

**'Latent Body - Plastic, Malleable, Inscribed:  
*The human voice, the body, and the sound of its  
transformation through technology*'**

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**[Abstract]**

This article examines, through the grooves of the record disc as a site, the inscription of the human voice onto the recorded medium, and the way recording technology has changed how the listener hears and comprehends the physical body. Recording technology allowed human presence to be captured onto a concrete and tactile medium, and enabled the material object of the recording to then be bought, consumed and privately owned. The political implications, and reactions, to this cultural paradigm are discussed. The article focuses on contemporary practices in popular music consumption, and observes that, in works that involve the voice, the human body and the material object are bound up in manifestations of the cult of celebrity.

KEYWORDS: Body, Voice, Technology, Recording, Phonograph, Gorillaz

## **Introduction: Latent Body: Plastic, Circular, Inscribed**

One does not want to accord it any form other than the one it itself exhibits: a black pane made of a composite mass which these days no longer has its honest name any more than automobile fuel is called benzine; fragile like tablets, with a circular label in the middle that still looks most authentic when adorned with a prewar terrier hearkening to his master's voice; at the very center, a little hole that is at times so narrow that one has to redrill it wider so that the record can be laid upon the platter. It is covered with curves, a delicately scribbled, utterly illegible writing, which here and there forms more plastic figures for reasons that remain obscure to the layman upon listening; structured like a spiral, it ends somewhere in the vicinity of the title label, to which it is sometimes connected by a lead-out groove so that the needle can comfortably finish its trajectory. In terms of its "form", this is all that it will reveal."<sup>1</sup> – Theodor Adorno (Adorno, 1934, 1990)

What is it about that childhood discovery of the parents' record collection? Of sneaking around in a musty back cupboard, piles of multi-colored paper sleeves stacked this way and that, baring photographs of men and women in various staged configurations of long hair and shiny bodies. I find one paper sleeve, all white, how curious! Inside it a large black plastic disc, with nodes – concentric rings inscribed upon its surface. At the center of the black disc, a circular label with green-apple icon. The form of the object I hold in my hands seems indicative of its mode of playback, and there have been times when I've observed my parents playing these discs before. I check over my shoulder – all quiet, nobody else seems to be around. So I take the record out of its sleeve, carefully set the disc's center hole through the pin, and line up the player needle to the outer grooves of the black disc. I press the play button, and watch the record begin to spin – slowly at first, now circling faster until out of the spinning grooves in the plastic come singing voices direct and immediate, filling the living room with sound. The voices that emanate from the disc are gnarly and harmonizing, accompanied by jangling guitars and loping drums. The songs seem at once familiar and far away. Small dents in the grooves produce

periodic incursions of rasp and jitter: I can hear the grain of the voice, and the grain of the material itself, the LP record.

This article will, through the grooves of the record disc as a site, look at the recorded voice and the way in which the materiality of the physical body – human or plastic – manifests itself in the era of sound recording and reproduction. We will enter the broad issues that connect the voice, the body and technology through the orifice of the mouth: Florence Nightingale's mouth, to be precise. Let us open with an 1890 recording of Nightingale speaking onto the Edison phonographic cylinder.

Female announcer:

"At Florence Nightingale's house, London: July the Thirtieth, Eighteen hundred, and ninety."

Florence Nightingale:

"When I am no longer

Even a memory, Just a name,

I hope my voice may perpetuate

The great work of my life.

God bless my dear old comrades of Balaclava,

And bring them safe to shore.

Florence Nightingale." <sup>ii</sup> (Nightingale, in Maconie, 2002, p.59)

When over a century after its creation I stumbled across this cylinder recording on MP3, I was immediately struck by the experience of hearing – with a kind of digital empiricism and with circum-aural headphones cupped close – the revealing quality of Florence Nightingale's voice as she spoke directly in my ear. Despite its age and antiquated means of production, the recording allows us to hear much of the woman behind the voice – traces of human utterance and gesture are contained in the document. We can hear the body and its internal mechanisms of nervous tension as she tries to deliver her words with perfect conviction: the sound of the lips forming the vowel-shapes of her upper-class

British diction; the resonant chambers that sound the body – soft and hard palettes, nasal cavity, something of the chest; deeper, we may hear the involuntary vibration of the vocal folds as they are activated by the air stream; we hear Nightingale’s audible breath, the pitch-center of her voice, the natural peaks and troughs of intonation, rhythm, timbre, and the audible degeneration of the vocal chords from age and wear. One may observe that this audible information enables the listener to complete the “visual” form. As Naomi Cumming puts it (Cumming, 2000), as listeners we use aural clues to construct the “sonic illusion” of a personality behind the sound.<sup>iii</sup> When we hear the qualities of Nightingale’s speaking voice, the listener can (and most likely will) visually imagine the physical form of the elderly woman leaning her mouth towards the large horn of the phonograph in the recording studio.

Also embedded in the audio document is the coarse sound of the voice as it inscribed in the wax, and in turn we also hear the sound of the needle following the grooves, the cylinder spun into motion after being vigorously hand-cranked. It is all these components of the Nightingale recording combined that Roland Barthes refers to in his renowned essay as *the grain of the voice* (Barthes, 1977) – the *grain* being “the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs.”<sup>iv</sup> In terms of vocal recording, as it pertains to this article, the *grain* is understood as the *sound* of the physical body as it is revealed through the archived voice.<sup>v</sup> The physical body, I suggest, refers to both the human trace contained in the recording, as well as the tangible physical object that houses the recording – that is, the phonographic cylinder, the LP, CD, the MP3 player, and so on.<sup>vi</sup>



Home recording on a phonograph cylinder, from an 1913 advertisement.<sup>vii</sup>

The phonographic cylinder captured the voice in a notation of grooves inscribed onto wax, but what impression was left on the body of the speaker by this process? The ability to capture a trace of the body for perpetuity had already been put in place with the photographic medium, but to harness the body in an audible form signified a unique and special moment. Recording technology was at such an early stage when Nightingale committed her voice to the cylinder, she was most likely incredibly curious to hear how her voice would sound when played back. That is, to hear for the first time the sound of her own echo, and with the longest sonic delay humans had, up to that point, ever encountered.

### **Recording the Body, Preserving the Body**

The cylinder recording of Florence Nightingale's voice enshrines a new day, a critical place in the history of recording and notation of the human voice, and it marked a

significant shift in our aural experience of the human body. This is a practice so familiar to listeners today that we take it as a given: the separation of the voice from the body from which it originally emanated – the emergence of the *disembodied* voice.<sup>viii</sup> With the telephone and (later) Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph in 1877, the voice became free-floating, no longer rooted in a particular body, nor to a specific locale.<sup>ix</sup> As Douglas Kahn puts it (Kahn, 1999), "Phonography kept one's voice and words together but wrenched the voice from the throat and out of time".<sup>x</sup> The new technology enabled the listener to hear sound without the visual accompaniment of its generating source (the physical body), thus fulfilling Pythagoras' *Acousmatic* ideal. The philosopher would deliver lectures from behind a curtain in order to obviate any visual distraction to the listener. Now the voice without its visual accompaniment could be wildly suggestive of the speaker or singer, and with the phonograph it became the work of the listener or receiver to imagine the person behind the heard voice.<sup>xi</sup>

This new technology also brought the ability to record and then replay one's voice, which not only enabled the speaker to hear their own voice without the accompanying resonant cavities of the internal body, but also allowed for the first time a kind of conscious preservation of a trace of the body to occur. Just as the photograph preserves a visual trace, the phonograph captured for posterity an auditory remnant. At last the body, or at least the voice that expresses and represents the body, could be fully immortalized through the recording process.<sup>xii</sup> With this in mind, Edison sought to preserve the voices of famous icons of the time including those of Lord Tennyson, Joseph Pulitzer and King Edward VII, in exchange for their endorsement of the phonograph.<sup>xiii</sup> Further, in the

conscious preservation of famous historical figures through sound, the figure behind the recorded voice became elevated to something of a God-like status: immortal, omnipresent. They could embrace eternal and mythological dimensions through the projection of rootless bodies who speak from some indefinable point in space and time. Thus began an inscription and reverence of the body through the recorded voice that would have implications for the listener's relationship to the recorded star in subsequent decades.

The content of Nightingale's speech, at the age of 70 years, certainly alludes to a sense of capturing the mortal body indefinitely: we can hear in the way she frames her words a self-conscious awareness that she is engaging in the process of her own immortalization. Walter Ong (Ong, 1981) describes this notion elegantly: "Sound... bound to the present time advertises presentness. Even the voice of the dead, played from a recording, envelops us with his presence."<sup>xiv</sup> Through the recording of her voice onto the phonograph, something of Nightingale's body is harnessed and inscribed onto the grooves of the wax cylinder.

Early approaches to the new sound technology held parallels to contemporary experiments with the photographic medium. In the years that flanked the fin-de-siècle, certain associations linked phonography, photography and the afterworld, and a supernatural aura shrouded both technologies alike (Braun, 2005).<sup>xv</sup> Other connections can be made between phonographic and photographic media that tie into notions of immortalization through physical documentation. Most notably, both media enabled the

means to capture the object in a static document, and to freeze in perpetuity an instant in time using (what were then) relatively elaborate production methods. Both media had the capacity to harness the subject with photo-realist accuracy, so that the subject in the document (be it sonic or visual) was understood to be *the subject* itself, even though in practice it represented only one facet of their being – a trace of the body, harnessed, then reproduced.<sup>xvi</sup> What I am alluding to here is a sense that the audible document engraved in wax was understood to *be* that person, so that when we hear Florence Nightingale’s oration, her entire physical image is brought to mind. As Simon Frith (Frith, 1996) puts it, “we assign [recorded voices to] bodies, we imagine their physical production”.<sup>xvii</sup> This underlying principle to the way we engage with the phonographic or photographic subject has implications with issues of commodification, ownership and control, which will be elaborated further.

### **Ephemera and the Ephemeral: The Coffin; The Body as Fetish**

Curiously, the Francis Barraud portrait (originally titled “Dog looking at and listening to a Phonograph”), from which came the famous HMV icon, is suggestive of the notion that this phonograph technology could offer access to the voice of the dead. Re-titled and revised to resemble the marketed gramophone, “His Master’s Voice” was sold to Alfred Clark of the London Gramophone Co. in 1898. In the original portrait, and with an artist’s nod to prevailing notions of the time, the dog was portrayed as perched on top of a coffin, presumably the casket of his master. The painting depicted the phonograph and iconic dog with listening “pricked-up” ear and head cocked to one side, supposedly listening to the voice of his deceased master.<sup>xviii</sup> The narrative makes more sense in the



original portrait, for the cylinder phonograph was capable of both making home recordings and playing them back (so it is viable that the master's voice could have been recorded directly and at home using this device). However, the original premise behind the painting got lost in the revision, for the disc *gramophone* (as seen up to the present in HMV marketing) was designed as solely a playback device.

Thus the gramophone's introduction (1887) signifies a moment in which the audio industry became commodified: where, instead of consumers engaging in direct creative practices with the sound technology (as was initially the case), disc records were commercially produced for the new gramophone for the sole purpose of personal consumption and home entertainment. From these conditions emerged a critical new phenomena that came to characterize the record production/consumption process. The advent of audio recording technology enabled vocal performance to become a permanent, authoritative text. Further, the document need not simply record the event, but through the process of documentation and preparation producers could seek to replicate "perfection".<sup>xix</sup> Thus with the new gramophone technology, the capturing of the physical presence onto a concrete and tactile medium enabled the listener/consumer to bring into the domestic environment a verbatim document of a particular (polished) performance of a unique performer, in a specific point in time, a document that could be replayed indefinitely, reproduced, and ultimately appropriated. No longer a fleeting listening experience, listeners soon learnt to distinguish between different performers, and to gradually become attached to certain labels and artists.

### **Necessity and Advertisement**

In “The Form of the Phonograph Record”, Theodor Adorno points out that the phonograph was the first technological invention that was entirely superfluous to human “needs”, a luxury item for entertainment (Adorno 1934, 1990).<sup>xx</sup> His essay on the subject is quietly suggestive of the subtle relationship between the form of the phonograph and commercialized consumption. From here we can trace a line that takes us to the present-day adoration and valorization of the musical star. Recording technology changed the way that vocal performers were heard and imagined, and ensured that Romantic notions of the performer as adored star persisted right through the Twentieth Century, from Enrico Caruso to Missy Elliot. In part, such ideas prevailed because (as noted earlier) in recording, the body of the performer becomes invisible, thus leading to the listener’s own *re*-imagining to replace the unseen. Enter the realm of fantasy and the work of the imagination, perhaps with tendencies towards idolization of the mysterious voice that floats through the sound waves (the voice of a God-like being?), rootless and magical. The elevated musical star becomes an icon that leaves a trace in the grooves of the physical recording itself, these nodes that connect the voice, the body, and the medium.

If the recorded object is indeed superfluous to our human needs, then Adorno says that “need” can instead be produced through “advertisement” (Adorno 1934, 1990).<sup>xxi</sup> Aided by the photographic medium comes an idolization of pop stars as objects, and they are revered and celebrated through the noisy ephemera surrounding them. The phenomenon of consumption and desire resonates in our personal obsessions, as listeners and collectors, with the material hardware of LPs and CDs, with “special edition” CD

packages highly prized, constantly discussed and scavenged and bid and traded, with poster pin-ups of music stars, and our obsession with the personal autograph. We recognize and celebrate “the artist” in terms of their material image – the aura of cult celebrity that manifests itself to the extreme in the pop or rock icon.<sup>xxii</sup> This is the meeting of the imagination with consumption in what Simon Frith coins, “commodity fetishism”.<sup>xxiii</sup> And this fascination is dominated by certain visual imagery and the stuff of personality paraphernalia, rather than the music itself. As Frith puts it, “the meaning of pop is the meaning of pop stars, performers with bodies and personalities”.<sup>xxiv</sup> Today, due to the vast media coverage on the issue, the public quite possibly know more about Michael Jackson’s child molestation trial, or Britney Spears’ body, her diets, her pregnancy, her latest love, than about the music of either artist. (It may also be noted that this commodification through extra-musical ephemera generates its own ephemerality: no doubt by the time this article is published, the examples I supply will seem a distant memory, already passé.) Just as when we hear Florence Nightingale’s voice and with it imagine the body that leaned into the horn at that crucial moment of inscription of body and voice, so in contemporary music consumption practices, the body and the audible voice walk hand-in-hand. Fans fetishize the recording because they associate the recording with the body of the artist. And part of collecting music involves a desire to in some way *own* the body of the adored star.

Through the medium, the tactile object, we can hold and feel the presence of something that isn’t there, a physical substitute for the disembodied author. If the voice is forced into a form of disembodiment through the recording process, the body of the artist is in

some sense cut into the medium, then distributed, widely disseminated, played repeatedly in the comfort of the home, slowly becoming familiar, loved, almost another member of the family keeping company in the living room, (or whispering in our ear on the subway). At some point the artist comes to be revered, and with them the material object on which they are housed is valorized also. And this heralds the birth of the record collection, of *consumptive* musical appreciation. At its most extreme, this consumption becomes an addictive condition – coined the ‘vinyl junkie’.<sup>xxv</sup>

What I am suggesting here, then, is that over the course of the previous century, the recording industry successfully fostered a paradigm in which the music, the performer, and its material manifestation were inextricably bound. As we crossed into the new century, however, the potentialities of digital media to sabotage this model, and to challenge conventions of ownership, control, and dissemination of music has spurred a crisis for the record industry, and marked the LP record (and, for that matter, the CD) as an archaic form. In the digital age the album no longer prevails in its physical form, although it still features as a metaphor for a collection of songs. Consider this, when I listen to Cher’s “Believe” from my computer, a visual icon of the album cover – which consists of a replication of her face in all its plastic perfection – inadvertently appears in my iTunes window. (Playback activates the image through my internet connection.) This highlights what seems to be a visual necessity in our culture today, a notion that somehow the audio, on its own, might be incomplete. In the same way that with the advent of recording we could no longer hold with our eyes nor touch the body that houses the voice but instead simply hear a recorded representation of the sounding object, such

software design enables the album sleeve to exist entirely as an encoded, visual representation of its former physical self – it is an abstraction of the physical object – shiny, plastic, alluring, but no longer tangible. Furthermore, the fact that we feel the *need* to replicate the visual material object itself in the age of digital bits suggests the extent to which we have come to valorize the material object of the album, and the visual iconography of the artist that accompanies it.

### **The Voice and its Malleability in the Digital Age**

In that recording separates the artist's voice from the body that speaks it, and the voice is no longer rooted in a particular time nor to a specific locale, there occurs a loss of control of the body itself as the sound of the voice enters the social realm of commodification, where recordings are bought, owned, and thus privately controlled. In the digital age the ease with which the encoded data of 1s and 0s can be separated from the material object that once housed it entirely undermines twentieth-century notions of authorship.<sup>xxvi</sup> Now, the body is preserved for posterity into a material form that can then be digitally reproduced, converted into bits, compressed, streamed through bandwidth, downloaded, sampled, and remixed. Because the voice is especially indicative of the physical being that speaks it, and we can hear the body in the voice that sings, the implications for vocal music as regards ownership and control are particularly pronounced.<sup>xxvii</sup> Today, commercial recordings often begin life or ultimately find their way to the virtual desktop of a personal computer, where of course the audio becomes digitized and easily disseminated or dismembered, making the voice (and with it, by implication, the body) privy to involuntary manipulation, without consent.<sup>xxviii</sup> As David Metzger puts it (Metzger,

2003), “the unauthorized use of voice suggests violation.”<sup>xxxix</sup> He too connects the voice of the star to their being, and suggests that “by controlling the voice, [the producer] controls the essence of that performer”.<sup>xxx</sup>

From the computer it is a small step to download the original recording to the pocket-sized hardware of an MP3 player, so that ultimately the listener/consumer can carry the voice of, say, Caruso or Gwen Stefani on a belt, clipped to the hip or strapped to the arm in the ultimate transmission of content from one physical body to the other: workout music.<sup>xxxi</sup> The body, always rootless, now resides in every listener’s back pocket. And if the music was indeed “bought” (and therefore deemed to be “owned”), who does the voice, (and the body from which it once emanated) now belong to?

On the subway recently I was struck by the image of a man sporting a small MP3 video player on a belt-clip at the hip. The man swings on the overhead bars in the train car, while from his pelvis projects the moving images of music video icons – stars, dancers, and models with moving mouths (but no sound, they are rendered mute). If the posing “singers” on the music video are denied their voice, one might ask if at this moment music has crossed entirely into the visual platform. And now that the voice itself is unnecessary, what indeed are we left with? (This episode seems quietly reminiscent of unveiling those ‘80s lip-synching puppets known as Milli Vanilli.) If as Frith suggests (Frith, 1996), “video is now a key component in our understanding of music as erotic,”<sup>xxxii</sup> then the subway scene illustrates the way in which the audible body, now rendered purely as a visible object, is bound in notions of desire, ownership, and seduction.

### **Plastic Abstraction, a Return to the Essence**

I will close by citing one contemporary example that seems to encapsulate the present mood. If the connection of the musical star and the tangible recorded object was born, and died, in the Twentieth Century, what has emerged as its replacement suggests a revisiting of our phonographic origins – that is, a return to capturing the voice as an audible source, a purely sonic object. This hypothesis is exemplified in the emergence of the virtual band, Gorillaz, where the extra-musical paraphernalia that surrounds the group is so highly abstracted as to be redundant, and what remains, when the cloak is shed, is Music, very much alive and hopping. Here the voices that appear in all their multifarious guises are once again rendered invisible, disembodied, and mysterious, and we hear the voice of the author peering out, once again, from behind the veneer.

Damon Albarn in collaboration with cartoonist Jamie Hewlett created Gorillaz in what seems a deliberate attempt to satirize and sabotage the world of adoration and fantasy that surrounds the pop or rock icon. The band consists of four imaginary, animated band members, who exist in the mythical “Kong Studios, high upon a mountain in the centre of a cemetery in Essex.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> Albarn creates the ultimate cult-band by providing consumers with a wealth of extra-musical sensation, including a fully interactive website in which users can take a virtual tour of the fictional studios – including bedrooms (complete with underwear and empty take-out containers, strewn about the floor), access to band member’s personal computers (which feature pictures, sound bites from studio takes, and email inboxes which invite voyeuristic entry into personal email correspondence).

Further, apocryphal stories and band gossip have been calculatingly and slowly leaked to the public, including rumors of supposed scandalous disputes and filmic crimes between the musicians, band breakups and reconstitutions, and specific background information on band members that puff their character into a three-dimensional form, (albeit in a cartoon-ish kind of way). Albarn shrouds the band in a deep mythology and invests them with a particular special-ness by creating an allure of the unattainable – for as consumers we are only ever supplied with glimpses onto the façade. Just as in the case of the Cottingley Fairy photographs which soared in popularity during World War I, Gorillaz is a calculated marketing ploy in which Albarn has seen a tendency of the marketplace and the weakness or inclinations of a public who are prepared, even wanting, to believe in an imaginary world of fantasy and illusion. (There is some evidence that the public’s need for the whimsical and idyllic becomes more pronounced during wartime periods, and the success of the Cottingley Fairies in capturing the imagination of the public is in part attributed to their World War I arrival.) Commercially speaking, Albarn’s formula has worked: Gorillaz made the Guinness Book of Records as “Most Successful Virtual Band”, and both *Gorillaz* and *Demon Days* albums have made a significant impression on the UK and USA Record Charts.

The music on *Demon Days* continues the conceit that the band is entirely a fabrication, for the entire album is comprised of a cut-and-paste mash-up of vocal “characters”, a kaleidoscopic tour of various vocal personalities who appear, somewhat randomly, upon the sonic canvas.<sup>xxxiv</sup> (It should be noted that the multi-faceted vocals are in themselves a conceit: Albarn remains Gorillaz’s sole band member, albeit with invited guest



musicians.) A song may shift at a moment's notice from warm, intimate male vocals accompanied by guitar, to the richly textured spoken voice of a rap artist, to the sound of a children's choir bathed in reverb. Other vocal layers straddle the real and the make-believe: sounds that bear a vocal "quality" but, through digital transformations such as vocoder, pitch shift, or filter, become merely *suggestions* of human presence. That is, like the very cartoon characters that pose as musicians, the vocal instances become, through a process of acoustic displacement, mere representations of a physical being, and the physical form is constantly surprising, illusive.

With Gorillaz the interest lies, vocally speaking, at the juncture between the fictitious appearances of animated "musicians" and the manifestations of vocal presence. Damon Albarn plays on the inherent conceit of the recording process – that is, that as listeners, we can only ever *imagine* the artist we hear in a recording. And our imagining is based on clues provided by *the grain* of the voice. Just as with Florence Nightingale's voice, the listener will unwittingly use timbral clues to create a visual imagining of the physical image they hear. But in Gorillaz, this imagining process produces a certain disjuncture or tension because the audible data has, somewhat unwittingly, been grafted to the entirely fabricated (and two-dimensional) supplied visual form: delivering what could be deemed the ultimate in vocal disembodiment.

Behind this curtain or mask lies the source. Albarn's construction of a virtual band operates on some level as a political act that acknowledges and plays on the tendencies of the commercial record industry. (How can the release of a Gorillaz DVD entitled *Phase*

*One: Celebrity Take Down* be seen as anything but a political act?) He exaggerates the fake and plastic veneer that shrouds the consumption of popular music in Western culture, in which the performer is chiseled into a highly abstracted, valorized form. Shiny, malleable, plastic, tangible. A latent body, privy to the whims of producers and publicists. Nothing is real. Albarn's band is in this way intensified to a point where the extra-musical paraphernalia of appearances and the noise of material ephemera begin to fall away. So that ultimately, all that remains, all that can be heard or accessed is *the source*, the music at its essence, and the listener is invited, finally, to engage in our own imagining of the body manifested through "the voice as it sings."

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Adorno, T. (1990) The Form of the Phonograph Record (T. Y. Levin, Trans.). *October*, 55, 56—61.

Original Publication: Adorno, T. (1934) Die Form der Schallplatte 23: *Eine Wiener Musikzeitschrift* 17—19, 35-39

<sup>ii</sup> Maconie, R. (2002). *The Second Sense: Language, Music and Hearing*, p. 16. Lanham, MD and London: Scarecrow Press. The audio is available on the web at: <http://www.lib.msu.edu/vincent/samples.html>. Thanks to Robin Maconie for introducing me to the Nightingale recording.

<sup>iii</sup> Cumming, N. (2000) *The Sonic Self*, p. 22. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

<sup>iv</sup> Barthes, R. (1977) *Image, Music, Text*, p. 188. London: Fontana.

<sup>v</sup> Many authors have previously reflected on Barthes' *grain*. In *Performing Rites*, Simon Frith develops the Barthesian *grain* by reading "the voice as a direct expression of the body" (Frith, 1996, p.192). Frith discusses the process by which the listener hears the recorded voice, the ways in which the voice signifies physical identity, and the modes by which we engage in forms of musical consumption. (See Frith, S. (1996) *Performing rites: on the value of popular music*, pp. 183-202. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). Also influential in this article is Katharine Norman's *Sounding Art*. Norman, K. (2004) *Sounding art: eight literary excursions through electronic music*, p. 115. Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate

<sup>vi</sup> As a point of departure for this article, Adorno's essay, "The Form of the Phonograph" focuses on the materiality of the recording medium, its "thingness," as well as the record as a form of inscription. Adorno, T. (1990) The Form of the Phonograph Record (T. Levin, Trans.). *October*, 55, 56. Original Publication: Adorno, T. (1934) Die Form der Schallplatte 23: *Eine Wiener Musikzeitschrift*, 17—19, 35-39. Adorno's translator, Thomas Y. Levin provides thoughtful insights into Adorno's writing in his own essay that accompanies the translations: Levin, T. (1990) For the Record: Adorno on Music in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility. *October*, 55, 23—47. Evan Eisenberg's *The Recording Angel* elaborates on ideas of recording technology and its relationship to materiality and cultural consumption. Eisenberg, E. *The Recording Angel: Music, Records and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.). New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

<sup>vii</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonograph\\_cylinder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonograph_cylinder)

<sup>viii</sup> Simon Frith cites Sean Cubitt (1983) "Note on the Popular Song" (unpublished). In Frith, S. (1996) *Performing rites: on the value of popular music*, p. 196. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>ix</sup> Thomas Edison presented his invention of the phonograph in 1877. There is some dispute over the date and place of the telephone's invention, as well as its inventor. The invention is largely attributed to Alexander Graham Bell who developed the first device in Boston, MA in 1876. However, it has since been found that the Italian Antonio Meucci's invention dates back to 1849. The US House of Representatives (Resolution 269) credited Meucci as the authentic inventor in June 2002.

An extreme form of the free-floating voice can be heard today in the cell-phone - evidenced by the very fact that most cell-phone conversations are initiated with the receiver asking, "Where are you?" The commonality of such a dialogue suggests that not knowing the location of the vocal source can be disconcerting to the receiver.

<sup>x</sup> Kahn, D. (1999) *Noise, Water, Meat*, p. 9. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

<sup>xi</sup> Katherine Norman discusses the mystery and the work of the listener's imagination when encountering the recorded voice. Norman, K. (2004) *Sounding art: eight literary excursions through electronic music*, pp. 106—107. Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate

<sup>xii</sup> As projected in Thomas Edison's 1878 essay on the potentialities for the phonograph (Edison, T. (1878) The Phonograph and its Future. *North American Review*, 126 (262): 527-537), the author states that the invention will "unquestionably outrank the photograph" for "the purpose of preserving the sayings, the voice and the last words of the dying member of the family" (p. 533). In the article Edison also proposes that the phonograph will "annihilate time and space, and bottle up for posterity the mere utterance of man" (p. 536).

<sup>xiii</sup> Johns, G. (1958) The First Disc Jockey. *The Gramophone*, 36 (421), 3--4.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ong, W. (1981) *The Presence of the Word*, p. 101. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

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- <sup>xv</sup> Braun, M. (2005, September). *Bragaglia, the Occult, and its Invisible*. Paper presented at the symposium entitled “Dark Rooms: Photography and Invisibility,” Princeton, NJ.
- <sup>xvi</sup> See Cavell, S. (1971) *The World Viewed*, p. 18. New York: Viking Press
- <sup>xvii</sup> Frith, S. (1996) *Performing rites: on the value of popular music*, p.196. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Connor, S. (2000) *Dumbstruck: a cultural history of ventriloquism*, pp. 386-387. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. N.B. Steven Connor refers to the painter in question as Francis Barrauld. However, other references to this incident spell the painter’s name as Francis Barraud.
- <sup>xix</sup> Simon Frith discusses the utilization of technology in the “quest for perfection”. See Frith, S. (1996) *Performing rites: on the value of popular music*, pp. 226-235. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- <sup>xx</sup> Adorno, T. (1990) The Form of the Phonograph Record (T. Y. Levin, Trans.). *October*, 55, 56. Original Publication: Adorno, T. (1934) Die Form der Schallplatte 23: *Eine Wiener Musikzeitschrift*, 17–19, 35-39.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Adorno, T. (1990) The Form of the Phonograph Record (T. Y. Levin, Trans.). *October*, 55, 56. Original Publication: Adorno, T. (1934) Die Form der Schallplatte 23: *Eine Wiener Musikzeitschrift*, 17–19, 35-39.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Classical music is certainly not without its own accompanying cult of personality. As the New York Times suggests, “Cheesecake CD covers and slinky gowns are as much a part of the hawking of classical music as of any other field.” Take, for example, the website “Beauty in Music” (subtitled, “A guide to the hottest women in classical music”), which celebrates through visual iconography women performers of the classical domain, including profiles and photographs. Wakin, D. (2005, September 11). Classical Cleavage. *New York Times*, p. AR 8. See <http://beautyinmusic.com>
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Frith, S. (1996) *Performing rites: on the value of popular music*, p.206. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Frith, S. (1996) *Performing rites: on the value of popular music*, p.210. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- <sup>xxv</sup> For more see *Vinyl junkies: Adventures in record collecting*, by Brett Milano, St. Martin's Griffin (November 10, 2003)
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Some of these ideas regarding the digital age separating musical data from the material object, and the possible meanings and ramifications of this, were inspired by reading David Byrne’s blog <http://www.davidbyrne.com/journal/current.php>, June 5, 2005. See also Evan Eisenberg’s *The Recording Angel* (2005).
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Simon Frith has discussed some of the legal ramifications concerning the voice, ownership and personal property. See Frith, S. (1996) *Performing rites: on the value of popular music*, p. 191. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Consider for example the case of Danger Mouse, whose *The Grey Album* (2004) was constructed entirely from sampled material, used without permission – a conglomerate of melodic fragments and rhythms taken from the Beatles’ *White Album* (1968) mixed with a cappella raps extracted from J-Z’s 2003 *The Black Album*. *The Grey Album* became the subject of a heated debate over rights and permissions, in which an altercation erupted between a community of “sharing” proselytizers and the record industry, followed by a successful local-level protest in which the music was made available on the internet as a free download.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Metzger, D. (2003) *Quotation and cultural meaning in twentieth-century music*, p. 177. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Metzger, D. (2003) *Quotation and cultural meaning in twentieth-century music*, p. 177. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Interestingly, the recent advertising campaign for the iPod itself focuses on the body, and is suggestive of a direct transference from the body of the musician or singer to that of the listener. The advertising markets to the body of the consumer/listener, focusing on the way the iPod makes one “feel”: the advertising imagery features the silhouette shapes of dancing figures robed only in distinctive iPod hardware, and the advertising catch-tune, Gorillaz’s, “Feel Good, Inc.”
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Frith, S. (1996) *Performing rites: on the value of popular music*, p. 225. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Wikipedia - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gorillaz>

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xxxiii Gorillaz. (2005) *Demon Days*. Virgin Records.

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