offer false status: “A working class hero is something to be,” as he puts it, with a purposeful ambiguity; “If you want to be a hero, just follow me.” In this song the musical style draws from that same Zimmerman whose authority had been rejected in “God,” a style that, originating with Woody Guthrie, had been pulled by folk-revivalists and leftist radicals into one that could (they hoped) speak for [*sic*] the workers. In Lennon’s song, ambivalence surrounding lyric shifters (who are “I,” “me,” “we,” “they”?) is paralleled by the way that the forbidding vocal tone (the tone of patriarchal laborism?) threatens from time to time to fracture, exposing the “feminine” voice of Yoko Ono’s domestic-to-be.⁸

In the fractures of these songs — no less than in the protective self-deprecation of Lennon’s contemporaneous comments (“whatever good means . . . whatever art is . . .”) — we can hear, better perhaps than in any other music of the period, the incipient crisis of the authenticity concept. The album, if read as an implied response to the Beatles phenomenon and beyond that to the ’60s more broadly, can also act as a pointer towards the historical force-field constituting this period, framed on the one hand by the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, when instrumentalized Reason, projecting the authority of the hegemonic Self on to the level of state paranoia, came close to destroying the whole human species, and on the other hand by the “events” of 1968 and their aftermath, when subversions and reconfigurations of Western

Reason — proposed, co-opted, neutralized, marginalized — ended up initiating the decisive turn towards the formations of narcissism and consumer capitalism — the self obsessively cultivated but also privatized — within which we still find ourselves. Within vernacular philosophy, derivatives of existentialism and of situationism were strong — representing moves of the self inward into *angst* and outward into absurdist action — and both were influential on Lennon. But in the intellectual wings, currents of poststructuralist thought were poised, against a backdrop of despair over political failure, to carry Western thought towards the problematic of relativism so familiar today.

Here (that is, when we reach today) we encounter a striking disjunction. Despite the passage of some pop music styles since the 1970s through various aesthetics of irony and self-deconstruction, the discourse of authenticity within the music culture still holds much of its critical primacy, as dismissive response to turn-of-the-century “manufactured pop” and “corporate hegemony” makes clear. And who is to say that this stubbornness does not reflect a continuing (if often unacknowledged) quotidian adherence, throughout social practice, to the claims of intuitive judgment? Yet within the academy, and, at the level of considered argument, among the intelligentsia more widely, this perspective has become an embarrassment. According to Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, authenticity is a concept that “has been consigned to the intellectual dustheap,”⁹ outmoded in a culture ruled by the simulacrum, an epistemological regime run through by anti-foundationalism, and a politics governed by pragmatism, at a moment marked, we are told, by the “end of history.” The Czech “velvet revolution,” focused on Václav Havel’s attempt to bind together artistic and ethical commitments to truth, looked increasingly like a last gasp as, after 1989, in an Americanized world, the stakes were reduced to a crude antinomy of power — with or against? — in which the hegemonic authority’s attempts to hide its instrumentalism, whether in political, economic, or cultural arenas, floundered between flimsy and disingenuous. Just at the moment when “speaking truth to power” could scarcely be more necessary, the intellectual tools to guide and justify this have gone missing.

Or are they actually right there, but in hiding, struggling for a footing? For, in an irony of world-historical proportions, the intellectual collapse of authenticity concepts has coincided with its opposite on the level of the political economy: a phase, unprecedented in its reach and force, in which an irrational fundamentalism has imposed itself across the planet, the norms of neo-liberal capitalism once again given the status of natural law but now with the backing too of divine authority — “one market under God.”¹⁰ Here the political weakness of anti-foundationalist views is as striking as their moral necessity. “Difference” is certainly everywhere in the people’s musics,

which, however, are also inextricably positioned within structures maintained and manipulated by monolithic corporate power (well practiced, of course, in the profitable exploitation of difference). Understanding how the trope of authenticity works within this culture demands that we tease out an understanding of its commodification, at a moment when the project of the self so clearly enunciated in Lennon's therapeutic trajectory has largely devolved upon a subject that struggles to define itself beyond the function of consumption: discourses of empowerment through work, and through the ever-growing consumption work makes possible, increasingly drive each other; "selling yourself" brands individuals with, precisely, a self, which their purchase of (musical and other) brands at the same time guarantees.

Staying, for now, at the level of intuition, though, authenticity does continue, apparently, to do its job. The commitment of the White Stripes strikes a chord. The Dixie Chicks stand up to threats generated by their opposition to the Iraq invasion, while Steve Earle goes further and releases "John Walker's Blues," a sympathetic portrait of the American Taliban recruit. Ms Dynamite and Dizzee Rascal rap, not for bling and big bucks, but for community, reality, and mutual respect, and it seems right. Mike Skinner (The Streets) sings from, precisely, there — a romanticism that is supposed to have been discredited — while punk bands such as The Others put on impromptu "guerrilla gigs" actually *on* the streets (perhaps including their anthemic song, "This is for the Poor"), the purpose of which is precisely to outflank music industry commodification. Israeli jazz musician, Gilad Atzmon, with Palestinian singer Reem Kelani, aims his outrageous post-orientalist hybrids at Ariel Sharon's fundamentalism: who giggles? Back in the Anglo-American pond, the youthful Joss Stone has an extraordinary success in the United States with an album of covers drawn from a repertory that provides the touchstone of authenticity for many (as it did, apparently, for Lennon) — African-American soul — and is nominated for the British Mercury Music Prize. (Subsequently, her first hit single is "Fell in Love with a Boy" by the White Stripes.) Yet with Stone the doubts immediately appear as well. Can a white seventeen-year old from Devon really sing black? Can she, so young, "own" such songs of experience and pain? Is covering not a confession of creative inadequacy — of inauthenticity? What would happen if she were to win a MOBO (Music of Black Origin) award?¹¹

With the other cases listed here too (and many more that could have been), we are driven to ask if the authenticity-effects we see are somehow just mystifications, or manifestations of nostalgia or solipsism. I want to ask whether the idea of authenticity can be, if not rehabilitated, at least refitted in a way appropriate to a supposedly postmodern age, in which the apparatus of Western Reason is in disarray, and all notions of origin, foundation, absolute truth have become suspect. But in doing this we also need to ask where this

concept came from — to sketch in a genealogy, that is, an excavation of the historically specific institutional and discursive passages whereby authenticity was molded into an ethical and cultural, even disciplinary force.

This might seem to raise the issue of *ideology*. Except that, for deconstructionists and poststructuralists alike, ideology subsides into the epistemologically weaker sphere of discourse. Foucault, for example, conceives power, the solvent of knowledge, as simply everywhere, an inescapable horizon of evaluation. But the truth-claims inherent in the historically formulated concept of authenticity invite us to at least consider the arbitrariness or alternatively the normativity of values. Although we could decide to just follow Foucault's lead and assign such issues to the machinery of an entirely contingent discursive regime, unless we also follow him in the illogicality of supposing that his figure of "so-called man" can simply choose to cancel himself, we shall need to take the historical *Telos* of the authenticity problematic (i.e., its utopian ambition) seriously. Cancellation could take place only from a position beyond that occupied by the humanistic experiment, either super- or sub-human; there seems every reason why the cyborgian hybrids we now know we always were should favor the former: as Taussig argues (see page 191), we need more invention, not less. For this reason I will be doubling back later to the question of ideology.

Part of the disjunction between vernacular and academic discourses stems from the fact that, although the idea of authenticity seems to retain much of its purchase within the popular music culture, its formulation there, and even to some extent within popular music studies and ethnomusicology, is not particularly well developed. Ask a student of pop — let alone a pop fan — what authenticity is, and almost certainly the answer will instance musical types: it is rock (rather than commercial pop), blues (rather than disco), early (rather than late) Elvis, Badly Drawn Boy (rather than well-groomed boy bands). Similarly, ethnomusicologists, though less so than used to be the case, might talk about rural rather than urbanized, traditional rather than commercial, local rather than international, indigenous rather than hybrid, and so on. Or, at a more sophisticated level, the discourse might be about the effects on musical practice of cultural imperialism, the trans-national music industry corporations, postcolonial subalternity, new border-crossing identities, etc. Generally, in any case, the focus is on music; it is *music* that is authentic (or not) — or at least, music is taken to stand metonymically for a rather inchoate sense of some wider territory. As I have already suggested, this territory needs to come more clearly into view. Allan Moore has started to engage with this requirement.¹² He argues that authenticity is not inscribed in music but *a*-scribed, *by* people; and that it is they who are authenticated (or not), not the music as such. Actually, as we have seen, it is both. We talk about people being true or false to themselves, and we worry about whether

our actions, feelings, and views are really, authentically our own; and we also wonder if music expresses or represents us, or other subjects, in an honest way. And the interplay is important. Authenticity is a quality of selves and of cultures; and they construct each other: which is another way of saying that the question here is not so much what or where authenticity is, but how it is produced.

We should not expect stability, as the etymology itself confirms. The root is the Greek, *authentikos*, carrying senses of both “authority” and “original.” Development of these meanings — authoritative, legally valid, reliable, factual, original, genuine, real — predominated from the Middle Ages down to the eighteenth century, with applications largely, it would seem, to aspects of the external world. From the eighteenth century they were joined by more inward-pointing usages: the authentic could become now what is truly a product of its reputed source or author; what belongs to oneself, is proper; what acts of itself, is self-originating or self-generating (and we remember that, according to some dictionaries, the root of *authentikos* itself was in *autos* (self)).

This historical shift retrospectively meshed with an earlier (fifteenth-century) assimilation of the semantic territory of authenticity to that deriving from the Latin *auctor* (agent), giving us the agency associated with authorship (*auctor* is the root of “author”) but also the chain, author — authority — authoritarian (joining up with the sense of authority already present in authenticity). From around the same (medieval) date, *auctor* had become confused as well with *actor*, also an agent but one who in subsequent predominant usage definitely *acts for* (another), particularly on a stage, in a way that seems opposed to the idea of self-generation, but which the concept of performativity in more recent theory would wish to situate, problematically, exactly in the midst of that idea.

The semantic trajectory of the term autonomy (etymologically “self” plus “law”) followed a similar course to that of authenticity: from the external, political sphere (having one’s own laws) to the subjective (having freedom of the will), which in the late eighteenth century, especially under the influence of Kant, became the prominent usage. However, an *Oxford English Dictionary* citation from 1765 could be taken to gloss this trend in an intriguing fashion, defining authenticity in the sense of self-generation as the “spontaneous or authentic motions of clockwork.” It is worth recalling that *autos* means same as well as self, and this self-same stuff, product of structures (but also performances) of repetition, may on the one hand claim autonomy but on the other may be suspicious of its own sense of automaticity. Is the self-movement of cyborgs authentic or authoritarian?

We need to keep the full complexity and historicity of this formation in mind. In particular, its tendency to fall into a binary shape — subject and

object, internal and external, self and other — should prompt us to be sure to hang on to both sides of the coin but also, perhaps, to query whether currency (a metaphor whose appearance here is by no means accidental, as we shall see) really does circulate in ways that ring true or false in quite that simple manner. Is this truly the best approach to our search for “the real thing”?

Two recent texts discussing examples of musical authenticity offer illuminating pointers to the implications and difficulties of such a search for reality. The Spice Girls’ 1996 hit, “Wannabe,”¹³ which launched them to fame, seems on one level to be about precisely this search: “I’ll tell you what I really, really want”; but, along with the surrounding publicity, it also established them, among critics, as a model for the emergent phenomenon of the “manufactured band” — a cynically assembled, talent-less group of puppets: inauthentic fakes. My own previous analysis of the song focused on how dialogues between the individual girls and between the two musical modes structured into the song (rock/rap against pop; “girl power” demand against fantasy and romance; “black” against “white”) dissolve into fluid similarity. Thus, I argued,

the bridging of individual empowerment . . . and collective feeling . . . is meant to target and construct girl power’s own community . . . But . . . Just as girl power offered a fake individual and collective empowerment at the extreme end of Thatcherism . . . , so “Wannabe” rehearses a simulacrum of difference, a wannabe teleology, a fantasy in which nobody fails and nothing is left out: rock and pop, romance and raunch, black (rap) and white (singalong), past and future are seamlessly stitched together.¹⁴

By contrast, Elizabeth Leach, having (rightly) traced the popular music authenticity trope back to the formations of nineteenth-century Romanticism and identified its post-punk inversion (when self-conscious artifice became the new authenticity), describes “Wannabe” as following up that history through a knowing play with a range of markers for authenticity itself. In particular, the various videos into which the song was inserted exploit further the “playful use of musical signs connoting traditional authenticity” in the original record — signs bridging “ordinariness” and “stardom,” “talent” and “busking,” “spontaneous creativity” and “artistic craft” — so that:

manipulating the discourse of authenticity enables the Spice Girls to use a re-branded version of the post-Madonna feminism with which their audience was familiar, without the lack of originality (usually a marker for “inauthenticity”) forming an obstacle to their success. [Thus] The Spice Girls’ contribution to *fin-de-siècle* pop music is to upset the clarity of authenticity markers by presenting a polysemy which allows different

collectives to construct the kind of authenticity that they require, based on the assumptions that they bring to their listening and thus to find their own meanings in the group . . . This polysemous presentation of authenticity enables listeners who see and enjoy the contradictions in these markers to understand that the opposition between commercialism and authenticity is itself a commercially constructed one.¹⁵

My use of the term *fake* was provocative, at least if it is taken to imply a putative standard of the real. It points, rather, to a certain “trick” by which a representational regime is cracked open but at once closed up again, its fictionality occluded as its apparently generous offer to articulate differences into an equivalence is at the same time gathered up into a rounded whole — precisely the definition, one might say, of a commercial brand.¹⁶ Leach’s interpretation, skillful though it is, strikes me as a postmodernist reading of a text whose own postmodernist claims are written in tabloid headlines, and as therefore acceding too readily to the terms set out by its object. All records are simulacra (the original by definition lost, even when we are given sonic indices of live performance, as is the case with “Wannabe”¹⁷); but here this “lie” is not only knowingly celebrated, as Leach suggests (there is no attempt to deny that the girls do not play instruments; the issue of authorship is made not to matter; different aural and visual modes of verisimilitude are montaged together), it is at the same time covered over, limited in scope and put in its place with glossy production values. Camera and microphone collude in eliding differences of subject position, so that the resulting simulacrum of community, although admittedly interpretatively malleable, amounts to little more than the multiple choices of a tick-box questionnaire, circumscribed by the overriding message, “This is all there is” (or as Margaret Thatcher used to put it, “There Is No Alternative”). By the time of the Spice Girls’ successors, Girls Aloud (“discovered” in a TV talent competition), the spice of feminist noise has been frankly if punningly reduced to an acknowledgement of the need for permission.

In contrast to Leach’s deconstructive approach, Terry Castle’s tribute to saxophonist Art Pepper attempts to rehabilitate, albeit equally knowingly, an older mode of critical response which celebrates rather than demystifying authentic expression.¹⁸ Like Leach, Castle is an academic, but, unlike her, she is not a musicologist; she writes as a fan, although a fan with considerable intellectual pedigree. For Castle, Pepper was “an authentic American genius”; and this quality permeated not just his music, but also his writing (she is enraptured by his autobiography, *Straight Life*, its title no doubt intended to suggest telling the story straight as well as alluding ironically to life without the heroin he found it almost impossible to leave alone) and indeed his life, bohemian to a romantic and fatal extreme — three aspects which she cannot

really separate: “Like his music, Pepper’s verbal style was thrilling: licentious, colloquial, and so painfully human . . . Pepper offered himself up with such astonishing vulnerability . . . In spite of the torments he suffered, Art, you would have to conclude, was blessed by life . . . [and] on account of his honesty . . . he was granted a second life . . . [for he] was also blessed by having a language. Not just one language but two. He could play and he could talk.” A hero in the Romantic tradition, then.

But Castle is no *naïf*. She knows that Pepper’s honesty was constructed. She quotes him describing how he “arranged” his self-image by looking in the mirror when high in order to “cancel” his older, hateful self. She knows that *Straight Life* was dictated to Pepper’s partner of the time, Laurie, who by chance was an anthropologist, giving it something of the quality (and problems) of an ethnographic document. She is well aware that autobiographers, especially those as “loose and crazy in print” as Pepper, are often guilty of “distorting or embellishing the facts” (perhaps not aware enough, though: letters responding to her article pointed out that she was misguided in accepting Pepper’s romantic falsification of the details of one celebrated recording session).¹⁹ Pepper was “upfront . . . about yearning to imitate the flip, dandyish, hipster style that . . . black postwar players cultivated so effortlessly”; “what I wouldn’t give,” he wrote, “to just jump in and say those things.” And Castle’s own yearning for such naturalism — “the mortifying craving I (still) had for a certain uncensored verbal fluency” — followed his. But although she acknowledges the delusions and the clichés in Pepper’s self-writing (“wet blankets everywhere will be saying, *This is all such a load of crap* . . . what a . . . self-deluding bastard Art Pepper must have been”), she insists still on her “own readerly intuition: the faith . . . that . . . it is still possible to locate some core emotional truth”; “in order to succeed at either [writing or music] you have to stop trying to disguise who you are. The veils and pretences of everyday life won’t work,” or as Pepper observes, “jazz musicians really only play themselves”: “I’ve realized,” she quotes him as writing, “that if you don’t play *yourself* you’re nothing.”²⁰

But which self is really at issue here? Castle identifies with Pepper, at first sexualizing their relationship through her consumption of the persona constructed in his music, writing, and photos, then assimilating his early life-story into a parallel with her own. Eventually she reveals that in a sense Pepper is standing in for her dead, seemingly psychotic stepbrother, Jeff, who was a sort of Pepper with no language to communicate his equally tortured self; Art speaks for Jeff (and therefore also for and to Terry). In the end, Castle’s essay is about *her* search for honesty, and Pepper has been used as “a manikin or decoy,” a “mummified icon,” safely distanced by ventriloquism. His authenticity retains its value, in itself, but also functions via an appropriation/projection mechanism to mark her weariness with the hypocrisies of the

French rococo — her scholarly specialism — in favor of the “close-packed human chaos” of the present and of her own life. The contradictions in Castle’s account make an easy target, but there is also a bravery in her insistence that the level of reality can be measured, even while — in a characteristic modernist gesture — real expression is always imagined as being *elsewhere*. Against this, the (equally modernist) aestheticism of one her critics — “this [Pepper’s] honesty is a purely aesthetic quality. It has something to do with not sparing yourself. It has nothing to do with telling the truth” — seems to come a poor second.²¹

Leach and Castle not only represent contrasting methodological stances — the one in the intellectual swim, the other defiantly unfashionable — but also carry us a bit deeper into the layering of the authenticity problematic. There is first of all the level of the musical texts, by the Spice Girls and by Art Pepper; and in both these cases the texts are actually more than musical, being surrounded by writing and visual images. The questions at this level concern the authenticity of these texts: are they true to . . . (their authors, their moment, an expressive intention, a conception of truth, a political purpose, or whatever)? At a second level, there are the interpretations, by Leach, by Castle; the questions here concern *their* fidelity: are they true to their objects (which includes the question whether and how deconstruction might count as truth), and also to the authors, moment, intention, etc. of these objects? (Even when no published commentaries exist, this level is in play, for as soon as music comes into being, verbal interpretation comes with it. Indeed, to some extent interpretation comes first: commentary has always already been prepared and will immediately make its truth-to claims.) At a third level come my critiques of Leach and of Castle; the question here, of *my* fidelity — to the music, to the interpretations, to the relationships set up between them — is one for my readers, but also, to the extent that “I” can interrogate “myself” in this text, one for “me.” And, of course, this process proliferates endlessly, spiraling around the circuits of repetition and representation — precisely the setting where, we may suppose, authenticity sparks into life (and fades away).²²

Is fidelity also complicity? The question returns, like a specter haunting the gaze of all representational sciences, from older theoretical formations — the dilemmas of the ethnographic encounter, the dialogic circles troubling hermeneutics and historiography — in all cases, raising issues rooted in the problematic meetings of selves and others. But the fidelity-stakes take on a new slant with the advent of recordings, which would come to make claims to be both repositories of fidelity (to remembered performance) and objects of faith (with originary authority). The anxieties pervading the practices of ethnographic recording and the controversies surrounding records in music cultures where live performance is highly valued, such as jazz, are typical. At

first glance, recording technology might seem to edit out the subject of performance or to elide it with the subject of the record text; to turn *énonciation* into *énoncé*, in a definitive freeze-up of subjectivity into iconic object. In practice, however, it is just as much the case that technological disembodiment has the effect of releasing multiple specters of *énonciation* into the textual arena, and, as we have seen in previous chapters, their potential work can actually intensify the dialogues of voices. At one extreme, the alienation of the record from an authorial subject can gear up an already existing mirror-function, enabling the listener to, as it were, insert him/herself into the imaginary role of (narcissistic) uttering subject; at the other, the record's capacity to act as a repository of socially constituted subjective memory-traces, to constitute a kind of prosthesis of imagined vocal bodies, and to act out such fantasies through technical trickery, can result in a complex fissuring of apparently coherent textual statements.²³

If Leach and Castle are in some way complicit with their subjects (and which of us could claim total innocence in this respect?), it may be in part because they pay insufficient attention to these tensions. Leach, for instance, seems to follow the claims of polysemy apparently inscribed in a Spice Girls web of ironic subject positions, while missing the extent to which, at a higher level of technical process, the recorded texts displace a conventional gender binary on to an internally differentiated structure of femininity (powerful girls against others), which cannot in the end resist reflecting back the familiar phallogocentrically organized gaze.²⁴ Castle, by contrast, arguably conflates Pepper's written and musical *énoncés* into a single persona and is content to invest his account of his records — as the spontaneous (if drugged up) transcription of the insights of authentic genius — with phantasmatic power, indeed to locate herself emotionally within this process, even though this requires bracketing out both the complex negotiations of multiple positions and the intertextual social learning involved in any successful jazz performance.²⁵ In both cases, we can say that an over-simplification of the recording's fidelity stands metonymically for a broader problem in which authenticity is displaced from its true, and truly fraught location at the heart of the problematic of enunciation: Who speaks?

Leach is after the “subject of deconstruction” — although, as we have seen, on my account she stops short of following the process right through.²⁶ But in any case her analysis exposes limitations in the concept. For her, authenticity resides with the listener (she identifies a “polysemy which allows different collectives to construct the kind of authenticity that they require, based on the assumptions that they bring to their listening”); but not only does this position deny the authoriality that actually circulates around the text (the author here is certainly *not* dead), it also stops at a point where the theory itself should push it on: if “this polysemous presentation of authenticity enables listeners

who see and enjoy the contradictions in these markers to understand that the opposition between commercialism and authenticity is itself a commercially constructed one,” this understanding should surely generate a process with no end. Authenticity must recede for ever, in the typical deconstructive move which, through complete deterritorialization of subjectivity, evacuates the political field in favor of a view from everywhere.

Castle, on the other hand, is after the “subject of psychoanalysis” — although, arguably, she makes the classic error (in Lacanian terms) of displacing the transference process from the level of the Symbolic (Pepper clearly should function as Lacan’s “subject supposed to know,” of whom the analyst is the exemplary case) to that of the Imaginary, where Pepper functions as object of desire. This subject, though fragmentary, mutable, dishonest, and as much social as inner, implies acknowledgement of a situated knowledge that goes with both embodiment and a specific psychic history, a history which, if denied or disavowed, will simply return in other shapes. Castle’s essay could be read as an (incomplete) attempt to “traverse the [her] fundamental fantasy”; but, if there is no more an end to this process than to that of deconstruction (just as “the emergence of the subject from the transference is . . . postponed *ad infinitum*”), what continues is not deconstruction but dialogue (“it is natural to analyze the transference”), which has, therefore, a specific contour and, at least potentially, an ethical point.²⁷

The question now becomes how and where this process might be paused, so that some sort of authentic *agent*, one who can plausibly claim the authority to act and to interpret this action, can emerge. For Nicholas Spice:

We’ve grown adept at seeing more than meets the eye, to hearing more than meets the ear. But for life to go on, for action of any kind to be possible, we have to stop the interpretative machine at some point and settle for definite meaning . . . Psychoanalysis is still feared . . . because it invites us into a world with more variables than we can cope with . . . So we keep sane with an idea of integrated selfhood which we derive from our experience of the dazzling individuation of other people . . . But beyond this, psychoanalysis does something altogether breathtaking. Out of the unworkability of its own project, and as though to upbraid us with the comfortable dishonesty of our ordinary human bonds, it fashions an image of pure trust: not trust based on the appetitive deal-making of friendship and love, but a groundless, purposeless, unjustifiable trust between two human beings holding a conversation on the edge of the abyss.²⁸

What sort of trust — of fidelity — would this be? Is the price of authenticity then *insanity*? And the price of politics, musical or other: *dishonesty*, comfortable or not?

The existential quality of these troubling questions is impossible to grasp outside an awareness of the historical trajectory that has projected them into contemporary consciousness. As my brief archaeology of the term “authenticity” suggested, the earlier history is lengthy. It takes us back most obviously to the eighteenth century: to the Enlightenment, to Rousseau, Herder and Kant. But this moment itself has an important prehistory.

In his authoritative study,²⁹ Charles Taylor begins his story with the Greeks. He points out that although Plato posited a unitary model of the virtuous person against the multifaceted Homeric *psychē*, centered on an ideal of self-mastery through reasoned reflection, this did not imply a modern sense of interiority, rather the search for accord with a more general quality of Reason — the Idea of the Good. For a more radical reflexivity, betokening a first-person standpoint — a “proto-cogito,” as Taylor calls it — we must wait for Augustine, whose Christianized Platonism located the presence of God within, in self-experience, as well as without, in the created universe. Augustine’s move was then picked up and developed further, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by Descartes and Locke on the one hand, Montaigne on the other. Descartes in effect scientized the cogito; the self, disengaged from reality (now conceived as mechanistic extension), nevertheless has the capacity to construct more or less correct *representations* of this reality. In Locke, this disengaged self — a “punctual self” in Taylor’s phrase, a self as disconnected *point* — reached a new level of mastery, reifying itself in the interests of control, both of the individual and of the world. In parallel with this trend, however, was a movement towards, not so much self-discipline, as self-exploration. For Montaigne, as reflected in his autobiographical “Essays” (themselves harking back in form to Augustine’s *Confessions*), the self is mutable, incompletely known and often frightening; the interior move in this case results less in universality (e.g., some conception of human nature) than in difference.

These exemplars, particularly Cartesian rationalism and Lockean empiricism, can be taken to represent the most important foundations on which the eighteenth-century Enlightenment built its (albeit variegated) discourses of the self and its objects. At their most soothing, these discourses, against a background of apparently beneficent commerce, imperial expansion, and universal improvement, seemed to promise a harmonious civil society in which an agreed agenda of human freedom, rights, and capacities might unite inner and outer nature in a narrative of endless progress. But Rousseau, looking within, found not harmony but discord. Nature, he thought — including human nature — is intrinsically good, but culture estranges men from nature; conscience “speaks to us in the language of nature,” but few hear it. Rousseau’s dramatization of the depths and struggles of authentic identity, whose “inner voice,” if only uncovered beneath the babble of social conditioning, is what we should be true to, strikes a recognizably modern

note: “I long for the time,” he wrote, “when, freed from the fetters of the body, I shall be myself, no longer torn in two, when I myself shall suffice for my own happiness.” And if the original locus of this voice of nature was most clearly identified — projected, we might say — in the figure of the Noble Savage, Rousseau had nevertheless a political and educational project for rediscovering it. (We might note the counterargument of Rousseau’s contemporary, Diderot, whose insistence — following Montaigne — on the constant and confusing interaction within the self of reason, desire, and fantasy “leaves us,” in Richard Rorty’s words, “with the need to construct a self to be true to, rather than, as Rousseau thought, the need to make an already existent self transparent to itself.”)³⁰

Rousseau’s stress on inwardness, self-expression, and a freedom guaranteed in nature led in an obvious way to the Romantics. But this motif of autonomy was drawn upon too, in his distinctive manner, by Kant, who also defined freedom in terms of action according with man’s true nature but for whom this nature lay in a quality of rational agency with universal application. Kant offered “a prospect of pure self-activity” in which such activity itself possesses autonomy, for “rational nature” — man’s highest nature — “exists as an end in itself,” even if many human actions are in practice “crooked.”³¹ The Romantics preferred to ground individuation in an expressivist conception of nature (including inner nature), in which the artist (who “is become a creator God” [Herder], a “true priest of the Highest” [Schleiermacher]) led the way in showing how “creative imagination” could reveal what lies beyond the senses, completing and transfiguring reality even as it is put before us. Yet in the work of many of the most penetrating thinkers of the early nineteenth century (Schiller, Schelling, Hegel) these two tendencies were brought together, not without tension but with a belief that this historical phase would in due course give way to a new stage in which man would return to nature in a higher synthesis (a belief that would influence the young Marx). This *Telos* was influentially articulated by Hölderlin:

There are two ideals of our existence: one is the condition of the greatest simplicity, where our needs accord with each other, with our powers and with everything we are related to, *just through the organisation of nature*, without any action on our part. The other is a position of the highest cultivation, where this accord would come about between infinitely diversified and strengthened needs and powers, through the organisation which we are able to give to ourselves.

But it had already been anticipated in Kant: “Perfected art becomes nature again; which is the final goal of the moral destiny of the human race.”³²

The foregrounding of *art*, emerging with the mid-eighteenth century field of aesthetics, is important. For Kant, Beauty (as embodied in “fine art” — high

art, as we might now call it) has moral import, for the Romantics, revelatory significance. For both, such art possesses its own autonomous quality (Kant's "purposiveness without a purpose"; Schiller's "aesthetic state," defined as one of "free play"), and its standards are of universal application: thus, just as "men work themselves gradually out of barbarity if only intentional artifices are not made to hold them in it... [and thus] the propensity and vocation to free thinking... works back upon the character of the people, who thereby stepwise become capable of managing freedom," so properly aesthetic judgments — as distinct from "barbaric" standards of taste dependent on the partiality of emotion — assert "universal" validity; such a judgment "requires the same liking from others... *demand*s that they agree."³³

Placed within a context of contemporaneous institutional innovation — public concerts, organs of critical discourse, conservatoires, and other educational provision — this aesthetic interlinks (though by no means in an entirely homologous manner) with the elements of a familiar constellation, elements whose aspirant universalism, seen through the optic made available by later critiques, can be identified as making up the emergent bourgeois music culture: the concept of the (score-based) musical work; the Great Man theory of production (genius, according to Kant, being "the talent (natural endowment)... [or] innate mental predisposition... through which nature gives the rules to art"); the collection of great works into a canon (for "the products of genius must also be models, i.e., they must be exemplary"); the ascription of truth-value to art; the practices of "detached," "structural," and "contemplative" listening.³⁴ If authenticity is to be found, it seemed, works of art, including art music, would be a key place to look.

However, the critique of this culture's universalizing claims implied by the specification "bourgeois" already raises a problem: How would this discourse deal with *difference*?³⁵ J. G. Herder, ethnographer, philosophical anthropologist, and early folk-song collector as well as writer and historian, was probably the first to speak (in the late eighteenth century) of cultures in the plural — ways of life distinctive of particular peoples (*Völker*), each valid, all incommensurate with the others. A key marker of these distinctions was language — the voice of a *Volk*. This view, indebted to Rousseau's expressivist theory of the common origin of music and language (the "voice of nature") in the articulation of feeling, would help power nineteenth-century nationalism (as Rousseau put it, "the locus of sovereignty must be a people... something more than a mere 'aggregation'").³⁶ But Herder, now looking inwards rather than outwards, also insisted that each individual person had his own way of being human: "Each human being has his own measure (*Mass*), likewise his own tuning (*Stimmung*) of all his own sensual feelings to each other."³⁷ Even though Herder negotiated a coherence out of such difference through a theory of empathy that looks suspiciously like a kind of appropriation

strategy (“every nation, every age, every individual judges music and poetry by widely different criteria . . . yet the materials of art are none the less inseparably linked by empathy to the person who enjoys them . . . an emotion that is always purely *human* . . . even if the masters of the art from various eras and peoples did not wish to deny their individuality, the intellect’s musical ear will still correlate them, appreciating each in its individuality and raising it to the sphere of the universal”),³⁸ this is still a remarkably modern model of cultural pluralism.

Herder’s negotiation was clearly motivated by his dialogues with musical, poetic, linguistic, and cultural others. There was, nevertheless, a prehistory to this important moment. Indeed, the archaeology takes us back to the Age of Humanism — the period of Montaigne, for example — which was also, of course, the Age of Discovery, when emergent topoi of travel, exotic others, center and periphery, empire and colony, represent the impact of rapidly expanding cultural horizons, and at the same time, arguably, dramatize through formations of difference the uniqueness of the equally emergent Western self. From our perspective — now speeding forward from Herder’s moment — such “encounters,” as Philip Bohlman calls them, form the history within which, from the Age of Discovery down to the present, changing images of “world music” play out. Montaigne, for instance, as well as exploring the inner self, also wrote an essay “On Cannibals,” drawing on accounts from 1578 by the missionary Jean de Lery of what Bohlman describes as “the first encounter between the musics of old and new worlds.”³⁹ At each such moment, whether the meeting was with diasporic Africans in the Americas, with “the Orient” in Egypt, Turkey or India, or with the polyglot folk singers of Herder’s expansive Europe, musical norms were challenged by encounters with difference, disrupting but also reshaping both cultural politics and musical subjectivity.⁴⁰

Encounters were constitutive, for both cultures and subjects, and with dynamics both positive and negative (i.e., working through trajectories of both appropriation and projection) — though these poles are themselves ambivalent. But the history was not simply cumulative. As the upward curve of Western bourgeois expansion — geopolitical, economic, and also philosophical and cultural — reached a certain peak in the later eighteenth century, the pressures exerted by and on its authoring subject stiffened noticeably, one symptom being the urgent and difficult issues of representation, as these related to the Enlightenment conflicts over universality and difference. Quite apart from the obvious political content of the work, Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, whose lofty idealism is inseparable from its alteritous portrayal of class, race, and gender difference, speaks both to the partiality of the democratic revolutions in America and France, and to the tensions in the philosophy of Kant. (For Kant, enlightenment was available in principle to all, but in practice,

at the present moment, was considered “very dangerous by the far greater portion of mankind (and by the entire fair sex),” not to mention “the great unthinking masses.” Similarly, he distinguished rigorously between high art, with its cognitive and reflective element, and the merely “pleasurable,” “entertaining,” and “enjoyable.”⁴¹ Nor is it surprising that at much the same time blackface performance was starting up in the United States (in a sort of inverted relation with the slavery abolition movement), or that, as much recent musicology has revealed, novel techniques for portraying subordinate or illicit gender and sexual identities were emerging (alongside the first shoots of radical feminism). Transgression, feared, policed, and indulged, would become a leitmotiv of the culture in the nineteenth century, intimately connected with the dramas of self-mastery. Rousseau’s claim in the *Social Contract*: “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. One man thinks himself the master of others, but remains more of a slave than they are,” was worked up by Hegel into his celebrated discourse of Master and Slave, which points both inward and outward, mapping together dialectics of history, philosophy, and psychology. The background here lies in the increasingly powerful discourses of imperialism, orientalism, raciology, and sexual orthodoxy; and of class — what I have been calling the problematic of the Low-Other. Even Herder, who had a place for “light music,” drew the line at street song: “The people (*Volk*) are not the mob (*Pöbel*) of the streets, who never sing or compose but shriek and mutilate,”⁴² initiating a discourse that traversed the nineteenth century (at the end of which, in 1899, the composer Hubert Parry inaugurated the English Folk Song Society with a comparison between “true folk-songs” — “treasures of humanity . . . with no sham, no got-up glitter, and no vulgarity” — and the “insidious . . . repulsive . . . rowdyism . . . the musical slang” of the “common popular songs of the day”), and still energized debates over the value of Tin Pan Alley song, jazz, and rock in the twentieth.⁴³

The authenticity trope was deeply embedded in this problematic, for at the heart of the issue lay the question of what a subject true to itself would be like and how such subjectivity would be represented musically. And this question was historically variable, which is to say that it is inseparable from, and an engine of, the on-going drama of modernity itself. The critique of too-easy authenticities is thus part of a wider critique of Enlightenment certainties with which we have become so familiar. Could the concepts of autonomy, self-direction, and the unitary self withstand the impact of Darwin, Marx, and Freud? How would the belief in endless progress respond to Schopenhaurian pessimism? Could the locus of civilization in a specific geo-historical space, represented in canons of self-validating texts, survive attacks from feminism, the objects of colonialism, and other peripheries? Above all, perhaps, what would happen to notions of the objectivity and universality of reason after Nietzsche’s devastating critique?

If the nineteenth century, looked at from this point of view, presents itself as the period when a certain conception of the authentic subject puffed itself up to the point of incipient explosion, the twentieth appears as the time when the resulting crisis, addressed in differing ways by positivism, critical Marxism, structuralism and poststructuralism, feminism, postcolonial critique, phenomenology, and existentialism, demanded to be worked through, or at least on. By the middle of the century, the good ship authenticity — under threat not only from philosophical critiques but also the baleful lessons of fascism and Stalinism — seemed definitely holed below the water; and yet so pressing, still, appeared its demands, as God, reason, progress lay dead or at least unconscious, that in another way it steamed ahead even faster, into the turbulence of the '60s, folk revivals, rock purism, punk nihilism, and world beat just some of its musical manifestations. Taylor points out that, while the negative side of Nietzsche's critique had by the second half of the century achieved a pervasive influence, the positive aspect — his "yea-saying" will to, despite everything, affirm — was less acknowledged (even though, he suggests, the most coruscating critics of the Enlightenment — Foucault, Derrida — do themselves nevertheless maintain an implicit ground for evaluation: in their case, "freedom").⁴⁴ This reluctance is understandable, given the Nazi misuse of Nietzschean discourse — but can we hear an echo in the voices of the Beatles, known throughout Europe as the "Yeh-Yeh-Yehs"? The most important of the early postcolonial critics, Franz Fanon, still spoke this language too: "Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth."⁴⁵

This is the language of "culture." But, as Fanon's appeal implies, the idea of culture — the idealized figure of the human subject, made whole by its own creative work — originated within the Enlightenment project itself. This idea, in its distinctive modern sense, arose with Herder and the German Romantics in response to the perceived failures or banality of actual civilization. It would go on to assume a range of forms, variously emphasizing moral demands, aesthetic standards, or anthropological plurality — or indeed, subversive difference, from the Parisian *bohèmes* to the Black Atlantic as counterculture of modernity. But in whatever guise, culture is conceived as *critical*; it answers to lack. From this point of view, authenticity fills out the absence that culture anxiously diagnoses.

But culture is also a response to the secularizing tendencies of the society, to the disenchantment of the world. In this sense it is normative: it tells us what we *should* think or feel or do, what art *should* be like, how society *should* work, when divine revelation is unavailable and unreflexive tradition seems insufficient. From this point of view, authenticity is precisely *uncritical*: it offers itself as *natural* (which is, of course, one of the standard definitions of ideology). Squeezed forth in this way, authenticity appears as, so to speak, a

byproduct of secular culture's political ambition and the drama of the modern subject's self-construction that accompanies this. Its materials can be both introjected (as superego commands and modes of signification assimilated from elsewhere) and projected (on to desirable others); but they coexist or struggle there with their opposites, forever drawing the distinctions by which we live, by which cultural values — in music, for instance — have their effects. For the young Marx, “Man . . . practically and theoretically makes the species . . . History is the true natural history of man”;⁴⁶ that is, we become human when we get to work on nature, enter history, and produce ourselves as the human species. But this historical movement (self-production, self-knowledge) comes with a cost: the sense of alienation.⁴⁷ As Terry Eagleton puts it, culture in all its guises is a response to “the failure of culture as actual civilization — as the grand narrative of human self-development . . . It [culture] is itself the illness to which it proposes a cure.”⁴⁸ Authenticity, as a name for value-claims positioned within the alteritously structured social and psychological fields of action where the cultural body is formed, is a symptom of this disease.

The crisis of authenticity thus represents both a cultural crisis — which needless to say runs through all forms of signifying practice, including music — and also a crisis of subjectivity. In both spheres, foundations seem to have been knocked away — foundations of, on the one hand, subjective agency and schemas of representation (of both self and others), and, on the other hand, of cultural legitimacy and power. And yet, the language of authenticity, and many of the assumptions on which it was built, refuse to die. This legacy is still clear in the texts by Leach and Castle, embroiled as they are in debates around identity, community, art, and politics which thread their way through the entire history of twentieth-century popular music, with roots going back still further — ultimately, indeed, to the familiar Enlightenment tropes of expression, authorship, and truth.

As I pointed out at the start of this chapter, discourses associated with folk music, blues, and jazz played a key role in this history, establishing terms that were subsequently taken over in rock and other late twentieth-century genres such as rap and world music. Intriguingly, in all these cases, authenticity has been negotiated not only in terms of the *Völkisch* but also those of Art: the construction of canons has vied with the celebration of ways of life, Kant with Herder, in the validation of what is to count in the negotiation of distinction. This is a negotiation, moreover, that projects forth for us one image of modernity itself, together with its critiques — a point that would not be lost on those modernists (from Stravinsky to Picasso, Bartók to Brancusi) whose re-imaginings of the dialogues of mastery with its slave-others, canonic tradition with neo-primitivism, left the legacy of artistic autonomy at once more forthcoming and more anxious about its own heteronomous underpinnings.

It may clarify our understanding of this history to look at a case from the earlier twentieth century, when many of the patterns of argument were set. An obvious choice would be blues, appropriated early to the criteria of folk music yet performed, especially in the 1920s, by singers who seemed to many to possess artistic stature; and at the same time, always at risk — or so it seemed to some — of dilution into an inauthentic commercial derivative.⁴⁹ Fans during the 1960s blues boom, when the genre was helping to power the new rock music and seemed to run over with exotic otherness, were familiar with its paradigmatic folk status; yet many of them also knew that the female singers of the twenties had performed something called “classic blues.” Why “classic”? In the first study of this subgenre,⁵⁰ Derek Stewart-Baxter expresses bewilderment, pointing out that the eclecticism of the blues repertoire makes this epithet highly inappropriate. The best he can do is to quote critic George Melly, who had written in 1969: “At their best the ‘classic’ blues represent that fragile but precious moment in a developing art form when feeling and technique are in perfect accord, and in Bessie Smith the times provided the necessary genius to give this moment concrete expression.”⁵¹ But where does this term, classic blues, come from? How does it relate to blues, as folk, and what has this relationship to say about the interplay of tradition, modernity, and authenticity?

Classic blues seem to have been first named by Rudi Blesh in his 1946 book, *Shining Trumpets*, which might plausibly claim to be the first general history of jazz.⁵² Blesh, an art critic and jazz writer, was a leading ideologue in the “traditional jazz” revival movement that had begun in the late 1930s, and, as such, a combatant in the “jazz wars” which consumed many critics and fans for the next decade or so. This conflict was fought over the territories of, precisely, tradition, authenticity, and modernity, and between three battalions, associated with New Orleans jazz, swing, and bebop, respectively. The politics went wider than those of the music culture itself (although there was no neat map of attachments): most revivalists were romantic leftists, often with close associations with protagonists in the contemporary folk music revival such as the Lomaxes.⁵³

Blesh’s history of blues puts forward a three-stage model. The first stage, beginning around 1870, is “archaic” or “preclassic.” It is identified retrospectively — it is “prior to the fullest development of the form” — and the discourse here clearly derives from folklore traditions. This is “authentic blues in every sense,” and the songs are “stark and simple,” with a “simple and heartfelt style” and a “lack of self-consciousness and a naturalness almost naïve”; Blesh’s imagery (“sprouting,” “seedlings,” “vitality”) is all natural. In the second stage, starting about 1900, “classic” blues emerge. Here Blesh’s writing moves towards an art discourse. The songs “still have spiritual simplicity, greatness, and natural poetry, to which are added the clarity and

power with which greater singers infuse the form”; this brings “growth in expressive means and in communicated power,” while the introduction of more complex band polyphony, including players such as Louis Armstrong, results in “an integrated musical whole.” From around 1920, “postclassic” blues appear, and Blesh’s discourse adopts elements from mass culture critique. He divides this stage into three types: “contemporary” (associated with male singers influenced by the classic women but turning their style into cliché: there is a “falling off in power but not in sincerity”); “decadent” (“an empty recital of dead history” characterized by “spurious elements of insincerity . . . grasping for easy success in the pornographic, the theatrical, or the merely clever”); and “eclectic” (“no more than a sophisticated revival,” as represented in the work of Billie Holiday, an “agreeable but enervated voice” peddling “uncreatively repeated mannerisms”).⁵⁴

Of course, three-part historical schemas with this rise-and-fall shape are familiar, in music historiography and more widely. Perhaps the first examples come from narrative constructions (including to some extent contemporary self-understandings) of the Classical Greco-Roman period itself; but more recently what would become the conventional mold for music historiography of the canon (Preclassical, Classical, Romantic) offered a telling model. As is commonly the case, Blesh’s rhetoric is organicist: “From the endless, seemingly aimless movement and mutation of cells, from the ceaseless counterpoint of natural forces, there sometimes emerges a form that endures, a generic form . . . the sonnet, the sonata, and the blues.”⁵⁵ This has the effect of naturalizing the teleology: the second stage, the classic, becomes generic — the *Ur*-form.

Blesh’s blues schema is embedded within a broader but similar model for jazz. Folk progenitors, from “memories of life on the Dark Continent” to “archaic street jazz,” led, through a process of “selective assimilation,” to a second phase beginning in the 1890s and marked by “stabilization” — “a more developed, classic stage,” localized in New Orleans and centered on a genealogy running from Buddy Bolden through Freddie Keppard, Bunk Johnson, and King Oliver to Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton. But “a quick degeneration occurred when this extraordinarily pure and vital music was transplanted, killing a part, deforming some of the growth, yet not striking quite to the roots”; leading, nonetheless, to “dilution and deformation,” setting in from about 1920 and marked by processes of commercialization, individualization, and Europeanization. These developments were especially clear in swing, some parts of which were “a completely devitalized, sentimental hodgepodge,” others, “nihilistic, cynically destructive, reactionary . . . devoted to the superinducement of a wholly unnatural excitement” — both tendencies to be found in the work of the “decadent . . . reactionary,” Ellington.⁵⁶

So the question now becomes, why “classic jazz”? Although this trope has become part of a familiar jazz discourse (jazz as America’s classical music, with variable understandings of what the canon comprises, albeit always with an essentializing movement), it was fairly recent coinage in 1946. Alain Locke used the phrase “classic jazz” in his 1936 book, *The Negro and His Music*, but in reference to “symphonic jazz,” that is music such as Paul Whiteman’s, influenced by classical music — a trend that Blesh abhorred. But Locke did refer to a “golden age” of jazz, in the mid-twenties, before artistry had been swamped by commerce. A similar paradigm is operative in writings from the 1930s and early 1940s by Hughes Panassié, Winthrop Sargeant, Charles Edward Smith, and Frederic Ramsey — and even earlier in the first critical writings of Roger Pryor Dodge, dating from the mid-1920s.⁵⁷ For some of these writers — and certainly for Blesh — this usage clearly represented a revivalist need to mark out the qualities of that golden age as against those of contemporary swing.

Blesh himself links the blues and jazz schemas. “The blues, developed,” he writes, “could provide a nucleus for New Orleans jazz”; Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith fused them “into a single greater form.” This relationship is gendered in an interesting (and very familiar) way, for “the blues of the classic period . . . are pre-eminently the music of Negro women as jazz is the lusty music of Negro men. The one seems to embody healing, maternal sympathy, which gestates and conserves life; the other externalizes the vitality and power of male procreativity.” And it is also mediated by race: true blues and jazz are alike “Negroid” — “To this day, with rare exceptions, only New Orleans Negroes can play real jazz”; “it is the survival . . . of an informing spirit, a racial consciousness,” and Blesh systematically charts jazz “deformation” in terms of the baleful effects of white influence. This combination is enough to see off Bix Beiderbecke: “real jazz is a strong music. Objectively considered, Beiderbecke’s playing is weak and weakness characterized his life.” Similarly, “hybridity” (a term that Blesh worries at throughout the book, and that we can surely read here as in part a euphemism for miscegenation) is a source of “decadence”; “[classic] jazz is no musical hybrid” but “a miracle of musical synthesis” (which is presumably why it is classic), whereas swing is a “hybridized popular music rather than a fine-art form . . . Negroid only in surface manner.” This is enough to dismiss Ellington’s “ridiculous and pretentious hybridizing” and poor Billie Holiday was lost because she “recorded with effete Negroes like . . . Teddy Wilson.”⁵⁸

So far, Blesh’s perspective seems to fit unproblematically into the terms of a long-established aesthetic position. It comes essentially from the traditions of *Kultur*, with a distinct leftist orientation (the attempt to ground the music in an African aesthetic of collective participation gives it the status, or at least potential, of a “people’s art”),⁵⁹ and its racist and phallogocentric

elements are not unfamiliar. But Blesh's construct is complex and unstable, marked by a number of discursive binaries which are always in danger of contradicting one another.

Völkisch language, with its characteristic tropes of "spontaneity" and "nature," is everywhere: "a music, improvised freely... sounds a summons to free, communal, creative living"; blues is such a music, for "the real blues grew spontaneously" and, as a "naturally evolved form... [.] sophistication acts like a blight upon them"; "the music seems like a phenomenon of nature itself." And these qualities are linked to ethnicity: "primitivism at each crucial point saves jazz." Against this discourse, however, runs a language of classicism, with tropes of "discipline," "purity," and "control," where the talk is of "a generic art form... universal in expressive scope... essentially an abstraction, a flexible framework built up of directives and limitations... no longer haphazard and capricious... but formulated in a cogent and fateful repetition, a ceaseless but controlled variation," with "purity of line and... rigid avoidance of the decorative." In effect the discourse of authenticity — urgently, even anxiously present throughout the book — faces two ways. The attempt to bridge them is not ignoble: a chance observation of a folk dance-song in the South sets Blesh to musing that "music which comes directly from the people need never thread its way from Elysian fields, down Olympic slopes to the Thessalonian plains. It begins on the plains, stays on the plains, and high above the rural revelry the high sounds float, to settle like dew on the parched heavenly groves." But it is awkward: "while jazz is a fine art, it has not been recognized as such... and has been forced to subsist as a folk art." But does this tension not bring out what is always a condition of constructions of the classic, at least in post-Enlightenment societies: that it depends on the folk as its other side? Each authenticity speaks in the name of a reified and naturalized transcendental subject (the people; *Kultur*) in a binary dance of otherness. And the gendering and racializing of this maneuver — the so-called oedipalized construction of the canon — has had deep-rooted effects that are still with us.⁶⁰

The folk/classic conflict spins off a related binary, concerning authoriality. Blues and jazz are people's arts and the stress on participation means that authorship has to be in one sense collective. Thus in classic jazz "the group becomes a single individual in the throes of creation," and Blesh criticizes Louis Armstrong in particular for, after 1926, becoming an individualist. At the same time, though, the story is told in terms of the deeds of Great Men: it "centers around a comparatively few great figures"; "in New Orleans... the history of jazz is written in biography. As it moved to Chicago... its story is still that of men of genius who worked together," so that "a personal style becomes definitive in a whole music." Blesh's way round this contradiction is to suggest that the individual, notably the lead trumpet player, stands

symbolically for the whole front-line, or even the whole band. (Oh, the stresses and strains of bourgeois subjectivity!)⁶¹

Which exclamation might lead us to the “class” hidden in “classic.” Blesh wants classic to be a conceptual not a stylistic term, so that classic blues and jazz are seen as aesthetically *equivalent* to classical music, not as influenced by it. But he constantly slides towards more specific comparisons, which make upwardly mobile claims. The relationship of blues to jazz is similar to the way that “European music of the latter half of the eighteenth century developed from the earlier dance suite”; he compares the “pregnant grandeur” of the blues to that of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony; and, most bizarrely of all, suggests that in classic blues “the piano or guitar may occasionally reach the equality of importance with the voice that the piano attains in Beethoven’s violin sonatas.” The viewpoint here is that of a liberal elite — and sure enough, black musicians turned out mostly to betray his patronage.

It is possible that this problem had its origins in Blesh’s knowledge of ragtime (his pioneering book on the subject, coauthored with Harriet Janis, appeared in 1950).⁶² Here, once again, he wanted to stress that the “classic ragtime” of Scott Joplin and a few others was classic in its own way (starting with a folk genre, “gifted composers . . . carried the music to a level that can only be termed classical,” but this just meant that the music was “highly articulated and developed along ragtime’s own proper lines”); yet at the same time he was deeply impressed by Joplin’s own “seriousness” and artistic ambition, and by his insistence on notational precision and discipline. In this case he found the “classicizing” discourse in the music culture itself — in titles of pieces, sheet music advertisements, and surrounding commentary — where, however, claims to quality (“high class rag”) were thoroughly mixed up with more specific attempts to accumulate cultural capital (“We have advertised these as classic rags . . . They have lifted ragtime from its low estate and lined it up with Beethoven and Bach”: advertisement by John Stark in *Rag Time Review* [1915]). Joplin’s alliance with (white) publisher, John Stark, clearly marks what is anyway apparent, that his project was part of the contemporary movement of black self-improvement (whose legacy was there in the Harlem Renaissance, with its ambivalent attitudes to low-class musics). For Blesh, this relationship reveals a cross-racial “mirrorlike correspondence” (he notes their palindromic initials: SJ-JS), with Stark the “alter ego of a Negro genius”; and this transposes to another level the fact that Stark himself was already “two men in one: the pioneer and the man of the new cities, the farmer with folk music in his veins and the new man of culture with opera in his head.” This trajectory took concrete form in the drive to *publish*, to textualize the vicissitudes of performance (for musical scores, after all, also reflect back the interpellative mirror-strategies of [self-] authoring); and this drive took a pronounced pedagogic (disciplinary) shape in Joplin’s *School*

of *Ragtime — Six Exercises for Piano* (1908), in which an uncompromising Preface (“That all publications masquerading under the name of ragtime are not the genuine article will be better known when these exercises are studied. That real ragtime of the higher class is rather difficult to play is a painful truth . . .”) introduces a welter of fierce instructions with the individual pieces (the music is to be “played as it is written,” “giving each note its proper time and . . . scrupulously observing the ties”; “never play ragtime fast”; those “prone to vamp” are enjoined to avoid “careless or imperfect rendering” in order “to complete the sense intended”).⁶³

For Stark — and probably for Joplin, too — these scruples went along with opposition to the crass (as distinct from old-fashioned, gentlemanly) commercialism of Tin Pan Alley.⁶⁴ Blesh shared this view too. Classic jazz, he wrote, “was a fine art transcending its surroundings” but then brought low by “the dry rot of commercialization”; this “cheapening and deteriorative force” produced “increasing banality,” “a product that can be put together by hacks, . . . profitably sold to the people” and “unobtrusively substituted for what the people already wanted and had,” demanding “aural activity devoted to neurotic excitement and the cliché.”⁶⁵ The language will be familiar to readers of Adorno’s (roughly contemporary) mass-culture critique; and it roots Blesh’s folk/classic ambivalence in an established modernist position.

Which brings us to a final binary conflict: in tension with blues/jazz classicism is Blesh’s insistence that they are also modern. As a revivalist, he “wanted to take it [jazz] back to 1926, when it had reached its highest point and then stopped . . . It was modern then — when it captivated yet thwarted a Milhaud and a Stravinsky; it is modern still.” By contrast, swing “sacrifices the truly modern tendencies of polyphonic jazz.” He compares jazz’s “free-melodic” technique, its “improvised polyphony,” to medieval and baroque music and to twentieth-century neoclassicism, all of which stand against the “harmonic-chromatic process” typical of the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ But where does this leave its classicism?

The answer lies in the way that Blesh’s three-stage historical schema⁶⁷ is overlaid with two binaries: a quarrel of ancients and moderns, together with a quarrel within the modern that sets modernism against commercial mass culture. But he has the really modern as also ancient, going back, via the “folk,” to Africa — an act of political utopianism (or fantasy) which only works by freezing the contradictions, and through an authoriality trick: conflating the multiple voices (individual/collective; transcendent/vernacular; low/high) into a single teleologically confident narration, orchestrating the various binaries so that they can turn difference into a self-sustaining circle of representations. Is this the classic classicizing move — the way this particular authenticity-work works?

In the second edition of *Shining Trumpets* (1958), Blesh added a Post-script. Now he regrets the jazz revival's conservatism. It should have built, organically, on its peak moment, not rested as an "anachronism." Drawing on his still active ethnic distinctions, he now legitimates bebop, and funky post-bop (Blakey, Rollins), and even soul (Ray Charles), and rock 'n' roll (Elvis) because they "go back," back to "drum-rhythms," "cries," "wailing" — to blues: "jazz is a fine art that sprang from a people . . . it will not cease being a folk art . . . Its people will not give it up." But this is still to reduce blues/jazz modernism to a single narrative — to *synthesis*, rather than hybridity: "It has its own primitive sources — which have always been the real elements of its modernness. Its Gabon masks are built in. The blues are such a mask . . . like the tragic mask of Greek drama . . . , the face of reality. The true likeness of the race, for the individual to wear."⁶⁸

Blesh would surely have regarded Bessie Smith's version of "St. Louis Blues" — a tune certainly assembled out of folk elements, as his own attack on Handy's "fatherhood" points out, but accompanied now by expressionistic twists and turns from Louis Armstrong's cornet, and set in some dusty tin church by Fred Longshaw's harmonium — as classic: a definitive mask whose tragic cast is at once statuesque and raw.⁶⁹ Yet in blues — the blues that is always already modern — the voice is always seeking to speak round the edges of the mask (which is precisely what Armstrong's cornet does). What happens, then, when Cab Calloway — as I believe — rips the mask away from Smith?⁷⁰ In his "cubist" version, what emerges is: more masks, more voices — an authenticity not destroyed but dismantled, its shards unsure how to authenticate their own voice, yet with a modernity beyond all classicizing.

Placing Blesh in this way suggests how a sense of the combination of under- and over-determinations in his account can open up the authenticity problematic in its actual historical development to more subtle scrutiny, at the same time as it points back to the discursive beginnings of the art/folk/mass nexus at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and forward to subsequent extrapolations from the terms of his argument in discourses around rock, rap, and world music.⁷¹ Three interlinked territories of debate emerge especially strongly from thinking about Blesh's book. First, there is the issue of the self or subject; can we still say there is a self to be true to, and what might be the nature of this subject? (To think about Armstrong or Ellington as coherent musical subjects immediately makes clear the extent of Blesh's problem here.) Second, we might ask how and where such a subject is to be found in musical texts and practices; what is the nature of creative agency, and what, now, can be the status of authoriality? (We saw how confused Blesh becomes on this question.) And third, there is the problem of how this author-subject is to be identified; what is the nature of the dialogue, the encounter, between the subject-in-music and its interlocutors

(us — as readers, listeners, speakers back)? (Blesh drew on anthropology, written historical sources, interviews, and recordings, and the results appear, mostly but not exclusively in his voice, in the form of words, discussions of musical performances, and transcriptions into staff notation; the question how historical and ethnographic others are to be represented is famously difficult.) It is to these three territories of debate that I turn in initiating the final section of this chapter.

Charles Taylor followed up his historical study of the “sources of the self” with *The Ethics of Authenticity*, a more polemical work on the plight of selfhood in the late twentieth century and one of the more impressive philosophical attempts to rescue authenticity from its apparent fate.⁷² His focus is on precisely the mutation I have outlined: the self has seemingly shrunk, its supports weakened or discredited, but at the same time its response, from within its smaller, inward-looking world, has often been to shout its demands all the louder. For Taylor, this narcissism describes one of the effects of the “soft relativism” into which the *topos* of the authentic self has now so often sunk, accompanied by privatization of the subject and the shrinking of the scope of agency in the face of systemic “iron-cage” instrumentalism. His answer to this decline is: conversation — or to use his term, dialogics. He insists that outside of dialogue with significant others, no sense of a real me can have meaning. Difference only registers against a “horizon” of existing values, and authenticity thus demands, as a condition of existence, reference to schemas located beyond the isolated self. Identity depends on recognition, and oppression can be defined as recognition denied.

This account of identity has enough in common with Lacan’s to justify comparison — the roots of both lie in Hegel, via Heidegger — but Taylor lacks Lacan’s tragic sense of what is foreclosed and imposed in these negotiations; both social antagonism and the unconscious are relative absentees in his theory. He does respond to poststructuralist critiques by — paradoxically but plausibly enough — aligning the poetic, rhetorical qualities of the Nietzschean legacy with the same source in Romantic aesthetics — the will to self-creation — as also generated the authenticity paradigm, which they have been used to deconstruct. Hence, he suggests, the denial of foundations inevitably becomes itself a foundation — unending “free play” — a point virtually accepted in the late Foucault’s emphasis on the aesthetic cultivation of the self (but less clearly acknowledged by Derrida). But, by so to speak eliding Dionysus with Prometheus, Taylor arguably underplays the *fictional* and *phantasmatic* quality of the poststructuralist self: the constant canceling which renders the subject “as if,” forever lost, incomplete, or elsewhere. Similarly, his heroic strategy to break the bars of the iron cage, through re-harnessing instrumental reason to moral choices open to (dialogically constructed) real

agents in the service of concrete political projects, is on one level inspiring but falls short of the necessary acknowledgement of the possible effects of the prison state itself on the very structures of self-understanding and self-construction. Something important is missing: self and other, subject and society, are made to ground each other, and the movements of authenticity articulate that process; but the point of leverage from which the entire picture comes into view — the larger field of articulation that is undoubtedly implied — is present only through its absence.

If the fully constituted, let alone the self-constitutive subject is at issue, what can we say about the statements to which its name is attached? Roland Barthes's celebrated answer is clear: The author is dead; the meaning of texts — of songs, let us say — is the creation of the reader (the listener).⁷³ Like all binary inversions, this simply transfers authority rather than upsetting the order within which it operates. More productive has been Foucault's historically oriented account of author-functions. Like Barthes, Foucault cuts the link between text and biographically substantiated individual. His aim, however, is not to destroy the author but to disclose the changing modes of his or her construction, as a figure with particular discursive properties, within both a body of "works" and particular social conditions of existence (e.g., the commodity status of these works). In taking account of the full range of discursive practices within which authorship operates, he comes up to the point where the modes of existence of the subject as such appear: "It is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse."⁷⁴ In songs, such functioning is complex and variable indeed — although, if we substitute for the concept of origination that of instantiation, this suggests immediately that the possibility of the former has been too quickly foreclosed. Foucault foresees the end of the author-function — "discourses . . . would then develop in the anonymity of a murmur" — a prophecy paralleled in some excited claims about the production of music within a culture of digital sampling; but even here, so far at least, new forms of author-function continue to circulate.⁷⁵

These functions are spoken (enunciated, uttered: *voiced*) as well as inscribed. Taking advantage of the dialogical space this distinction opens up, Kaja Silverman has intriguingly pursued the issue of authorship in film in a way that insistently foregrounds the vital question (vital for music, too): Who speaks?⁷⁶ Although she hardly refers to Foucault, Silverman's argument is congruent with his. Subject-positions and identifications, associated with characters or with the operations of the camera, are constructed in the film discourse, and, if sufficiently coherent, produce an "author-inside-the-text," which then projects for us the sense of a (nonbiographical) "author-outside-the-text." But Silverman goes further. To the extent that this relationship

represents a play of “authorial identification” and “authorial desire,” indeed a “*mise-en-scène* of [authorial] desire,” its manifestation in the filmic text will reveal a split subjectivity — a “text inside the author” structured around a particular fantasy scenario.⁷⁷ It is not difficult to see how this approach could be transferred to analysis of songs, where authorship often refers to the playing out of an (individually or collectively owned) fantasy scene. While Silverman declares that she does not want to bracket the biographical author altogether, her author-outside-the-text is a textual projection, and she barely looks beyond it — only, in fact, to touch on the implications for gender position when the gender of the biographical author and that of the author-outside-the-text differ. But the biographical author, albeit always discursively mediated, does exist — under the unifying function of a name — and exists too in other places than the film (or musical) text. Perhaps our sense of her solidity depends upon a sort of cross-checking between the fantasy-scenarios circulating in this intertext; and, as corollary, perhaps her own sense of reality depends upon what seems to support this structure. Something, again, is missing — something without which analytic movement cannot pause and authoriality risks shooting right past the demands of practice.⁷⁸

One way to explore this broader territory within which musicians, and others, author their utterances might be through the methods of ethnography — which, since the “reflexive turn” of the last twenty years apparent in both anthropological and historical branches of this discipline, has applied itself with some force to the problematic of subjectivity, notably the subject in its relations with the other, and both in relation to the practices of representation and writing. By “ethnography” I mean here not only ethnomusicologists’ recordings of their encounters, which have proliferated in this period, but also reports of analogous expeditions, literal and metaphorical, by popular music scholars, and by historical anthropologists (Philip Bohlman, Gary Tomlinson et al.) — and even by historical musicologists reconstructing past performance practices: all our attempts, in fact, to make sense of, to represent, to fashion a story — a *true* story — about what is foreign but must also become familiar — the music of others and our engagement with it. At this point in the argument, the various levels of the authenticity formation — structures of selfhood, interactions of participants, truth-claims of authorship, aesthetic or ethical values of musical objects and practices — tend to intersect in particularly complex ways. It is convenient to focus on Michelle Kisiuk’s brief but classic exposition of an ethnographic method appropriate to the post-reflexive moment: “(Un)Doing Fieldwork: Sharing Songs, Sharing Lives.”⁷⁹

Kisiuk rejects any pseudo-objectivity, but at the same time she knows very well that her subject — music cultures of the BaAka in central Africa — is not just “there for her.” (In her book-length study of the BaAka, *Seize*

the Dance, she is very careful to distance herself from previous stereotypes of so-called pygmy culture, and exoticizing exploitations of it.)⁸⁰ What is persuasive about her method is precisely her insistence on writing herself in: her determination to present the encounter as shared, a conversation, yet to acknowledge, even foreground, her own inescapable authoring role. In the impulse to share, in fact, she seems to put her very identity at risk: “Self-Other boundaries are blurred . . . our very being merges with the ‘field.’” But this self-conscious constructionism has a purpose. Ethnographers “create themselves,” as, in fieldwork, “the process of identity-making surges to the forefront of awareness”; and in a sense her aim is to define herself as she wants the BaAka to see her — in particular, to differentiate herself from tourists and missionaries. Here the intense difficulties in her project begin to emerge; they are, actually, the difficulties always associated with the Lacanian *Che vuoi?* — the “What do you want from me?” addressed to the Big Other — but further complicated by a doubling of the position addressed.⁸¹ She sides with the locals in their refusals to play along with stereotypes and in their essays in modernization; but she cannot avoid having an agenda of her own (one inextricably implicated in her relations with a different other — her readers). She too has a sense of what is real in BaAka culture, and ironically, to defend this, she has to risk her own authenticity, to *perform* the role she wants to represent her (for the BaAka; for her readers) in the encounter. Although she is aware of the history she brings with her, and of the history going to create BaAka culture as she finds it, the foregrounding of “experience” (“I tried to keep an open mind . . .,” she writes — perhaps as a tactic to help manage the difficulties of her two-sided position) effectively brackets this out. She knows, and she knows that we know, that she is (unavoidably) selective; but her criterion for selection — we should “ask ourselves whether an experience changed us in a way that significantly affected how we viewed, reacted to, or interpreted the ethnographic material” — pushes ethnography in the direction of *Bildungsroman*. In the end, BaAka music becomes, against her will as it were, “for her.” In the conjunction, Kisliuk and the BaAka, each term is in danger of becoming the mere ground for the other; something has gone missing, and it is in this unacknowledged absence that the images of authenticity — of experience, of representation, of belonging — spring up.⁸²

One term for the missing element might be *ideology*. The indispensable names of the game in play, as they are for Kisliuk, Taylor and, in a somewhat different register, Silverman, are exchange, encounter, intersubjectivity, dialogue — even if in many circumstances we would need to think in terms of Spice’s “groundless . . . conversation on the edge of the abyss,” with all the phantasmatic positions this might conjure up. Yet power is the lubricant for this game. Even in the scriptural texts of dialogics — the writings of

Bakhtin and his circle — the dialogic exchange, within the operation of signifying practices or of the structures of subjectivity, is commonly written in the language of ideological conflict. And the concept of authenticity, born in the same Enlightenment moment as that of ideology, lives within that world — the world of truth and falsehood, reality and illusion, and the struggles between them. This does not mean it is easy to stitch the assumptions of Bakhtinian dialogics into the dialectical framework within which the mainstream Hegelian-Marxist tradition of ideology theory developed — although Žižek’s rereading of Hegel does outline a “dialecticized dialogics” that puts this intriguing goal on the agenda. In this approach, negation, the antagonistic response to an initial proposition of the subject, “preserves all its disruptive power” but at the same time turns back on this propositional moment, revealing itself as its guarantee; “negativity as such has a positive function” and the “negation of the negation,” far from performing a sublation, turns out to be the prior (retroactive) condition of the subject’s only identity, namely his constitutive lack. “Contradiction which appears at first as an unresolved question is already in itself a solution”: an idea that could stand as a certain kind of definition of ideological work, as well as indicating the dialogical conditions of an experience of truth.⁸³

But we have moved too fast. Let us take a step back. If a dialogical stance is the starting point for any attempt to refigure authenticity for a world where foundational authority must be regarded as humanly constructed, then there are several versions available — including some, and not just Žižek’s, that factor in a role for ideology. The best-known is Jürgen Habermas’s model of “communicative reason”: “action oriented to reaching understanding” in which “the unforced force of the better argument” is counted on to bring interlocutors into alignment, always subject to “third-party” judgment of validity-claims (that is, ideology critique in the interests of “undistorted communication”).⁸⁴ Habermas derives his model from what he identifies as a counter-discourse within Enlightenment reason itself — thus he distances himself from the exclusionary tactics he associates with Foucault and Derrida — and indeed he can be criticized for a neo-Kantian return of universalism: “intersubjective understanding” exerts a “binding force,” setting up a “dialectic of betrayal and avenging force” that is ultimately indebted to a religious motif of faith — a “covenant” with truth.⁸⁵ At a distance from such universalism stands the unalloyed pragmatism of Richard Rorty, whose refusal to look beyond an interests-oriented account of truth, again pursued through intersubjective negotiation, links his politics with Taylor’s liberalism.⁸⁶ In both cases, however — Rorty and Habermas — one is struck by the sheer *reasonableness* of the approach — as if “authenticity” can just be neatly stitched back in to an unfortunately disrupted coffeehouse conversation. But if authenticity appears historically exactly in the moment when

the modern dialogics of Self and Other emerge, then to identify dialogue as the mechanism *on its own* that can save it is to take as input what was in the beginning an effect. Authenticity was born in shock. Its conjoining of ethical and aesthetic imperatives — law with pleasure, a “you should” with a “you want” — introjects a turbulence into the signifying dialogues forming the subject that goes along with the withdrawal of the Father (for God is dead). The resulting trauma is what requires to be brought to light.

We shall not get far without the concept of ideology. The difficulty, though, is that this concept has long since been moved beyond its earlier character of tying values to specific interests — typically, those of social classes — so that, especially since the poststructuralist turn, it is most often now conceived as pervading discourse in general.⁸⁷ According to Žižek, in his article “The Spectre of Ideology,” “We are within ideological space proper the moment this [any] content — ‘true’ or ‘false’ (if true, so much the better for the ideological effect) — is functional with regard to some relation of social domination (‘power,’ ‘exploitation’) in an inherently non-transparent way.”⁸⁸ But if “truth,” as Lacan puts it, “has the structure of a fiction,” what then marks out ideology as different? For Žižek, this is the wrong question. Indeed, the denial of a nonideological reality is the ultimate ideological move, the too-easy “it’s all ideology” acting as the verso of the vulgar-relativist “it’s all true (from its own point of view).” In Žižek’s words:

Although ideology is already at work in everything we experience as “reality,” we must none the less maintain the tension that keeps the *critique* of ideology alive . . . ideology is not all; it is possible to assume a place that enables us to maintain a distance from it, *but this place from which we can denounce ideology must remain empty, it cannot be occupied by any positively determined reality* — the moment we yield to this temptation, we are back in ideology.⁸⁹

We *can* after all, then, ground ideology, and hence truth also — but only in an absence, an impossibility. And how is this place to be specified? Žižek takes a fix on it through the dualities of inside and outside, spirit and body, one ideology over against another, ideology as external force (institutionalized in the Ideological State Apparatuses of Althusserian theory, for example) and ideology as internal spontaneity. This dialogics introduces a “reflective distance:” ideology is always “ideology of ideology,” and we can think perhaps of chains or triangulations of authenticities in this way, such that all binaries are always overrun (the case of Rudi Blesh comes to mind). But this is no comfortable conversation. Its issue is a ghostly presence, for which Žižek adopts Marx’s term, *specter*: an elusive pseudo-materiality that subverts the classic ontological opposition of reality and illusion. Specter, indeed, *supplements* what can be represented, covering for what is missing

from our symbolizations of reality. It is, then, “the pre-ideological kernel, the formal matrix, on which are grafted various ideological formations” — and the specter (e.g., of authenticity) stands for the return of just what cannot be represented. Žižek is of course drawing here on the Lacanian concept of the Real — defined as what always escapes from, is foreclosed by, the orders of the Symbolic (ruled by the signifier) and the Imaginary (where the identities of Self and Other are played out), which brings them along with itself into being in the very act of foreclosure. For Žižek, then, specter appears in the gap between reality and the Real; “the pre-ideological ‘kernel’ of ideology thus consists of the spectral apparition that fills up the hole of the Real.”⁹⁰

Why do we — we the subjects constituted in this ideological space — go along with this? Or rather, what is the nature of this “we” in relation to the mechanisms Žižek has described? Approaching from this direction, Žižek’s argument⁹¹ has a post-Althusserian cast, picking up the theory of interpellation from where the intervening phase dominated by Foucauldian and other poststructuralists had (too quickly) dropped it. But the question here is, why do we even respond to the interpellative hail, that hail on behalf of authority which, according to Althusser, encapsulates the mechanisms of ideological subjectivation? Why does the hailed individual *turn* — or better: what is it that turns? Žižek’s answer, in effect, is that in the turn — in that “Who? Me?” — there is already *desire*: “the externality of the symbolic machine . . . is . . . not simply external . . . When we subject ourselves to the machine, . . . we already believe *unconsciously* because . . . [the machine] exercises its force only in so far as it is experienced, in the unconscious economy of the subject, as a traumatic, senseless injunction . . . a residue, a leftover”: a “dead letter.”⁹² We turn because we *want* to, and this desire — Pascal’s “belief before belief” — is what marks the subject, not as “what makes ideology work . . . [but as what] emerges where ideology fails”⁹³ — an empty space, a meaningless kernel, a rock of the Real around which (ideologically structured) reality is built. This object is of course an *objet petit a*, what Žižek terms a “sublime object,” what Lacan calls — to distinguish it from ideological symptoms — *sinthome*: the subject’s “only substance,” “a certain signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a bearer of *jouis-sense*, enjoyment-in-sense.”⁹⁴ If this belief is a “bad faith,” it is not because of “betrayal” — at this level nothing substantive has yet been established that could be betrayed — but because it gives way on “freedom:”⁹⁵ yet it is all we have (our “only substance”).

This object at the heart of the subject marks the subject’s constitutive alienation, its thing-ness, whose symbolic impossibility (or “hole”) supplies the very condition of the subject’s consistency (or whole). Žižek thinks this impossibility in terms of *antagonism*, a concept certainly important to Lacan but which Žižek takes in more politically developed form from Laclau and Mouffe, for whom, as Žižek points out, “Society does not exist” (any more than

“Woman” does, or “The Sexual Relationship” — or, for that matter, “Popular Music”).⁹⁶ For Laclau and Mouffe, the protagonists in a social antagonism overlap and interpenetrate each other, each constituting the other’s condition but also the impossibility of its completion:

antagonism constitutes the limits of every objectivity, which is revealed as partial and precarious *objectification*. If language is a system of differences, antagonism is the failure of difference: in that sense, it situates itself within the limits of language and can only exist as the disruption of it — that is, as metaphor... [Thus] antagonism, as a witness of the impossibility of a final suture, is the ‘experience’ of the limit of the social.⁹⁷

In other words, the totality, the absolute, which, by definition, our socially constructed symbolizations can never encompass, is necessarily riven by social antagonisms (e.g., class struggle), the representation of which is always already distorted (“objectified”), even as the protagonists concerned lay claim to the whole symbolic terrain — to the totality, as it were. What is necessarily excluded, “the ‘repressed’ real of antagonism,”⁹⁸ to use Žižek’s phrase, can never emerge because it would mean the mutual canceling of incompatible visions — one authenticity and another, working-class and bourgeois, self and other — whose thoroughly ideological self-presentation as *polarities* inserts a third term, a neutral context — truth, God, social harmony — to ground them. It is in the traumatic gap between these “realities” and the repressed Real that the apparitions of authenticity — “real music,” “honest expression,” “people’s culture,” “truthful performance,” etc. — emerge: spectral fetishes, fetishized specters that are the subject of our worship and our haunting — not true but not false either. We can begin to glimpse what is missing from Kisiuk, Taylor, and Silverman: just that antagonism — that cut between what is and what can be conceived — whose exclusion makes possible the appearance of an ordered symbolic whole, social reality as such, throwing up in the process the specters associated with the authenticity trope: truth to self, representations of the other, a quasi-universalistic human sympathy, and so on.

Both subject and other are holed, that is, are constituted around an exclusion; indeed, these holes are mutually constitutive: this is the meaning of the Lacanian concept of extimacy. It is at this level, where the void at the heart of the subject provides the support for the symbolic realities which structure it, that the circuits of ideology and those of *jouissance* meet up — meet up in those webs of *jouis-sense* we call fantasy. (Lacan’s formula for fantasy is $S \diamond a$: the barred subject in relation to its *objet a*; and I take the Žižekian specters to be particular, socially referenced figures of fantasy.) As Žižek puts it: “The subject (of the signifier) and the (fantasy-)object are correlative or even

identical: the subject is the void, the hole in the Other, and the object the inert content filling up this void; the subject's entire 'being' thus consists in the fantasy-object filling out his void." Such fantasy-objects make ideology not only operative but desirable. Fantasy covers over what ideology cannot admit to; it "is a means for an ideology to take its own failure into account in advance." At this level — the level "beyond interpellation" — "we find only drive, its pulsation around the *sinthome*. 'Going-through-the-fantasy' is therefore strictly correlative to identification with a *sinthome*."⁹⁹

Here we might pause to think further about the concept of fantasy. John Mowitt has made the important point, in relation to both mechanisms of fantasy and those of interpellation, that Freud and Lacan (in the first case) and Althusser (in the second) over-emphasize the role of vision at the expense of sound. For Althusser (following Lacan's theory of the mirror-phase), subjectivation takes place in the field of specularity, while for Lacan (following Freud), fantasy has a "freeze-frame" form designed to protect the subject from the sounds of memory (i.e., from trauma). Mowitt wants to reinstate the aural dimension of the interpellative hail in order to construe subjectivation as a "discontinuous space" at the level of the sensorium; and to stress how, within the visual stasis of fantasy, "sound breaks in on the hearer," enabling us to "see how the theatrical character of fantasy . . . is also decisively mediated by hearing." Drawing on Laplanche and Pontalis's rereading of Freud's theory of fantasy, Mowitt points to the temporal ambivalence of the relationship between fantasy and reality: in effect, fantasy is the origin of what it installs, in so-called reality, as its own origin (just as, we might add, the Symbolic as such is the origin of what it installs as its own foundation, the Real). Fantasy is "originary," and "originary fantasy is thus indexed to the psychological process through which the subject 'stages' the history of its own formation." Moreover, "if a temporal delay structures the relation between reality and fantasy, then this delay is in some sense part of our experience of both reality and fantasy . . . This means that, in what makes reality seem original to us [we might say, what makes it seem *authentic*], fantasy is at work."¹⁰⁰

Curiously, Mowitt does not link his account of temporality with his theory of the interpellative sensorium, even though the vocal stream carrying the hail, unlike the visual self-image to which it gives rise, is inescapably temporally organized. By the time of the "You!," we might say, the "Hey!" has already installed itself as the originary source of interpellative acquiescence, the vocal surplus — the voice as object, or that which escapes the sense of the signifier — correlating precisely with the subject's *sinthome*, that which makes the identification stick, sustains the phantasmatic investment, hence makes reality real. Moreover, the temporal ambivalence *within* the acoustic signifier — both in terms of the structure of the signifier itself, where oscillation between repetition on the one hand and movement forward and back on the other is

built in, and in terms of the structure of subjective identification, where the feedback loops and relay mechanisms characteristic of the acoustic mirror distinguish it from its visual equivalent — remind us of Kaja Silverman's crucial point: that the symbolic work performed by voice goes all the way down through the developmental phases of the subject, with a particularly important focus on the (originary? phallic?) role of the mother.¹⁰¹ As part of this complex work, it is (perhaps) object voice — the meaningless stratum of the interpellative “Hey,” first constituted in the maternal babble — which deposits *sinthome* in the heart of the subject. If sound, then, is what on this “primordial” level goes to constitute the real-impossible kernel of ideology, then the key exemplar of this mechanism would be the *fort-da*, understood as a model of senseless (self-) interpellation; here ideology is constituted, authorized, and enjoyed in the very pulsations of the subject itself, in the movements of repetition and (self-) representation — and in the constitutive delays of fantasy and truth. Is this trajectory where we should look to find the passages of the *sinthome*? And, in thinking through the role of fantasy, should we reserve a special importance to the intersection of voice and gaze, as Žižek himself suggests?

Bearing these suggestions and questions in mind, let us return to the general account of ideology but with a more methodological cast of mind. How would we carry on, now, the practice of ideology critique?¹⁰² Žižek himself has helpfully outlined a procedure:¹⁰³

1. “The first task . . . is . . . to isolate, in a given ideological field, the particular struggle [it is useful to gloss this as antagonism] which at the same time determines the horizon of its totality.”
2. The second task is to locate the field's *point de capiton* (Lacan's “quilt-ing-point”) — an “empty” yet richly performative master-signifier that ties the field together: “The crucial step . . . is thus to detect, behind the dazzling splendour of the element which holds it together (‘God,’ ‘Country,’ ‘Party,’ ‘Class’ . . .) this self-referential, tautological, performative operation.”
3. The third task is to unveil the interplay, set in motion by the ideological performance, between ideal ego and ego-ideal, imaginary and symbolic identification, subjective lack, acting as cause of desire, and lack in the Other, articulated in the *Che vuoi?*, which together provide the setting for fantasy. (We should add to Žižek's discussion that the interplay of voice and gaze, as objects/routes of identity/identification, should feature here.)
4. The fourth and last (?) task — bearing in mind that “‘Beyond interpellation’ is the square of desire, fantasy, lack in the Other and drive pulsating around some unbearable surplus-enjoyment” — is to uncover

this “non-sensical, pre-ideological kernel of enjoyment . . . structured in fantasy,” to “detect, in a given ideological edifice, the element within it which represents its own impossibility,” that is, “what is excluded from the Symbolic . . . [and which] returns in the Real.” This is to “traverse the fantasy” and identify with the *sinthome*.¹⁰⁴

How might this procedure work in relation to, say, the Spice Girls’ “Wanna-be”? The determining struggle is presumably a gender struggle, but one specific to young women in an allegedly postfeminist consumer society, a relationship metonymically condensed to the ambitions of young, female pop performers in a male-dominated, mass-market music industry. The *point de capiton* is, most obviously, “girl power,” encapsulated musically in the chorus hook, “If you wanna be . . .” which fades the record out, and which — both in terms of its rather inchoate message of want and its musical materialization — disseminates its power throughout the song: the continuity of the underlying groove, the multiple repetitions of this particular musical idea, the links between the two fundamental musical modes in the song, the articulation of the individual voices into a collective position — all combine to perform out the quilting function. Relatively empty in themselves, these signifiers, tautologically repeated, demonstrate how the self-referential quality common in music as such can be put to particularly powerful ideological use.

The articulations of formal units, of voices and of stylistic references already suggest how structures of identification are animated. A theatrical scene peopled by “I,” “you,” “lovers,” “friends,” “giving and taking,” is activated through the interplay of these musical positions, and given corporeal form — both desired (from here) and envisaged (from there) — in the injunctions to “slam down,” “wind around,” and “zig-a-zig” the body. Needless to say, the fantasy put in play takes variable shape, depending on listener position, a variability only enhanced when structures of video or film gazes intersect with the network of voice positions. (But this intersection is there even when just listening to the record, to the extent that a simulacrum of performance is built in to the listening experience implied by the form of the recording.)

At this point in the analysis, we would certainly be permitted to associate this “ideological edifice” with a certain authenticity — what is really, really wanted, what we “gotta” do, insisted upon to the point where its reality seems close enough to inhabit. We could even (with Elizabeth Leach) identify a knowing traverse of authenticity-markers, although this would not significantly affect the ideological analysis because, as Žižek points out, cynicism here simply rewrites Marx’s “They do not know it, but they are doing it” with a “They know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it.”¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the latter eventuality reveals all the more clearly that the authenticity here can only be *spectral*: even if its untruth is acknowledged, we still want

it, and we want it all the more because this phantasmatic version is all we have — what has been excluded from symbolization (genuine gender revolution) by the antagonistic structure that depends on its denial (marked by the commodification of feminism) “returns in the Real.” For the power invoked, and given voice in the intoxicating drive [*sic*] of the music, bodies forth a nonsensical *jouissance* without which, “unbearable” though it is, the edifice of sense would crumble. It is an enjoyment with distinct sado-masochistic elements, the power of the Thatcherite whip re-enacted *après la lettre* (a “dead letter” indeed), the Spice Girls playing out as (lucrative) comedy the tragedy of the first time.

What next? If we have now outlined a way of “going through” the fantasy implicated in this particular signifying formation and identifying with its *sinthome*, is the job done? Žižek’s approach successfully rehabilitates the critique of ideology for a non-foundational world and is good at accounting for ideological pleasures, but it is open to the criticism that, just as traversing the fantasy marks for Lacan the limit stage of the transference — we can only identify with, and hence repeat the *sinthome*, not dissolve it — so it is for Žižek at the level of politics. The fundamental antagonism can at best be managed, not escaped, because “all culture is in a way a reaction-formation, an attempt to limit, canalize — to *cultivate* this imbalance, this traumatic kernel, this radical antagonism through which man cuts his umbilical cord with nature, with animal homeostasis.”¹⁰⁶ Does identifying with the *sinthome* not reconcile us with untruth? How, then, might social change come about? How, to be more specific, might the people’s interests be pursued?

If the object at the heart of the subject — the meaningless bit of the Real underpinning reality — is impossible to symbolize, its content by definition un-representable, then it would appear to be out of the question to shift its position, let alone rearticulate it. Yet it is part of the Enlightenment legacy — that legacy claimed by Lacan and Žižek themselves (not to mention Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche) — that what is forbidden should be taken as what is to be unveiled (even if we know that we shall never fully succeed). The *sinthome*, we are told, is (the meaningless) part of a signifying formation, and comes “afterwards,” as an originary effect. If, then, the sense of the signifiers shifts as a result of rearticulative work, so too surely, in some indefinable way, will the *sinthome*. This will be all the more the case if we take seriously the idea that the symbolic work of subjectivity *goes all the way down*, so that *sinthome* and symptom, Real and Symbolic, are always already articulated together. Identifying with the *sinthome* might then have the effect of releasing its potential meaning (yet another in the line of interpretations of Freud’s “*Wo es war, soll ich werden*,” which I am reading here to indicate where the subject of the Symbolic must go — into the place occupied by the impossible Thing). This move will, of course, displace or re-articulate the underlying

antagonism rather than abolishing it, but also *enables history* — a history conceived, moreover, as the proper territory of the fully constituted subject of both meaning and desire.

In other words: the concept of the *sinthome* must be radically secularized, socialized, and grasped historically if it is not to become a fetish.¹⁰⁷ To the extent that we can see it as social substance — and the argument that the unconscious is socially constituted, in a field of *extimité*, implies that we must — we should think, perhaps, of *sinthomaticity*: a function of collective subjectivities. Moreover, such a socialized field of sinthomaticity would also certainly be itself split, divided against itself as a manifestation of social antagonism, and hence susceptible to the labors of political struggle. This process of division, producing ever-new remainders, relates in one direction to the deep-rooted symbiotic struggle between *sinthome* and Symbolic, and in another (for the struggle is life or death) to the dialogics of the drives, pulsing forever between, precisely, Life and Death. Lacan himself can be read as hinting in this direction, for at the topmost level of the graph of desire, “beyond interpellation,” where the sphere of meaning is intersected by the forces of enjoyment, we find the functions of *jouissance* on the one side, castration on the other. Incarnated pleasure, evacuated by the cut of the Symbolic (the body dismembered) survives in pockets, as *sinthome*, in relation to drive on the one hand (including the scopic and invocatory drives), lack in the Big Other (correlating to the subject’s own constitutive lack) on the other. To put this another way, the Lacanian bar — as figured in the symbolic phallus, marker of the castration metaphor — can itself (contrary to many readings) be barred, its remainder *sinthomatised*; or (a different way again) it can be construed as a movable point: *fort/da* goes all the way down (senseless repetition intersects with representational meaning as far down as one can see). It is just this mobility and permeability of the bar that makes politics possible.

The historicity of *sinthome* in “Wannabe” already started to come into view — indeed (perhaps indicatively), forced itself on our attention. If, by definition, we can only speak here in hint and metaphor, it seems clear nonetheless that the pleasures of power that are at stake are specified, first, in relation to the powers that were available to girls and to others identifying, and identifying with, them in this society at this time, and, second, in relation to an intersection between this sphere of collective girlhood and a more individualized, fetishistic power associated with the contemporary sphere of stardom. The exchanges insistently played out between the girls may invoke fantasies of both sisterhood and of the “lesbian scene” — fantasies that, needless to say, will be variably occupied depending on gender and sexual position — but sinthomaticity here is irrevocably riven by an undecideability of *jouissance*, revolving around the alternative pleasures of

having and being: lesbian phallus, or oedipal exchange of women? For Brennan, an important aspect of “the ego’s era” is the gradual decline of traditional patriarchal social forms, a transition to a more “liberal” social system, and a consequent transfer of authority from external god-figures to the male self, in effect displacing the social contract to one between brothers (who then take out their increasing insecurities on an all-the-more stereotyped category of Woman).¹⁰⁸ If this is true, it casts the pleasures of sisterhood, as these have been posited and claimed more recently, in a light both fraught (politically) and specific (historically) (remember *Showboat!*).

But in reckoning with this master/slave split in the “Wannabe” *sinthome* (having, being, being had . . .), we need to factor in the effects of other collective fantasies as well. Racial difference, smoothed into a faint blackface oscillation in the musical material with a visual focus on the minority black presence (Mel B); class hierarchy, articulated in a space bounded by middle-class (“Posh Spice”) Victoria on the one hand, working-class Mel C on the other, and similarly smoothed into a celebration of individuality as togetherness: these disavowals show just enough of a repressed Real to titillate while marking the effects of underlying social antagonisms the suppression of which is the enabling condition for the pleasures — celebrating collectivity and celebrity in apparent contradiction — of the song. To add that the principle of *exchange* links the musico-ideological level of the record to the political economy within which it was disseminated — the Spice Girls, the individual girls, girl power, and the record itself all commodified and subjected to the laws of exchange-value — is to amplify the point that *sinthomaticity* here is contoured in a way specific to its moment: vocal life, frozen by the mortifying gaze of money, turns the trick of a particular pleasure — equivalence enjoyed as apparent difference.

At this level — the pleasures of exchange in consumption, given their own symbolic representations in the forms of sales charts — *sinthomaticity* is systemic, anchored to a particular phase of capitalism. If we return to the John Lennon songs discussed earlier, “God” and “Working Class Hero,” the analysis on many levels will of course be different from that of “Wannabe.” The formation of the *sinthome* here is transected by figures of external authority (religious and political, from Jesus to the working class), and their sadistic destruction turns the focus of the fantasy inwards to a narcissistic imaginary, abjected in the one song, reconstituted by quasi-maternal embrace in the other. (To hear “God” after “Working Class Hero” is to hear suicide followed by rebirth, a trajectory completed in “Imagine,” where — so the images circulating around the song suggest — the world is saved, the people’s peace secured, by John, Yoko, and a white grand piano.) But the antagonism underlying the “impossible” overlay of social fantasy and solipsistic cocoon points towards a confusion of collective and individual investments similar to

that in the Spice Girls' anthem — even if the heroism of celebrity is apparently rejected in “Working Class Hero.” The list, in “God,” of disavowed but mutually substitutable authorities; the reduction of workers, in “Working Class Hero,” to a homogenous mass of “fucking peasants”; the traverse of difference, in “Imagine,” to produce a singular “all the people,” living “as one”: these provide the setting for the endless circulation of the musical commodities themselves, which offers exchange as and of fetish as a Real underlying the reality Lennon's patent sincerity constructs. “The dream is over,” he sings; to the contrary, it had simply mutated, its authenticity relocated — and its Real foundation (the “dream within the dream”)¹⁰⁹ had changed also, just enough and no more, and come along with it.

It might seem that this analysis has the effect of reconstructing a dichotomous formation — ideology/commodity equating to Symbolic/Real (or even, heaven help us, superstructure and base). Not so. Žižek develops his theory of *sinthome* on the basis of Lacan's claim that it was Marx (rather than Freud) who invented the idea of symptom, and he derives his figure of the specter from Marx's theory of the commodity-fetish, which of course also confounds the false (that is, real) abstractions of exchange with the nonetheless real (i.e., spectral) presence of the consumer good. We can add another twist to the approach if we remind ourselves that this is not just an analytic model but also as an historically specific condition; for authenticity arose *on the back of* commodity-fetishism: the two figures are codependent, each the under- or over-side of the other. These specters are *Doppelgänger* — and the authenticity claims of musical commodities, such as Lennon's album, gleam through a dense and ghostly mist.

Žižek's argument, we recall, is that the system of commodity exchange is a “real abstraction,” that is, a framework whose social efficacy — for we act as if we believe in the material reality of money even if we know this to be “nonsensical” — belies its abstraction, all the more so because it is covered over by the fetishistic appeal of the commodity itself. This “sublime object” installs itself, within the conditions of this social regime, in the foundations of the subject: it is, indeed, *sinthome* — a “form of thought whose ontological status is not that of thought, that is to say, [it is] the form of thought external to the thought itself,” a form that in effect announces to the subject, “there, in the external effectivity of the exchange process, is your proper place; there is the theatre in which your truth was performed before you took cognizance of it.”¹¹⁰ Within this theater, where inside and outside interpenetrate each other, symptoms marking both the contours and the limits of particular ideological formations — their constitutive imperfections vis-à-vis the abstract universality implied in the principle of exchange — correlate, at the level of subjectivity, to those marking the illusory value of commodities, at the level of the object. Covering these fissures, we can then say, the specters

or fantasies of truth, value, origin — of, let us say it, *authenticity* — match up to the fetish-power in consumption, each the verso of the other in a socio-ideological figure of *genuine coinage*.

Žižek pushes his argument further, pointing out that the principle of exchange penetrates not only relations between things but also those between human beings. Just as the value of a commodity depends on its exchange-relationship with another, so it is with human subjects: “only by being reflected in another man [*sic*] . . . can the ego arrive at its self-identity; identity and alienation are thus strictly correlative”¹¹¹ — the formula of the Lacanian mirror stage. Extrapolating from Žižek’s extension of this argument to the master-slave dialectic, we can readily see how not only women but also racial subalterns (slaves and their blackface descendants) and workers (differentiated labor-power reduced to substitutable exchanges of labor-time) are subjected to this mechanism of equivalence. For Žižek, under capitalism (as compared to feudalism) fetishism is displaced from social relationships to the sphere of commodities; human subjects are defined (if only nominally, we might add) as just as “free and equal” as the factors in market production (and indeed, this is precisely the context for the advent of a new type of “autonomous” subject). Yet it would surely be truer to say that, with the increasing alienation (or “thingness”) of subjectivity in this period, fetishism is also displaced into the interior of the subject, where fraught relationships with its others (of gender, sexuality, race, class, etc.) stake out ground on which the master-slave dialectic is reconstituted. The dependence of these imaginary others for their representation on the objectification of real (if misrecognized) social actors marks the way in which modernity itself in its capitalist articulations performs out its founding antagonism — which is why its most revealing symbolic mode is that of the mask, across the range of techniques of masquerade, mimicry, and blackface. The space created here is where the regime of representation and that of exchange (across symbolic and political-economic registers, in both cases) meet up: the subject’s authenticity is guaranteed — so long as the credit is good — by its (self- and other-) representations and their exchangeability; in the dream-world of capitalism, the repetitive *vorstellen* (*fort/da*) of *Repräsentanzen* (present, absent, spectral) sets the stage. This is also, we might hazard, where social substance bodies forth the *sinthome* — where it is, precisely, fleshed out, contouring our objects (of desire, identity, meaning) in historically specific ways.

If this locates the apparatus of ideology (correctly) as specific to a particular historical phase — at least “ideology” in this understanding of the term — then it does the same for sinthomaticity.¹¹² Returning now to our methodological agenda for ideology critique — asking again how this might offer ways of exploiting openings revealed in the previous song-analyses for productive political effect — we can see the need to proceed on two, inter-

linked levels. The techniques are there to de- and re-articulate what Laclau and Mouffe call “moments” of discourse, or “relations of representation”:

every relation of representation [even the most “authentic”] is founded on a fiction: that of the presence at a certain level of something which, strictly speaking, is absent from it. But because it is *at the same time* a fiction and a principle organising actual social relations, representation is the terrain of a game whose result is not predetermined from the beginning.¹¹³

Reararticulation can thus, potentially, have political as well as symbolic effects — perhaps through un-pinning the *points de capiton*, releasing the differences of the signifiers (including constitutive absences) and reknitting them in new points of equivalence; not, however, an equivalence of exchange and substitution but one of “slack” overdetermination (what a reararticulated Deleuze might be persuaded to categorize as repetition of difference as against repetition of the same; or what a Butler might think of in terms of subversive mutation of the performative mime). But the critique will fall short, politically, if we do not at the same time *stand in the place of the sinthome*; that is, identify with the fantasy-object filling out the foundational void of the formation, enjoy (however guiltily) its pleasures (however dirty), and sense/make sense of the *jouis-sense*. If this puts “integrity” at risk, the transaction takes place, on all sides, *in history*; overflow thus has practical limits, and in any case simply acknowledges the critic’s own dependent lack. It is hard to see that to articulate figures of the people musically can today have any other starting point.

This argument may have something to say to the problematic of what Donna Haraway (among others) has called “situated knowledge.” Because “only partial perspective promises objective vision,”¹¹⁴ the concept of situated knowledge is a *sine qua non* for any epistemological regime that takes seriously the essential fraudulence of any fixed Name-of-the-Father. Haraway’s stress on the need for contestational connectivity between different points of view, in full awareness of their technological mediations, is not too far from a politics of articulation, as formulated by Laclau and Mouffe (though it needs to be supplemented with a broader theory of mediality: ear as well as eye). It is difficult to see, though, that situational analysis can cope with the full trickery of ideology and its base of antagonism without building in Žižek’s impossible “empty place” of ideology critique. But what is this place, one might ask, if not that which is always already reserved for *sinthome*? To occupy this place — or rather, to assume it, in a move that is also necessarily a refusal — is to “sinthomatise” it: which is to say, to engage its void in a structure of desire, to wrestle, not with the angel, but with the god-like *saint-homme* (who is also doubting Saint Thom, as well as cyborgian synth-man).¹¹⁵ What is at issue is objectivity itself. Haraway argues that “embodiment is significant

prosthesis; objectivity cannot be about fixed vision when what counts as an object is precisely what world history turns out to be about.”¹¹⁶ Her vision offers a world of objects reanimated by human modesty (a reanimation engineered, we might think, by that “re-tooling [of] the mimetic faculty” through technological innovation of which Michael Taussig writes).¹¹⁷ If the era of the *sinthome* is the era of the death of God — or rather, the era when God moved progressively inside — then its climactic moment might well lie in the current emergent political phase of “Empire,” where the gathering of every element into relationship with a de facto systemic whole marks the point at which, on the one hand, a constitutive territorial exterior of the type that has legitimized all previous social ideologies disappears (or rather, is forced to move into the *interior* of the body politic), and, on the other hand, the *sinthome* is divided against itself. Just as the existence of matter, it seems, depends on assuming an invisible anti-matter, so the price of identification with the impossible-real object, in an apparently single social universe, may be acceptance of a permanently mutating anti-*sinthome*. Somewhere in this murky territory lies the remake of nature that so many recent writers, from Benjamin down to Haraway, Taussig, and Brennan, have sensed — a remake that, in its dethroning of the imperial subject, reveals that (as Bruno Latour has it) we were never really modern anyway.¹¹⁸

At this point I find myself in a dilemma. This book has centered its arguments on musical materials drawn from the period of Western late modernity, with a particular focus on its Anglo-American popular-music dominant. To pursue these arguments into the phase of “Empire” demands a shift into the framework of “world music”: not just the commercial category but the entire late-twentieth/early twenty-first century context marked out as the territory of popular musics of the whole world. This is beyond my scope. Might it be possible, though, to outline some of the questions that would need to be asked, and to relate them to a specific world music product — say, the unexpectedly successful 1997 album of old-time Cuban *son*, *Buena Vista Social Club*?¹¹⁹

If we were to look for a symptom of Empire, located in the interstices of its plural formations, it would be hard to find a more resonant example: a music originating (in style, in much of the repertoire) from the old Cuba (a lost territory, from before the Revolution); recorded towards the fag-end (?) of Castro’s reign, under conditions of U.S. blockade (including the baleful glare of a militantly right-wing exile community a few miles across the water in Florida); but recorded through the intervention of celebrated American roots musician and “animator of world music,”¹²⁰ Ry Cooder; and shot to success through the imperial mechanisms of the global music system (first world record label, Grammy award, sell-out concerts around the world, Wim Wenders’s documentary film, etc.).¹²¹ In a sense the music is pre- and

post-Cold War at the same time, but also — stemming from Cuba — comes from its aging heart, marking a place that stands as one of the few remaining “blots” troubling the otherwise triumphant neoliberal world system. Yet the elderly musicians who were catapulted to fame owed this to the circuits of that very system, and on that level the *Buena Vista* brand — manifested in nostalgic visual images and musical grooves that circulated, so it seemed at one time, around every bourgeois living-room, every trendy café and bar, in the world — functioned like any other. For this audience, the appeal of the music — like that of early blues, hillbilly, and New Orleans jazz — related, it seems, to its prelapsarian innocence, an authenticity lost to the musical mainstream. But by the 1990s such credibility drained out of the product much more quickly, and these listeners knew all along, one suspects, that this was an authenticity that could only work as dream — a point mirrored, from the other side, by the ambivalent reception of the phenomenon in Cuba itself, where, certainly for many of the youth, tastes ran more to styles influenced by contemporary dance music and rap, often conjoined emotionally with revolutionary weariness and a pent-up desire for consumer goods which, for them, could only be misrepresented by the *Buena Vista* success.¹²²

Within this context, the ideological field and the particular struggles marking its contours are extraordinarily multi-leveled. But the *point(s) de capiton* is/are situated in, or cluster around, some notion of a “real popular” — the people as reality, or an authentic reality that is here represented in a popular music form. Many references in the songs are to a certain peasant imaginary rooted in early twentieth-century Cuban society (including religious allusions from the cult of *Santería*).¹²³ But the racial divisions and hybridities in this society — glancingly signaled in the term Afro-Cuban — without which the music is inconceivable, are smoothly covered over; and the patriarchal gender positions go without question. Multiple alterities (of race, of class) are, arguably, assimilated within a latin-masculinist dominant. The exclusions driving both left- and right-wing appropriations (and negations), from positions outside the Cuban theatre itself, are no less clear, if different. And the even starker “repressed Real” going to found predominant modes of “world music” reception may be read easily enough in, for instance, Ry Cooder’s quasi-anthropological claim that this music was “nurtured” in “an atmosphere sealed off from the fall out of a hyper-organized and noisy world” (this despite the clear influences from American jazz); or in the suggestion by a Miami film festival director that “The [Wenders] film succeeds because music transcends politics” (a claim always identifiable as the most political of all).¹²⁴ The dialogues of identification set up by this multi-leveled discourse are complex and variable indeed (many are delineated in the intersections of voice and gaze, bridging worlds, that are caught in Wenders’s movie).¹²⁵

Given this, sinthomaticity here can only be equally heterogeneous. My

own enjoyment of the music (which is intense) relates, I suspect (but what do I know?), to a fantasy of social interaction that seems to underlay the grace and dialogic interplay running through the vocal/instrumental ensembles; and this in turn seems rooted in a “natural” submission of subjectivity to an automatism of the body, for, as Cooder puts it (yes, I am susceptible too), “the music flows like a river. It takes care of you and rebuilds you from the inside out.” But, while there is (I hope) something in this spectral memory that, with appropriate articulative work, is not necessarily dead to a future politics, it is certainly dependent on crippling exclusions (marked by the gender and sexuality strai[gh]tjacket, for instance). Moreover, this sinthomatic trajectory is inescapable competition with other structures of desire founded on their own exclusions (bracketing, for example, any socialist potential, or racial antagonism). Sinthomatic struggle here is irreducible — and in a world of Empire this is what we would expect: “When we see [or hear] it [the album], we feel heart-stopping nostalgia for something *we did not realize we had been missing*. That something is Cuba” (my italics) — but Cuba as spectral *Vorstellung* of a *Repräsentanz* that was always already inside, already conflicted, an *infection* within the body of the global imaginary.¹²⁶

Where, then, with “the people”? The authenticity of *Buena Vista*, and of the other music discussed in this chapter, is through-and-through *historical*. It is “the real thing” precisely to the extent that, in the particular case, a sound-signifying-formation is constructed with sufficient skill, integrity, and engagement to constitute itself as a popular object-cause of desire capable of supporting a convincing fiction, the result carrying its listeners along in a direction that is, in the broadest sense, politically productive. This does not abolish antagonism, nor therefore the struggle between musics. Nor does it render the music’s truth-effects anything other than intrinsically contingent (for the status of whatever we can imagine them to be true to is necessarily floating, while that of even the meaningless stuff embodying their sinthomatic foundations is historically situated); contingent but not disabled, either on the level of performativity (where power, persuasiveness, subversiveness are at issue) or on the level of critique (where articulation, re-connection, re-identification are the names of the game). Somewhere along this trajectory, at an (impossible) point in the future, we may imagine a *buena vista* to end all others; for this is where the specter of authenticity (decommodified, defetishized) is leading us. The view from there would be truly “social”; for, with society demystified (we would *know* that “it” does not exist), “clubbing” (by class, gender, race, whatever) would lose all association with violence, real or symbolic — in short, with enforced hierarchy — turning instead towards a radically self-inventing democracy which we might tentatively characterize as a state of freedom.¹²⁷ At that (utopian) moment, the people will dissolve itself, its need for collective voice superseded. But not yet.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. The slogan was prominent in the procession to the great Chartist meeting on Kennington Common, London, in April 1848: “The body of the car [a horse-drawn cart carrying the Chartist leaders] was inscribed on the right side with the motto, ‘The Charter. No surrender. Liberty is worth living for and worth dying for;’ on the left, ‘The voice of the people is the voice of God;’ while on the back of the car was inscribed, ‘Who would be a slave that could be free?’ ‘Onward, we conquer; backward, we fall’” (*Illustrated London News*, April 14, 1848).
2. Lacan’s trope will be discussed in more detail later. It points toward the metaphorical status of patriarchal authority-claims typically vested, in their originary mythic forms, in divine figures.
3. The song text given here in full comes from Ernest Jones, *Songs of Democracy*, published in *The People’s Paper*, “the organ of the working classes” (London: John Lowry, 1856–57). As for the music, version 2 is taken from a song sheet, “The Song of the ‘Lower’ Classes” (London: John Lowry, n.d. [1856]), while version 1 is from a pamphlet published by the Workers Music Association (WMA; n.d.) and reproduced in János Maróthy, *Music and the Bourgeois, Music and the Proletarian* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1974), 475. The pamphlet cannot date from before 1936, the year the WMA was formed. However, the metamorphosis of the tune that it documents (discussed below) may reflect a process which had been going on for some time.
4. See Maróthy, *Music of the Bourgeois* (cf p. 288 n. 213), 1974, 474–75 and passim. In a lecture from 1867 (the time of the second Reform Act), Jones, writing about the fusty building that was the British constitution, declares that “public opinion, like a clear breeze, shall come pouring through its halls with the breath of heaven, the people’s voice, which is the voice of God” (quoted in Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones, Chartism, and the Romance of Politics 1819–1869* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 237). Was Jones, who was involved in, and indeed arrested at, the Kennington meeting, recalling it some twenty years later? The slogan, “The people’s voice is the voice of God,” was deeply embedded in nineteenth-century radical discourse. A title search of the British Library catalog, with the keywords *voice*, *people*, and *God*, brings up some twenty publications issued between the 1830s and the 1880s. *The Voice of the People* was a trade union newspaper of the 1830s (and similarly *Die Stimme des Volks* was a German communist paper of the same period, referred to by Marx). At the same time, ownership of the phrase was contested: Gladstone liked to think of himself as the voice of the people, and that people as the voice of God (see Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848–1914* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 50]). And the idea was older: the Kintilloch Weavers Reform banner, from 1832, is inscribed “The Voice of the people is the supreme” — as in the Supreme Being of eighteenth-century Deism, and of Robespierre’s revolutionary civic religion? See Nick Mansfield, “Why Are There

No Chartist Banners? — The ‘Missing Link’ in 19th Century Banners,” *Journal of the Social History Curators Group* 25 (2000): 35–44, 40.

The phrase itself was also far older, familiar in debates about political and religious freedom in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and even before — especially in its Latin version, “Vox populi, vox Dei.” For example, Daniel Defoe — novelist, journalist, and campaigning dissenter, imprisoned in 1702 for publishing a satire on the Anglican establishment’s attitude to nonconformity — was the probable author of a 1709 pamphlet with this title. It circulated widely for some time, and was drawn upon later in the century by the American revolutionaries. The Vox populi, Vox Dei slogan was well known in the Middle Ages; indeed, the first written record dates from the eighth century AD — a letter from the theologian Alcuin to the emperor Charlemagne (advising him to pay no attention to it). It was rooted in still earlier Christian critiques of Classical elitism (for all true Christians were to be regarded as God’s People), and even in the Old Testament: when, for instance, the people ask Samuel to give them a king, God’s advice to Samuel is (in the language of the Vulgate), “Audi vocem populi” (I Samuel 8:7).

5. The Workers Music Association, closely associated with the Communist Party of Great Britain, brought together several already existing labor movement choirs, and devoted much of its energy to the encouragement of choral singing. The march trope to be found in “We’re Low” has a historical complexity too great to be explored in detail here. Bearing in mind the connection of marching and drumming, John Mowitz (*Percussion: Drumming, Beating, Striking* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002], 91–115), draws attention to a rich nexus of connotations in nineteenth- and twentieth-century musical and political practice: the disciplining of bodies (as explored by Foucault); the specific disciplines of (black) slavery, and the possibility that African-American drumming answered back to these disciplines; the noisy processions associated with “rough music” (charivari) in both Europe and America; the similar practices developed in the organized labor movements: for instance, antiscab sloganeering, and the rhetoric of the industrial strike. Maróthy’s “smashing crochet” arrays itself across this historical terrain. I shall have occasion to come back to the labor–slavery articulation; for the moment it is perhaps enough to note that in this perspective “We’re Low” points not only back to the *Marseillaise* and forward to a lineage of industrial conflict, but also to the “marching” rhythms of ragtime and jazz, and, through the link between its tone of mockery and that of “rough music,” to the parodistic march-dance of the turn-of-the-century cakewalk.
6. Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, 2003, 179.
7. *Ibid.*, 95.
8. Richard Middleton, “Musical Belongings: Western Music and Its Low-Other,” in *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000a), 59–85.
9. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), 193.
10. I owe my awareness of this work to Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 142–44. My interpretation, starting out from hers, is based on the primary sources: John O’Keefe, *A Short account of the new pantomime called Omai, or, A trip round the world... With the recitatives, airs duets... and choruses... a new edition* (London: T. Cadell, 1785; and William Shield, *Omai or A Trip round the World. A Pantomime... The Words written by J. O’Keefe* (London: Longman & Broderip, [1786]). See also Roger Fiske (“A Covent Garden Pantomime,” *Musical Times* 104 (1963): 574–76.
11. *European Magazine* (1782), 182, quoted in Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 121. For Louterbourg’s *Omai* designs, and his work more generally, see *ibid.*, 118–27. On Shield’s theater music, see Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 453–73.
12. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (1807, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 111–19.
13. Mozart shared the widespread fascination of his time for automata, and wrote pieces for mechanical instruments. A “slave” can be not only a dependent human being but also that component of a mechanical system (later also a computer system) which is “driven” by a master; that is, which simply obeys.
14. Among Shield’s many operas and other theater pieces, there are examples of music drawn

from, or imitating, Irish, Scottish, Sicilian, Russian, and Turkish traditional repertoires, as well as tunes from the English collections that John Gay had plundered earlier in the century in *The Beggar's Opera*. There may also be vernacular tunes that Shield had heard while growing up in the Northeast of England (he was born in Swalwell, near Gateshead, on the south bank of the River Tyne); Roger Fiske ("A Covent Garden Pantomime," 1963, 576) speculates that he may have picked up the tune of the "Sailor's Song" in *Omai* while working as an apprentice shipbuilder in South Shields. For a selective list of musical borrowings (including of many folk tunes) in English operas produced between 1760 and 1800, see Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, 1973, 600–12.

15. In one of the two, "Let Me When My Heart A-Sinking," reproduced in Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 23, pizzicato violins and bass, imitating the "clinking" of Mungo's guitar ("When de tring peak... I soon am cur'd of tinkin'"), might be heard as initiating a trajectory that would lead, a century and a half later, to Porgy's banjo in the equally minstrelized "I Got Plenty of Nuttin'" from Gershwin's opera, *Porgy and Bess*. It is difficult to believe that a later song by Dibdin, "The Negro and His Banjer" (from his one-man show of 1790, *The Wags, or The Camp of Pleasure*), did not include a banjo imitation, although the vocal score gives no clue.
16. For information on American music theater production, see Julius Mattfeld, *Handbook of American Operatic Premieres 1731–1962* (Detroit: Detroit Information Service, 1963), and Oscar G.T. Sonneck, *A Bibliography of Early Secular American Music (18th Century)*, rev. William T. Upton (1905) (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1945). For estimates of the extent of blackface performance in the second half of the eighteenth century, see Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 13–29. For comment on the musical connections between the early minstrel and the contemporary "Scots" and "Irish" repertoires, see *ibid.*; Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 1962, 59–213; Charles Hamm *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: Norton, 1979), 109–18; Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 26–28.
17. W. T. Lhamon, Jr., *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 1997, 89; Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 64, 68. Lhamon is of course alluding to, and expanding on, Paul Gilroy's influential concept of the "Black Atlantic"; see *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

Charles Hamm (*Yesterdays*, 1979, 118) is one who argues that the clockwork-Irish-blackface style reflects the ignorance of white bourgeois composers, referring to a complexity in "real" African and African-American music which they were unwilling or unable to recognize. This is an argument that either treats black culture at this time as a pure object of history with no possibility of agency, or appeals to a folkloristic model that assumes the existence of a *hidden* culture. In fact, the evidence for racial interaction and hybridity is overwhelming — there *was* trade, even if the terms (as in all so-called free markets) were skewed. Rice is supposed, according to legend, to have learned "Jim Crow" from an elderly black man; so why is the tune so "Irish"? Because, perhaps, black musicians — slave and free — had been assimilating the white traditional repertoires of the South (English, Irish, Scots) for years, and giving them back to whites with a twist; and had also more recently been picking up (and feeding into) the early blackface repertory as well. Nathan (*Dan Emmett*, 1962, 166, 171–72) gives "Jim Crow" alongside similar tunes from the Irish folk tradition and the English stage. Lhamon (*Raising Cain*, 1998, 180–86) locates it in part within a long-established black folk repertory, while Cockrell (*Demons of Disorder*, 1979, 76–89) roots it on the one hand within a tradition of corn-shucking songs, black as well as white, and on the other in the noisy lineages (again, biracial) of antimusical, carnivalesque charivari or "rough music." Lott (*Love and Theft*, 1993, 59–60) quotes a report of an occasion when Rice overheard a "Negro version" of "his song," learned it, and paid its singer; was this "black" or "blackface"? Lott provides the richest and most subtle account of the irreducible hybridity of the early minstrel repertoire in general (see especially 94, 177–82).

The wider social context is important too. In the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, Irish immigrants and African Americans were often thrown closely together, both located at the bottom of the heap but also, incipiently and in due course actually, in competition. For

many “superior” white Americans, the Irish were “white Negroes,” the blacks, “smoked Irish”; see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Lott, *Love and Theft*, 1993, 71, 94–96. The musical evidence suggests that this relationship may be rooted in a complex of attitudes with earlier, European origins — hence Lhamon’s “plebeian Atlantic.”

Peter van der Merwe (*Origins of the Popular Style: The Antecedents of Twentieth-Century Popular Music* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989]) traces the outlines of a similar triangular trade going into the evolution of blues. The results of this would not become fully visible until the twentieth century; but it is intriguing to think that it may have been paralleled by an analogous economy operating more visibly on the bourgeois/popular stage — and indeed, that the two may have intersected.

18. Lhamon, *Raising Cain*, 1998, 42; Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 1997, 63.
19. The Water Cress Woman is actually a fairy in disguise, an emissary from Towha. Thus the three categories of “womanhood” are interconnected. Moreover, she is played by a man (a pantomime Dame?). The element of cross-dressing, here as in the case of Oedidee, adds its usual frisson to the role of gender in the drama of alterity.
20. Christa Knellwolf, “Comedy in the OMAI Pantomime,” in *Cook and Omai: The Cult of the South Seas* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2001), 17–21.
21. *Ibid.*, 18, 20, 21. The actor John Rich had influentially developed the genre of harlequinade earlier in the eighteenth century at Covent Garden, playing Harlequin as a dumb acrobat, a comic figure who was, however, endowed with magical powers. According to Roger Fiske (*English Theatre Music*, 1973, 472), the actor David Garrick reveals in a letter of 1775 that he had thought of putting Omai on the stage as an “arlequin sauvage.”
22. Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 144–50; *The Pantomime of Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp... the Poetry by J. O’Keefe Esq. the Music selected from the Works of Handel, Giordini, Carolan & Shield, by Mr A. Shan, the Songs by W. Shield* (London: G. Goulding, n.d. [1788?]). Among Shield’s pieces are several “Irish” tunes, and dances (a “Turkish Dance,” and dances for “Zoreb the little slave,” and for “Mustapha”) in typical “clockwork” style. Another popular example is *Aladdin or The Wonderful Lamp, A Fairy Opera... Composed by Henry R. Bishop* (London: Goulding & D’Almaine, 1826); much of Bishop’s music for the genies is significantly repetitive and drone-based — but overall his score, compared to earlier works, is in a more homogeneous early Romantic (“fairy”) style: the bourgeois ego settling into a greater degree of (self-) control?
23. Slavoj Žižek, “‘I Hear You with My Eyes’; or, The Invisible Master,” in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 90–126, 97.
24. Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 144, 149.
25. Steven Connor (*Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 23) remarks that the etymology of the word *dictator* reminds us of the priority of *voice* in the apparatus of authority; he quotes St. Paul (Romans 10:17): “Ex auditu fides” (from hearing, belief). He also comments (275–77) on how, in the classic ventriloquist–dummy setup, the ventriloquist is himself often constructed as a stooge, sharing the same mechanical, childlike discourse as his dummy.
26. See Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 166–79.
27. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), 164–65; translation slightly modified. Marx’s word was not *phantastische*, as the translation in this edition suggests, but *phantasmagorische*. His concept was later significantly developed, in relation to the specific sphere of cultural production, by the critical Marxists, Walter Benjamin and T. W. Adorno; see Max Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 124, 244–45.
28. The South Sea Bubble was one of the earliest examples — and is still the most notorious — of irrational speculative investment and crash. The South Sea Company was awarded a trade monopoly in return for taking over most of the National Debt. An overheated rise in share value was matched only by its precipitous fall. The situation was rescued only by the intervention of the politician Sir Robert Walpole, who became First Minister the following year on the strength of his achievement. Gay was an investor, and lost heavily — not the least of the ironies inherent in the title of *The Beggar’s Opera*, along with the fact that the corruption of Walpole’s administration is among the objects of satire in the work.

Although the phantasmagoric value of South Sea capital dissolved in 1720 when the

bubble burst, one might suggest that it returned later, as cultural capital, in the forms offered for consumption by Cook, Omai, and others. “O my!” seems a suitable exclamation to mark the magical effects of both moments (especially since property, financial or cultural, was involved in both).

29. This popularity extended to America. It was first performed there, in New York, in 1750. It was preceded by performances of other English ballad operas (starting in 1735), and followed by many more (see note 16 above).
30. *The Dancing Master*, eighteen editions, with changing content, published by John Playford (1651–89), Henry Playford (1690–1703), and John Young (1706–c. 1728). *Wit and Mirth*, ed. Thomas D’Urfey, various editions, 1699–1720. It is not known if Gay took tunes directly from these collections but many of the tunes he uses can be found there. Also important in this period were Allan Ramsey’s collection of Scottish songs, *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724), Alexander Stuart’s *Musick for Allan Ramsey’s Collection of Scots Songs* (1725), and William Thompson’s *Orpheus Caledonius* (1725). Again it is not known if Gay took tunes from these sources, but he does use some tunes that are found there. For Gay’s tunes, and discussion of their sources, see Jeremy Barlow, *The Music of John Gay’s The Beggar’s Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
31. John Gay, *The Beggar’s Opera* (New York: Dover, 1999), 1, 57.
32. See Barlow, *The Music of John Gay’s The Beggar’s Opera*, 1990, ix–xi; for the Burney quotation, p. x.
33. This point is made by Barlow, *ibid.*, 109. Quotations in the rest of this paragraph describing tunes come from sources listed in *ibid.*, 109–16.
34. Gay, *Beggar’s Opera*, 1999, 40.
35. *Ibid.*, 7. In one of the many parodies of *The Beggar’s Opera* — *The Metamorphosis of the Beggar’s Opera*, presented at the Little Theatre in London in 1730 — all the male parts were played by women and vice versa — an interesting subversion (perhaps) of the gendered structure of exchange in the work (cf. note 19 above); see Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, 1973, 102.
36. That the crisis was at the same time economic (hyperinflation, crash, depression), political (totalitarianism), and discursive (modernist assaults on “representation” as such) marks out the interpenetration of systems which I have been outlining, but by negation: “exchange” itself, as a social and epistemological principle, was in question — and has remained so.
A different but also intriguing comparison would be between *The Beggar’s Opera* and a novel which came out one year before the South Sea Bubble, by that arch-dissenter Daniel Defoe — *Robinson Crusoe*, no less: whose guileless location of mercantile enterprise within man’s natural state itself, as celebratory as Gay is mordant, provided ample grounds for the political economists’ theorizing (and, later, for Marx’s ironic comment on their romantic “Robinsonades”: see, e.g., Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1973), 83.
37. According to Fiske (*English Theatre Music*, 1973, 102), at the moment of McHeath’s (deliberately absurd) reprieve, the gallery (i.e., the lower elements in the audience) “cheered hysterically.”
38. Shield in a letter to Ritson, cited in Bertrand H. Bronson, *Joseph Ritson: Scholar at Arms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938), 146; according to Fiske (*English Theatre Music*, 1973, 544–46), Shield’s pantomime of 1790, *The Picture of Paris*, is full of such lines as “The gay Monsieur, a slave no more.”
39. On Ritson and Shield, see Bronson, *Joseph Ritson*, *passim*; Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, 1973, 544–46; and Dave Harker *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British “Folksong” 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press, 1985), 15–37. On “The Collier’s Rant” and its contemporary context, see A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (London: Panther, 1969), 331–37; Ritson was the first to print this iconic song, but most specialists agree that it is almost certainly of much older provenance. Shield’s textbook, *An Introduction to Harmony*, in its first edition (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1800), already contained a few “national” tunes together with advice to accompany them “simply” (for, as Shield wrote to Ritson, both preferred “simple national melody” to florid Italian stuff: quoted, Bronson, *Joseph Ritson*, 1938, 87); in the second edition (London: J. Robinson, n.d. [1815]) Shield added an Appendix containing an extensive selection of model harmonizations of folk tunes — Scots, Irish, Welsh, Canadian, and “Border tunes” said to have been learned “during my infancy” (35). Among the last category is “The Keel Row,” in arrangements for piano, harp, fiddle, and “small Northumberland pipe,” and a dance tune called “The Running Fitter,” described as being associated with the “Hopping

Musicians” (the “hoppings” is still the local (North East England) name for annual carnival). Ritson’s publications referred to in the main text are: *A Select Collection of English Songs*, 3 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1783); *The Bishoprick Garland; or Durham Minstrel* (Stockton, 1784); and *The Northumberland Garland; or, Newcastle Nightingale: A Matchless Collection of Famous Songs* (Newcastle: Hall and Elliot, 1793).

40. See Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 2000, 191–225, 249–89; quotations from 200, 197–98, 231, 277.
41. My translation (helped by Ian Biddle) of “Wir wären gut — anstatt so roh/Doch die Verhältnisse, sie sind nicht so” (Bertold Brecht. *Die Dreigroschenoper, Versuche*, 3 [Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1959], 175). Literally, *roh* means “raw” or “crude” and *Verhältnisse* means “relations;” the latter casts an interesting extra light on the “Marxism” of Peachment’s point: it is the word that Marx often uses when he is talking about “relations of production.”
42. Cockrell (*Demons of Disorder*, 1997) takes the title of his book from an 1833 Philadelphia newspaper description of “rough music” (78), and links its function to Jacques Attali’s association of “noise” with disorder. See Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985); I come to Attali’s theory in a bit more detail shortly. Describing early blackface songs, Cockrell writes: “This music assaulted sensibilities, challenged the roots of respectability, and promised subversion, a world undone . . .” (82).
43. This dating should not be taken too tightly. In England, the period of Civil War and Commonwealth (1642–53) marked a moment of great popular agitation, and between then and the end of the seventeenth century, Milton and Locke among others laid the foundations of democratic political theory. This half century was also the period that saw the beginnings of an organized music business, manifested in public concerts, pleasure garden entertainment, and music publishing enterprises such as Playford’s, which to some extent began to bring vernacular music into this new public space. In Raymond Williams’s terms, this early Enlightenment period was an *emergent* phase in a process that would reach its peak in the second half of the eighteenth century. We could go even further back, say, to Shakespeare’s “All the world’s a stage,” at a time when an initial expansionist phase of mercantile capitalism coincided, intriguingly, with consciousness-shifting encounters with foreign “others,” in the New World and elsewhere. But, despite the invention of opera at this time, with its *stile rappresentativo*, music was not yet to an equivalent level of development; for some time to come, the subjects of opera would be confined to gods, kings, and mythic heroes.
 This “archaeology” is congruent with Foucault’s — even though (with apparent perversity) he presents the “modern” episteme (beginning around 1800) as breaking with the representationalism of the earlier period (which he terms the “classical” episteme); see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1974).
44. Attali, *Noise*, 1985, 81, 46, 57, 61, 62.
45. *Ibid.*, 64–65.
46. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 86.
47. Readers may recognize, lying behind this paragraph, the outlines of Lacan’s psychoanalytic economy. The three “orders” of this economy are: the Symbolic, the sphere of the signifier, where subjects are positioned in relation to the overall system governing the structures of semiotic difference (or Big Other); the Imaginary, the sphere of identification, where the ego finds its ideals and (self-/mis-) representations (typically through such processes as those associated with the so-called mirror stage) and its objects of desire (*objets petits a*); and the Real, that stratum of brute materiality which is foreclosed, rendered impossible, by the initiation of the Symbolic and the Imaginary, whose existence can only be supposed but whose unknowability is absolutely necessary if particular meanings and identities are to function. For more detailed discussion, see Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1997), to which (rather than clutter up my text with over many citations of Lacan’s own writings) I shall often refer.
48. The same is true in the political theory as well: repetition here, it was considered by many writers, turned representatives into mere ventriloquizing delegates.
49. Attali, *Noise*, 1985, 126.
50. Referring to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, Steven Connor (*Dumbstruck*, 2000) has argued that vocal gesture “is not a form of representation, or mimicry of pre-existing thoughts, but a

way of bringing the speaker's [or singer's] world into being" (4). Connor's first chapter (3–43) eloquently outlines the sensorial structure of voice/gaze interaction. I shall return to the topic of this structure quite often, particularly in the context of its technological reconfiguration.

51. Cited in Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 2000, 113.
52. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* (New York: Routledge, 1993), xiii, 72, 21, xiii, 47, 45, xviii; the quotation beginning "Before, the fetishes..." is from Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. When Taussig invented his "aping" trope, he may have had in his mind Marx's aphorism, "Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape" (Marx, *Grundrisse*, 1973, 105). Marx's point is that critical self-understanding at a "higher" stage is a condition for explaining the differences and similarities of the "lower," and hence the process of historical development; Taussig stands this insight on its head — or at least reveals the mimetic circle underpinning the relationship.

The "magical" (irrational) power which actually supports the generalization of representation (the *ré-total*) is nowhere clearer than in the schemas of Marxist futurology — unless it be in Napoleonic confidence in the global applicability of French revolutionary law, or in the doctrine of the "manifest destiny" of the United States.

53. For an excellent critical summary of the post-Gramscian development of articulation theory, as worked out by Hall, Laclau, and Mouffe, see Jennifer Daryl Slack, "The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 112–27. Returning to an earlier point in the argument (*Omai*), one might say that the desirable trajectory is from a relation of property ("Oh my... [whatever]") to one of wonder in the connectivity of difference ("Oh, *my!*").

This "post-Marxist" development of articulation theory is only one of the ways in which attempts have been made to cut the hierarchical ties of representation. Derridean deconstruction is another. Perhaps Deleuze's "nomadic thought," constantly de- and reterritorializing itself, is closest — except that Deleuze's antipathy to even temporary formations of power seems to rule out all possibility of political agency; see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1988). Curiously, Deleuze (along with some other poststructuralists — Barthes, for example) seems to see music itself — defined as "refrain" constantly deterritorializing itself — as a model of nonrepresentational practice, downplaying the hierarchical structures of mimesis which have developed here no less than in other signifying practices.

54. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).
55. Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), 210.
56. Teresa Brennan, *History After Lacan* (London: Routledge, 1993), 10.
57. Cited in Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 9. For an application of Kittler's perspective to early nineteenth-century German music aesthetics (to which I am indebted here), see Ian Biddle, *Listening to Men: Music, Masculinity and the Austro-German Tradition, 1789–1914* (forthcoming), chapter 1, "Discourse Channels: Listening as a Cultural-Historical Category in the Austro-German *Früromantik*."

The spatialization of voice at which Novalis seems to hint might support an interpretation of this historical shift in terms of an interplay between the Lacanian part-objects — *objets petits a*, or objects of desire — of "gaze" and "voice." I see this Lacanian economy as an equivalent to the Derridean antimony of "speech" and "(archi-) writing" — except that in Lacan there is no presumption that "voice" (the carrier of "presence" in Derrida's scheme), is simply a metaphysical charlatan; rather, it retains a constant potential of disruption — of invoking the Real. One of the pioneers of phantasmagoria, Étienne-Gaspard Robertson, liked to project specters onto smoke, including the severed head of the recently guillotined Danton (see Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 177–79); surely this head would be open-mouthed in the act of a (now silenced) final scream — just like the scream in Edvard Munch's famous picture, which Žižek has taken as a definitive image of "object voice" (Žižek, "I Hear You with My Eyes," 1996, 93–94). Munch wrote obsessively about this silent scream, seemingly conjoining the scream inside himself and that within nature: "One evening I walk

down a hillside path... I felt a huge scream welling up inside me — and I really did hear a huge scream... The lines and colours quivered with movement. These vibrations of light caused not only the oscillation of my eyes. My ears were also affected and began to vibrate. So I actually heard a scream.” And again: “I was walking along the road with two friends — then the sun set. The heavens turned a bloody red... and I was left trembling in fear. And I felt a huge endless scream course through nature” (quoted, Poul Erik Tøjner, *Munch in His Own Words* [Munich, London, and New York: Prestel, 2002], 96). The suggestion is that, as the reification and abstraction of gaze proceeded (including within the abstracted writing out of subjectivity in musical scores), so the disruptive, transgressive potential of voice — especially disturbingly disembodied voices — increased. Connor points out (*Dumbstruck*, 2000, 338–56) that the age-old fantasy of building a “talking head” — an apparently vocalizing automaton — took on new impetus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, leading eventually to the development of telegraphy and phonography.

It is important to stress that the aesthetic shift I am pointing to here is concretely there in the detail of the music history: symphony and concerto grew most significantly out of opera, and their methods of representation of inner drama can be readily traced to operatic models, while the theatrical structures of chamber music add to this lineage the drama of the street (via the traditions of divertimento and serenade). However, this shift should not be seen as a simple displacement. The relationships that ensued were intricate and ambivalent: for instance, it would be possible to think of the imposition of monologic authorial control in autonomous musical works as a tactic in which voice so to speak takes over the spatializing function of gaze — “the composer’s voice” (to use Edward Cone’s famous formulation) *speaks for* the gaze. This complexity is such that, although the topic is enormously relevant to my overall argument, its full development would demand a different book, and I can only gesture here to some of the existing literature.

Gary Tomlinson (‘Musicology, Anthropology, History,’ in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton [New York: Routledge, 2003], 31–44) traces the disciplinary divergence in the West between music historiography and music anthropology, beginning in this period, to the split between a conception of autonomous instrumental music, conceived as specific to the West, and a broader, intercultural category of *singing*. Elsewhere (*Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999]), Tomlinson explores the role of opera in this history as constituting a sphere where a sense of the “noumenal” — what lies beyond the territory of concrete representation — could be adumbrated; the modern operatic voice (dating from around 1800), for example, is seen as mediating between the structure of the Kantian transcendental subject (“The accord governing knowledge is now a harmony of faculties within the subject. The system of representation involved in knowing is folded wholly into the soul” (77)) and an emergent awareness of the *uncanny* (“This voice... is a place where the phenomenal world extends itself to a noumenal margin, so it holds out the hope of embodying before our ears, finally, a transcendental object” (84)). This is an area influentially discussed also by Carolyn Abbate (*Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991]), who argues for the importance of moments when the obvious operatic narrative, associated with the control exerted from an authorial distance, is disrupted by uncanny, other voices (e.g., instrumental enunciations; female characters who seem to sing “against” the compositional line), which have the effect of dividing subjectivity in a kind of “second hearing” (56) — precisely the “proliferation of possible selves” to which I refer shortly (see p. 28). Wagner is central to Abbate’s argument, as he is too to Lydia Goehr’s in her *The Quest for Voice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998): Wagner, whose operatic symphonism (out of Beethoven) is at the same time shot through with his highly theorized attempt (derived ultimately from Rousseau’s account of the primordial relationship of melody, speech, and human feeling) to rebut the claims of musical formalism through a technique that would reanimate instrumental sounds themselves with the quality of “voice.” Nietzsche, as quoted by Goehr (*ibid.*, vi), catches precisely the essence of Wagner’s mimetic counterthrust:

One can say, as a general comment on Wagner, as a musician, that he has given a language to everything in nature that until now has made no attempt to speak; he does not believe that some things must inevitably be dumb. He plunges even into dawn and sunrise, into

forests, fogs, ravines, mountain peaks, the dead of night and moonlight and discovers a secret longing in all of them: they want a voice.

Finally (here), one should mention Richard Leppert (*The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993]), who offers a broader account (broader both historically and in theme) of the interplay of the sight and sound of music, in the context of *embodiment*, and, in particular, the gendering of this whole nexus; within this history, music as such, at least in its sensuous presentations (as against rational theorizations), was always tending to be feminized, a tendency that reached a peak of anxious insistence in the nineteenth century.

In the face of this impressive body of work, by a collection of remarkable scholars, I have only one further comment to add: that a still fuller picture of this discursive field as a whole will not be available until more account is taken of the contemporaneous and more clearly palpable contributions of *popular* voices.

58. Musicological excavation of this “supplement” is now well established. One excellent example, by Lawrence Kramer (“The Musicology of the Future,” *Repercussions* 1 [1992]: 5–18), reads the textures of a Mozart Divertimento “as a staging of the ‘civilising’ effort needed for an artistic distancing from the palpable body of the Low” (Richard Middleton, “Who May Speak? From a Politics of Popular Music to a Popular Politics of Music,” *Repercussions* 7–8 [1999–2000]: 77–103, 98n). But how should we animate the voice of this body? To use Taussig’s terms, how should we represent (*sic*) its aping of Mozart’s aping? “My question for Kramer [it is a question for all of us] would be: what would it mean to hear this music from the vantage-point not of the drawing-room but of the street?” (*idem.*)
59. This fantasy spread widely down through the social layers in the nineteenth century, and is still powerful. Two examples: the hugely influential essays on self-development by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the extraordinarily popular *Self-Help* (influenced by Emerson) by Samuel Smiles (first published in 1859).
60. T. W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 22.
61. Attali’s somewhat misleading dating may come back into the picture at this point. His picture of the bourgeois concert as representation — a “spectacle in front of silent people” — actually only became typical in the second half of the nineteenth century (later still in America: see Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988]). The process of interiorization took place gradually, unevenly, and partially, and even then retained an exterior (that is, a social) dimension in the intraclass ritual enacted in the concert-event. See Christopher Small, “Performance as Ritual: Sketch for an Enquiry into the True Nature of a Symphony Concert,” in *Lost in Music: Culture, Style and the Musical Event*, ed. Avron Levine White (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 6–32.
62. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973), 255–66, 259. Benjamin also writes:

Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. (*Ibid.*, 265)

63. *Ibid.* 257: “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it ‘the way it really was’ (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”
64. See Slavoj Žižek, “How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?,” in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 11–53.
65. Mowitt, *Percussion*, 2002, 205. Mowitt goes on (205–6) to turn his question into a critique of Žižek, diagnosing (symptomatically) a “naturalism” at odds with the method of historical materialism. But the material process of discursive invention surely has an important role in such a method.

66. The idea is already adumbrated (complete with an embryonic mirror-stage theory) by Marx himself: “after a fashion, it is with the human being as with the commodity. Since the human being does not come into the world bringing a mirror with him, nor yet as a Fichtean philosopher able to say ‘I am myself,’ he first recognises himself as reflected in other men” (Marx, *Capital*, 1976, 1:23).
67. Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 21.
68. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1973), 309–17. The quotations here are taken by White from *The Communist Manifesto* itself.
69. Here it is, clearly signaled in Marx: “The division of labour . . . which in its turn is based on the natural division of labour in the family, and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, simultaneously implies the *distribution*, and indeed the *unequal* distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property, the nucleus, the first form of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband.” (Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* [New York: Prometheus Books, 1998], 51–52.)
70. The first point has been concisely explored by Teresa Brennan (*History After Lacan*, 1993, 160–65), among others. The second has been most incisively put in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s devastating critique of economic essentialism, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985). In their “post-Marxist” position, “objects appear articulated not like pieces in a clockwork mechanism, but because the presence of some in the others hinders the suturing of the identity of any of them” (104).
71. Hobbes, quoted in Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 2000, 105.
72. *Ibid.*, 103.
73. Compare Marx:

human beings become individuals only through the process of history. He appears originally as a *species-being*, *clan being*, *herd animal* — although in no way whatever as a ‘political animal’ in the political sense. Exchange itself is a chief means of this individuation. It makes the herd-like existence superfluous and dissolves it. Soon the matter [has] turned in such a way that as an individual he relates himself only to himself, while the means with which he posits himself as individual have become the making of his generality and commonness. (Marx, *Grundrisse*, 1973, 496)

74. Unless, of course, this is that chapter — the chapter that cannot speak its name (and what might this silence be a symptom of?).
75. It is quite hard for us to think ourselves back into a situation in which huge proportions of populations, in every continent of the world, were in conditions of slavery or related forms of servitude (serfdom, peonage, debt-bondage, indentured service). In many parts of the Americas, Africa, and Asia, during the period around 1800, the proportions were over 50 percent. It is worth noting too that the possibility of slavery for *Britons* had been a worry, and sometimes a reality, within recent memory. At least 20,000 Britons were captured by “Barbary corsairs” between 1600 and 1730, and many were enslaved in north Africa; see Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1730* (London: Pimlico, 2003). Similarly, American ideology celebrated the new world as a refuge from European systems of religious and economic “slavery,” even though large numbers of white Americans had been indentured or enslaved (including by Native Americans). Yet in both cases (Britain and the United States), freedom was founded, economically and arguably psychologically, on enslavement of others. It is as if “freedom” cannot even be conceptualized — its absolute promise is too terrifying — unless it is given an anchorage in the palpable nonfreedom of another.

A piercing light is thrown on this problematic by Eric Lott’s brilliant dissection of the economy of blackface as “love and theft”: a traffic in representations and another in commodities (both human and musico-theatrical), each mediating the other, both finding a focus in fetishizing exchanges of the black male body, with its (more or less off-stage) setting in the “peculiar institution” itself; see Lott, *Love and Theft*, 1993, 55–62. Bearing in mind the complex dynamics here of both (mis-)recognition and of property, this appears — translating now into my terminology — as a prime case of a *being(.) had*. Lott (*ibid.*, 226–33) is also illuminating on the tortured discursive knot around which the concepts of slavery and wage-slavery chased each other in nineteenth-century America.

- What might be the significance of the fact that both “slavery” and “the people” (hence “popular music”) took on a dramatically new discursive force — that is, became issues in a new way, became problematized — at around the same time? Is it, perhaps, because in both cases (and in interlinked ways, actually) they became “others,” their specificity thrown into new light by alteritous relationships? Robin Blackburn (“Slavery — Its Special Features and Social Role,” in *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour*, ed. Léonie Archer [London: Routledge, 1988], 262–79) outlines the interrelations (as well as differences) between various types of bondage. Basing his argument on the theory of early human history put forward by Marx and Engels, Blackburn also describes ways in which these types of bondage may have grown out of early developments in family and kinship structures; one can see, as I will shortly suggest, how “the people” could appear as a kind of “slave” within the political and cultural household.
76. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1979), 195–228. Foucault makes clear the “theatrical” character of panoptical systems: “They [the cells in which subjects are ‘enslaved’] are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualised and constantly visible.” And this triumph of the authoritarian gaze carries with it the *silencing* of those imprisoned actors, for it “made it possible . . . to avoid those compact, swarming, howling masses that were to be found in places of confinement [not only earlier forms of prison but all other locations of multitudinous connection]” (200). Foucault’s “dummies” — unable to make themselves heard, ventriloquized even without their knowledge — find a twentieth-century apotheosis in the inhabitants of Debord’s “society of the spectacle”; see Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1970).
 77. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 2000, 121, 115.
 78. Marx’s stress on the role of *circulation* (*Grundrisse*, 1973, 401–743, for example) comes inescapably to mind. Thus “The exchange of substance and of form subordinated to human need through human labour appears from the viewpoint of capital as its own reproduction. It is at bottom the constant reproduction of labour itself” (742). But the dialectic of property and being is central to this process: “The exchange of labour for labour — seemingly the condition of the worker’s property — rests on the foundations of the worker’s propertylessness” (515).
 79. “This, then, is the basic paradox of the Lacanian logic of ‘non-all’ [*pas-tout*]: in order to transform a collection of particular elements into a consistent totality, one has to add (or to subtract, which amounts to the same thing: to posit as an exception) a paradoxical element which, in its very particularity, embodies the universality of the genus in the form of its opposite.” (Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, 2nd ed. [London: Verso, 2002], 44.) Thus “The Woman [Woman qua universal] does not exist,” whereas Man, having universalized himself via the exception, “Woman,” does.
 80. “. . . in so far as every position within social totality is ultimately overdetermined by class struggle, no neutral place is excluded from the dynamics of class struggle from which it would be possible to locate class struggle within the social totality” (Slavoj Žižek, “The Spectre of Ideology,” in *The Žižek Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright [Oxford: Blackwell, 1999c], 53–86, 75). “Class struggle” is “a certain limit, a pure negativity, a traumatic limit which prevents the final totalisation of the social–ideological field. The ‘class struggle’ is present only its effects, in the fact that every attempt to totalize the social field, to assign to social phenomena a definite place in the social structure, is always doomed to failure.” (Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 164).
 81. Here is cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt, grappling in the middle of the nineteenth century with the effects of this moment: “The word freedom sounds rich and beautiful, but no one should talk about it who has not seen and experienced slavery under the loud-mouthed masses, called ‘the people,’ seen it with his own eyes and endured civil unrest. . . . I know too much about history to expect anything from the despotism of the masses but a future tyranny, which will mean the end of history” (from *Letters*, quoted in White, *Metahistory*, 1973, 235).
 82. Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, Bertold Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetics and Politics* [London: New Left Books, 1977], 123.
 83. It is only an apparent paradox that the effect of universalization here (i.e., the installing of “serious music” as a norm) is individuation — the (phallogocentric) power to “be oneself” to lay down a law. By contrast, of course, “all women are the same,” and “all blacks look alike.” It is no coincidence that Adorno persistently figures popular music in terms of feminization and emasculation; see Middleton, “Who May Speak”? 1999–2000, 89–92; Susan McClary,

- Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 65.
84. T. W. Adorno, "On Popular Music," in *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (1991, London: Routledge, 1990), 301–14, see footnote on p. 314; Abner Silver and Robert Bruce, *How to Write and Sell a Song Hit* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1939). Needless to say, both texts come from a moment that was just as much a "moment of danger" as was 1848 or the 1790s. I have no doubt that today, when Žižek is writing, qualifies to join this lineage.
 85. Silver and Bruce, *How to Write*, 1939, 2, 55, 161–62.
 86. *Ibid.*, 159.
 87. See Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 173–78.
 88. For this paragraph, see *ibid.*, 55–129. For Althusser's celebrated "parable" of interpellation, in which a subject is "hailed" ("Hey, you there!") by a policeman on the street, see Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 121–73 (esp. 160–65).
 89. Ernesto Laclau, "Preface," in Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, xii.
 90. Mowitz, *Percussion*, 2002, 12.

Chapter 2

1. Cited in Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 1. For background on the Fair, see Christopher Robert Reed, "All the World Is Here": *The Black Presence at White City* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2000); subsequent quotations from *ibid.*, 186, 71 (Cook), 132, 103–4 (*Chicago Herald*, July 19, 1893 on "jumpy music").
2. Burleigh was a protégé of Dvořák (who was also there, promoting his view that a true "national" American music should be based on "Negro melodies"), and went on to write the first arrangements of spirituals for solo concert performance.
3. A young W.C. Handy, later to become "father of the blues," set off for the Fair with his vocal quartet, which sang contemporary popular and minstrel songs, but they arrived to find the event postponed for a year; see Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography* (1941, New York: Da Capo, 1991), 24–26. Handy would not "discover" blues for another ten years; see note 14 (p. 259). One wonders, however, if his youthful quartet included barbershop chords in their performances; according to Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff ("'They Cert'ly Sound Good to Me': Sheet Music, Southern Vaudeville, and the Commercial Ascendancy of Blues," *American Music* 14 (1996): 402–54), who quote Handy on the subject, such "intuitive" chromatic harmonizing was one route whereby blue notes emerged (*ibid.*, 404).
4. See Philip V. Bohlman, *World Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 33, 112.
5. This oversimplifies Du Bois's views, but the effects of his hugely influential book perhaps justify this for my context; see W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, centenary ed., ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (1903, New York: Norton, 1999). Ronald M. Radano ("Soul Texts and the Blackness of Folk," *Modernism/Modernity* 2, no. 1 (1995): 71–95), explores the complexity of Du Bois's view of the spirituals, as carrying meaning far beyond what could be associated with any "authentic" folk essence, a view that was absolutely demanded by his theory of "double consciousness" and its implications for the relationship of race, culture, and history. Du Bois's book was crucial in showing African Americans that they, no less (indeed, more) than whites, could assert an interest in the musical evidence of an earlier phase of their development rather than abandon it in embarrassment.
6. Lott, *Love and Theft*.
7. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 1999, 10–11. Ronald M. Radano ("Denoting Difference: The Writing of the Slave Spirituals," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1996): 506–44) demonstrates how the roots of the folklorization of the spirituals go back to the early nineteenth century, and also how the impulses behind this process and the contemporaneous white investment in black-face discourse were from the start thoroughly intermixed, in an affective nexus where desire,

envy, distancing, and mockery slide into each other. Du Bois's Herderian idea of the "slave songs" as part of a world folk heritage surfaced again, interestingly, when in the 1930s Paul Robeson visited Eastern Europe, Russia, and Spain, and began to theorize a universal folk music grounded in a common popular experience of suffering; see Martin Baum Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (London: Bodley Head, 1989), 121, 129, 156, 176, 218. This is only one aspect of how we can see "black music" as linked to an emergent category of "world music." Radano's perspective on the always already hybrid nature of "black music," which is very close to my own, is more fully discussed in his *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

8. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 111.
9. *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, Universal MPO14V.
10. The Faustian bargain was a widespread blues trope. Tommy Johnson certainly made the claim: see David Evans, *Tommy Johnson* (London: Studio Vista, 1971), 22–23; Francis Davis, *The History of the Blues* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1995), 105–6.
11. Charles Keil and Steven Feld, "People's Music Comparatively," in *Music Grooves: Essays and Dialogues*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 197–202. Keil's piece had been initially published in 1985 (in *Dialectical Anthropology* 10:119–30).
12. Francis Davis (*History of the Blues*) follows a somewhat similar, though not quite so radical line; but he does not list Keil's text in his bibliography. Otherwise, to the best of my knowledge, Keil's argument has not really been followed up.
13. Tony Russell, "Blacks, Whites and Blues," in *Yonder Come the Blues: The Evolution of a Genre*, ed. Paul Oliver, Tony Russell, Robert M. W. Dixon, John Godrich, and Howard Rye (1970, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 143–242.
14. Rainey was speaking to John W. Work (*American Negro Songs and Spirituals: A Comprehensive Collection of 230 Folk Songs, Religious and Secular* [1940, New York: Dover, 1998] 32–33); she remarks that when, shortly after, she began to sing such songs in her act, they were not yet called "blues." Morton was speaking to Alan Lomax in his Library of Congress interviews of 1938 (*Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and "Inventor of Jazz."* [1950, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1973]), 62; Morton also mentions other pieces that he heard, or created, around the turn of the century and that he refers to as "blues" — but the exact dating is unclear and in many cases the examples he gives suggest ragtime features as much as those of what would come to be understood as blues. Handy was writing in his autobiography (*Father of the Blues*, 1991, 74), telling the famous story of hearing a bottleneck guitarist at Tutwiler railroad station; Handy, admittedly, does also refer (142) to a one-line tune he heard in St. Louis in 1892, of a type that, later, he says, he would draw on to create his own blues songs. Clearly, then, elements which would later congeal into typical blues features were in play before 1900 — but that is a different point.

For an overview of the few sources that describe blueslike music in the 1890s, see David Evans, *Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues* (New York: Da Capo 1987), 32–33, and, for similar references to the early twentieth century, *ibid.*, 33–40. Some of the locations are rural but many are urban (including racially fluid New Orleans).

Charles Keil ("People's Music Comparatively," 1994, 200) has a footnote referring to an unpublished master's dissertation including descriptions of sheet music, by white composers, that contains blueslike features and dates from the 1880s. On the other hand, Thomas L. Riis (*Just Before Jazz: Black Musical Theatre in New York, 1890 to 1915* [Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press 1989], 58) describes proto-blue notes — actually chromatic oscillations around the major/minor third — in songs from the "new" African-American musical theater of the early 1900s as part of what made it sound innovative at the time. But then Peter van der Merwe (*Origins of the Popular Style*, 1989), traces some such features back to sixteenth-century Europe...!

15. See Howard W. Odum, "Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes," *Journal of American Folklore* 24 (1911): 255–94, 351–96; E. C. Perrow, "Songs and Rhymes From the South," *Journal of American Folklore* 25 (1912): 137–55; 26 (1913): 122–73; 28 (1915): 129–90. The songs had been collected some years before publication. John A. Lomax does identify a blues (see note 61, p. 263) but treats it not as part of a genre but as just a song — one that lives in the larger category of secular songs ("reels"); see John A. Lomax, "Self-Pity in Negro Folk-Songs," *The Nation* 105 (1917): 141–45.

16. "Memphis Blues" was also an instrumental at first, not being given lyrics until 1913. The original "Mr. Crump" was modeled on a song already circulating on the streets of Memphis; see Abbott and Seroff, "'They Cert'ly Sound,'" 1996, 438. Handy's 1912 publication was also preceded, just, by "Baby Seals' Blues," composed by the black vaudeville artist, H. Franklin "Baby" Seals (*ibid.*, 415–19); this did have lyrics. Four years earlier, in 1908, "I Got the Blues" by white New Orleans musician Antonio Maggio came out; this is a piano rag, but does have an opening strain in 12-bar blues form (*ibid.*, 405–6). White's "Nigger Blues" had been copyrighted in 1912 under the title "The Negro Blues"; in that version it has fifteen verses, reduced in the 1913 publication to six (*ibid.*, 409–11). The very first recording of a vocal blues seems to have been a version of "Memphis Blues" by the white minstrel Morton Harvey, put out by Victor in 1915 (*ibid.*, 439).
17. For a typical, dismissive description of "Nigger Blues," see Robert Palmer, *Deep Blues* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 105–6.
George O'Connor (1874–1946) was a highly successful lawyer and businessman, a familiar figure in upper-class Washington, DC, society, an intimate of many top politicians, and well-known too in these circles as a singer of light opera and contemporary popular songs. Among a large amount of sheet music, his papers contain 63 "coon songs." Columbia put out quite a number of records by O'Connor, usually backed by other popular singers of the time, including Al Jolson; "Nigger Blues," for example, is backed by Jolson's "I'm Saving Up the Means to Get to New Orleans." See <http://www.library-georgetown.edu/dept/speccoll/oconnor.htm>. "Nigger Blues" was reissued on *Let's Get Loose*, New World Records NW290 (1978).
18. Intriguingly, the earliest known published account of blues singing on a public stage has it coming from the mouth of a ventriloquist's dummy (see Abbott and Seroff, "'They Cert'ly Sound,'" 1996, 413–14). The "ventriloquist" was black vaudeville performer Johnnie Woods from Memphis, whose blues voice seemed to come from his little wooden-headed doll, Henry. (Woods was also a female impersonator; cf. Frankie "Half Pint" Jaxon; see note 74, p. 264). From the start, it seems, and for blacks as well as whites, the blues voice was split — located somehow elsewhere.
19. As it might seem to us. For some in this period, the Golden Age was already gone, destroyed by "modernity" (sheet music, records, commerce). This pattern of infinite regression is part of the process of folklorization itself — and also, as we shall see, of the structure of nostalgia.
20. It is both an advantage and a disadvantage of speculative historiography that proof is impossible. In this case, presumably, it would entail establishing that all black blues singers were situated within chains of musical learning at earlier stages of which — perhaps beyond various mediating links — one would find white as well as black inputs. Walter Benjamin's advice ("Theses on the Philosophy of History," 1973, 257), which I find persuasive, that "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger," does not license distortion of materials. We now have the sources to show the explosive development of a rich commercial music culture, involving blacks and whites, often in close proximity, from the 1890s to the 1920s; the spread of the new media technologies, including into rural areas, and the importance in the South of traveling shows and vaudeville theater; the important mediating role of white entrepreneurs (Ralph Peer; H. C. Speir; Frank Walker) in marketing blues from the South; and the inescapable presence across these developments and processes of blackface performance conventions. To assemble all the evidence would require a large book. (There is a useful summary of many of the strands, drawing on recent research, in Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz* [London: Continuum, 2001], 30–71; Ted Vincent, *Keep Cool: The Black Activists Who Built the Jazz Age* [London: Pluto Press, 1995] is also useful, if due allowance is made for an overzealous black-nationalist viewpoint; Abbott and Seroff's "They Cert'ly Sound" 1996, is indispensable in documenting the establishment of an African-American vaudeville circuit in the South, and the important role played there from around 1910 by blues performance.) Such a book, however, still would not prove the point. What is at issue is a cultural unconscious that can be invoked, led to the couch, and encouraged to speak (through interpretations of its textual signifiers) but not reliably documented. I am not of course assuming that, for African-American actors within this unconscious, the signifiers unthinkingly replicate what has been heard, only that they are involved in a network of reference structured by differential power. I will come to the "moment of danger" presently.

21. David Evans, quoted in Davis, *History of the Blues*, 1995, 47. See also Lomax, *The Land Where the Blues Began* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 64–70; Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 1987, 169–74.
22. Houston Baker Jr., *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 4, 64, 65, 5. We should add (with Radano, “Soul Texts,” 1995, 72), that blues is also always already *different* (from itself: that is, internally differentiated), and that such differences are to be historically situated. Still, although on one level it is indeed vital to insist on such differentiation (and the operation of intrablues dialogics will be important later in my argument), on the level of myth it is precisely the fact that “blues” can present itself as a “(w)hole” that explains its nostalgic appeal.
23. Paul Oliver, Tony Russell, Robert M. W. Dixon, John Godrich, and Howard Rye, *Yonder Come the Blues: The Evolution of a Genre* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.
24. Quoted, Samuel B. Charters, *The Country Blues* (1959, New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), 63; Oliver et al., *Yonder Come the Blues*, 2001, 262–63.
25. Quoted, Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 1987, 63.
26. W. C. Handy *Blues: An Anthology*, ed. Abbe Niles (1926, New York: Da Capo, 1990), 12, 20.
27. Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 1991, 231; and see 137–51.
28. Evans, *Tommy Johnson*, 1971, 18, 19; Lomax, *Land Where the Blues Began*, 1993, 55, 460; Oliver et al., *Yonder Come the Blues*, 2001, 203.
29. John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Leadbelly* (New York: Macmillan, 1936).
30. John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), xxx.
31. *The New Yorker* (January 19, 1935) published a “ballad” by noted poet William Rose Benet to mark Leadbelly’s arrival in New York with John Lomax. It includes the words: “He was big and he was black/And wondrous were his wrongs/But he had a memory travelled back/Through at least five hundred songs./When his fingers gave those strings a twang/Like a very god in heaven he sang” (Accompanying booklet, Leadbelly, *The Library of Congress Recordings*, comp. Lawrence Cohn, Elektra EKL-301/2, ND). See Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell, *The Life and Legend of Leadbelly* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1993), 167–68; and for further evidence of the frisson surrounding Leadbelly’s arrival in New York, *ibid.*, 1–4, 136–42. On Leadbelly as primitive, see also Davis, *History of the Blues*, 1995, 164–71.
32. Lomax, *Land Where the Blues Began*, 1993, 18.
33. Quoted, Wolfe and Lornell, *Life and Legend*, 1993, 112.
34. *Ibid.*, 145, 141–42, 2, 130, 135.
35. Nathan Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 199.
36. In Bruce Kellner, ed., *Keep A-Inchin’ Along: Selected Writings of Carl Van Vechten about Black Art and Letters* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 48, 162.
37. Lomax, *Land Where the Blues Began*, 1993, 446, 447; Bill Broonzy (with Yannick Bruynoghe), *Big Bill Blues: Big Bill Broonzy’s Story as Told to Yannick Bruynoghe* (1955, New York: Oak Publications), 1964), 11–25; Charters, *Country Blues*, 1975, 177–80.
38. Broonzy, *Big Bill Blues*, 1964, 31.
39. John Lee Hooker, speaking in 1968, was more straightforward: “My type of music, I got a variety — for the young folks and the older folks, and the folksingers... I have created about three different fields; a folk field, a blues field, and a jump field for the kids” (quoted in Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 1987, 84).
40. Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 128, 161, 264, 281–82.
41. Newman I. White, *American Negro Folk-Songs* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 25, 389, 5.
42. Sterling A. Brown, “The Blues as Folk Poetry,” in *Folk-Say: A Regional Miscellany*, ed. B. A. Botkin (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), 324–39; Carl Van Vechten, “The Black Blues,” in Kellner, *Keep A-Inchin’ Along*, 1979, 43–49 (first published, *Vanity Fair*, August 1925); Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926); Langston Hughes, “The Weary Blues,” (1926) in *The Negro Caravan*, ed. Sterling A. Brown, Arthur P. Davis and Ulysses Lee (1941, New York: Arno Press, 1970), 367–68; Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” *Nation*, June 23, 1926: 692–94.

43. Brown, "Blues as Folk Poetry," 1930, 324, 339.
44. I am most interested in, and have concentrated on, this folklorizing move. But, debate concerning the interpretive, historical, and policy significance of African-American music, especially spirituals, blues, and jazz, was fierce throughout Harlem Renaissance circles, reflecting its role in the contemporary drama of tradition, nostalgia, and modernization. For Du Bois, the spirituals had a special status as Herder-ish race heritage, whose destiny, he hoped, was to function as a complementary pole to a more developed artistic consciousness, leading to a Hegelian reconciliation; he had no time for more recent commercial products. Locke too regarded the spirituals as a stage in an evolutionary story, out of which a specific sort of formal art would develop, but one which would be part of his vision of a pluralistic cultural universalism: "Deep river; deeper sea!"; Locke valued early jazz, whose neofolk credentials he also wanted to see built on by more formally trained composers. (So far as performance of spirituals was concerned, Locke's taste was for Roland Hayes's "classicizing" style, while Du Bois preferred the more "natural" approach of Paul Robeson.) Hughes attacked the "race towards whiteness" of the black bourgeoisie on class grounds, and his defense of blues and jazz was on the basis that they, rather than spirituals, constituted the genuine poetic voice of contemporary working-class African Americans. Ethnographer and writer, Zora Neale Hurston, criticized Du Bois explicitly for imprisoning rural African Americans in a narrowly interpreted, mythologized past, and in a "double consciousness" which left them no alternative but a normative (white) idea of "progress"; for her, the complexity of contemporary rural musical culture — especially the full range of religious song — ruled out all primitivist interpretation and demanded recognition on its own terms (although she did not, perhaps, altogether escape the dangers of folkloric romanticism). On these debates, and for full references, see Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2001).
45. Greil Marcus, *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* (London: Picador 1997); *Anthology of American Folk Music*, comp. Harry Smith, Smithsonian Folkways FP 251, 252, 253 (1997) [1952].
46. Intriguingly, Davis also recorded white blues, was considerably influenced by black music, and even recorded with a black musician, Oscar Woods; see Tony Russell's account, "Blacks, Whites and Blues," 2001, 206–9.
47. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 1999.
48. See Erika Brady, *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1999).
49. *Ibid.*, 30–32; Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, 208–11.
50. On this see Žižek, "I Hear You with My Eyes," 1996.
51. Lomax, *Land Where the Blues Began*, 1993, 9.
52. In John Lomax's account of his and Alan's 1933 recording trip (John Lomax, "Sinful songs of the Southern Negro," *Musical Quarterly*, 21 (1934), 177–87), the convicts they record seem to demonstrate absolutely no suspicion of the "singing machine."
53. Davis, *History of the Blues*, 1995, 72–73.
54. Brady, *A Spiral Way*, 1999, 1.
55. Abbe Niles in Handy, *Blues*, 1990, 40.
56. Lomax, *Land Where the Blues Began*, 1993, ix–x, and see 472.
57. Russell, "Blacks, Whites and Blues," 2001, 233.
58. Cecil Brown, *Stagolee Shot Billy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
59. In tracing the genealogy of the archetype represented by Stagolee, it is difficult to avoid romanticizing an outlaw culture. Howard Odum published a trilogy of "novels" (the best known being the first, *Rainbow Round My Shoulder: The Blue Trail of Black Ulysses* [1928, New York: Krause, 1972]) recounting the nomadic, womanizing, often violent life of a fictional bluesman. Odum undoubtedly drew on his fieldwork, in particular his relationship with a real hobo-songster called John Wesley "Left Wing" Gordon; but in speaking for his Homeric hero — the narrative is in a highly dialectized first person — Odum cannot resist introducing each chapter with a scene-setting, purple-prose slab of "romantic sociology." Alan Lomax described one of his "discoveries," James "Ironhead" Baker, as a "black Homer" (Wolfe and Lornell, *Life and Legend*, 1993, 112). Like the Coen Brothers' similar movie — the story of *O Brother* is loosely based on that of Homer's *Odyssey* and Everett Grant's middle name is Ulysses — both Odum's and Lomax's conceit can perhaps be seen as a powerful cultural inversion in the inter-

est of the Low: the hero no longer a king but an outcast. At the same time, one might ask if this overromanticizes a certain marginality in a way that is absolutely standard in bourgeois culture. Do the Coen Brothers do this too? Do I?

60. Cited in Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 1987, 47–48.
61. White, *American Negro Folk-Songs*, 1928, 389. It is interesting to compare Langston Hughes, for whom “the decisive modernity of the blues — the music he read as *city* songs rising from the crowded streets of big towns — in no way threatened its authenticity as folk music” (Anderson, *Deep River*, 2001, 194).
John Lomax (“Self-Pity in Negro Folk-Songs,” 1917, 143) gives a blues which, he says, he has heard many times under many different names (usually referring to a particular place: e.g., “The Dallas Blues”), but first of all in a levee camp in Texas that was using imported Mississippi labor. The lyric contains a huge number of familiar blues phrases, many of which can be found in published songs such as Handy’s and in later recordings, and some of which appear in White’s “Nigger Blues.” According to David Evans (sleeve notes, *Let’s Get Loose*), “Nigger Blues” entered the southern white and black folk repertoires and was recorded under a number of titles; no doubt the traffic went both ways.
62. See Brown, *Stagolee*, 2003, 98–105.
63. Meaning that sexual difference functions not in terms of complement but of supplement: the two partners do not add up to a whole; rather, each represents a different modality (which, in both cases, fails — that is, as one might say, contains a hole). Part of the failure is that the relationship will always be asymmetrical. Lacan’s patriarchy weights this asymmetry in a predictable direction, one which we do not need to accept and on which the fraught and distinctive history of African-American gender relations offers a sharp commentary. Dylan Evans (*Introductory Dictionary*, 1997, 181–82) gives a concise explanation of Lacan’s thinking on this subject.
64. See Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 1987, 114–15.
65. Which is not quite always silenced: “Every day seem like murder here” (Charley Patton, “Down the Dirt Road Blues,” 1929).
66. The discourse of commodity-fetishism is not used idly here. I have already noted John Lomax’s remark about Leadbelly’s “money value.” It is clear that female blues singers in the 1920s made a much bigger contribution to the composition of their songs than is recorded in the copyrights; what they were called to supply was their bodies (as Van Vechten’s tribute to Bessie Smith’s implies). Male singers were often exploited even more comprehensively while, at the same time, many were refused recording opportunities because they were considered not to possess sufficient “original” (that is, copyright) songs (even if they made creative use of common-stock material). W. C. Handy was inspired to compose blues not only by the Tutwiler incident (see note 14, p. 259) but also when he observed the success of an unknown local band in Cleveland, Mississippi, playing what sounds like dance-blues; describing the shower of cash thrown by the ecstatic dancers, Handy notes, “Then I saw the beauty of primitive music” (*Father of the Blues*, 1991, 77). Advertising images for blues records often fetishize singers’ bodies, especially the women’s, if only via the distortions of blackface caricature, while in the 1930s the flood of semipornographic hokum blues records certainly paid dividends.
67. For Lacan, “the true formula of atheism is not *God is dead* — even by basing the origins of the function of the father upon his murder, Freud protects the father — the true formula of atheism is *God is unconscious*” (Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan [Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1979], 59) — a formula confirmed throughout the blues, where God is a very present absence. Lomax acutely points out that many singers of the most agonized blues were actual orphans, but that this also stands for a broader sense of orphanage from society (*Land Where the Blues Began*, 1993, 361–62). In this context, the racialized discourse of (black) “boys” and (white patriarchal) “bosses” of course takes on a particular meaning. Teresa Brennan has drawn attention (*History After Lacan*, 1993, 171–72) to the argument that, with the social-historical shift from feudalism to liberalism, there was a gradual decline in the symbolic power of external authority (the Father, in a chain running from patriarch through lord and monarch to God) and a transfer inwards to the level of the fraternal (that is, God becomes increasingly unconscious). The fierce fraternal rivalry that resulted had particularly fraught consequences for women, as she points out. On one level, blues emerges out of just such a shift from feudal to liberal social relations — but one where everything is intensified by the effects of slavery

and racial subjection. At the same time, the relationship of this specificity to a quasi-universalistic level where song as such seems to have a privileged function for the psychodynamics of loss, is nicely caught by Nathaniel Mackey: “Song is both a complaint and a consolation dialectically tied to that ordeal, where in back of ‘orphan’ one hears echoes of ‘orphanic,’ a music that turns on abandonment, absence, loss. Think of the black spiritual ‘Motherless Child’ Music is wounded kinship’s last resort” (“Sound and Sentiment, Sound and Symbol,” in *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, ed. Robert G. O’Meally [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998], 602–68, 603).

68. Slavoj Žižek, “Pornography, Nostalgia, Montage: A Triad of the Gaze,” in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 107–22.
69. All tracks mentioned are on *Hurry Down Sunshine: The Essential Recordings of Leroy Carr*, Indigo IGOCD 2016 (1995).
70. For example, Davis, *History of the Blues*, 1995, 138–39.
71. For more detailed exploration of this relation (in Freudian terms, between the life and death drives) see chapter 4.
72. All records discussed in this paragraph are on *Tampa Red — Volume 1 (1928–1929)*, Document DOCD-5073 (1991).
73. Davis, *History of the Blues*, 1995, 137–38.
74. Jaxon was active in vaudeville from around 1910 and became closely involved in the hokum/jive scene, especially in 1930s Chicago, where he had his own radio show from 1933. I will pick up this element of “modernistic” grotesque, which was typical of that scene, later in this chapter.
75. Evans (*Big Road Blues*, 1987, 190–93) describes how racial tension and violence were particularly high, even for Mississippi, in and around the town of Drew, where Patton and many of his blues associates spent much of their careers.
76. David Evans, “Charley Patton, The Conscience of the Delta,” in *Screamin’ and Hollerin’ the Blues: The Worlds of Charley Patton*, Revenant Album No 212 (ND), 14. All Patton recordings mentioned are also found in this reissue collection (whose label name could hardly be more appropriate for Patton’s ghostly vocal doublings!). Patton’s recording career ran from 1929 to 1934.
77. *Ibid.*, 10.
78. For an early example of a “phono-photographic” representation of a yodeled African-American holler, clearly showing the division of the voice produced by sudden register breaks, see Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, 1926, 257–63 (the graphs were the work of Carl Seashore and his associates).

The black lineage may not have been straightforward, however. The vaudeville performer, Charles Anderson, was singing combinations of blues and “lullaby yodels” from 1913, as part of his female impersonation act (see Abbott and Seroff, “‘They Cert’ly Sound Good to Me,’” 1996, 421).

79. Although I have often represented voices in this network as present in a particular recording only by their absence, the network had solid material existence, via common stock cross-racial repertory, travel, and migration, and above all dissemination of records. The records of Carr and Blackwell, and of Tampa Red’s various hokum groups (which later in the 1930s, incidentally, often included Bill Broonzy), circulated widely, in the South as well as the North. Tommy Johnson adapted songs from records of both Tampa Red and Leroy Carr (see Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 1987, 253), and, according to Alan Lomax (*Land Where the Blues Began*, 1993, 411–12), Muddy Waters — protégé of Son House, who was in turn part of the circle around Johnson and Charley Patton — claimed that the first song he tried to learn was Carr’s “How Long Blues.” The Chatmon family, neighbors of the Pattons, produced many musicians and groups, including the Mississippi Sheiks, whose best-selling hokum was marketed in both old time and race record catalogs (see Russell, “Blacks, Whites and Blues,” 2001, 184–87); their 1930 hit, “Sittin’ on Top of the World,” was covered by Patton as “Some Summer Day” (and by many others, including country performers). Equally, down-home records by such artists as Charley Patton would have been familiar to city-based performers in the North. Jimmie Rodgers traveled widely, and is known to have listened to and learned from many black musicians, just as it is clear that many of them listened to his recordings (see e.g., the evidence given by Russell in *ibid.*, 188–95); Howling Wolf, who learned his falsetto from Tommy Johnson,

- claims he was given his name by Rodgers when he met him in the 1920s (*ibid.*, 194). I have already mentioned connections between Patton and both Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey, and that Rainey recorded with Tampa Red. Versions of “Tight Like That” appeared from (among many others) Leadbelly, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong — who also recorded with Jimmie Rodgers... (and so on).
80. Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, 1979, 67–119; Žižek, “Pornography, Nostalgia, Montage,” 1991; “I Hear You with My Eyes,” 1996.
 81. The race theme was awkward for many from the start. Nomenclature (“nigger,” “colored,” “Negro,” etc.) was always controversial and subject to change in later productions. Both the original productions (New York, 1927; London, 1928) and the first important film version (1936) received a good deal of criticism from blacks for their portrayals of African Americans (see e.g., Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 1989, 114–15, 203). The first *Show Boat* film (1929) tactfully excised the miscegenation element of the plot and cast the comedian Stepin Fetchit as Joe, symbol of the mighty “Ol’ Man River,” a part originally intended by Kern and Hammerstein for the heroic Paul Robeson; see Miles Kreuger, *Show Boat: The Story of a Classic American Musical* (New York: Da Capo, 1990), 76–98.
 82. Cited in Ethan Mordden, *Make Believe: The Broadway Musical in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 213.
 83. The main source for my musical interpretations is the “authentic” recording supervised by John McGlinn, the first to be based on the 1927 full score and sketches rediscovered in 1982 (*Show Boat*, EMI CDS 7 49108 [1988]). This recording includes the whole work in its 1927 version, with the original orchestrations, together with numbers discarded before the New York opening and several others added for the 1928 London production and the 1936 film. I also refer to this film, available on video as MGM/UA M301757 (1990).
 84. On the banjo, cf. Walt Whitman: “American opera — put three banjos (or more?) in the orchestra...” (quoted in Lott, *Love and Theft*, 1993, 89).
 85. This was the ending in the first New York production, at least. It replaced an earlier attempt at a finale, containing a new number, equally “jazzy,” called “It’s Getting Hotter in the North,” and was in turn replaced by a variety of alternatives in later productions. There was clearly a problem here, to which I will return — although the aim throughout this production history was to mark the moment musically as *now* — the “jazz age.”
 86. Quoted in Kreuger, *Show Boat*, 1990, 55.
 87. *Ibid.*, 65.
 88. Bessie Smith put out a record of “A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight” early in 1927, while Kern and Hammerstein were working on *Show Boat*. It is intriguing to wonder if they heard it. Whether they did or not, comparison of Smith’s bluesy version with the raggy march style of the snatch that ends the Trocadero scene points up the question what “hot” could mean for them and for their white characters in 1927, and what this had to do with blackness.
 89. Another black composer, Bob Cole, had included a song called “In Dahomey,” with a similar debunking theme to Cook’s, in the show, *A Trip to Coontown* (1898); and his 1901 song, “A Castle on the Nile,” follows a similar theme, with music displaying “the clichés of jungle depiction — a minor key, drone fifths, and pulsating eighth-notes” (see Riis, *Just Before Jazz*, 1989, 87–88). With this description in mind, it is worth thinking ahead not only to Kern’s “In Dahomey” (which displays all these techniques), but also to Duke Ellington’s “jungle style” developed in the late 1920s and 1930s (see below), and at the same time comparing the style to that of the “Caboceer’s Entrance” in Cook’s *In Dahomey* (reproduced in Riis, *More than Just Minstrel Shows: The Rise of Black Musical Theatre at the Turn of the Century*. ISAM Monograph No 33 [New York: Institute for the Study of American Music, 1992], 29), which deploys the same “jungle” clichés. The tune for “On Emancipation Day” is in a bluesy major-pentatonic, with major/minor third oscillations and raggy syncopations (cf. note 14, p. 259). On the *In Dahomey* show, see Riis, *Just Before Jazz*, 1989, 91; Riis, *The Music and Scripts of “In Dahomey”*. Recent Researches in American Music, vol. 5 (Madison, WI: A&R Editions, 1996, 104); John Graziano, “Images of African Americans: African-American Musical Theatre, *Show Boat* and *Porgy and Bess*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, ed. William A. Everitt and Paul R. Laird (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 63–76.

All the clichés of this “jungle style” circulated across a broader style spectrum freely attached to depictions of cultural exoticisms; they all appear, for instance, in Derek Scott’s list of “orientalist” style-markers (Derek Scott, “Orientalism and Musical Style,” *Musical Quarterly* 82

- [1998]: 309–35, 327). But it is clear that, within American music at this time, they had formed into a specific subset. This ambivalence (it may be compared to that in early minstrelsy: see pp. 11–14 above), as well as supporting my argument about Kern's equivocation, explains how Duke Ellington could, in his usual sly manner, parody the "orientalist" style from *within* his "jungle" stance: see Middleton, "Musical Belongings, 2000a, 71–72.
90. Kreuger, *Show Boat*, 1990, 64.
 91. Mordden, *Make Believe*, 1997, 209.
 92. We should think here of the "sisterly discourse" in 1920s female blues to which I have already referred, and which has been discussed by Angela Davis and Hortense Spillers among other writers. They link such discourse to the transmission of (black) knowledge along female genealogical lines. See also pp. 112–13 below.
 93. Compare John Lomax: "[Black] folk singers render their music more naturally in the easy sociability of their homes and churches and schools, in their fields and woodyards, just as birds sing more effectively in their native trees and country" (quoted in Wolfe and Lornell, *Life and Legend*, 1993, 111).
 94. According to John Moore ("The Hieroglyphics of Love': The Torch Singers and Interpretation," in *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, ed. Richard Middleton [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 262–96), although the torch song genre in the 1920s was white, many of the singers were regarded as "blues" singers, as exotic and even as racially marginal. Helen Morgan, who created the part of Julie, was often thought (mistakenly) to be of mixed race, and Noel Coward wrote "Half-Caste Woman" for her (264–71).
 95. The first Queenie was Tess Gardella, who was Italian and whose career had been built as a blackface performer with the stage-name of "Aunt Jemima." She was billed as "Aunt Jemima" for the 1927 and 1932 New York productions. The nuances this must have brought to the relationship with Julie/Helen Morgan, especially in the playing of the pantry scene, boggle the mind! It is clear from photographs reproduced by Kreuger (*Show Boat*, 1990, 31, 47) that she did not play Queenie in blackface (although she must have been heavily made up, and she did wear her stereotypic Aunt Jemima costume); however, in both the souvenir program (68) and several contemporary newspaper cartoons (66–67) she is portrayed in full blackface caricature. One wonders what blues singer Alberta Hunter made of the part in the 1928 London production (she is not featured in the London cast recording of "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," where "Julie" [Marie Burke] sings Queenie's part as well as her own). Hattie McDaniel, although she also had been a blues singer, was by the 1930s better known for stock "Mammy" roles in films, including *Gone with the Wind* (1939), and (ironically) as an "Aunt Jemima" who advertised cake mix. In a further connection, Frankie "Half-Pint" Jaxon (see above, p. 58) got his start around 1910 in a touring show run by McDaniel's father.
 96. The concept, which homes in on the dialogical "turning" of the blackface mask/dance through the generations and between the races, is Lhamon's; see his *Raising Cain*.
 97. Mordden, *Make Believe*, 1997, 229.
 98. *Sketch*, October 5, 1928, quoted in Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 1989, 115.
 99. Mordden, *Make Believe*, 1997, 212.
 100. Robeson nearly always had trouble finding theater and film roles that would not compromise his politics. By the mid-1930s, these were becoming increasingly militant, coupling pan-Africanism with a leftism that would shortly carry him into Communist Party circles. His parts portraying African "natives" in the films, *Sanders of the River* (1934) and *King Solomon's Mines* (1936), which he later deeply regretted, may cast an interesting light on his role in the *Show Boat* movie. Duberman (*Robeson*, 1989, 196, 203) suggests that, though he was happy with the filming, his part was significantly cut and changed in the final version, which he was not allowed to preview.
 101. It is equally interesting to imagine spectators experiencing *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* from Tommy's point of view. Although the Coen Brothers soften the burden of representational hegemony through comedy (as against the naively credulous romance of *Show Boat*), the difficulty of even imagining a racial inverse of *O Brother's* narrative dynamic raises the question of how much has actually changed between 1927 and the early twenty-first century.
 102. Middleton, "Musical Belongings," 2000a, 66–70.
 103. *Ibid.*, 62.
 104. Lacan, quoted, Evans, *Introductory Dictionary*, 1997, 90.
 105. Middleton, "Musical Belongings," 2000a, 70.

106. The first attempt was “It’s Getting Hotter in the North,” but this was abandoned in favor of a jazzed-up “Why Do I Love You?” (1927), then a new song called “Dance Away the Night” (London, 1928), and then a “Gallivantin’ Aroun’” sequence (film, 1936), most of which never made it into the film. Interestingly, the “hot” quotient gets steadily less as we move through this sequence (the “black” contribution more and more taken for granted?). Stills reproduced from the cut “Gallivantin’ Aroun’” material can be seen in Kreuger, *Show Boat*, 1990, 148–50.
107. All records referred to in this section are from *The Ultimate Show Boat: Original Casts, Revivals, Film and Radio Productions and Significant Performances 1928–47*, Pearl GEMS 00600 (1999), except those taken from the 1928 London cast recordings (*Jerome Kern’s Showboat and Sunny*, World Records SH 240 [ND]), or where otherwise indicated.
108. *On Lady Day: The Complete Billie Holiday on Columbia 1933–1944*, Columbia CXX 85470 (2001).
109. Kreuger, *Show Boat*, 1990, 74.
110. Duberman, *Robeson*, 1989, 79.
111. *Ibid.*, 604, note 14; 270, 290, 428.
112. Whiteman on Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, quoted in Neil Leonard, *Jazz and the White Americans: The Acceptance of a New Art Form* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 80.
113. Allison McCracken (“God’s Gift to Us Girls’: Crooning, Gender, and the Re-Creation of American Popular Song, 1928–1933,” *American Music* 17, no. 4 [1999]: 365–95), explores the widespread association of early crooners with homosexuality and the panic that ensued: “The contrast of their widely publicized white male bodies with their thin, pleading voices marked crooners as sissies who had no right to the adulation they received from white women” (366). She also draws attention to the racial lineages of this association: previously it was only blacks and women, particularly black women and blackface minstrels, who could be described as “crooning.”
114. Many of Jolson’s listeners in 1928 would have seen him the previous year, blacked up, in this beseeching, kneeling pose, singing “Mammy” in the film *The Jazz Singer* — a moment, according to Lawrence Kramer (*Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002]), 194), which “dramatizes the power of European immigrants, represented by their pariah figure par excellence, a Jew, to assimilate into the social mainstream by establishing their difference from America’s blacks. . . . The result ‘is that [*The Jazz Singer*] contains no jazz’ [Michael Rogin] — only minstrelsy.” Yes — but there is not only difference but also a strange (masked) identification, and the distinction between “jazz” and “minstrelsy” was at this point (if it ever was) by no means entirely clear. On Jolson’s singing style, see Stephen Banfield, “Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, ed. John Potter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 70–72. Lhamon (*Raising Cain*, 1998, 102–15) is good on Jolson’s place in the blackface cycle. The relationship between the paternal metaphor — the introjection of the Law-of-the-Father — and the nexus of narcissism and maternal desire and authority (the field of the so-called phallic mother), especially in the context of race, is something I pursue in chapter 3.
115. On Jones, see Riis, *Just Before Jazz*, 1989, 146–49, *More Than Just Minstrel Shows*, 1992, 8–11.
116. Riis, *More Than Just Minstrel Shows*, 1992, 13.
117. Shipton (*New History of Jazz*, 2001, 42–62) stresses the importance of the black theater, including the touring outfits and networks, to the early development of both blues and jazz.
118. Alec Wilder, *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators 1900–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 3–28; Hamm, *Yesterdays*, 1979, 358 (and see 357–90 passim).
119. Allan Forte, *The American Popular Ballad of the Golden Era, 1924–1950* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
120. *Ibid.*, 55–59; for my critique of Forte’s book, see Richard Middleton, “Pop Goes Old Theory,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 122 (1997): 303–20 (for his treatment of “Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man,” 311–12).
121. Mordden, *Make Believe*, 1997, 145.
122. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 271–313.
123. On Signifyin(g) — the aesthetic of the “changing same” — see Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); on double consciousness, see above, p. 39.

124. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 1994, 86.
125. Houston Baker Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 15, 25, 56; Alfred Appel Jr., *Jazz Modernism from Ellington and Armstrong to Matisse and Joyce* (New York: Knopf, 2002), 204.
126. All eight sides are on *The Ultimate Show Boat*, and those by Morgan and Robeson were discussed earlier.
127. The recordings discussed here, together with Ethel Waters's recording of "Porgy" discussed later, are on *The Complete Duke Ellington*, vol. 5, CBS 88082 (1974). On the Cotton Club at this time, see Middleton, "Musical Belongings, 2000a, 70–73; Nathan Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Leonard, *Jazz and the White Americans*, 1962; Jim Haskins, *The Cotton Club* (New York: Random House, 1977); Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968). Cab Calloway describes the Cotton Club as "a replica of a Southern mansion. . . . The waiters were dressed in red tuxedos, like butlers in a southern mansion. . . . and the whole set was like the sleepy-time-down-south during slavery. . . . I suppose the idea was to make whites who came to the club feel like they were being catered to and entertained by black slaves" (Cab Calloway and Bryant Rollins, *Of Minnie the Moocher and Me* [New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976], 88).
128. However, according to Shipton (*New History of Jazz*, 2001, 576–77), scat had a white as well as black provenance, within vaudeville performance; but where did that come from — the minstrel show?
129. This is my speculative reading of Ellington's blackface wink in such performances; see Middleton, *Musical Belongings*, 2000a, 72.
130. And which would bear further fruit in the emergence of rock 'n' roll, the subject of John Mowitz's analysis of drum voicing in his book, *Percussion* (2002).
131. It is no doubt this that James Reese Europe is referring to in his description (1919) of a four-piece band from New Orleans, which he seems to have heard there around 1904, and which subsequently came to New York. This "Razz's Band" (from whose name the term jazz derives, he rather dubiously claims) "had no idea at all of what they were playing; they improvised as they went along, but such was their innate sense of rhythm that they produced something that was very taking. . . . The Negro loves anything that is peculiar in music, and this 'jazzing' appeals to him strongly. . . . I have to call a daily rehearsal of my band to prevent musicians from adding to their music more than I wish them to. Whenever possible they all embroider their parts in order to produce new, peculiar sounds" (quoted in Vincent, *Keep Cool*, 1995, 211–12). On "circus trombone" and its origins in cakewalk band music, see William J. Schaffer and Johannes Riedel, *The Art of Ragtime* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 112–15. The techniques fed through to New Orleans jazz; for example, the trombone tiger growls in "Tiger Rag" (which, interestingly, would become a key piece, along with blues, in the repertoire of The Missourians, Cab Calloway's band: see below).
132. The Victor recordings, from October 1927, are on *The Works of Duke/Complete Edition*, vol. 1, RCA 731043 (ND).
133. Dodge (1929), quoted in Shipton, *New History of Jazz*, 2001, 210; Roger Pryor Dodge, "Harp-sichords and Trumpets" (1934) in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 105–10; R. D. Darrell, "Black Beauty" (1932) in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 1993, 57–65, 58.
134. *The Works of Duke/Complete Edition*, vol. 8, RCA 741114 (ND).
135. On Ellington's "Dear Old Southland," see Appel, *Jazz Modernism*, 2002, 213; David Metzger, "Shadow Play: The Spiritual in Duke Ellington's 'Black and Tan Fantasy,'" *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 2 (1997): 137–58, 138–39, note 4. (Metzger's article focuses on the derivation of the main theme in "Black and Tan Fantasy" from a "spiritual" — actually a black mediation of a "sacred song," "The Holy City," by a white composer.) On the derivation of "Summertime," see Samuel A. Floyd Jr., "Troping the Blues: From Spirituals to Concert Hall," *Black Music Research Journal* 13, no. 1 (1993): 31–51.
136. Cootie Williams and His Rug Cutters, "Ol' Man River," *The Duke's Men*, vol. 2, 1938–1939, Columbia C2K48835 (1993); and see Appel's excellent discussion (*Jazz Modernism*, 2002, 218).
137. Appel, *Jazz Modernism*, 2002, 143; and see *ibid.*, 31–32, 140–43. These three recordings are on *Louis Armstrong V.S.O.P.* 6, 7, CBS 62475, 62476 (1974).
138. See Appel, *Jazz Modernism*, 2002, 26–27, 91–114; Shipton, *New History of Jazz*, 2001, 594–97.

All the Waller tracks discussed here are on Fats Waller, *Great Original Performances 1927–1940*, Jazz Classics RPCD 619 (1993).

139. On *Louis Armstrong, V.S.O.P.*, vol. 1, CBS 62470 (ND).
140. On *Billy Banks and His Rhythmakers*, CBS 52732 (1970).
141. Shipton, *New History of Jazz*, 2001, 593. All pieces discussed here are on *Cab Calloway and His Orchestra 1930–1931*, Classics 516 (1990). Calloway and his band went on performing in his style right through the thirties and beyond, but the main elements are all there in the early recordings of 1930 and 1931. Shipton's discussion of Calloway (583, 590–93) is useful, and so is Gunther Schuller's: *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 326–50.

According to Calloway, “music . . . should keep up with the pace and feeling of life. . . . The Missourians were closer [than the Alabamians, his previous band] to what was going on in New York, but they still needed to work at keeping up with the times. That was exactly what I tried to get them to do . . . to stay hip with it” (Calloway and Rollins, *Of Minnie*, 1976, 84).
142. Arguably, he more than anyone invented the hepster language of “jive” which became so popular at this time, although he drew on existing scat vocabularies such as Armstrong's; see Calloway, *The New Cab Calloway's Cat-ologue* (New York: Calloway, 1938); *The New Cab Calloway's Hepster's Dictionary: Language of Jive* (New York: Calloway, 1944). Small wonder that Gershwin intended the character of Sportin' Life in *Porgy and Bess* for him, and that in later years he made a great success of the part (though he did not play it in the first production).
143. “De black ones” is what he sings; this is how to do it, Paul!
144. Much of the drug-related argot concerned marihuana or opium, and there are often “oriental” references (e.g., snake imagery: a “viper,” for instance, was a marihuana user; Minnie the Moocher's downfall takes place in Chinatown, and she is described as a “red hot hootchie coocher”). A piece like “The Levee Low-Down” demonstrates that Calloway could readily do the jungle style without the drug references — but even here, in one of the growled brass solos, there is a quotation from “Fatima's Dance”! So much for “primitivism,” this seems to say (but then again, *how* much?). The “orientalism” in Calloway's moaner repertoire may cast light on the participation of African-American musicians at this time (including Ellington) in fashionable “Arabian” motifs, as well as on Calloway's debt to Jolson.
145. See Calloway and Rollins, *Of Minnie*, 1976, 111.
146. See Slim Gaillard and Slam Stewart, *Complete Columbia Master Takes*, Definitive Records DRCD11190 (2001).
147. See, e.g., Alyn Shipton, *Groovin' High: The Life of Dizzy Gillespie* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 158–62, 173.
148. George Russell, who contributed to the composition, quoted in *ibid.*, 200. “Cubana Be/Cubana Bop” is reissued on Dizzy Gillespie, *The Complete RCA Victor Recordings*, Bluebird 07863 66528-2 (1995).
149. *The Duke Ellington Carnegie Hall Concerts, January 1943*, Prestige P-34004 (1977); the core theme of the “Black” movement is Ellington's “spiritual,” “Come Sunday.”
150. Charles Mingus, *Beneath the Underdog* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1975). Nowhere is the pathology of the race/sex interplay in America more powerfully represented. Nobody in the 1950s and 1960s played more “cubist blues” than Mingus.
151. This is “King Joe,” a 1941 tribute to boxer Joe Louis, with words by novelist Richard Wright, music by the Basie Band, and production by white impresario John Hammond. Robeson sings the simple blues formulae in standard English, with full “operatic” voice production, wooden phrasing, and blue notes that scream their discomfort. He also recorded “St. Louis Blues” in much the same style (but without the advantage of backing from the Basie Band); but of course only one of this tune's three strains is in the twelve-bar form. Both recordings can be heard on *The Paul Robeson Collection*, Hallmark 390692/3 (1998).
152. Riis, *Just Before Jazz*, 1989, 67–68.
153. Robert Fink, “Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon,” *American Music* 16 (1998): 135–79. Fink tells a more complicated story, however, arguing that Presley's live performance of “Hound Dog” started off as comedy (“a witty multiracial piece of signifyin' humor, troping off white overreactions to black sexual innuendo”) but that, angered by media panic and censorship when he sang this version on TV, he transformed it for his recording into a “menacing, rough-trade version of the song” (169). I confess I cannot hear the contrast as being this extreme; but in any case both versions are

- “performative” — Fink, I think, errs in distinguishing the recorded version as being “fierce, angry, and real” (171), as if coming from some inchoate emotional core of authenticity — and each encapsulates a form of blackface caricature. Fink makes a good point in noting that in the process of developing the recorded version, elements of the rhythm become more “square,” rigid, and “Beethovenian,” and the connection to my discussion (below) of “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” and “What If I Was White?” is intriguing (see note 157). But white reification of “black rhythm” is as old (at least) as notations of the spirituals, as Radano makes clear (“Denoting Difference,” 1996, 506–44).
154. Charles Shaar Murray, *Crosstown Traffic: Jimi Hendrix and Post-War Pop* (London: Faber, 1989), 82, 83, 138; and see 45, 68–71, 78–79 (on Hendrix’s blackface negotiations) and 145–49 (on “Voodoo Chile”). “Voodoo Chile” is on *The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Electric Ladyland*, Track 613 017 (1968).
 155. Lhamon, *Raising Cain*, 1998, 218–26.
 156. I discuss Eminem’s “My Name Is” from his *The Slim Shady LP*, Interscope 490 287-2 (1999) in Richard Middleton, “Locating the People: Music and the Popular,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton (New York: Routledge, 2003), 251–62, 259–60.
 157. Sticky Fingaz, “What If I Was White,” [*Black Trash*] *The Autobiography of Kirk Jones*, Universal 012 157 990-2 (2001). The answer to my question, the music seems to suggest (but the subtleties in the lyrics, not to mention the participation of Eminem, to query) is: no (despite the claims of Jumpin’ Jack Flash). The hook’s first rhythm (Ex. 2.3a) insistently recalls the initial, and famous, “fate” or “V for Victory” motive of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, its continuation (Ex. 2.3b) Beethoven’s equally celebrated tendency to hammer his triumphs to death, usually in marcato four-four, e.g., at the end of the same symphony. The mind then moves on, deliciously in view of blackface phallic myth, to Susan McClary’s notorious analysis of such Beethovenian moments as standing for male desire, penetration, and even rape; see McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 1991, 12–16, 68–69, 124–30.
 158. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 1994, 116.

Chapter 3

1. There is good work that does not stop at this point; for example, Sheila Whiteley, ed., *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1997); Stan Hawkins, *Settling the Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics* (London: Ashgate, 2002); and relevant parts of Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and G. C. Thomas, ed., *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (London: Routledge, 1993), of Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, ed., *Embodied Voices: Representing Racialized Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and of McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 1991.
2. Not that the converse position is less problematic: the exploration in punk rock of new female voices did not of itself lead to transformation in women’s economic and social power within the music industry.
3. Barbara Bradby and Dave Laing, “Introduction,” in “Gender and Sexuality,” special issue, *Popular Music* 20 (2001): 295–300, 299. Kristeva’s essay is included in Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, trans. Anita Barrows (London: Marion Boyars, 1977).
4. Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 41.
5. Carolyn Abbate, “Opera; Or, the Envoicing of Women,” in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 225–58, 239, n. 257. Do I dare go further and draw attention to the common observation that it is men who know best what it means to behave (walk, talk, flirt, etc.) “like a woman”? This is the transvestite or *Some Like It Hot* argument, and it can also be applied, mutatis mutandis, to the register of race (the “blackface” argument).
6. Wayne Koestenbaum, “The Queen’s Throat: (Homo)sexuality and the Art of Singing,” in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991), 205–34, 211.
7. *Ibid.*, 206–7.

8. Ibid., 205.
9. Ibid., 214.
10. For an excellent summary of the contradictory values forming the field of voice, see Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 1988, 42–45; and for a discussion of the construction in some psychoanalytic traditions of the mouth as an “organ hole,” entry-point to the “dark continent” of female sexuality, concluding with the Derridean deconstruction, see *ibid.*, 66–71.
11. Steven Connor (*Dumbstruck*, 2000), has a not dissimilar figure — the “vocalic body,” which “is the idea . . . of a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operation of the voice” (35). “Having or being”: the gendered articulation of this body is already implicit in this formulation; and, while I like the “alimentary” metaphor in part for its active quality — its insistence on the voice’s in-, di-, and e-gestive functions in a process that is always both production and consumption — Connor’s discussion also moves in this direction. Pointing to the assumption in Classical Greece that the ventriloquial voice is located in the stomach (as the etymology suggests), he describes how this topography was extended to take in the female genitals, seen as offering an “opening” to the workings of the *earth’s* breath, an operation “which parallels ingestion . . . but differs from ingestion in that . . . speech adds something to the breath which it exhales; breathing has utterance as its fruit” (57). These ideas, including the myth of the “speaking womb” and of “incarnation itself as a kind of ventriloquism, the emission of a word from the genital regions” (92, 93), remained current to the eighteenth century. They go far, perhaps, to provide mythic embodiment for the structure of phallogocentricity: man — born as Logos from Woman — in turn speaks her, ventriloquist to her dummy.
12. On the body as an “inscriptional site” for performative fabrications of gender identity, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), 134–41.
13. Koestenbaum, “The Queen’s Throat,” 224.
14. See Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 21–46.
15. Abbate, “Opera; Or, the Envoicing of Women,” 1993, 226–27. On displacement of male lack to the female through the classic techniques of cinematic projection (and, we might add, similar techniques in recorded music), see Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 1988, 24.
16. Ibid., 251.
17. John Mowitt starts with this question in “The Sound of Music in the Era of Its Electronic Reproducibility,” in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 173–97.
18. Žižek, “I Hear You with My Eyes,” 1996, 92. In this sense, we might say that *all* voices are ventriloquial; the issue is just who (or where) is the ventriloquist, who (where) the dummy.
19. The “acoustic mirror” is a phrase of Guy Rosolato’s. His ideas, together with the roles of voice and gaze in subject construction more generally, are discussed in Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 1988.
20. Koestenbaum, “The Queen’s Throat,” 1991, 223, 217.
21. Abbate, “Opera; Or, the Envoicing of Women,” 1993, 236, 248, 252.
22. Van Morrison, “Gloria,” *The Story of Them, Featuring Van Morrison*, Deram 844 813-2 (1997); Patti Smith, “Gloria in Excelsis Deo”/“Gloria,” *Horses*, Arista 07822 18822 2 (1975).
23. Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, “Rock and Sexuality,” in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (London: Routledge, 1990), 371–89.
24. Ibid., 374.
25. Mike Daley, “Patti Smith’s ‘Gloria’: Intertextual Play in a Vocal Performance,” *Popular Music* 16, no.3 (1997): 235–53.
26. Victor Bockris, *Patti Smith* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), 20.
27. Goffredo Plastino kindly brought to my attention a Hendrix version of “Gloria,” issued on an Italian single (Polygram 2311 014 Jimi 1) in 1979. I have not come across this recording elsewhere. This stretched-out psychedelic-rock version is even more “monolithic” in its effect than Morrison’s, dominated by the unceasing chordal riff and Hendrix’s vocal and guitar. His guitar solos leave very little (that is, everything) about his encounter with Gloria to the imagination.

28. Bockris, *Patti Smith*, 1998, 7.
29. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester, 1991); Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977a), 179–89.
30. This is Judith Butler's term for that subversive process which "opens up anatomy — and sexual difference itself — as a site of proliferative resignifications," at once "deprivileging" the phallus and "recirculating and reprivileging it"; see Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge 1993), 88, 89.
31. Actually Freud hardly ever uses the word *phallus* (though he does use the adjective *phallic* rather more). His preference for *penis* is a symptom of his reluctance to abandon biologism completely.
32. See Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 5–11; *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1995), 20–21.
33. One way of putting this, drawn from a particular current in Lacan's thought, is that there are *two* laws: the law of the superego is one of irrational, tyrannical command and is actually at odds with the normative law governing the subject's position in the Symbolic order. The destructive character of the superego — it stands for the *jouissance* of the Other within the subject — means that it represents loss as such.
34. Mladen Dolar, "The Object Voice," in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 7–31, 27.
35. Lacan, quoted in *ibid.*, 27–28.
36. The tempo increases continuously through the first set of verses to create an initial climax at the first chorus, then builds to a second climax at the second chorus, drops to half-time for the chiming of the tower bells, then jumps back to full speed for the final chorus — which fades to incompleteness.
37. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 1990, 15.
38. Note how, with the strange episode in the lyrics where "twenty thousand girls call their name out to me" "at the stadium," there is a conflation of modes of *jouissance* attaching to sex, religion, and rock stardom.
39. Butler is perhaps the most incisive. However, there have long been intelligent feminists prepared to defend, or at least work with, Lacan's ideas — not just within the rather specific tradition of French feminist psychoanalysis (Kristeva, Irigaray, Cixous) but also in the Anglophone world; the first important publication in the latter category, dating from not long after Patti Smith's "Gloria," is Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds., *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne* (London: Macmillan, 1982).
40. For a stimulating account, see Slavoj Žižek, "Otto Weininger, or 'Woman Doesn't Exist,'" in *The Žižek Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999b), 127–47 — a critique of Otto Weininger's misogynistic tract of 1903, *Sex and Character*. A comparison between Germaine Greer's treatment of Weininger (*The Female Eunuch* [London: Paladin, 1971], 119ff.), which straightforwardly attacks his misogyny, and Žižek's, which unpicks his extremism in order to lay the foundations for a "realistic" but "knowing" feminist counterposition, is telling.
41. Apparently, she used to "jerk off" to her own photo — not to mention the Bible (Bockris, *Patti Smith*, 1998, 160); and on one level her work often has some of the quality of pornography — the objectification of the watching subject-voyeur (see Žižek's exploration of this territory, in his "Pornography, Nostalgia, Montage," 1991). At the same time, her general attitude to performance is more like that associated with acting — an "acting out."
42. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 8–18.
43. Brian Currid, "'We Are Family': House Music and Queer Performativity," in *Cruising the Performative: Interventions into the Representation of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Sexuality*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case, Philip Brett, and Susan Leigh Foster (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 165–96.
44. *Ibid.*, 177.
45. *Ibid.*, 179.
46. Žižek, "I Hear You with My Eyes," 1996, 93.
47. See Žižek, "Pornography, Nostalgia, Montage," 1991, 116 ff.; "I Hear You with My Eyes," 1996, 92ff.

48. Lacan took the idea of Woman as “object of exchange” most directly from Lévi-Strauss, but it was already well entrenched in physical anthropology and Freudian psychoanalysis. In both of these discourses, it is regarded, taken together with the incest taboo which it accompanies, as a founding moment in the emergence of human society. Gayle Rubin’s celebrated critique applies a Marxist analysis to the implications of this for the history and structure of the heterosexual gender system (see “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex,” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Rapp Reiter [New York: Monthly Review, 1975], 157–210). For an excellent survey of feminist work on gender, from a Marxist point of view, see Haraway, “‘Gender’ for a Marxist Dictionary,” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 127–48.
49. See John Corbett and Terri Kapsalis, “Aural Sex: The Female Orgasm in Popular Sound,” *The Drama Review* 40, no.3 (1996): 102–11.
50. Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 1988, 49.
51. Žizek, “Otto Weininger,” 1999b, 136.
52. That a Big N might stand both for the Name-of-the-Father and for Nostalgia (see above, pp. 54–55) may be no accident.
53. Bockris, *Patti Smith*, 1998, 125; Clinton Heylin, *From the Velvets to the Voidoids* (London: Penguin, 1993), 198.
54. See, e.g., Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 1990, 35–78.
55. And, adding a further register of analysis, it is worth noting that both originated from working-class backgrounds and moved, along one of the classic popular-music routes, into a certain sort of bohemia. More about class in due course.
56. Jimi Hendrix’s version, referred to in note 27 above (p. 271), brings these references right up front, especially given his (racist) image as a “black stud.”
57. “I never really liked white stuff” (Bockris, *Patti Smith*, 1998, 13); “the Rolling Stones redeemed the white man forever” (*ibid.*, 28).
58. bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), 5.
59. See Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (1970, London: Virago, 1977), 57, 80–81; Greer, *Female Eunuch*, 1971, 343. hooks (*Ain’t I a Woman*, 1982, 138ff) attacks this “correspondence” as equating “women” with “white women” and “blacks” with (implicitly) black men, and hence itself a construct of patriarchy. Angela Davis (*Women, Race and Class* [London: The Women’s Press, 1982], 33–34, 42–45) points out that the “correspondence” can be traced back to the nineteenth century, when it led to actual political alliances (but also disputes) between feminists and abolitionists.
60. Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* (summer 1987): 65–81, 65.
61. Quoted in Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness and Race Relations* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 302.
62. See, e.g., Dunn and Jones, *Embodied Voices*, 1994, 11–13. The quoted phrases here are taken by Dunn and Jones from Kaja Silverman and Hélène Cixous respectively.
63. See Angela Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. Joy James (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998a), 7, 12.
64. Baraka, quoted in hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman*, 1982, 95. Baraka’s masculinism at this time was also, entirely typically, homophobic: unlike “effeminate” white men, the virile black was a “real” man; see *ibid.*, 96.
65. Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (London: Panther, 1970), 26, 184, 65, 146, 151, 152. Like Baraka’s, Cleaver’s neoprimitive masculinism was also homophobic: in his critique of James Baldwin, he equates Baldwin’s alleged intellectual integrationism with his homosexuality; he “bends over” for the white man (100).
66. Interestingly, Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice*, including “The Allegory of the Black Eunuchs” (143–59), was first published in 1969, only a year before Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*.
67. “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves,” reprinted in Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 1998a, 111–28. See also Davis, *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (London: Orbach and Chambers, 1971), and her later work, *Women, Race and Class* (London: The Women’s Press, 1982).
68. bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman*, 1982. See also Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Super Woman* (New York: Dial Press, 1978).
69. bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston MA: South End Press, 1984), 69–70; Davis, *Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 1998a, 116.

70. Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (New York: Pantheon, 1998b), 67.
71. Quoted in *ibid.*, 121–22 (emphasis added).
72. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 1987, 66, 80.
73. Peter Antelyes, “Red Hot Mamas: Bessie Smith, Sophie Tucker, and the Ethnic Maternal Voice in American Popular Song,” in *Embodied Voices: Representing Vocality in Western Culture*, ed. Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 212–29, 213, 216. At the same time, Antelyes makes use of the same Danny Barker quotation as Angela Davis, see note 71 above.
74. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 102–3.
75. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1991, 248–49. There is a specific genealogy behind such images. Just as feminism and abolitionism danced together in complex ways in the nineteenth century, so too the more transgressive side of the racio-sexual imaginary was prefigured in the cross-dressing fantasies of the early minstrel show: see Lott, *Love and Theft*, 1993, 159–68. The two lineages intersected in the “feminization” of minstrelsy associated with Stephen Foster (*ibid.*, 187–201).
76. See Silverman, *Acoustic Mirror*, 1988, 72–100.
77. *Ibid.*, 101–26. For another critique of Kristeva, on similar lines, see Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 1990, 79–91.
78. Silverman, *Acoustic Mirror*, 1988, 79–84
79. *Ibid.*, 84–86.
80. *Ibid.*, 98–100.
81. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 79, 80.
82. *Ibid.*, 184
83. See Nina Simone (with Stephen Cleary), *I Put a Spell on You: The Autobiography of Nina Simone* (London: Ebury Press, 1991). As a ghosted autobiography, this source is, of course, likely to be performing a particular kind of act of self-construction.
84. *Ibid.*, 92.
85. *Ibid.*, 87.
86. *Ibid.*, 65, 90–91.
87. *Ibid.*, 113.
88. *Ibid.*, 24.
89. *Ibid.*, 125.
90. *Ibid.*, 141.
91. *Ibid.*, 144.
92. *Ibid.*, 150, 164
93. Barbara Engh, “Loving It: Music and Criticism in Roland Barthes,” in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 66–79, 74, 79. One is reminded of the ancient fantasy of “speaking without a tongue” — part of the myth of a female-genital voice (Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 2000, 182); but Simone decisively inverts the feminizing implications of this fantasy.
94. All the Simone recordings discussed in any detail here can be found on Nina Simone, *Gold*, Universal Classics and Jazz 9808087 (2003).
95. Maybe she had. Lomax’s field trip was in 1959, and many of the recordings were issued on Atlantic Records in 1960. Simone’s recording of “See-Line Woman” dates from 1964.
96. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 67.
97. Koestenbaum (“The Queen’s Throat,” 1991, 222) reminds us that “Marcel Garcia’s laryngoscope — a device made of two mirrors — assured him that he had a larynx, and, by extension, a phallus and a self.”
98. Screaming Jay Hawkins, “I Put a Spell on You,” Okeh 7072 (1956), reissued on *Radio Gold 4*, Ace CDCHD 810 (2001).
99. See Davis, *Blues Legacies*, 1998b, 156.
100. Simone, *I Put a Spell*, 1991, 110.
101. Diamanda Galás, *The Singer*, Mute CDSTUMM103 (1992).
102. Galás is Greek-American and her father is said to have sung Rebetika, the “Greek blues.” See David Schwartz, *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 197, note 3.
103. Galás, quoted in *ibid.*, 134.
104. Michael Flanagan, “Invoking Diamanda,” in *Life Sentences: Writers, Artists, and Aids*, ed. Thomas Avena (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1994), 161–75, 164.

105. Ibid., 173.
106. Galás, quoted in Thomas Avena, "Interview with Diamanda Galás," in *Life Sentences: Writers, Artists, and Aids*, ed. Thomas Avena (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1994), 177–97, 180.
107. Quoted in *ibid.*, 188.
108. See Schwartz, *Listening Subjects*, 1997, 134–38.
109. Evans, *Introductory Dictionary*, 1997, 78.
110. See Mary Celeste Kearney, "The Missing Links: Riot Grrrl — Feminism — Lesbian Culture," in *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, ed. Sheila Whiteley (London: Routledge, 1997), 207–29.
- Kearney's objection to the reduction of Riot Grrrl to stereotypic positions within existing patriarchal discourse (e.g., as "girl punks") is well made. But the fact that no "separatist" movement can escape such conflicts demonstrates that the structure of gender politics is an interactive web to which there is no outside.
111. See Currid, "'We Are Family,'" 1995; Susana Loza, "Sampling (Hetero) Sexuality: Diva-ness and Discipline in Electronic Dance Music," *Popular Music* 20 no. 3 (2001): 349–57; Stephen Amico, "'I Want Muscles': House Music, Homosexuality and Masculine Signification," *Popular Music* 20, no. 3 (2001): 359–78; Barbara Bradby, "Sampling Sexuality: Gender, Technology and the Body in Dance Music," *Popular Music* 12 no. 2 (1993): 155–76.
112. Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991), 13–31, 17, 21.
113. See Fred E Maus, "Glamour and Evasion: the Fabulous Ambivalence of the Pet Shop Boys," *Popular Music* 20, no.3 (2001): 379–93.
114. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1991, 86–90.
115. I draw on *The Best of Michael Jackson and Jackson Five*, Polygram 530 804-2 (1997); Michael Jackson, *Number Ones*, Epic 2 513800 (2003); and Michael Jackson, *Video Greatest Hits*, Sony SMV 50123 2 (1995).
116. Cynthia Fuchs, "Michael Jackson's Penis," in *Cruising the Performative: Interventions into the Representation of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Sexuality*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case, Philip Brett, and Susan Leigh Foster (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 13–33.
117. Ibid., 17.
118. Ibid., 26.
119. Ibid., 18.
120. Fuchs (*ibid.*, 13) quotes Fanon: "One is no longer aware of the Negro, but only of a penis; the Negro is eclipsed. He is a penis."
121. On the narrative structures of his videos, see Kobena Mercer, "Monster Metaphors: Notes on Michael Jackson's *Thriller*," in *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader*, ed. Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Routledge, 1993), 93–108. A good example of the interinscription of "life" and "music," pointed out by Mercer, is the way that the transformation of Jackson in the *Thriller* video into a werewolf, enacted through special effects before our eyes, can be seen as "a metaphor for the aesthetic reconstruction of Michael Jackson's face" —that is, of his face in "real life" (105).
122. Fuchs, "Michael Jackson's Penis," 1995, 19–20.
123. In one celebrated sequence in *Black or White*, Jackson, portrayed as an angry ghetto youth, wrecks a car with a crowbar while clearly (it would seem) masturbating. It seems wonderfully appropriate both that Jackson cut this sequence, in response to apparent Moral Majority outrage, and that it is now restored: his decision "to excise the masturbatory member that remains not-seen, [which] imitates his continuing surgical reconstruction," doubles the castration that the exorcism has already put in play, while the return of "the painful, aching, unseen penis" performs out, as in all structures of disavowal, an insistence of what has been denied (*ibid.*, 24).
124. Mercer, "Monster Metaphors," 1993, 106–7.
125. I have drawn on the CD single of her E.S.C. song, "Diva," CNR Music 5300295 (1998); the album *Diva*, IMP 2048 (1998); and a privately produced video of the BBC broadcast of the 1998 Eurovision Song Contest.

Although there appears to be no connection between Dana International's choice of name and that of the 1970 E.S.C. winner, the Irish singer Dana, the coincidence is piquant. Dana epitomized the wholesome values of a traditional "feminine" singing style — as in her winning song, "All Kinds of Everything" — and subsequently went on to stand, unsuccessfully, for the

- Presidency of the Irish Republic, and, successfully, for election to the European Parliament on a Catholic, antiabortion, family values ticket.
126. For a cross-section of media reports, see http://home.online.no/geskogse/media_press_uk.html
 127. Ted Swedenburg, "Saida Sultan/Dana International: Transgender Pop and the Polysemiotics of Sex, Nation, and Ethnicity on the Israeli-Egyptian Border," *Musical Quarterly* 81, no.1 (1997): 81–108, 98; 107, note 59.
 128. See Sander Gilman, "Damaged Men: Thoughts on Kafka's Body," in *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 176–89.
 129. Peter Antelyes, reasonably enough, discusses Bessie Smith and the Jewish Sophie Tucker side by side (see "Red Hot Mamas," 1994). The interplay of African-American and Jewish elements — East and South penetrating (or "invaginating"?) the "West," as it were — sets the essential framework for the development of American popular music right through the twentieth century.
 130. See Yael Ben-Zvi, "Zionist Lesbianism and Transsexual Transgression," *Middle East Report* (Spring 1998), 26–28, 37.
 131. Ashkenazi Jews are those of European origin. Mizrahi Jews originate in Africa or Asia, and especially Middle Eastern countries other than Israel.
 132. See Swedenburg, "Saida Sultan," 1997. There was by this time a tradition of Mizrahi music in Israel, including a lineage of female Yemenite singers; Dana International's immediate predecessor, Ofra Haza, who stemmed from this background, came second in the 1983 E.S.C. See Motti Regev, "Musica Mizrahit, Israeli Rock and National Culture in Israel," *Popular Music* 15, no.3 (1996): 275–84.
 133. See Philip Bohlman, "The *Shechinah*, or the Feminine Sacred in the Musics of the Jewish Mediterranean," accessed at <http://home.online.no/~geskogse/bohlman.pdf>. The quotations are from pp. 1 and 9 respectively. See also Liora Mariel, "Dana International: A Self-Made Jewish Diva," *Race, Gender, and Class* 6, no.4 (1999): 110–24.
 134. From interviews in *The Guardian* (June 26, 1998) and the *Jewish Telegraph* (June 19, 1998) respectively; accessed on the web (see note 126). Dana International's selection as Israeli candidate for the E.S.C. certainly disturbed the order of the patriarchal state: the government almost fell as far-right religious parties threatened to walk out.
 135. Loza, "Sampling (Hetero) Sexuality," 2001, 354.
 136. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 150.
 137. Mariel, "Dana International," 1999, 116; Swedenburg, "Saida Sultan," 1997, 97.
 138. It is intriguing, if inconclusive, to compare it to the recordings of the last castrato (dating from 1902 and 1904): Alessandro Moreschi, *The Last Castrato: Complete Vatican Recordings*, Opal CD 9823 (1987). The radical gap opened by the different recording technologies leaves any parallel (which I certainly sense) tantalizingly faint. My colleague, Paul Carding, Professor of Voice Pathology at the University of Newcastle, thinks it unlikely, on the basis of aural evidence alone, that Dana International has undergone surgical "tightening" of the vocal folds. It is of course amusing that the first and last institution known to have employed castrato singers was the Vatican; *il Papa's* little joke?
 139. Homi Bhabha, "Are You a Man or a Mouse?" in *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 57–65.
 140. See Currid, "We Are Family," 1995, 186–92.
 141. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 181.
 142. Bohlman, "The *Shechinah*"; Swedenburg, "Saida Sultan," 1997, 93–97, 99–101; Mariel, "Dana International," 1999, 117, 122.
 143. For more detail on these songs, and on the language issue, see Ben-Zvi, "Zionist Lesbianism," 1998; Swedenburg, "Saida Sultan," 1997; Liora Mariel, "Diva in the Promised Land: A Blueprint for Newspeak?" *World Englishes* 17, no.2 (1998): 225–37.
 144. Bohlman, "The *Shechinah*," 11, 12.
 145. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 1990, 36–53; the quotations are from 48, 45.
 146. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 162.
 147. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 1990, 130.
 148. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 160; see also Barbara Ehrenreich, "The Decline of Patriarchy," in *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 284–90.
 149. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 161.

Chapter 4

1. Jacques Lacan, quoted, Mitchell and Rose, *Feminine Sexuality*, 1982, 35.
2. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 1993, 95.
3. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 150–51.
4. In ad hominem terms, this is a passage from Marx through Freud and Lacan to Žižek — though I would want to avoid thinking this historical staging in overly reductive terms.
5. For example, in Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1990), chapter 7.
6. Sigmund Freud, “Recollection, Repetition and Working Through,” in *Therapy and Technique*, ed. Philip Rieff (1914, New York: Collier Books, 1963), 157–66.
7. “Re-presentation”: I intend the use of this style here to signal the significance of the temporal (and often spatial) gap which enables us to group all of these terms under this general concept. There are important differences between them. For example, “to represent” (to place before, again) and “to repeat” (to seek again), even in the etymology, seem to have radically different tones, related perhaps to claims of epistemological certainty. Jacques Attali’s rich account of the relations between “representing” and “repeating” is relevant, though arguably it oversimplifies the relationship (see pp. 25–26 above).
8. The idea of “encounter,” as a trope articulating the emergence and development of a sense of “world music” within the culture of Western modernity, from the Renaissance to the present, is brilliantly presented by Philip Bohlman in his *World Music* (2002). I use the term *history* here in a particular sense, one contingent upon the self-understanding of “modernity” itself; this understanding will, I hope, become clear as the discussion proceeds.
9. On the “work concept,” its critique and its historical career, see Michael Talbot, ed., *The Musical Work: Invention or Reality?* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).
10. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 1999, 94.
11. Not entirely: Attali (*Noise*, 1985, 120–21) suggests that “It is not the least of the paradoxes of our research that we have detected uniformity in such multifarious music, repetition in a society that talks so much about change, silence in the midst of so much noise, death in the heart of life. Everywhere, in fact, diversity, noise, and life are no longer anything more than masks . . .” We may not want to accept his pessimistic tone uncritically.
12. We might think that repetition in music is always in the act of saying, “*Salve!*” — “Be well (or else . . .).”
13. The concept of “refrain” is crucial to Deleuze’s privileging of music in his theory of rhizomatic thought; thus: “Music is a creative, active operation that consists in deterritorializing the refrain. Whereas the refrain is essentially territorial, territorializing, or reterritorializing, music makes it a deterritorialized content for a deterritorializing form of expression” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux*, 1988, 300; and see 299–350 *passim*). I introduce the concept here partly in acknowledgment of this intriguing idea, but also as a prelude to my critique of Deleuze which will come later.
14. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, xiv.
15. Susan McClary, “Same as It Ever Was: Youth Culture and Music,” in *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose (London: Routledge, 1994) 29–40. For a similar argument, including much of the same material, but in a different context, see Susan McClary, “Music, the Pythagoreans, and the Body,” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 82–104.
16. McClary, “Same as It Ever Was,” 1994, 38.
17. *Ibid.*, 37, my emphasis; 38.
18. *Ibid.*, 40.
19. Sledge’s record was first issued on Atlantic 2326 (1966).
20. In Žižek’s account of the Lacanian story, the Lady of “courtly love” is an emptied-out, sublimated object standing in for the traumatic Thing — the impossible Real that can never appear — imposing randomly unreasonable demands on her masochistic (male) slave. See Slavoj Žižek, “Courtly Love, or Woman as Thing,” in *The Žižek Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999a), 148–73.
21. See *ibid.*, 150–60; the quotations are from 158, 159.
22. See Kramer, “Ghost Stories: Cultural Memory, Mourning and the Myth of Originality,” in *Musical Meaning*, 2002, 258–87.
23. Žižek, “Courtly Love,” 1999a, 156; Kramer, *Musical Meaning*, 2002, 258–59.

24. Stanley Sadie, ed., *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 5, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001), 410–15 (entry on Chaconne); Willi Apel, *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 126–28 (entry on Chaconne and Passacaglia). McClary's references ("Same as It Ever Was," 1994, 36–37) document the European reception, and link the musical style of the seventeenth-century European *ciaccona* to long-lasting norms in a range of American vernacular dance-song genres.
25. I do not want to misrepresent McClary. She is clear that the body gestured into existence here is a *constructed* body and that music is one of the cultural technologies through which this process happens. Nevertheless, the metaphors in her descriptions are striking in their rhetorical passion.
26. See John Shepherd, David Horn, Dave Laing, Paul Oliver, and Peter Wicke, eds., *Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*, vol. 2, *Performance and Production* (London: Continuum, 2003), 610 (entry on Groove).
27. According to anecdotal evidence (gleaned over a pint at the Brecon Jazz Festival in the 1970s), hipster Slim Gaillard claimed to have "invented" the new usage of "groovy." Source: Bennett Hogg. Cab Calloway might well have disputed this: see the definition he quotes (Calloway and Rollins, *Of Minnie*, 1976, 256) from his own *Hepster's Dictionary* (1944) — "fine. Ex., 'I feel groovy.'"
28. The dimension of fashion is highlighted if one attends to the historical staging of changes in meaning: in the late nineteenth century, the main metaphorical meaning of "groove" was "routine"; by the 1930s, at least in slang musical usage, this had turned right around, as we have seen; but then in the 1980s, we find a further (ironic) inversion, in which "groovy" can be used, by adolescents to whom earlier "groovy" styles have become discredited, as meaning, precisely, *passé*. These, and subsequent, definitions are taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary*; Jonathan Green, ed., *Cassell's Dictionary of Slang* (London: Cassell, 1998); and Tony Thorne, *Dictionary of Contemporary Slang* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999).
29. Quoted in Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 134, 148; the sources date from 1944 and 1947 respectively.
30. The earliest *OED* reference to a record "groove" dates from 1902. My colleague Bennett Hogg has drawn my attention to the wealth of references in early twentieth-century literature to qualities of routine, tedium, or mechanicity in modern life which draw on phonographic metaphors. For example, T. S. Eliot's typist in *The Waste Land* (1923), after desultory sex: "She smoothes her hair with automatic hand/ And puts a record on the gramophone." Of course, many such metaphors have stuck (as it were): "stuck in a groove," "the needle's stuck," "change the record!"
31. The phenomenological effects are not set in stone (or rather wax, shellac, vinyl . . .), but shift with the technology; the artisanal or agricultural image of "cutting" gives way, with CD technology, to that of "burning" — the unseen but powerful (panoptical?) eye of the laser? — and thence to the cybernetic imagery of computer memory.
32. T. W. Adorno, "The Curves of the Needle" [1928], trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *October* 55 (1990b): 48–55, 54; the translation is of a revised version (by Adorno) first published in 1965.
33. See Adorno, *ibid.*; Adorno, "The Form of the Phonograph Record" [1934], trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *October* 55 (1990c): 56–61; and Thomas Y. Levin, "For the Record: Adorno on Music in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," *October* 55 (1990): 23–47, which acts as an introduction to these.
34. Adorno, "Form of the Phonograph Record," 1990c, 58,
35. Though Benjamin, typically, goes further: in Taussig's extrapolation from Benjamin, what matters is not so much the "clockwork" as the *animistic* quality in such mimetic technologies as the "talking [*sic*] machine"; revealing the primitive magic within technology, the gramophone is an object that speaks, re-creating "mystical participation" between consciousness and "nature" (Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, 193–211). Connor's history of ventriloquism picks up this interpretation: "Matter which has . . . been given a voice — the radio, or the telephone, for instance — still retains a tincture of the old supernatural explanations, and indeed begins to bring about a kind of re-enchancement of the world. In technological modernity, the dead and dumb world of matter begins to speak, though now not as the voice of nature or the breath of God, but on its own" (Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 2000, 42).
36. Adorno, "Form of the Phonograph Record," 1990c, 59; Adorno (1953), quoted, Levin, "For the Record," 1990, 41.

37. Adorno, "Form of the Phonograph Record," 1990c, 58.
38. Levin ("For the Record," 1990, 41) argues that for Adorno this functions not as "nostalgic origin" but as utopian "regulative ideal"; but this does not seem to reduce its metaphysical status.
39. David Toop, *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1995), prologue [unpaginated]; 12.
40. Leonard B. Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 170.
41. My response would be: "No, it would not"; but this would not mean that the opposite conclusion — that history has stopped — is right either.
42. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), ix.
43. See, e.g., Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: Norton, 1994); Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1987), including his bald statement that "Modernity and the critique of repetition are synonymous notions" (66).
44. As Lawrence Kramer puts this, "A requirement was widely accepted: such music had to testify at every moment to its own originality. In practical terms, this meant that the music could contain none of the conventionalised 'filler' common in earlier eras" (*Musical Meaning*, 2002, 277).
45. Interpretation along these lines is now well-established. As well as the work of Susan McClary and Lawrence Kramer, see, e.g., Ruth A. Solie, "Whose Life? The Gendered Self in Schumann's *Frauenliebe* Songs," in *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, ed. Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 219–40.
Solie, discussing Schumann's *Frauenliebe* songs, begins by quoting D. H. Lawrence: "[A woman] is the unutterable which man must forever continue to try to utter," and goes on to comment, in light of the way the composer stresses in his settings, "the endless repeatability of the woman's experience," that "though Lawrence is undoubtedly right to deem woman 'unutterable,' she clearly is *iterable*" (219, 228). Lawrence's aphorism, of course, offers an exemplary instance of the phallogocentric formulation of the "vocalic body"; see p. 271, note 11 above.
46. Quoted in Peter Kivy, *The Fine Art of Repetition: Essays in the Philosophy of Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 335.
47. *Ibid.*, 344–45.
48. Eduard Hanslick, "On the Musically Beautiful," in *Music in European Thought 1851–1912*, ed. Bojan Bujic (1854, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 11–39, 19, 29.
49. Pierre Boulez, *Orientations*, ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, trans. Martin Cooper (London: Faber, 1986), 93.
50. John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 55.
51. Reported in *The Guardian*, December 31, 1993. Maybe I should not be so flippant: Jon Ronson (*The Men Who Stare at Goats* [London: Picador, 2004]) has documented how elements in U.S. intelligence have developed the use of endlessly repeated, and repeating, pop tunes as a "disorienting" interrogation technique; the link between such repetition and psychosis is clear in their theorizing, and the techniques seem to have been widely deployed in the "war on terror."
52. From Adorno's book on Mahler, quoted in Anthony Newcomb, "Narrative Archetypes and Mahler's Ninth Symphony," in *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, ed. Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 118–36, 118.
53. Adorno, "Form of the Phonograph Record," 1990c, 58, 118.
54. See, e.g., T. W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Bloomster (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973); "Perennial Fashion — Jazz," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (1953, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 120–32; "On Popular Music," 1990a. Adorno was not alone: Bernard Gendron has described (*Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club*, 2002, 135–36) how in the 1930s and 1940s jazz revivalists excoriated the swing bands for their militaristic, riff-based discipline and connected these qualities to fascist tendencies. Rudi Blesh, for example, writing in 1946, explicitly linked the "rabble-rousing" repetitions of riff-swing to the techniques of political demagoguery (*Shining Trumpets: A History of Jazz*. 2nd ed. [1958, New York: Da Capo Press, 1976], 290–91). Such critiques of repetition, then, have not been confined to elite cultural discourse; and much the same line of

- attack could be found at later moments in popular music critical discourse, applied to other repetition-heavy styles, such as disco and techno.
55. Adorno in 1929, quoted in Levin, "For the Record," 1990, 29.
 56. Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 179.
 57. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, 1976, 28, 29.
 58. Adorno, quoted in Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics*, 1993, 178, 179.
 59. Adorno, in Bloch et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, 1977, 123.
 60. On this problematic, see Donna Haraway's "'Gender' for a Marxist Dictionary," in Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 127–48.
 61. Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. S. Rabinovitch (1971, New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Books, 1990).
 62. The classic text is his article "On Popular Music" (Adorno 1990a), first published in 1941.
 63. Adorno, "Perennial Fashion," 1983, 125.
 64. Adorno, "On Popular Music," 1990a, 314. See above, p. 33.
 65. *Ibid.* 306–7. Similarly, Adorno stresses that songwriting (as distinct from production and promotion of song carriers — sheet music, records) only pretends to industrialization and is really at a handicraft stage; but, as Bernard Gendron has argued ("Theodor Adorno Meets the Cadillacs," in *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski [Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986], 18–36), he does not allow this to disturb an assembly-line analogy for standardization in music which is badly in need of a more historically and analytically nuanced discussion. For a concise outline of the historical processes through which standardized types of popular song emerged as a result of "competition," see Paul Charosh, "Introduction," in *Song Hits from the Turn of the Century* (New York: Dover, 1975), ix–xii. The magical conjunction of novelty and repetition is nicely caught in Charosh's quotation (xi) from *Music Trade Review* (July 14, 1900): "The song of the moment constantly touches a great popular chord and this song can never die."
 66. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (London: Fontana, 1988), 298. Williams's essay on "Standards" (296–99) informs my discussion here.
 67. Richard Middleton, "Work-in(g)-Practice: Configuration of the Popular Music Intertext," in *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*, ed. Michael Talbot (Liverpool, UK: University of Liverpool Press, 2000b), 59–87, 84, 83.
 68. Recordings from: Solomon Burke, *A Change Is Gonna Come*, Rounder REU 1004 (1986); Lou Rawls, *Classic Soul*, Magmid MMO 19 (1986 [1969]); James Brown, *Live at the Apollo* vol. 2, Polydor 314 549 884-2 (2001 [1967]); Natalie Cole, *Happy Love*, Capitol EST 12165 (1981); Laura Lee, *Two Sides of Laura Lee*, Hot Wax SHW 5009 (1972); Shirley Scott, *The Very Best of Jazz After Dark* 2, Global TV RADCD 156 (2000); Richard Clayderman, *Les Musiques de L'Amour*, Delphine 174 052-2 (N.D. [1977]); James Galway, *I Will Always Love You*, RCA Victor 7432 1 26221 2 (1995); Wes Montgomery, *The Legendary Wes Montgomery*, Music for Pleasure MFP 50436 (N.D. [1967]); Kenny Rogers, *Always and Forever*, Recall SMDCD 199 (1998); De Danaan, *Welcome to the Hotel Connemara*, Hummingbird HBCD 0025 (2000); Art Garfunkel, *The Best of Art Garfunkel*, Columbia 491450 2 (1998 [1988]); Gregorian, *Masters of Chant*, Edel 0114042 ERE (2000); Bette Midler, *The Rose*, Atlantic 7567-82778-2 (1979).
 69. Dai Griffiths, "Cover Versions and the Sound of Identity in Motion," in *Popular Music Studies*, ed. David Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus (London: Arnold, 2002), 51–64, 59; the "songline" reference is to Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1987) — see *ibid.*, 61–62.
 70. Walter Benjamin pointed out the significance in the mid-nineteenth century of the connection between weather and *boredom*; see Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 101–5.
 71. Recordings of "There'll Be Some Changes Made" from: Ethel Waters, *An Introduction to Ethel Waters: Her Best Recordings 1921–1940*, Best of Jazz 4013 (1994 [1921]); Mildred Bailey, *That Rockin' Chair Lady*, Topaz TPZ 1007 (1994 [1939]); Sophie Tucker, *Some of These Days*, Digi-mode GO 3821 (N.D. [1927]); Billie Holiday, *Last Recording*, Verve 817 802-1(1959); Peggy Lee, *A Portrait of Peggy Lee*, Gallerie GALE 442 (N.D. [1947]); Tony Bennett, *Have You Met Miss Jones?*, Recall SMDCD 353 (2001 [1976]); Charlie Byrd, *Byrd-Love*, Concorde SMDCD 270 (2000 [1997]); Dave Brubeck, *The Essential Dave Brubeck*, Columbia 5105942000 (2003 [1960]); Glenn Miller, *Glenn Miller in Concert*, RCA NL 89216 (1982); Chet Atkins, *The Best*

- of Chet Atkins, Columbia 504420 2 (2001 [1990]); Russ Conway, Columbia SEG 7957 (N.D.); Mezz Mezzrow, "Really the Blues" Concert, Jazz Archives JA 39 (1978 [1947]); Eddie Lang [Blind Willie Dunn], *A Handful of Riffs*, Living Era CDAJA 5061 (1989 [1928]); The Boswell Sisters, *Jazz Age! Hot Sounds of the 20s and 30s*, Past Perfect PPCD 78131 (1998 [1932]).
72. Tucker — a white but Jewish "red hot momma" — had begun her career performing in blackface.
 73. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973b), 219–53.
 74. *Ibid.*, 224.
 75. Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973a): 157–202, 188, 190; "Mémoire involontaire" was Proust's term for (in effect) the unconscious.
 76. Mowitt, *Percussion*, 2002, 20–28.
 77. Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," 1973a, 177.
 78. Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 1973b, 241–43.
 79. See Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 1999, esp. "Convolute D [Boredom, Eternal Return]," 101–19.
 80. Mowitt's incisive discussion of the Adorno–Benjamin dispute traces some of the implications of post-Benjamin technological innovations for formations of subjectivity (see "The Sound of Music, 1987, 173–97). Dai Griffiths ("Cover Versions," 2002, 58) points out that basing a song on a sample of a previous record's key riff effectively turns the later song into a new kind of cover.

The "traces" (*Spuren*) of Freud's "memory traces" (*Erinnerungsspuren*) can also refer to tracks (such as animal tracks) and branches (such as railway branch lines or mountain spurs). A further enticing word-play is available in English, introducing elements of both temporality and agency, if we think of subjects spurred into action, on the spur of the moment.
 81. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 1999, 11, 119; Adorno could make similar points: cf. his "The eternity of fashion is a vicious circle" ("Perennial Fashion," 1983, 127).
 82. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 1999, 10.
 83. Quoted in Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 26.
 84. *Ibid.*, 27.
 85. As Mowitt ("The Sound of Music," 1987) is keen to point out, memory is always socially organized and subjectivity forms on its foundations. Arguably, Adorno's misrecognition of the sociotechnological conditions of musical memory under high capitalism goes far to explain the impasse in which his autonomous subject finds itself. Following Mowitt, we may suggest that a key part of this misrecognition lies in a continuing visual orientation: the ego initiated through a process of (mis)representation in the mirror phase is modeled in the relationship between the contemplative listening subject and the imaginary totality pictured in the notated score; a reweighting of subject formation toward sound and the dialogic repetitions constituted via the acoustic mirror may be deciphered not only in recent theory but also in the technologically constructed memory formations of cyborg culture, of which the subject may be a prosthesis: "cover, riff and sample" as Phallic Mother?
 86. Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, trans. J. R. Snyder (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1988), 4.
 87. In *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), David Harvey provides a detailed account of the sequence of time–space compressions.
 88. Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," 1973a, 196.
 89. Notably in Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 1990, chapter 7.
 90. Christian Friedrich Michaelis, *Berlinische musikalische Zeitung* (1805), in Peter Le Huray and James Day, eds., *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 290; see also 5–6.
 91. Quoted in Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, 1995, 185.
 92. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 1993.
 93. James A. Snead, "Repetition as a Figure of Black Culture," in *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (London: Routledge, 1984), 59–80.
 94. *Ibid.*, 63.
 95. An irony of this picture is that the African's apparent predilection for repetition could be

- used to explain his tendency (so it was thought) to “imitation,” including imitation of what in itself had been positioned as opposed to mere repetition (i.e., European cultural forms). Henry Louis Gates Jr. gives eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples of this trope of black “mimicry” (*The Signifying Monkey*, 1988, 66–68).
96. Hegel, quoted in Snead, “Repetition,” 1984, 62, 63; the translation is Snead’s own. For the passage from which his quotations come, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (1830, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 174–90. Hegel’s short diversion through “Africa” ends with the magisterial dismissal: “We shall therefore leave Africa at this point, and it need not be mentioned again. For it is an unhistorical continent, with no movement or development of its own” (190).
 97. Snead, “Repetition,” 1984, 63, 64.
 98. *Ibid.*, 75.
 99. Baker, *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature*, 1984; Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 1988.
 100. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 1988, xxiv.
 101. *Idem.*
 102. *Ibid.*, 46.
 103. Ralph Ellison, quoted in *ibid.*, 62; *ibid.*, 52
 104. David Brackett, “James Brown’s ‘Superbad’ and the Double-Voiced Utterance,” in *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, ed. Richard Middleton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 122–40. For other examples of the application of the theory of Signifyin(g) to music, see Matthew Brown, “Funk Music as Genre: Black Aesthetics, Apocalyptic Thinking and Urban Protest in Post-1965 African-American Pop,” *Cultural Studies* 8, no.3 (1994): 484–508; Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Middleton, “Work-in(g)-Practice,” 2000b; Gary Tomlinson, “Cultural Dialogics and Jazz: A White Historian Signifies,” *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (1991): 229–64.
 105. Steve Reich, *Writings about Music* (New York: Universal Edition, 1974), 53. Paul Allen Anderson (*Deep River*, 2000, 211–17) has suggested that the debate about repetition in black music can actually be traced back, within African-American thinking itself, to the Harlem Renaissance and even before — to the difference between, for instance, Du Bois and Hurston; Du Bois’s insistence that the simplicities of the “sorrow songs” needed to be developed in the context of more worked-through musical forms — what Alain Locke would call a “path of progress” — was couched in explicitly Hegelian terms, while Hurston’s innovative characterization of African-American rhythmic technique as a “rhythm of segments,” asymmetrical, cut up, foreshadows not only Snead but also Gates, as well as offering implicitly a neo-Bakhtinian perspective. At issue here, of course, is the politics — dialectical? dialogical? — of “double consciousness.”
 106. Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 65–72.
 107. *Ibid.*, 70, 72.
 108. *Ibid.*, 72. Rose takes me to task (*ibid.*, 198–99, note 24) for discussing musematic repetition in *Studying Popular Music* without grounding the analysis of “black practices in African traditions...[in] an alternative approach to cultural production.” This observation is fair comment, although it ignores the fact that such cultural grounding is not provided for the white examples either, and is not the point of the discussion. I hope it is not racist to contest the idea that the theorists to whom I refer — Freud, Lacan, Barthes and others, as well as Adorno — are necessarily less relevant to examples of commercial popular music produced by African Americans than to examples produced by white Americans or Europeans. Interestingly, Snead, on whom Rose’s account of repetition in black culture is based, also refers approvingly to Freud and Lacan.
 109. David Brackett, “What a Difference a Name Makes: Two Instances of African-American Music,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton (New York: Routledge, 2003), 238–50. This might also be read as a riposte to Kofi Agawu’s piece in the same book, whose heuristic program of starting interpretation with a presumption of *sameness* between African and European music would no doubt interest Tricia Rose! (See Agawu, “Contesting Difference: A Critique of Africanist

- Ethnomusicology,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton [New York: Routledge, 2003], 227–37.)
110. Quoted in Nuala O'Connor, *Bringing It All Back Home: The Influence of Irish Music* (London: BBC Books, 1991), 67.
 111. Cf. Wagner, writing to August Röckel in 1854: “[No one] can [ever] again surpass that act whereby he became human through love; he can only repeat it... and it is this repetition which alone makes possible the unique nature of this love whereby it resembles the ebb and flow of the tides, changing, ending, and living anew.” (Quoted in Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice*, 1990, 135). As Kramer points out, Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* has been seen in this light from the moment in the composer’s own program note when he writes of its representation of desire as “forever renewing itself, craving and languishing” (147). Kramer also shows, however, that the point of the work is at the same time to suggest how desire can overflow all natural boundaries.
 112. See Kramer, *Classical Music*, 1995, 68–71.
 113. Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 1–17.
 114. Taussig (*Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, 212–20), drawing on Alexander Buchner’s *Mechanical Musical Instruments* (1978), points out that the automata in eighteenth-century mechanical musical instruments are almost never modeled on white males; they are animals, birds, blacks, or women. This re-creation of primitive mimicry through mechanism — the clockwork of Newtonian Nature — is then picked up later in the famous His Master’s Voice logo for the early gramophone, where the faithful dog, Nipper, continues the theme: fidelity, both to the Master and to what is copied. Taussig also quotes Zora Neale Hurston on African-American mimicry: “The Negro, the world over, is famous as a mimic. But this in no way damages his standing as an original. Mimicry is an art in itself [and] he does it as the mocking-bird does it, for the love of it, and not because he wishes to be like the one imitated” (68). And he gives an anecdote concerning dancer Josephine Baker dancing privately for a German count in 1926, imitating his demonstration of the new dance he has created for her but going beyond the original in an “excess” that serves as an example of the possibilities of “answering back” (68–69). At the same time, we should note the irony that many nineteenth-century African-American writers were known as the “mockingbird school” on account of their alleged inability to rise above imitation — perhaps a measure of white neurosis where “repetition” was concerned.
 115. See *ibid.*, 45–47, 63–68; the quoted phrases are from Horkheimer and Adorno’s *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and Taussig gives them on pp. 47 and 63.
 116. The latter is what Roman Jakobson called “introversive signification,” but in the specific context of black culture is Signifyin(g). The gaps which appear all over the entire nexus are, in Derridean terms, the trace of the supplement. I discuss (*Studying Popular Music*, 1990, 183, 214–17) the fact that in music, much more than in any other signifying practice, *difference* is filtered through the screen of *equivalence* (that is, introversive signification); this in turn points to the importance of *contiguity* (as against *distinction* and *opposition*); which in turn points us back to the *acoustic mirror*. Even the best studies of mimesis/doubling (Taussig’s, Warner’s) tend to pay little attention to sound, which often leads to a downplaying of the significance of the specific mimetic processes of repetition.
 117. Martin Heidigger, *The Question Concerning Technology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 149, 150.
 118. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, 72.
 119. Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 21.
 120. Taussig, whose historical scheme is similarly shaped, is less inclined to do so, although he is at least as intrigued by the interplay of mimicking between colonizers and colonized as by structures of repression. He describes a “colonial mirror of production,” a “crucial circulation of imageric power between... selves and... anti-selves, their ominous need for and their feeding off each other’s correspondence — interlocking dream-images guiding the reproduction of social life no less than the production of sacred powers” (*Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, 66, 65).
 121. Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 24, 25.
 122. *Ibid.*, 102.
 123. So could Kramer’s quotation from Carl Dahlhaus on the subject of Schumann’s *Carnaval*, which is exemplary of a traditional attitude to repetition in nineteenth-century music less self-aware than Kramer’s own: “Almost invariably, the motive has a distinctive rhythm while the pitch content remains open and variable. Thus the ‘four notes,’ instead of *quickly cloying*

- by frequent repetition and manipulation, merely serve as an initial impetus to the pieces. At the same time, the pitch content, by merely alluding to the opening of the movement, could be taken up again and again without courting monotony or ‘unpoetic’ pedantry” (Kramer, *Musical Meaning*, 2002, 101; emphasis added).
124. Newcomb, “Narrative Archetypes,” 1992, 120, 133, 134 (the last a quotation of Peter Brook); Newcomb is drawing on Freud’s earlier theory of repetition, not the later development which I shall come to presently.
Mahler and Freud were of course contemporaries in Vienna. They knew each other; Freud admired Mahler’s sensitivity to psychoanalytic ideas; Mahler approached Freud for an analysis, and Freud produced one. The connection surely points to a cultural knot of larger scale. Interestingly, Newcomb at one point refers to “Jekyll-and-Hyde” intercutting between different materials in the Ninth Symphony; Robert Louis Stevenson’s more or less contemporary Jekyll and Hyde story is treated by Warner as a key example of late-nineteenth century uncanny “doubling”; see Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 185–87.
 125. See Kramer, *Classical Music*, 1995, 174–200; *Musical Meaning*, 2002, 194–215 (esp. 194–201). The transatlantic anamorphic mirror constructed between Mahler and Ives here — (Euro-) Jewish on the one side, (African) American on the other — might recall the one I erected earlier between Michael Jackson and Dana International. As in that case, there are, for both protagonists, Mahler and Ives, important gender and class dimensions to their “pathologies.” Kramer goes into Ives’s; for Mahler, see Biddle, *Listening to Men*, forthcoming, chapter 5, “... man sagte bloß, es tanze jemand: Mahler, Kafka and the Male Jewish Body at the Habsburg fin de siècle.”
 126. See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), esp. chapter 7, Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914” (263–307).
 127. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 1999, 11.
 128. Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). This conjunction is also dependent on the fact that new media could record memory; see Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 1999, passim but esp. 78–94.
 129. Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 156.
 130. On this see Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 1986, 44–62; Tania Modleski, “Femininity as Mas(s)querade: A Feminist Approach to Mass Culture,” in *High Theory, Low Culture*, ed. Colin McCabe (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1986), 37–52.
 131. See, e.g., Kramer, *Classical Music*, 1995, 201–25. Kramer draws attention to the conjunction in Ravel’s work of exoticism, a spectacularly modern technique, and a consumerist attitude to the massing of sensations, all of which on one level come to be centered on Ravel’s “techniques of reproduction, iteration, similitude — techniques, we might suggest, strikingly similar to those by which commodities are identified and distributed” (216), and which may also be linked with the “sensational” mass reproduction of images in the early cinema and its technological predecessors (217).
 132. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, 23, xix; and see 19–43, 193–249.
 133. Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 165.
 134. I discuss this process in Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 1990, 275–78.
 135. Interestingly, Danny Barker’s reminiscences of early twentieth-century New Orleans suggest that, there at least, the imagery of “honky-tonk trains” was preceded by such expressions as “playing the horses” and “rolling the horses,” “because it was the same thing over and over and sounded like a gang of horses trotting” (Barker, *Buddy Bolden and the Last Days of Storyville*, ed. Alyn Shipton [London: Continuum, 2000], 103). This (preindustrial, “natural”) imagery comes up in the context of an anecdote about the young Barker accidentally but excitedly observing activity in a brothel, featuring a naked woman dancing to the accompaniment of boogie-woogie.
 136. Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 119–41.
 137. Cf. p. 86 above.
 138. An emblematic phrase derived by W. T. Lhamon (whose theory this is: see *Raising Cain*, 1998) from the lyrics of Thomas “Daddy” Rice’s minstrel hit, “Jump Jim Crow”: “Weel about, and turn about, And do jis so; Eb’ry time I weel about, I jump Jim Crow.”
 139. See Henry Louis Gates Jr., Preface, ix, and Introduction, xxvii–xxxiii; Dickson D. Bruce Jr.,

- “W. E. B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness” (236–44); all in Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1999. Gates also points out (x) that the idea was subsequently taken up in such a way that the African-American case could be treated as exemplary for a broader sense of the human condition under modernity. On Du Bois’s debt to (and transformation of) Hegel, see Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 1993, 111–45, esp. 134ff.
140. I take the phrase “pendular thirds” from Peter van der Merwe (*Origins of the Popular Style*, 1989, 131), who in turn took it from Nigerian ethnomusicologist, J. H. Nketia. For examples of work songs that use the tonic-minor third riff, see: “Po’ Lazarus” (discussed in *ibid*, 192–93; this tune is heard at the start of the movie, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, where it marks not only what is escaped in the search for modernity but also the bedrock state against which this search is measured and to which the heroes might just have to return [they almost do]); “I Be So Glad When the Sun Goes Down” (*Sounds of the South*, Atlantic 1346, ND [c. 1960]); “Eighteen Hammers” (*Roots of the Blues*, Atlantic 1348, ND [c. 1960]). All these were recorded by Alan Lomax in 1959 from inmates of the Parchman State Penitentiary in Mississippi. “Baby Please Don’t Go” can be heard in many versions; also see Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 108–9. Howlin’ Wolf’s “Spoonful” (1960) is on *His Best*, Chess MCD 09375 (1997). Public Enemy’s “Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos” is on *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, Def Jam 527 358-2 (1988). Admittedly, this record was a careful choice to fit my argument; but many Public Enemy, and other, rap tracks use very similar bass riffs; they can often be heard as speeded up work songs, as if produced by hyperactive cyborgs (from the point of view of technology, they literally were).
 141. Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 2002, 159.
 142. Quoted, Snead, “Repetition,” 1984, 64.
 143. Cf. p. 129 above. Jodi Brooks (“Ghosting the Machine: The Sounds of Tap and the Sounds of Film,” *Screen* 44, no.4 [2003]: 355–78) discusses the cultural politics of tap dance in the contexts of Fordist machine-rhythm, minstrelized performance conventions, and Hollywood genre formulae, focusing on “the Hollywood musical’s barely repressed ghosts — the bodies, sounds, and steps of African American vernacular dance” (359), and concluding with an analysis of Michael Jackson’s *Black or White* video from this point of view. Carol Vernallis (*Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2004], 167) suggests that, in his *Thriller* video, the music tells us that the zombies (rather than Jackson) are actually warm-blooded: “it is the *zombies* who know the groove” (indeed yes — the *groove* from beyond the *grave*).
 144. The most obvious example to cite would be music associated with possession experiences (obvious also in that quasi-possessive effects are often attributed as well to minimalist music, rock, and pop-dance — rave, techno, etc.). Gilbert Rouget (“Music and Possession Trance,” in *The Anthropology of the Body*, ed John Blacking [New York: Academic Press, 1977], 233–39) reminds us, however, that even in this case the relationship is complex and variable, and he suggests that the purpose of possession music is precisely to “*socialize* trance” (238; my italics) — a point that, translated into the theory of ventriloquism, can also be taken to suggest that the development I am discussing here should be seen as yet another symptom of shifts in the ventriloquial possession economy.
 145. The angel stands facing the past. The storm of History “irresistably propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress” (Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 1973c, 260).
 146. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 1999, 22–23. And compare Kittler’s quotation of the philosopher Jean-Marie Guyau (1880): “The soul is a notebook of phonographic recordings” (30).
 147. Sigmund Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (1920, London: Penguin, 1991b), 269–338, 296–97; Mowitt, “The Sound of Music,” 1987, 183; Freud, “A Note upon the ‘Mystic Writing Pad,’” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin, 1991a), 429–34, 434. I have modified the Penguin translation of Freud’s famous “memory trace” phrase (“*das Bewußtsein entstehe an Stelle der Erinnerungsspur*”: see *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 13 [Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999], 25); “at the site of” (*an Stelle der*) appears in some other translations but the Penguin translation has “instead of.” The ambiguity is in the German phrase itself, and perhaps points to an unacknowledged uncertainty in Freud’s thinking, still, about the relationship between consciousness, memory, and the unconscious

- (and hence also, of course, repetition). (Thanks to Thomas Rutten for advice on interpreting the German phrase.)
148. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Robert Payne (1843, London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 183–84; *Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology*, trans. W. Lowrie (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 6.
 149. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), 547, 549.
 150. Quoted, Baker, *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature, 1984*, 217.
 151. Jean Baudrillard, “Symbolic Exchange and Death,” trans. Charles Levin, in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1988), 119–48, 138.
 152. Frederic Jameson, “Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 53–92.
 153. Chernoff, *African Rhythm*, 1979, 140–50.
 154. Morton Marks, “Uncovering Ritual Structures in Afro-American Music,” in *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, ed. I. Zaretsky and M. P. Leone (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 60–134, 112.
 155. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, 1942, *passim*.
 156. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1994, 18, 21.
 157. Julia Kristeva, “Women’s Time,” in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986b), 188–213, 210.
 158. Henryk Gorecki, Symphony No 3, Warner Classics 0927498212 (2003).
 159. Interview with Maja Trochimczyk, 1997, accessed at http://www.edu/dept/polish_music/composer/gorecki.html
 160. John Adams, *Grand Pianola Music*, Nonesuch 7559-79219-2 (1993).
 161. http://www.schirmer.com/composers/adams_bio.html
 162. If the auto-piano figure functions as a fetishized *objet a*, we might recall that for Lacan all such objects are representatives of “the libido, *qua* pure life instinct, that is to say, immortal life, or irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ [nor piano] . . . precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction.” If the repetitions of Adams’s music are “sexy,” it is in this reduced (and here mechanized, alienated) sense. And appropriately, what is subtracted — this transfinite libido which “flies off” at the moment of birth — is figured by Lacan, in a yolky joke, as an eggy lamella: the *l’hommelette*, which represents “the relation between the living subject and that which he loses by having to pass, for his reproduction, through the sexual cycle. In this way I explain the essential affinity of every drive with the zone of death, and reconcile the two sides of the drive — which, at one and the same time, makes present sexuality in the unconscious and represents, in its essence, death” (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 1979, 197, 198, 199). I am anticipating my argument somewhat here (see p. 185ff. below), but repeat the question: Does Adams’s fantasy-object represent a triumph of phallic authority or a funeral?
 163. There is a postmodernist argument that denies this difference; see, e.g., Fink, “Elvis Everywhere,” 1998. For convincing rebuttals of this position, both drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of capital (cultural/economic), see Gendron, *From Montmartre to the Mudd Club*, 2002, 1–23, and Georgina Born, “Afterword: Music Policy, Aesthetic and Social Difference,” in *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions*, ed. Tony Bennett et al. (London: Routledge, 1993), 266–92. If (as Fink’s title suggests) Elvis is everywhere, it strikes me this is less a symptom of the end of cultural hierarchy than one of a multiplicity of highly differentiated *revenants*; see Kramer, *Classical Music*, 1995, 227–42.
 164. See Lawrence Grossberg, “Is Anybody Listening? Does Anybody Care? On the ‘State of Rock,’” in *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose (London: Routledge, 1994), 41–58.
 165. P. J. Harvey, *To Bring You My Love*, Island CID 8035 (1995).
 166. Mark Mazullo locates the feminism and the anguish in a topos of suicide (“Revisiting the Wreck: PJ Harvey’s *Dry* and the Drowned Virgin-Whore,” *Popular Music* 20, no.3 [2001]: 431–47). On the sleeve of *To Bring You My Love*, Harvey is depicted floating, Ophelia-like. On the back insert, she is shown climbing some stairs (like Gloria?) — but the stairs, claustrophobic as they are, are lit from above by a shaft of quasi-heavenly light, and they have no end that we can see. The comparison with Kristeva’s female suicide problematic (see p. 92 above) is obvious.

167. Tricky, *Maxinquaye*, Island BRCD 610 (1995).
168. “Black Steel,” on the same album, is a cover of Public Enemy’s “Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos” (see above, p. 174), but the lyrics are re-rendered (transferred to Martine), sung rather than rapped, and in any case largely disappear into the pulsating sound mix.
169. This is not to suggest that one can simply read across from the specifics of African-American history to the situation in the Caribbean, let alone its aftermath in Britain — although it seems likely that slavery created similar pressures. Looking into the black Atlantic mirror, Martine, in “Suffocating Love,” quotes the title of Maya Angelou’s first volume of autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.
170. On another track, “Aftermath,” Tricky samples a phrase from a replicant in the film *Blade Runner*: “Let me tell you about my mother.”
171. Alistair Williams, “Music as Immanent Critique: Stasis and Development in the Music of Ligeti,” in *Music and the Politics of Culture*, ed. Christopher Norris (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), 187–225.
172. *Ibid.*, 216, 217.
173. Born, “Afterword,” 1993, 285.
174. Steve Reich, *Come Out, Early Works*, Nonesuch 979 169-2 (1987); Prodigy, “Everybody in the Place,” *Best of Rave*, vol. 1, Low Price Music LOW CD 115 (1993).
175. Reich, *Writings about Music*, 1974, *passim*.
176. Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, 1995, 183, 214, 278, 257, 258, 259, 275, 279–80.
177. John Rahm, “Repetition,” *Contemporary Music Review* 7 (1993): 49–57, 50, 53, 50. The discourse of “slavery,” “zombies,” and “revenants” is revealing in its lack of historical self-consciousness!
178. Middleton, “Musical Belongings, 2000a, 76–77.
179. Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” 1991b, 307, 285, 308, 311, 312.
180. Jacques Derrida, “To Speculate — On Freud,” in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991d), 518–68, 549.
181. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 1979, 62–63.
182. *Ibid.*, 49, 239, 53, 54, 43, 56.
183. *Ibid.*, 61.
184. Guy Rosolato, “Répétitions,” *Musique en Jeu* 9 (1972): 33–44, 40, 43, 41.
185. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 246.
186. Quoted in Christopher Norris, “Utopian Deconstruction: Ernst Bloch, Paul de Man and the Politics of Music,” in *Music and the Politics of Culture*, ed. Christopher Norris (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), 305–47, 339.
187. Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991b) 82–111, 90.
188. Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991a), 61–79, 70, 72.
189. Jacques Derrida, “The Double Session,” in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991c), 171–99, 193.
190. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, 35.
191. *Ibid.*, 115.
192. Quoted in Evans, *Introductory Dictionary*, 1997, 51.
193. Julia Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language,” in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986a), 90–136, 94, 126, 128.
194. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1994, 18, 17, 3, 50, 18.
195. *Ibid.*, 20.
196. *Ibid.*, 292–93, 25.
197. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, 192.
198. Quoted in Van M. Cagle, *Reconstructing Pop/Subculture: Art, Rock and Andy Warhol* (London: Sage, 1995), 62.
199. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1994, 19, 7–8.
200. See Slavoj Žižek, “The Undergrowth of Enjoyment: How Popular Culture Can Serve as an Introduction to Lacan,” in *The Žižek Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999d), 11–36; quotations on 24, 30, 31.
201. *Ibid.*; quotations on 34, 28.

202. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, xvi.
203. Taussig's gloss is very fine: "only at the depth of habit is radical change effected, where unconscious strata of culture are built into social routines by bodily disposition. The revolutionary task... could thus be considered as one in which 'habit' has to catch up with itself. The automatic pilot that functions while asleep has to be awakened to its own automaticity..." (ibid., 25).
204. See Peter Pesic, *Seeing Double: Shared Identities in Physics, Philosophy and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).
205. Lacan, quoted in Dolar, "The Object Voice," 1996, 28.
206. See Žižek, "The Undergrowth of Enjoyment," 1999d, 16–17.
207. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, 96–99. Elaine Scarry's reading of Marx in this respect is similar; see Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 286 (but also *passim*).
208. The term "performance-work" is indebted to the idea of "song-work" put forward by Barbara Bradby and Brian Torode (in "Song-Work: The Musical Inclusion, Exclusion and Representation of Women," unpublished conference paper, British Sociological Association, Manchester, 1982). They in turn are drawing on Freud's concept of "dream-work"—the mental labour through which, in dreams, "latent content" is translated into, and disguised by, "manifest content": a process that the psychoanalyst (and by analogy the analyst of musical performance) will try to reverse. For Lacan's gloss on Freud, in which he adopts Freud's term *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* and applies it not only to the economy of the dream but also that of repetition, see Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 1979, 53–64.
209. Details of records discussed in this section: James Brown, "Funky Drummer," King K6290 (1970); Public Enemy, "Bring the Noise," "Terminator X to the Edge of Panic," and "Rebel without a Pause," *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, Def Jam 527 358-2 (1988); Stone Roses, "Fool's Gold," Silvertone ORE13 (1989); Future Sound of London, "Papua New Guinea," *Papua New Guinea*, Jumpin and Pumpin CDTOT52 (2001); John Oswald, *Plunderphonics* (1989); Sinéad O'Connor, "I Am Stretched on Your Grave," *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*, Ensign CDP32 1759-2 (1989).
210. James Brown (with Bruce Tucker), *The Godfather of Soul* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 242; Ulf Poschardt, who quotes this (*DJ Culture*, trans. Shaun Whiteside [London: Quartet Books, 1998], 117), has a useful discussion of the issue.
211. The allusion is not only to Benjamin's Angel but also to his view of dialectics generally: "having the wind of history in one's sails.... What is decisive is knowing the art of setting them" (Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 1999, 473).
212. I am indebted to Suade Bergemann for this information. Bergemann also confirms, through personal acquaintance with one of those involved, the "Fool's Gold" FD sample, even though this has been queried by some commentators.
213. <http://www.plunderphonics.com>, which also contains a wonderfully tasteless picture of "Michael Jackson" (subject of another track, "dab"), resexing him and with a clearly missing penis. For Oswald's well-argued case against copyright, and in favour of sampling, see <http://www.halcyon.com/robinja/mythos/plunderphonics>
214. János Maróthy (*Music and the Bourgeois*, 1974) has magisterially documented this lengthy history.
215. On this track, see Keith Negus, "Sinéad O'Connor — Musical Mother," in *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, ed. Sheila Whiteley (London: Routledge, 1997), 178–90.
216. Žižek, "The Undergrowth of Enjoyment," 1999d, 30; Poschardt, *DJ Culture*, 1998, 318, 116.

Chapter 5

1. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. Christopher Bigsby (1854, London: Everyman, 1995), 78.
2. The condition of slavery, actual and metaphorical, is a theme that runs right through *Walden*. It is intriguing to note that at the same time Thoreau was experimenting with self-sufficiency in his Walden cottage (1845–47), and not so very far away, the minstrel show was also dramatizing the issues around, and symbolized by, slavery, albeit in very different ways. The crisis both were addressing was the moment of the "American 1848," as it has been called; see Lott, *Love and Theft*, 1993, 86–88, 105–7, 169–210.

3. Simon Frith, “‘The Magic that Can Set You Free’: The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community,” *Popular Music* 1 (1981): 159–68; “Playing with Real Feeling – Jazz and Suburbia” in *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 45–63.
4. Jann Wenner, *Lennon Remembers: The Rolling Stone Interviews* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972), 100–1, 103.
5. *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band*, Apple PCS 7124 (1970).
6. The main chord-sequence of Ben E. King’s 1961 Soul hit, “Stand By Me” — I-VI-IV-V — was familiar enough from previous soul and doo-wop tunes but became iconically associated with King’s song (much as George Gershwin’s “I Got Rhythm” sequence became “the rhythm changes”). Lennon would have a minor hit with “Stand By Me” in 1975.
7. Cf Thoreau once again: “it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking” (*Walden*, 1995, 3).
8. For a somewhat longer discussion of “Working Class Hero,” see Middleton, “Locating the People, 2003, 256–57.
9. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 30.
10. The phrase comes from Thomas Frank, *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism and the End of Economic Democracy* (London: Vintage, 2002).
11. All these questions were raised in a profile published in *The Guardian* by Caroline Sullivan (July 23, 2004, 13). We might add that in the histrionic performance culture of soul music epitomized by James Brown, “authenticity” is, precisely, performed, and when singers sweat out their commitment to “telling it like it is” and “keeping it real,” through an arsenal of well-tried stage techniques, knowing listeners may well smile. In this sense, the “doubts” raised in the Stone case are built into the culture.
12. Allan Moore, “Authenticity as Authentication,” *Popular Music* 21, no.2 (2002): 209–23.
13. Spice Girls, “Wannabe,” *Spice*, Virgin CDV 2812 (1996).
14. Middleton, “Locating the People,” 2003, 258.
15. Elizabeth Eva Leach, “Vicars of ‘Wannabe’: Authenticity and the Spice Girls,” *Popular Music* 20, no. 2 (2001): 143–67, 151, 149, 161–62.
16. On representation as an unstable field, always marked by the search for a final (impossible) suture of representative (here the musical/filmic texts) and represented (the differential structure of the girl power community), see Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 1985, 119–22; and on New Right (Thatcherite) populism as an example, see *ibid.*, 169–71. “Wannabe” offers a case where the two extremes of Laclau and Mouffe’s “unstable oscillation” seem to meet up, a knowing “literalization of the fiction” (this is just a polysemic game) giving rise to “a dissolution of the fictitious character of representation” (the Spice Girls really are like this, and you [other girls] are/could be too). This defines the aesthetic mechanism of populism.
17. The stage is set with the sound of footsteps approaching the mike, followed by a laugh.
18. Terry Castle, “My Heroin Christmas,” *London Review of Books*, December 18, 2003: 11–18.
19. For example, letter from Don Locke (*London Review of Books*, January 22, 2004, 5): “addictable to everything and anything, self-deluding as well as self-destructive, Pepper tells it not as it is, but as he needs it to be.”
20. A nice symptom of Castle’s knowingly ironized credulity (as well as being a commentary on authenticity as acting) is the way she implicitly plays (*sic*) with the connection between her enjoyment of Pepper’s “playing” and her own professional standing as a scholar of eighteenth-century literature specializing in masquerades.
21. Locke, letter. Quotations from Castle’s essay (“Heroin Christmas,” 2003) come, in order, from: 11, 14, 18, 16, 14, 15, 16, 18.
22. Many questions are begged — at least for now — in this way of putting things, not least the epistemological status of the construction, “true to.” One of them is the status of music as, so to speak, an object or a subject of discourse. If “every object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence” (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 1985, 107), musical objects will come under this rubric; but if music also (arguably) operates as a quasi-discursive signifying practice (I think it does), it also constructs conditions of emergence for its own objects (at the same time as doing so within the regime of linguistic discursivity). This complicates musical truth-claims somewhat.
23. For differing versions of the “mirror” argument, by Adorno and Silverman respectively, see pp. 96, 115 and 146 above. For record dialogics, see pp. 95–96, 105–6 and 159–60 above.

24. Elsewhere (“Locating the People,” 2003, 258) I have suggested that the binary structure of “Wannabe,” articulated through the contrast of musical modes and its artful closure, not only maps to a conventional masculine/feminine dichotomy but also conjures up “specters” of paired dance-forms from earlier European music history and of an *antico/moderno* negotiation intrinsic to the self-understanding of Western modernity itself. These relationships help root/route the record in/to the structure of a familiar binary subjectivity.
25. In the exemplary case, Castle defends the essential truth of Pepper’s account of how he made the *Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section* recordings, against incontrovertible historical evidence, because of its “ludic genius”; but Pepper’s (false) insistence that he “was forced to pull the music out of himself” because he had not played for six months, had no decent mouthpiece, and was wrecked by drugs simply airbrushes from history his own professionalism, training, and stock of musical knowledge — not to mention the contributions of the other musicians (“Heroin Christmas,” 2003, 16).
26. To put it differently (and perhaps better): Leach signals a deconstructive enterprise, but this is applied to an autodeconstructive text; what a deconstructive analysis really demands, therefore, is an exposure of the constructive intentions hidden beneath the wannabe-deconstructions of the song.
27. The phrase “situated knowledge” comes from Donna Haraway (“Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 183–201). Subsequent quotations from Evans, *Introductory Dictionary*, 1997, 61; Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1980), 231, 271.
28. Nicholas Spice, “I Must Be Mad,” review of *Wild Analysis*, by Sigmund Freud, *London Review of Books*, January 8 2004, 11–15, 15.
29. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Taylor’s account is particularly informative but, in essentials, the same story is told by many other authors; Teresa Brennan’s genealogy of “the ego’s era,” for instance (in *History After Lacan*, 1993), makes many of the same points as Taylor, and refers to many of the same sources.
30. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, quoted, Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 1989, 357–58, 362; Richard Rorty, “To the Sunlit Uplands,” review of *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* by Bernard Williams, *London Review of Books*, October 31, 2002, 13–15, 15.
31. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 1989, 364; Kant, quoted, *ibid.*, 365.
32. Herder and Schleiermacher, quoted, *ibid.*, 378; Hölderlin, quoted, Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 1989, 94; Kant, quoted, Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 1989, 385.
33. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 65; Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), 137; Kant, “What Is Enlightenment?” in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997), 83–90, 89–90; Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 1987, 55, 56, 69.
34. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 1987, 174, 175. On the musical work concept, see Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Talbot, ed., *The Musical Work*, 2000; David Clarke, “Musical Autonomy Revisited,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (New York: Routledge, 2003), 159–70.
35. The authoritative critique of Kant’s aesthetic universalism is Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).
36. Rousseau, quoted, Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 1989, 415.
37. Herder, quoted, *ibid.*, 375; translation modified. *Stimmung* can also mean “tune,” from *Stimme*, “voice.”
38. Herder, from *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (1813), in Le Huray and Day, eds., *Music and Aesthetics*, 1981, 252.
39. Bohlman, *World Music*, 2002, 2.
40. Accounts from the Americas, from the seventeenth century on, are plentiful; see, e.g., Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: Norton, 1971); *After Africa: Extracts from British Travel Accounts and Journals of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries Concerning the Slaves, their Manners, and Customs in the British West Indies*

- (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). For one eighteenth-century “orientalist” account, with references to many others down to that of Guillaume-André Villoteau, sent to Egypt by Napoleon, see Amnon Shiloah, “An Eighteenth-Century Critic of Taste and Good Taste,” in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, ed. Stephen Blum, Philip V. Bohlman, and Daniel M. Neuman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 181–89. Herder’s folk-song collections, published in 1778–79, included songs sent back from Latin America as well as European material from as far away as Estonia and Latvia.
41. Kant, “What Is Enlightenment?” 1997, 83, 84; Kant, quoted in Le Huray and Day, eds., *Music and Aesthetics*, 1981, 220–23.
 42. Herder, from *Kalligone* (1800), in Le Huray and Day, eds., *Music and Aesthetics*, 1981, 255; Herder, quoted in Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple-Smith, 1978), 22.
 43. Hubert Parry, “Inaugural Address to the Folk Song Society,” *Journal of the Folk Song Society* 1 (1899): 2–3. On the twentieth-century debates, see Richard Middleton, “The ‘Problem’ of Popular Music,” in *The Twentieth Century*, vol. 6 of *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, ed. Stephen Banfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 27–38.
 44. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 1989, 487–90.
 45. Franz Fanon, quoted in David Caute, *Fanon* (London: Fontana, 1970), n.p.
 46. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, intro. Lucio Colletti (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1975), 279–400, 327, 391.
 47. A term that in most nineteenth-century formulations, such as the young Marx’s, implies an essentialized conception of human subjectivity, against which “alienation” marks a loss — a conception which is of course very much part of what is at issue now. Yet, psychoanalysis, unlike most poststructuralist currents, retains the concept, and although “alienation” for psychoanalysis is not the same — it marks not so much a fall as the condition of a coming to be (of any subject) — there is a certain continuity, which will turn out to be important later in this chapter.
 48. Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 23, 31.
 49. On blues as art see, e.g., Carl Van Vechten on first hearing Bessie Smith live: “we felt as we might have felt before going to a Salzburg Festival to hear Lilli Lehmann sing Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*” (Kellner, ed., *Keep A-Inchin’ Along*, 1979, 162). Or similarly, pianist Teddy Wilson: “She had the dynamic range of an opera singer and the same control and power of voice” (quoted in Shipton, *New History of Jazz*, 2001, 54). (But these are not just *ad feminem* references, for they stand in a lengthy history initiated by the widespread nineteenth-century conception of the minstrel show as “Ethiopian opera.”) On the early commercialization of blues, see Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 1987, 59–70 (he sees the relationship in terms of a “dual aesthetic”).
 50. Derek Stewart-Baxter, *Ma Rainey and the Classic Blues Singers* (London: Studio Vista, 1970).
 51. *Ibid.*, 7. Interestingly, in his book on pop culture, first published in the same year as Stewart-Baxter’s book on classic blues, Melly adopts a very similar line on the Beatles: “Nostalgically we may regret the simple cocksure days of Rock . . . but there has never been a way of preventing an art form from developing. The compensation for the loss of innocence, of simplicity, of unselfconscious energy, is the classic moment. In pop this belonged to the Beatles. It’s there on record. You can play it any time” (George Melly, *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts in Britain* [Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972], 124).
 52. Blesh, *Shining Trumpets*, 1976.
 53. It is no accident that Alan Lomax, as well as collecting, researching, and publishing blues and other folk genres, conducted and published (in 1950) the Library of Congress interviews with celebrated (but “outmoded”) New Orleans musician, Jelly Roll Morton (Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 1973). On the “jazz wars,” see Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club*, 2002, 131–57. The articulation of discursive binaries with a triangulated territory produced interesting effects. Many of the terms of debate characterizing the initial conflict between revivalist jazz and swing were transferred subsequently to those between swing and bebop and between traditional and modern jazz.
 54. Blesh, *Shining Trumpets*, 1976, 108, 110, 113, 114.
 55. *Ibid.*, 98.

56. Ibid., 3, 5, 6, 156, 227, 290, 321.
57. On Locke's usage, see Vincent, *Keep Cool*, 1995, 173, 184; and on his views as a whole, see Anderson, *Deep River*, 2001, 113–166. On Dodge, see *ibid.*, 247–56. See also Hughes Panassié, *Le jazz hot* (1934), published in English as *Hot Jazz: The Guide to Swing Music*, trans. Lyle and Eleanor Dowling (New York: Witmark, 1936); Winthrop Sargeant, *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid* (New York: Dutton, 1938); Frederic Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith, eds., *Jazzmen* (New York: Harcourt, 1939); Hughes Panassié, *The Real Jazz*, trans. Anne Sorelle Williams (New York: Smith and Durrell, 1942). Here is Panassié in 1936, for example: in 1926, jazz, especially through the agency of Louis Armstrong, who “brought hot style to a peak,” “attained its stable form . . . ceased to falter and became a definite, balanced musical form” (*Hot Jazz*, 1936, 27, 38). There are some differences, however: Sargeant is more inclined to a neoprimitivist picture, stability being attributed to folklike tradition; Panassié moves toward this position in his *The Real Jazz*. On this nexus in jazz criticism, see Scott DeVeaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 3 (1991): 525–60.
58. Blesh, *Shining Trumpets*, 1976, 100, 134, 6, 176, 95, 230, 3, 6, 134, 143.
59. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 25–27.
60. *Ibid.*, 4, 146, 109, 108, 378, 98, 99, 102, 124, 97, 15. I owe my understanding of the oedipal construction of the canon to my colleague, Ian Biddle. One of the problems for Blesh is that, whereas the black-other is usually feminized (in relation to the white Law-of-the-Father), his inversion of the racial hierarchy means that the black-other has to encompass both “maternal sympathy” and “lustly male procreateness”; this can only work by casting “effete Negroes” like Teddy Wilson as effectively white: homosexuality is always available to shore up Oedipus!
61. *Ibid.*, 241, 242, 252; on the symbolic status of the star individuals, see 257.
62. Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, *They All Played Ragtime*, 4th ed. (1950; New York: Oak Publications, 1971).
63. *Ibid.*, 8, 253, 36, 48–49, 141, 142, 144. According to Blesh and Janis (*ibid.*, 8), the term *classic ragtime* was first used early in the twentieth century by Stark and was “commonly accepted” by 1912–13.
64. Stark on Tin Pan Alley songs: “The methods of selling them are wide of our own conception of how the ‘art divine’ should be dispensed. They are hurled across the country with a whoop and hurrah, while the songs that teach and thrill the purer souls too often lie silent on the shelf” (quoted, *ibid.*, 253–54); and on his opposition to the new monopolistic practices, see *ibid.*, 240–41. Compare Joplin: “Syncopations are no indication of light or trashy music” (*ibid.*, 141).
65. Blesh, *Shining Trumpets*, 1976, 11, 12.
66. *Ibid.*, 346, 289, 8.
67. Which is itself incipiently binary, of course: there is peak, and there is not-peak, each side guaranteeing the other.
68. Blesh, *Shining Trumpets*, 1976, 344, 375, 378.
69. *Ibid.*, 146; Bessie Smith, “St. Louis Blues” (1929), *Bessie Smith 1928–1929*, Classics 897 (1996).
70. For Calloway's version of “St. Louis Blues,” see above, p. 83.
71. It is certainly vital to take due account of historical specificity. Thus, while in the later twentieth century the canonizing impulse spread right across the range of musical genres — to the extent that in 2004 I noticed a reference to “classic gangsta” — this move tended to overlay the qualitative criterion with a quantitative one. Drawing on the semiotics of “charting” — which arose precisely as a way of ordering difference (and its absence) when received values come into question — the ubiquitous phenomenon of *lists* (favorite rock albums, best disco tracks, etc.) suggests a cultural shift marked by the difference between the psychology of collecting and that of enumerating, between the private library and the rewriteable disk, between bourgeois and populist consumerism. Though we can thread our way back from here to John Stark's commitment to high-class musical commodities, the distance traversed presses the question, can maximum exchange value now possess its own kind of authenticity?
72. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). Rescue-philosophy on the subject of “truth” has been quite common in recent anglophone writing; see, for example, Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), which also discusses the thematic subset clustered under “authenticity” quite extensively. I concentrate on Taylor's book here because “authenticity” is his focus.

73. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977b), 142–48.
74. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" trans. Joseph V. Harari, in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (New York: Longman, 1988), 196–210, 209, 210.
75. See Middleton, "Work-in(g)-Practice," 2000; Elie During, "Appropriations: Deaths of the Author in Electronic Music," in *Sonic Process* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, N.D. [2002?]), 39–57.
76. Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 1988, 187–234.
77. *Ibid.*, 193, 217, 216.
78. This is somewhat unfair to Silverman, who argues that "the fantasmatic . . . is always absorbing the world outside. I would go even farther, and argue that it is being continually drawn into new social and political alignments, which may even lead to important 'scenic' changes. It is thus important to ask of any authorial desire: How has it assimilated history? And how might it be seen to have acted upon history?" (*ibid.*, 217–18). In part, this makes my point for me. But to the extent that this methodological rule is not followed up, it also supports my reservation. Moreover, the status of "authorial desire" seems to remain entirely contingent. What and where, exactly, is this "it" that is drawn into new alignments, that assimilates history and acts upon it, and how does it manage to imagine itself speaking?
 For an incisive study of poststructuralist conceptions of authoriality, see Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998). Burke not only discusses problems with these conceptions but also brings out the resistant passages of authoriality within the texts of these writers themselves, ending with an argument for a theory of "situated" (rather than transcendental or naively biographical) authorship. (This species of authorship is what I was looking for in my discussions of Charley Patton, Patti Smith, Nina Simone, and some others.) He also points out that to kill the author, one must first build him up — which is to maintain him: "the concept of the author is never more alive than when pronounced dead" (7) — just like that of God (of whom the Author is of course part).
79. Michelle Kisluk, "(Un)Doing Fieldwork: Sharing Songs, Sharing Lives," in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 23–44. The contextualizing literature is vast. Many of the classic texts on the anthropological side involve James Clifford (*The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988]; "Travelling Cultures," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler [New York: Routledge, 1992], 96–116; James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986]). On the historiographical side, the work of Hayden White and of "new historicists" such as Stephen Greenblatt and Roger Chartier have been particularly important. For a useful introduction, see Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1991). Bridging this entire field is the hugely significant work of Michel de Certeau.
80. Given the profile of "pygmy pop" over recent decades, such caveats were certainly necessary; on the exploitation of BaAka and other central African "pygmy" music, by a range of musicians from jazz and rock through to avant-gardists such as Brian Eno and dance music mixes like *Deep Forest*, see Steven Feld, "The Poetics and Politics of Pygmy Pop," in *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 254–79.
81. In more detail: Lacan's theory of identification distinguishes between the imaginary level of the "ideal ego" and the symbolic level of the "ego-ideal," the first referring to the image the subject wishes to assume, the second to the point in the Other from which this image is to be seen, for which it is intended. The "*Che vuoi?*" marks the extent to which these can never completely correlate, that is, the subject's doubt as to the right answer. Kisluk, as I try to suggest, is presenting herself for two different gazes. There is a clear explanation of Lacan's theory in Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 100–14.
82. Quotations in this paragraph from Kisluk, "(Un)Doing Fieldwork," 1997, 23, 24, 25, 29, 39.
83. Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 176, 177. The question might be raised whether Žižek's move, as well as (or rather than) dialecticizing dialogics, has the effect of dialogicizing dialectics, and if so, whether this freezes the possibility of historical movement in a way that, arguably,

- reinscribes the Adornian standstill of the negative dialectic. This is a question I will come to in due course.
84. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990), 296, 130.
 85. *Ibid.*, 324, 325. Žižek's response to Habermas's positing of the "ideal speech situation" brings out its neoreligious impulse, its "status as fetish": as an example of something that is "simultaneously denied and laid claim to," this ideal demonstrates the classic fetishist logic — "I know very well that communication is broken and perverted [that the phallus is not there; that this god has no power. . .] but still. . . (I believe and act as if the ideal speech situation is already realized)" (Slavoj Žižek, "Beyond Discourse-Analysis," in Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* [London: Verso, 1990], 249–60, 259). But this also reveals, in what is only apparently a paradox, Habermas's Enlightenment roots. For Žižek, Kantian Reason was free to operate, as Kant himself was aware, only on condition of an acceptance of contingent social law: "Only to the already enlightened view does the universe of social customs and rule appear as a nonsensical 'machine' that must be accepted as such." But further: Reason itself has its nonsensical side; the "categorical imperative is precisely a Law which has a necessary, unconditional authority, without being true," so that "we can free ourselves of external social constraints and achieve the maturity proper to the autonomous enlightened subject precisely by submitting to the 'irrational' compulsion of the categorical imperative" — in Kant's own formulation: "You can because you must!" (Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 79–84; quotations from 80, 81). Of course, this is to locate Habermasian Reason, including its commitment to "internal" ideology critique, as itself "irrational," to situate his truth-machine as, precisely, ideological at a deeper level. As we shall see, this is part of what Žižek's theory of ideology attempts to do.
 86. See, e.g., Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth, Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
 87. The most convincing argument along these lines is Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 1985; see p.109, for example, where the authors' radically antiessentialist concept of discursive overtermination leads them to bracket the category of ideology altogether.
 88. Žižek, "The Spectre of Ideology," 1999c, 61.
 89. *Ibid.*, 70. This empty place may, at first sight, look like the discredited Godlike "view from nowhere" of scientistic Reason. Its emptiness and its impossibility are designed to prevent this. Moreover, it can only be internal to the discursive formation, not above it — within, not outside, the territory of subjectivity. Admittedly, this raises the question whether, even if emptied of "positively determined reality," it might be thought to contain *something*; I come to this question below.
 90. *Ibid.*, 72, 73, 74.
 91. Developed most notably in Žižek, "How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?" in *Sublime Object*, 1989, 11–53. For a concise and admirably clear account along similar lines, see Mladen Dolar, "Beyond Interpellation," *Qui Parle* 6, no.2 (1993): 75–96.
 92. Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 43.
 93. Dolar, "Beyond Interpellation," 1993, 78.
 94. Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 75.
 95. On freedom, not on *desire* (the subject should "ne pas céder sur son désir," according to Lacan), which is precisely what is brought into existence by this moment.
 96. See Žižek, "Beyond Discourse-Analysis," 1990, 249. So Margaret Thatcher was right ("no such thing as society")! But not for the reason she thought. On the nonexistence of popular music, see pp. 32–34 above.
 97. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 1985, 125.
 98. Žižek, "The Spectre of Ideology," 1999c, 77.
 99. Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 196, 126, 124.
 100. Mowitt, *Percussion*, 2002, 42–58, 138–50; the quotations are on 56, 147, 148, 144, 142–43. See also Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986), 5–34.
 101. On this aspect of Silverman's argument, see above, pp. 114–5, 135.
 102. As will be obvious, I find this perspective broadly persuasive, as one that I believe measures up to the tragic dimension inherent in human existence without thereby giving way on desire (as Lacan puts it). But there are alternatives. Here are two:

John Mowitt (*Percussion*, 2002, 51–58), rejecting the Žižekian idea of the postinterpellative “remainder” as implying a nostalgic vision of subject-as-agent (rather than as system), puts forward a conception of subjectivity as a “discontinuous and uneven lamination of strata,” an “unsteady locus of spatial and temporal discontinuities” (55), mediated by sensorial variability (hearing/seeing, for instance). His argument that the conditions of *sinthomicité* (as we might call it) have not been satisfactorily specified, is well made, and I will return to it. But nothing in Žižek’s model necessarily construes the subject as agent rather than system (albeit system with an unspecified motor). Moreover, the “absent remainder” in Mowitt’s more typically deconstructive model tends itself to get filled in with undertheorized “foundations” — “radical democracy,” “resistance,” “knowledge production.” And without a “belief before belief,” he has no answer to the question why the interpellated individual should even want to turn. (Interestingly, his distrust of subjective “solidity” has a correlate at the level of the musical object: by employing Christopher Small’s concept of “musicking” to attribute those (necessary) moments when the flow of musical practice “solidifies” temporarily — we mark these moments with, for example, song-titles — to the fantasizing of “old musicology,” he misses the degree to which a retroactive “as if” is installed here, just as it is in the space of the preideological subject. On “musicking,” see Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music* [London: John Calder, 1987a]).

By contrast, Teresa Brennan (*History after Lacan*, 1993) — while she too in effect focuses on the moment of interpellation (she calls it the “founding fantasy” of the ego and her model draws on Melanie Klein as well as on Lacan’s theory of the mirror phase) — certainly does specify a “foundation before the foundation” (16). Describing the destructive effects of “the ego’s era,” and connecting the “founding fantasy” to a misogynistic myth of Woman rooted in the objectification and passification of the mother, Brennan, drawing on elements from Spinoza, Deleuze, and Irigaray, invokes a prior “foundation” in which the mother stands for a “natural reality” (21) marked by a “logic” based in the multitudinous differences and connections between beings and their environment, and the flows of energy that link them. The political program Brennan constructs from this model is powerful — not least because one of its bases is an ecologically sensitive revisionist account of Marxist political economy which brings natural resources, along with human labor-power, into the category of variable capital that can produce surplus value; but, although she acknowledges that the action called for — in which “the subject invests itself with the properties that animate the generative logical chain of nature” (17) — is built upon an unprovable foundation, it is hard to see her elision of the discursive constitution of “nature” as anything other than an originary fantasy of maternal origin masquerading as a godlike subject of science.

103. Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 87–129. The outline is structured around a remarkably clear interpretation of Lacan’s “graph of desire,” moving from the lowest (quasi-Althusserian) level of the graph to the upper levels (“beyond interpellation”).
104. *Ibid.*, 89, 99, 124, 125, 127. I will return to my questioning of the finality of the fourth step in the procedure.
105. *Ibid.*, 28–30.
106. *Ibid.*, 5.
107. Rather than “grasped historically,” I might have written “historicized” — except that Benjamin, among others, has taught us the poverty of historicism as a method of articulating the past for productive political effect. According to Žižek, the problem with historicism (as opposed to what he terms “historicity”) is that it relativizes all historical content and hence “evades the encounter with the Real,” “historicity differs from historicism by the way it presupposes some traumatic kernel which endures as ‘the same,’ non-historical; and so various historical epochs are conceived as failed attempts to capture this kernel.” (Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do*, 2002, 101, 102.)
108. See Brennan, *History after Lacan*, 1993, 169–72; and cf. above, pp. 53–54.
109. Žižek, “The Spectre of Ideology,” 1999c, 82.
110. Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 19.
111. *Ibid.*, 24.
112. If “ideology,” qua concept, is specific to modernity, perhaps its changing phases can be mapped to the history of modern society. Thus it would begin, in the late eighteenth century, as the theory which identifies the attachment of specific worldviews to specific social interests, and then, as the discursive space gradually fills up with ideological work, would generate the

narrative (and problems) of Marxist, anti-Marxist, and post-Marxist theories. At the culmination of that process comes the point when Žižek's "empty place" is required. Again there is a relation between theory and social formation, for this empty place corresponds, perhaps, to the "non-place" occupied by power in the deterritorialized space of "Empire" (see Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 2000). The question now becomes how this place can/should be occupied, without thereby installing the Godlike gaze of a new Master. I come to this question shortly.

113. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 1985, 119.
114. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 190.
115. This rather fantastical etymology is given in Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 75.
116. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991, 195.
117. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 1993, xix.
118. This understanding of "Empire" comes from Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 2000. They write:

The passage to Empire emerges from the twilight of modern sovereignty. In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentred* and *deterritorialising* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. (xii–xiii)

They (and I) may be overstating things. It is an open question whether it will actually be possible for an ideological formation, and its accompanying apparatus of social command, to survive without a constitutive outside to act as an other (the potential of the extraterrestrial comes to mind; and "history," once completely spatialized, may be available for a similar function — although, in both cases, does the foreign not immediately get incorporated in the interior?). But the main drift — that territorializing divisions move inside — is unmistakable; as many commentators have pointed out, the perpetrators of 9/11 were in many senses creations of "the West" — "they" were already "us."

The idea that the modern subject of Reason never actually succeeded in escaping from nature comes from (inter alia) Bruno Latour (*We Have Never Been Modern*, 1993). Dethroning the objectifying subject of Empire reveals its "objectal" underside — as the Lacanian joke puts it, in rewriting the story of how the emperor's new clothes were seen through, "Look, under his clothes he is completely naked!" (see Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 1989, 29).

119. *Buena Vista Social Club*, World Circuit WCD050 (1997).
120. Michael Chanan, "Play It Again, or, Old-Time Cuban Music on the Screen," *New Left Review* 238 (Nov./Dec. 1999): 150–56, 154. For an account of Cooder's role, in the context of a useful discussion of global and local forces in popular music, see Jan Fairley, "The 'Local' and 'Global' in Popular Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 272–89.
121. Wim Wenders's film, *Buena Vista Social Club*, was a Road Movies production in association with Kintop Pictures and ARTE (1999). Wenders also made a film, *Until the End of the World* (1991), exploiting the "childlike" sounds of BaAka pygmies.
122. According to one Chanan source (quoted in "Play It Again," 1999, 154), "The youth consider them 'something like antediluvian monsters.'" For a study which presents the Buena Vista Social Club phenomenon as "revivalist" music for tourists (real and metaphorical), see Jan Fairley, "'Ay Díos, Ampárame' (O God, Protect Me): Music in Cuba during the 1990s, the 'Special Period'" in *Island Musics*, ed. Kevin Dawe (London: Berg, 2004), 77–97. The genre which really represented contemporary Cuban life, according to Fairley, was *timba*, the main focus of her piece.
123. Not the least resonant symptom of *Buena Vista Social Club*'s appeal — if "the era of the *Sinthome* is [indeed] the era of the death of God" — lies in the way that the religious references might be taken to mark the *rebirth* of religion in recent decades, most strikingly in Africa and Asia but also in the Americas, including the United States; has the script of modernity gone wrong? To investigate fully the factors involved in this seemingly bizarre development would demand another book. An intriguing question to raise, though, is whether, in a state of "Empire," what is happening is that a hitherto premodernist (superstitious) "outside" is being forced "inside," highlighting the irrationality inherent in modernity itself. It is clear that the rebirth is not a simple return or renewal but rather a fundamentalist reaction to a perceived

failure of modernity. And part of the context is the crisis, equally, of the People-idea, whether conceived as subject of democracy, agent of socialism, or image of the nation-state. There is a vacuum of authority asking to be filled.

124. Cooder quotation from album sleeve notes; the film director is Nat Chediak, quoted on <http://www.salon.com/ent/music/feature/1999/03/09feature.html>
125. Wenders cuts constantly between “here” and “there,” “them” and “us,” mediated by the traveling figure of Cooder, and setting up a “triangular trade” between Europe (the opening concert, in Amsterdam), (Afro-) Cuba, and the United States (the final sequence, and concert, in New York). His “innocent” documentary-style camera presents the musicians in interview like ethnographic subjects, and the occlusion of politics (except for a very occasional visual signifier referencing the Revolution), indeed, the relative lack of social context altogether, constructs a “Cuba” that in its way has as much of a fairy-tale quality as the hypermodern street scenes of New York patently do for the visiting, wonder-struck Cuban “old-timers” (as Cooder calls them). Similarly, there is no other music than that of the band — it inhabits its own universe, out of time — so that the way it flows round all three sites, always the same, a truly global sound, can cover over the fractures between worlds: the impossible “blot” in the object gaze which the admission of political antagonism would otherwise expose.
126. Critic Alma Guillermoprieto, quoted in Chanan, “Play It Again,” 1999, 151; Cooder quotation again from album sleeve notes.
127. Some might hope that this moment would also see the end of labored punning — but, to the extent that it is inconceivable without an increase in *jouis-sense*, I cannot agree. I do, however, see this moment as redeeming the promise laid down in Raymond Williams’s inspirational idea of a “common culture” — a promise weakened in the original vision by essentialist notions of human autonomy and of “the people” (see Raymond Williams, “The Idea of a Common Culture,” in *Resources of Hope*, ed. Robin Gable [1968, London: Verso, 1989], 32–38). Williams rightly rejects his earlier formulation of a “culture in common,” but we might rewrite this as a “culture of the commons,” where “common” stands both for a postpopular understanding of the space of democratic subjectivity and for those ecosocial spaces where the writ of property does not run — where all may safely graze.

Hardt and Negri (*Empire*, 2000, 300–303) come up with the same metaphor for their utopia. (I read their book after drafting my note, an interesting sign of, precisely, common passages of thought.) Referring back to French revolutionary political theorist, Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, they want to push past his dismissal of “*ré-tota*” (the totalizing “thing” of monarchical sovereignty) in favor of “*ré-publique*,” toward a “commons” where the “non-place” of Empire is populated by “the new place in the non-place, the place defined by the productive activity that is autonomous from any external regime of measure . . . [standing for] the incarnation, the production, and the liberation of the multitude” (357, 303). Their figure for this multitudinous inventiveness harks back even further historically, contrasting “the naked life of *homo tantum*” with the Renaissance trope of “*homohomo*, humanity squared, enriched by collective intelligence and love of the community” (204) (we might prefer humanity not so much squared as multiplied to the infinite power). However, in the end their search for an image to render this project more concrete seizes on the figure of the *posse* (“posse,” from Latin, “to be able,” “to have the power”), and finds a pointer in the social imaginary of U.S. rap groups. While this exemplar certainly offers pregnant figures of cooperative invention outside the law, if we pursue its fantasmatic prehistory into the Wild West, we are reminded that posses here (even if made up of gangstas) existed to enforce the Law, often with maximum violence — clubbing clubs indeed (and one wonders how far they are, in the rappers’ imagination, if only by inversion, from the lynch mob). For Hardt and Negri, the posse is “a biopolitical unity managed by the multitude, organized by the multitude, directed by the multitude — absolute democracy in action” (410). It is the *absolute* that is the problem. Although the empty or nonplace should certainly be occupied — occupied by (conflicting) desire(s), that is, sinthomatized — on the level of content, it is essential that it remain *empty*.

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MUSIC

How does popular music produce its subject? How does it produce us as subjects? More specifically, how does it do this through voice — through “giving voice”? And how should we understand this subject — “the people” — that it voices into existence? Is it singular or plural? What is its history and what is its future?

Voicing the Popular draws on approaches from musical interpretation, cultural history, social theory and psychoanalysis to explore key topics in the field, including race, gender, authenticity and repetition. Taking most of his examples from across the past hundred years of popular music development — but relating them to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century “pre-history” — Richard Middleton constructs an argument that relates “the popular” to the unfolding of modernity itself. *Voicing the Popular* renews the case for ambitious theory in musical and cultural studies, and, against the grain of much contemporary thought, insists on the progressive potential of a politics of the Low.

Richard Middleton is Emeritus Professor of Music at the University of Newcastle. Author of several books on popular music, including *Studying Popular Music* (1990), he was also a founding editor of the journal *Popular Music* and is co-editor of *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* (2003).

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