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TRANSTEXTUALITY IN POPULAR MUSIC ON COMMERCIAL RADIO.

by

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B.A., Concordia University, 1985

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department

of

COMMUNICATION

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Abstract.

For entertainment and information, North Americans today can choose from a very wide range of options, from pay television to computer networks. One of the oldest mass media, radio, still holds a prominent place among the choices that they make. Commercial stations in particular attract a large number of listeners every day. In this thesis, I address the question of what it is about commercial radio, particularly the music on it, that appeals to its listeners. My hypothesis is that one of the main attractions of listening to the radio has to do with the sense of predictability and familiarity that the broadcast provides for its audience: people tune in to commercial radio because they know that they will hear music with which they are already familiar. I am interested in how radio stations use familiarity in their broadcasts to maintain their popularity. I use semiotics to address this question, regarding the identifiability of the music on commercial radio. The most relevant semiotic theories for my purposes bear on transtextuality, the relations that any given text has to other, previous texts. I complement this approach with theories that deal specifically with the music industry in North America.

In order to measure the degree of transtextuality on commercial radio, I focus on a six-hour excerpt drawn from a
Vancouver-based commercial station, CFOX-FM, during the summer of 1989. I analyze the songs in this sample, and the music in the advertisements, drawing out and explaining the transtextual relations that the music contains, and showing how these relations make the broadcast more accessible for listeners. I conclude from my observations that the music in the excerpt contains transtextual references that are both numerous and varied. Although my examples come mainly from CFOX-FM, I believe that my observations are applicable to other commercial radio stations in major urban centres.
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Introduction.

Certain media theorists in the early 1950s felt that radio would not survive the advent of television. They felt that the public would tire of a medium that offered only half of what television offered: sounds, but not sights. These theorists were wrong. Radio thrived, and is still thriving today. According to the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement, 96% of all Canadians listen to the radio for at least fifteen minutes per week. Radio ensured its survival from the early 1950s onward by focusing on music. Indeed, although a few stations today still feature more talk than music, the majority of them broadcast music. On the whole, the many people who listen to these stations do so distractedly. They do not take the time to consider what it is about the radio broadcast that attracts them, nor do they consider what it is about the music in particular that succeeds in drawing and maintaining their interest. Given the continued prominence of the medium in our day-to-day lives, I consider these questions, regarding the appeal of radio and the music on it, to be worthy of close attention.


2 The percentage is from the Fall 1980 survey. [Paul Audley, Canada's Cultural Industries: Broadcasting, Publishing, Records and Film (Ottawa: Canadian Institute for Economic Policy, 1983), p.192.]
My guiding assumption throughout this thesis is that the popular songs on commercial radio carry with them a certain number of outside references. Indeed, virtually all of these songs, in a more or less obvious form, refer to other elements of the commercial cultural environment. Naturally, one can observe that a popular song has, for example, a structure similar to that of other songs, and conclude (correctly) that it refers in this way to previous texts. But the claim of this thesis, and its subject, is that almost all songs on commercial radio go beyond such obvious resemblances; a song, and the performer who sings it, appeal to a person's knowledge of the following: the language and structure of popular music; other popular songs; events and incidents related to popular music, and to culture in a larger sense. Such references are made in part because listeners can identify more readily with ideas that are already familiar to them. In this manner, performers who can borrow from the commercial cultural environment with a certain measure of skill are more likely to be heard, and to be commercially successful, than artists who attempt to widen the boundaries of popular music by espousing even moderately divergent sounds and styles. The latter are less likely to appeal to a mass audience than the former.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the extent to which each new popular song that appears on commercial radio
eventually becomes part of a larger matrix, namely the commercial cultural environment of North America. A new song will find more immediate acceptance into this cultural matrix if it already refers to something that listeners (including A&R people, record producers, radio programmers, and so on) can relate to their own experience. A popular song does not appear in a vacuum, but rather joins a vast repository of cultural commodities. It becomes part of a large and durable cultural tradition to which it offers at most slight variations.

Certain semiotic works on transtextuality (particularly from Gérard Genette, Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes) will help me to attain my objectives. Transtextuality, as Genette defines it, involves the study of everything within a given text that relates it to previous texts. Thus, in addition to being considered for what new ideas it presents, the text is examined for the ideas that it borrows from other texts and from the author's social environment. In this way, the text is considered in relation to the cultural environment in which it is produced. This examination of the music on commercial radio will be closely tied to considerations on the context in which this music is produced. In addition to Kristeva, Genette and Barthes, I

3 There is a detailed discussion of transtextuality in chapter two. [Gérard Genette, Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p.9.]
will refer in this thesis to Simon Frith and Jacques Attali, theorists who have written directly about popular music and its place in society.

In *Understanding Popular Culture*, John Fiske emphasizes the appropriateness of transtextuality for the study of popular culture. Popular culture lends itself well to a transtextual approach, better still than to a strictly textual one. The latter approach consists of analyzing a text independently of its context, looking for deep levels of significance within it. There are texts, including many so-called highbrow ones, for which such an approach is useful. For instance, many art enthusiasts derive satisfaction from studying paintings and sculptures within the confines of a museum, completely detached from the outside world. Popular culture works differently, however; according to Fiske, much of it is simply too transparent to merit detailed textual analysis. Indeed, it only becomes fully meaningful for its audience when it is considered on

---


5 We should however keep in mind that Susan McClary and Robert Walser, among others, strongly recommend that musicologists apply their analytical skills to North American popular music, so that they can explain how a song works for an audience: what is it about a particular chord change or rhythm that makes a song moving? [Susan McClary and Robert Walser, "Start Making Sense! Musicology Wrestles with Rock," *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, eds. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), pp.277-292.]
three levels: as a text, in relation to other texts, and in relation to the social environment where people use it. As Fiske writes,

Popular culture circulates [trans]textually, among what I have called primary texts (the original cultural commodities - Madonna herself or a pair of jeans), secondary texts that refer to them directly (advertisements, press stories, criticism), and tertiary texts that are in constant process in everyday life (conversation, the ways of wearing jeans or dwelling in apartments, window shopping, or adopting Madonna's movements in a high school dance). 6

A reader's familiarity with these three levels enhances his/her appreciation and enjoyment of a text. In fact, without an awareness of transtextual references, s/he can become quite lost in reading a text. I will therefore keep in mind Fiske's three textual levels when I examine popular music on commercial radio.

This examination, of six hours of airtime from a specific radio station, will be a step-by-step one, inspired in part by Barthes' slow reading of Balzac's "Sarrasine" in S/Z. I will look at how the radio text involves its listeners, how it makes itself meaningful for them. The text, through its allusions, is incomplete on its own: it requires its listeners to fill in the spaces with ideas and attitudes drawn from their own experience. This thesis will

6 Fiske, p.124.
examine the spaces in the radio text, and some of the ideas and attitudes that the audience uses to fill them. There will be little semiotic analysis focusing on the single text (on a single song, for example, or on the words of a single song). Rather, I will be looking at relations between texts.

The thesis is divided into two parts, each of which consists of four chapters. Part One provides a theoretical background to transtextuality in popular music on commercial radio. The first chapter of Part One offers some perspectives on the study of popular culture that help to set the tone of the ensuing sections. I address the mass culture debate in it, justifying my approach to the study of popular music in the process. The next three chapters each deal with one of the three major aspects of the thesis: I explore, in turn, transtextuality, popular music, and commercial radio. Although the main focus in each chapter is on only one of these three subjects, I make an effort to interrelate them: all three chapters include details on each of the three topics. The chapter on transtextuality, for instance, uses many examples of popular music from commercial radio. The following chapter, on popular music, in addition to offering some socio-historical perspectives on popular music, and defining key terms (such as "rock" and "pop"), deals with homogeneity in popular music, using
critical theorists Horkheimer and Adorno's views to address the subject. Chapter four, on commercial radio, includes a section on the appeal of predictability and repetition for an audience.\footnote{Homogeneity, predictability, repetition are all different facets of transtextuality. See chapter two.}

Part Two applies the notions and concepts developed in Part One to a specific case, CFOX-FM. I use a six-hour excerpt from the station to illustrate my point that transtextuality is commonplace in music on commercial radio. In chapter five, I describe how I chose the station and I provide a general introduction to it. In chapter six, I analyze the songs on the station, examining how they correspond to the station's format. In chapter seven, I review specific songs from my excerpt, looking at the different forms of transtextuality within them. In the final chapter, I apply the same approach I used in the previous two chapters to the music in the advertisements on CFOX-FM.
Part One.

Transtextuality in Popular Music on Commercial Radio:

Theoretical Perspectives.
Chapter One. Towards a New Openness: Popular Music within the High Culture/Low Culture Debate.

1. Introduction

Critics view popular music in a different way than they did twenty or so years ago. Although the high culture/low culture debate continues, with some theorists still propounding a separation of high from low culture, the view in recent years has been a more accepting one towards mass culture, including popular music. As we shall see in this chapter, postmodern artists now freely incorporate elements of mass culture into their work, and popular musicians are looking towards high culture, and towards other cultures, for ideas and styles that can enrich their work.

The following chapter examines two differing views on the high culture/low culture question, a modernist one, based on Dwight Macdonald's "Masscult and Midcult,"1 and a postmodernist one, based on Andreas Huyssen's "Mapping the Postmodern"2 among other texts. This review has two aims: to indicate positions within culture as a whole that critics have ascribed to rock since its initial

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2 Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," New German Critique, 33 (Fall 1984), pp.5-52.
appearance, and to emphasize the present interrelationship of popular music with other forms of cultural expression, including high culture. We will see that borrowing, alluding, imitating are commonplace practices in the arts of today.

2.1. Remarks on Modernism.

There are many ways of defining modernism. After all, the term has been applied at different times to a wide spectrum of social phenomena. In this thesis, the focus is on modernism as an aesthetic movement guiding artistic creation and criticism from the 1910s to the early 1970s. The 1910s are a significant period because, according to David Harvey, a "qualitative transformation" in art and music occurred at that time.\(^3\) Indeed, a new view of art's relation to reality became dominant in the 1910s. From striving for the most accurate and lifelike representations of reality, artists sought more and more to develop and explore new ways of interpreting reality.\(^4\) The aim of modernists in the twentieth century was to build upon previous accomplishments in the arts and music: art, like science, had to progress. Arnold Schoenberg's development of a twelve-tone musical system in the 1910s and 20s


\(^4\) Harvey, pp.27-28.
exemplified this spirit of exploration. Modernist creators were continually building upon their predecessors' achievements in order to broaden the scope of their art. In this way, the late-Romantic composer Richard Wagner was more than an inspiration for Shoenberg: he was someone to surpass and transcend. Modernist advances were based upon a specific canon of creators, a body of artists who had made advances in the arts and music from the Enlightenment onwards.

A consequence of this search for progress was that modern art grew increasingly challenging for the average viewer or listener: for many people, the word "modern", as in "modern art" or "modern music", was synonymous with "difficult". It seemed best to leave the evaluation of modern art to people who understood it. Those critics who did understand it tended to be particular about their preferences; indeed, they based their judgments on how effectively art attained modernist ideals of progress. Underlying this approach was the presupposition that creators and critics could establish universal guidelines according to which they could measure all art and music. F.R. Leavis expressed such a view when he wrote in 1930,

The minority capable not only of appreciating Dante, Shakespeare, Donne, (...) but of recognising their latest successors constitute the

5 Harvey, pp.44-45.
consciousness of the race (...) Upon this minority depends our power of profiting by the finest human experience of the past; they keep alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of the tradition.  

Such an attitude tended to marginalize artists and musicians who were not dedicated to advancing the artistic enterprise. Popular culture, in keeping with such a perspective, was not especially popular among most modernists: reflecting Leavis's ideas, many of them simply viewed the culture of the masses as a threat to the integrity of high culture. Dwight Macdonald, as we shall see, reflects the foregoing dimensions of modernism in many ways.

2.2. A Review of "Masscult and Midcult".

I chose Macdonald's essay "Masscult and Midcult" for its clearly delineated modernist position, in which the author takes a separation between high and mass culture for granted. Macdonald published the article in 1962, just before the earliest intimations of postmodernism in the form of Pop Art brought into question the need to keep high and mass culture hermetically sealed off from one another.  

Macdonald's opinions had wide currency at the time of their publication:


7 We will look at postmodernism in section 3 of this chapter.
appearance, although they have been superseded by less elitist ones in what a number of writers have called "postmodern" times.8

In his essay, Dwight Macdonald divides North American culture into three categories: High Culture, Midcult and Masscult. Macdonald's views are typically modernist, in the sense that he views Midcult and Masscult as infringing upon High Culture. He emphasizes the need to keep High Culture distinct from these lower forms of culture, because they threaten to devalue it and to impede its progress. According to Macdonald, a society without High Culture becomes a stultifying one where mediocrity is the norm.

High Culture was present in occidental society before the Industrial Revolution. The term, as Macdonald applied it to preindustrial times, referred to the artistic practices of educated minorities who shared similar intellectual and aesthetic interests, and who had sufficient

8 Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that there are writers to this day who share Macdonald's perspective on mass culture. See for instance Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 393 pages. Bloom's chapter on "Music" (pp.68-81), in which he criticizes rock for its sexual beat and hostility to reason, is particularly relevant. Also, Patrick Brantlinger examines the long tradition among numerous critics of viewing popular culture as a threat to society in *Bread & Circuses, Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 307 pages. He reviews Macdonald on pp.200-203.
leisure time to pursue them. The artist in such an environment frequently knew the people whom s/he was addressing, and thus could make various assumptions about their understandings of his/her ideas that enabled him/her to express him/herself freely and fully. Because of the limited size of communication networks in preindustrial society, it was more difficult to make money from the creation of art. As a consequence, economic considerations did not draw artists' attentions away from self-expression: compromises and adjustments for the sake of reaching a wider, paying audience were unnecessary, because there was no wide paying audience. During these preindustrial times when High Culture was thriving, Folk Art, the culture of the uncultured, was thriving too. It was through Folk Art that the "people" expressed and entertained themselves. It was fulfilling for the people because they were the ones who created it and who lived it themselves. In this manner, Folk Art was a direct expression of their interests and passions, their preoccupations and worries.

The Industrial Revolution brought a change to how people sought to achieve cultural satisfaction. It led to the urbanization of the peasantry, which was forced to labor in the factories in order to increase production;\(^9\) it also

\(^9\) Macdonald does not do justice to the severity of conditions during this period. The ills of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century are more forcefully described by Lewis Mumford in *Technics and Civilization*. Mumford
led to an increase in literacy among these people, and left them with a certain amount of leisure time to fill.

Unfortunately, Macdonald remarks, the rigors of their way of life left them with little desire for that which was intellectually challenging: after a hard day at work, few of them felt inclined to read demanding literature or listen to complicated music. They were furthermore separated from their original communities; as a consequence, they were disinclined to develop their Folk Art further, because it was no longer a direct reflection of their lifestyle.

The capitalist marketplace was developing throughout the Industrial Revolution, and an audience was being created for a particular form of culture: "Masscult". The basic difference that Macdonald establishes between Folk Art and Masscult is that, while folk art is created by the people for the people in the best American democratic tradition, Masscult is imposed from above. It is centrally produced by

writes that the Industrial Revolution imprisoned people into dismal lives, where they had to work incessantly at tasks that were repetitious and monotonous. Factories were huge and impersonal, to achieve economies of scale. Workers were treated as if they were pieces of machinery, repeating a simple task all day long, because it was considered inefficient to make them do varied tasks. Coal was the main source of energy at the time. The mines dug to obtain the coal destroyed nature, and the pollution spewed out by the coal-burning factories were a further detriment to the environment, turning the world in which the workers lived into a black and grey one. See Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilization (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963), pp.151-211.
the few for the many (and for the money). These few give
the audience what they think it wants. Unfortunately, their
desire to reach the largest possible number of people, which
reflects the ideals of mass production and which can
potentially enable economies of scale that lead to vast
profits, dilutes the relevance of the culture that they
produce. For, Macdonald writes, as soon as the intended
audience grows in size and in heterogeneity, concessions
have to be made. Essentially, the product has to appeal to
the lowest common denominator. It has to appeal to those
superficial traits that a mass audience shares.
Unfortunately, these traits frequently tend to be based on
primary impulses (such as sexual curiosity, a morbid
fascination for the violent, an interest in the weaknesses
of fellow men and women, and celebrity worship). Humanity's
more developed interests cannot be appealed to on a wide
scale, because they are less common in a vast, diverse group
of people. Thus, according to Macdonald, Masscult responds
to the superficial fancies of the masses; it does not
satisfy their deeper, more individual yearnings. Besides, a
product that truly satisfied would compromise its
salability. If, for instance, The National Enquirer (which
is an obvious target, but one that ought to be aimed at for
its very obviousness) were to solve its readers' lack of
purpose and fulfillment, it would lose them: after all, what
people seek in reading that tabloid is reassurance, through
learning about the mishaps that befall fellow people. This reassurance is temporary.

According to Macdonald, Midcult is "a peculiar hybrid bred from [Masscult's] unnatural intercourse with [High Culture]." Like Masscult, it is comprised of depersonalized commodities. Midcult is however potentially more insidious, according to Macdonald, because it steals forms, techniques and ideas from High Culture, and presents them as its own. It has the appearance of High Culture, but it does not present the intellectual challenges and emotional provocations of High Culture. Midcult is not High Culture, because its proponents do not strive towards self-expression and innovation. They are aiming for popularity, and as a consequence, are trying to guess at their audience's tastes (or lack thereof, as Macdonald implies). In the case of Midcult, the audience is, on the whole, more educated than the Masscult one, more desirous of substance in its activities of cultural consumption, and yet unwilling to strive for the Real Thing: the genuine intellectual and emotional stimulation that High Culture provides. The Midcult product, as in the case of Masscult, is homogenized for consumption. One example is Time magazine. The reports from Time's foreign correspondents are not usually published directly as such: they are rewritten in New York, so that a

10 Macdonald, p.37.
greater consistency of tone and style can be achieved. The purchaser of a Midcult product, like that of a Masscult one, knows exactly what to expect, even before reading the first word or hearing the first note, because the producer has taken pains to respond to the audience's expectations in a predictable manner.

Macdonald contends that the commoditization of art that has led to the spread of Masscult and Midcult in North America has reduced the importance and scope of High Culture. Truly original thinkers and creators are unable to reach an audience. They cannot find publishers for their work, so concerned have the latter become about the salability of the product. When these writers do find a publisher, they must yield their manuscript to editors and proofreaders who frequently depersonalize it, in their efforts at turning it into a marketable product. In some cases (textbooks, for instance), all expressions of individuality are erased. (Macdonald neglects to mention that some editors have actually rescued unreadable prose from oblivion. The classic example is Maxwell Perkins' editing of Thomas Wolfe's unwieldy manuscripts.)
2.3. Comments on "Masscult and Midcult".

Macdonald's discussion of Masscult and Midcult is interesting. Some of his arguments, however, are debatable. The very assumption that it is necessary to distinguish between High Culture, Midcult and Masscult has become a questionable one. In this respect, John Simon, in his introduction to the 1983 reprint of Against the American Grain, readily admits that Macdonald was an "elitist".\(^\text{11}\) For the sake of argument, however, let us provisionally accept Macdonald's categories. In so doing, we observe that he is too concerned about the negative impacts of Midcult on High Culture. Novelty and provocativeness will not drown in a sea of imitations and banalities; they will perhaps be submerged at times, but they will not disappear. There will always be a market for High Culture as he defines it. There will always be people with the curiosity and desire for something "off the beaten track". Besides, adherents of Midcult do eventually become bored with the product. They require some novelty, now and then (or, if not exactly some novelty, some variety, in any case). High Culture needs to exist, even if only as a laboratory for aesthetic and cultural experiments. (It is more than that, of course.)

\(^{11}\) John Simon, "Introduction." Against the American Grain, p.vi.
Midcult can thereafter adapt the experiments that succeed to the needs of its consumers.

Another point that Macdonald neglects to make is a recognition of humanity's fallibility: it simply cannot live on High Culture alone. In fact, today, Macdonald would have a hard time finding a work of art that does not incorporate mass culture in some form. When he was writing, in the early 1960s, high and mass culture were more distinct categories. Still, at the time, living on nothing but High Culture would have been like subsisting solely on champagne and escargots. Certainly, we can hope along with Macdonald that people will approach a daring and challenging book or piece of music openmindedly, for the enrichment and satisfaction that they provide. But we need not expect them to always want to expend the intellectual effort necessary to absorb such works. Even the likes of Jean-Paul Sartre, whose output included such icons of High Culture as *Being and Nothingness*, liked to read the occasional "roman noir" (police thriller).  

Predictability and formulas are sometimes a welcome complement to the challenges of the unfamiliar.

Furthermore, in giving general examples of Masscult and Midcult, Macdonald overlooks his own point that the artist

must avoid treating the public as a homogeneous mass. One must accept that different people will have different tastes. They will not necessarily agree with Macdonald's examples as to what belongs to each of his three categories. For instance, we believe that Macdonald's criteria for High Culture are too narrow. He asserts that all American magazines are Midcult, except for The New Yorker (sometimes) and small academic journals such as Partisan Review or Commentary. Macdonald also casually dismisses rock & roll as a whole as being part of Masscult. This dismissal is partly attributable to the date at which the essay was written: 1960. (Macdonald was 54.) In this respect, it antedates the developments that occurred throughout the 1960s which increased the versatility of rock.

Although Macdonald's categories are an interesting way of interpreting art, they depend to a great extent upon individual taste. In the same way that Masscult is imposed onto the masses from above, Macdonald could be accused of imposing his own criteria upon his readers. These readers need to be wary enough to adapt such views to their own environment. In addition, they must see Macdonald's levels not as a way of avoiding or condemning certain forms of cultural production, but as a way of being more critically

13 Macdonald, p.3, p.4.
aware of them. One should be conscious of the different levels of culture that exist in society. It is not necessary, however, to separate art into hermetic categories if it is in order to ignore or suppress its more popular manifestations.

2.4. Rock and Commerce.

In deference to Macdonald, one must concede that many a song, as André Malraux writes, "is a form of advertising which aims at selling itself". Many pop songs today have, in Macdonald's words, "the formula, the built-in reaction, the lack of any standard except popularity". Performers such as Vanilla Ice or Milli Vanilli are marketing concepts in search of an audience. Like Macdonald and Malraux, most contemporary writers recognize that there are close ties between rock and commerce today. They disagree with Malraux and Macdonald, however, on whether this interrelatedness makes rock any less viable as an art form.

Contemporary theorists such as Simon Frith recognize that the music that is produced within the culture industry has particular characteristics, a particular shape, and that it is different from folk music, for instance, or so-called

15 Macdonald, p.37.
serious music. Describing music as "the final product" of the music industry, Frith expresses this view in "The Industrialization of Popular Music":

Twentieth century popular music means the twentieth century popular record; not the record of something (a song? a singer? a performance?) which exists independently of the music industry, but a form of communication which determines what songs, singers, and performances are and can be.16

Unlike modernists such as Macdonald, however, contemporary theorists do not categorically condemn the music that is produced within the culture industry.17

Indeed, in Art into Pop, Simon Frith and Howard Horne remark that the commercialization of popular music has not prevented musicians and fans alike from sustaining Romantic values of authenticity and individuality in music. For instance, in art school, both fine arts and commercial design students maintain the image of the artist as inspired creator, expressing his/her individual emotions through


17 See Mary Harron, "McRock: Pop as a Commodity," Facing the Music, ed. Simon Frith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), pp.173-220. What Harron shows in her article is that, although close ties between rock and commerce have remained a constant from 1955 to the present, the prevailing attitude towards the music's ties to the industry has fluctuated with the times.
Capitalism marks the appearance of what Frith and Horne call the "Romantic commodity", exemplified by the subversive practices of Factory Records, in which each mass-produced item is given a distinguishing characteristic: craftsmanship intrudes upon mass production, and the product acquires something of the aura of an original work of art. Frith and Horne note furthermore that consumers, if their purchasing decisions are considered as a whole, can be seen as maintaining a sense of individuality even when they are buying mass-produced goods: although there is nothing individual about buying a Frankie Goes to Hollywood record when thousands are buying the same thing, there is something individual about buying that record, a Miles Davis one, and a Fleetwood Mac one. There are as many permutations of purchasing decisions as there are people, and it is in this manner that consumers can retain a sense of distinctiveness and independence in the marketplace. Such theorists as Iain Chambers and Lawrence Grossberg recognize the important

19 Frith and Horne, p.163.
role that the consumer plays in making a piece of music meaningful, in giving it significance. For them as for
Frith and Horne, the uses to which music is put are at least as important as the music's intrinsic qualities.

Our society manages to sustain Romantic ideals in spite of its commercialization. According to Jon Stratton, whom
Frith and Horne cite, Romanticism can actually be used to support capitalism: marketers use ideas of creativity and
self-expression to promote records as something more than mere commodities. Records and, say, door hinges are both
products that one buys for their use-value. The difference between them is that, although records are produced just as
much with market considerations in mind as hinges, a person (particularly a teen or young adult) who buys a record feels
as though s/he is creating a link between him/herself and the performer on the record. Although in reality the need to
make something salable limits the performer's creativity, the commonplace attitude towards records are that they are
something more than mere commodities. They do in fact


23 Jon Stratton, "Capitalism and Romantic Ideology in the Record Business," Popular Music 3, eds. R. Middleton and

24 Frith and Horne, p.149.
become something more in the hands of the consumer, depending on the uses that s/he makes of them.

This subtle interplay between art and commerce is illustrated by album-cover design. The primary purpose of an album cover is to increase sales of the record inside. (You could argue that, with CDs and cassettes, the cover plays this marketing role even more: after all, you can more easily imagine people buying LPs for the sake of the cover art than their buying CDs and cassettes, with their tiny covers, for that reason.) In any case, many graphic artists manage to respond to the commercial objectives of covers by manifesting fine art ideals in their designs. A few even incorporate actual works of art. They overcome in this way the limitations that commerce imposes on them. Frith and Horne refrain from criticizing what others would term the co-optation of fine art by commerce, admitting that they, as much as everyone else, are fascinated by the processes at work in the capitalist marketplace; they confess to this fascination when they write, "Our faces are pushed up against the display windows just like everyone else's."25

All the theorists to whom we have referred in this section recognize the close ties between popular music and commercial practices in capitalist society. Dwight

Macdonald, among other modernists, deplores the effect this interrelationship has on art, and more broadly, on people's capacity for free and independent thought. More contemporary theorists (postmodern ones) recognize that the effects of commercial popular music on its consumers have not been negative, because consumers have used music (however mass-produced and homogeneous it sometimes can be) in independent ways. In their opinion, music manifests its consumers' distinctiveness and autonomy in the sense that no two people are alike in their purchasing decisions considered as a whole. Even an acceptance of the way things are on the part of consumers can be perceived positively: Jean Baudrillard, as Frith and Horne note, "sees the masses' very passivity, their 'somnambulant strength of denial', as a gigantic black hole in which bourgeois myths are swallowed up and made truly meaningless."\(^{26}\) Indeed, as far as Baudrillard is concerned, the mass media might as well be broadcasting nothing but oppositional viewpoints: whether they do so or not, most of the audience, awaiting the next signal in the stream of output, will respond with indifference. Although the need to produce salable material imposes constraints upon musicians, such a situation, according to Frith and Horne, has not diminished the

enjoyment to be had from popular music for producers and consumers alike.

3.1. Remarks on Postmodernism.

One constant that emerges rather rapidly in theorists' definitions of postmodernism is the essential indeterminacy of the term. I want to focus on it as an aesthetic movement originating in the early 1970s. At the same time, I recognize that the term has received a broad diversity of applications. After all, as David Tetzlaff has observed, "Postmodern is the academic buzzword of our time." 27

Ihab Hassan states repeatedly in his essays on the postmodern that it is not possible to give an exact meaning to the term, in part because indeterminacy is a characteristic of postmodernism itself. Indeterminacy, he writes, is "a decisive element in the new order of our knowledge". 28 His own essays are, to a degree, shifting embodiments of that indeterminacy: Hassan circles the subject, suggests, qualifies, retracts. The term "postmodernism" is applied so widely that there are bound to be hesitations regarding its definition. In addition,


because the term applies to the creative practices of today, critical perspectives must continually evolve to encompass the latest additions to postmodern art and music; when new works appear, the meaning must be revised. It is difficult for a theorist to focus amidst all this flux: it is like trying to take a picture in a whirlpool. Hassan states that "postmodern" is at best a provisional term, because we lack the critical distance to categorize with accuracy the changing creative output of the present. He adds that it will be the task of future generations to describe late twentieth-century art with relative precision. It is also important to point out that not all writers view postmodernism in a positive light. Some, like Fredric Jameson with his "bleak Marxist account"\(^\text{29}\) of postmodernism, have in fact been quite skeptical about it.\(^\text{30}\)

Still, there is agreement among the critics on one thing: a distancing from modernism has occurred among many contemporary artists, a change has taken place. Charles Jencks writes, "Post-Modernism has the essential double meaning: the continuation of Modernism and its


transcendence." With modernism, before the 1970s, amateurs of art could imagine that, in a broad range of fields of artistic expression including music, things were being accomplished that had not been accomplished before. Artists were exploring new territories, they were pushing back the realms of the unknown; space exploration in the '50s and '60s and its associated sense of discovery could be seen as an example for them to follow. The amateur could sense an evolution of sorts in art that paralleled technological developments. There was also a feeling of anticipation and curiosity regarding the new artistic ideas that would presumably continue to emerge in the future.

After the 1960s, the unexpected and novel would not necessarily take the forms anticipated by modernists. Indeed, starting in the early 1970s, there arose among some artists the sense that the pursuit of innovation that was a characteristic of modernism could not continue; these artists wanted, and sought, alternatives to the dictum of "Progress for the sake of progress". By the 1960s, modern artists, in their ceaseless search for the novel, had explored vast territories. Now, it was time to reflect upon these explorations. The brainstorming was over, and the vast panoply of ideas that had been developed by artists of

the past could now be used and recombined in different ways, as the basis for new works of art. They could engage in a process of, in Hassan's words, "hybridization", the notion that one could borrow from the past (for instance) and, through new or unusual artistic juxtapositions, succeed in throwing light upon both the past and the present.

Postmodernism thus arose as a reaction to the constraints that modernism was felt to impose upon the artist. It replaced the modernist's desire for constant progress with a wish to explore the past and understand it. It also reacted against modernism's elitism. The advent of postmodernism coincided with the greater influence of women and minority groups on cultural production. Postmodernism also turned towards foreign cultures, which it faced "by means other than conquest or domination". The movement was thus characterized by a lesser degree of ethnocentrism than modernism.

3.2. The Collapse of High Culture/Low Culture Distinctions.

A notable sign of the openness of postmodernism relative to its predecessor was, in the words of Simon Frith and Howard Horne, "the collapse of high culture/low culture

32 Hassan, p.170.
33 Huyssen, p.51.
distinctions". Huyssen reflects this attitude when he writes,

A new creative relationship between high art and certain forms of mass culture [was], to my mind, indeed one of the major marks of difference between high modernism and the art and literature which followed it in the 1970s and 1980s both in Europe and the United States.

The maintenance of distinctions between high and low cultures was a characteristic of modernism. Huyssen suggests that the distinction was partly a consequence of the historical circumstances through which modernism developed. Indeed, he hypothesizes that the distinction was a defensive reaction to the rise of totalitarianism in the '20s and '30s (and later, to the Cold War). Regimes such as Hitler's and Stalin's were imposing severe controls upon freedom of expression and creativity. They enforced and encouraged harmlessness in art; they made art irrelevant. In this respect, one can cite Theodor Adorno's insistence that real art is art that is created independently of the powers that be. This insistence can be perceived as a warning on Adorno's part that the art of his time needed to be protected from the encroachments of totalitarian regimes. By the late '60s, however, some

34 Frith and Horne, p.4.
35 Huyssen, p.23.
artists felt that modernity's distaste for mass culture was constraining; they did not feel as strong a need as in the past to isolate art from the influence of mass culture. In this respect, Huyssen writes,

"Pop in the broadest sense was the context in which a notion of the postmodern first took shape, and from the beginning until today, the most significant trends within postmodernism have challenged modernism's relentless hostility to mass culture."

Indeed, postmodernists would consider such viewpoints as Dwight Macdonald's to be needlessly segregationist.

Besides, there was the sentiment that the separation of high and low culture had helped to draw the creations of modernists too far away from their audience. Certain forms of modern music, for instance, had distanced themselves from all but a small specialized core of "connoisseurs". Postmodernists realized that to continue along the path that modernism had taken was to move towards a hypothetical situation where the only individual capable of appreciating a new work of art would be the creator him/herself. In this respect, John Barth writes,

"My ideal postmodernist author neither merely repudiates nor merely imitates either his twentieth-century modernist parents or his nineteenth-century premodernist grandparents. He has the first half of our century under his belt, but not on his back. Without lapsing into moral or artistic simplism, shoddy craftsmanship,"

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37 Huyssen, p.16.
Madison Avenue venality, or either false or real naiveté, he nevertheless aspires to a fiction more democratic in its appeal than such late-modernist marvels (by my definition and in my judgement) as Beckett's *Stories and Texts for Nothing* or Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. He may not hope to reach and move the devotees of James Michener and Irving Wallace---not to mention the lobotomized mass-media illiterates. But he *should* hope to reach and delight, at least part of the time, beyond the circle of what Mann used to call the Early Christians: professional devotees of high art.38

Jencks discusses pluralism as being an aspect of postmodernism that strives to achieve the democratization of art that Barth is recommending. With the realization that today's audience is growing increasingly fragmented as a result of the proliferation of entertainment choices, Jencks recognizes the uses and benefits of pluralism in architecture, as well as in other fields. He states that artists, when they design a work of art, should remember to consider the existence of "different 'taste cultures' (in the words of the sociologist Herbert Gans)".39

One way of making art more democratic is therefore to ensure that there be closer ties between high and low culture. Indeed, the presence of familiar elements of popular culture in literature or music is attractive to readers or listeners: it gives them a way of acceding to a work of art. Thus many readers were drawn to Umberto Eco's


39 Jencks, p.22.
The Name of the Rose, which Charles Jencks calls postmodern,\textsuperscript{40} because it could be read as a detective novel. What they found, however, was something more than a whodunit.

Furthermore, art that is informed by a consciousness of mass culture is capable of reflecting culture as a whole more accurately. The postmodern stance basically encourages artists to draw inspiration from mass culture, to borrow from it and to comment upon it. Such a position favors the enrichment of art by giving it new dimensions. It is a more realistic reaction to the world at large than one in which the influence or the presence of pop culture is ignored or suppressed. Postmodernism is leading to a greater acceptance of the popular within the artistic community and among critics and amateurs. There is an increasing awareness of that which it has to offer through its techniques, forms and images.\textsuperscript{41}

Before concluding, it is appropriate to relate here Robert Pattison’s view towards rock as he details it in The

\textsuperscript{40} Jencks, p.7.

\textsuperscript{41} The very emergence of departments of communication during the 1970s shows an awareness of the need to deal with mass culture in a systematic way that is inherently postmodern. Modernists would have probably questioned the raison d’être of such a discipline.
Triumph of Vulgarity. While he does not mention postmodernism, his ideas run parallel to those of postmodernists. Indeed, in his book, he states that the omnipresence of rock in contemporary society is a mark of the "triumph of vulgarity". In spite of the pejorative connotations of the term "vulgarity", Pattison's judgment of rock's dominance is favorable, because he sees rock as a sincere expression of the self's true emotions. He dismisses the pejorative aspect of the term "vulgar" as one imposed from above by aesthetic purists, who uphold transcendental art as the only valid form of art. (These individuals apply the word "transcendental" to learned and refined creations that lift the spirit.) Vulgarity is only negative in relation to such purists' narrow view of what art should be. In the following passage, Pattison draws an opposition between proponents and opponents of rock in which the latter see the former as distorted mirror reflections of themselves, and vice versa:

Refinement looks at vulgarity and sees exactly what vulgarity sees when it looks at refinement, only the image is reversed. Each side stands in front of a mirror and points at its reflection, exclaiming, "You're a monster because everything you do is backward." "I hold up the words intelligence and personality," says Aldridge.


"but when I read them in the mirror, I see meaningless runes clutched in the hands of an apathetic idiot." "I show you primitive order and infinite energy," says the rocker, "but all I see in the mirror is a boring old man preaching lifeless repression."44

Enlightened appreciators of rock (and of art in a more general sense) stand above the value judgments expressed by "Aldridge" and the "rocker": they do not take sides in such a vain argument, but accept rock and the attitudes that it is based upon and upon which it continues to sustain itself. They realize that one does not have to choose between the refined and the vulgar: it is better to accept a balance of the two in art. After all, life is refined at times, vulgar at others: art should be able to reflect that fact. Pattison concludes that rock's celebration of emotion over reason is positive. Its vulgar emotionalness brings people in touch with their senses and with their spontaneous perceptions of their environment.

4. Conclusion.

High art and mass culture in the age of postmodernism have become so intertwined, because they borrow so much from each other, that distinctions between the two have lost their importance in the eyes of critics and amateurs alike.

44 Pattison, p.162.
As Husseyn writes, postmodernism operates in a field of tension between tradition and innovation, conservation and renewal, mass culture and high art, in which the second terms are no longer automatically privileged over the first.45

Thus, in a postmodern sense, the notion of "high culture" becomes secondary. There is simply culture, culture that interests, moves, fascinates, enlightens... Many postmodernists believe in the values of being Renaissance people, in the sense of individuals whose at least initial stance towards various art forms is an accepting one. Such people show interest in listening to a wide spectrum of musical artists ranging from (for example) John Cage to John Cale by way of J.J. Cale; they judge these musicians only after having familiarized themselves with their style. They listen before dismissing.

Rather than distinguishing between high and low art, postmodernists distinguish between good and bad art, and recognize that it is up to each individual to determine for him/herself what is good and what is not. Through his/her day-to-day interactions with art, each person forms a set of attitudes that is unique to him or her. S/he can thus

45 Huysssen, p.48.
manifest his/her individuality even in the face of mass production. Postmodernists, furthermore, are openminded: they are willing to explore unfamiliar forms, in addition to indulging in familiar ones, and to seek diversion in art, in addition to enrichment.
Chapter Two. Transtextuality and Popular Music.

1. Introduction

One aspect of postmodernism is that it tends to be a pastiche of other works: it borrows extensively from various sources. It imitates and parodies. But what does it mean specifically to imitate or to parody? There is a field in semiotics that examines the borrowings that occur in all works of art, one that was originated by Julia Kristeva in the mid-1960s. Kristeva was inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin, a mid twentieth-century Russian critic, to formulate theories about how a text always includes some form of reference to other texts. Kristeva used the term intertextuality to describe the connections that exist between different texts. Her ideas were later echoed and developed by such semioticians as Roland Barthes and Gérard Genette. "Intertextuality" is also a term which has found currency among many theorists of postmodernism, including Stephen A. Tyler and Ihab Hassan.¹

This chapter reviews some of these writers' ideas on intertextuality or, as Genette calls it, transtextuality. It emphasizes the concept's applicability to popular music. Marshall Blonsky, among other semioticians, stresses the importance of increasing the scope of the discipline, to ensure that it remain topical and relevant. In his introduction to On Signs, a compilation of articles which apply semiotics to subjects ranging from Casablanca to the marketing of brassieres, Blonsky calls for a widened use of semiotics, to increase its applicability to life today:

"Semiotics is operable, analytically and creatively. It can be applied in the world. But one has to crack it out of its present uses and override refusals to abuse it. It is not a corruption of the semiotic enterprise to use it politically, or commercially. Quite the contrary: isolation will be the destruction of semiotics."

We begin this chapter by reviewing various approaches to intertextuality. We then examine the semiotician who first defined the term, and who explored its various manifestations in literary texts, Julia Kristeva. Her insights, as we shall see, are taken up and elaborated upon in a more recent work on "transtextuality" by Gérard Genette, Palimpsestes.

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2. Defining Intertextuality.

2.1. Some Approaches.

At the beginning, to a great extent, intertextuality was emphasized as a means of countering Romantic ideas of originality and creativity, 19th century notions of the artist as independent and independent-minded author-creator. Julia Kristeva, who first coined the term "intertextuality" in 1966, used it to point out the interrelatedness of all texts with the milieus in which they were produced. For Kristeva, an intertextual approach was one that considered a text not in isolation, as a point on a line, but as a "crossing of textual surfaces" ("un croisement de surfaces textuelles"). In other words, in addition to being considered for what new ideas it presented, the text was examined for the ideas that it borrowed from other texts and from the author's social environment.

Writing at the same time as Kristeva, Pierre Macherey made a similar point: that authors, far from being independent, far from working in a vacuum, were accountable both in form and content to previous authors, to their style.

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and ideas. Macherey notes that a text, although it might appear to be entirely present, offering itself directly to the reader in a linear manner, is in fact an amalgam of unstated assumptions and borrowings that obscure its apparent clarity: absences complicate that which is present. Whatever new meaning a text is producing is tied to ideas borrowed from other texts, and is explicable only through a series of presuppositions that the reader (it is hoped) shares with the author. Macherey writes,

Il n'y a pas de premier livre, ni de livre indépendant, absolument innocent: la nouveauté, l'originalité, en littérature comme ailleurs, se définissent toujours par des rapports.

Macherey pursues this idea by saying that it is not enough to show what a text's intertextual relations are: it is also necessary to show why these relations exist (and by extension, why these relations and not others).

It is possible to perceive the intertextual approach as one that goes against the grain of other types of criticism, including semiotic criticism in general: usually, a critic, in analyzing a text, will attempt to show what it is about the text that is new, what it offers that has not been seen


5 "There is no first book, nor an independent, absolutely innocent book: novelty, originality, in literature as elsewhere, always define themselves through relations." (My translation. Macherey, p.22.)
before. For instance, Roland Barthes, in *Mythologies*, will look at a photograph in *Paris-Match*, or at an ad for laundry detergent, and he will elaborate upon that text, showing us aspects of it that we had not until then paid conscious attention to: Barthes brings out what to casual readers appears "natural", he points out what they take for granted. Whereas Barthes examines the text as it stands on its own in *Mythologies*, intertextual theorists bring much of their attention to bear on source texts, on texts that support or motivate or inspire the main text; they divide their attention more equally between the main text and its sources. Barthes also looks at sources in *Mythologies*, but this practice is incidental to his main focus of attention, which is the text itself. There is in fact a greater emphasis on that which is old in intertextuality than there is in semiotics considered as a whole. Indeed, in a reversal of emphases that is a characteristic of post-structuralism, Jacques Derrida goes so far as to focus on the old to the detriment of the new: he takes the notion of intertextuality to the extreme of excluding all possibilities of novelty within a text. Indeed, noting that all words have a history, an etymology whose origins are impossible to retrace, Derrida indicates that any "new" text is borne of an innumerable series of anterior texts.

Vincent Leitch, in discussing Derrida's *Maries*,⁷ pursues the idea:

The appearance of a word extends and reactivates a history. Every word in a text holds this potential. The lines of intertextuality, when multiplied in correlation with citability, surpass all possibility of representation. The dream image of an immense cosmic network only hints at the proper model.⁸

If we follow this perspective "à la lettre" (or "au mot", so to speak), infinite intertextuality precludes the possibility of new meaning being produced: if every word in a text has been used countless times before, originality becomes impossible. (But of course, not every word combination has been tried before.) Derrida's viewpoint is reminiscent of Jorge Luis Borges' fictitious "Library of Babel",⁹ an infinite library in which every permutation of the letters of the alphabet is represented in a book, and no two books are exactly alike. In such a circumstance, the production of new meaning becomes of course an impossibility.


2.2. Adapting the Approach to the Text.

Jonathan Culler, like Derrida, notes that the network of intertextual relations that underlies a text is extremely vast, and that it would be an impossible task to determine with precision all of the texts that underlie any given intertext. The problem is that even the authors of the text are not consciously aware of all the texts that have shaped them, and their style of writing; the authors bring to their work a set of presuppositions whose origins they would be very hard put to retrace. For instance, what is it exactly that motivates them to choose one word over another in the paradigmatic axis, say, "imitate" over "copy"? Given such uncertainty, the question of what is new and what is old in a text becomes problematical. Culler adds that, even using a narrower definition of intertextuality, each reader, for any given text, would compile for him/herself a different inventory of intertextual relations, depending upon his/her background, his/her knowledge of other texts.

For example, a naive reader, one whose set of


presuppositions is limited, may well find P.D. James's *The Skull Beneath the Skin* to be different, original, novel; conversely, a reader who is well-versed in detective fiction may well recognize the book to be, as Jim Collins remarks, "a mainstream detective novel (...), very similar to Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*." New meaning, in this respect, is in the eye of the beholder. The value of the intertextual approach as Culler formulates it, is to make one aware of the subjectivity involved in the perception of new meaning.

Such broad perspectives of intertextuality as Culler's and especially Derrida's are not particularly encouraging for the semiotician: accepting the idea that nothing can be original, that all texts are ensnared within a vast web of intertextual relations, a semiotician can arrive at the conclusion that his or her work, understood here as the production of meaning, is futile. For Harold Bloom, however, it is possible for a writer to overcome the influence of anterior texts; he views this process as a struggle, however, one that only certain writers are capable of overcoming. Bloom's focus is in fact quite specific: in *The Anxiety of Influence*, he is chiefly interested in


major English and American poets of the 18th and 19th centuries. For Bloom, the intertext is not comprised of a vast network of previous texts; rather, it has a narrower set of antecedents. Indeed, Bloom focusses on the influence that a strong precursor bears on a younger poet. It is something of a father-son (or mother-daughter) struggle, with the younger poet, initially inspired and influenced by a precursor, working to overcome that influence, and striving to develop a style of his/her own. The intertext, in this case, is mainly shaped by the precursor's work: the production of new meaning in the younger poet's intertext can be measured through its autonomy from his/her precursor's texts.

From Derrida to Bloom, we have gone from one extreme to another, from intertextuality as an all-encompassing network of interrelated meanings, to intertextuality as chiefly expressed through a struggle between two writers. It is evident that, for different theorists, intertextuality means different things. Jonathan Culler suggests that it is not necessary to engage in debates over what is and is not intertextual within a text: he writes about "the need for multiple strategies, for different focuses and restrictions, even though one cannot have any confidence that these could eventually contribute to a grand synthesis".\textsuperscript{14} In this way,\textsuperscript{14} Culler, p.111.
semioticians of intertextuality should adapt their approach to the goals that they are trying to attain.


We will now examine Julia Kristeva's approach because, after all, she was the one who coined the term "intertextuality"; she was also among the first to explore the area, and her approach influenced subsequent researchers. We will begin by reviewing her theories on the double character of language, because they are helpful to situate intertextuality within semiotics; we will then look briefly at how she applied her ideas to a particular work.

3.1. The Double Character of Language.

In Sèmeiotikè, Kristeva describes what she calls the double character of language ("le double caractère du langage"). She says that language is both syntagmatic and systematic. It is syntagmatic because it occurs in time: one has to read a certain number of words or hear a certain number of sounds, in a particular order, before one can derive an intelligible meaning from language. For instance, the following sequences are too brief, or too lacking in order, to be meaningful: "As for the fact that she wal-" and "She fact for as the that wal-". Unlike a painting or a

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photograph, which can be absorbed at a glance, a novel or a piece of music can only be perceived through their progression in time, through the ordered sequence of words or sounds. Kristeva adds that the syntagmatic dimension of a text is metonymical, for one draws an understanding of the whole through a comprehension of its parts: one deciphers a melody through hearing the sequence of individual notes and understanding their connection to each other; one understands a song through having singled out its various melodies, and through having understood how each of these melodies stands in relation to the others. Understanding occurs through the ability to break down a text into its various components and to thereafter associate these components with each other.

In addition to being syntagmatic, language is systematic, because it refers to a larger system of codes and signs. The references can be made explicit within the text, but more often, they are implied: there is an absence that the listener must fill; pieces are missing which s/he must provide, searching through his/her experience to fill the space. A straightforward example is that of the parody. "Weird Al" Yancovik, with his song "Fat", assumes that the listener has already heard the song that he is parodying, Michael Jackson's "Bad". While listening to "Fat", listeners continually refer to the original in their mind;
they mentally compare "Fat" to "Bad". Without the point of reference, the listener is simply bewildered, and Yancovik's parody loses much of its impact. Kristeva says that the systematic dimension of a text is metaphoric. Let us use a simple metaphor, to explain: "Rick Astley is the Fabian of the 1980s." Such a reference is not entirely explained within the sentence; it assumes that the reader has a certain previous knowledge of the subject through having read other texts that refer to Fabian (and to Rick Astley). They have to know something about Fabian, something to the effect that he was a handsome young man with no particular talent for music who was briefly turned into a star in 1959 through shrewd marketing and promotion. Texts frequently allude to a reader's store of knowledge. A young individual who wants to understand such allusions must keep on reading or listening to various texts, so that s/he can widen the scope of references to which s/he will know the source.

When people read a text, they engage in both syntagmatic and systematic decoding. With syntagmatic reading, one simply follows the sequence of words and assimilates meaning through this straightforward process.

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16 Yancovik's dependency on ephemeral cultural references such as "Bad" makes his parodies very temporary; they date quickly, because they refer to songs that become dated themselves: if few people listen to the original, fewer still will listen to the parody.
With systematic reading, one associates the meaning to one's field of knowledge; one has to draw comparisons to assimilate the text. Every person who reads or listens to a text does two things: s/he acquires new ideas and images through the act of reading and s/he compares them to previously acquired ones. Intertextuality focuses on systematic decoding.

3.2. Oral and Written Communications.

In order to develop and illustrate this idea of systematic reading a little further, we will examine Kristeva's analysis of a work of fiction written by Antoine de la Sale, a French writer of the fifteenth century. The work is called *Jehan de Saintré*; it appeared in 1456. This examination will serve to throw light upon Kristeva's approach, her ideas pertaining to intertextuality, and her applications of these ideas.

Using *Jehan de Saintré* as an example, Kristeva shows that intertextual references can be of two kinds. A


writer, in a text, can refer either to outside oral communications, or to outside written communications. At this point, it is pertinent to keep in mind Kristeva's assertion that there is an oral communication at the source of all written communications. The chronological primacy of oral communication need not contradict the fact that passages borrowed directly from the oral tradition have a different background from passages borrowed from a written transcription of a previously oral text. Each type of borrowing has a different influence on the text. Antoine de la Sale uses each type in his book.

Kristeva shows how oral traditions influence the tone and style of de la Sale's book. For example, she refers to the seller in the medieval market, attempting to draw the attention of passersby to his/her goods and showing the products off by loudly enumerating their qualities, and repeating these enumerations. This approach finds its way into de la Sale through what Kristeva calls "laudatory descriptions" ("descriptions laudatives"). De la Sale does not merely describe an object: he shows off its qualities, he uses an exorbitant, praising style that celebrates the values of objects (or scenes) that appear in the novel; his style is also repetitive. The writer

21 Kristeva, "Le texte clos," p.133.
incorporates into his novel oral modes of communication that he and his audience know well. In this way, he makes the book more accessible to his fifteenth century readers.

Popular composers commonly use this procedure to forge a closeness with the listener. Mark Knopfler sings "I can't do the talk like the talk on the TV" in "Romeo and Juliet", but listeners do not care. They do not especially want to hear even the slightly formal form of oral communication that talking heads provide on the television screen. They want the singer to use the day-to-day language that is the most familiar to them. Moreover, informal style is an index of sincerity: a singer affirms his loyalty to his/her listeners by adopting a style that sounds like theirs. For instance, rap performers like Public Enemy or N.W.A. use a vocabulary that can only be fully understood by listeners who share a similar background, or by listeners sufficiently interested in the music to familiarize themselves with that background. It is far more important for popular composers to be understood and accepted by their fans than to be grammatically correct. In this respect, Simon Frith writes,

Song words, in short, work as speech, as structures of sound that are direct signs of emotion and marks of character; songs are more like plays than poems. Songwriters, therefore, draw on our conversational knowledge of how voices
work, which is why they use common phrases, snippets of slang.\footnote{22 Simon Frith, Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock and Roll (London: Constable, 1983), p.35.}

Pop fans like to feel close to the singer. They do not want to sense that s/he is singing over their heads. As a consequence, many pop composers avoid using big words in their lyrics.

In addition, Kristeva remarks that Antoine de la Sale often plunderers from written sources. She notes his frequent use of citations from religious theorists of the time and classical Greek writers. She also notes the presence of unattributed quotes and outright plagiarism in the book. Antoine de la Sale, through this use of other texts, assimilates his work to the literary practices of his time. His book, rather than being the creation of an individual writer, is the work of a collectivity. Antoine de la Sale wrote Jehan de Saintré alone, but he involved a number of other writers in his work by borrowing or plundering from them. Without knowing it, these writers have left their mark on what de la Sale said and on how he said it. De la Sale did not choose to quote from writers haphazardly: he sought writers that he knew would be esteemed and respected by his audience, so that the esteem, by juxtaposition, could be extended to his own work. Writers must be careful about
whom they cite. Such limitations on the possibilities for quoting compel a writer to give his/her work a specific form, one that reflects his/her time. The numerous references to other texts indissociably tie Jehan de Saintré to the time in which it appears, although there is distortion in the way that it represents its time which is a consequence of the author's sensibility. In spite of this distortion, there is still representation. Jehan de Saintré, because of the myriad ways in which it borrows from other writers, is unmistakeably a work of the fifteenth century.

4. Genette and Transtextuality.

Kristeva's explorations of intertextuality in the late 1960s were wide-ranging and influential. They were, however, just that: explorations. She was covering new ground, and was too close to her subject to establish a taxonomy of her discoveries; she identified, but did not label or categorize. Gérard Genette examines the various aspects of what he calls transtextuality in a more orderly manner by establishing categories for transtextuality. Although Kristeva's term "intertextuality" is the more widely used one among contemporary critics, Genette's approach is more useful, because it is more focused and precise. It was helpful to learn how Kristeva defined
"intertextuality" and applied it, because she originated the term, but Genette's terminology is the one that will be used in this thesis.

Gérard Genette's *Palimpsestes* is a study of the varied ways in which texts refer to other texts. 23 "Transtextuality" is the name that he gives to this characteristic of texts, that they all contain within them something borrowed or taken from other texts. Although his primary source of examples is literature, Genette uses the odd pop song 24 or cinematic reference 25 to illustrate his points. His ideas apply to a diversity of texts beyond the literary, as the ensuing review of his six main categories will show. The six categories are listed here for the sake of clarity:

1. Paratextuality;
2. Metatextuality;
3. Extratextuality;
4. Architextuality;
5. Intertextuality;
6. Hypertextuality.

24 See Genette, pp.78-79.
25 See Genette, pp.175-177.
Genette applies these terms to the decoding of a text, as opposed to its encoding; he is something of an enlightened reader, concerned more with discovering how a text is read than with how it is produced. The first three categories on the list, although they are commonplace in popular music, are less relevant than the last three. We will therefore review them briefly. We will then examine the last three in more detail. Before proceeding, it is important to note, as Genette does, that many texts include elements of more than one type of transtextuality.

4.1. Paratext.

A paratext, as the prefix "para" implies, is a text that is beside another one. It resembles another "para", the parasite, for its relation to the other text is one of dependency: its existence is dependent upon the presence of another text. All texts that indicate, supplement or complete another one are paratexts. Genette cites as examples prefaces, postfaces, forewords, footnotes, and illustrations. Titles also are paratexts, because there would be no need for the title if there were no text. There do exist titles for nonexistent works, but even in such cases, the implication is that there is a text somewhere with that title. The reader is called upon to imagine the text that would go with it: when Roy Orbison jokes that he should write a song called "Lonely Blue Dreams", one
pictures a song that would combine his lonely songs ("Only the Lonely"), his blue songs ("Blue Angel", "Blue Bayou") and his dream songs ("Dream Baby", "In Dreams").

Paratexts are important, because they provide us with our first glimpse of the main text, and they influence our perception of it. People usually buy the tape or disc for the music, but what they see in a cassette and CD store are the cassette or CD covers, which are paratexts in the same way that a title is one. An attractive cover can presumably influence customers' choices, if they are hesitating between more than one cassette or CD.

4.2. Metatext

The metatext is a text that comments upon another text. It is produced by an outsider, a person or group who has had no part in writing the main text, and usually involves a detached evaluation of the original text. Genette writes, "C'est, par excellence, la relation critique." Examples


It is, par excellence, the critical relation." [Genette's italics. (Genette, p.10.)]
of a metatext include the film or record review. Without the original text (the film or record being reviewed), there obviously can be no review.

4.3. Extratext.

Another category that Genette mentions is the extratext, which refers to the immediate environment in which a text is decoded by the reader. The extratext is individual to the decoder, because it refers to the specific environment where s/he is reading a text. The relationship between the reader's environment and a text is relevant, because it can have a strong impact on his/her appreciation of the text. A person will often take pains to find an appropriate environment to read a text. In the case of listening to music, an audiophile will seek a locale with the lowest possible ambient noise level, in order to hear the full range of frequencies of a song with clarity. In addition, the same song will probably awaken different degrees of interest, depending on whether it is heard in a bar or in a dentist's waiting room.\(^{29}\)

\(^{29}\) Genette, because he is basing his evaluation principally on written texts, overlooks one type of relationship that does not have as strong an impact on the reader as it does on the music listener: the relation of the text to the channel upon which it is being conveyed. Our appreciation of a song can be affected by the fact that it is appearing on a faraway station on a cheap transistor radio rather than on an expensive stereo system with CD.
4.4. Architext.

The architext refers to all the other texts among which a text finds a place, or against which it reacts. A poem or a novel or a rock song will seldom describe itself: one seldom hears the singer specifying in the song that what the listener is hearing is a rock song. [An example of an exception is the Rolling Stones' "It's Only Rock & Roll (But I Like It)". ] In this way, the song's belonging to a genre or a musical tradition is seldom made explicit. And yet, the listener, through his/her prior familiarity with a cross-section of similar genres (blues, folk, rap, reggae), can determine, for instance, that Iggy Pop's "Real Wild Child" has more in common with rock & roll than with country & western. A record store will use paratextual indications (jazz, male pop vocal, easy listening, metal) that show the architextual categories to which songs implicitly belong.

Regardless of their accuracy, such paratextual indications of architextuality can influence people's opinion of a performer. Indeed, so long as Bobby McFerrin was labelled a jazz singer, he was considered too esoteric and offbeat for commercial acceptance. Boardroom decisions at EMI-Manhattan, however, led to an aggressive marketing.

The Greek prefix for through, "dia-", suggests the term "diatext" for this form of transtextuality.
strategy for McFerrin. The singer recorded a rock standard ("Good Lovin'"), and a straightforward pop number ("Don't Worry, Be Happy") that was featured in the Tom Cruise vehicle *Cocktail*. Flashy videos for both tunes received heavy rotation on MTV and MuchMusic. Mainstream radio also accepted the songs (particularly "Don't Worry, Be Happy") and commercial success ensued in September 1988. *Simple Pleasures*, the album containing these two songs, went from appraisals in such jazz magazines as *Cadence* and *Jazz Journal International* in July and August 1988 to a review in *Rolling Stone* in late October 1988.

Barthes, in this respect, indicates that, although many texts such as news programs profess to depict reality accurately, almost all of them are in fact distanced from reality, because the author has to conform to certain conventions in producing them.\(^{30}\) Barthes uses the example of realist novels. He says that, in such books, portraits or descriptions are too detailed and schematic to be realistic. When the main protagonists enter a room, for instance, they are unlikely to pay much attention to the pattern of the wallpaper, or the color of the carpet. They do not actually observe in painstaking detail every little aspect of a room. In reality, only writers focus especially

attentively on their surroundings. Barthes says that an author who pretends to be realistic by offering complete descriptions of rooms and faces is actually conforming to artistic conventions that require that a room or face be described with as much precision and detail as possible.

There is a certain way of doing things which is influenced less by reality than by how a writer or composer's contemporaries attempt to depict reality. The producer of a text thus relies heavily upon architextual references in the creative process. The problem is not one of describing an incident with the utmost accuracy. Rather, it is one of describing an incident in a way that fulfills the expectations of readers, given the type of work being written. This approach applies particularly to writers of genre fiction; if you are writing a mystery, then the reader will expect certain things to happen: a crime will be committed, an inquiry will be made, the crime will be solved. It also applies to proponents of high culture, who will strive to incorporate (consciously or subconsciously) modern or postmodern ideas into their work.

The consequence of a work's conformity to genre is that many incidents in fictional narratives, such as the Elopement, the Murder, or the Promenade, will allude to, or bring to mind, incidents from other texts. Thus, people who are familiar with the culture of their time and place will
seldom experience a movie or song as something new because, within any so-called "new" movies or songs, there are multiple references---not to reality, but to previous movies and songs. In this respect, Barthes writes that such a theme as Kidnapping in a new book refers to all kidnappings already written.\(^{31}\) Such themes "sont autant d'éclats de ce quelque chose qui a toujours été déjà lu, vu, fait, vécu."\(^{32}\)

In relation to Barthes' ideas, John Fiske writes that "intertextual relations are so pervasive that our culture consists of a complex web of intertextuality, in which all texts refer finally to each other and not to reality."\(^{33}\) With respect to popular music, one could show that such working-class narratives as Bruce Springsteen's are not so much based on direct lived experience, but on folk traditions that hark back to (for instance) Bob Dylan's rambling character studies and Woody Guthrie's populist anthems. Springsteen's narratives are also drawn from cinematic conventions, exemplified by such road movies as Vanishing Point, which glorifies the solitary, rebellious driver. It is no surprise then that Springsteen's songs

\(^{31}\) Barthes, \textit{S/Z}, p.28.

\(^{32}\) Such themes "are so many fragments of that something that has always been read, seen, done, lived." (My translation. Barthes, \textit{S/Z}, p.28.)

lend themselves well to movies. We can note in particular the extensive use of his recordings in John Sayles' *Baby, It's You*, and the easy transition that some songs, such as "I'm on Fire" and "Glory Days", have made to music video narratives.

**4.5. Intertextuality.**

Before defining the term, Genette acknowledges that Kristeva was the first to use it. He indicates however that his definition of "intertextuality" does not correspond exactly to hers. Indeed, it is narrower. Genette makes a distinction between the "hypertext" and the "intertext", whereas Kristeva applies the term "intertext" to both categories. I shall use Genette's definition for its greater precision.

The main difference between an intertext and a hypertext is that, with the intertext, there is no transformation of the source material, whereas with the hypertext, there is. However, before elaborating upon this distinction, which in such a summarized form may appear unclear, one should note Laurent Jenny's specifications. An important point that this critic makes is that any process of incorporating an existing text into a new one is

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34 Genette, p.8.
transformational. After all, even if the pilfering is direct, the context changes. Listeners will perceive Dire Straits' "Money for Nothing" in different ways, depending on whether the song is on the original Dire Straits record, *Brothers in Arms*, or whether it is on the *Money for Nothing* compilation. Intertextuality can benefit listeners or readers who know the original text, because it allows them to view in a new light the borrowed part of the source text, and the source text as a whole. In this manner, the process of intertextuality can enrich the wary reader's perspective of the source text.

An intertext is a text that makes use of another text without changing it. Genette says that this other text which is incorporated into the intertext can take one of three forms: citation, plagiarism or allusion. In the first two instances, the text is transposed as such from its original context to the intertext: either the transposition is made evident by the use of quotation marks and references, in which case it is a citation, or it is not, in which case it is a plagiarism. There is also the allusion: the text paraphrases another text, or refers to it, without changing the essential meaning of the original. In this case, the writer or musician has taken pains to remain

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35 Jenny, pp.50-54.
faithful to the original; s/he has sought to respect the ideas of the writer of the original text. With regard to musical performance, club bands that pay tribute to the likes of the Doors or the Rolling Stones are intertextual to the extent that they are trying to achieve faithful reproductions of their models' music. In most cases, however, it is advisable for a writer or performer to refrain from using intertextual references excessively, because the borrowed text can easily upstage the borrowing text. There is the possibility that a too direct and inclusive quote will draw attention towards the source text and away from the text being read.

4.6. Hypertext.

The next text is the hypertext. In the sense that it incorporates elements of another text into itself, it is similar to the intertext. The difference lies in the fact that the hypertext actually transforms the original text, rather than merely transposing it or alluding to it, as in the case of the intertext. Implicit in hypertextuality is the fact that this transformation involves a judgment or a commentary of the original text. This change to the original text can, according to Genette, take one of three forms: simple transformation, imitation and parody. It is
easier to just transform a text than to imitate or parody it.

Transformation involves taking something from the original text and changing it to suit one's needs. The original can be condensed or expanded. It can be made simpler or, less frequently, more complicated. It can be made either more or less commercial. It can be bowdlerized. With regard to bowdlerization, Ed Ward writes that some changes were made to Big Joe Turner's "Shake, Rattle and Roll" before Bill Haley and His Comets recorded it:

Some of Turner's gamier lines (comparing himself to "a one-eyed cat peepin' in a seafood store," admiring the woman's "dresses the sun comes shinin' through" and declaring her "the Devil in nylon hose") were rewritten.36

It was a common transformation of the 1950s: white performers like the Crew Cuts and Pat Boone sang tamer, "cleaner" versions of risqué black originals. (In the process, as Tom McCourt indicates, they "robbed [the music] of any vitality,"37 and prevented many black artists from receiving their due for songs and styles that they had originated.)


Imitation is more difficult, because it involves more than borrowing and changing. In order to imitate a text, you must first acquaint yourself with that text, and learn what makes it distinctive. It is by singling out the distinctive qualities of an original text and using them in a new context that you can imitate effectively. Even if the singling out is done at an intuitive, spontaneous level, it involves, to a certain extent, identifying and categorizing the characteristics of the original. In this respect, an imitator needs to have a solid understanding of the object of imitation, before s/he can imitate it properly.

Genette states that to imitate is to generalize. Once an imitator has understood the essential characteristics of a group of texts, s/he could continue the imitation indefinitely, should s/he choose to do so. In this respect, regarding his imitation of the writer Renan, Marcel Proust states, "J'avais réglé mon métronome intérieur à son rythme [celui de Renan], et j'aurais pu écrire dix volumes comme cela."38 Proust adds that it would be irrelevant to actually write ten volumes because an imitation has served its purpose once it has succeeded in showing the general traits of the original corpus. A good imitation will

spontaneously be recognized as such by a listener who is familiar with the original. Moreover, an imitation will help the listener to notice what makes the original special.

The third form of hypertextuality that Genette discusses is the parody. The best way of defining "parody" is to compare the term with "imitation". The main distinction between imitating and parodying is that, as Genette writes, one parodies single texts, whereas one imitates genres (or a corpus, however slender it is, treated as a genre). Another way of stating the distinction between an imitation and a parody is to say that the parodist is essentially dealing with a text rather than a style or way of writing, whereas the imitator is doing the opposite, dealing essentially with a style rather than a text. Thus, you can parody "Like a Virgin", by changing some of the words around, which is what "Weird Al" Yancovik did when he wrote "Like a Surgeon". You cannot imitate "Like a Virgin", however. You need a wider cross-section of songs to be able to imitate. Thus, such Madonna sound-alikes as Regina and Stacey Q are basing their imitations not on a particular song by Madonna, but on the Madonna style, as exemplified by a number of songs, perhaps all of the songs on Madonna's first two records. Parodies and

39 Genette, p.92.

40 Genette, p.89.
imitations are commonplace in popular music, as Andrew Goodwin observes:

As old texts have become new again (through new media forms like music video and the increased use of pop as a film soundtrack, as well as CD reissues), pop has plundered its archives with truly postmodern relish, in an orgy of pastiche. The degree to which pop music in the 1980s has become self-referential is now so developed that some songs sound like copies of parodies.41

Madonna herself engages in parody: her "Material Girl" video reprises Marilyn Monroe's performance of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" at the end of the movie Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. John Fiske compares the two performances in Reading the Popular.42 He notes a few resemblances: both songs are about getting financial support from men, and both stars perform in an elaborate choreography featuring a dozen male dancers on a bright red stage. Fiske also notes a few differences: for one thing, Madonna projects an image of greater self-sufficiency than Monroe does. Fiske suggests that Madonna uses the source text to enhance her own appeal towards her fans, particularly her female ones. Through the parody, she invites her viewers to equate her with Monroe in terms of alluringness. At the same time, however, she


invites them to perceive her as superior to the '50s star in terms of assertiveness, as Fiske remarks:

While parodying many of Monroe's movements, gestures, and facial expressions, she goes further in taking money not offered and in knocking down a chorus boy and posing triumphantly over his prostrate body. (...) Her gestures and expressions are less supplicatory or seductive for the men who admire her.45

The contrast between the two performers is made stronger by the viewer's perception of the "real" Monroe as a vulnerable woman who ultimately succumbed to the pressures of stardom. Madonna shows more control: like Monroe, she will take the money; unlike her, she can take or leave the man. Through this independence, Fiske suggests that Madonna is a good role model, particularly for her younger female fans.

In analyzing the transtextuality of "Material Girl", Fiske shows us how the video invites its viewers' imaginative participation. Indeed, taken on its own, the video is incomplete. Such an incompleteness encourages the viewer to play an active role in making Madonna's video meaningful. Fiske suggests that viewers should have at least a general awareness of Marilyn Monroe to fully appreciate the "Material Girl" video; unless they can relate it in some way to its source text, its meaning remains open-ended.

43 Fiske, p.129.
4.7. Score and performance.

It is important to note that a song can be considered as a text in two ways: the text can be either the performance, as it is heard on tape or on record, or it can be the score, as it is read on paper. The distinction between the two is important, because it is harder to be intertextual with regard to a performance than it is with regard to a score. I can cite, for example, Cheap Trick's remake of "Don't Be Cruel", which Elvis Presley sang originally. If we consider the song as a score, Cheap Trick has not made any transformations: the lyric, the melody, the song structure are all the same. However, if we consider the song as a performance, we can see that some changes have been made. My reading of the song is that Cheap Trick performs it in a pseudo-rockabilly style that gently pokes fun at the original; the piece appears slightly campy to me. The group seems aware of there being some silliness in recording the old Elvis song, but it is enjoying itself in the process. Cheap Trick's "Don't Be Cruel" is thus intertextual to the extent that the score has not changed; it is hypertextual to the extent that the performance has.
5. Conclusion.

Kristeva's ideas and Genette's typology are appropriate for the study of popular music on commercial radio. After all, transtextuality plays an important role in the radio broadcast. Indeed, part of the pleasure of listening to the radio lies in what Kristeva calls systematic decoding: we enjoy discovering and understanding the radio announcers' allusions, or a song's resemblance to other songs. Furthermore, the sheer repetitiveness of the radio broadcast, with similar songs and patter recurring over and over, creates a pattern that comforts us, giving us an escape from the complexity and unpredictability of everyday life. In other ways, commercial radio coincides with an urban lifestyle and brings it to mind: radio reflects the city through its fast pace, its discontinuous juxtaposition of talk and song, its aggressiveness and its energy. Beyond such attributes, there are many allusions to popular culture, both in the songs and the talk on the radio: these allusions help to make the broadcast highly relevant to our day-to-day concerns; they help us to feel a sense of solidarity with other listeners, making us aware of what they are thinking and talking about on an everyday level.

Kristeva shows that through a transtextual reading, one is in a way looking beyond the text, to discover what a society values, what its origins are, where its interests
lie. In the same way, through looking at transtextual allusions on the radio, we can learn what some of our society's concerns are. Transtextual allusions on the radio are part of a marketing strategy to keep us listening, but they are more than that as well: they are one of the main reasons for which we listen to radio and enjoy it. Because of this appeal, it is worth exploring the nature of transtextuality on the radio, and some of the ways in which it works for consumers (and producers).
Chapter Three. Theoretical Perspectives on Popular Music.

1. Introduction.

Popular music in North America today is a commodity. Record companies produce and distribute it with the expectation of making a profit from their efforts. For modernist theorists like Horkheimer and Adorno, this situation exemplifies a society where centralized powers control the masses from afar. More contemporary theorists such as John Fiske remark that record companies, rather than controlling people's tastes, try to anticipate and react to them; Fiske notes that "To be made into popular culture, a commodity must also bear the interests of the people." To support his point, Fiske points out that most products fail to find an audience.

This chapter explores some of the historical and social developments that have led North Americans to establish such a commoditized relation to music. It is comprised of two main sections. In the first, we examine Jacques Attali's *Noise, the Political Economy of Music.* In this book,


Attali discusses the social role that music has played through history, especially in helping the elite maintain its hegemony over the masses. His observations on the current period, marked by the appearance of recorded music and its diffusion among the general public, are especially relevant. There follows an outline of Daniel J. Boorstin's complementary views on the same period.³ This section as a whole provides a broad historical context within which we can situate our current practices of consuming recorded music. In the second section, we examine two forms of popular music, "rock and pop", that are omnipresent today. There follows Horkheimer and Adorno's views on the dynamics that underlie the creation and diffusion of popular music in capitalist society.⁴ In reviewing their ideas, we will focus on a subject that is of primary concern in this thesis -- homogeneity in popular music. We can now turn to Attali's *Noise*.


2.1. Music as Sacrifice and Representation.

Music, for Attali, is more than a code to be studied in itself: it is an organization of sounds that works for, or reacts against, systems of power. There is little in Noise on the structure or sonority of music; rather, the chapters are devoted to the social relations that are at the foundation of music.

Attali writes about how music is shaped by the way in which people relate in society; he writes also about how such music further reinforces and influences the behaviors of people. In particular, and this theme is among the most important in the book, music is a way for people to channel their violent sentiments. A division between the elite and the masses characterizes the four stages of the development of the musical environment, from "Sacrificing" to "Repetition". With "Sacrificing", which corresponds to preindustrial times, people produce their own music, using it directly as an outlet for the frustrations in day-to-day life.

Representation follows sacrifice. In this stage, which accompanies the Industrial Revolution, people are less

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5 Attali, pp.11-13.
involved in the production of music: they merely consume it. With representation, music becomes the product of the few which is made available, at a price, to the many. The pleasures of the audience become more vicarious, since they are lived out through the expertise of the musicians whom they have to pay to hear. Music also becomes more sophisticated, and is played with a higher degree of expertise: after all, patrons must get their money's worth. Music also becomes less accessible and more spatially confined, to ensure that only paying customers are allowed to hear the music. As a consequence of this situation, people lose touch with the cathartic power of music that is produced actively (as opposed to being consumed passively).

2.2. Repetition.

The advent of repetition at the turn of this century has gradually effected changes upon our entire perception of music. Repetition is born out of technological developments that allow sound to be preserved and thus stockpiled. It marks the subjugation of musical production to the demands of the marketplace. One no longer makes music primarily to express one's emotions, or to communicate an idea. Rather, the musicians who want their efforts to be repaid set out to imitate existing forms of music. They sell their talent, therefore, which no longer lies in creativity; rather, it
lies in the ability to make music that conforms to preset notions of what is acceptable.

Whereas representation assumes a diversity of local powers, and a convergence of the attentions of different groups upon these local powers, repetition involves a centralization of power. The paradigmatic change that is repetition arises through the appearance of the phonograph record. Attali points out that the change was by no means immediate; rather, it was gradual. The original phonograph record was not actually intended to find its way into consumer society. It was not originally considered to be a motivating force acting upon the commercial capitalist infrastructure. Rather, it was perceived as a possible way of preserving sound. It was, in this respect, the aural equivalent of the camera, able to preserve a moment in time for future personal reminiscing. The phonograph did succeed in moving people towards solitary consumption; however, that which was consumed was anything but personal. It was once again music by the very few for the very many.

An important effect of repetition, according to Attali, is silencing. Mass-produced music, which was available on the smallest of transistor radios in 1977, when Attali wrote Noise, is enough to reduce the creativity and the expressiveness of the individual to almost nothing. For,
Attali remarks, one tends to judge one's own musical output by the stringent standards of the sanitized, studio-perfected music that emerges from countless sources in a schizophrenic cacophony of competing sounds, and one inevitably finds oneself lacking the talent to entertain as effectively as the chosen few. By chosen few, Attali means those musicians who can, through extraordinary luck and talent, express themselves on a massive scale, involving repetition in quantity of records issued, and in number of times played. The consequences for amateurs is that the joy of playing music for themselves and by themselves is diminished. This diminishment takes effect because mass culture turns all participants into spectators, gazing fixedly at the music videos on television, or at televised sports, or even living vicarious thrills through soap operas on screens that are faded by the brightness of daytime light. In the repetition mode of musical transactions, accumulation is the key to success. People relate to music by choosing, buying and possessing it.

"Repetitive Society", the concluding section of the chapter on repetition, is especially relevant to us, for Attali's historical chronology of music has moved up to the present: here, the writer discusses how things are today. Attali asserts that his description of today's "repetitive
society" includes "neither polemic nor value judgment". He immediately qualifies that statement when he adds that, merely by stating things as they are, he will show society for the "caricature" that it is. For instance, Attali mentions that our society's emphasis on mass production deindividuates society. He denounces "the replacement (...) of custom-made clothes by ready-wear, of the individual house built from personal designs by tract houses based on stereotypical designs". He relates this intuition to music by saying that people in a repetitive society only have the illusion of choice when it comes to participating in the world of music: for one thing, participation is equated to the act of buying the music and stockpiling it, not the act of creating or performing it. In addition, within this act of possession, the choice of differing types of music is narrow. The music that is offered is mostly noiseless music, which soothes the senses without involving the consumer, or provoking him or her in any way. It encourages in the buyer a sense of complacency that facilitates social control, and that robs the buyer of his or her individuality.

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6 Attali, p.127.  
7 Attali, p.128.
2.3. Composition.

In the final chapter of *Noise*, "Composing", Attali suggests that a powerful new form of musical production could emerge outside of the centralized framework within which the other categories are confined. His view is hopeful; the kind of music making that composition is, with its affinities to the celebratory atmosphere of the festival, benefits all the people in a society, not just the elite. "Composing" is Attali's utopia. It refers to the musical environment that could rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the previous musical environments. The term as Attali uses it does not refer directly to the aesthetic qualities of the music. The sound of the music, in "Composing", is secondary to the social relations from which it arises. For Attali, these are relations in which every individual has the capacity or the opportunity to gain control of the music that he or she wishes to make and hear; "composition" suggests a real choice in matters of music. With the advent of "Composing", personal taste is no longer manipulated by the marketplace; it is no longer imposed from above. Music is made personal, and appeals to the individual, not the masses. Composing encourages diversity in musical styles, a real choice between vastly divergent sounds, not a marketed, limited choice between various types of rock (for instance). Composition circumvents bourgeois
distinctions between learned and profane music. Attali talks about the flourishing of free jazz in the 1970's as an example of composition in action. With free jazz, certain black American musicians took control of the production and diffusion of their particular type of music, which was resolutely uncommercial, although it was a satisfying and invigorating expression of the musicians' emotions and sentiments.

Composition, however, may possibly be closer to us today than it was in 1977, when Attali wrote Noise. Indeed, the original French edition of Noise appeared before the mass diffusion of home computers, and the concurrent development of easy-to-use synthesizers. As synthesizers and home computers become more and more accessible to the public at large, as their prices lower and as their ease-of-use increases, it becomes increasingly possible for an ever-widening circle of people to compose their own music, and to have it reach a level of quality that can potentially rival and compete with the culture industry's homogeneous output.

2.4. Some Implications of Attali's View.

One of Attali's assertions is that changes in musical paradigms precede broader, vaster social changes. Thus, the passivity of repetition entails passivity on a wider scale. In some respects, Attali's book is a call for an end to
complacency. The mass media spoil us: the music produced by the record industry is only one way in which our choices are limited and our self-expression is constrained. Beyond music, there is the whole matter of spectator sports and television dramas, for instance, which stifle our needs and desires for a fulfillment that could better be achieved by actively participating in sports, or by inventing and telling stories of our own. In this respect, Attali's *Noise*, if anything, is a call for action.

In responding to Attali's ideas, however, we should keep in mind that, to a great extent, they are overly deterministic: Attali underestimates the capacity of people to resist the efforts of producers to impose various musical products upon them. In spite of producers' efforts, consumers still have the capacity to choose between goods being offered, or to reject them altogether. They also have the ability to practice oppositional consumption, using goods in ways not anticipated by their producers. John Fiske provides a viewpoint that contrasts strongly with Attali's when he writes, "Everyday life (...) is characterized by the creativity of the weak in using the resources provided by a disempowering system while refusing finally to submit to that power."8 Throughout the stage

that Attali calls "repetition", amateur musicians and non-musicians have appropriated for themselves the music on the radio or on records, and have sung or performed it themselves (in the car, on a walk, at a party) as a way of releasing day-to-day tensions. H. Stith Bennett describes a very active process of consumption in documenting how bar bands function. Such bands, in getting songs from a record, in practicing these songs, and in recombing them for their sets, are manipulating the original recordings in ways that Attali neglects to acknowledge when he discusses repetition.

Attali also objects to the commodification of music. Although commerce undoubtedly has an effect upon the form and content of much popular music, it is possible to view the situation with less pessimism than Attali does if we keep in mind the potential for the consumer to be active; in keeping with this perspective, Fiske writes, 'The creativity of popular culture lies not in the production of commodities so much as in the productive use of industrial commodities.' Fiske concedes that many popular texts are lacking in creativity ("excessive and obvious" are the adjectives that he uses). Creative consumption, however, is

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10 Fiske, pp.27-28.
not limited to the appreciation of the single text, but in
the enjoyment of related texts, and the ability of drawing
meaning from combining and juxtaposing different texts
(transtextuality). The single text may be poor, but in
combination with related texts, its meaning and significance
can become quite rich.

2.5. Boorstin’s Complementary View of Repetition.

Daniel J. Boorstin offers a complementary view of the
period that Attali calls “repetition”. Like Attali,
Boorstin remarks that the phonograph changes experience,
making it repeatable. Unlike him, Boorstin views the
appearance of the phonograph in a positive light. Whereas
Attali writes about the homogenization of experience that it
causes, Boorstin says that the phonograph makes a
democratization of experience possible.

In fact, Boorstin writes, many technological
developments in the late 19th and early 20th century
democratized experience for North Americans, gradually
allowing more and more of them to enjoy privileges that had
been unattainable as late as the 1850s. For instance,
Boorstin notes that the phrase in the Lord’s Prayer, “Give
us this day our daily bread,” could almost be taken
literally before 1850, because most people’s diets consisted
Improvements in canning, refrigeration and transportation eventually allowed North Americans to make their diets more varied. Through the spread of new technologies among the general population, the standard of living for North Americans improved markedly from the mid-19th century onward.

Among these new technologies was one of Thomas Edison's inventions, the phonograph, which would democratize the experience of listening to music. Before it became possible to reproduce and distribute music on a massive scale, a small coterie of wealthy patrons commissioned composers to write pieces primarily for their personal enjoyment. Classical composers could not write for a wide audience, because they did not have the technological means to reach one. The very musical instruments that they used could only carry over a certain distance and, as a consequence, could only be heard clearly by a limited number of people. As a result, "wealthy aristocrats"\textsuperscript{12} were the ones to determine their careers.

The phonograph made it possible for composers to reach a wider audience. It encouraged a growth in the market for

\textsuperscript{11} Boorstin, p.322.

\textsuperscript{12} Boorstin, p.384.
classical music. More significantly, Boorstin writes, it "gave a new incentive to the makers of popular music."¹³

"Now," in his words,

The great American public could become the patron. Music was being democratized, not only because the nation's millions could now enjoy music once reserved for a few, but also because the millions now commanded the most profitable musical market, had a new power to shape musical taste, a way of making it a composer's or performer's while to give the millions what they wanted.¹⁴

It had become very profitable to write music that could reach the masses.

In addition, the phonograph had an effect upon people's perception of time. The machine diluted the impact of the moment, because the moment could now be relived at leisure. Along with the camera, the phonograph was able to make experience repeatable. People listened to music differently when it was played on a record, because they knew that they could replay the record as often as they wanted. The uniqueness of the listening experience was gone. In its place, however, there arose a strong feeling of satisfaction in knowing that the same song could be enjoyed over and over, and that, in this sense, the past could be repeated.

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¹³ Boorstin, p.384.

¹⁴ Boorstin, p.384.
As most inventions do, the phonograph gave rise to criticism when it appeared. Boorstin mentions John Philip Sousa, best known for composing "Stars and Stripes Forever" (in 1897), who feared that the phonograph could devalue music by making it too commonplace. He also thought that music could be put into contexts where it would be, to say the least, inappropriate:

In the prospective scheme of mechanical music, we shall see man and maiden in a light canoe under the summer moon upon an Adirondack lake with a gramophone caroling love songs from amidships. The Spanish cavalier must abandon his guitar and serenade his beloved with a phonograph under his arm...\textsuperscript{16}

Many have had the experience (which was still conjectural when Sousa was writing) of the peaceful sounds of a night in the country being masked by the inopportune blaring of a ghetto blaster.

Attali indicates that a small number of conglomerates have in a large measure co-opted the production and diffusion of records, and have taken the power of musical expression away from the individual and the community. Boorstin tempers Attali's pessimism when he observes that people today have a greater potential access to music from

\textsuperscript{15} Boorstin, p.382.

different times and places than ever before. There are thus positive and negative aspects to the fact that we have become consumers of recorded sounds, for whom listening to music is a repeatable act. It is pertinent at this point to define the forms of music which we consume the most today, rock and pop.


3.1. A Definition of Rock.

Both "rock" and "pop" fall within the broader category "popular music", as opposed to "'serious' music". The latter term refers to music created by musically learned composers and musicians for their small but equally learned audience. Benjamin Britten and John Cage are composers of "serious" music. "Popular music", as the qualifier suggests, is music created for the people, if not always by the people.

Rock gradually evolved throughout the early '50s from various forms of popular music, including rhythm & blues, and country & western.¹⁷ Rock was in fact a combination of

black and white musical styles. Its popularity resulted from a growing disaffection on the part of teenagers and young adults for the conservative music of their elders, which lacked passion and energy. Recognizing the growing appeal of rhythm & blues among young white Americans, white performers began to record sanitized versions of R&B hits in the early '50s. Rock had its first strong impact on North America when Bill Haley and His Comets' rendition of an R&B song, "Rock around the Clock", became one of the biggest selling singles of 1955 after it was featured in the movie *Blackboard Jungle*. Rock & roll became a truly dominant musical force with the advent of Elvis Presley, who first enjoyed massive success in April 1956 with "Heartbreak Hotel". Through his charisma and sex appeal, Presley gave rock & roll a very desirable image among young white Americans. His subsequent string of hits contributed to a revolution in the musical tastes of North Americans as a whole. After Presley, rock would become the dominant style in North American popular music.

Defining rock presents certain difficulties, as Robert G. Pielke remarks:

A permanent, unchanging definition of rock music is intrinsically impossible; it would amount to an abstraction from a particular part of its
developmental process and would thus contradict itself: a part would claim to be the whole.  

In addition, as Robert Pattison observes, rock adheres to a Romantic ethic which values individuality and innovation. Thus, many so-called "rock" performers will continually seek to stretch the bounds of their music, while showing a marked indifference for definitions or categories. Pielke emphasizes too that rock cannot be defined from a strictly musicological point of view: one must keep in mind the role of the performers, the media, and the audience in creating, diffusing and experiencing the music. In spite of his reservations, Pielke attempts a musicological definition of rock. His definition is dissatisfying because, in noting what musical instruments it uses, and how it uses them, Pielke ends up portraying rock as it stood in the 1950s; it is difficult to apply his description to later forms of rock.

Like Pielke, Lawrence Grossberg remarks upon the difficulty of describing rock and roll along musical lines, because the term has been applied to so many different

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18 Pielke, p.11.
19 Pattison, pp.188-209.
20 Pielke, pp.10-20.
sounds in the past forty years. He also finds it difficult to describe it according to people's experiences of it, because individual and collective perception varies tremendously through time and space. Grossberg sees the defining features of rock elsewhere, in the use that rock fans make of their music, and in certain ideas and attitudes that rock fosters in them. Unlike the music itself or people's opinions of it, these uses and attitudes have remained constant throughout rock history.

Fundamental to Grossberg's view is the idea of empowerment: rock empowers its fans, in the sense that it gives them the means to express their autonomy from social constraints; unlike popular music in general, rock motivates its fans to be non-conformists. Fans engage in a process of creative consumption, using the music in ways that ignore the intentions of its producers: the fans, Grossberg writes, "can control its uses, use it in new and unintended ways, restructure and recontextualize its messages, and so forth." This unorthodox use of rock evidently poses a threat to authority, and there have been countless efforts over the years to censor and suppress the music. Grossberg suggests that what such people are really trying to control


22 Grossberg, p.114.
when they attack rock is the oppositional behavior of its fans.

According to Grossberg, the reason for which rock is liberating to its audience lies to a great extent in the emphasis that it puts on youth, on style and on the body. Youth is valued for itself, its energy and vitality; it is also valued in opposition to adulthood, which represents oppression (or conformity to that oppression). Rock also counters the constraints of adult society through its emphasis on style, surfaces, artifice: in this way, Grossberg remarks, rock offers a haven from the "controlled panic" of life at the end of the twentieth century.23 Fans can distance themselves from the barrenness of contemporary society by focussing on style: rock is an enclave of stimulating images in a drab environment. In addition to emphasizing youth and style, rock liberates the body, providing a musical context for rhythmic movement, dance, sex and, at times, sexual experimentation.

As Grossberg writes, rock is a "set of strategies for struggle" through which rock fans can achieve a sense of power in opposition to authority.24 Rock allows its followers to organize their lives in such a way that they

23 Grossberg, p.117.
24 Grossberg, p.123.
can express their autonomy and individuality in spite of social constraints.

3.2. A Definition of Pop

According to Grossberg, rock fans establish their commitment to the music in part by drawing boundaries between rock and other forms of music: "Rock and roll fans distinguish not only between good and bad rock and roll, but also between rock and roll and music that cannot be heard within the genre."²⁵ Pattison, along similar lines, makes a blunt use of irony to describe the differences between rock and pop, as the "rock purist"²⁶ views them:

The public by its debased taste establishes a standard of gray mediocrity whose sole artistic function is to provide a dull backdrop against which the pinpoint flashes of genuine artistic light can be recognized. In rock's aesthetic, the mediocre lump is called pop.²⁷

Thus, the main difference between the two is a qualitative one: rock is good, while pop is mediocre. Simon Frith and

²⁵ Grossberg, p.115.
²⁶ Pattison, p.189.
²⁷ Pattison, p.189. (One should emphasize that Pattison is interpreting what he thinks the "rock purist" views as pop, relative to rock. Pattison would probably be less severe if he were expressing his own opinions directly.)
Angela McRobbie reflect this view when they suggest that "rock has a creative integrity that 'pop' lacks." 28

The term "rock" applies to those proponents of popular music whose main purpose is to make music, not money. It describes artists whose innovativeness and daring distinguish them from performers who evidently dilute the potency of their work in order to attract a large cross-section of people. The latter are pop musicians. Pattison, to illustrate the distinction, contrasts the Sex Pistols with Abba. The former group's "Anarchy in the U.K." was for rock fans a cathartic expression of anger and frustration that could never achieve mainstream public acceptance. At the time of that song's release, Abba's "Take a Chance on Me" was at the top of the British charts; Pattison writes that it was a vapid and meaningless song that made too many artistic compromises in order to appeal to a vast audience. Other groups, such as Dokken, Night Ranger and REO Speedwagon, although their sound and image are closer to rock than Abba's, are not worthy of the term "rock" because, according to Pattison's purists, they have made vast concessions in order to achieve commercial success.

Pattison adds that rock purists can on occasion condescend to listening to pop, an act that is called

"slumming". Thus, rock purists can admit to listening to the likes of the Pet Shop Boys, and maybe even liking some of their songs, all the while emphasizing that their music is only something that they will listen to in passing, if it is on the radio, for instance. They will reserve attentive listening for bands that conform to their notion of what rock is and should be. In this respect, some rock fans esteem their favorite performers only so long as they do not become household names.

Pielke expresses a view that is quite similar to Pattison’s. He says that, unlike for instance classical, jazz, blues, C&W, or rock, pop is at best an indirect expression of its creators’ artistry. The term, says Pielke, applies to music whose main purpose is to make money for its creator. Pop is too calculated to be a spontaneous expression of artistry. In addition, it does not seek to communicate any particular message to an audience, for such a message could potentially detract from its salability. Instead of being meaningful or provocative, as rock (among other genres) strives to be, it is relatively meaningless and conservative. It is artificial, synthetic. Purveyors of pop imitate whatever is popular at the moment, with the hope that this popularity will extend to their music.

29 Pielke, p.195.
Pielke says that imitation is at the heart of pop, because it is only through copying other forms of music that a pop song can have the probability of achieving the desired commercial success.

"Pop", thus, has marked pejorative connotations for both Pielke and Pattison. The term, however, is subjective: some people would say that Journey, for instance, is pop, while others would say it is rock. In this thesis, I will use the term "pop" in contexts where I want to emphasize the derivativeness of the music and its subjection to the commercial imperative, and "rock" (or "jazz" or "blues" and so on) when I want to emphasize the artistic dimensions of the music being described.

3.3. Homogeneity in Popular Music.

3.3.1. A Review of Horkheimer and Adorno on Popular Culture.

In Dialectic of Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno describe the dynamics that underlie the production of popular culture in capitalist society; they affirm that popular culture, including the "hit song", becomes homogenized in capitalist society.  

created under the same conditions of mass production as soap or cars, becomes a commodity, something that, in order to fulfill its goal, which is to make money for its producers, must be in some way predictable. It must borrow from tried-and-true formulas. Horkheimer and Adorno write that some originality and innovation are needed, to add a small measure of diversion to predictable fare, but they are added in the smallest possible increments.

In doing so, the producers of popular culture respond to the expectations of their mass audience, which, when it buys a product, wishes to know in advance that the product will perform in the anticipated way. A person who buys a bottle of milk will expect the bottle to be filled with fresh milk, not sour milk or cream. Horkheimer and Adorno affirm that, in a capitalist system, the moviemaker or songwriter will attempt to fulfill the consumer's expectations in a manner that is similar to the bottler of milk. S/he will provide a product, be it a song or a movie, that the consumer can expect will contain a predictable measure of distraction. Thus, commercial radio, for instance, will provide music of a nature that is relatively homogeneous. Just as a person who turns on the faucet can expect to get a steady stream of drinkable water, s/he can expect, when s/he turns on the radio to a specific station,
to get a steady stream of homogeneous music. Predictability is more salable than novelty or originality.

Horkheimer and Adorno state that the capitalist system is incapable of fostering the production of innovative and challenging music. It is a system where all objects are turned into commodities, from which it is in the interests of the producer to extract the largest possible profit. Through its subjection to mass production, art loses its claims to distinctiveness and originality, and its ability to provoke, uplift or inspire. Capitalist art provides diversion and evasion in banal and imitative patterns that fail to offer respite from work. Indeed, popular art in capitalism often prolongs the repetitiveness of the workplace, to the point that a new commercial movie or television show or pop song is nothing to arouse particular interest. The latest police drama on television today is nothing more than a slightly faster-paced and more violent version of a police drama from ten years before. The latest hit ballad offers little novelty with regard to a ballad that appeared twenty years before.

For Horkheimer and Adorno, another aspect of homogeneity in mass culture is a general lack of social or political commentary. Movies and pop songs are fleeting distractions: they offer nothing more than momentary escapes
from day-to-day frustrations. Their role is to draw the masses' attention away from social and political concerns, encouraging them instead to fantasize about rich and famous entertainers (for example). Cultural producers avoid exposing the masses to alternative (or simply autonomous) perspectives because they are loath to allow the expression of views that question their own hegemony. In this regard, Horkheimer and Adorno write,

> There is the agreement -- or at least the determination -- of all executive authorities not to produce or sanction anything that in any way differs from their own rules, their own ideas about consumers, or above all themselves.\(^{31}\)

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, it is in the interests of the culture industry to sustain itself and the capitalist system of which it is an integral part. As a consequence, producers encourage a passive acceptance of the status quo among the masses.

In their examination of the popular music industry, Peterson and Berger also see a potential for homogeneity in the culture industry, but they do not view this homogeneity as a constant.\(^{32}\) Rather they demonstrate that it varies, in relation to cycles of corporate concentration and

\(^{31}\) Horkheimer and Adorno, p.122.

competition. According to them, periods of increased market concentration, where a few large companies dominate production, alternate with periods of competition, where independent companies challenge the hegemony of the major companies. According to Peterson and Berger, a high degree of homogeneity accompanies periods of concentration. During such periods, the major record companies strive to consolidate their market position by acting conservatively: they repeat past successes and avoid taking risks. The two researchers note that the period from 1948 to 1955 was especially conservative, because competition from independents was low. The majors prevented them from competing through vertical integration; they controlled all phases of the creation and distribution of pop music.

Peterson and Berger view the effects of concentration on the music-listening audience as essentially negative. They indicate that, in trying to maintain their hegemony, the major companies neglect the audience: they respond slowly to the public's changing tastes. The researchers indicate that a stagnation in growth, and occasional declining sales, accompany periods of concentration. The audience seeks satisfaction elsewhere, cultivating its interests in regional music and live performance rather than in mass-mediated music. It also turns to independent companies. As these "indies" become more popular,
competition increases, and the public can choose from a greater diversity of musical styles.

Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Peterson and Berger recognize that the interests of cultural producers can diverge strongly from those of consumers. Peterson and Berger, however, are less pessimistic than the Frankfurt School theorists: as they see it, the major record companies' power over consumers is tempered by the threat of competition. The majors are unable to achieve complete control because the music audience turns to alternative sources of music when their dissatisfaction grows too strong.

3.3.2. Remarks on Horkheimer and Adorno's Views.

Keeping in mind Peterson and Berger's observations, we should be wary of accepting Horkheimer and Adorno's views too unquestioningly. At the same time, however, we should not simply dismiss them. Indeed, although they wrote Dialectic of Enlightenment in the 1940s, their observations on the sheer redundancy of much popular culture still apply today. We can however object to their analysis, regarding the negativity of this situation, in two principal ways. Both objections regard responses that the consumer can make to culture.
Simon Frith states that popular music depends on quantity. Only a few titles among the many that a record company distributes will make a profit. The company nevertheless continues distributing many titles because it does not know which ones will be profitable. Through such a strategy, it must stave off the boredom that strikes consumers faced with products that are too homogeneous.

The consumer, faced with the many different titles that the record company presents to him or her, has some choices. Admittedly, they all fall within a somewhat limited range; if one's tastes run to the music of Spain or the Philippines, one's options are limited. Nevertheless, music does arrive in sufficient quantities and sufficient variety to keep the consumer satisfied, even if it does not always enrich him or her. In addition, discriminating listeners who want music to be more than a background for other activities can satisfy their desires in many different ways, through listening to non-commercial radio stations, and through seeking out lesser-known recordings on independent labels or in the import bins, for instance. They can also frequent venues where alternative forms of music are played, or they can create music themselves.

Horkheimer and Adorno, in their polemic against the constraints imposed upon the production and distribution of music in a capitalist economy, neglect to remark that the listener can play an active role in choosing music for him or herself. Interestingly, they controvert their own argument in the following passage, where they suggest closing down movie theaters, whose very existence, they claim, is an insidious lure for the sheeplike masses; they write: "The disappointment [of such closures] would be felt not so much by the enthusiasts as by the slow-witted, who are the ones who suffer from anything anyhow." If we provisionally accept their condescending assumption that the "slow-witted" are a lost cause, then we can state that Horkheimer and Adorno do not have to worry about them. They do not have to worry about people who are not slow-witted either, because such people are presumably capable of making satisfactory cultural choices and of avoiding predictable fare. Nobody has to listen to Chicago XIX. The roman numeral appended to the group's name is sufficient indication that the content of the record will be little different from Chicago XVIII, or Chicago XIII for that matter. Capitalist society gives the enterprising listener the option of listening to Charles Ives rather than Burl

34 Horkheimer and Adorno, pp.138-139.
35 Horkheimer and Adorno, p.139.
Ives, or both, or neither. Although the dominant musical discourse is strongly homogeneous in our society, with the same tunes blaring from innumerable radios across North America, the possibility of enjoying a variety of alternate musical styles is present. Audiences respond to the dominant discourse in ways that are much more varied and idiosyncratic than Horkheimer and Adorno are willing to allow.

In addition, not all consumers seek enrichment through listening to popular music. Indeed, many people do not care whether their music is uplifting or not. Furthermore, even when they do not especially like the music itself, they can derive pleasure from positive associations that the music brings to mind. Thus an individual can listen to, for instance, Bruce Hornsby and the Range's "The Valley Road" not so much for the song's intrinsic qualities, as for the associations that it provides to pleasant moments. One should note also that it is possible to derive satisfaction from resemblance and homogeneity. Some people can enjoy listening to the twelve-bar blues, for instance, even though a non-initiate will think that all the songs sound alike. There is something comforting about recognizing familiar patterns in music. Homogeneity is not always negative.
Furthermore, a listener can develop with a pop star what Joshua Meyrowitz calls a "media friendship". Indeed, a listener can develop a reassuring familiarity with a certain performer's music. Even when the artist repeats him/herself continually, listeners can derive pleasure from the sense of continuity that s/he provides through his/her homogeneity. It matters little to faithful fans if the new Bob Dylan album sounds much like the previous one, because they view Dylan more as a "media friend" than as an artist or entertainer. No matter what Dylan is singing, or how he is singing it, it is the voice that they want to hear, like an old friend's. As a result of the dedication of fans to his public persona, Dylan still sells a steady number of copies for each new album that he releases.

In sum, although Adorno and Horkheimer are correct in pointing out that popular music, and popular culture in general, tend towards homogeneity in capitalism, they underestimate the capacity of the individual listener to overcome these limitations. They also reveal a modernist bias by exaggerating the importance of constant novelty in music. Postmodernists recognize that a constant search for novelty can alienate people, making it more difficult for

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them to recognize any elements of a work of art that appeal to them.

3.3.3. Mass Culture Decentralized.

In *Uncommon Cultures*, Jim Collins presents a postmodern view that runs counter to Horkheimer and Adorno's. One of Collins' main points is that, whereas in modernism, one could still talk about a specific canon, a body of works whose influence and significance were unmistakeable, there occurs in postmodernism a fragmentation of this canon. As the elitism and the segregationism of modernism make way for the openness and plurality of postmodernism, it becomes difficult to cite any specific body of works as being particularly inspirational: instead of one set canon, there are many different ones. Michel Foucault's metaphor of the panopticon is no longer applicable, according to Collins. The panopticon is a circular prison in which a central tower is able to watch and communicate to several peripheral cells, which are separate from each other. Jim Collins argues against this theory of the centralized power, controlling the masses from afar. He also attacks those critical theorists, such as Horkheimer and Adorno, who claim


that the technological infrastructure has given centralized powers the ability to convey their ideology to the masses. Collins in fact says that the production of culture is so decentralized today that it is impossible to ascertain what the dominant ideology might be; in fact, he claims, there is no dominant ideology, only several competing and decentralized ones.

Technology plays a key role in this situation: Collins remarks that the proliferation of media has encouraged this dispersal of production. In modernist times, production was still relatively concentrated, with for example only three major television networks dominating the airwaves; in postmodernist times, cable, pay TV, VCRs, the Fox Network have all become threats against the hegemony of the networks. This profusion of cultural options has given us diverse creative possibilities, enriching the culture, bringing about the openness towards different forms of expression (from ethnic minorities, women, foreign peoples) that is one of the principal characteristics of postmodernism. This increase in freedom suggests furthermore that we have in some ways reached "composing", the ultimate of Jacques Attali's five stages (although a profusion of choices is not quite the same as actual participation).
4. Conclusion.

This chapter has presented the views of Jacques Attali, and of Horkheimer and Adorno, critics who deplore much of what is occurring today in popular music. It is worthwhile to examine their cautionary views, because the casual listener has the tendency to accept things as they are, without imagining that they could be improved in some ways; the casual listener ignores too that the growing slickness of popular music throughout the '60s and '70s has drawn it away from the people, making virtuosity a virtual prerequisite for participating in the creation of music. I have tried to balance Attali's perspectives, and Horkheimer and Adorno's, by showing that the current situation is not entirely negative. In this respect, Boorstin's view, that people have a greater access to different forms of music than ever before, is especially worthwhile. We also touched upon the question of homogeneity in popular music, which we will explore in more detail in subsequent chapters.

1. Introduction.

In this section, I examine the context in which commercial radio operates, and the constraints that encourage it to provide music that is familiar rather than challenging, allusive rather than original. I begin by briefly retracing radio's origins, followed by a description of programmers' decisive role in choosing music for airplay, and the constraints that they have to face in the process. I then look at how listeners perceive radio, as well as how (and why) they use it. Lastly, I present a view that in a sense combines the programmer's perspective with the radio listener's, to show how their roles, considered together within the framework of the music industry, help to make commercial radio what it is today, a purveyor of music that corresponds to specific formats and established standards.


the technology for transmitting sound over considerable distances by cable was available. The inventor Guglielmo Marconi, in 1897, devised a method for transmitting sound through the air, without the use of wires or cable, by using electromagnetic waves. It was possible to communicate with Marconi's invention through the use of Morse code (devised sixty years previously for telegraphy). It was not long before equipment sensitive enough to transmit the subtleties of the human voice and of music was developed. The first transmission of the human voice by way of electromagnetic waves occurred less than a decade after Marconi's invention, in 1906. Reginald Fessenden broadcast his voice and his violin playing from Boston to ships nearby.

Originally, radio was used in the same way as the telephone, for person-to-person communication. Following the end of the First World War, there developed a subculture of amateur radio enthusiasts, many of whom had been trained during the war. One of the companies that provided equipment to such enthusiasts, Westinghouse, recognized the possibility of broadcasting music and talk as a way of increasing radio sales. The company therefore started its own radio station, KDKA, which went on the air in Pittsburgh, on November 2, 1920. KDKA was a success, and

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2 The distinction of being the first radio station belongs to XWA (soon to be known as CFCF), which started broadcasting in Montréal in May of 1920. [Troyer, W.L., *The
many other companies followed suit in the next few years. In fact, growth was such that the airwaves became filled with stations competing cacophonously for a limited range of frequencies. The American and Canadian governments eventually had to intervene to regulate the licensing of stations.

The first radio stations belonged to private corporations such as Westinghouse, and could not depend on public funds for sustenance.\(^3\) The radio-receiver manufacturers who opened radio stations were willing to accept that the stations lose money, expecting that profit would come from increased sales of receivers. The idea that a radio station could earn a profit by selling discreet amounts of time to advertisers did not occur immediately. In fact, many people at the time considered that broadcasting actual sales pitches would be an affront to the listener.\(^4\) Radio stations, faced with increasing overhead

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\(^4\) Head and Sterling, p.60.
costs and companies' eagerness to advertise, soon overcame their reticence about advertising: they began to accept ads. In those early years, advertisers usually sponsored entire programs. Indeed, until the disruptive advent of television, this procedure was the most commonplace one. From the mid-1920s onward, advertising would play a dominant role in radio.⁵

Today, advertising is virtually the only means of revenue for a private station. A consequence of this dependence is that commercial radio's allegiance tends to lie with the advertiser rather than with the listener. Eric W. Rothenbuhler supports this point by saying that, if a radio announcer is short of time, he will sooner cut a song or shorten his patter than cut an advertisement.⁶ The consequences for the station of not playing a song are smaller than those of not playing an ad. No one will really miss the deleted song or talk. If however the advertisement is not played at the specific time, the deejay must play the ad free of charge at a later appropriate moment. A commercial radio station survives through advertising. It

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⁵ Head and Sterling, pp.60, 84, 94-96.

can thrive only if the advertising is plentiful (and expensive).

Music also plays a role in the success or survival of a radio station because it is a lure for listeners. Not any music can be chosen, however: the right kind of music must be broadcast, so that the station attracts the kind of listener that most appeals to its advertisers. Rothenbuhler writes that, as a consequence of this desire to attract specific listeners, stations need to have specific formats. A commercial radio station must play a certain kind of music if it wants to keep its audience. If it plays different types of music, it runs the risk of alienating some of its listeners and of discouraging others from becoming habitual listeners. A versatile station might attract a wider cross-section of people, but these people will probably only tune in sporadically, for short amounts of time. Thus, a commercial station that plays the music of Colin James and Jeff Healey will avoid playing any Debbie Gibson or Donny Osmond. A format on the radio can benefit listeners, to the extent that they know they will enjoy or at least tolerate most of the songs when they tune in to a particular station.

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This need to placate advertisers also has negative consequences for listeners. For instance, the probability of hearing something truly different on a mainstream station is remote. In addition, because commercial stations want to make money, they will all program a similar type of music, in order to attract the most lucrative audience. As a consequence, various forms of rock dominate the airwaves today, even though many other styles of music could also be transmitted. Also, because the radio station wishes to maintain its audience for as long as possible, listening to the radio must never be a completely fulfilling experience, as Barry Truax remarks. It must profess to fill a need, companionship in times of loneliness, diversion in times of boredom, but it must not entirely satisfy that need. If it does, it runs the risk of losing valuable listeners. The very rhythm of radio helps to prevent listener satisfaction, consisting as it does of numerous incompatible fragments which are all too brief to be satisfying.

Because it is important to maintain an audience, much care is taken in selecting songs for airplay. The choice of a song is seldom a matter of individual preference. Rothenbuhler remarks that the choice of a song depends on the approbation of many people in the industry; he writes:

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In recent times the roles in the system include the recording musicians, the record producers, the record company policymakers, the record promoters, radio programmers, and both the record buying public and the radio listening public.9 The greater the number of decision makers, the greater the probability that markedly original music will meet with someone's disapproval. The decision makers, who have their jobs to consider, tend to be conservative in their choices of songs. Radio programmers play an especially important role in the decision-making process: they choose from a large number of records those few that the listener will actually get to hear on the radio.

In 1982, Rothenbuhler observed the goings-on at a commercial radio station in the American Midwest. During his stay, he noted that, in a ten-week period, only 35 of 467 available albums appeared on the air.10 In all probability, only one song was aired from each of these 35 albums, what is commonly called the "consensus cut", the single song on the album that people in the industry agree should be the one to be broadcast. Programmers tend to follow the example of leading stations in choosing which song on a record to play, because the probability of the

9 Rothenbuhler, p.80.
10 Rothenbuhler, p.86.
song's becoming a hit is higher if all the stations in the country are playing it. The playing of a hit reflects well on the radio station, giving it the aura of a station that keeps up with current trends. In addition, audience recognition is greater when a consensus cut is played than when two or more cuts are played from an album in a single period.  

3. Audience Responses to Radio


Roland Barthes writes in *S/Z* that all texts hold a multiplicity of meanings.  For Barthes, the act of reading involves a discovery of some of those meanings, with the reader choosing those meanings that are significant for him or her. Gérard Genette corroborates Barthes' view when he writes: "Lire, c'est bien (ou mal) choisir, et choisir, c'est laisser. Toute œuvre est plus ou moins amputée dès sa véritable naissance, c'est-à-dire dès sa première lecture." The process of reading is as active and

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11 Rothenbuhler, pp.90-91.


13 "To read is to choose well (or badly), and to choose is to leave out. Every work is more or less amputated at the moment of its genuine birth, in other words, at the moment of its first reading." (Genette, *Palimpsestes*, p.265.)
involving as the original process of writing the text, because there is not a single meaning that can pretend to be generally more significant than another in a text. There should be no hierarchy established between connotation and denotation. Barthes writes that

"La dénotation n'est pas le premier des sens, mais elle feint de l'être; sans cette illusion, elle n'est finalement que la dernière des connotations (celle qui semble à la fois fonder et clore la lecture)."

If a text did carry a primary signification, which would be its denotation, then one could foresee every single reader of a text reacting in the same way, when in fact one reader can like a text while another will dislike it. Bon Jovi, for some, is the essence of trendiness; for others, it exemplifies the commoditization of noise. Barthes writes that the reason for such a divergence of opinions is that "Ce 'moi' qui s'approche du texte est déjà lui-même une pluralité d'autres textes, de codes infinis, ou plus exactement: perdus (dont l'origine se perd)."

People who read (or listen to) a text are all mentally recreating it:

14 "Denotation is not the first of the meanings, but it pretends to be; without this illusion, it is ultimately nothing more than the last of the connotations (the one that seems to be both the basis and the end of the reading)." (Barthes, S/Z, p.16.)

15 "This 'me' who approaches the text is itself already a plurality of other texts, of infinite codes, or more exactly: lost ones (whose origins tend to be lost)." (Barthes, S/Z, p.16.)
they are using the original text as a point of departure for their own very individual mental text.

Like Barthes, John Fiske, in *Television Culture*, emphasizes the active role that the audience plays in giving meaning to a text, whether it is a television program or a pop song.\(^{16}\) He suggests two extremes of interpretation: one in which the audience member readily accepts and confirms the (usually dominant) ideology conveyed in a piece of mass culture, and another in which the audience member completely rejects it.\(^{17}\) People who feel happy about their position in society will usually accept and support the dominant ideology. In this instance, he cites the "white, middle-class, urban, northern male"\(^ {18}\) as a type who would be disposed to accept the message that the purveyors of popular culture put into their text. Conversely, women, minorities and working-class people will probably have interpretations that differ from the dominant one, and that in fact differ from each other's. We should note that their interpretations are not always completely at odds with the interpretation that the encoder intended. Fiske talks in this respect about "negotiated" meanings, in which a person


\(^{17}\) Fiske, p.82.

\(^{18}\) Fiske, p.64.
will receive the intended message, but accept it only
insofar as it corresponds to his or her set of values.

Lawrence Grossberg suggests that part of the reason for
audience's divergent readings of rock songs and performers
is that they use such readings to define themselves as a
group. Thus, as Pattison remarks, a fan will qualify as
"rock" only songs that correspond to his/her particular
tastes: the rest is "pop". People cultivate an affinity
for a particular performer or musical style because they
want to distinguish themselves from their less enlightened
peers, or from boring adults. Rock fans are special, or
consider themselves to be so, because they have developed an
interest that goes beyond the superficial ones of most
people. In this way, they raise themselves above the
apathetic masses, by actually caring about a type of music,
or a specific performer.

Like Grossberg, George H. Lewis says that perceptions
of music are dependent upon more than the intrinsic value of
the music. The fact that the appreciation of music can be

19 Lawrence Grossberg, pp.178-185.

20 Robert Pattison, The Triumph of Vulgarity: Rock
Music in the Mirror of Romanticism (New York: Oxford

21 George H. Lewis, "Patterns of Meaning and Choice:
Taste Cultures in Popular Music," Popular Music and
Communication, ed. James Lull (Newbury Park, California:
affected by outside sources increases the probability that a single song will elicit differing interpretations among its listeners. Lewis mentions other people's opinions of music as a capital outside influence: indeed, an individual will tend on the whole to listen to the music that his or her friends prefer. Lewis writes that

Adolescents understand this and are constantly checking out the record and tape collections of influential friends (to see if they themselves are "covered" in their own collections), or of newcomers seeking admission to their group (to see if they "fit").

Lewis uses Herbert Gans's term "taste culture" to describe the affinities that people with the same likings for arts, including music, share with each other. Gans suggested that there was a correlation between one's preferences for certain forms of culture and one's social standing. Thus, working-class people would like a certain type of music whereas upper-class people would like another. Lewis suggests that "taste cultures" are not so neatly shared among specific social groups as Gans supposes. Lewis says that taste cultures tend to cut across boundaries of wealth, race or religion. Taste cultures do exist, but their only

22 Lewis, p.200.

defining characteristic is the preferences that people share, be they for funk or reggae or house, and so on.24

Music is used as a means of delimiting social relations. It is especially significant in this role for youth, as Simon Frith indicates in Sound Effects.25 Frith notes that the transition from the dependency of childhood to the autonomy of adulthood is often arduous. Adolescents make the process less difficult by banding into peer groups. According to Frith, a peer group uses music "as a badge and a background".26 Music is a badge in the sense that it identifies the members of a group, displaying their tastes in opposition to other people's; it is a background in the sense that it accompanies their activities, and is a dominant subject for exchanges and discussions within the group. In this respect, the music, and its performers, can have a strong influence on the way the members dress, behave and think. Involvement in a peer group, according to Frith, helps young people to acquire and develop a sense of identity. It gives them a feeling of belonging, especially when they feel alienated from school.27 Peer groups also

24 For a detailed description of a specific taste culture, see Simon Frith, Sound Effects, pp.202-234.
26 Frith, p. 216.
27 Basing himself on a study of 509 high school students which he did over a four-year period in Sweden, Keith Roe observed that "High involvement in certain teenage
provide a secure context for them to practice their social skills.


Watching television, Fiske writes, is one of many activities that take place in the home on a daily basis, neither more nor less significant than cooking supper or doing the laundry.\textsuperscript{28} Sometimes people watch television with undivided attention; more frequently, however, people are engaged in other activities at the same time: they read or study with the television on, or they converse with other people. Even attentive viewing can be interrupted by another commonplace communications technology: the telephone. This distracted listening is even more pronounced in relation to the radio, for the radio commands only the sense of hearing, leaving the sense of sight entirely free for other activities. People are usually doing something else when the radio is on.

Crisell considers this flexibility that the radio allows to be one of two of its advantages relative to other

\textsuperscript{28} Fiske, pp.62-83.
He refers to radio as a "secondary" medium. The medium is secondary relative to other, primary, activities that the listener is engaged in. Few people today turn on the radio with the express intention of listening to it and doing nothing else. People usually turn it on to relieve the monotony of such tasks as housework or driving. For many people, listening to the radio involves a level of attention that Barry Truax calls "listening-in-readiness". This type of listening applies to situations "in which the attention is in readiness to receive significant information, but where the focus of one's attention is probably directed elsewhere." Thus people will only interrupt their primary activity to listen to the radio at certain times: when they hear the opening bars of a favorite song for instance, or when they hear the familiar voice of the newsreader.

The other advantage of radio, according to Crisell, is its ability to engage the imagination of the listener.

Indeed, because radio transmits only sound, the listener must, in a sense, fill in the blanks created by the absence of any visual stimulus provided directly by the radio.

29 Andrew Crisell, Understanding Radio (London: Methuen, 1985), pp.7-17.
30 Crisell, p.15.
31 Truax, p.19.
Thus, if a story is being told on the air, listeners can imagine for themselves such details as the way the protagonists are dressed and look. The radio announcer's appearance too is left to the imagination. Many listeners, when they see an oft-heard announcer for the first time, find it difficult, initially, to reconcile the imagined appearance of the person with his or her actual appearance.

The act of watching television often involves choosing blocks of time, rather than specific programs. The approach to radio is even more casual. People today commonly switch channels in mid-song, transforming the act of listening to the radio into one that is at least as fragmented as that of watching television with a remote-control device. Also, listening to the radio is extremely dependent on the listener's circumstances. In keeping with its status as a "secondary" medium, the decision to listen to the radio depends upon what the listener is doing at the time. It can also depend upon whom s/he is with, although radio today is a much more solitary activity than it once was. Before television, listening to the radio was a group activity; the radio was in a way a replacement for the

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family hearth, especially during the 1940s, when the medium was at its most popular and influential.\textsuperscript{33}

Mendelsohn presents views that are complementary to Crisell's.\textsuperscript{34} Mendelsohn surveyed 1000 radio listeners in Greater New York in the early '60s. Although the survey was done a while ago and radio formats have changed since then, Mendelsohn's observations on people's listening patterns are still valid today, because he was measuring the need for radio in general, rather than the need for any specific programs. Mendelsohn remarks that most people listen to radio for very practical reasons, usually to satisfy an immediate need. They generally listen to the medium to maintain their psychological well-being, rather than, for instance, to better themselves intellectually. Mendelsohn observed that among the things that people like about radio is that it brackets their days, giving their day-to-day lives a sense of order and structure. People also listen to the radio to feel better when they feel depressed, or to calm them when they feel tense. They listen to the radio when they feel the need for companionship. One of Mendelsohn's respondents, a homemaker, says that her house

\textsuperscript{33} Crisell, p.157.

feels empty in the daytime when the radio is off, so she keeps the radio on all the time, even when certain loud activities, such as vacuuming, mask its sound. Some people said that they listened to the radio to stay informed; these people emphasized that they were interested mainly in down-to-earth information, including weather and traffic reports, that could be put to immediate use. People also liked the fact that radio gave them something to talk about with their spouses or their friends.

There are other reasons for listening to the radio. In his article, however, Mendelsohn wanted to emphasize that radio played an active role in responding to people’s immediate psychological needs, and was listened to frequently for this reason. The radio fulfills an important role for its listeners. Its content is relevant, but in many cases, its presence is what matters the most, to enliven a quiet room, and to fill its emptiness.

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36 In this respect, another survey, of 7000 adults in seven large U.S. cities, calculated that adults listened to the radio for an average of 3.5 hours per day, in 1962. [Motivation Analysis, Inc., Broadcasting, 63 (Sept. 17, 1962), p.35, quoted in Mendelsohn, p.248.]
4. Appeal of Predictability and Repetition for an Audience.

People, in the process of interpreting their surroundings, frequently try to relate the obscure and novel to the familiar; they establish categories in order to acquire an understanding of their environment. Such an approach is used to assimilate new music, with listeners attempting to determine for themselves where such and such song belongs. When hearing a record for the first time, they will seek to position the record in relation to other records. They do this positioning in an attempt to find a way of interpreting the record, of making it familiar enough so that they can become comfortable with it.

Listeners guess at the performer's possible sources of inspiration, wondering where s/he gets her ideas, whom s/he sounds like, whether s/he is imitating someone or something. This guessing makes them more aware of what to expect, either further on in the same song, or in other songs by the same artist. On the basis of hearing a single song, they can form an idea of whether they might buy an entire album of songs from this performer. In this respect, the listener, in describing the song to a person who has not yet heard it, usually talks about other performers whom it brings to mind. Such descriptions seldom dwell on the tone
of the drums or the guitar, even if these details are important for the initial appreciation of a recording. For the sake of conciseness, s/he will say that Tracy Chapman, for instance, sounds like a cross between Suzanne Vega and Joan Armatrading. Record companies encourage such comparisons in their promotional material, because it facilitates acceptance of a new performer.

Eric W. Rothenbuhler cites figures showing the important role that radio plays in listeners' exposure to music. He writes that Lull and Miller, "In their pre-MTV study of exposure to new wave music, report that 59% of their respondents cite the radio as their 'principal source' with 35% for records and tapes, 3% clubs, 2% concerts, and 2% television."37 Programmers, of course, will only broadcast records that they think their listeners will like. Still, it is disconcerting to realize the power they hold in determining what listeners get to hear, and perhaps more significantly, what they do not get to hear.

Radio programmers must reconcile two contradictory objectives: because they play a key role in presenting music to the people, they have a responsibility to broadcast new kinds of music. At the same time, however, they have to make concessions to their listeners' complacency.

37 Rothenbuhler, p.79.
Programmers will try to meet both objectives by broadcasting new artists who play familiar-sounding music, like Richard Marx or the Escape Club in 1989. More established performers are not entirely exempt from the necessity to appeal to programmers either. For commercially successful performers who wish to prolong their success, it is important to avoid excessive deviations from past successes, at least on the single release. The strategy is to build and then maintain a core audience. If you want to keep these people loyal, you have to provide them with what they enjoy hearing. Changes can be made, but they had better be gradual, say 10% of innovation with every new release. (10% is a figure of speech: it can be more, just as it can be less.) The fan has heard most of the songs that appear on commercial radio countless times before. For the regular listener, the new song is the exception: s/he will hear maybe ten familiar songs before hearing a new one. This familiarity pleases the listener, because it demands less attention (and it is somehow more evocative) to hear something that one has heard before. It is not the only way of proceeding, however. After all, there is no shortage of new music, and one could listen to new songs during every waking hour without being able to keep up with everything that is commercially available, not to mention everything that is "privately" created.
John Ryan and Richard A. Peterson, in their review of the American country music industry, describe a situation in which homogeneity is emphasized at the expense of diversity.\textsuperscript{38} Many of the songs that are produced in the country music industry tend to resemble previous songs. The demands for a marketable product submerge individual expressiveness. Country songwriters cannot expect their compositions to make it to the consumer as they originally imagined them; in fact, they cannot even be certain that their compositions will be recorded, for the performer and the producer choose to record only a fraction of the songs submitted to them. Also, the latter rewrite most of the songs that are chosen, to suit the performer’s image and the presumed tastes of the audience. The records thereafter go through other stages in which inappropriate or uncommercial songs are winnowed out.

Ryan and Peterson suggest that a song is more likely to be a hit if it resembles other songs that were successful in the recent past. With respect to this point of view, they refer to the "product image".\textsuperscript{39} All programmers have a mental image of how the product should sound, based on their


\textsuperscript{39} Ryan and Peterson, pp.21-25.
experience of what has sounded good in the past. Each of
the people involved in the chain linking songwriters to
artists regard a song as a product -- as a potentially
salable (or unsalable) piece of music. It is in their
interests to shape the song in such a way that the next
people on the chain will find it acceptable. Thus producers
will record a song in such a way that promoters will feel
motivated to support it; promoters will emphasize songs that
they think will interest radio programmers; radio
programmers will in turn select songs that they think their
listeners will like. Radio programmers will base their
selections on what has already been tested, giving the go-
ahead to music by proven stars while neglecting many other
stars with relatively lacklustre reputations regardless of
how good their most recent recordings are. From a financial
perspective, the most prudent way to proceed is to attempt
to duplicate recent successes.

Country music evolves gradually, with innovations being
introduced in small increments to avoid alienating
listeners, because it must maintain their interest. At the
same time, it avoids upsetting their sensibility by
presenting too many unexpected sounds or unfamiliar songs.
Successful writers of country songs are not artists but able
craftspeople, who are familiar with the rigorous
restrictions of the genre and who can tailor their songs
accordingly. Country music is too concerned about pleasing people to consider challenging them.

Rock music follows less stringent rules than country music because, as Ryan and Peterson observe, "The division of creative labor is greater [in country] than in the contemporary pop/rock music field." Successful rock performers tend to write their own songs (unlike country performers, for whom professional songwriters commonly write the hits), and thus have more control over what they say with their music, and how they say it. Still, rock performers cannot entirely ignore the need to conserve an image of the music as a product to be sold, for like country performers, they run the risk of being dropped by their record company, and of losing their livelihood in this way, if they produce music that sells poorly. The employer/employee relationship that exists between many rock performers and their companies is illustrated by Motown's lawsuit against Rick James. Motown sued the "funk rocker" for handing in inferior music, missing deadlines, and working under the influence of drugs.41

40 Ryan and Peterson, p.12.

5. Conclusion.

The conservatism of commercial radio prevents many artists from reaching a wide audience, or any audience, for that matter. A Bizarro cartoon depicts this situation with a touch of cynical humor. A middle-aged guitarist sits alone on a stage. He says, "The next song is about how talented, seasoned musicians with something important to say to the world are completely ignored in favor of shallow, hormone-crazed teenagers with multimillion dollar music videos and..." He pauses, looking out at the solitary audience member, who is resting his head on a table, and says, "Hey... You awake?"42 The music industry, as we have seen in this chapter, is organized in such a way that radio programmers are not in a position to challenge their listeners to any great extent. As a consequence, commercial radio generally tends to present to its listeners the same old music dressed up to be fashionable, at the expense of more original or meaningful forms of music.

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Part Two.

Transtextuality in the Music on CFOX-FM.
Chapter Five. The Format and Structure of CFOX-FM.

1. Introduction.

In the late forties and early fifties, television began to invade the home. At first, it was a luxury; soon, however, it would become a necessity. Many media forecasters at the time predicted that the spread of television would lead to the demise of radio. After all, television was able to provide the same news and entertainment as radio had until then, with sights in addition to sounds. Radio, however, was able to survive. It changed by responding to needs among listeners that television could not fulfill as well.

In this chapter, I describe commercial radio stations, particularly those that feature music as opposed to talk. In the first half, I look at the ways in which music stations have responded to needs among their listeners: I discuss the codes that they use to be more accessible, the impression of fashionability and solidarity that they convey, and the redundancy that makes them easier to assimilate. Such considerations form a basis for my ensuing presentation of CFOX-FM, the Vancouver station that is the object of my transtextual analysis, in which I examine how

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1 As I noted at the beginning of the thesis. (Head and Sterling, p.94.)
the various components of the radio text relate to each other, and to the audience. The second half of the chapter describes the process that led to the choice of the station, followed by a presentation of the station itself.

2. Remarks on Format and Structure.


A commercial radio station that played Iron Maiden, Bob Marley, and Madonna back to back, or that broadcast five ads in a row, would soon go out of business. Stations do not air different songs and ads in a pell-mell fashion: their station's broadcasts are based on codes. Codes, to use Werner Hüllen's description, are "closed systems of [...] signs, organized according to syntactic rules." They give a sense of purpose and order to a radio broadcast. In fact, they structure even the most mundane of our daily activities, such as locating a CD in a music store: the emplacement of a CD follows a code such that we can usually locate the title we are looking for within seconds. Such seemingly banal distinctions between rock, rap and jazz depend upon a socially-shared understanding of what such categories represent. Codes simplify our lives.

Two levels of codes determine the language that a commercial radio station will use. They are the format and the structure. "Format" refers to content, or the type of music that is presented, whereas "structure" refers to form, or the way in which the music is presented.3

In this respect, Hilliard notes the importance of a specific format in today's market.4 A commercial radio station should indeed play a clearly delineated style of music. Hilliard observes that radio stations, to survive and thrive in competitive urban markets, must appeal to a demographic group that is 1. attractive to advertisers and 2. not served by other stations. The way to attain these goals is to have a specific format. Routt, McGrath and Weiss point out the importance of the format:

The ease with which listeners can switch stations denies radio the freedom to abuse. The listener, once hooked on a TV drama, has to suffer through five to ten units of advertising if he is to sate his interest in the plot. Not so with radio. There is no plot to follow: there is only entertainment and information. When the broadcaster becomes offensive in language, manner, or commercial load, he is easily turned off in favor of a less offensive dial setting. Radio programmers, therefore, simply must walk on egg shells [sic] throughout the broadcast day. There

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3 Radio programmers do not necessarily use such terms in the same way, but the terms are useful here to demonstrate how commercial radio broadcasts are organized.

is never a time to ease up and say, "Forget the listener." 5

It follows that a successful station will be one with a particular format: it will broadcast a specific type of music, determined by the radio programmer's (sometimes intuitive) choices as to what songs should make it to the air.

In addition to the format, a commercial station uses another type of code, one that operates more subtly for the listener, at a less conscious level. This code is the structure. A radio station consists of a series of units, which include the station identification, the news, music, advertisements, and so on. "Structure" refers to the way in which the various elements that make up a station's broadcast are sequenced. The units are organized into a closed system that is meaningful for the listener: the sequence of music, talk and ads is patterned into a code. As Barry Truax writes, "The content of radio must be poured into a predetermined mold whose structure is a predictable, repetitive pattern that is effective in holding the listener's attention." 6


Harold Mendelsohn says that one of the uses of radio is to "bracket the listener's day". Radio can reach this goal by using sequences of songs and chatter whose patterns are easy for the listener to understand and predict. Thus, an effective structure might be the following: two songs/station i.d./two songs/announcer talk/three ads, repeated until the news break at the top of the hour. Radio stations reflect current listener preferences when they advertise the fact that they have more music and less talk. JR Country, for instance, proclaims that you can hear up to "nine [songs] in a row" on their station. CFOX, for its part, has "twenty-five-minute music sweeps".

A notable aspect of codes is their subtlety, their unassumingness. The English language, for instance, is a code that countless people use spontaneously, without having to consider its complexity. Once a speaker is familiar with the language, s/he no longer thinks about such elemental components of language as vocabulary, grammar and syntax. The code fades into the background of his/her consciousness. People perceive the structure and the format of radio in a way that is similar to their perception of language. Regular listeners to a particular station have assimilated these codes, and no longer consider them in a conscious

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7 Mendelsohn, p.242.
manner. Like language, structure and format are always present, but they are a background presence. As a consequence, the listener is seldom aware of them. S/he only considers structure when its regularity is disrupted. Thus, s/he will only think about the code when, for instance, only three songs are played in a set that usually consists of four, or when the news is read at a quarter past the hour instead of at the top of the hour.

Formats and structures change. These two codes are continually modified in small increments in reaction to fluctuations in the preferences of listeners. In spite of these small changes, format and structure give coherence and order to programming on commercial radio. These two codes enable the station to attract and keep its audience, who appreciate the predictable patterns that they provide.

2.2. Station/Audience Symbiosis.

A commercial radio station must strive to please its listeners, in order to maintain ratings that are appealing to potential advertisers. It must make itself attractive to its listeners. One of the primary connotations that a station should project to its audience is that it is broadcasting the best music and information in the area. At the very least, through the choice of songs and through the announcers' patter, it should convey the impression that it
is preferable to other stations in the same market. Stations in all formats do in fact try to produce this effect: the terms "beautiful music" or "easy listening," for instance, suppose a distinction between those types of music and music that is not beautiful, or that is difficult listening.

Listeners do not need to perceive every single segment of a radio broadcast as being better than on other stations, but the station should certainly give such an impression overall. Note in this respect the morning announcers who, to be amusing, broadcast a piece of music that does not correspond to the station's format. For instance, if it is a Contemporary Hits station, they might play something by the Andrews Sisters. In such a context, it is unlikely that they will play more than 10 seconds of the song. In addition, they will quite vehemently distance themselves from the piece by mocking it, or by reminding the listener that they would never play it with any degree of seriousness. The fact that innumerable songs are unacceptable for airplay indicates how rigid the formats can be for commercial stations in competitive markets.

A commercial station tries in fact to broadcast a type of music that will attract a particular market segment. This market segmentation is made easier by the fact that
listeners generally want to feel part of a group (although not necessarily part of a market segment): they want to feel that listening to a station keeps them in touch with their social group's interests and concerns. In keeping with this perspective, a particular station should give its listeners the impression that they are 1. behaving like people whom they consider to belong to the same social group and 2. acquiring information that they can impart as a way of showing their allegiance to this social group. Fornatale and Mills remark that such behavior begins at an early age:

As [children] grow into preadolescents, programming is designed to attract them, and radio listening helps confirm a group identity. It may be based on "hipness" (...). It may be based on ethnic pride. Or it may be based on civil responsibility or sophistication. 8

As for adolescents who are part of a subculture, a radio station quite often becomes an element of their style. As John Clarke indicates, members of a subculture distinguish themselves from the parent culture through bricolage: they take objects and ideas from their environment, and change or recombine them to suit their own needs and intentions. 9 For example, individuals can take an ordinary baseball cap, and


use it as part of an ensemble to show that they belong to a particular subculture; to emphasize their distinctiveness, they will often wear the cap in an unconventional way (with the price tag dangling, perhaps, or back-to-front).

Phil Cohen proposes four modes through which members of a subculture transform their immediate environment to express themselves: dress, music, ritual and argot. Radio stations evidently have the potential to affect their listeners' music and argot. In this way, for example, the youthful members of a subculture can mark their detachment from the parent culture or from other subcultures by professing a liking for a station that the latter do not like. Non-commercial stations like UBC Radio in Vancouver are particularly attractive to subcultures, but certain commercial stations can function in this capacity as well. A station does not in fact have to be obscure to attract members of a subculture (although obscurity can enhance its attractiveness): what really matters is how appropriate the station is in reflecting the subculture's point of view, and


11 For instance, as Fornatale and Mills observe, "Radio acceptance of 'hype', 'hassle', and 'rip-off' helped make them, for better or worse, common English." (Fornatale and Mills, p.xxi.)
how well the station fits into the subcultural ensemble.

John Clarke writes,

> The selection of the objects through which the style is generated is then a matter of the homologies between the group's self-consciousness and the possible meanings of the available objects.\(^{12}\)

In certain circumstances, members of subcultures can express their distinctiveness by listening to the radio in ways that are different from the mainstream's: they tune in to late-night and early-morning broadcasts, they listen for irony where the mainstream hears sincerity, and so on.

In general, there develops a complicity of sorts between the radio station and its listeners, a feeling that they are in on a secret that most other people do not share. A station may even cultivate in the listener the feeling that s/he is superior to other people who do not listen in; in this way, it is fulfilling a desire that individuals feel for a sense of superiority relative to other people.\(^{13}\) By demonstrating their familiarity with the top tunes of the week, teenagers enhance their appeal with regard to their peers, and distance themselves from all those people who


are, in their opinion, too dull to engage in such activities. Of course, a detached observer would say that preference for CFOX over some other station does not necessarily make you a better person. Music stations and their fans ignore such a view; indeed, commercial radio continually reinforces in its listeners the impression that they are special. It accomplishes this reinforcement in part by repeatedly emphasizing the good qualities of the music that it broadcasts, whether this music is heavy metal or Contemporary Christian.

There forms a symbiosis between the station and the listener that has positive repercussions for both participants, the former profiting (indirectly) from having a much-needed audience, and the latter deriving pleasure from being the audience. The symbiosis is effective so long as listeners accept the terms of the contract: that listening to the station keeps them in touch with the best music and talk available, and therefore makes them better than other people. Should listeners question their often tacit assumptions regarding the superiority of, say, rock over country, then they will also question their allegiance to one station over another.
2.3. The Redundancy of Commercial Radio.

Another means through which the commercial station succeeds in maintaining its appeal with regard to the listener is through redundancy. Individuals can only assimilate a certain measure of new information at once: too much information can be an overwhelming experience. As Umberto Eco writes, redundancy can help to circumvent such a situation:

There are a lot of circumstances in which the hearer already knows what the speaker is going to say. Interactional behavior is based on redundancy rules of this type, and if people had to listen to (or read, or look at) every expression they received, analyzing them item by item, communication would be a pretty tiring activity. As a matter of fact one is continuously anticipating expressions, filling up the empty spaces in a text with the missing units, forecasting a lot of words that the interlocutor may have said, could have said, will certainly say, or has never said.14

It is far easier then for information to be repeated under various guises, or for the same information to be repeated two or more times. In this respect, Nicolas Ruwet speaks of the importance of repetition in music.15 He states that music, to be enjoyable, must have redundancy built into it. In listening to music, the listener derives pleasure from


recognizing the recurrence of melodic and harmonic syntagms throughout a piece. Serial music or the like, according to Ruwet, can seem shapeless or formless, regardless of the richness of the harmonies and melodies used, because melodies are not repeated regularly within it.\textsuperscript{16}

Commercial radio certainly tries to respond to the listener's need for redundancy. For instance, the frequency with which a station announces its call letters ("CFOX, Vancouver's Home of Rock & Roll") testifies to its redundancy. Beyond the call letters, there is the music, which is at the heart of most commercial radio stations. Music is a prominent example of the inherent redundancy of the format. Commercial stations have a limited playlist. They will broadcast some especially popular songs several times in a single day. Regular listeners to a particular station will be able to identify most of the songs, because they will have heard them many times before. In any given week, the proportion of new songs that appear on a commercial station is much smaller than that of recurring songs.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17} CHRX-AM ("The Classic Rock Station"), in finding a niche for itself in the Vancouver marketplace, has come up with a novel response to this situation: it advertises that, unlike other stations, "You will never hear the same song twice on the same day." Still, CHRX is redundant in its own way, since it focusses exclusively on songs that rock radio
Although redundancy is a necessary part of any message, there can be too much of it. Sluckin et al. suggest that the likeability of music generally follows an inverted-U curve relative to familiarity: the more a previously unknown piece of music becomes familiar, the more it is liked; a piece eventually becomes too familiar, however, at which time likeability starts to decrease. It is indeed tiresome to hear a song more than fifty times in a month, no matter how enjoyable the song has been. Russell speaks of a "self-regulating mechanism," whereby a drop in a song's likeability leads to a decline in sales and chart position, motivating a programmer to remove the song from rotation. As a consequence, the playlist changes slowly through time. If one takes two excerpts, four months apart, from a commercial radio station, one notices that few of the same songs appear on both excerpts. New songs eventually replace older ones. These changes, however, occur very gradually. The listener can thus bask in the comforting familiarity of has played extensively at one time or another in the past three decades.


19 Russell, p.195.
the music, knowing that any new song will be introduced carefully. Indeed, with regard to new music, the announcers will usually indicate many times that they are playing a new song, thereby making it easier for the listener to assimilate the unfamiliar. Some announcers (on LG 73, for instance) will play two new songs in a row, and ask listeners to vote for their favorite, thus ensuring that the song that corresponds most closely to the existing (and favored) format according to voters is the one to eventually be adopted.

Radio programmers do not modify their playlists solely in order to offset listener boredom: they also feel pressure from record companies to provide exposure for new releases. In order to attain this goal, most of the major record companies have recourse to independent promoters. The job of such people is to encourage stations to add new titles to their playlists; as Martin Laba writes, their role is "to contrive promotional strategies for hit-making, aided of course, by massive financial sums and other persuasive vehicles." According to Fredric Dannen, support for a single from an "indie" demonstrates to radio programmers that a record label is serious about promoting that single and the artist who recorded it; if it is willing to pay

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large amounts of money to a promoter, then it probably cares strongly about the performer whom the indie is promoting.\textsuperscript{21} Programmers can add the single to their playlists with the confidence that the record company will also be promoting the song to other stations, and in other ways (through well-produced music videos, carefully-planned tours, and prominent in-store displays, for example).

The influence of independent promoters is not negligible. Realizing that the indies were a drain on their capital, the major record companies orchestrated a boycott of their services in 1986. Many indies consequently began working for smaller labels; in using their persuasive techniques on behalf of these labels, they helped to make hits of a few songs that might otherwise have faded into obscurity. Dannen cites as an example "I Wanna Be a Cowboy" by Boys Don't Cry (on Profile Records).\textsuperscript{22} Indies working for Virgin Records also helped such artists as T'Pau and Cutting Crew to get hit singles in early 1987.\textsuperscript{23} The majors were unable to maintain a common front against the promoters, and their boycott soon came to an end.


\textsuperscript{22} Dannen, p.291.

\textsuperscript{23} Dannen, p.292.
Still, the power of independent promoters is not unlimited. As Ken Barnes points out, a song has to fit into a station's format to get airplay:

In an age of research and audience testing, the "my sister-in-law made this record and we're gonna make it a hit if we have to pay off every radio station in the country" scenario is dead in the water. (...) Playing the record is not worth the risk of alienating a substantial segment of [the] audience (...).

Whether or not an independent promoter is involved, the process of choosing songs involves commercial stations in an interesting paradox: the music that they choose may be hard rock, loud and strident, with many rough edges, but the way in which individual songs are presented is very gentle and cautious.

Through its redundancy, a commercial radio station performs for its listeners what Roman Jakobson refers to as a phatic function. A "Phatic" refers to those messages that provide no new information for the receiver, but that serve the purpose of ensuring, for the sender, that the receiver is still receptive to the messages being conveyed. Phatic messages serve to ensure that the lines of communication are


still open. Pierre Guiraud writes that the conversation of two lovers performs a phatic function to a great extent: the two lovers converse even when they have no information to impart to each other, because they want to continue feeling a sense of solidarity or communion with each other. In such a context, the purpose of saying, for instance, "I love you" repeatedly serves less an informational goal than an associational one. In this way, the music that appears on the station can be viewed as performing a phatic function: a station does not broadcast an old standard that everyone has heard many times before with the objective of imparting new information to the audience; after all, you will not learn anything from hearing "Good Lovin'" for the thousandth time. The station broadcasts the song because it knows that few people will find the song objectionable (many will in fact be happy to hear the song again, for various reasons). Listeners, as a consequence, are likely to stay tuned. Such a song performs a phatic function insofar as it ensures that the listener will remain receptive to those messages whose information matters greatly to the sender, although it may not matter much to the receiver: the advertisements.

Guiraud, in this respect, points out that this need for solidarity or association is expressed especially strongly in cases of mass communication. He explains his viewpoint:

Cette communion entre les participants prend une grande importance dans les formes collectives de
Like the spectacle or the religious ceremony, commercial radio plays the role of making its listeners, however physically isolated they may be, feel a sense of solidarity with other people who are listening at the same time. Solitary listeners can acquire the feeling that they are part of a larger group.

Through repetition, and transtexualities, the commercial radio builds up a canon of hit songs that, like some secular, mediatized Bible, gives its participants a feeling of unity with other people. Radio listeners acquire the sense that, through their familiarity with oft-heard hits, they fit in with the vast, wide-ranging culture that

26 "This communion between participants acquires a great importance in collective forms of communication: spectacles, speeches, religious and political ceremonies, etc. The purpose of songs, dances, parades is to put the participants together, in step with each other, to the same beat, and their semic content is secondary. The military or political harangue contains little information, and no doubt is it necessary that it contain as little as possible, its objective being to assemble the participants around a leader, a common ideal." [My translation. Pierre Guiraud, La sémiologie (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971), p.19.]
is North America's. "Like a Prayer" and "Faith", among other songs, because they are so familiar through extensive radio airplay, become a part of our collective consciousness, linking us in the same way that religious songs and prayers linked people (including non-believers) forty years ago.

We can view the radio format as a balancing act, between playing tried-and-true standards to maintain listeners' interest without overtly challenging them, and adding new material to prevent them from becoming bored. Many radio stations combine the two approaches, by bringing in as new that which is old but starting to lose its familiarity. Two examples are the resurrection of UB40's "Red Red Wine" and Sheriff's "When I'm with You", two early '80s songs that enjoyed extensive airplay at the end of the '80s.27

3. Choosing and Describing CFOX-FM.

3.1. Format and Popularity.

The above observations on a station's need for redundancy suggest that there is a direct correlation between a station's popularity and its transtextual

27 With regard to these two songs and others, see David Handelman, "The Same Old Songs: Bands and Radio Programmers Look to Remakes for Sure-Fire Hits," Rolling Stone (January 26, 1989), p.11.
references. A station that wants to have a larger audience tries to be redundant. The station avoids repelling its listeners by eliminating music that does not fit into its musical paradigm: it generally plays familiar pieces. In keeping with this practice, the station is partial to new songs that have many transtextual relations, referring in some way to songs or artists already on a current or recent playlist. 28 A station will be effective in dominating its market if it can successfully add "new" music that is in some ways already familiar. It can use transtextual relations in this manner, to renew itself without alienating listeners.

The more intertwined the network of transtextual references is, the more likely it is that the station will succeed in becoming a point of convergence for the attention of listeners. A station in which songs appear to flow harmoniously one into the other, through affinities in sound and other transtextual relations, is likely to be able to

28 In this respect, the DJ on CFOX remarked that he had received some calls from listeners who were asking whether "So Alive", a song by Love & Rockets that had just been added to the playlist, was the latest from T. Rex. Although the song does sound very much like T. Rex, the question reveals a certain lack of historical perspective, given that Marc Bolan, the creative force behind T. Rex, had been dead for over twelve years. Still, CFOX does play T. Rex frequently, so the callers might have been misled into thinking that T. Rex was still active at the end of the 1980s. (CFOX-FM, Vancouver, 10:35 A.M., July 8, 1989.)
sustain a sizable audience through time. The more the station diverges from the specific format, the greater the probability that it will broadcast something that the listener does not like.

Some stations, especially non-commercial ones, do not have specific formats. In such cases, transtextual relations are relatively absent: one song has little bearing on the ones that precede or follow it, in the minds of listeners. It is more challenging to listen to such stations than to listen to formatted (or "codified") ones. CBUF-FM is a case in point. Most Vancouverites, were they to listen to this station, would not find many transtextual references in the programming, partly because they would be unfamiliar with it. CBUF-FM is the least popular station in Vancouver to a great extent because it is the least transtextual. It is also the least redundant. For one thing, it uses a code, the French language, that few Vancouverites know fluently. Thus, when they listen to CBUF-FM, Vancouverites are obliged to decipher the code before they can assimilate the message, no matter how simple the message is. Such an effort is frustrating.

It is not surprising of course that a francophone station should do poorly in an anglophone market. I have

29 It is worth pointing out that many non-commercial stations do have a format.
referred to CBUF-FM here because it is an extreme example of the idea that the less transtextual and redundant a radio station is, the less likely it is to be popular. In keeping with this perspective, I have decided to examine a station at the other end of the spectrum, the most listened-to music station in Greater Vancouver, because I consider that the more listeners there are for a given station, the more transtextual references that station will have. My reference for determining the most listened-to music station is the BBM report for Spring 1989.

3.2. Choosing CFOX-FM.

BBM, the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement, is an association of broadcasters, advertisers and advertising agencies that evaluates levels of listenership for radio and television in Canada. The survey for radio in Greater Vancouver upon which I have based the choice of a station was conducted during a three-week period, from April 10, 1989 to April 30, inclusively. For the survey, BBM chooses a random sample of respondents from the population of Vancouver, representative of its division into sex and age groups. BBM selects these people through telephone directories and other such listings, and contacts them by

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30 CFOX-FM is the third most listened-to station overall; the top two stations in Greater Vancouver are not music stations.
phone to ascertain their appropriateness for the survey, and to gather relevant information. BBM then posts diaries to the respondents, who write down their listening choices for each 15-minute block of time between 5AM and 1AM during a week-long period. There is a 50% response rate. Upon receiving the diaries, BBM compiles the responses, and divides the results according to an assortment of variables, such as radio station, sex, age, occupation, and so on.31

Interestingly, the top two positions in BBM's Spring 1989 survey of radio stations in Greater Vancouver were held by CKNW, a news/talk station, and CBC Radio's AM incarnation, CBU, which has a variety format, comprised of music and talk. These two stations' dominance of the ratings can be explained in part by the fact that they are virtually the sole examples of their type in Greater Vancouver. Indeed, since the demise of CJOR, CKNW has held a virtual monopoly on the talk format in Vancouver. Of the two other stations that most resemble it, one, CKO-FM, is all news, and the other, CBUF-FM, is in French. The latter two stations lag far behind in the ratings.

Another reason for CKNW and CBU's dominance of the ratings could be attributed to the fact that respondents,

for the one week that they have to keep a diary, change their listening patterns slightly, because their greater attention to the medium during that week makes them use it less as a secondary medium, and encourages them to listen to more spoken programming that maintains their attention. Another reason is that they may be motivated by a desire to impress the surveyors by their interests in topical matters.32

The remaining stations all mainly play music, much of which is rock, in one form or another. (There are two country stations and one easy-listening station.) Fans of music radio appreciate the humanizing presence of an announcer on the air, but they prefer that his/her role be functional: that s/he provide song titles and artists, and the time of day, but that s/he generally limit information of a more personal or anecdotal nature. Although many more people listen to music on the radio than to talk or news, their affinities are divided among a larger number of stations.

After CKNW and CBU, the next four stations are roughly equal in position, according to BBM. They are, in order of listenership by 1/4 hour, CFOX-FM, CKXW-AM, CKLG-AM (LG 73),

32 The potential drawbacks of audience surveys are reviewed in Head and Sterling, pp.398-400.
and CFMI-FM. Only a year before, the BBM ratings showed CFMI-FM to be the most listened-to music station, with CFOX-FM slightly behind LG 73 and CKXW. Such a turnaround indicates the competitive nature of the Vancouver market. There is indeed much competition between music stations in urban markets, as Robert Hilliard writes:

While some audiences remain loyal to particular formats over many years, the changing demographics result in constantly changing popularity of format types. Radio programming is anything but stable. [...] Radio program directors constantly must be on the watch for format trends and changes, and must be innovative in trying to hold or take the lead.

Hilliard's observations certainly apply to commercial radio in Greater Vancouver. There will no doubt be more fluctuations in the ratings as time goes on. CFOX, however, by virtue of its lead among music stations in the Spring 1989 BBM survey, is the station that I have chosen for my analysis.

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33 Following is the average quarter-hour listenership for Monday to Sunday inclusively, between 5AM and 1AM, based upon all respondents in all the survey areas: 1. CKNW-AM, 31 900 listeners; 2. CBU-AM, 30 500; 3. CFOX-FM, 20 400; 4. CKWX-AM, 19 200; 5. CKLG-AM, 13 700; 6. CFMI-FM, 13 300. (BBM Bureau of Measurements, p.5/1.)

34 BBM Bureau of Measurements, p.5/1.

35 Hilliard, pp.204-205.
3.3. Description of CFOX.

I will start by allowing the station to describe itself. The following passage is excerpted from CFOX's application to the CRTC for renewal of its broadcasting licence. This context partly explains the flamboyance of the style:

For almost twenty years, CFOX has played album-oriented rock music in a format designed to appeal to young urban adults. Back in the mid sixties, we were Canada's first AOR/PROGRESSIVE FM station. The spirit of contemporary rock and roll lives at CFOX, as we build on our long and proud heritage of exploring new musical forms, and extend our tradition of innovation, exploration, and even irreverence, both in what we play, and how we present it. Today, this means we draw on a three-decade musical universe, representing the thirty years of musical consciousness of a typical CFOX listener. Our audience was weaned on rock music; they have evolved with us from Buddy Holly to the Beatles to Fleetwood Mac to the Police.

Demographically speaking, most of the CFOX audience is 18-34, with a slight skew towards the younger end of this age spectrum.\[36\]

The Spring 1989 BBM measurements generally confirm CFOX's description of itself. One detail CFOX does not mention is that male listeners outnumber females, 64% to 36%. Also, 50% of the respondents claim to be heavy listeners. A majority (65%) have completed high school or technical education.

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school, although only 16% of CFOX's listeners have attended university. 73% work full time.37 CFOX is owned by Moffat Communications Limited, which also owns LG 73 in Vancouver, and a number of other radio and television stations and cable television systems, mostly in Western Canada, but also in Ontario, Florida and Texas.38 Their head office is in Winnipeg, as are many of their holdings. Moffat's net income for the 1988 fiscal year was $5,045,000, on gross revenues of $67,688,000.39

The CRTC has a positive influence on the station, encouraging a measure of diversity that might not be present if CFOX-FM were to operate strictly in response to the demands of the marketplace. Still, the CRTC's control is hardly stringent. On the last license-renewal decision in 1985, the CRTC accepted most of CFOX's requests, including a decrease in spoken word programming "from 25 hours 14 minutes to 12 hours 35 minutes per week".40 It declined CFOX's request, however, for a reduction in news programming to 2 hours per week, imposing a minimum of 3 hours. In

addition, regarding CFOX's weekly playlist, the CRTC recommended that CFOX operate at the high end (the 800 end) of its proposed playlist of "600 to 800" titles per week, reminding the station not to broadcast any single song more than 18 times in a week. In addition, CFOX must provide one hour of airtime a week for the community. The station actually devotes a full 80 minutes to its community access program, which is held every Tuesday through Friday, from 10:40 PM to 11 PM. CFOX calls it "Your Own Radio Show", and turns it over to one of its listeners, who generally provides more of the same: s/he announces and plays a personal selection of favorite songs, nearly all of which are familiar AOR staples.

In listening to CFOX, one notices many of the characteristics of a station with a strict format. There is a smooth flow to the music. If your attention, in dial switching, is caught by an individual song on "The Fox", then it is likely that you will enjoy listening to the station for the ensuing dozen or so songs. Nothing objectionable, or markedly unusual, interrupts the flow of familiar performers and tunes, most of which are harder rock. Everything appears to fit together. Anything novel is introduced within a framework of very familiar songs. Thus, a Steely Dan classic from the mid-70s will lead into the new release from Anderson-Bruford-Wakeman-Howe, the 1989
incarnation of the progressive-rock staple Yes. The entire program is geared towards ensuring that the listener will not be challenged, or provoked into reaching towards the receiver and switching channels.

The familiarity of the music can be reassuring for listeners. As Simon Frith observes, for 25-to-40-year olds ("the baby boomers grown up"\textsuperscript{41}), rock still retains the connotations of youthful rebelliousness and vitality that it originally had in their adolescence. Classic rock songs still have a strong nostalgia-value because of their power to evoke times that baby boomers, preoccupied by the concerns of adult life, are best able to relive through memory: "The aging rock audience," Frith writes, "already believes it has lost its hold on the rock secret."\textsuperscript{42} Classic songs bring back memories of a time when it still had a hold on the "rock secret", youthful values of freedom and individuality.

In keeping with this attitude, baby boomers who have been away from radio for a while may wonder whether they will still have the same knowledge of the music on the airwaves that they once had in the past. There is after all


\textsuperscript{42} Frith, "Picking Up the Pieces," p.90
the possibility that they have fallen out of step with the latest developments in contemporary music: they may no longer be able to identify (or identify with) the performers on the radio, presumably featuring strange new artists who appeal to younger people. How disillusioning for such potential listeners to consider that they may no longer be on the cutting edge of popular culture. Baby boomers will find reassurance upon tuning in to CFOX, as they come to the realization that the station, ignoring many of the changes in popular music that have occurred since 1975, gives the appearance of being frozen in time. This situation is not uncommon, as Frith's comments indicate:

What's most striking about the late 1980s music scene is the continuing popularity of rock dinosaurs. When the Grateful Dead, Fleetwood Mac, and Genesis dominate the charts, it's tradition that's being celebrated, not novelty, whatever the actual age of the fans.\textsuperscript{43}

In fact, as Frith indicates, it is much of the music particular to teens ("like heavy metal and hard core punk")\textsuperscript{44} that is on the fringes of the mainstream. According to Ken Barnes, "Research tells radio today that most people like familiar older music better than familiar-sounding new music."\textsuperscript{45} In this way, when the recognizable

\begin{itemize}
\item Frith, "Picking Up the Pieces," p.127.
\item Frith, "Picking Up the Pieces," p.127.
\item Barnes, p.45.
\end{itemize}
strains of Donovan's "Sunshine Superman" emerge from the radio's speakers, CFOX listeners are reassured in the knowledge that they are familiar with what "everyone else" is hearing. When "Sunshine Superman" is followed by April Wine's "Tonight is a Wonderful Time to Fall in Love," they are comforted by the thought that the best time for music may have been 10 or 20 years earlier. They may even consider that any effort to keep up with new music is unnecessary. Like the 18-to-24-year-olds who are also a part of CFOX's target audience, these baby boomers should feel at home listening to the station.

4. Conclusion.

Although the sounds that appear on CFOX are to a great extent the rough sounds of hard rock, the station is in a way an easy listening station, not because it features anything resembling Muzak, but because it is easy to listen to for its numerous listeners. As CFOX itself observes, today's music listeners were "weaned" on rock. As a consequence, the easiest style of music for these people to assimilate is rock, so a station that plays nothing but that kind of music all day is bound to garner a sizable audience for itself. CFOX is very effective in providing a sense of communion and pleasure for its listeners. It is less

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46 Moffat Communications Limited, CRTC Application Concerning an FM Broadcasting Transmitting Undertaking, p. 6.
successful, however, in challenging and inspiring these people. My general considerations on format and structure, and on CFOX as a whole, shall now lead, in the next sections, to an examination of a specific excerpt drawn from this station.
Chapter Six. Conventions and Innovations in the Songs on CFOX-FM.

1. Introduction.

Dave Watson makes the following remarks on the conservatism of commercial radio:

To young people raised on [the classic rock] radio format (...), there were only a couple of dozen bands in the '60s, and each only recorded a handful of songs. The Zombies had three singles, the Animals had four or five. Procol Harum wrote two songs, while the Rolling Stones cranked out a double-album's worth of tunes.¹

CFOX is not, strictly speaking, a classic rock station, but it often plays a limited assortment of different songs from the past, all of which have been engraved into listeners' minds through ceaseless repetition. This music is hardly representative of the various styles of popular music in the '60s. Repeating the same tunes over and over is one of the ways in which CFOX-FM makes its broadcast attractive to a wide audience. In this chapter, I use a six-hour excerpt from the station to describe some of the other ways through which it attains this goal. The first part deals with the criteria of selection for the excerpt, followed by a description of its structure. There ensues a transtextual typology of the songs in the excerpt. The chapter concludes

with some remarks on conventions and innovations in rock on commercial radio.

2. Choice and Structure of Excerpt from CFOX-FM.

For the ensuing sections, I will use an excerpt drawn from CFOX-FM in order to illustrate some of the points that I want to make about transtextuality in rock on the radio. In addition to a qualitative analysis, I have done a quantitative analysis of the 63 songs in the excerpt. The results of this approach, which are listed in Appendix II, will help us to better understand the extent of transtextual relations in the excerpt. These results, and the methods used to reach them, are related to content analysis. I have refrained, however, from calling my quantitative approach a "content analysis," and from using terms such as "random sample," which are proper to content analysis.

In coming to my quantitative results, I did take many of the steps that a content analyst would: I established sampling categories, tested them, and then applied them to the six-hour excerpt from CFOX. I can also say that I selected this particular excerpt from CFOX-FM at random, in the sense that I did not choose the broadcasts done on July

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31 and August 2, 1989 over others that might have proven less transtextual. In other ways, however, I strayed from an orthodox approach. For instance, the excerpt was not "chosen by recognized randomizing procedures", to quote Leiss, Kline and Jhally,\(^3\) nor did I use sampling tables to determine the excerpt's length and distribution through time.

Nevertheless, the quantitative approach that I used does give an indication of what a content analysis could accomplish. It would be possible to use the categories that I have established as a starting point for an in-depth content analysis, applying them to a genuine random sample. In this way, a rigorous approach could provide more comprehensive figures on how stringent a station's format is (compared to formats on other stations for instance). My purpose, however, is more to examine the qualities in the sample as opposed to quantities; in this regard, the six-hour excerpt, and the quantitative results that I have obtained, are sufficient.

2.1. Excerpt from CFOX-FM as "Supertext".

It is worth considering the excerpt from CFOX in light of certain observations that Nick Browne makes about the

\(^3\) Leiss, Kline, and Jhally, *Social Communication in Advertising*, p.170.
"supertext". A supertext is a text consisting of a diversity of elements or units (songs, talk, ads, and so on, in the case of radio) which is considered as a whole. Writing about television, Browne emphasizes that people who study commercial programming should take all of the elements of the supertext into account, since that is what audiences do when they watch television. Audiences seldom watch a particular program as a distinctive unit, because the flow of the program is interrupted by ads, and by their own channel switching. Besides, he points out, a TV show is not made to be independent from ads: the ads actually help to determine its structure. Indeed, a program frequently builds up to a small climax just before each commercial break. This build-up makes it more likely that audiences will sit through the ads to find out what happens next in the program.

Such a situation reflects the "business of television", which is, as Browne states, "showing ads to audiences". In this way, the supertext has evolved to ensure that ads and audiences will be matched effectively. After all, advertisers do not merely want to reach a big audience: they

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5 Browne, p.587.
want to reach people who are interested in their products, and who have the money to buy them. To help advertisers attain this goal, television supertexts have predictable patterns, with particular programs appearing at specific times of the day and week. Soap operas, for example, dominate daytime programming because they are effective in attracting homemakers, the most desirable economic group for advertisers among people who stay at home during the day. Companies that produce household products such as fabric softeners and floor waxes know that they will reach an appropriate audience when they advertise during soaps. "In general," Browne writes, "though there are changes from year to year, program positions through the day and across the week have been codified and stabilized." This stability makes it easier for advertisers to reach the right audience for its products on a regular basis.

Like television, commercial radio is in the business of selling audiences to advertisers. A station should be able to ensure its advertisers that it is attracting the right kinds of people (people within a certain age bracket who make a certain amount of money). As a consequence, when it schedules the various units that make up the supertext, it has to be responsive to the day-to-day practices of its

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Browne, p.588.
primary audience. The station has to develop its supertext in a predictable way, ensuring that advertisers and the audience know exactly what to expect at any time during the week. My examination of an excerpt from CFOX will demonstrate that Browne's remarks on the television supertext are readily applicable to commercial radio.

An initial assumption that I can make in light of Browne's observations is that the commercial radio supertext is homogeneous: the general structure and format of the programming on any given day will be much like it is on another. By virtue of this homogeneity, I believe that the observations made with regard to the particular excerpt are representative of other weekday mornings on CFOX-FM, and more broadly, on other commercial stations.

2.2. Choice of Excerpt.

The BBM report lists average levels of listenership to CFOX-FM for each quarter hour between 5 AM and 1 AM on weekdays. The levels reflect the routines of the 9-to-5 working day, with listening to radio at its highest when people are preparing for and getting to work (6:30 to 8:30 AM), breaking for lunch (noon to 1 PM), and leaving work (5 PM).
The number of listeners increases gradually throughout the early morning, surging almost to 30,000 at 6:30 AM. The number of listeners remains above 30,000 until 8:30 AM, reaching peaks at 7 and 8 AM. After 8:30, listenership starts to fall off slightly. The figures confirm Paul Audley's observation that peak listening hours for radio are weekdays between 7:30 and 8:30.\(^8\) After 8:30, listenership slowly declines throughout the morning, reaching a low point at 11 AM before increasing again. Listenership is high at noon, and stays so until 1 PM. This is CFOX's Electric Lunch, in which the station plays music from the 1960's. There is yet another increase in listenership, though not quite so high as the morning surge, between 3 and 5:30 PM (peaking at 5), after which levels fall off considerably for the evening, as people presumably turn to their television sets for entertainment and information.

On the principle (stated in the previous chapter) that transtextuality is high when listenership is high, I chose to analyze the peak hours, between 6:30 AM and 9:30 AM. My excerpt stretches one hour beyond 8:30 AM, the point at which levels start to fall off slightly, to ensure that I have a sufficiently broad supertext to analyze. Besides, at 9:00 AM, there is a twenty-five minute music sweep that

\(^8\) Audley, p.192.
increases the number of songs in my excerpt. Furthermore, I took the excerpt on two weekday mornings rather than only one, so that I could compare the structure on the two days. The two mornings were Monday, July 31, 1989 and Wednesday, August 2, 1989, each time from 6:30 AM to 9:30 AM. (See Appendix I for a list of programming units during these times.)

I will use the excerpt as the primary basis for my ensuing comments and observations in order to give my analysis a sense of order and cohesiveness. I should also note that, in addition to repeated listenings of the six-hour excerpt, my comments are informed by a broad knowledge of CFOX's programming, the result of tuning in to the station as a matter of habit at various hours of the day and the week during a long period of time. I will begin with a few remarks on CFOX's structure.

2.3. Structure of Excerpt.

Radio stations, as we have seen, structure the units that make up their programming carefully, so that the broadcast appears organized and professional. CFOX is no exception to this practice. The station conveys to its listeners the impression that some care has gone into determining the sequence of songs, ads and talk. These listeners, however, probably do not consciously notice the
extent to which these units are sequenced. An examination of my excerpt reveals that the patterns are highly regular.

Some items appear every half hour. The Traffic Check, introduced by a few seconds of the Beatles' "Drive My Car" (a "sting", in radio parlance), appears at 10 past the hour, and again at 40 past. News, weather and sports, in that order, appear every half hour as well, at 25 past and 55 past. The newsreader usually covers four events or incidents in the 1:30 to 2 minutes allotted to news. The last item before the weather is always a light bit of "soft news" intended to amuse the listener. In addition to its structure, what one remarks about the news is its brevity: the news is not a priority on CFOX. The station caters to music fans, not news fans. Arthur Asa Berger's comments on radio news in general apply to CFOX's news:

This 'news' is all superficially interesting and satisfies our curiosity, but it doesn't help us to orient ourselves because nothing fits together with anything else. (...) What we get may be fascinating but it is not particularly edifying or useful to the listener who wishes to uncover the meaning of events.  

The news on CFOX has many of the characteristics that Andrew Crisell ascribes to "popular" radio news, as opposed to "quality news": it is brief, tends towards sensational items, emphasizes "human interest" stories, and intermixes...  

serious and light news.\textsuperscript{10} CFOX shrewdly ends its news coverage just before most other stations begin theirs, at the top of the hour and at half past. When news starts on other stations, the station is playing music. This procedure encourages people who would rather listen to music than to news to switch away from rival stations to CFOX. These people are likely to continue listening to CFOX until the next installment of news, weather and sports, appears on the station 25 minutes later. Other items appear just as regularly as the news, although they do so less frequently. On weekday mornings, the announcer adheres to the following schedule, give or take one or two minutes:

- 6:50 AM Birthday Break (birthday announcements);
- 8:10 AM Kokanee Joke of the Day;
- 8:15 AM Fox Hunt '89 (contest);
- 8:50 AM Molson Canadian Calendar of Events;
- 9:00 AM Nine O'Clock Super Set.

In this way, people can set their alarms for 6:50 AM, and awaken to learn who was born on that day. Or people who drive to work at 8:10 every morning can expect to have a joke to tell their colleagues during the coffee break.

Also, CFOX broadcasts its programming units in a very regular order. Generally, this order consists of a continual repetition of music / announcer talk / advertising. The pattern can be nuanced a little more if we

\textsuperscript{10} Crisell, pp.92-99.
divide the excerpt into half-hour segments. Between 6:30 AM and 9 AM, each half hour consists of the following sequence: music / announcer talk / traffic check / ads / music / announcer talk / ads / news. The sequence is interrupted at 9 AM by the Super Set. CFOX plays more music during this half hour (between 9 AM and 9:30 AM) than during any other half hour in the excerpt. The twenty-five minutes of continuous music, in addition to attracting listeners, enables the mid-day announcer to replace the morning announcer peaceably. Also, as would be expected, the music is not played at the expense of advertisements: there are larger than usual clusters of ads just before and after the sweep. Rather, the songs are played at the expense of the Traffic Check and the News, which do not appear during this half hour. The songs themselves, outside of music sweeps, are clustered into groups of two or three. Each cluster usually combines a 1989 song with one or two older songs, mostly from earlier in the 1980s and from the 1970s. The super sets at 9 o'clock consist exclusively of Classic Rock, with an emphasis on the 1970s.

These observations demonstrate that the morning show on CFOX has a rigorous structure. The format of the station is similarly rigorous: the station essentially broadcasts rock, even in the early morning. As a consequence, all of the songs in my excerpt share similar characteristics. In the
ensuing section, I describe the music on CFOX and its characteristics.

3. Format of Excerpt from CFOX-FM.

CFOX proclaims in some of its promotional announcements that it is "the only place to hear rock & roll in the morning." The station is indeed unique in playing such a style of music so soon in the day. Radio stations do not generally play hard rock and heavy metal in the early morning. Those styles of music connote the night, and to play them before 9:30 AM is to dissociate them from their habitual, nocturnal context. The value of rock is lessened by being broadcast so early, just as it is when one hears it on an ad. The consequence of such exposure to rock is that, when people hear it in a pleasant nighttime context such as a bar or club, they can be reminded of their groggy selves in the early morning, facing a long day at work: such a reminder can detract from nighttime pleasures. Besides, one's condition in the early morning is not conducive to hard-edged music. A person who has just awakened presumably wants a gentler transition from a sleeping to a waking state than the music of Led Zeppelin. (The group's "The Ocean" was played at 6:31 AM on Wednesday in the excerpt.) Slow songs on the CFOX morning show are the exception, not the rule, and even then, they feature some harsh sounds in the
appropriate style. There are some people who do seem to prefer a musical jolt along with their morning coffee: CFOX is for them.

In all, there were 63 songs in my excerpt, 32 on Monday and 31 on Wednesday. Of these songs, 6 qualify as Canadian content -- 9.52%, inferior to CRTC regulations, which require 20% Canadian content for music in CFOX's case.11 One should note that CFOX-FM compensates for the lack at other times, when the level of listenership is not quite so high. There is some repetition: six songs were played twice, once on Monday and once on Wednesday. In addition, six performers, or closely related performers, appeared with two different songs each. Three performers appeared with three different songs each:

1. "Instant Karma", John Lennon; "Baby, You're a Rich Man", the Beatles; "You Never Give Me Your Money", the Beatles;

2. "The Doctor", "You Can't Stop It", "Need a Little Taste of Love", the Doobie Brothers;


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11 Canadian content regulations for FM radio vary according to format. The CRTC defines CFOX-FM as a Group II station, requiring that at least 70% of its music selections be "rock, hard rock and harder popular music". At least 20% of the music on Group II stations must be Canadian. [Gerald L. Caplan and Florian Sauvageau, Report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1986), pp.124-125.] For a review of Canadian content on radio, see also Audley, pp.183-212, passim.
The Beatles and Led Zeppelin are staples of AOR rock. Their presence is not especially surprising. As for the Doobie Brothers, they were enjoying a strong resurgence in popularity when the excerpt was taken. Still, the attention that CFOX accords to these three old groups is a good indication of the conservatism of the programming. After all, these performers were all familiar to music fans as early as 1972. They may be even more identifiable today: as a consequence, the sound of their music is likely to encourage a dial switcher to stop and listen.

The programming of new songs is also cautious. *Billboard* magazine includes "Album Rock Tracks", which is a weekly list of the most played songs on AOR radio across the United States. Stations, as Ken Barnes indicates, "Find the format charts handy as guides to the records that work at other stations in the same format." It appears that CFOX uses this chart to choose songs for airplay: seven of the Top Ten songs for the week ending July 29, 1989 are in the excerpt, five of these twice, on both Monday and

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12 Barnes, p.41.

13 It is worth noting that many other factors come into play with regard to song selection. Stations, for instance, are responsive to local sales, basing some of their choices on how well records are selling in local markets. Eric W. Rothenbuhler deals with the subject of song selection in detail: see Rothenbuhler, pp.85-92. See also chapter 4.
Wednesday. Curiously, among the next forty songs on this chart (which lists the Top Fifty), only song number eleven is also on the excerpt (again twice). Many of the other songs on the chart have been broadcast on CFOX at other times, however. CFOX apparently schedules all of the most popular songs of the week for radio prime time.

3.1. Determining the Format on CFOX-FM.

My aim in this section is to discuss CFOX's format by uncovering similarities between the songs in my excerpt. I want to describe the architextual relations of these songs (to use Gérard Genette's terminology), to show in what essential ways they all relate to the same basic genre, rock. Jonathan Culler notes that this application of what Genette calls transtextuality is a potentially enlightening one with regard to a text. He writes,

Focusing on the conditions of meaning in literature, [such an approach] relates a literary work to a whole series of other works, treating them not as sources but as constituents of a genre, for example, whose conventions one attempts to infer.  


15 See chapter 2.

16 Although Culler is referring to literature, his suggestion is applicable to other texts, including songs. Jonathan Culler, "Presupposition and Intertextuality," The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 117.
I wish in this way to "infer" conventions. Conventions, as John Cawelti describes them, are "elements which are known to both the creator and his audience beforehand." Cawelti opposes them to innovations, "which are uniquely imagined by the creator." The approach that I will take here thus involves determining the conventions that the songs use: I want to establish a typology of the songs in my excerpt.

I do not intend, however, to describe all of the conventions underlying these songs: such a formidable task is not necessary in order for me to attain my objective. I merely wish to show some basic characteristics that the songs share, relating to song structure, choice of instruments, vocals, and subject matter. The following analysis will thus focus on some of the more salient similarities between the songs. It will allow me to describe CFOX's format, and remark upon its limitations.

3.2. Preliminary Remarks on the Format of CFOX-FM.

My discussion of typology is inspired by the results of a quantitative analysis conducted on my six-hour excerpt. (See Appendix II for the results of this analysis.) I feel


18 Cawelti, p.54.
that my excerpt is large enough for me to uncover many of the conventions that songs on CFOX share with each other. In some cases, regarding for instance the presence of drums or bass, the results are so conclusive, surpassing 95% of all cases, that the analysis of a larger excerpt would be irrelevant.

In applying transtextuality to such a body of work, it is important to keep in mind that, although various elements of a song can be temporarily isolated for analytical purposes, these elements should be viewed as being part of a system or structure. No single element from the ones examined in the content analysis is sufficient to enable a song to become part of a playlist. In this way, a song can have, for instance, an electric guitar solo in the bridge whose tonality, rhythm and intensity would seemingly make it an obvious choice for inclusion within CFOX's format. If, however, the beat is too mechanical and prominent, and the words are about dancing, the likelihood of the song's being included on CFOX's playlist is remote.

The producer's important role in the creative process today is partially a consequence of the stringency of radio formats. Much of his or her task in producing a record involves achieving the right sound: a sound that programmers
will deem appropriate for their formats.\(^\text{19}\) Antoine Hennion describes producers as people who mediate between the performer and the audience.\(^\text{20}\) In doing so, producers are not just \textit{producing} a song: they are also \textit{consuming} it, listening to it with "the ear of the public".\(^\text{21}\) By always keeping the target audience in mind during production, producers hope that they can give the music a sound that will please the audience (within which we can include radio programmers).

\textbf{3.3. Song Structure and Instrumentation.}

The rock songs on the CFOX-FM excerpt are like the programming in that they too have a clear structure, consisting of an alternation of verses and choruses, with a bridge or solo in the middle, and a fadeout at the end. Some songs stray from this basic structure. As a consequence, they can sound slightly incongruous or incomplete. In my excerpt, for instance, Bruce

\(^{19}\) Certainly the producer is only one of many people involved in the making of a hit record. Many others are also responsible, from the A&R person who originally signs an act to the radio programmer who adds a song to the playlist. See the section on "The Product Image" (Ryan and Peterson) in chapter 4.


\(^{21}\) Hennion, p.186.
Springsteen's "Pink Cadillac" lacks a bridge: there is no break from the alternation of verses and choruses in the song. Rock fans come to expect a bridge at a certain point; that Springsteen's record does not provide one may strike them as unusual. In other songs, the general sequence is respected more often than not, however, to the point that it becomes second nature to the fans: they can normally anticipate when the bridge or the solo is going to occur.

A song that alternates between verse and chorus without interruption can sound repetitive. A bridge helps to prevent a song from sounding this way. It is a point at which some writers introduce a third vocal melody, in addition to verse and chorus. The bluesy ballad "Angel Eyes", by the Jeff Healey Band, is a good example, having the following structure: verse/chorus/verse/chorus/sung bridge/verse/chorus/fadeout. Writers of ballads, in the Tin Pan Alley tradition, usually include a sung bridge in their songs. In rock, and on CFOX, however, there is more frequently an instrumental solo in the middle, rather than a third vocal melody: forty-eight of the sixty-three songs include such solos, many of which feature an electric guitar. This figure can be compared to the twenty songs that have a sung bridge. Some songs have both a bridge and a solo.
The electric guitar is featured prominently on these instrumental solos, which usually occur in the middle of the song, and sometimes at the end as well. The solo really is that: a part of the song in which one musician displays his or her virtuosity while the other instrumentalists remain in the background. Jethro Tull's "Bungle in the Jungle" shows that an instrumental break need not be a solo, but can include several instruments playing in harmony. Still, solos are an important feature of rock, drawing the spotlight away from the singer (for a moment at least). They add a few guitarists and keyboard players to the pantheon of vocalists who are featured so admiringly in rock fanzines. It is after all more difficult for fans to adore a musician whose music remains in the background. Thus, in a group such as Van Halen, the lead singer and the guitarist attract the most attention, while the bassist and the drummer remain in the background.

There is, as can be expected, much homogeneity in the choice of instruments present in the song. All of the songs have vocals. Virtually all of the songs include drums and bass. Nearly all of them also feature the electric guitar as lead instrument, frequently accompanied by a second (and occasionally a third) electric guitar or an acoustic one. Keyboards and pianos are commonplace as well, and ten of the songs have a brass section. Not many performers experiment
with other instruments to any extent. John Cougar Mellencamp's two songs both feature a fiddle and an accordion. Jethro Tull has its ubiquitous flute. David Bowie's "Blue Jean" includes a xylophone. Beyond these exceptions, and a handful of others, few performers take advantage of the wide assortment of existing instruments, preferring to create the format-ready sounds provided by the electric guitar and its ancillary musical instruments.

3.4. Vocals.

The vocals are one of the most prominent features of a rock song. Indeed, the song is usually organized around them: such terms as verse and chorus, which are used to describe a song's structure, are based upon the vocals. The voice is usually what gives the song a certain measure of distinctiveness and personality. It is true that musicians also give their instruments a personal sound: Eddie Van Halen, for instance, has a recognizable (and often-imitated) guitar style. Nothing, however, is so directly an expression of individuality as the voice, for all other sounds that a musician makes are mediated through musical instruments. A song is thus usually identified through the singer's name: "Rod Stewart" indicates the singer of "Lost in You", not the guitarist or the drummer.
In the case of CFOX, and of AOR radio in general, white male singers dominate. Many of these vocalists (Phil Collins, Roger Daltrey, Robert Plant and Steve Winwood, for instance) sing in a similar way. Thanks to modern technology, they could sing as softly as they wish. They could even whisper their songs. All of them, however, project their voices. They sing strongly, sometimes almost screaming, as a way of imitating or overcoming the sound of the other instruments. Their vocals are high-pitched, almost strained. (In Plant's case, they are strained.) Their voices often sound rough and weathered, connoting both a surfeit of emotion and a rugged lifestyle. Rock is a direct mode of communication whose often intense emotions are best translated through such a vocal style.

Only four records in my excerpt feature lead singers who are not white males. There are only two black singers, both of whom do their songs with white performers: Tina Turner with a white Vancouverite made-good and his band, and Roland Gift with two white ex-members of the English Beat who recruited him to sing a hybrid of English rock and rhythm & blues. This poor representation of blacks is unfortunate. After all, rock has borrowed extensively

22 "It's Only Love", Bryan Adams and Tina Turner; "Good Thing", Fine Young Cannibals; "Seven Wonders", Fleetwood Mac, and "Try (Just a Little Bit Harder)", Janis Joplin.
from black musical traditions. It is possible to view CFOX's oversight as yet another example of the lack of recognition that black musicians have faced throughout rock's history.

At the same time, Charlie Gillett suggests that the absence of blacks from rock is not entirely a result of restrictive practices on the part of white programmers and consumers. He notes for instance that *Billboard* magazine stopped compiling a separate chart for black hits in December 1963, when the musical tastes of blacks and whites began to coincide. The situation, however, "was not a stable one", according to Gillett:

> Excitement and emotion [in 1964] (...) were generally preferred in the white market in the forms offered by British interpretations of rhythm and blues. (...) But the black record buyers did not need second editions of songs they already had, or had rejected when performed by black singers, and they were not interested in the songs composed by British singers using the techniques of rhythm and blues.

Gillett writes that black music evolved at this point as a way for blacks to reaffirm their cultural distinctiveness from mainstream popular music: they started creating music


24 Gillett, p.233.

25 Gillett, p.233.
that reflected their values and interests. The implication of this assertion is that the music was only tangentially expressive of white values and interests. As a consequence of this divergence, Billboard soon resumed its compilation of a "black" chart. In this respect, a possible explanation for blacks' underrepresentation in the CFOX excerpt is that much black music is expressive of a lifestyle that is distant from white people's.

The problem with such an explanation, that blacks have their own culture, is that whites can use it as an excuse to ignore their contributions to popular music. Such a stance on the part of whites creates obstacles in what Paul Gilroy calls "the struggle to have blacks perceived as agents with cognitive capacity, and historicity, even an intellectual history -- attributes that modern racism has denied us." 26 Furthermore, as Steve Perry observes, the separation of black music from white denies blacks access to a wider market, limiting their influence and their capacity to get fair pay for their efforts. 27

Women too are underrepresented in the excerpt from CFOX. Part of this underrepresentation has to do with the


fact that the music business is male-dominated, and a woman who wishes to succeed must overcome the prejudices of men, their desire for control, and the possibility of harassment. The three females who are in the excerpt all have vocal styles that are characteristic of their male counterparts: their voices are rough and earthy. The sounds of the voices are indices of rugged lifestyles on the margins of society. In the cases of Janis Joplin and Tina Turner, the indices relate to genuinely trying times.

3.5. Subject.

Many of the songs in my excerpt deal with relationships between men and women. On the whole, they reflect a male point of view, a consequence of the fact that most of the songs are sung by men. What Simon Frith remarks about live performances also applies to subject matter; he writes:

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28 In this respect, Alan Wells' content analysis of American album and singles' charts between 1954 and 1984 leads him to observe that "women are greatly underrepresented in popular music." He adds that, "In the last thirty years the music industry has become more concentrated and, coupled with the sales downturn of the last few years, perhaps women have experienced added obstacles to entry in the market." (Alan Wells, "Women in Popular Music: Changing Fortunes from 1955 to 1984", Popular Music and Society, 10, no. 4 (1986), pp. 77, 83.

29 The issue of women in rock is of course highly significant. It is however tangential to my purposes in this chapter. For more on the topic, see Susan McClary, Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 220 pages.
As a man, I've always taken it for granted that rock performances address male desires, reflect male fantasies in their connections of music and dance and sexuality. The first time I saw a women's band perform for women I was made physically uneasy by the sense of exclusion, became suddenly aware how popular music works as a social event. Its cultural (and commercial) purpose is to put together an audience, to construct a sense of 'us' and 'them'.

Almost half of the songs in my excerpt feature a male singer addressing a fictitious female character, and telling her 1. how sexy and attractive she is to him; 2. how much he loves her and the relationship; or 3. how preoccupied he is about a potential or realized separation between him and her.

Many of the other themes of the songs in my survey are also common to rock: eight of them are about escape (with or without the beloved female). Another eight songs deal with creating a better world, either in general, or for oneself. The two other themes that should be noted, music


31 Roland Barthes, writing in 1977, remarks: "(Historical reversal: it is no longer the sexual which is indecent, it is the sentimental---censured in the name of what is finally only another morality.)" Roland Barthes, A Lover's Discourse: Fragments, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).
and money, are also conventional ones in rock.\(^3^2\) (The excerpt, also, was divided fairly evenly between pleasure and displeasure: thirty-four singers conveyed the impression of being pleased or happy, twenty-four appeared displeased or unhappy. It is hard to draw any conclusions from such a division, except to observe that the cumulative effect of the songs is neither unusually negative nor positive.)

On the whole, my survey reveals the format of CFOX, at least during the morning hours, to be stringent, offering a limited spectrum of musical styles. In the typical song, a white male sings about a female. He is backed by drums, bass, electric and rhythm guitars, and keyboards. The song alternates between verses and chorus with an electric guitar solo in the middle and a fadeout at the end.


Although I believe that CFOX could benefit its listeners by being more adventurous in its choice of songs, I do not wish to imply that transtextual references between songs are something to be avoided. In this section, I will show, firstly, that all works of art are at least partly conventional, and secondly, that these conventions can play

\(^{3^2}\) One song, Men at Work's "Who Can It Be Now?", did not fit into the above categories. It was listed separately as a song about paranoia.
a positive role for music listeners. There is a place for
convention in popular music, and on commercial radio.

The Romantic notion of an independent creator who can
express him/herself without constraints is unrealistic. It
is an ideal that cannot be attained. All artists, at any
period, are limited in what they can accomplish: they create
in response to the context in which they live; their
creativity is determined by the socio-historical conditions
in which they are working. "Pure originality", certainly in
popular culture, but also in so-called high culture, is a
fiction. Certain rules are always observed.

Ferdinand de Saussure divides language into two
components, "langue" (or "language-system") and "parole" (or
"speech"). 33 "Langue" is the social component of language.
It refers to the rules that we have to learn in order to
speak a language. "Parole" is the individual component of
language. It refers to the personal uses that we make of
the "langue". Except for analytical purposes, "parole" is
inseparable from "langue". The innovations that we are
capable of achieving as individuals depend upon our ability
to use the appropriate conventions, the linguistic codes
that we share with other people. It is only in this way

33 Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General
Linguistics, 3rd ed., eds. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye
and Albert Riedlinger, trans. and annot. Roy Harris (London:
that we can communicate our ideas to other people. All innovations in language are thus founded upon conventions.

Musical innovations too are based upon prior conventions. After all, as Nicolas Ruwet observes, music is a language, where the individual singer or musician must temper his individuality through the observance of codes.\textsuperscript{34} As a sign of music's status as a language, Ruwet notes that, of the myriad sounds that can be discerned by humanity, only a few are actually used in music. Ruwet writes that this limitation is actually an advantage. He compares music to a young child's soundmaking, which is extremely varied, including a far greater range of sounds than adults make when they speak French or English.\textsuperscript{35} The problem is that a child's noises, for all their diversity, observe no code that would enable them to convey meaning. Music distinguishes itself from noise by its observance of codes analogous to linguistic ones. As Jacques Attali notes, music is an organized noise.\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, the musician who haphazardly selects assorted sounds and calls them "music" will succeed only in alienating his or her audience.

\textsuperscript{34} Ruwet, \textit{Langage, musique, poésie}, p.25.
\textsuperscript{35} Ruwet, p.26.
\textsuperscript{36} Attali, p.4.
It would be helpful, for the sake of clarity, to state that certain aspects of music are always conventional, whereas others are always innovative. Music, however, unlike language, does not lend itself well to clearcut distinctions between "langue" and "parole", because no single element, not even rhythm or melody, can be isolated as being indispensable. This characteristic also applies to musical genres (or architexts), such as country or rock. One might suppose, for example, that drums are a necessary component of rock. Such a supposition, however, would be false. My excerpt, after all, includes a rock song with no drums: there is only some sparse percussion during part of the chorus in the Who's "Music Must Change". Songs, to be perceived as belonging to a genre, must observe many of the genre's conventions. They do not have to observe all of its conventions, however: the creators can decide upon the conventions that they will observe, and those that they will not. In this way, a song may have no drums, but if it is still to be considered as rock, it should have some other characteristics that are typical of the genre, be they an electric guitar or strained, high-pitched vocals. "Music Must Change" has such elements.

John Cawelti remarks that works of art cannot be completely innovative, otherwise they would be incomprehensible to the listener. They cannot be completely
conventional either, otherwise they become plagiarisms. All works of art fall somewhere in between these two extremes. In popular music, some performers are much more conventional than innovative. In my excerpt, for instance, there is Winger, whose music is a hybrid of Van Halen and Bon Jovi. Other performers are much more innovative than conventional. Nick Cave, for instance, uses many of the same musical instruments as rock groups do, but his pieces are too dissonant and unstructured to ever appear on CFOX-FM. Musicians at either extreme of the spectrum are unlikely to sustain any measure of commercial success: Winger will never last beyond their first couple of albums unless they develop a voice of their own, and Nick Cave will never have more than a small cult following unless he writes songs with verses and choruses. Musicians who seek some measure of public acceptance have to establish a balance between convention and innovation. Such a balance can be hard to achieve, as Greil Marcus has indicated:

[The artist] can move on, and perhaps cut himself off from his audience; if he does, his work will lose all the vitality and strength it had when he knew it mattered to other people. Or the artist can accept the audience's image of himself, pretend that his audience is his shadowy ideal, and lose himself in his audience. Then he will

37 Cawelti, pp. 54-55.
only be able to confirm; he will never be able to create.  

An artist who is too conventional will strike listeners as being boring or derivative. An artist who is too innovative will strike them as being an oddity with no place in contemporary musical canons.

On a social scale, as Cawelti remarks, both innovation and convention are important. Innovation is a necessary response to changes in a society, indicating a society's openness to new ideas and influences. It is a sign that the culture is alive, and able to adapt to (and perhaps even encourage) social change. As for conventions, they are what allow for a distinct culture to exist. They give cohesion and stability to a society. Cawelti remarks that social groups in earlier times were smaller and more homogeneous than they are today. Games, folktales and religion were highly ritualized, comprising a large proportion of repetition. This repetition provided the groups with a comforting sense of unity and continuity. Today, it is popular culture that enables our vast heterogeneous society to have something in common, something to bond it together. Conventional elements subsist in all of the popular arts as

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39 Cawelti, pp.55-56.
a way of providing society with a shared cultural language that enables people from across North America to feel that they have something in common with each other.

The predictable patterns that are apparent in forms of popular culture ranging from television sit-coms to baseball games help to create a sense of unity and continuity in modern-day society. Musical genres play a similar role: the conventions of rock are clear and broad enough that they can reach (and move) an otherwise heterogeneous population.

5. Conclusion.

Cawelti's position is clear: for a work of art to be recognized as such, it has to be conventional to some extent. It has to appeal to a knowledge that the audience members already possess. In fact, to be effective, it can often start from a listener's familiarity with some cultural icon, and build upon it, or change it in some way. In this manner, for example, I consider Iggy Pop's remake of "Real Wild Child", an old rock & roll song from the '50s, to be an improvement, because his "parole" is such that it brings to the song a greater degree of menace and aggressiveness than the original had.

With regard to CFOX, there is a high degree of homogeneity in the music, as the above typology shows. Part
of the reason for the sameness of the music has to do with the purpose of the station, which is to deliver audiences to advertisers: a clearly delineated format helps the station to attract and keep a particular type of audience. Indeed, there are many listeners who appreciate the conventions of commercial radio. Through its references and familiarity, the music on CFOX gives its listeners a sense of continuity through time; it offers them a comforting feeling of predictability. In effect, what the station has lost in terms of novelty and breadth, it has gained in terms of stability and cohesiveness. Listeners who want more variety can listen to a diversity of stations.
Chapter Seven. Transtextuality in the Songs on CFOX-FM.

1. Introduction.

In the previous chapter, I noted that one of a radio programmer's criteria in choosing a song for airplay is the song's appropriateness for the station's format. The songs in the excerpt, by virtue of meeting this criterion, necessarily sound alike; they are all part of the same architext. A rock song stands a better chance of being played on commercial radio if it bears transtextual relations of this sort than if it does not.

In this chapter, I examine a few specific songs in some detail. I use these songs to show a few of the other transtextual relations, in addition to architextual ones, that have helped them to achieve airplay. I first examine the most important of these relations, the one to the performer of the song: I look at the already-known performer, and his/her impact on the popularity of a new song. I then examine the song's relation to previous songs: here, among other subjects, I look at cover versions. I conclude with two general perspectives (from Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco) on the type of music that CFOX favors in its broadcasts.
2. The Song and Its Performer.

Barthes, in *Le Plaisir du texte*, states that a link of sorts is formed between the writer and the reader of a text. He remarks that,

Dans le texte, d'une certaine façon, je désire l'auteur: j'ai besoin de sa figure (qui n'est ni sa représentation, ni sa projection), comme il a besoin de la mienne (sauf à "baviller").

J.D. Salinger, in *The Catcher in the Rye*, expresses the same idea as Barthes, but in a somewhat more expressive manner:

What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it.

In this way, when we read, we usually try to discover what the person who wrote the book is really like: who is, for instance, the real J.D. Salinger, or the real Roland Barthes? We usually form an image of the writer whose work we are reading. We would like this image to be accurate, but Barthes is right in emphasizing that it is a desire, for

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the image that we form is usually a representation or a projection, and not the author's actual countenance. When we listen attentively to a pop song, we do it in the same manner that we read a book. The pop song is a text through which we attempt to form an image of the singer and his/her environment. Our perception of the writer of the song, and of the context in which we imagine it to have been recorded, influences our appreciation of the song. In this way, the song refers to its (presumed) conditions of production. Almost in spite of itself, it refers back to the singer and his/her context.

2.1. The Appeal of the Performer.

Simon Frith, in Sound Effects, describes how important the star system is to the music industry, as a way of ensuring a certain measure of predictability in a volatile system: a performer whose career momentum is strong is virtually assured of solid sales, at least for a couple of albums, until the public begins to lose interest. Thus Frith writes, "If acts become stars because people like their records, the commercial object is to get people to buy their records because they are stars."³ John Cougar Mellencamp is a good example from the excerpt: a gradual buildup in popularity over the course of four albums leads

³ Simon Frith, Sound Effects, p.134.
to massive sales with the album *American Fool*. The momentum carries Mellencamp through three more successful releases, and his popularity does not start to wane until the 1989 album *Big Daddy*. Ironically, Mellencamp attacks the very system that has made him rich and famous on that album's first single, "Pop Singer" (which is in the excerpt). He sounds a little ungrateful, singing that he "never wanted to be a pop singer" at this point in his career.

After all, for Mellencamp and others, stardom is the key to commercial success (and possibly artistic recognition). Lawrence Grossberg concurs with Frith when he writes that, in the music business, "The production of a hit song is less important than the production of the star as a marketable commodity."\(^4\) Hits matter less than stars because the star is more flexible and durable. Certainly a hit song can be used in ads and movies to lend them prestige or credibility, but its versatility is limited. At a time when popular music is dominated by multinational corporations with holdings in diverse companies, a successful performer can do much more than produce hit records. Indeed, stars can be used to sell everything from toys to pop, and to popularize talk shows and magazines by appearing in them.

As Grossberg indicates, it is not even necessary that these performers be especially talented: having a look or a style is at least as important as musical talent.\(^5\) As far as the audience is concerned, what is important is that the stars be easy to identify, and to identify with: the stars should embody values that matter to the audience, like wealth and beauty.

Grossberg points out that, in these postmodern times, traditional values such as love, family and sex have become "treacherous traps".\(^5\) As a consequence, we look for satisfaction elsewhere, by vicariously experiencing the intensity of a star's life for instance. Grossberg speaks of a "search for an excessive affect necessarily divorced from the contingencies of everyday life".\(^7\) Identifying with a star can help people achieve this "excessive affect": they escape the mundanity of their lives by losing themselves in a star's experiences. Such a situation gives stars power. Indeed, musical artists who enjoy the public's esteem can exploit their popularity in a number of ways. For example,

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\(^6\) Grossberg, "MTV: Swinging on the (Postmodern) Star," p.263.

they can support causes that matter to them, or they can make millions appearing in beer commercials.

For a few long-lived artists such as Pete Townshend, career momentum can be an opportunity for creativity and daring. Although Townshend's solo material has not been enormously successful, his tenure with the Who ensures that commercial radio will be receptive to anything new that he produces. In this way, "A Friend is a Friend" appears twice in the survey. The record is not catchy, nor is its structure evident. Although it is carefully produced, with dense layers of vocals and instrumentation, nothing about the record is instantly memorable. As a consequence, a single exposure to the song can be bewildering for the listener. CFOX-FM, however, gives the song a chance, because Pete Townshend the performer is very familiar to its listeners: if nothing more, they can at least recognize his thin but pleasant vocals. Repeated airplay over the course of two or three weeks enables the audience to acquaint

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8 Note too that, back in the 1970s, the Who went from renting their stage equipment and rehearsal space to renting out equipment and space that they had bought with profits from concerts and record sales. Money can buy you power. See Simon Frith, Sound Effects, pp.145-146.

itself with the patterns of the song. From its obscure first listening, the song emerges as something comprehensible by the twentieth listening. It becomes familiar because it now refers back to all of its previous broadcasts on CFOX-FM: the song we are hearing for the twentieth time has an imposing intertext in the form of its nineteen previous appearances on the station.

Stardom is not shared democratically among a large number of artists. It is in fact only a small proportion of the performers on a record label who succeed in attracting media and public attention. Consequently, as Simon Frith remarks, most of a record company's profits come from a small fraction of the artists on its roster. Most of the performers in fact lose small amounts of money for the company. The company recoups these many small losses through the large profits that a select few artists provide. Given this situation, it is not surprising that only a small proportion of performers ever become rich: Leigh Silverman notes that "Less than fifteen percent of the artists signed to major record labels ever break even." Frith says that labels sign many artists who will prove unprofitable because they cannot be certain which ones will be successful.

Besides, companies can afford to produce records that do not make money since many of the costs of making a record are fixed costs anyway: "Pressing plants, recording studios, A&R departments, and so on" have to be maintained regardless of whether they are used for profitable performers or unprofitable ones.

The excerpt from CFOX-FM shows the extent to which the commercial radio station sustains the hegemony of the already-famous rock star. Indeed, many of the performers in the excerpt, in addition to appearing on commercial radio, appear in music videos, on movie soundtracks, on talk shows, in magazines, and so on: for example, to promote his album *Iron Man*, Pete Townshend gave numerous interviews, toured with the Who, and starred in a video for "A Friend is a Friend". The music industry imposes its various performers upon all of North America through a vast transtextual network of media tie-ins. It turns entertainers into celebrities whose fame is more immediate and widespread than at any other time in history. This system, because it is so vast, needs to be based on the most popular performers of the time, whose success has been proven, those whom the audience already knows well from

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13 In the process, Townshend was doing his fans a service by discussing his severe case of tinnitus, the consequence of prolonged exposure to high-decibel rock.
previous texts. An indication of CFOX's way of choosing songs, and performers, is that, of 34 songs released in 1984 or later that appear in the excerpt, 23 are by performers who were known in 1979 or earlier, five years before. 14 Another indication of the enduring appeal of some stars is that 19 of 24 solo performers in the survey were originally in a band: such performers as Don Henley and Robert Plant were part of groups in the 1970s. When the groups die off, the solo members live on.

One of the groups in the survey (Bad English) includes former members of previous groups. (There is also the post-1984 Van Halen, with Sammy Hagar, who was originally with Montrose and then a solo performer.) The record company always clearly advertises the composition of such a group as Bad English, so that the listener can relate the potentially too-novel song (in this case, "Forget Me Not") to previous songs by the performers. "Forget Me Not" sounds in many ways like "Missing You", the biggest hit that lead singer John Waite had during his solo career.

It seems furthermore that no significant groups ever disband permanently: the Doobie Brothers separated in 1983, seemingly for good. The members, however, were back

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14 29 of the 63 songs in the excerpt were originally released before 1984, another indication of CFOX's apparent aversion to new performers.
together six years later, when their style of early-1970s music became fashionable once again. The appeal of such 1989 songs as "The Doctor" and "Need a Little Taste of Love" is strongly hypertextual. *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll* describes the Doobies' early 1970s "formula" in the following way: "A strong beat, high harmonies and repetition of a single phrase like 'Listen to the music'."  

The 1989 songs are very much in the same vein as the early 1970s releases. "The Doctor," about music being "the doctor of your soul," is thematically close to the 1972 hit, "Listen to the Music," and "Need a Little Taste of Love" features the same incessant repetition of a single phrase. The 1989 Doobies are very appropriate for AOR radio, because the music blends in well with the classic rock from the 1960s and 1970s that dominates it.

### 2.2. Paratexts and Metatexts on the Performer.

Our interest in the singer is such that it often extends beyond the record itself to paratexts and metatexts: we satisfy our curiosity through reading articles and reviews on the performers, or through watching television programs on them. Magazines like *Spin* or *Creem* cater to our desire to be informed about the stars. They provide

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innumerable articles describing the stars' origins, and their gradual emergence from obscurity. The typical profile is indeed often a "rags-to-riches" story, with the pop star as hero. Readers can derive pleasure through their identification with the star, and his or her passage from an ordinariness akin to their own, to a state of popularity that they are unlikely ever to attain.

Many rock performers have careers that are like parabolic arches: they consist of a gradual rise from obscurity culminating in a few hits, and a slow descent back into obscurity. Their careers are similar to the process that takes place for singles on pop charts: singles rise, peak, and descend. A hit song by a new performer, if she is lucky, will awaken the public's interest in him/her. Listeners will want to know who she is, how she looks, where she is from, and so on. The mass media will provide them with the requisite information. If the performer proves to have an appealing personality and physique, they will greet subsequent releases with a certain measure of openness. The performer, in this way, builds upon the public's interest, sometimes reaching a considerable degree of commercial success in the process. Coverage of the performers increases, to the point where, as Alvin Toffler notes, "They take on a reality almost as (and sometimes even more) intense than that of many people with whom we do have
in-person' relationships." All artists, however, eventually begin to suffer from overexposure. The older performers reach a level of saturation at which public interest begins to fade. Newer, undiscovered performers attract the public's attention. Toffler remarks that, in our modern-day society, the rate at which we consume these personalities has accelerated.17

Louis Menaud explains the dynamics that underlie our infatuation with the stars:

Everyone who leads an ordinary life knows that another life is possible. That other life is like an unknown planet: we wouldn't want to go there, but we are interested in knowing what living there would be like. Belief in the other life offers two kinds of solace. It pleases us to think that, freed from responsibility and care, living would feel differently than it does; and we are certain that, in the end, being ground down slowly by ordinary life is the wiser choice, since we suspect that the atmosphere anywhere else would kill us very quickly. The celebrity is the explorer who tests the other life and sends back information about what it is like. It doesn't matter whether we are told that the existence pursued by Paul or John or Marilyn or Elvis was a frictionless one or a wretched one. It only matters that it not sound too much like our own.18

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17 Toffler, p.134.

Thus paratexts are shaped in reaction to our relation to the pop star, supplying us with a continuous stream of personalities temporarily emerging from obscurity to show us how they live, and how we could live, given the opportunity.

2.3. The Death of the Performer.

On a more macabre note, the excerpt from CFOX-FM includes a few songs from performers who have died prematurely. Their early deaths allow us to cultivate the myth of "lost potential". The question arises, in listening to a song by Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin or John Lennon (all of whom are in the excerpt): what would they have done had they lived? The implicit answer is that they would have continued creating successful music. The reality is that they would have aged, and their popularity would have diminished. Jim and Janis and John died young. They thus remain perenially young in our collective consciousness.

Because of this idea of "lost potential," the news of a celebrity's death, particularly if it is sudden, is the most moving form of popular news there is. It is like the old cliché of everybody remembering what s/he was doing on the day that John Kennedy died.19 Songs from performers who

19 With respect to Kennedy, Paul Dennis Hoffman hypothesizes that the trauma of the President's death may have contributed to changes in rock after 1963, including a greater emphasis on social and political issues in the music, and a greater number of bands with rough and rebellious names and images that mark disillusionment with
have died prematurely acquire an impact through events that are exterior to them. They remind the listener of the sense of loss and sadness that s/he felt upon first learning about the performer's death. In addition, as Louis Menaud has noted, a premature death indicates the strains that can develop in a life led in the spotlight. Such an occurrence keeps our possible longing for a star's life in check.20 The mass media thus reinforce our acceptance of anonymity by emphasizing the rigors of stardom.

3. The Song and Previous Songs.

Artists who are not already renowned must find ways of escaping from the oblivion that is the fate of most popular musicians. It is difficult for a new artist to break through with an original song. It is better if the song refers in some way to previous texts. One way in which artists achieve this identifiability is through remaking old (and not so old) hits. Such covers are comforting to the listener because, in essence, they are a repetition of the past: they allow the old song to momentarily defy the oblivion that is the ultimate fate of 99% of all pop music. The practice of covering an existing song can be the result

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20 Menaud, p.34.
of marketing decisions, rather than creative ones: some artists, for instance, use them to prolong a stagnant career.

There is nothing intrinsically reprehensible about covers, however. Folk music, before the invention of recording technologies, was sustained through an oral culture. The music would evolve gradually from cover to cover, with each new interpreter changing the song in some small way, or adding something to it. Such a procedure did not always strictly take the form of a cover: indeed, David Hatch and Stephen Millward note that,

There are (...) at least three possible stages available to new generations of pop musicians in the development of their musical competence. 21

The first stage involves copying a song as a way for the new artist to assimilate the conventions of an unfamiliar genre. The second stage is best illustrated in the excerpt by Van Halen's remake of Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman": it consists of recording a familiar song in a new style. In this way, the old and the new are combined. Songs like Van Halen's remake have "the facility to demonstrate the 'before and after effect', thus giving definition to the musical

development in the most concrete way."^22 Van Halen's covers of the Orbison song, and, earlier in their career, the Kinks' "You Really Got Me," made it easy for listeners to recognize the innovations that the group was bringing to the music: they could compare the cover with the original, evaluating the differences between the two versions. These covers helped Van Halen to achieve commercial acceptance. The third stage, according to Hatch and Millward, involves producing a new song in the acquired style, a song that assimilates the techniques and abilities of the borrowed style to the performer's personal style (his or her "parole").

There are seven covers in the excerpt, all of which belong to stage two as opposed to stage one.^23 Their relation to the original text is hypertextual: indeed, they all differ in some way from the original, using the same words and music, but adapting them to contemporary styles. Apart from Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman," it is unlikely that any of the original versions would fit onto CFOX's morning playlist. For instance, Phil Phillips and the Twilights' 1959 recording of "Sea of Love" differs in too

^22 Hatch and Millward, p.3.

many ways from CFOX's format requirements. Charlie Gillett describes the song, "recorded at the primitive Goldband studio in Lake Charles, Louisiana," as a "murky, mysterious chant."24 The vocals are too smooth and gentle by CFOX's standards, and the piano playing, one arpeggio to the bar, is too characteristic of the distant late 1950s. The Honeydrippers' rendition of the song features modern-day sound quality, and although there is some humor in the dated nature of the song itself, and in the thick strings (which are reminiscent of Led Zeppelin's "All of My Love"), the guitar solo by Jimmy Page is present to lend the song a contemporary sound, as are Robert Plant's typically histrionic vocals.

Covers are a good way of introducing new and unfamiliar artists to the audience. Six of the seven covers, however, are by performers who already have a long history of popular success. Only the Jeff Healey Band is a new act. CFOX has not taken advantage of Hatch and Millward's second stage, which involves using the familiarity of an old song as a way of acclimatizing the listener to a new artist.

The few songs by new artists that are selected by CFOX-FM for airplay certainly have numerous transtextual references. For example, the Jeff Healey Band's bluesy

24 Gillett, *The Sound of the City*, p.175.
"Angel Eyes" was originally written and recorded by John Hiatt. The Call's "Let the Day Begin" sounds like a Pete Townshend song, with its reedy lead vocals, female backups, philosophizing lyric, and power chords played on the electric guitar. I thought, at first listen, that it was a track from Pete Townshend's current album at the time, The Iron Man. There is also "Headed for a Heartbreak", from Winger's first album. Listening to the song, I kept in mind John Cawelti's remarks, that conventions are important in giving cohesion and coherence to a culture. Nevertheless, I found it hard to appreciate the song, feeling that it was extremely banal both musically and lyrically. It was in fact difficult for me to discern anything innovative about the Winger number, such as a sense of individual artistry, or a desire to build upon rock and heavy metal conventions.

My reaction to "Headed for a Heartbreak" indicates how challenging it can be for a programmer to pick new songs for airplay: in trying to choose a new song that fits in with the ones already in rotation, a radio programmer runs the risk of adding a number that sounds excessively banal to some listeners, motivating them to tune out or switch stations. It appears that radio programmers are particularly conservative when it comes to a new performer:

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25 Cawelti, p.55-56.
unlike a proven star, a new performer cannot rely on previous successes as a way of reassuring programmers that s/he is appropriate for their station. So a radio programmer will tend to compare the new performer's song to songs that are already on rotation: in doing so, s/he is making sure that the new song will fit on the playlist. Such comparisons are not as necessary for established performers, because they have already shown that they are suitable for the station through their previous successes.

4. The Pleasure of CFOX-FM.

Two structural approaches to the text throw light upon the nature of the songs that dominate the excerpt. Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco each distinguish in their own way between the text that conforms to our expectations, and the text that challenges them. The music on CFOX belongs of course in the former category. Barthes and Eco's distinctions are useful because they remind us that there is more to the enjoyment of music than the pleasures of recognition provided by CFOX-FM.

Roland Barthes, in Le Plaisir du texte, draws a distinction between "pleasure" ("plaisir") and "bliss" ("jouissance").26 Bliss is an imprecise translation of "jouissance." Indeed, "jouissance" has a strong erotic

26 Barthes, Le Plaisir du texte, pp. 82-84.
connotation that "bliss" does not quite share. Roland Howard, in his preface to the English translation of Le Plaisir du texte, humorously states that, unlike the French, the English in their vocabulary have "either the coarse or the clinical" to describe the sensations of sexuality. He suggests that "coming," for all its vulgarity, is a more accurate translation of "jouissance" than "bliss."

In light of these considerations, we can define "plaisir" as being a more protracted, albeit less intense sensation than "jouissance." Barthes says that we feel "plaisir" when we read (or listen to) conventional art, when we broach the text "qui vient de la culture, ne rompt pas avec elle, est lié à une pratique confortable de la lecture." We feel pleasure because the intent of conventional art is to give us pleasure. The stronger emotions of "jouissance" (or "coming") are reserved for those texts that shock or surprise us through their novelty or their unusualness, or through their alienation from habitual ways of seeing things. It is the privilege of autonomous art to jolt us, and to strive toward emotions


28 Howard, p.vi.

29 "That comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a comfortable practice of reading." Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text, p.14. (French quotation in Barthes, Le Plaisir du texte, p.25.)
that one can equate with orgasm. The songs from the CFOX excerpt give us a sense of pleasure rather than bliss because they appear in a context that deprives them of their autonomy.

Umberto Eco's distinction between open and closed texts is analogous to Barthes' between "plaisir" and "jouissance." The distinction, as Eco states it, is between "the text that seeks to produce a new reader and the text that tries to fulfill the wishes of the readers already to be found in the street." Eco calls the first text "open" and the second one "closed." He elaborates upon the difference:

In the latter case we have the book written, constructed, according to an effective, mass-production formula; the author carries out a kind of market analysis and adapts his work to its results. (...)

But when a writer plans something new, and conceives a different kind of reader, he wants to be, not a market analyst, cataloguing expressed demands, but, rather, a philosopher, who senses the patterns of the Zeitgeist. He wants to reveal to the public what it should want, even if it does not know it. He wants to reveal the reader to himself.

Few such blissful revelations occur in the excerpt: most of the songs belong to the "closed" category of texts. Not all

32 Eco, Postscript to the Name of the Rose, pp.48-49.
of the songs on CFOX were prepared with market considerations foremost in mind: creativity is present. In fact, there are musical and lyrical insights in many of the songs in the excerpt. It is also possible that some of the older songs sounded more innovative when they first appeared than they do now. A number of classics have been heard so many times, and have influenced so many artists, that their novelty has diminished over the years. Besides, the songs, regardless of the artists' intentions, are chosen by the programmer for their ability to respond to the public's tastes rather than to broaden them; they are (or have become with time) closed texts rather than open ones.

5. Conclusion.

Only certain songs are chosen for airplay from the many that are produced. We could assume that the songs that become hits are simply better in some ways than those that do not. Such an assumption would be inaccurate, however. After all, radio programmers ignore many songs that have the technical sophistication, the instrumental and vocal virtuosity, and the emotional impact of major hits. People do choose songs for their intrinsic qualities, but their transtextual relations are at least as important. The
relations between a song and its performer, and those between a song and previous songs, play an important role in a song's acceptance on commercial radio. In this chapter, I gave examples from the excerpt to illustrate some of the ways in which records on commercial radio refer beyond themselves to other texts.
Chapter Eight. Transtextuality in the Advertising
Music on CFOX-FM.

1. Introduction.

The various songs on CFOX are not the only music on the station: much of the advertising includes music as well. Transtextual relations are just as numerous in the ads as they are in the songs. I begin the chapter by outlining what it is about music that makes it appropriate for advertisements, emphasizing its capacity to evoke associations for listeners or, in other words, to bring other texts to their minds. There follows a description of the excerpt, with sections on advertising for concerts, and the use of hit songs to sell goods and services. I close the chapter with a look at the transtextuality of the ad music. All of the advertisements discussed in this chapter come from my CFOX excerpt.


Arnold Perris, in Music as Propaganda, reviews a number of ways in which music has been used through time to convey various ideas and attitudes to people.¹ Music, according to

Perris, is an effective conduit for propaganda:2 used effectively, it can dispose listeners towards listening to a message, and maybe even accepting it. Music enhances the impact of the words that accompany it, whether these words are spoken or sung. Music produces this effect because people react to it in particular ways.

For one thing, people have a response to music that is associative: they imbue music with meaning by relating it to the contexts where they hear it. Perris notes for example that listening to only a couple of measures of the "Marines' Hymn" will evoke feelings of patriotism among many Americans because the melody has so frequently been linked with patriotic events, such as military parades, in the past. Many other components of music also carry meaning as a result of their extratextual references. One of these components is musical genres: regardless of melody, genres are often quite evocative. Ragtime, for instance, makes many North Americans think of saloons in the Far West, because the music appears in countless barroom scenes in Hollywood Westerns. Movies in general have a strong influence on the associations that certain types of music bring to mind, as Simon Frith observes:

2 Perris writes, "Propaganda is the 'spreading of ideas, information or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause or a person,' according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary." (Perris, p.5.)
There is a standard musicological exercise (...) in which people are played pieces of instrumental music and asked to write down their "associations". The results suggest both that there are widely shared conventions of musical meaning and that these conventions are partly derived from people's shared experiences of film soundtracks.\(^3\)

Frith remarks furthermore that moviegoers have become so used to hearing particular types of music during certain scenes in movies, such as lush strings during a romantic moment, that much of a scorer's task consists of responding to the audience's expectations, filling in the blanks with the appropriate musical style.\(^4\) As in the case of language, the connotations of a piece of music are culturally learned: only the most onomatopoeic sounds have a readily definable signified.\(^5\) The associations that music brings to mind can have a strong impact upon listeners, arousing in them a variety of intense feelings.

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This ability to move people is another of music's qualities as a mode of propaganda. Music appeals to the heart first, the mind second. Perris writes that music "is an art which reaches the emotions easily, often (always?) ahead of intellectual awareness."\(^6\) Indeed, we use music primarily to alter our moods, playing a slow song to soothe us when we feel tense or a raucous song to invigorate us when we feel tired. Musical pieces endure primarily through their capacity to move us in some way, to affect us on an emotional level. Perris writes,

> All the eloquence of the words (if it is a work to be sung), an emotion-wringsing title, or awareness of the original tempestuous event which it memorializes will not be enough to interest later generations if the quality of the music is poor.\(^7\)

The aesthetic impact of the song considered as a whole is more important for its lasting appeal than the message conveyed in the lyric. If a song pleases us, however, then the words that it carries will survive, the message will persist. Neil Young's "Ohio" links the Kent State tragedy to a memorable melody: the appeal of the song allows the memory of the incident to endure. (Even people with no knowledge of the incident will sense that Young, singing

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\(^6\) Perris, p.6.

\(^7\) Perris, pp.8-9.
"Four dead in Ohio...", is referring to something dramatic that once happened in Ohio.)

According to Perris, these two capacities of music, to evoke associations and to move, dispose listeners favorably towards accepting any words that might be conveyed in tandem with the music, whether these words are sung or spoken. Alfred North Whitehead's remarks reflect this view:

With the sense of sight, the idea communicates the emotion, whereas with sound, the emotion communicates the idea, which is more direct and therefore more powerful.  

Nevertheless, Perris's description of music as a force in persuasion and even control is imperfect, because he neglects to acknowledge the important role that the listener plays in decoding the message. Certainly, we should reject the implication that music has the power to somehow entrance people into accepting an idea or an attitude: we should recognize that the listener has the independence of will to disagree with the words conveyed through music, however effectively it supports them.

Perris's approach shows how appropriate music is for advertisements, as a way of sugarcoating the advertising message, making it an easier pill to swallow. "Surely,"

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Perris writes, "No one will disagree that the singing commercials of radio and television belong to an art of persuasion." Music makes it less unpleasant for us to receive new information about a service or a product. The ability of a catchy jingle to insinuate itself into our consciousness explains the important role that music plays as a promotional device. A dual process is involved: 1. we react emotionally to music and the associations it brings to mind; and 2. we link the song and its associations to the product or service being advertised. The song guides our response; it cues us as to how we should be feeling towards the service or product. An effective ad will succeed in creating a mood that we can associate to the product. For instance, an ad from the excerpt, for the Seattle International Raceway, features heavy metal with an especially strident guitar. The sound is kinetic and energizing. It evokes images of young men in black leather jackets. There are intimations of action and violence. Through listening to the ad, we transfer these emotions and associations to the subject of the ad, the Raceway itself. If the energy of the music attracts us, then it is probable

9 Perris, p.5.

10 Judith Williamson describes this process in some detail, using magazine ads for perfume as an example. (Williamson, Decoding Advertisements, pp.24-31.)
that the Raceway, through its juxtaposition with the heavy metal, will also attract us.

David Huron cites a number of other uses of music in advertisements.\footnote{11} He notes that a musical score can give a sense of continuity to an ad, especially if the ad features two or more announcers speaking in different styles. Advertisers can also use music to emphasize specific parts of the ad, through the use of crescendos or rises in pitch. Music, especially in the form of jingles, can also increase the memorability of the advertising message. As Huron writes, "Music's tenacity for mental loitering is evident even when the mind is an unwilling host."\footnote{12} In this way, such jingles from the excerpt as "This Bud's for You" or "Can't Beat the Feeling" (for Coke) tend to linger in the mind when they are repeated often enough. Music can also help advertisers to reach their target audience. In this way, advertisers will choose musical genres that are particularly likely to appeal to their potential clients: Coor's, for example, made an appropriate choice, a hard rock score, in promoting its light beer to the CFOX audience.

\footnote{11} David Huron, \textit{Music in Advertising: an Analytic Paradigm} (Burnaby, B.C.: Simon Fraser University, May 2, 1986), 32 pages.

\footnote{12} Huron, p.11.
Huron remarks that music is also quite effective at conveying evocative and lyrical words. In this respect, he remarks that in many ads, the spoken words differ markedly from the sung words. In an ad for Factory Carpet (taken from the excerpt), the speaker provides practical, down-to-earth information: "From now until Wednesday you can buy the latest carpet styles and designs at Factory Carpet for as low as half price or less." The singers, for their part, chant words that would sound vague and irrelevant if they were spoken:

Pick out your carpet and we'll do the rest;  
Factory Carpet does it for less.  
'Cause satisfying you is what we do best,  
Satisfying you is what we do best.

The sung lyric, as Huron says, appeals to the emotions more than to reason. The above verses elicit a feeling of trust and confidence in Factory Carpet; few listeners, however, are attentive enough to notice that there is nothing about the words to substantiate such a sentiment. For instance, Factory Carpet says that, after we have chosen our carpet, it will "do the rest". This claim is quite meaningless, because it does not explain what "doing the rest" involves. We can expect the salespeople at the store to package the

13 Interestingly, the announcer repeats this information three times in three slightly different ways in the ad. Redundancy is an effective way of getting the message across to the listener.
carpet, calculate its cost, and accept our payment. All stores, however, do such actions as a matter of course. Although these verses promise nothing in particular, they can inspire a general sense of confidence in the store when they are sung, more because of how they are sung than because of what is sung.

Ads from national advertisers provide this emotional appeal with perhaps more craft. Soft drink companies like Coke and Pepsi, for example, spend enormous amounts of money on advertising, and their ads rely completely on emotion to promote their drinks. As David Vadehra, president of Video Storyboard Tests, an advertising-research company, remarks, "The thing about soda commercials is that they actually have nothing to say." Their purpose, according to him, is to "keep the product in the public eye through sheer entertainment." In this sense, the better drink is the one that is featured in the better commercial. As Philip Nelson has indicated, such a view is not nonsensical. Nelson agrees that most national advertising provides little information in the conventional sense. He says, however,  

that information as such is besides the point of this advertising. Rather, the point is to show to the audience that the company is successful: it has done well enough with a product that it can afford to advertise it on a wide scale. "Simply put," Nelson writes,

It pays to advertise winners rather than losers. In consequence, the amount of advertising gives consumers a clue as to which brands are winners and which brands are losers.17

Certainly the omnipresence of ads for Coke and Pepsi, reflecting worldwide expenses in 1989 of $140 and $151 million respectively,18 gives consumers a strong indication of the colas' popularity. If a company can afford to produce entertaining ads and to give them wide exposure, then its products must be worthwhile. Ads that are competently done can in this way instill feelings of confidence in consumers.

Apart from classifieds and retail ads, most advertising does not appeal to people's reason so much as it does to their emotions. Music, through its capacity to move people, is thus highly appropriate for advertising. Gordon Bruner has done a comprehensive review of the literature on how

17 Nelson, p.50.

music affects mood and behavior. In this review, Bruner observes that music is especially effective for products that people buy without thinking much about them; such products as beer or cosmetics demand "low cognitive involvement". Indeed, choosing a brand of beer has more to do with mood than with reasoning. Music can also be effective, but less so, with regard to products whose purchase requires more thought, like cars and appliances. Bruner writes that, given music's ability to establish the mood of an ad, it is important for marketers to be familiar with what kinds of music produce what kinds of effect in advertisements. In other words, what types of music can make a message sound happy or sad, serious or humorous, serene or exciting, for a target audience? Marketers can use such knowledge to improve the effectiveness of the advertising message.

3. A Description of the Excerpt.

There are 71 advertisements in the excerpt, which amounts to about three every fifteen minutes. Such a frequency seems like an effective way of inculcating


21 Bruner, p.100.

22 See Appendix 1 for a list of the ads.
commercial values into the youthful CFOX listeners. The ads address the interests of CFOX's core audience, the 18-to-34 age group, as the following list demonstrates:

- Shows (concerts, races, movies): 19 advertisements.
- Drink (pop, beer, coolers, milk): 12.
- Food (restaurants, supermarkets): 11.
- Services (travel, banks, lottery, insurance): 6.
- Employment and education: 5.
- Public service announcements: 3.

The importance of music in advertising is illustrated by the fact that 55 of the 71 songs include music. The songs without music, because they are so few, tend to project a specific connotation, usually of seriousness. None of the three PSAs has any music, for instance, adding emphasis to the fact that drug and alcohol abuse, and drinking and driving, are issues whose gravity is incompatible with the distractions of music. The PSAs remind us of the father telling his daughter to turn off her stereo because he has something important to tell her.

The ads that do have music feature a far wider range of styles than the songs on CFOX. This relative heterogeneity of the ad music brings into relief the homogeneity of the records that CFOX broadcasts. One of the reasons for this stylistic diversity is that many of the ads are not produced specifically for CFOX. Advertisers choose the music more with regard to the image that they want to project; CFOX's
format requirements are of secondary importance to them. As a consequence, the musical styles on these ads range from circus music to heavy metal. 7-11 grocery stores are the ones with the circus music, in a contest for tickets to a Who concert. The ad uses a piece of stock music featuring a brass section with trumpets, trombones and a tuba. It is effective as an attention-getting device because it stands out from the rock that dominates the station. The piece opens with the instruments gradually rising in pitch, creating a sense of excitement. It then proceeds to a simple rhythmic melody for eight bars, returning thereafter to the opening rise in pitch. The music alternates in this way between a buildup in tension followed by a release. It is the kind of music that accompanies trapeze artists, reaching a climax during one of their stunts, and marking time between the stunts. The music is for special events, reinforcing the ad's message that a Who concert is something not to be missed. The listener can almost picture the ad's announcer in the centre ring of a circus, under the spotlight, announcing the main event in his lively voice. It is a clichéd idea to use this musical style in an ad. The score manages nevertheless to produce the requisite sense of excitement about the Who contest.

Some of the musical styles in the ads that are least suited to CFOX's format are there to produce a humorous
effect. There is humor to be derived from the incongruity of playing inappropriate styles in a strict commercial format. Hearing country on CFOX when we are expecting more rock can make us smile, because the style of music appears out of place. There is some levity in the aforementioned 7-11 ad, for instance. Another humorous example is the ad for The Track: Charlie the Talking Horse describes the good times to be had at this horse-racing stadium. The score of this ad consists of square-dance music featuring a Jew's harp. The latter instrument, along with the kazoo, is synonymous with unseriousness. It helps communicate the idea that The Track is a place for fun and laughter.

3.1. Concert Promotions.

A common aspect of AOR radio promotion is the ad for upcoming concerts. Radio is the natural outlet for concert promotions, since both it and the concert provide the same product, music. For concert promotions, advertisers commonly string together fragments of the performer's most familiar songs. This process enables the listener to sample the product that will be supplied in full at the concert venue. The samples are too brief for the listener to derive any satisfaction from listening to them. It is part of the advertising strategy to maintain a certain measure of dissatisfaction on the listener's part, as Leiss,
Kline and Jhally remark.° Ads attempt to create a longing among their audience to actually buy and own the products and services being described.

In addition to being teasing examples for the actual concert, these collections of fragments help to increase the stars' stature in the minds of the audience, because their musical impact is condensed into a 30-second spot: such an ad features nothing but the best three or four seconds of the performers' greatest hits. It makes the listener aware of the extent of their success. It can also remind him or her of songs that s/he did not think were part of the artists' repertoire. The musical fragments from Streetheart, for a concert featuring "Kenny Shields and former members of Streetheart," show to the listener that the group has at least five familiar-sounding records to its name.

Interestingly, the ad for the Ringo Starr concert does not feature any examples of his music. Starr, however, is a special case, because he is better known for his connection to the Beatles than for his music. After all, Starr has not had a hit since 1975. As a consequence, instead of samples of his music, there is a made-for-the-ad metal soundtrack. This music gives Ringo Starr an aura that his early 1970s

23 Leiss, Kline, and Jhally, p.61.
solo material ("You're Sixteen", for instance, which features a kazoo solo, or "The No No Song") could not give him. We might also include the Beatles' "You Never Give Me Your Money" as part of the ad: CFOX played this song only five minutes before the Ringo Starr promo on Wednesday. It is a good strategy: after hearing a classic Beatles song, listeners might find the prospect of seeing Starr in concert a little less bleak than they otherwise would. CFOX also broadcast "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" right after an ad for the Rolling Stones. The station occasionally extends a concert ad in this way by playing a record from the featured group shortly before or after it.

3.2. The Commercialization of Rock.

Media tie-ins are a frequent occurrence in popular culture: the appearance of a new movie will be tied in to the appearance of a novelization or a soundtrack, for instance. Such cross references are good for sales: the movie attracts people to the soundtrack, and hit songs from the soundtrack draw people to the movie. Advertisements also benefit from media tie-ins: Simon Frith remarks that "The association of any product with a popular record has been found by advertisers to help sales."\(^{24}\) Advertisers use

hit songs for their promotions because the music lends an aura of fashionability to their goods and services.

Many people frown upon such a commercialization of popular music, particularly when it is well-known performers who sell their songs or services to advertisers. Neil Young made a prominent attack on this process in his song "This Note's for You", criticizing those musicians who sell out by allowing themselves to be used for the promotion of consumer goods such as beer or soft drinks. Leslie Savan writes that "The point of Young's video is that when a rock star is totally identified with his or her aluminum can, every time they appear, they become commercials." 25 In this way, as Neil Young himself says, artists "lose their artistic credentials." 26 A performer who sacrifices a song with the express intention of making money also sacrifices his or her individuality: the music of the performer loses its value as a direct expression of his or her feelings. Elvis Costello has also said that it is a shame that the main message that Michael Jackson is conveying to the youth of today, given


26 Savan, p.49.
his prominence and his power to set an example, is "Drink Pepsi-Cola".27

Stuart Ewen, furthermore, writes that advertising dissociates images from their original context, divesting them of their significance in the process.28 As an example, Ewen describes an ad for hair spray that compares today's "neat" look with the 1960s "wild" look: Ewen points out that the ad treats long hair as if it were merely a fashion statement in the 1960s, when in fact it was a code through which young people expressed their adherence to the counterculture. Such an example, according to Ewen, shows advertising's "ability to transform social movements into easily manipulated visual clichés."29

This transformation also occurs when Labatt uses "Summertime Blues" in its advertisements. The song was co-written by Eddie Cochran and was a hit for him in 1958. It reflects the carefree rebelliousness of the times, expounding upon the inconvenience of being young in an adult world. Cochran, although he died in a car crash at age


29 Ewen, p.256.
twenty-one, was an influential performer, and the Who and Blue Cheer paid homage to his significance by recording their own renditions of "Summertime Blues" at the end of the sixties. Labatt, however, takes the song and turns it into a sales pitch for beer. In this way, the company creates new associations between the song and a product, Labatt's Blue. As a consequence, when we hear the original Eddie Cochran version of the song, we are likely to start thinking about a beer commercial instead of enjoying the undiluted impact of the song's gently rebellious message, and its ties to two of rock's most formative periods, the mid-1950s and the late 1960s.

4. Transtextuality in the Advertisements.

Advertising appeals to our sense of recognition to a great extent. Such songs as "Summertime Blues" are effective in arousing our interest because they mean something to us, they are significant for us. If nothing more, we listen to such an ad as the one for Labatt's Blue because we want to hear what the advertisers have done to the song in it. Because of its effectiveness, the practice of including various cultural references in an advertisement is commonplace, as Gérard Genette observes:
Advertising is indeed extremely hypertextual, taking elements from our culture at large, and transforming them for its own uses.

It does this borrowing as a matter of course because it needs to make an immediate impact upon the audience. As Leiss, Kline and Jhally write,

In the era of market segmentation and the thirty-second commercial, this reliance on shared knowledge becomes even more important. The thirty-second ad allows little time to give information about anything. Advertisers pretty much have to use what already exists in the imaginations of the target audience.

Henry Dreyfuss, who was an industrial designer, adds that people derive pleasure and comfort from recognizing familiar forms in unfamiliar settings. He writes:

Almost without exception, our designs include an ingredient we call survival form. We deliberately incorporate into the product some remembered detail that will recall to the users a similar article put to a similar use. People will more readily accept something new, we feel, if they recognize in it something out of the past. Most of us have a nostalgia for old things. Our senses quickly recognize and receive pleasure when a long-forgotten detail is brought back. (...) Somehow these recollections of the past give us

30 "One would need, as I have said, a large volume, which would become instantly out-of-date, to merely compile the hypertextual practices of modern advertising." (Genette, Palimpsestes, p.436.)

31 Leiss, Kline and Jhally, p.156.
comfort, security, and silent courage. By embodying a familiar pattern in an otherwise wholly new and possibly radical form, we can make the unusual acceptable to many people who would otherwise reject it.  

In addition to being evocative, "remembered details" (or, in other words, transtextual references) in advertising are a useful way of conveying new information, by relating the novel to something with which the listener is already familiar. It is easier to convey new information by relating it to information that the receiver already possesses.

We can view transtextuality as a combination of old and new meanings in that it refers back to the text from which it originates (referring in this way to its old meaning) while at the same time conveying a new meaning through its placement in a new context. The old meaning makes it easier for the listener to absorb the new meaning. For example, the Club Med theme ("Hands Up") borrows from musical styles that originated in the West Indies. The Caribbean shimmer of the music spontaneously conveys a sense of tropicalness, sunshine, warmth and relaxation to the listener, and the lively chorus projects a celebratory feeling of collaboration and companionship among people. There is no need for cumbersome descriptions and explanations: the music

Similarly, the ad from the B.C. Dairy Foundation features a modern update of the blues, with a black-sounding announcer backed by an acoustic guitar, bass and drums. Much of the appeal of this advertisement lies in the transtextuality of the score. The austere instrumentation of the music projects an appealing image of simplicity and genuineness. Compared to their descendants, rhythm & blues and rock, the blues sounds like a purer, more natural form of music. All of these qualities (simplicity, purity...) lend themselves well to the product being advertised, "Cool Milk".

Musical genres such as the blues are quite useful in creating positive associations for a product. Although the associations that they evoke are more diffuse than those that actual songs evoke, genres are much cheaper for the advertiser than songs are: genres, after all, infringe upon no one's copyrights. Conversely, the fees for buying the rights to specific songs, as Fred Miller indicates, "can run to hundreds of thousands of dollars; they depend on the usage of the material and the marketability of the song."³³ The expense explains why only a few national advertisers in

the excerpt (McDonald's, Labatt, Mr. Submarine) use copyrighted material. Commissioned jingles played in recognizable genres are almost as effective as popular songs, and local advertisers frequently use them in their ads.

5. Conclusion.

Much of the appeal of music lies in its transtextuality: music refers beyond itself, to images and ideas that listeners have acquired through previous cultural experiences. I tried to show some of these references in my examples. Because they contain many transtextual references, the advertisements in the excerpt are very time- and place-related. The cumulative effect of all the references in the ads, in addition to those in the music and in the announcer talk, is of tying CFOX very closely to the time and place of its appearance. Were we to relisten to the excerpt in 1999 or 2009, long-forgotten images and memories of North American culture in 1989 would come to mind. The advertisements that appeared on CFOX in the summer of 1989 are closely connected to that particular time. They will eventually disappear from the airwaves, and from our memory. New advertising, however, will emerge in their place, recycling the ideas and images of its predecessors in slightly different ways.
Concluding Remarks: Innovation and Convention.

Angela McRobbie has written, "(...) Rock does not signify alone, as pure sound. The music has to be placed within the discourses through which it is mediated to its audience (...)."¹ She is referring here mainly to the rock press, and its metatextual observations on music, but her views also apply to the radio supertext. In this thesis, using a transtextual approach, I examined an excerpt from CFOX-FM as a discourse "through which [rock] is mediated". I showed how CFOX chooses and frames the music on its broadcasts. I also demonstrated that the presence of transtextual allusions on CFOX is a significant reason for the station's popularity. In this conclusion, I want to recount some of the positive and negative aspects of transtextuality on CFOX. I also want to show how this study has affected my own relationship to commercial radio.

First, however, I will recapitulate the main points explored in this thesis, and indicate some contributions that it makes to the study of popular culture.

1. Recapitulation and Some Contributions of the Thesis

The first half of the thesis focused on theory. Chapter one was the equivalent of an establishing shot in film, presenting the broad context in which I would be examining CFOX. In this chapter, I situated the study of popular culture within the framework of modernism and postmodernism, showing how attitudes towards popular music have become more accepting over the past twenty years, at least among proponents of postmodernism. I set up in this way an opposition between modernists who keep their distance from popular culture, and postmodernists who embrace popular culture. This binary opposition illustrated my own ambivalence towards popular music: at some times in writing the thesis, I was not sure whether to condemn or embrace the music. A part of me felt the need to distance myself intellectually from popular music, from what I sometimes felt was an adolescent indulgence that I ought to outgrow. Another part of me could not deny the tremendous enjoyment that popular music was still giving me, even if this enjoyment was primarily emotional rather than intellectual.² I feel that in the end I was able to resolve this

opposition: I recognized that the choice was not an either/or one (either the head or the heart), but that it was possible to have an emotional attachment to popular music while also being able to appreciate it at an intellectual level. In this way, a significant purpose of chapter one was to present, and illustrate in a compressed form, the opposition between head and heart that preoccupies me throughout the thesis.

Thus reflecting a postmodern acceptance of the popular, I went on to examine, in the next three chapters, transtextuality, popular music, and commercial radio. In chapter two, I examined different interpretations and applications of transtextuality; I then discussed Gérard Genette's typology in some detail, feeling that it was particularly appropriate for reviewing the various forms of transtextuality in the CFOX excerpt. There followed chapters on popular music and commercial radio, in which I related the semiotical concerns of my analysis to approaches that were more sociological in nature. The four chapters of Part One enabled me to explore some key aspects of transtextuality in popular music on commercial radio. The chapters gave me (and by extension, the reader) a position from which to approach CFOX. For instance, favorable interpretations of popular culture such as Simon Frith's and
John Fiske's showed me how it was possible to view commercial radio in a positive light.

In Part Two of the thesis, I applied the theoretical perspectives from Part One to a six-hour excerpt from CFOX. I introduced CFOX in chapter five, discussing significant dimensions of a commercial station in the process. Using a transtextual approach, I proceeded in the next three chapters to describe various aspects of the format and structure of the station, its songs, and the music in its advertising. In these chapters, I showed how preponderant transtextual references were on CFOX, and I described some of these references in detail.

Academics have traditionally neglected radio, devoting more attention to such media as film and television. Radio, however, is worthy of sustained critical attention, and this thesis attempts to give the medium the attention that it deserves, given the significant role that it plays in our everyday lives. The purpose of my slow reading of CFOX in Part Two was to develop perceptions and impressions that an audience -- myself included -- often overlooks when it listens to the radio. I wanted to encourage among the readers of this thesis a process of recognition ("Yes, I've noticed that too about commercial radio") that would encourage them to listen to radio with a greater sensitivity to its effects on them. I also meant to instill in them a
more acute perception of how a commercial station functions at the level of the text, particularly how it works transtextually to create and strengthen its ties to its audience. In this regard, I tried to emphasize the positive aspects of repetition and imitation in music on the radio, counterbalancing a common attitude among writers on popular music, that of being critical of such characteristics. 3

2. Positive and Negative Aspects of Transtextuality on CFOX.

I can conclude from my observations that the sixty-three songs in the excerpt contain transtextual references that are both numerous and varied. The music in the advertisements also include many transtextual references. Whether or not it was used in ads, the music on CFOX showed the capacity to evoke transtextual associations in listeners that helped to make the broadcast more accessible and interesting for them. In other words, transtextuality is commonplace on CFOX because it is an effective way of making the programming readily and effortlessly accessible to its audience. Although all of my examples came from the CFOX excerpt, I believe that my observations can be applied to other commercial radio stations in major urban centers.

3 See, for example, Pattison, The Triumph of Vulgarity, p.191.
This profusion of transtextual references in the CFOX excerpt has a number of positive consequences. I showed how closely the songs on CFOX related to each other through commonalties in theme, form, instrumentation, and so on. The result of such a situation is that discrete songs, created independently of each other, interrelate: rather than some motley assortment of songs and announcer talk and advertisements, the excerpt from CFOX presents itself as a structured and cohesive text. Regular listeners to CFOX are particularly likely to sense the orderliness of the text, because their broad experience of the station in the past gives them a solid basis for perceiving how the different textual elements connect with each other. They recognize the songs and performers, and they are familiar with the announcers. It is possible in this way to compare music radio to television soaps, where the bond between performers and their fans is unmistakably strong. In soaps, there is no real end to events, there is just a perpetual renewal of dramas involving familiar characters. With CFOX, the songs create the drama, and the performers and announcers are the characters.

Another positive aspect of commercial radio is that its stringent format gives its audience a sense of continuity and stability through time. CFOX is reassuring to its listeners, because they know that they can turn again and
again to the station, and find songs there that relate closely to their present or past lives. If CFOX in particular cannot evoke these pleasant memories, then other stations probably can: after all, it is possible to find practically all the hits from the Swing Era onwards somewhere on the radio dial in Greater Vancouver. Given such a situation, it is not surprising that radio has been able to maintain its position in spite of constant developments in competing communications technologies. Radio, the original broadcast medium, is not about to disappear, because it has a strong ability to evoke positive associations among its listeners.

Radio also maintains its place through announcers' constant references to aspects of their audience's day-to-day lives. Their continual allusions to what is happening here and now connect listeners to the world at large. Regular listeners acquire a sense of shared meaning with the announcer. In fact, this shared meaning extends to the whole radio broadcast. It takes time for people to feel this sense of community with a station; they develop a knowledge of a station's world gradually, as shared meanings increase. Once they have acquired this knowledge, however, they can derive much satisfaction from their general familiarity with the songs and announcers on a particular station.
Not everything about commercial radio is positive: indeed, comforting predictability can become constraining for producers and consumers alike. CFOX's level of revenue depends on its ability to reach a large audience in the proper age bracket. As a consequence, it has to adhere to a strict format. It is important that the songs fit into the station's format, because listeners might switch stations if they hear a song that seems inappropriate. Because of these restrictions, CFOX tends towards homogeneity, bringing to mind some of Horkheimer and Adorno's criticisms of the culture industry as fostering standardization.⁴ Furthermore, a critic like Dwight Macdonald would complain that there is nothing elevating or challenging about the music on CFOX. In answer to such objections, one can argue that the purpose of CFOX is not to challenge or elevate its audience, but to entertain it. There are alternatives for those who want challenge. Even so, it is worth pointing out that CFOX does take small chances on novel music by performers who are already well-known: such songs (from the excerpt) as Pete Townshend's "A Friend is A Friend" and Don Henley's "I Will Not Go Quietly" have original arrangements and instrumentation, and lyrics that are both thought-provoking and moving.

Another drawback with regard to CFOX is the idea that the station is for musical specialists: listeners who remain faithful to the station are also remaining faithful to a particular style of music. As Theodor Adorno has observed, such a situation can lock listeners into an excessively hermetic world, potentially distracting them from matters of greater importance to their lives. 5 Again, we should point out that CFOX does broadcast some alternative forms of music outside of peak listening hours. Also, listeners can always turn the dial, turn off the radio, or listen to cassettes and CDs.


My own attitudes towards commercial radio have fluctuated through time. As a teenager, I listened assiduously to CHOM-FM, the English-language AOR station in Montréal. I enjoyed the station tremendously because I was very familiar with the announcers, artists and songs that the station broadcast; I could always depend on CHOM to broadcast the music I liked. Interestingly, since completing this thesis, without having consciously decided to do so, I have been listening more and more to prerecorded tapes rather than the radio. There are a number of reasons

for this practice, including the ability to control my musical choices and the freedom from commercial interruptions. I am also fond of the offbeat songs hidden away on cassettes that do not always receive radio airplay. More significantly, I am wary of radio's strategies to attract the listener. I suppose I am reluctant to create a bond with a station in Vancouver like the one I had with CHOM-FM in Montréal; such a bond can be too much like an addiction or a dependency. In addition, the most evocative music for me, corresponding to a period during which I listened to music constantly, has not been appearing regularly on the radio in the early 90s: even Coast 1040 only plays so-called "New Wave" music intermittently. I know however that my preference for tapes is temporary, and that changing circumstances in my life will make me turn to radio with renewed interest.

CFOX continues to provide a continuous stream of hard rock and heavy metal to its listeners, giving them a comforting feeling of recognition in the process. There is much about CFOX that is positive: the music is expertly produced and recorded, the announcers sound lively and confident, and the broadcast is structured and organized. In spite of the undeniably positive aspect of CFOX-FM, it is worth keeping in mind that the station covers a narrow musical range. In the end, the choice is the listener's:
s/he can become a specialist, enjoying the pleasure of hearing familiar tunes, and developing a good knowledge of the particular type of music that CFOX broadcasts; or s/he can become a generalist, making the potentially blissful discovery (on other radio stations and elsewhere) of the myriad sounds that people call music.
Appendix I.

Programming Schedules,

6:30-9:30 A.M., Monday, July 31, 1989

and Wednesday, August 2, 1989.
CFOX-FM, 93.3 MHz, Vancouver.

Monday, July 31, 1989


6:34 Announcer Talk. (Very brief. Robin Larose until 9:00.)


6:40 Announcer Talk.


6:43 ADV. Seagram's Wild Berry Cooler. (Hard rock.)

6:44 ADV. CFOX's Larry and Willy Show. ("Larry and Willy Boogie," rockabilly.)


6:51 Announcer Talk.


6:53 ADV. Knowledge Network. (Gentle trumpet and brass music.)

6:54 ADV. Parenthood, movie. (Latin-flavored brass music.)


6:55 News Brief. (Read by Stone Phillips.)

6:57 Weather.

6:57 Sports.

6:58 Station identification.

1 Unless otherwise specified, the music was made for the advertisement.

7:01 SONG. "We Will Rock You/We Are the Champions," Queen, 1977.

7:06 Announcer Talk. (Brief.)


7:11 Announcer Talk.

7:12 Traffic Check.

7:13 Announcer Talk.

7:13 ADV. Budweiser beer. (Blues with harmonica and gruff male vocals.)

7:13 ADV. Umbertino's restaurants. (No music.)

7:14 ADV. 7-11 grocery stores. (Contest for tickets to Who concert. Circus music with crowd noises.)


7:23 Announcer Talk. (Includes four phone-in imitations of Sylvester Stallone, in conjunction with Lock-Up, a new Stallone movie.)

7:25 ADV. Safeway supermarkets. (Bouncy light rock.)

7:25 ADV. Wendy's restaurants. (Sound effects, but no music.)

7:26 PSA. Drinking/Driving Counterattack, "A message from the Broadcasters of British Columbia." (No music.)

7:26 ADV. Temporarily Yours. (Job placement service. No music.)

7:27 News Brief.

7:29 Weather.

7:29 Sports.

7:30 Station identification.


7:38  Announcer Talk.

7:39  Traffic Check.

7:40  Announcer Talk.

7:40  ADV. Playland amusement park. (Bass and drum sounds.)

7:41  ADV. McDonald's restaurants. (Organ-based rock, using melody from The Chordettes' "Lollipop" [1958].)

7:41  ADV. CFOX's Larry and Willy Show. (Phone-in listener playing Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" [1971] on his electric guitar.)


7:52  Announcer Talk.

7:52  ADV. Factory Carpet. (Gentle synth pop with light saxophone and female chorus.)

7:53  News Brief.

7:55  Weather.

7:55  Sports.

7:56  Station identification.


8:00  SONG. "Baby You're a Rich Man," The Beatles, 1967.

8:03  Announcer talk. (Brief.)


8:08  Announcer Talk. (Subject turns to marriage. "Here Comes the Bride" on solo organ is briefly broadcast.)

8:09  Traffic Check.

8:10  Announcer Talk. (Kokanee Joke of the Day, with brass intro reminiscent of Doc Severinsen's style.)
8:11 ADV. Kokanee Beer. (No music.)
8:11 ADV. Woolco department stores. (Light rock, female chorus.)
8:12 Fox Hunt ’89. (Female announcer in CFOX van, offering $99.30 to car in front.)
8:19 Announcer Talk.
8:20 ADV. Seattle International Raceway. (Heavy metal with electric guitar.)
8:21 ADV. B.C.A.A., medical insurance. (No music.)
8:21 PSA. Minister Responsible for Alcohol and Drug Programs. (Helpline phone number. No music.)
8:22 News Brief.
8:23 Weather.
8:23 Sports.
8:38 Announcer Talk.
8:39 Traffic Check.
8:40 ADV. Coor's Lite. (Light rock with male vocalists.)
8:41 ADV. CFOX's Larry and Willy Show. (James Bond theme.)
8:51 Announcer Talk.
8:51 Molson Canadian Calendar. (Concert listings in
Vancouver. Read by Robin Larose and Mary Ann
Mackenzie. Ambient drums and bass.)

8:53 ADV. Club Med. ("Hands Up," Caribbean-styled
chorus.)

8:53 ADV. Bacardi Breezer. (Light rock.)

8:54 News Brief.

8:57 Weather.

8:57 Sports.

8:58 ADV. B.C. Dairy Foundation. ("Cool Milk." Acoustic
blues guitar with black-sounding vocalist.)

8:58 ADV. Save On Food and Drugs. (Light synthesizer
music.)

8:59 ADV. A & B Sound. (Various samples from recent rock
songs.)

9:00 Station identification. (Nine O'Clock Super Set.)

9:00 SONG. "Foreplay/Long Time," Boston, 1976.

9:07 SONG. "Your Move/I've Seen All Good People," Yes,
1971.


9:17 SONG. "Try (Just a Little Bit Harder)," Janis Joplin,
1969.


9:27 Announcer Talk. (With Daryl Hébert.)

9:27 ADV. National Trust. (Keyboard pop, sounding like
David Foster.)

9:28 ADV. Labatt's Blue, beer. (Remake of Eddie Cochran's
"Summertime Blues" [1958].)

9:28 ADV. Super Save Gas. (Rock with slide guitar and
piano.)

9:29 ADV. Canadian Armed Forces. (No music.)
9:29 ADV. Concert featuring Ringo Starr and His All-Starrs (Heavy metal soundtrack.)


Wednesday, August 2, 1989.


6:40 Announcer Talk. (Robin Larose until 9:00.)


6:42 ADV. Coor's Professional Rodeo at Cloverdale Exhibition and Stampede. (Slow hard rock.)

6:42 ADV. Kokanee beer. (No music.)

6:43 ADV. Larry and Willy Show. (No music.)


6:50 Announcer Talk.

6:50 Birthday Break. (Music from On the Beach, with Annette Funicello.)

6:52 ADV. Heritage Duty Free Shop. (Techno pop. Sounds like Art of Noise.)

6:53 ADV. Wendy's restaurants. (No music.)


6:54 News Brief. (Read by Stone Phillips.)

6:56 Weather.

6:56 Sports.

6:57 Station identification.
7:05 Announcer Talk. (Very brief.)
7:10 Announcer Talk.
7:11 Traffic Check.
7:11 ADV. Classic Cars Lotto. (Fifties rock & roll with brazen saxophone solo.)
7:12 ADV. Woolco department stores. (Light rock, female chorus.)
7:12 ADV. The Track, horse racing. (Square-dance music.)
7:13 ADV. FOX Wear, CFOX clothing. (Sparse drums and bass backing.)
7:22 Announcer Talk. (Includes three phone-in imitations of Sylvester Stallone, in conjunction with Lock-Up.)
7:25 ADV. Abbotsford Air Show. (Old-fashioned Dixie music.)
7:25 ADV. P.J.'s restaurants. (Synthesizer pop.)
7:26 ADV. Temporarily Yours, job placement service. (No music.)
7:26 News brief.
7:29 Weather.
7:29 Sports.
7:30 Station identification.
7:33 SONG. "You Can't Stop It," Doobie Brothers, 1974.
7:36 Station identification. ("Then... and Now, Double Shots.")


7:40 Announcer Talk.

7:41 Traffic Check.

7:42 ADV. National Trust. (Keyboard pop, sounding like David Foster.)

7:42 PSA. Drinking/Driving Counterattack, "A message from the Broadcasters of British Columbia." (No music.)

7:43 ADV. Larry and Willy Show. (The Odd Couple theme.)


7:52 Announcer Talk.

7:53 ADV. Mr. Submarine. (Remake of the Young Rascal's "Good Lovin'" [1966].)

7:54 ADV. Concert featuring Kenny Shields and former members of Streetheart. (Samples of Streetheart's music.)

7:54 News Brief.

7:56 Weather.

7:56 Sports.

7:57 Station identification.


8:02 SONG. "Who Can It Be Now?" Men at Work, 1982.

8:05 Announcer Talk. (Very brief.)


8:10 Announcer Talk.

8:11 Traffic Check.
8:12 Kokanee Joke of the Day. (Intro: rock with electric organ. Sounds like The Doors.)

8:13 ADV. Kokanee Beer. (No music.)

8:13 ADV. Coca-Cola Classic. ("Can't Beat the Feeling." Pop with male and female chorus, reminiscent of Drifters' "Under the Boardwalk" [1964].)

8:14 ADV. Fox Hunt '89, CFOX contest. (Orchestral movie music. Resembles theme from Indiana Jones.)


8:23 Announcer Talk.

8:25 ADV. Travis Institute of Recording Arts. (Instrumental hard rock.)

8:26 ADV. Majestic Futons. (Synth pop.)

8:26 ADV. Consumer's Distributing. (Raucous rockabilly.)

8:27 ADV. Coor's Light. (Hard rock.)

8:28 News Brief.

8:30 Weather.

8:30 Sports.

8:31 ADV. Rolling Stones Concert. (Samples of the Rolling Stones' music.)


8:40 Announcer Talk.

8:41 Traffic Check.

8:42 ADV. Coor's Professional Rodeo at Cloverdale Exhibition and Stampede. (Slow hard rock.)

8:42 ADV. Notorious, "classic rock" nightclub. (Rock.)

8:43 ADV. The Who Concert. (Drums and bass backing.)
8:43 Announcer Talk. (Including phone-in memories from the movie Woodstock.)


8:52 Announcer Talk.

8:53 Molson Canadian Calendar. (Concerts in Vancouver. Read by Robin Larose and Mary Ann MacKenzie. Ambient drums and bass.)

8:55 ADV. Seagram's Wild Berry Cooler. (Hard rock.)

8:56 ADV. McDonald's restaurants. ("Summertime, summertime..." sung to the tune of the Chordettes' "Lollipop" [1958].)

8:56 ADV. Abbotsford Air Show. (Atmospheric synthesizer.)

8:57 News Brief.

8:58 Sports.

8:58 Weather.

8:58 Sports.

8:59 ADV. Umbertino's. (No music.)

8:59 ADV. Canadian Armed Forces. (No music.)

9:00 Station identification. (Nine O'Clock Super Set.)

9:00 SONG. "I'm a Man," Spencer Davis Group, 1967.


9:28 Announcer Talk. (Daryl Hébert.)

9:28 ADV. Cloverdale Exhibition and Stampede. (Rock.)

9:28 ADV. Knowledge Network. (Light horn music.)
9:29 ADV. The Track, horse racing. (Square-dance music.)

9:29 ADV. Concert featuring Ringo Starr and His All-Starrs. (Heavy metal soundtrack.)

Appendix II

Results of Quantitative Analysis of CFOX-FM Excerpt.
Size of excerpt: 63 songs

1. **Structure.**

**Alternation between verses and choruses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>60 songs</th>
<th>95.24%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60 songs</td>
<td>95.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
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**Sung bridge**

<p>| | | |</p>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>68.25%</td>
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**Instrumental solo**

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<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
</tr>
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**Fadeout**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On repetition of chorus</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On instrumental</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On improvised vocals</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
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2. **Instruments**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drums</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>98.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>96.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric lead guitar</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>90.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric rhythm guitar</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyboards</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acoustic guitar</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brass</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxophone</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strings</td>
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<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accordion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flute</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments used in instrumental solos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric guitar</td>
<td>35.51</td>
<td>56.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyboards</td>
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<td>5.56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saxophone</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No solo</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
</tr>
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3. Vocals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead vocals</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>95.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male and female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backing vocals</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male and female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singer addresses</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other person, opposite sex</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other person, same sex</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listener</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant emotion of singer</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displeasure</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.94%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lust/sex</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of loved one (or fear of loss)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape/evasion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a better world</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in general/for oneself)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship/solidarity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love/relationships</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money (or lack thereof)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranoia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 When two lead instruments appeared in a solo, either in tandem or consecutively, 0.5 was accorded to each of the instruments instead of 1.
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