DOROTHEA GAIL

Weird American Music

Case Studies of Underground Resistance, BarlowGirl, Jackalope, Charles Ives, and Waffle House Music

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ALFRED HORNUNG
ANKE ORTLEPP
HEIKE PAUL

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For Ray with Love

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In *Postcards from the End of America,* author Linh Dinh expresses his frustration with what American life has become. Perhaps we can find some consolation, as Scott Erickson puts it in *The History of the Decline and Fall of America*, in looking at the way we have travelled to come to this point. May we never forget the charm of the "old, weird America."

Brittas, Glantane, Ireland,
the 2nd of September 2018

Dorothea Gail

1 Introduction

> Enlightened people didn't really care anymore about the minimum wage or workers' rights. But the stuff about authenticity and personal fulfillment – the stuff that appealed to "the young existentialists" – that stuff would win elections. (Thomas Frank, *Listen, Liberal* 50)

The course of pop music history changed when in July 1965, Bob Dylan took the stage at Newport Folk Festival. Dylan had not only defined the sound of the folk music revival as it encountered the age of rock and roll, the persona he constructed had been *the* face of folk for a new generation of postwar fans. But when he strummed his first chords on an electric guitar at the performance in Newport, he encountered loud booing. Backstage, the apocryphal image of a furious Pete Seeger eager to chop off the cables of Dylan's guitar or mike from the sound system with an axe has entered the realm of pop mythology.

There are many theories about the cause of the booing that day. Some conclude that it had no relation to the transition to electric instruments or even to Dylan himself. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Dylan's move to an electric sound was subsequently seen as a betrayal by the folk community. His black leather motorcycle jacket was negatively dubbed a "sell out" jacket by critics. Greil Marcus writes in *Invisible Republic* that with Dylan's turn away from his early persona of earnest acoustic folkie to folk-rock star the "sound of his hammered acoustic guitar and pealing harmonica [...] a kind of free-floating trademark, like the peace symbol, signifying determination and honesty in a world of corruption and lies" was now neutralized, "suspended in the air" (x).

The first album after Newport, *Highway 61 Revisited* was clean and fully orchestrated in the slickest and most accessible rock 'n' roll style. A tour followed, during which Dylan had to repeatedly face crowds of fans angry at the amplified rock portions of his shows. In 1966 Dylan suffered a motorcycle accident. Recovering from it, he joined his recent tour band in recording some informal sessions in a basement. What came out of these sessions – first leaked to the public in bootlegged versions and then

partly released officially in 1975 – was a music which stood between the traditional folk style and the newly established sound of rock.

However, the 1960s new folk revival had not been just a stylistic phase in the story of pop. The entire folk music community young and old lived with one musical bible, the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, a collection of folk music recordings from the 1920s and 1930s released and made accessible to a broader public in anthology form in 1952. The songs and ballads from this anthology had been taken up by the folk music revival, which began in New York City's Greenwich Village in the 1950s and 1960s.

For the musicians of the folk revival, the anthology was a window into the American past, but not the past recognized by the consensus narrative of conservative postwar mainstream society. The *Anthology* did for America what later world music would do in a broader context; it made forgotten regional cultures accessible and opened the possibility for its modern-day practitioners to imagine themselves as part of deeply felt "authentic" cultures. In the case of the *Anthology* however, the rediscovered musical elements of the culture in question largely sidestepped issues of ethnic difference and therefore cultural accessibility. This music was presented by its champions as the pre-modern heritage of mainstream white Americans themselves, in an even more "authentic" sense than the recognizably "invented" cowboy or country mythologies that underlay some regional radio traditions in the South and the West. The field collection and recording expeditions to the Appalachians of Cecil Sharp in 1916 had laid the groundwork for better understanding – and exploitation-cum-acknowledgement – of this material by a broader mainstream community of fans. Starting in the 1950s however folk music did not just stay inside the fan community or on printed paper in some library. It was revived and adopted by the mainstream media as a sign of a real past for white America that reeked of authenticity, ever more appealing to the city dwelling youth as the times they lived in seemed ever more inauthentic.

Greil Marcus dubbed it the music of "old, weird America," an invisible American republic of the heart populated by the ghosts of the past.[1] Jefferson Cowie and Lauren Boehm write about Marcus's dream of this past in connection with Bruce Springsteen:

[1] The title of the revised edition of *Invisible Republic* is *The Old, Weird America*.

> Just as the last vestiges of hope for a republic of wage earners were collapsing, so was what Greil Marcus celebrated as the wild and eccentric "invisible republic" of people's music. Marcus invokes the idea of a strange, vibrant, interracial republican world of vinyl, where all of the wild and eccentric energy of America came together in popular music: "Here is a mystical body of the republic, a kind of public secret: a declaration of a weird but clearly recognizable America within the America of the exercise of institutional majoritarian power." In "Born in the U.S.A.," however, the "old weird America" seems to be coming to a close as the official trumps the mystical, the national smothers the local, and the majority drowns out the individual. The "ruling question of public life" is no longer what Marcus describes as "how people plumb their souls and then present their discoveries, their true selves to others" [1997, 125] but, as Springsteen proclaims, how "you spend half your life just covering up." (371-72)

I would like to look at the grey area between the two poles of Marcus's "old weird" authenticity, and Springsteen's new world of "lifestyles" in which the self is engaged in a constant cover up. The "weirdness" of Bob Dylan's basement tapes is not just an effect of the weirdness of old folky styles filtered through his own personal weirdness; rather it comes through the combination in these basement tapes of the old with the new, of dreams of revived authenticity combined with the forward driving force of the market. This contradiction expressed something about the times after the peaking of the civil rights and peace movements; a time in which co-optation was rapidly uncovering yet also taking away the glimpses of authenticity from the past, a time in which the folk music community was "as conflicted as all America," as Mark Sinker observed in *The Wire* (76).

My investigations deal with such conflicted and "weird" musics.[2] The weirdness arrives among us through the category of "in-betweenness," a tense, unstable field lying between the concept of authenticity and the concept of the market, between inherent if subjective experiences of identity and the conscious commodification of identity. The tension derives from trying to hold on to something which gives meaning, while managing the subordination of meaning to the market's endless need for new musical product.

[2] My category overlaps but not fully encompasses what has been labeled "outsider music" (Chusid).

If we look at individual American artists and the ways they have negotiated between these two poles since about 1980, we get a picture of a society and its subcultures filled with people trying to make a living while expressing something honest about themselves. These individuals must however play according to the rules for distributing political, economic, and symbolic power in a neoliberal market economy that more and more permeates all parts of our lives. This economy insists we are consumers first and foremost, and only secondarily workers, artists, thinkers, and citizens. In my research I have tried to find out if neoliberalism has already fully swallowed up the artistic identity of the musicians I examine, or if they have found a way to at least partly escape co-optation. Is authenticity still possible, or – as Thomas Frank has suggested in his path-breaking book *The Conquest of Cool*, and the more recent *Listen, Liberal* – has it become just another word for self-fulfillment, a performance, a lifestyle choice itself, rather than an issue of finding ultimate meaning in a core identity free of market or other outside considerations? How did patterns of artistic value definition, and the forms in which these values were expressed, change over the course of the more than three decades from 1980 to the 2010s? What do these changes tell us about the current passage through which American culture is making its way?

The ideological field in which this passage is taking place is neoliberalism, introduced into public policy in its current form under Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. In its basic economic sense, neoliberalism was a turn away from Keynesian economics and the legacy of the New Deal interventionist and redistributionist state, which had sought to regulate capitalism after its near-collapse during the Great Depression. In its place, Chicago School economists like Milton Friedman advocated countering high inflation with a tight monetary policy, tax cuts for big businesses to cause investments and a "trickle down" effect, and deregulation of the financial sector. The same policies were mirrored by Britain's then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

For our purposes however, neoliberalism cannot be understood in the merely economic sense, as an updated anti-statist version of *laissez-faire* capitalism (a doctrine of classic liberalism). Neoliberal ideas about the market as the ultimate arena for the enactment of politics, personhood, and human value now permeate American culture. The long-term results are a rising gap between the rich and the poor, the decimation of organized labor, the rise of the "consumer" as the replacement for the old identity of

"citizen," and the deterioration or outright disappearance of any ideas about the commons or public good that cannot be monetized and commodified for personal gain (cf. Hickel; W. Brown; Chomsky).

In this ideological regime, products (and in this study I am focusing on musical products) have to succeed in the neoliberal market in order for their intrinsic (in this case aesthetic) value to become real. This does not mean however, that such values (moral, religious, ideological, political) embedded in the products are necessarily superfluous or even damaging to their marketability. In this study I track the options artists have to express their beliefs and values (their "authenticity"), while at the same time they negotiate the market's different set of options.

I use the word "in-between" rather than the already well theorized term "hybridity" to express the idea that the tension between competing world views and competing ways of life remains unresolved and therefore more conceptually and heuristically dynamic.[3] I retain the term hybridity however, to describe the inner aesthetics of musical works, as a marker of a successful melting of different cultural musical traits. When I then deploy the actual term "in-between(ness)" in musical aesthetics, I seek to mark an actual point when successful hybridity becomes unstable, thereby exposing an external, market-driven "in-betweenness," which only pretends that cultures join together in a mutual agreement.

Hybridity is often hailed as an achievable solution for problems of assimilation or a welcome outcome of successful integration in advanced late capitalist consumer societies. Many times, however, such hybridity is

[3] In this I follow Homi Bhabha, who pointed out the liminality of hybridity and its threat towards centers of power. The category of "in-betweenness" can be applied to describe both the identity of individual artists (located between two or more identities) and the cultural location of the music (between authenticity and the market). The Call for Papers for the 2013 "Liminality & Borderlands" conference of the U.S. Chapter of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music stated: "[P]opular music and culture are full of performers and characters who move through and effectively occupy zones of 'in-betweenness,' carrying signifiers of more than one identity at a time while fully embodying none." For the usage of the term "in-betweenness" in pop music and art see Basu and Crowdy et al., for identity see Walter. The separate discourse around musical hybridity (especially in the UK) emphasizes the creative potential in fusing cultures, and is less focused on investigating the power relationships and the appropriation of cultures of "Otherness" unavoidably connected with it (cf. Haynes).

very fragile, depending on an equilibrium of economic or physical power between incompatible groups of roughly the same status, or the random good will of a hegemonic establishment, usually ethnically or religiously based, that gains political and moral legitimacy from temporarily allowing such diversity.

What happens however, when the correlations of power shift, and hegemonic orders become unstable? I want to investigate the ruptured, incomplete and compromised in the entanglements of authenticity with the market in a late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century America which has progressed way beyond the sweet spot and panacea of achievable equal opportunity into unknown cultural and political territory, a country showing more signs of domestic instability by the day.

American Culture between Authenticity and the Market

In the five different musical case studies that comprise this book, I examine the place of identity and of values in cultural practice and discourse in the United States since the 1980s. After the first emergence of identity politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and then a return to a social ethos of conspicuous consumption under the Reagan administration in the 1980s, new and old subgroups defined by shared values proliferated or redefined themselves by the end of the century. These diverse values found expression in religious belief, ethnic, regional, or gender identity, socially stratified aesthetic taste, and political ideology. The subcultures attracted support and propagated their beliefs by defining their values as lifestyle choices, available in a society defined no longer by the role of citizen but of consumer.

Unlike earlier campaigns to spread universal or consensus values such as equality and civil rights, defined as important for the society as a whole, the newer waves of value propagation became linked to parochial projects of subcultural identity-making. The language of identity thereby took over the cultural and political role of critiquing limitations that still stood in the way for non-white people and economically precarious members of the white lower and middle classes in both their struggle for self-realization and in their chances in the marketplace. The overarching system of enactment of identity politics and ethnic essentialism at the end of the 20th century even allowed groups *within* the ethnic and cultural main-

stream such as conservative evangelical Christians to partake in a discourse demanding their recognition as valuable identity groups. Stephen Greenblatt therefore believes that "there is an urgent need to […] understand the vitally important dialectic of cultural persistence and change" (1-2) as neither the newer concepts of "hybridity" nor the older of "rootedness and autochthony" seem to fit with the contemporary reality in which cosmopolitanism, hegemonic nationalism, and rejectionist identity politics all exist at the same time in the same social formation.

The mainstream culture of the United States for most of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first is the classic example of a consumer society. Fox and Lears note that when this "new" societal form – in which consumption of commodities is the driver of a capitalistic economic system – emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, voices of contestation could already be heard. Subjected to critical analysis by Marxist-influenced scholars (Benjamin, Adorno, Attali) or other figures such as Max Weber, this system (and its attendant culture industry and mass market) has established itself as the dominant "American way of life" or the "American Dream." Many studies have described the history and values underlying this consumer culture (cf. Goodwin et al.; Cross; McGovern; Cohen; Appleby).

In such a socioeconomic formation, even the smallest and most well-hidden subcultures cannot maintain a position of dialectical opposition outside of the system but become part of the system's claim to diversity, innovation, and the creation of new types of market demand. Acknowledging the ubiquity of the market and the fragmented criteria for describing an elective affinity (ethnicity, race, class, gender, religion, age, region, etc.) scholars have introduced new terminologies for describing a subculture; as "urban tribe," "new tribe," "co-culture," "partial culture," or "fragmented culture" (cf. Muggleton and Weinzierl; Bennett and Kahn-Harris; Samovar et al.; in the particular case of music and subculture, also Hebdige 1987 and 1993). Due to the market's co-optation and commercialization of the category of "identity" (usually interpreted as a commodified lifestyle choice), the ideas of a counterculture or a culture of resistance collapse into the superficial category of "subculture." Today, even formerly hegemonic, pre-market identities like "Christian," gladly identify as belonging to a commodified "Christian" subculture. Meanwhile the fragmentation of such markets makes it ever more difficult to define a clearly dominant mass culture.

In one of the first widespread reactions to the initial establishment of this commercialization/co-optation consensus, the hippies and the rest of the 1960s counterculture played a decisive role in at least reintroducing (if not coherently advocating or defining) the ideal of a fulfilled and meaningful life into mainstream discussion, following in the less visible footsteps of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg a decade or two earlier. They connected the idea to an emphasis on individualism and with a rejection of middle-class culture. To counter the alienating extremes that individualism risked, they mythologized a community-oriented spirit, even if the community in mind was their own subgroup (Rorabaugh 11). In this hippie understanding of authenticity, there was always the risk that the will to self-fulfillment would easily get corrupted back into selfishness and lose the communal spirit through a concentration on individualism. Authenticity as self-realization also proved easy for the market to co-opt – one only has to think about the continuation of "spiritual" commodification into the twenty-first century, as presented in the book and film *Eat, Pray, Love* (Gilbert). Authenticity can also confuse the spirit of longing for a simpler past with the desire for a *völkisch* authoritarianism that supposedly existed before modernity supposedly broke all the bonds of traditional communitarianism. Charles Taylor takes us through these dilemmas in *The Ethics of Authenticity*, investigating the tension between the will to individualism and a longing for a lost order of meaning. Marshall Berman follows the intellectual history of authenticity from the post-renaissance "emergence of modern society" and also understands it in terms of the claim of the individual to happiness.

This idea easily moves via romanticism into the world of subjective feelings and emotion. By the second half of the twentieth century, it had moved even further towards a therapeutic culture, in which the quest for happiness is so individualized that it can be easily co-opted by the market through the idea that the fulfillment of happiness (and also the risk of realizing one's own misery) is no longer connected with societal circumstances or responsibilities (Imber). Authenticity, understood as an expression of reality, was also thought to have disappeared in postmodernism. Hanneke Stolk writes in connection with postmodernism's critique of capitalism:

> Baudrillard discussed "bubbles of simulation" like Disneyland as places constructed according to a scenario of potent signs and images. His work

> offers an interesting perspective on questions of reality and authenticity and reveals the very important social and cultural role that such "meaningless" locations play in the way we construct these concepts in our contemporary societies. (230)

Music between Authenticity and the Market

Perhaps more than other art forms, music has been instrumental in symbolizing lifestyle choices, in disseminating messages about subcultural beliefs and affiliations, and in defining the individual's relationship to the consumer society. However, and despite a seemingly vibrant mass popular publishing industry devoted to this topic, music has been somewhat underutilized as a means to investigate the cultural changes in recent American society, while art and literature feature prominently in this discourse. I therefore want to stress that this study does not take music as its main subject, in the sense of tracking a series of genres unfolding in the art form's history. Rather I use the category music as a tool to investigate those cultural changes. Music both reflects and influences the broader production of culture while remaining an important cultural practice in itself, an important repository and stage for the enactment of the key individualist myth of artistic freedom. Music has played a prime role in the establishment of the consumer culture, through its deployment in advertising and in the various emergent genres of popular music itself, starting with sheet music production in Tin Pan Alley and furthered by the invention of the gramophone record (Suisman; T. Taylor 2012). In *The Conquest of Cool,* Thomas Frank has pointed out how a long series of countercultural phenomena, including music, which might have started out as protest against mainstream society became appropriated by the same society and made to serve the dominant values of consumption and conformity.

David Hesmondhalgh (1995) indicates that the authenticity of "independent" labels (which are supposedly independent from the major labels and not just fronts for the bigger ones) has to be questioned, when they collaborate with bigger labels in the distribution of their underground records. The broader market actually tolerates the smaller labels as a way to have them figure out the market; once a new style establishes they move in with force to exploit exactly this style (cf. also Hesmondhalgh 2002; Garofalo 1987; Kotarba and Vannini 78-81; Fenster; King).

Musical discussions about authenticity have often revolved around the seriousness of the musical expression in contrast to a supposedly superficial "fun" or "make-believe" function of ludic play.[4] In the course of this discussion, rock music became a genre connected with the idea of authenticity, while disco music – in which flamboyant gay behavior, the concept of "camp," and dance were supposed to dominate – became understood as inauthentic by much of the mainstream audience and critical community of popular music (to the question of rock's co-optation see Grossberg 338; Chapple and Garofalo). The problem involved in these dialectical definitions was that rock music was perceived as predominantly white and straight, while disco was configured as black and gay. When a deliberate campaign against the inauthenticity of disco got included as a promotional gimmick during a 1979 baseball match in Chicago – resulting in the destruction of disco records in the half-time break – the supposed authenticity of rock outed itself as essentialist discrimination on this Disco Demolition Night.

Modern popular music arguably first got connected with a rhetoric of authenticity in the course of the modern folk revival of the 1960s. Later on, it became associated with the music produced by non-white cultures, which were still believed to be intact and practicing their own lifeways and value systems outside the commercial nexus – or at least they were so understood by the New Age and world music movements that sought to exploit them. Regina Bendix, writing about the search for authenticity in the folklore movement, points toward the mingling of authenticity and the market when Zulu singers back up Paul Simon or when "indigenous" people lobby for copyrighted protection of their arts and crafts. She refers to the impossibility of distinguishing between "fakelore" and folklore (101). Timothy Taylor writes in *Global Pop* about the persistent and self-serving idea that musical authenticity is located outside the white market:

> Western culture is neither pure nor impure because it is owned. It is constructed as outside the purview of such ideas as authenticity. But other cultures' forms are available to be constructed as pure or impure when they are not owned, and even, sometimes, when they are. I would like to make it clear that the "authenticity" I am attempting to describe here is a

[4] Cf. Barker and Taylor. I would like to highly recommend Richard Elliott's detailed course syllabus "Popular Music & the Politics of Authenticity" for an approach towards authenticity in popular music.

> real thing, not just a marketing tool, or as Martin Stokes has written, "a discursive trope of great persuasive power," or, as Iain Chambers has argued, on the wane. But "authenticity" is something that many musicians and listeners believe in *and* use as a discursive trope. (22)

In *Footsteps in the Dark,* George Lipsitz ponders the culture of prefabrication that is rife in the pop music industry, where boy band identities are "scripted and carefully coordinated on the basis of market research," never being "original, innovative, or unpredictable" (4). He thereby establishes a lower limit by which to evaluate commercial authenticity, a standard which is not reliant on historical exactness and ethnic essentialism. In *Dangerous Crossroads* he shows us that questions of authenticity can become especially burdensome to musicians from formerly colonized countries, as the reality that such musicians grew up in was always a reality of many cosmopolitan influences. Allen Moore likewise lobbies for replacing the static word "authenticity" with the more dynamic "authentication" – the process of investigating if a musical expression is sincere (cf. Trilling, who presents sincerity as a moral category).

Case Studies

In this book, I investigate what kind of authenticity is at play in a selection of artistic case studies, and how this authenticity is altered, overdetermined, or defined by aspects of market logic. I argue for the possibility of a measurable authenticity, which, like an ingredient in a recipe, is always mixed with the other ingredient of marketability to produce the final internal-aesthetic as well as external-cultural meaning of the art in question. My study examines the intersection of aesthetic, subcultural, and consumerist values in the post-Fordist society of consumption operating in the United States since the 1980s. I take five eclectically selected case studies of musical activity from different U.S. subcultures and examine them, using approaches from the fields of critical/cultural studies as well as musicology. I locate each of these musical activities between the conceptual poles of authenticity (as measured by the aesthetic and political/moral values of the interpretive communities that produced them) and the market imperatives of the wider consumer society. I examine these subcultures' efforts to position their respective musics at a particular cultural location in-between these two poles. I believe these efforts can tell us much about

the interaction of music, identity, and consumption in the transition from an "empire of production" to an "empire of consumption" that the historian Charles Maier has identified as a salient aspect of late modern society in the United States.

This under-researched field addresses important emerging topics such as the study of whiteness and political conservatism in U.S. culture studies (cf. the anthology *White Privilege* by Rothenberg). My study is of sociopolitical importance in showing how the tensions between consumer society and subcultural values are interwoven strands in the emergence of a particular kind of post-consensus but nevertheless mainstream culture. In the historical period we have entered of American political and cultural hegemony in decline, this study will help us to understand how power has recently been negotiated and understood in domestic American cultural debates. It will help us better understand and cope with various tendencies in a declining model of American multiculturalism, as power struggles become more intense due to global economic and political instability.

My choice of these five case studies aims to cover a sufficient range of subcultures and musical styles representative of the late twentieth-century United States. The case studies deal with milieus and musics in which the tensions between artistic authenticity, the market imperative, and values within and outside the subculture are overtly articulated and highly visible. All of the studies cover cases in which musical production is not integrated into the mainstream big business of the entertainment industry. In this book I do not focus on the production of mass-market culture, but on subcultural musical phenomena that have emerged in this consumer society without fully participating in its values. In contrast to studies that investigate musical subcultures in the strictest sense of the term, my effort will focus on music in a broader range of subcultures or partial cultures (subgroups) which are not necessarily constituted or defined by the music itself.

The case studies include 1) anti-consumerist tendencies in the second wave of Detroit techno electronic dance music (Underground Resistance); 2) the commercialization of conservative Christian values in Contemporary Christian Music (BarlowGirl); 3) the redefinition of ethnicity and world-views in Native American/Chicano cross-over music (R. Carlos Nakai and Larry Yáñez); 4) the question of elitism and outsider status in the classical music scene (Charles Ives) and 5) the fusion of consumer values, branding, and community identity in advertising via of the self-

produced jukebox music of the regional roadside restaurant chain Waffle House.

In the chapter on the early twentieth-century classical composer Charles Ives, I mostly investigate the reception of his music from the 1980s to today, rather than focusing on the artist himself. The questions I pose to this material about authenticity and the market therefore concern the recent reception, and not the composer himself. In that way, this chapter differs from the others in which the musicians themselves are the main protagonists.

Detroit techno's in-betweenness is unexpected. Middle-class African Americans built a new form of electronic music called techno out of elements from earlier dance music forms, Italo pop, and the sound of the German band Kraftwerk. This appropriation of European genres got reappropriated in turn when techno music conquered the UK and Europe, making its black roots a forgotten footnote in the mainstream history of techno music. But it is not just the weirdness of standing between black and white – hiding their faces behind gasmasks or bandanas to be "visibly invisible" as blacks – that makes Detroit techno compelling, it is also the weirdness of standing between life and death. Detroit has become a haunted city, a city of living ghosts and of dead ghosts, the past ghosts of the slave trade and the present ghosts of the drug trade, ghosts in the form of robots in outer space or in the absence of the composer through his substitution with the DJ. Imagining space and equality in a musical dream sphere in the so-called musical underground has become the way of resisting further exploitation (e.g., through the music industry).

Detroit copes with the harsh reality on the ground of a black, Southern-derived population that came to the industrial North to nurture hopes of freedom and prosperity just in time to see these hopes crushed when industry moved to the non-unionized South and white flight left the city center desolate. The discrepancy between the broadening horizons of the African American middle-class mind and the late twentieth-century dystopia it witnessed on the ground in this city created the matrix for the creativity of techno's beginnings. I follow the label Underground Resistance in the second wave of Detroit techno since the 1990s in their efforts to stay independent and nevertheless be able to make a living through music.

The weirdness and the feeling of sitting between two non-compatible chairs in the case study of the Christian rock group BarlowGirl from

Chicago's suburbs comes less from the music itself, which sounds like a slightly hysterical form of standard stadium rock music. The impression of weirdness comes rather from the combination of rock music – in itself rebellious and aiming to express protest – and the extremely conservative Christian lyrics, yelling out a defense of sexual purity, the overwhelming threat of worldly temptation, and self-crushing confessions of faith failing and "falling." The weirdness is also located in the specific late twentieth-century Christian fundamentalist subculture's expressivity and affect, which combines extreme ideological positions with soft-sell consumer and popular culture form; trying, for example, to make chastity hip through the "virgin chic" (Deerman) of "True Love Waits" rings and father-daughter chastity balls. In the case of the Barlow family, whose three daughters have toured as BarlowGirl, we deal with a fourth and fifth generation Catholic Irish immigrant family background, now turned Protestant non-denominational charismatic with a vengeance. In the third generation, the girl's paternal grandparents in the 1950s had been upwardly mobile. The girl's parents and aunts and uncles however, came of age in the 1960s and 1970. Classic products of the Reagan years in the '80s, they embraced the cults of entrepreneurialism and business consultancy as well as therapeutic approaches to consumerism, finally jumping onto the bandwagon of consumer Christianization in the early '90s with its emerging megachurches. Remaining upwardly mobile in a time of growing inequality however, gradually became an unattainable goal which could only be achieved through magical thinking and the embrace of the prosperity gospel: believe in God and you shall be given what you want.

The downside of a magical world view, however, were the extreme fears projected onto the Barlow children, sheltered from the outside by something like a family-based cult: home birth, homeschooling, Christian college, family economic project via an all-female Christian band composed of the three daughters, with the father as band manager. Regardless of this non-mainstream worldview and the all-pervasive family cult, the outward appearance was in the consumerist idiom: multiple outfits for the band on stage and their publicity, the embrace of the Disney princess image, consistently narcissistic self-centeredness, and superficiality in interviews.

The next case study seeks out the in-betweenness linking the poles of a Native American and a Chicano identity and the intellectual sphere of

experimental art and pop music, channeled through a New Age market. R. Carlos Nakai, a versatile Native flute player, and Larry Yáñez, a Chicano artist with inclinations towards rock and avant-garde music, formed the ensemble Jackalope at the beginning of the 1980s. An image that captures this weirdness would be a Navajo with a U.S. military veteran's cap eating Mexican food in a restaurant in Tucson, Arizona with me, a German researcher, talking about the shared experience of an exhibition of stuffed chimeras (composite animals or *Wolpertinger*) in a museum in Munich. Or a Chicano in his Arizona home town of Yuma (rhymes with "humor") eating potato tacos with the same researcher after the discovery that both love the cacophonic music of Charles Ives.

For the player of the Native flute, R. Carlos Nakai, it had been an inspiring example to see that R. C. Gorman, a Navajo, had made it out of the relatively narrow tribal world onto the bigger cosmopolitan stage as an artist. Having seen the outlines of a wider intellectual and artistic horizon than what was available on the reservation while growing up near Flagstaff, Nakai tried to expand beyond his birth identity by becoming a classical trumpeter, only to get his dreams crushed, together with his wind-instrument player's teeth, by a car accident. He then took up the Native flute, selling his own music mostly in New Age markets. Enter a Chicano artist, Larry Yáñez; together they start mocking ethnic conquest and exploitation, developing an in-between project called Jackalope – after a mythical animal half jackrabbit and antelope. Here, they mixed pop music, experimental noise, and a haunting flute sound.

The context out of which this music grows is a complex one – the experience of being born in a land repeatedly conquered by others, mixing Natives, Hispanics, Anglos, and later hippies and the conservative right. The unstable mixture represented by the Jackalope is more a dream of a possible multiculturalism than a reality.

The weirdness in the reception of the early-twentieth-century classical music of the New Englander Charles Ives comes from the clash of elitism and eccentricity in the urban and small-town worlds of the progressive-era East Coast. The region's academic and cultural life was cut off from Europe but nevertheless extremely Eurocentric, steeped in the ideas of free thought, transcendentalism, individualism, and a certain kind of post-Protestant moralism. The social and cultural history of his reception reflects the quality of in-betweenness already inherent in Charles Ives's own life and work. Ives had seemed destined to become a banker or business-

man, but he also wanted to be an artist and finally managed to live both lives in parallel. This left him as an outsider in the professional musical world despite his sound musical education and a mentor who had studied in Munich. Ives developed a style best described as polymorphously hybrid, while more or less maintaining the framework of classical form. The psychological tensions between family expectations of a successful business career, the identity conflicts around possible closeted homosexuality sublimated into homophobia, and the guilt generated by leaving his art as an avocation seems to have contributed to a music full of breaks, collapses, and loops, one that mixed pop and classical idioms and used literary forms as a means for building new musical structures. His music spoke to people who felt similarly torn between conflicting identities and duties. In the belated scholarly reception of this music however – the subject on which I focus in my chapter – it was not the label of eccentricity, but the category of eliteness that prevailed as a way of permanently defining Ives. Newer generations of musicologists succeeded in establishing a view of Ives as a "normal" romantic composer – in the course of a heated discussion in regards to Ives's normativity or deviance – and thereby made it possible to elevate Ives into the established pantheon of the Eurocentric classical music cult.

The Waffle House fast-food chain has an in-house jukebox, on which part of the selection consists of promotional music composed for the Waffle House company itself by professional jingle composers. However, the resulting material takes the form of extremely cleverly composed and well produced, complete pop songs extolling the actual food item one is already eating at the Waffle House as the song is playing. Not only are these songs too long to be usable radio broadcast ads, they are only available on these jukeboxes in the Waffle House once one has already made the decision to sit down and order food. The songs stand weirdly in-between – not being real songs in themselves, nor being superficial advertisement clips. The failure to fit in preconceived categories of what songs are for, so to say, at the same time makes them artistically very interesting. Through them an older Southern folk tradition of musical parody can play itself out in a novel and commercial setting. The South itself serves here as a staging ground of an in-betweenness with a rich historical perspective. Adding to and making such an in-between form of music, is possible there where local white identity had remained something apart from the sensibilities of a globalizing world deep into the twentieth century, while

stuck in an endless loop of the 1950s to the 1980s when the region rejoined the national economy.

I had to leave out many other possible case studies. For example, I did not write about Asian Americans and the American Idol contestant William Hung, a Hong Kong-born American on the West Coast, who made a career out of getting humiliated by the show's jury for his awful performances. In the end, he wound up becoming loved precisely for his awfulness by a huge audience who saw in him an exemplification of the American Dream: you gamble, try to reach as high as you can, and if you fail, that's part of the dream. William Hung did not fail financially. He founded a music label and marketed his "awful" image so well that he actually ended up being hired as one of the Super Bowl half-time musicians. I also did not write about Latino music and the tragic life of Selena Quintanilla-Pérez, an incredibly popular tejano singer, who got murdered by the female founder of her fan club. I had to leave out the story of the Chicano Elvis impersonator El Vez, whose weirdness would have fitted perfectly.[5] Another singer I left out with regret – because I chose R. Carlos Nakai for investigating Native cross-over – is Radmilla Cody born to an African American father and a Navajo mother. Her soul filled voice singing the National Anthem in Navajo language is such a beautiful part of this country that I hope that somebody else will fill this and all the other gaps I have left, in the future.

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I embarked on field studies for this book in March of 2015, spending a week each in Detroit (techno music), Phoenix (Native/Chicano cross-over music), Atlanta (Waffle House music) and Chicago (BarlowGirl). As part of the subculture of musicologists in the U.S., and involved in Ives research during earlier phases of my scholarly career, I decided to work insights into this topic from my personal experience of this scene. It was sometimes not that easy to get access and interview time, as the different subcultures were aware that I would write about them from a possibly critical perspective. I did not want to hide the fact that I was coming with something of an anthropological approach, with all the classic epis-

[5] Cf. Mita Banerjees investigation into El Vez's performance of an ethnic Elvis.

temological power of a white scholarly investigator already pre-entangled in an unequal power relationship.

When we look at the relation of power to whiteness several things came up in my field studies that might tell us about how the players/musicians locate themselves in a larger cultural system. It might seem a coincidence that most of the white subjects – the Waffle House musicians, the Waffle House executives and the BarlowGirls – chose to remain nearly invisible for me. In the case of BarlowGirl, a band which had disbanded at the end of 2012, I could not find any email or phone information for the three sisters. Several emails to their father Vince Barlow, who had been their manager, remained unanswered. The only contact I got was an email exchange with the African American minister of the church they had gone to in Elgin, but he could do nothing else than suggest to me to try emailing Vince Barlow.

I respect this decision to retain privacy, but it also hewed closely to the general tenor of their relations with the complicated outside world of other cultures in the multicultural USA. At the end, I had a pleasant interview with the (white) musician Matt Lundgren at Willow Creek megachurch in Chicago's North-West. Despite the stress of pre-Easter preparations, he took 30 minutes to sit with me face to face in the church's cafe to answer my questions regarding Willow Creek and its music.

In the case of Waffle House in Atlanta I had two phone conversations with musicians and one with representatives of the company, however I was not able to meet any of them in person, something I had offered to do. Waffle House first stonewalled me and I had to call and email a couple of times before they agreed to a phone interview, asking me to submit my questions beforehand. I wondered about that, because I clearly identified myself as a "fan" of their music and food. When I finally talked to them they refused to take the interview beyond the repetition of company promotional objectives onto a more "personal" level of a behind the scenes encounter. The press agent was very careful not to reveal any real insights into the system, sometimes even seeming to know less than myself (for example that all and not just a selection of the tunes had been transferred to the new digital jukebox). Even the musicians I talked to seemed to be extra careful in choosing their words. It seemed that business practice in Atlanta – as in many other cities – hewed to the convention that you only meet with insiders on a personal level. Everything seemed very corporate. Waffle House were the most suspicious of all the subcultures, having a

second spokesperson listening into the phone conversation I had with the executive.

In the case of the techno outfit Underground Resistance, I had no problem getting an appointment with John Collins, manager of UR/Submerge in Detroit, who gave me a tour through the in-house techno museum. Only *after* the three-hour long tour was over did I ask him for a recorded interview, because I did not expect to immediately be trusted as a white researcher from outside the community. When Collins was nice enough to set another appointment for that interview, he nevertheless checked my questions in advance to screen out any possible "trick" questions. The experience of white exploitation is a staple in the culture of African American Detroit and I can understand this caution. This pattern of being accessible to fans but not to the general public is also apparent in the door policy of techno clubs. I spent two nights dancing to the music of Robert Hood and John Collins in Berlin's Tresor club and one-night dancing to Underground Resistance's Buzz Goree at the Berlin Berghain club. Tresor has a very capricious and sometimes hostile door culture. The club has no particular soft spot for journalists or researchers; as they never tire of pointing out, they don't need publicity. I guess that the Detroit techno T-shirt I wore that night identified me as an insider. The doors of Berghain were friendlier; however even here I got patted down for drinks and my cell phone was checked because they don't allow photos.

The ready access and the warm welcome in Phoenix from Robert Doyle, CEO of Canyon Records which distributes Jackalope and R. Carlos Nakai, was pleasantly surprising. I interviewed Nakai in Tucson and Larry Yáñez in Yuma, a four hour drive away, both face-to-face, in their family homes. Here however I was dealing with musicians plugged into the academic scene, all college graduates. They knew what I planned to do and were already aware of their rights and their positions in a knowledge and culture economy that put a premium on creativity, exoticism, and individuality. They opened their world, their corporate offices, and their private spheres sufficiently so I could let the impressions of the environment in.