2010

Mashing power: musical re-imaginings of post-9/11 political rhetoric

David Weir
Southern Cross University

Publication details
Weir, D 2010, 'Mashing power: musical re-imaginings of post-9/11 political rhetoric', PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.
Copyright D Weir 2010

ePublications@SCU is an electronic repository administered by Southern Cross University Library. Its goal is to capture and preserve the intellectual output of Southern Cross University authors and researchers, and to increase visibility and impact through open access to researchers around the world. For further information please contact epubs@scu.edu.au.
Mashing Power: Musical Re-imaginings of Post-9/11 Political Rhetoric

David Weir
B.Sc. (UWA), Dip.Ed. (UWA), B.A. (SCU), B.Music (Hons) (SCU)

School of Arts and Social Sciences,
Southern Cross University, NSW

Exegesis supporting a compact disc of recorded compositions, submitted toward fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2009
Abstract

This composite thesis is the realisation of a practice-based research project. It comprises a compact disc of recorded compositions and a supporting exegesis. The practical outcomes of creative arts practice are presented on the CD. Here, contemporary music composition and production skills, conjoined with a personal political/philosophical perspective, have been applied to the creation of what I have called ‘political mashup’. Political mashup is a post-9/11 form of oppositional music that incorporates sampled political speech into composed musical settings. Mass mediated political speech is captured, digitally manipulated, and set to music to form alternative narratives.

In the nine pieces presented on CD, prominent power-wielders in post-9/11 Western democracies are ‘corrected’ by their own words, verbalising confessional narratives that speak alternative truths to those disseminated by the broadcast media. These musically imagined realities are set against the backdrops of the war on terror, impending environmental crises, political spin and government alignment with a globally networked capitalist hegemony. I refer to the latter as ‘Empire’, following Hardt and Negris’ (2000) theoretical conception. I argue that a central lever of Empire’s power is its ability to install in populations, through instruments such as the mass media, universalising norms that serve hegemonic interests – prominent among them being the normalisation of violence. My works attempt to escape this field of influence by letting non-violent principles guide the construction of the narratives.

The exegesis presents the various contexts within which the creative works may be analysed in detail. My creative practice is placed within historical traditions of musical protest and cultural activism. Through a recounting both of political developments and the mass media’s role in representing them in the wake of the September 11 2001 attacks on America, I elaborate the personal political/philosophical perspective that oversaw the creative process. This perspective is fashioned through the application of a variety of theoretical tools that are applied within a broader critical methodological framework. In this respect the project crosses disciplinary boundaries; creative arts practice is informed by cultural studies and political theory. The roles of music and sound as means of signifying are examined, and the variety of technical tools and processes applied to the composition and production of the works is catalogued. I recreate the studio-based processes by which the musical pieces were realised, reflecting upon the creative aims, problems, challenges and breakthroughs that I encountered in this creative arts practice.
I argue that, in its appropriation of the technological tools and infrastructure of globalised capitalist hegemony, political mashup offers its practitioners a sense of agency in relation to Empire. Counter-hegemonic claims for the music are extended beyond its oppositional content, into its very processes of production and distribution. Particular focus is given to the cultural significance of the Internet as a technology that is enabling networks of geographically dispersed individuals to engage in new, more egalitarian modes of cultural production and exchange.
Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University’s rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

David Weir

12th November, 2009
Acknowledgements

A number of people have helped me to realise this project. I wish to express my gratitude to my principal supervisor, Dr Jon Fitzgerald, for his diligence and patience in providing me with invaluable feedback on matters of musical and extra-musical importance.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Rebecca Coyle, who has so generously placed her critical skills and scholarly excellence at my disposal. And I thank my third supervisor, Professor Michael Hannan, for his support and expert musicological advice throughout this project.

I express my unfailing gratitude to my wife, Elenor Sapir and my daughter, Remy, for their unwavering and loving support throughout a journey that, in many ways, we have all shared.

I thank Russell Hughes and Kirsten and Dervis Pavlovic for their friendship and continuous creative and scholarly support. I thank Erica Sapir for her unbridled enthusiasm and the providence of her choice of where to live, from where she offered us unlimited hospitality. I thank Enlightened Fool for his musical offerings.

Finally, I thank George W. Bush and all of the other leaders who unfailingly and unwittingly provided me with their rhetorical soundbites. Without them this project would not have been possible.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ii

## Part 1: Introduction viii

### Prelude viii

1. **Rogue Sounds** 1

   - Introduction 1
   - The RogueSounds Project 6
   - Summary of Exegesis 9

## Part 2: Informing Concepts 12

2. **A History of Imagined Futures** 12

   - Introduction 12
   - A Millennium of Musical Protest 13
   - Cultural Activism 28

3. **The Problem of Power** 35

   - A Bitter Stew: the Ingredients of Post-9/11 Radicalisation 35
   - The Empire’s New Clothes 44
   - The Multitude and Musical Networks of Resistance 56

4. **Music and Meaning** 61

   - How Sound Signifies 61
   - Recontextualising Samples to Change Their Meaning 65

## Part 3: Creative Arts Practice 70

5. **The Practice of Protest** 71

   - Framing the Research 71
   - Political Mashup Production: Methods and Tools 78
Conclusion

6. Words Noted: Nine Creative Analyses
   Overarching Aesthetic Considerations
   Track 1. “The Redemption of George W”
   Track 2. “Rendering Babylon”
   Track 3. “Quickening”
   Track 4. “Howard Repents (The Real Thing)”
   Track 5. “Rogues”
   Track 6. “Legacy (Into the Darkness)”
   Track 7. “Mouth Music”
   Track 8. “Zeitgeist”
   Track 9. “Over and Out”
   Conclusion

7. Cultural Production, Agency and the Future of Imagined Futures
   To Give and to Receive: Distribution, Reception, and Feedback
   Outro: Journeys of Dissent, Agency and Cultural Production

Bibliography
Discography
Mashography
Filmography
Appendix 1: Full Transcripts of Speech Narratives
Appendix 2: Content Analysis
Appendix 3: Distribution and Publications
Appendix 4: Instruments and Musicians
Part 1: Introduction

Prelude

*Syllables govern the world.*

John Seldon, *Table Talk*, 1689

My education was in music rather than politics. A self-taught, performing, writing musician, my passion to delve more deeply into music’s inner workings led me in the 1990s to undertake undergraduate study in contemporary music composition. Earlier, I had ‘discovered’ the sixties – in the early eighties, a very different era. The androgynous identities of glam rock, who in the seventies had welcomed me to the world of popular music, were long gone. As was disco, punk and big-haired heavy metal. I avoided the commercial channels on my radio for a decade, preferring to wade through my collection of vinyl LPs, fanatically mining them for guitar parts to emulate as I set about teaching myself to coax music from the instrument. However, on Friday nights I listened to 6NR, a local university station. The apolitical pop music that had shaped my earliest musical sensibilities left me utterly unprepared for the musical – and cultural – revelations that were offered by *The White Rabbit Review*. The show’s unashamedly devotional focus on the music of 1960s America offered weekly servings of a world that had passed me by. It was a world that enthralled. Through the show, I learned of how a tiny folk scene centred in New York City had quickly snowballed into a vibrant movement, gathering legions of fans who were eager to hear songs about the injustices wracking their societies. These songs were written by young writer musicians who despaired at the seemingly heartless machinations of a government that sent its citizens’ youth to die in foreign lands, that funneled billions of dollars of their money into weapons of mass destruction, and that officiated over a segregated nation. I learned of how this movement eventually shed its acoustic instruments, its core of social consciousness now projected though electric, amplified rock.

I found myself drawn to much of this rock; music that had something to say beyond the saccharine platitudes of bubble gum pop. The tracks whose vinyl grooves were most worn in my LP collection were songs such as Pink Floyd’s “Have a Cigar” and “Welcome to the Machine” (1975), both brooding ruminations on profit-driven recording companies. The same band’s earlier song, “Us and Them” (1973), a melancholy lamentation on the inequalities that feed life’s
suffering, was from an album that incorporated numerous spoken word samples: snippets of recorded interviews with band members and studio staff. John Lennon’s album Imagine (1973) was also well worn, its political/social consciousness themes evident in “Gimme Some Truth”, a rant against the deceptive spin of politicians, and “Imagine”, Lennon’s now-iconic utopian dream. Then there was Dylan’s “Hurricane” (1975), the song that reminded the post-boomer generation that he had been there at the vanguard of folk protest, and invited them to uncover his earlier protest material. Through these, and many more songs, unfolded the stories that taught me important things about my culture. Throughout the nineties and beyond I continued to make my own music, expressing it either through performance or the writing of film and theatre scores. But, the critical thread those early listening experiences wove through my psyche has remained. It runs unbroken through this project, instilling with passion what is a personal plea for transformation. And now …

A computer search engine, guided by mouse clicks and the signifying power of words, delivers up a selection of YouTube videos: a diverse collection of political leaders, both past and present, are captured in their attempts to use words – to inspire, to conceal, to instruct, to reveal, to deny, to rally, to simplify, to stereotype, to deceive, to explain, to pontificate, to complain, to accuse, to alarm and to calm. As I watch these animated public figures, I am struck by the differences in the ways they deliver their messages. Some speak freely, with no visual prompts, words seeming to rise up easily on the breaths of their hearts and souls. Others labour over pre-scripted lines, their halting oratory mixed with phatic fillers … “umm, err, ahem…” But, regardless of their varying talents as orators, all share a knowledge that is indispensible to any who seek to harness the power of public opinion: that in a mass mediated world, words are the essential bearers of messages. They are spells that ignite or extinguish dreams; that grow cultures, or stifle them.

[Note: chapter emblems are ASCII art (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) copied from release notes accompanying pirated music software.]
Chapter 1

Rogue Sounds

The arts of power and its minions are the same in all countries and in all ages. It marks its victim; denounces it; and excites the public odium and the public hatred, to conceal its own abuses and encroachments.

Henry Clay, 1834

These days the spin machine is always on the silver screen, secret plots and submarines, foreign fiends and magazines wave the flag, watch the news, tell us we can count on you, mom and dad are marchin’ too, children, step in time.

Tracey Grammer, “Hey Ho” (2005)

Introduction

RogueSounds is a collection of self-produced musical compositions that comprise the practical outcome of this research through creative practice. The electronically mediated, recorded speech of prominent Western politicians of the twenty first century has been captured and deployed as the key lyrical elements of original musical protest. Contemporary digital audio production tools have been applied, first to the disassembly of selected political rhetoric, and then to its reassembling within composed musical settings. These settings are stylistically adventurous, and are the product of skills in both broad-based contemporary music composition and digital audio production.

The nine compositions that make up RogueSounds represent an intensely personal response to power – in particular, to what I perceived as destructive, repressive contours of sovereign rule, thrown into sharp relief by the actions of Western democracies in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on America on September 11th 2001. Living far from war zones, I apprehend prevailing global social/political discourses of power, global conflict, capitalistic greed and political spin,

predominantly through the broadcast media. Global political entities – and the realities born of their decisions – are depicted for me for the most part via relayed images and sound.

As a musician and a composer I am intrigued by the aural components of these outpourings: by the words that, in our technology-driven era, flow to me via the conduit of the electronic media. Through its various portals these words arrive as sounds: captured, transmitted aurality that entone the zeitgeist – not only semantically, but also sonically. For, sounds help to define an age; they are musical strands, threading through the weave of the tenor of the times. Moreover, as recent history records, speech must be counted within this music. No comprehensive recollection of World War II could omit recalling the frightful wails of air raid sirens or the ominous whistling of descending bombs; but nor could it overlook the defiant, lilting tones of Winston Churchill, nor the rabid, staccato oratory of Adolph Hitler. An account of the 1960s would be incomplete if it ignored the Beatles and psychedelic music, yet equally so if it neglected the chorused chants of anti-war protestors, the soaring, melodious addresses of Martin Luther King, or the poetic musings of Bob Dylan. And, similarly, the glib speech performances of US President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Australian Prime Minister John Howard remain as vivid sonic emblems of global politics in the first six years of the post-9/11 era.

The music that is the basis of this thesis was catalysed by a cycle of mass-mediated government responses to the 9/11 attacks. While the fields of advertising and entertainment continue to covertly fashion our world by instilling desires and values in populations in ways that are often subliminal, political speech ostensibly aims to deliver overt, truthful messages. One need only reflect back upon Western governments’ attempts to win support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq to recall how easily this aim is corrupted. Ex-US Secretary of State Colin Powell notoriously demonstrated this when, in a UN address, he unequivocally declared an object in a photograph he was holding to be a ‘chemical weapon tanker,’ thereby adding an apparently solid piece of scaffolding to the case the US administration was avidly building for war.² Powell’s president, George W. Bush strengthened the case, both with his repeated charge of Iraq concealing

---
Chapter 1. Rogue Sounds

weapons of mass destruction and his promises of liberating the Iraqi people from ‘evil dictatorship.’ Then-British Prime Minister Tony Blair added ‘sexed up’ intelligence reports to the mix while his Australian counterpart, John Howard, merely echoed the subterfuges of all of the above.

The ramifications of such dubious appropriations of the signifying power of words were – and still are – profound: not only for the thousands of casualties of wars that are still raging, nor just for the security-fixation these words have incited, with all of its resultant impingements upon a range of factors in our everyday lives. Politicians’ co-opting of language to serve their agendas has, as I shall argue throughout this exegesis, also profoundly inflected the ways in which we perceive power, by thrusting the spectre of political spin – and its relationships to rhetoric, global conflict, capitalism and greed – into the limelight. In the West, our elected representatives count among the dominant voices in our cultures; by virtue of their privileged access to the various modes of media transmission directed at the majority mainstream our leaders have the means to exert inordinate control over culture. Through the manipulation and dissemination of oratorical language, governments are able to project representations that strengthen the status quo and thus, serve their interests. It is for these reasons that I have made political rhetoric the primary focus of this project. Given this focus, my research journey has necessarily led me across disciplinary boundaries, into cultural and media studies, and political theory.

The carefully crafted messages of governments have formed the centrepiece of the practical component of this compound thesis. This creative response is an equally carefully crafted re-appropriation of that political rhetoric. The captured speech of politicians who signify the current age – marked by the interminable ‘war on terror,’ impending climatic and energy crises, globalised capital, and most recently, a global financial recession – has been conscripted in the creation of what I have called ‘political mashup.’ Before detailing this particular project’s creative contribution, it is necessary both to define the genre and to identify some relevant terminology.

Introducing ‘political mashup’

In recent years the term ‘mashup’ has gained currency within the mutable linguistic fashions of popular culture. In the broadest sense it refers to an ostensibly apolitical practice in which different cultural texts – either songs, videos, digital media or web applications – are blended
Chapter 1. Rogue Sounds

together to form new texts. Musical mashup – the original form, and the one most pertinent to this project – involves the blending of two or more songs to form a new piece (usually an a capella vocal track from one song is mixed with looped instrumental sections from another). Musical mashups are also variously referred to as ‘bootlegs’, ‘blends’ or ‘bastard pop.’ Additionally, ‘cutups’ is a popular designation referring to the cutting and pasting of speech fragments from any number of captured narratives – either as text or recorded audio – in order to create new narratives. Audio examples of cutups may or may not use political speech; they may also eschew the use of backing music. I have chosen the term ‘political mashup’ to refer to the setting of political speech cutups to music because the practice applies mashup’s postmodern aesthetic – utilising collage, appropriation and authorial ambiguity – in ways that are overtly political. Moreover, the practice embraces mashup’s overriding ethos of allowing the possibility of appropriating any elements from mediated, broadcast culture if the signifying function of those elements adds to the overall meaning of the reconstructed message.

It should be noted here that political mashup is by no means an exclusively first-world Western phenomenon. In Chapter 3 I discuss some potent non-Western exemplars of the practice. In general though, I restrict my historical contextualisation of the oppositional form to English language examples, and, predominantly those that emanate from the US, UK and Australia. This focus is in harmony with the personal nature of this intervention, which, from my Australian perspective, views these as the three most visible (and audible) national actors in the theatre of post-9/11 global politics. Moreover, Chapter 2 details a history of protest and cultural activism that is decidedly US-centric. This is by design; the US occupies centre stage in the drama of the war on terror, an undertaking that it initially launched unilaterally, and then in concert with its close allies, including the UK and Australia. The world’s only post-cold war super-power

3 Although mashup is not an overtly political form, it has raised some highly contentious issues, particularly around the subject of copyright. See, for instance, Michael D. Ayers’ examination of the legal ramifications of a prototypical mashup project, Dangermouse’s The Grey Album, in ‘The Cyberactivism of a Dangermouse’, in Ayers, M D (Ed.) (2006) Cybersounds: Essays on Virtual Music Culture. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
5 There are Western examples that, because they are rendered in languages other than English, are not referred to in this study. For example, a delegate at an 2006 IASPM conference I attended in Birmingham, UK gave me a cassette of Italian political mashup, none of which, sadly, I could understand.
6 The Australian government’s eagerness to join the ‘coalition of the willing’ was a significant factor in my desire to create the RogueSounds project. Post-9/11 Australian support for the US was seen by many (myself included) to be
continues to sustain an immense military dominance in relation to all other sovereign states (Corbin and Levitsky, 2003), as well as being the central node in globe-encircling networked capital (Hardt and Negri, 2000). The rich tradition of US musical protest comprises many responses to the military efforts that have sought to defend perceived threats to that dominance – either in the Cold War arms races, or in more overt acts of aggression in Korea and Vietnam. This tradition also encompasses – along with most US-based cultural activism – responses to the excesses, injustices and inequities associated with the economic dominance that has underpinned such military superiority. As Martin Cloonan (2004) has pointed out, economic and military dominance were respectively symbolised by the two main targets of the 9/11 attacks: the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. The attackers – for whom America is “the Great Satan” – were attacking the very “idea of America” (2004: 11, italics in original), which was, in their view, a nation whose cultural and economic hegemony spawned material excess and military adventurism. However, as Cloonan notes, “the idea of America is not settled, but is open to contestation” (ibid.: 11). Traditions of US protest music and cultural activism testify to this; they are home-grown, counter-hegemonic expressions that enact a tradition of opposition to US sovereign power from within the margins of that power’s own constituency. It is a tradition that is vivified by the profound extent of US global hegemony. Contextualised in this way, post-9/11 political mashup is a contemporary expression of this same tradition, and as such, is intrinsically bound to the US political and cultural context.

As Chapter 3 details, when the US invasion of Iraq proceeded in 2003, mainstream channels in the US were effectively closed to those who wished to publicly air opposition to the war; dissident voices were forced to turn to the underground channels of the Internet. The resulting outpouring of political mashup flowed from many sources, including an army of laptop-owning ‘bedroom producers’ who capitalised on George W. Bush’s ubiquitous presence in the broadcast media by capturing his daily transmissions and setting reconfigured versions to music. These pieces mashed words, composed and appropriated music and ‘found sound’ together to effect their reconfigurations of political messages. Within the field of almost limitless plasticity afforded by digital audio technology, they reconfigured the discourses upheld by major political figures in strengthed by the very close personal bond between the then Australian Prime Minister John Howard and George W. Bush.

7 ‘Found sound’ is another designation from contemporary music parlance that refers to any audio samples, musical or otherwise, that are incorporated into larger recordings.
order to present alternative discourses. The typical tone of these mashups was sardonic; invective-laden and aggressively oppositional to the Bush administration, the majority set short repeating phrases to hip hop style beats and synthesised pads.

Regardless of their emotional tone and narrative range, all of the countless examples of political mashup in circulation online feature spoken word performances of politicians that have been prised from their literal settings – press conferences, speeches, interviews, etc – then freighted into new settings. Politicians, as performers, are then enlisted as unwitting performers in new productions. It is this performative aspect of political speech that renders such appropriations musically viable. As is described in Chapter 4, Music and Meaning, the captured nuances of timbre, texture, melody and inflection presented by the various protagonists as they set about convincing and cajoling their electors find harmonies within their musical settings. Sometimes unexpected, sometimes cultivated, these harmonies add further layers of meaning to constructed narratives.

As both a politically interested contemporary composer/producer and a researcher, the possibility of basing my research upon a creative, politically engaged response to these events was compelling. The still young genre of political mashup described above has so far largely escaped the scrutiny of academia. I shall argue in this exegesis that the manifold processes involved in the production, distribution and reception of the form constitute not only examples of individual and collective agency in an age of pervasive global economic hegemony, but provide templates for new modes of cultural production that are more egalitarian than those that have existed within traditional producer/consumer models. And, crucially in terms of this project’s research scope, there remain within the genre possibilities that have not, thus far, been rigorously explored. The following section shall outline the key characteristics of the practical component of the present project and in doing so, propose ways in which it both challenges and extends the broader genre.

The RogueSounds Project

One of the principles that helped shape the creative outcomes for this research project was a desire to avoid merely controverting the narratives of current and recent leaders; I wanted to go beyond simply applying technological trickery to the task of making the leaders diametrically contradict themselves. My constructed narratives are attempts to intervene at a deeper, more
paradigmatic level. This is borne out by examining the ways in which I have dealt with the major themes addressed in the pieces. The theme of political power for instance, is unpacked almost psychoanalytically to reveal sub-themes such as confession, repentance and redemption. In three of the first four tracks, the central protagonists arrive at their confessions of political expedience via processes of honest self-reflection. Confessional narratives are constructed that imagine degrees of repentance for a range of government-sanctioned acts, from waging illicit war to torture, from avoiding environmental responsibilities to failing to address the healing of indigenous Australians’ cultural wounds. Imagined confession and repentance, and through these, redemption, are generally chosen in place of accusation and condemnation in the speech narratives. The guiding philosophy of non-violence is a key component of the re-renderings of political speech. Vicious personal attacks are avoided. The emphasis is consciously placed upon imagining ‘what could be’ rather than damning ‘what is.’ In Chapter 3 I argue that this approach is intended to undermine the normalised violence which hegemonic concerns cultivate through the defence of their cultural and economic dominance.

The music supporting the speech narratives in many of the pieces is designed to reflect these imagined ventures into introspection. Standard contemporary popular music instruments – guitars, basses, keyboards and drums – are used, but never exclusively. Conventional rock structures continually morph into more abstract sounding textures that are intended to sonically reinforce the reflective processes being depicted. These incursions directly signal another major theme addressed: that of technology. In general, the pieces are deliberately celebratory of the powers of digital audio technology. The computing tools that enabled the speech manipulations that are at the heart of the project are also continually evident in the music. Radical digitally enabled sonic transformations often colonise more conventional arrangements and persistently foreground the technological power that is mediating the production; they serve as reminders of the mutable nature of political ‘truths.’ Other aural signifiers are also used, either to underline or to allude to thematic nuances. For example: in Track 2, “Rendering Babylon”, a sampled oud is used to evoke the Middle Eastern destinations cited in Condoleezza Rice’s exposé of ‘extraordinary rendition.’ In Track 3, “Quickening”, a sample of the Islamic Adhan (call to prayer) is used both to effect a sectional transition and to evoke the theme of terror war.8

---

8 See the section ‘The ethics of sampling’ in Chapter 5 for a discussion of the ethical considerations that have been applied to the use of sampling in this project.
Capitalism and greed are abiding themes addressed in many of the pieces. In Track 3, “Quickening”, President Bush’s opening rap-like monologue points to how collusion between governments and corporations can obstruct necessary responses to global warming. In Track 5, “Rogues”, the basic tenets of global economic hegemony are spelled out more literally; the rapid-fire narratives present imagined insider perspectives on how governments act within the milieu of global capitalism to inculcate populations with universalised hegemony-serving ‘truths.’ In Track 8, “Zeitgeist”, the emphasis shifts to the current global financial crisis, which, in itself has provided a damning example of what ensues when unregulated markets meet unabated greed.

The use of humour is important throughout the works. The comedic possibilities of speech cutups are already evident in a plethora of online send-ups of celebrity figures, both political and non-political. Overall, humour is used throughout this project in the spirit of satire. Oumar Chérif Diop has pointed out the power of laughter as a means of wresting back our humanity from the identity-fragmenting effects of oppression. By highlighting the ridiculousness in the excesses of unfettered power, “laughter becomes the prelude to, and an integral part of, the liberation process that heralds a new moral order” (Diop, 2008: 296).

As suggested above, the music addresses universal themes, but does so through the voices of political figures – who remain decidedly ephemeral. As the following section shall discuss, the completed body of work therefore presents a qualitatively different listening experience to that afforded by hearing the pieces as they emerged over a period of more than three years.

Transcending the temporal

Throughout the duration of the project I have responded to global political issues as they emerged. In this regard the musical works serve as a calendar of recent global events; they chronicle the onset of the ‘war on terror’ with its related allegations of torture use, the emergence of global warming as a political issue, the passing of the Howard, Blair and Bush eras of rule, the ascendance of Barack Obama as the first African American US President, and the descent of global markets into a worldwide recession. However, as revealed in the above overview of major themes addressed, my responses to these events on a timeline embody political and philosophical perspectives that transcend the temporal specificity of current affairs. Animated by critiques of

---

9 Artists such as Cassetteboy (http://www.myspace.com/bloodycassetteboy), Skidmark Bob (http://www.diymedia.net/collage/gwb-sbm.htm), and Poison Popcorn (http://home.graffiti.net/poisonpopcorn/) are exemplars in the field of speech cutups.
Chapter 1. Rogue Sounds

existing structures of governmental and hegemonic power, the works speak broadly of shared challenges confronting humankind, of imagined possibilities for change and the greed and ambitions that obstruct them.

The speakers who inhabit the recordings represent, on the one hand, reconfigurations of individual personalities. In this sense their captured utterances tie them to points in history, while their vocal idiosyncrasies are intrinsic to their functioning as musical voices in composed arrangements. But in a broader sense, these figures are merely emblems of a political/economic paradigm that the works seek to problematise. The featured world leaders may be viewed as contemporary champions of modernism, hailing from political traditions formed in an era in which the promise of endless economic growth was fueled by cheap oil and burgeoning scientific innovation. However, the music responds to their interactions with the present age, when the ambitious dreams of modernity have now begun to clash with the realities of diminishing oil reserves and the dire environmental consequences of unrelenting growth. Even as I write this, the words and actions of the current crop of beleaguered leaders in response to a crisis of globalisation seem rooted in the old ways of thinking; as they doggedly prop up failing financial structures with borrowed money, their words express assurances that belie the possible passing of their age into one in which their world views may increasingly struggle to find relevance.

As musical works, the nine pieces presented within this thesis are designed to speak for themselves. However, they are also part of a practice-based research journey. This journey has been multi-disciplinary; perspectives from outside of music composition and audio engineering – cultural studies, political science and philosophy – have informed the music creation. The remainder of this exegesis – summarised below – seeks to contextualise, theoretically underpin and analyse that journey.

Summary of Exegesis

The exegesis comprises three parts. Part 1 contains the Prelude and this introductory chapter. Part 2 comprises three chapters that seek to contextualise the project: historically, politically and semiotically. In Chapter 2, A History of Imagined Futures, the two primary genealogical roots that have fed the growth of political mashup are identified. The work is first placed in an historical context, situating it within an enduring tradition of protest music. Like the protest songs that preceded it, political mashup has expressed opposition to sovereign powers when they
have tried to enslave or deceive subjects, sent them to fight in unjust wars, or legislated to restrict their freedoms. Following this, the debt owed by the practice to the more recent oppositional expressions of ‘cultural activism’ is acknowledged. Cultural activism responded to the anxieties associated with the rise of 20th century corporativism by the appropriation and reconfiguration of hegemonic content. In this sense it served as a forerunner of contemporary political mashup.

In Chapter 3, The Problem of Power, political mashup is presented as a post-9/11 phenomenon owing its emergence to the conjunction of three primary factors: the war on terror, government-aligned media saturation of the war, and a burgeoning home computer industry allied with advances in high speed internet. Michael Hardt’s and Antonio Negri’s (2000) theoretical conception of ‘empire’ is used to frame an assertion that the critiques forwarded by political mashup typically extend beyond those mounted by traditional protest music. A content analysis of existing examples is referred to in support of this assertion. The magnitude of the symbiosis between government and globalised financial hegemony is exposed with particular reference to the post-9/11 machinations of the music recording industry. Taking Adam Haupt’s assertions of the possibilities for hip hop sampling practices and peer-to-peer file sharing to provide agency in the face of pervasive global hegemony (Haupt, 2008), I apply similar reasoning to the processes involved in political mashup. From its creation through to its distribution and reception, these processes are examined in terms of their potential to subvert hegemonic interests. A case is made for the capacity of the presented creative work to extend this subversive function through its rejection of hegemony-serving normalised violence. Finally, using the theoretical framework of ‘the Multitude’ (Hardt and Negri, 2004), I examine the potentials of online networks of individuals, united by a common goal, for transcending hegemonic channels of commerce and exchange. Possibilities are raised for new and innovative models of cultural production and consumption based upon copyright reform and open source philosophies.

In Chapter 4, Music and Meaning, the semiotics of audio sampling as they relate to political mashup are examined. Samples are presented as captured performances in time and place in order to both analyse the ways in which they signify, and how changing their contexts changes their signification. Political mashup is shown to employ a two-fold recontextualisation: the first ensuing from words, plucked from one setting to be given new verbal surrounds, the second involving the setting of constructed narratives to music. From this follows a discussion of the music inherent in speech.
Chapter 1. Rogue Sounds

Part 3 contains the final three chapters, in which the practices that contributed to the research as a creative arts-based project are elaborated. Chapter 5, The Practice of Protest, outlines the methodological approaches that were applied to the composite thesis. Situated within critical and creative arts paradigms of research, the project is presented as a practice-based investigation that employs a bricolage of theoretical tools, including critical discourse analysis, non-violence (as a guiding precept) and poststructuralism. A general background to the processes of digital multi-track audio recording is provided, before detailing the specific methods and tools that were deployed in the production of the body of musical works. In Chapter 6, Words Noted, the studio-based process is discussed and replicated. The creative journey is mapped, track by track, by both reflecting upon the processes by which thematic content was addressed, and through a musicological analysis of key musical elements. This mapping begins with a particularly detailed analysis of Track 1, “The Redemption of George W”. Because this track is pivotal to the rest of the project, its entire constructed Bush speech narrative is unpacked to reveal the intended meanings behind each phrase. The key musical elements are then identified (most are notated) and their presences explained in terms of how they serve the overall narrative of the piece. Thereafter, each of the remaining eight pieces is analysed to reveal its central narrative themes and, as with Track 1, its key musical elements.

Chapter 7, Cultural Production, Agency and The Future of Imagined Futures, begins by detailing the journey the pieces have taken in their various modes of dissemination. I argue that the primarily Internet-based, viral distribution patterns bring to light the networked nature of cultural production as it emerges in the current age. The project is cast as an example of cultural production in an emerging non-commercial economy. Offering subjects agency in the face of pervasive hegemonic structures, claims are made for political mashup as one small element in a culture in the making – one that has the potential to redress old inequities in power relations and economic prosperity by its rejection of longstanding hegemony-serving paradigms in favour of more inclusive, egalitarian models of cultural production.

* * * * *

In Part 1 the aims and motivations of this project were outlined and the broader practice of political mashup defined. The three chapters in Part 2 contextualise the project’s outcomes within the various conceptual structures that have informed them. As posited above, political mashup is a distinctly contemporary expression in terms of the technologies it deploys and the sensibilities it applies. The practice nonetheless owes much to what has gone before it. As a form
of resistance to power it rests upon foundations that are deeply rooted in the soil of past struggles. Power, since it earliest inception, has prompted resistance. In the following chapter, political mashup shall be placed within the historical continuum of two main arms of this resistance: protest music and cultural activism. Each has a rich and varied history, comprising a multiplicity of stories of hope and struggle that were fashioned out of the enduring question that oppression provokes: how can this world be better?
Chapter 2

A History of Imagined Futures

The history of liberty is a history of resistance.

Woodrow Wilson, Speech in New York, September 9, 1912

We shall overcome, some day.
Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

Pete Seeger, “We Shall Overcome”

Introduction

Political mashup rose from a flowering of hybridised roots. In one sense, the creative form qualifies as ‘protest music,’ a label that denotes a longstanding tradition of giving musical expression to social and political grievances. In another sense, political mashup is ‘cultural activism’; its sensibilities are wrought from what can be called ‘anxieties of modernism’ – concerns that accompanied the rise of giant corporations in the 20th century, with their attendant cultural imprints, such as mass mediated advertising and escalating materialism. Protest music had its genesis in an age preceding the ubiquity of personal computers. Its canon comprises mostly songs, with a few politically inspired instrumental works. These have been sung and played by medieval travelling balladeers, slaves, folk singers and rock stars. ‘Cultural activism,’ a

---

10 Seeger modified an old Black spiritual that was continually transformed as it was handed down from singer to singer (Reed, 2005).
label that encompasses a broad range of practices, only some of them musical, spans the ‘analog’ and ‘digital’ ages. Its various oppositional responses to culturally and politically dominant structures have in common their use of cultural artefacts appropriated from these structures. And, while the practice of appropriation had contributed significantly to much protest music long before twentieth century cultural activism was conceived of, the primary concerns of cultural activism have also inspired many songs.

Making reference to a variety of sources, the following section charts an historical course through the traditions of protest music – one that attempts to highlight those aspects of the tradition that can be said to have served as precursors to, or inspirations for, political mashup.

---

**A Millennium of Musical Protest**

*When I was a little baby*

My mama said “Hey son,”

“Travel where you will and grow to be a man
and sing what must be sung, poor boy”

Sing what must be sung.

The Kingston Trio, “Greenback Dollar” (1962)

---

**Musical expressions of discontent prior to the 20th century**

Digging at the roots of protest music inevitably uncovers a tradition of song. Palmer (1996) reveals the depths of this tradition in his historical account of the practice of balladry. He writes:

> A powerful body of political protest in the form of song and ballad stretches a thousand years from the Normans to nationalism and nuclear power today. For the most part, and not surprisingly, it is critical of established authority, sometimes with a regressive, more often with a progressive, intent. (Palmer, 1996: 235)

Balladeers wrote in response to the pressing social issues of their day, their words often reflecting the grievances of the oppressed poor. The raising of rents or taxes was sure to call forth an outpouring of musical protestation, as is evidenced by this example from the reign of James 1 in 1630:

> …Like th’israelite in Egypt,

> The poore are kept in thrall;

> The task-masters are playing kept,
While the poor of England had obvious targets for their resentments in the upper classes, they were not alone in giving vent in song to the frustrations of inequity; artisans and tradesmen also felt the pinch of harder economic times, which were usually attended by tax rises and sparse employment. Their disgruntlements often found expression in sung verse, such as “The Tradesmen’s Lamentation” of 1688, and “General Distress” from the late 18th century (ibid.). At that time, the capacity of the English ruling classes to provoke musical opposition stretched across the Atlantic, where a song, “American Taxation”, aimed invective at the “cruel lords of Britain … striving after our rights to take away, and rob us of our charter, in North America.”

The appropriation of popular song by political entities – such a feature of contemporary political campaigns – is not such a recent phenomenon. Palmer notes the frequent use of ballads in political campaigns from 18th century Britain: “Candidates in elections had songs printed and sung to further their cause” (Palmer, 1996: 246). And, in North America, campaign songs are as old as the nation itself, the earliest known example being “God Save George Washington”, a predigital mashup of “God Save the King” with new lyrics.

Lewbelling: music as social regulator

One way in which music was commonly deployed in the service of dispensing rough ‘social justice’ (as it was conceived of in the day) was in a ritual procession, known in Britain, variously, as ‘lewbelling,’ ‘riding the stang,’ ‘rough music,’ or – as sketched out by Thomas Hardy in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* – the “skimmington ride” (Hardy, 1886: 288). In continental Europe the custom was called “charivari” (Toop, 1995: 71). This ritual, the earliest occurrence of which Palmer cites as 1719, involved the public parading of effigies which were usually designed to depict the accused transgressors of moral codes. Adultery was a common inspiration for lewbelling (the shaming practice was apparently most commonly exacted upon female adulterers), although the process was sometimes applied to political opponents (ibid.).

---

13 Interesting echoes of the use of effigies to depict accused figures resound in the practice of political mashup, in which the narrative constructed from recorded speech may be taken as a sort of ‘aural effigy’ of the accused.
Chapter 2. A History of Imagined Futures

As these premodern examples of protest music suggest, the harnessing of the power of music to galvanise people around pressing social issues has a colourful and longstanding history. However, it was in the modern era that musical protest began to take on the characteristics that more clearly influenced contemporary oppositional practices. In the 20th century in particular, music was used to express opposition to more universal themes than it had addressed in the past. As global communications networks extended their reach, they carried information beyond the confines of the village or the valley, seeding imaginations with visions: of not only how life could be better elsewhere, but also of the suffering of others. Moreover, the 20th century was an era of remarkable technological innovation, during which it became possible to record music, thereby fixing cultural texts that had hitherto been fluid, their dissemination tied to the physical movement of singers and balladeers. It was also in this century that corporations swelled to a level of prominence that drew oppositional responses to their pervasive marketing strategies. In the following section I trace the more immediate paths that led to the onset of the practice of creating political mashup.

20th Century Protest Music

The phrase: ‘20th century protest music’ may readily conjure up images of students burning draft cards, the Vietnam War, and the violent clashes that often attended US civil rights marches. However, these iconic instances of when music channelled the malcontent of 1960s US counterculture had important precedents earlier in that century. Eyerman and Jamison (1998) note several such precedents in their study of 20th century social movements. Benefits of insight for the current project may be gained from reflecting upon the notion of ‘movements’ as the milieux within which creative expressions such as music, art and literature find catalysis as shapers of culture. A ‘movement,’ by definition, suggests a number of people aligned with a common cause; a cause that expresses not only discontent, but discontent imbued with desperation: enough to fuel the mobilisation of groups of individuals into united action, directed against the source(s) of their discontent. An interesting point of contrast exists between such desperation that is born out of threats to basic human needs such as livelihood and shelter – as was generally the case with pre-modern examples of social movements – and the later (and no less desperate) movements witnessed in late modernity that stemmed from broader humanist concerns. Whether stimulated by starvation or moral outrage, movements have always been
fomented in periods when sections of populations have reflected critically upon their societies (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998).

Many of the US nation’s earliest protest songs expressed the suffering of slaves. Songs such as “Steal Away”, “Run To Jesus”, “We Shall Be Free” and “Go Down Moses (Let My People Go)” applied biblical themes to an epic plight. Religion merged with the toil of daily life in later songs, some of which expressed more immediate calls to galvanise slave resistance:

\[
\text{Aris, aris! Shake off your chains!} \\
\text{Your cause is just, so Heaven ordains} \\
\text{To you shall freedom be proclaimed!} \\
\text{Call every Negro from his task} \\
\text{Wrest the scourge from Buckra's hand} \\
\text{And drive each tyrant from the land!}^{14}
\]

The Civil Rights movement that flowered in the US in the 1950s-60s had its roots in the sufferings of slaves. Music and religion had important roles in ‘the struggle,’ as it was then known to Blacks (Reed, 2005). The Black church arose in the US South, having originally been encouraged by white slave owners as a means of quelling the angst of suffering slaves with hopes of a happier hereafter. However, Black protestant preachers of the slave era often used their white-sanctioned positions of cultural influence to elaborate very earthly scenarios of deliverance:

\[
\text{Under slavery, black Christianity developed a kind of double coding in which Bible stories} \\
\text{became liberation stories. For example, the captivity of the Israelites in Egypt became a} \\
\text{metaphor of slavery, and the promised land of Canaan became a very literal promise of freedom} \\
\text{in Canada. (2005: 11)}
\]

These stories were delivered not only as sermons, but also as songs; in this form they became seeds that would be passed down through the generations, carefully preserved by repetition during less hopeful times, awaiting the fertile soil of “movement conditions” (2005: 11). As the music of the church was gradually transformed into a vehicle for the expression of emancipatory visions, “no cultural force played a greater role at all levels of struggle than what became known as the ‘freedom songs’” (2005: 12).

---

Music was the glue that bound the movement’s historical roots to the accomplishments of its living participants – and to the future they envisioned. The familiar strains of traditional gospel music anchored the movement in a past that was shared in memory, through oral traditions brought from Africa. When progress was slow, these “songs brought up from the days of slavery offered a gentle reminder of how ancestors had faced far worse circumstances” (Reed, 2005: 15). Their evocation of past humiliation and bondage also helped Blacks to sustain the determination needed to navigate the often slow, arduous paths to freedom. Left unaltered, many old songs took on new meaning within the charged context of the movement. At a now legendary march in Montgomery, an old hymn, “Onward Christian Soldiers”, was resurrected. Five thousand marchers sang the 1864 song, their shared voices harmonising the event with American history and Christianity, thus imbuing it with “righteousness” (2005: 17). But, as the cause developed, songs began to be altered to incorporate the names of specific communities who joined the growing movement. This “pouring [of] new content into old forms” foreshadowed later musical practices that at the time would have been unimaginable (ibid.).

‘Sit-ins’ began when black students challenged segregationist ‘laws’ by taking their place at ‘white only’ café counters and asking to be served. The practice quickly spread, particularly amongst black student groups. Sit-ins announced the take-up of the struggle by a new generation – one that drew upon different music for its inspiration. A predigital form of political mashup was the result, with popular (and apolitical) rhythm and blues songs being altered to articulate the political imperatives of the times. A prominent musical group within the movement, the Nashville Quartet, mashed up the Little Willie John hit song of the time, “You Better Leave My Kitten Alone” (1959) to include the new lines: “You better leave segregation alone / because they [white folks] love segregation like a hound dog loves a bone” (Reed, 2005: 20). The Nashville Quartet also mashed up Ray Charles’s recording of “I’m Movin’ On” (1961) (an apolitical song about ‘love gone wrong’) to make it a potent tool for the movement:

```
Segregation’s been here from time to time / but we just ain’t gonna pay it no mind // It’s moving on’ It’s moving on’ It’s moving . . . // Old Jim Crow’s moving on down the track /
He’s got his bags and he won’t be back. (2005: 20)
```

Parody was also used in the reworking of some songs, such as this one, sung to the tune of

---

15 ‘Sit-ins’ also tended to target major retail chains such as Woolworths and Kress department stores, a point that served to highlight the “corporate complicity in state-sanctioned segregation” (Reed, 2005: 20).
“Jesus Loves Me, This I Know”:

\[
\text{Jesus loves me 'cause I'm white / Lynch me a nigger every night. /}
\]

\[
\text{Hate the Jews and I hate the Pope / Jes' me and my rope. /}
\]

\[
\text{Jesus loves me, the Citizens' Council told me so. (Reed, 2005: 26)}
\]

Lyrical fluidity was always an important hallmark of protest songs as they adapted to changing conditions while retaining familiar musical forms. The Union movement in the early 20th century US used songs as “central part of the . . . strategy of recruitment, solidarity and strikes.” Strike songbooks were printed and distributed among workers as early as the 1890s. Some of these songs were later taken up by the Civil Rights movement. “We Shall Overcome”, the movement’s anthem, had earlier been adapted as a workers’ song (Reed, 2005).

The music that had such a powerful function within the civil rights and the union movements also exemplified two facets of political music that endure in contemporary political mashup: it was music that was created and consumed outside of corporatised revenue streams, and it eschewed the necessity of ‘expertise.’ That is to say, it did not require professional musicians to recreate it (Reed, 2005: 28). Yet, in the hands of a gifted activist, songs could become political speech, as demonstrated in this recounting of a process that strangely reverses that of political mashup:

\[
\text{When Mrs. Hamer finishes singing a few freedom songs one is aware that he has truly heard}
\]

\[
\text{a fine political speech, stripped of the usual rhetoric and filled with the anger and}
\]

\[
\text{determination of the civil rights movement. And on the other hand in her speeches there is the}
\]

\[
\text{constant thunder of and drive of music. (Bob Cohen, in Reed, 2005: 37)}
\]

The roots of folk protest

The Great Depression in 1930s US prompted many of its victims to musically catalogue their woes. The song “Strange Fruit” (1939) was a protest song at the tail end of the Depression era, directed not against poverty but specifically decrying the practice of lynching, an expression of southern US racism that was often enjoyed as a public spectacle. At around the same time, Woody Guthrie was wandering the denuded agricultural lands of America, writing the songs that would form his collection: Dust Bowl Ballads (1940).17

---


In the wake of America’s Depression, intense economic hardship led to outspoken radicalism. Reflections upon the causes of widespread social deprivation gave rise to moral outrage. Chambers (1985) explains how the galvanising effects of this outrage were musically channelled within movements that spoke out against poverty, racism and gross inequity. America’s booming industrial experiment, while hailed as the eventual bearer of utopia, was seeding suspicion amongst those who observed its imprints upon culture with trepidation. Doubts crystallised in the songs of singers such as Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie and Huddy Leadbetter (aka ‘Leadbelly’). Their words, set against simple, unaffected guitar accompaniments, reflected the rising currency of qualities such as ‘sincerity’ and ‘authenticity’ within a movement that railed against swollen consumerism, mass advertising and creeping materialism (ibid.).

The folk revival that began to flower in New York in the early 1960s did not grow in isolation. It emerged in politically and culturally charged times, through soil enriched by the earlier emancipatory struggles that had taken place during that turbulent century. Reed (2005) recounts how the civil rights activists in the 1950s and ‘60s drew upon songs of the union movements of 1930s America, passing the spirit of these songs on to the folk music scene. The Freedom Singers were particularly instrumental in this passing on of influences. In their prolific travels throughout the US they eventually appeared in New York’s Greenwich Village, where their by then renowned message caught the ears of a new generation of white, morally discontented singers. Many of these musicians were recruited to the civil rights cause via ‘Freedom Summer,’ a 1964 campaign that “brought more than a thousand northern students to Mississippi for three months of intensive movement activity” (2005: 23). Many of the key organisers of movements from the later sixties were trained during their attendance at ‘Freedom Summer.’ These movements included women’s rights, gay liberation, and most notably, the anti-war movement (ibid.).

Another influential ingredient in the early ‘60s protest music mix were the Chad Mitchell Trio,

18 According to Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen, as mass consumerism began its ascendancy in the US, “the proliferation of mass images provided an introduction to a new way of life promised by industrial America” (Ewen and Ewen, 1982: 28).


Vietnam and the twilight of the Civil Rights Movement

* Tin Soldiers And Nixon's Bombing
* We're Finally On Our Own
* This Summer I Hear The Drumming
* Four Dead In Ohio
* Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, “Ohio” (1970)

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young wrote “Ohio” in response to the shooting dead of four student anti-war protesters at Kent State University, Ohio in 1970. The year before, at Woodstock, Jimi Hendrix had mashed up “The Star Spangled Banner” with amplifier feedback ‘falling bombs’ and heavy distortion to create a solely instrumental anti-war statement. These expressions came towards the end of a period that had seen steadily rising opposition to the US military operations in Vietnam. In 1965, when the US escalated its military presence in Vietnam, the folk singers who had embraced the civil rights cause were drawn to the anti-war movement. Bob Dylan and Joan Baez were prominent, while the Country Joe and the Fish song “I Feel Like I'm Fixing to Die Rag” (1967) made the rounds at many demonstrations and marches (Reed, 2005).

According to Reebee Garofalo, the traditions of folk music, with its longstanding associations with political and social struggle, formed a key link in bringing protest music into the mainstream. Dylan and Country Joe MacDonald, along with groups such as Jefferson Airplane and The Grateful Dead, exemplified the drift of mid-1960s folk musicians into electrified rock, moves which Garofalo attributes to bringing protest music into more mainstream channels (Garofalo, 1992).

Meanwhile, the emergence of the Black Panthers had split the civil rights movement either side of what Chang has referred to as “the age-old African American question; Shall we fight for the nation or build our own? Shall we save America or ourselves?” (Chang, 2005: 9). The firebrand politics of Malcom X preached ‘Black Power,’ inspiring hits such as Nina Simone’s “To Be Young, Gifted and Black” (1969), James Brown’s “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud)”
Chapter 2. A History of Imagined Futures

(1968), and Aretha Franklin’s “Respect” (1967).20 By the mid-70s this discord within the movement – together with government pressure – led Curtis Mayfield (who in the '60s had penned “Keep On Pushing” (1964), a favourite anthem of Martin Luther King Jr) to lament the collapse of the movement in “Pusherman” (1972) (Chang, 2003).

Reggae and the message of Bob Marley
Jamaica in the late 1950s, although emerging from its colonial past, was beset by overcrowding, crime and political corruption (King, 2002). This time of turmoil gave rise to a new form of music, called ska. A hybrid of indigenous Jamaican mento, jazz and rhythm and blues, behind its apolitical, happy exterior, ska music conveyed the social hardships of the time, albeit in a mild, nonaggressive way (ibid.). Despite tending to express a “politics of passive suffering,” rather than aggressive activism, ska provided an early musical rallying point for Rastafarian ideologies through the music’s “faint themes of repatriation and the introduction of the term ‘Mount Zion,’ the Rastafarians’ heaven in Africa” (2002: 4-5).

The Jamaican Labour Party (JLP), characterised by an oppressive, autocratic style of governance, was re-elected in 1967. This had the effect of galvanising several marginalised groups: the Rastafari, the chronically poor and radical academics. A new type of Jamaican popular music, Rock Steady, had emerged in the mid-60s, giving expression to more pointed political views. In 1968, amidst convulsive symptoms of civil unrest, rock steady’s prominent electric bass and backing vocals married with ska’s offbeat guitar chops to give birth to a harder, more politically engaged music whose lyrics reflected urban turmoil. The sounds of reggae were “the sounds of the apocalyptic thunder and earthquake; of chaos and curfews ... of a society in the process of transformation, a society undergoing profound political and historical change” (Linton Kwesi Johnson, in King, 2002: 45). Reggae’s explicitly oppositional lyrics relived the past bondage of slavery, and envisioned social reform and the ultimate Rastafarian goal of repatriation to Africa.

As reggae became increasingly entwined with Rastafarian ideals, the music’s early producers were implemental in shaping the new form to political ends. King Tubby (aka Osborne Ruddock) wove special effects with instrumental reggae to form dub, which, with its fragmented rhythms and ghostly echoes, sounded “the mostly wordless music of dread” (Chang, 2005: 35). Lee

---
20 This song was actually written by Otis Redding and was originally about wanting respect when coming home from doing a performance.
“Scratch” Perry slowed down reggae’s rhythms to allow space for its increasingly political lyrics. With the release of *Catch a Fire* (1973) by The Wailers, songwriters Bob Marley and Peter Tosh were launched as international stars (King, 2002).

Bob Marley’s fame in particular carried the story of the Rastafarian struggle to all corners of the planet. Despite radical political music’s historical status as a less commercially viable form, US recording companies saw the chance, and began to successfully market reggae as a fresh new “rebel music” to young Americans and Europeans (King, 2002). Many traditional Rastafarians perceived the religious aspects of their ideology to be trivialised by commercialism, which brought with it a plethora of pseudo-Rastas who were inspired to superficially adopt Rastafarianism’s more manifest customs of ganga (marijuana) smoking, dreadlocks and language, while ignoring its religious and political goals. Nonetheless, reggae’s critique of Jamaican injustices was still evident in the international form. Moreover, international reggae expanded the oppositional agenda; it “universalized its themes of protest and repositioned the Rastafarians as part of a larger, more ‘universal,’ pan-African movement” (2002: 96).

Elements of the punk movement in Britain and the US, which had its roots in disaffected youth, resonated with reggae’s depictions of oppressed alienation (ibid.). A prominent British punk group, The Clash, incorporated reggae rhythms into their music, while some punks embellished their already brazen apparel with the green, yellow and red of Ethiopia’s flag. Bob Marley’s song “Punky Reggae Party” (1977) was purported to be an acknowledgement of punk’s partial embrace of reggae (King, 2002).

There were elements of the Jamaican musical weave that prefigured later developments in US hip hop. The latter, like reggae, sprang from highly localised street scenes that were enlivened by music broadcast from mobile ‘sound systems.’

---

21 This successful branding of an oppositional music to promote corporate profits shall be readdressed in the section ‘Just wars at the borders’ and recuperation, in Chapter 3.

22 Punk itself has been variously represented as a political movement, a cultural fad and a marketing tour de force. Its music, as exemplified by bands such as The Sex Pistols and The Clash, often expressed opposition to existing social structures. The varying claims for and against punk music constituting protest music are both broad-ranging and contentious and are beyond the scope of this study. An interesting approach to this much debated question is taken in Roger Sabin’s (1999) *Punk Rock: So What?*, London: Routledge.
Jamaican ‘sound systems’ and dub plates

Reggae’s precursors of ska and rhythm and blues were able to infiltrate the hearts and souls of the poor shanty town dwellers via the technology of the ‘sound system.’ Plugged into an electric outlet in a backyard, the mobile systems played discs through two to eight powerful speakers that could engulf a neighbourhood with music. The R&B records that ska producer and promoter Clement Dodd brought back from America were fresh to the ears of people who were too poor to afford radios (King, 2002). As the local industry grew, sound systems began creating acetates, or dub plates – recordings of local talent that could be played alongside the American imports. A simple oversight – a sound engineer neglecting to turn up the vocal fader on a recording – resulted in an acetate with an extended instrumental section. The frenetic saltation that the vocal-less textures evoked in the dancers that night showed the sound system owner the fortuitousness of the engineer’s mistake. In a precursor to the contemporary practice of extracting a multitude of mixes from a single song, system owners began cutting vocal-less versions of songs and putting them on the B-sides of full recordings. Over the extended instrumental sections, DJs would ‘toast’ the crowds, whipping them up into excited frenzies (Chang, 2005). Sometimes the toasting would morph into political rants, thereby evolving the sound system into “the focal point for the development of a community of dissent” (King, 2002: 16).

Hip hop and the birth of rap

According to cultural and musical critic Jeff Chang, the genre of hip hop had its genesis in New York in the 1970s (Chang, 2005). Born out of the struggles for identity – and often survival – of African and Hispanic Americans in the ghettoised ‘Projects’ of the South Bronx, hip hop incorporated a range of expressions that reflected the conditions faced by that city’s marginalised inhabitants. In the 1950s, the Cross-Bronx Expressway had cut a seven mile swathe through Black, Puerto Rican and Jewish ghettoes in Manhattan. The Expressway was designed to connect the suburbs of Queens and New Jersey via Manhattan, transforming the latter into a wealthy shopping district. Displaced residents were relocated to the South Bronx Housing Projects, where, amidst the rubble thrown up by bulldozers and jackhammers they raised the territorial ire of poor white Jewish, Irish and Italian residents. Gangs were formed, both as measures of self defence and to alleviate the boredom of unemployment and the meaninglessness of existence in a vast concrete metropolis (ibid.).

DJ Kool Herc, aka Clive Campbell, was one of the pioneers of hip hop (Chang, 2005). At his ‘Block Parties’ he span platters of James Brown and other soul and R&B artists through a
powerful sound system, sometimes stepping back to observe – as the Jamaican DJ toasters had earlier – how the dancers appeared to hold something in reserve until the climactic instrumental break of the song, at which point they would go wild. Kool Herc had the idea of adding a second turntable and then indefinitely extending the break section by continually cross-fading two copies of the same record from table to table (ibid.). This innovation continued the evolution of the ‘DJ as producer’ era that had its genesis in the Jamaican sound system parties; it was to have profound implications for hip hop, and later, mashup styles. Although DJ Kool Herc’s efforts were not aimed at making political statements, they inspired other artists, who would take the hip hop form into more political or socially conscious realms.

Afrika Bambaataa developed Kool Herc’s break-centred mashups further, weaving seamless pastiche from the breaks of songs by Sly and the Family Stone, The Monkees and Grand Funk Railroad with James Brown snippets and Malcolm X speeches. Bambaataa’s brilliance in ‘programming’ – which in its predigital form meant the cross fading of selected sections of different songs – was applied to the creation of music that pushed the idea of power through self knowledge (Chang, 2005). Originally a member of the Black Spades, a predominantly African American street gang, Bambaataa “started to believe that the energy, loyalty, and passion that defined gang life could be guided toward more socially productive activities” (Watkins, 2006: 23). He founded the Universal Zulu Nation, an organisation that pushed the idea of hip hop as a channel through which marginalised Blacks could come to new, more positive understandings of themselves (ibid.). Another of the “trinity of hip-hop music,” Grandmaster Flash, brought the technique of ‘scratching’ into DJing, and also conceived of the idea of vocal accompaniment over the breaks he mashed up in his ‘Quick Mix’ theory, in which the record was sectioned off like a clock (Chang, 2005: 90). This led to MCing and, finally, rapping. Both MCs and DJs often recorded their live shows, the resultant ‘mix tapes’ being sold within the community to spread word of their talents. While the tapes were of a rough quality, “they, nevertheless, marked the beginnings of an alternative economy that has endured in hip hop” (Watkins, 2006: 14).

Grandmaster Flash had a part in producing what is now thought of as an iconic piece of social commentary rap, in “The Message” (1982). In the mid to late ’80s rap crews such as Public Enemy with “Fight the Power” (1989), Boogie Down Productions with “Stop the Violence” (1988) and N.W.A with “Fuck tha Police” (1988) returned to themes of black radicalism, railing against police violence while challenging white media representations of Blacks (Chang, 2005).
In the 1980s President Reagan’s politics of deregulation saw the demise of US manufacturing industries. The administration’s robust stance against communism led it to some highly contentious actions on the international stage, such as selling arms to the fundamentalist Islamist regime in Iran, then using the proceeds to fund *contras* (militant guerrilla groups) in Nicaragua.\(^{23}\) Anti-Reagan sentiments provoked a stream of vigorous oppositional music, such as Billy Joel’s “Allentown” (1982) about the demise of manufacturing; The B-52s’ “Channel-Z” (1989) with its many references to cold war weaponry anxieties; and Jackson Browne’s anti-Reagan “Soldier of Plenty” (1985).\(^{24}\)

In the 1990s the effects of globalisation began to imprint themselves upon the production and consumption of popular music. Chang writes of a “narrowing of the content of popular music,” characterised by standardised (and reduced) radio playlists and gradual monopolisation of the recording industry by major companies, whose cannibalistic tendencies were directed at smaller, independent companies, and then at each other (Chang, 2003, online). This is not to say that protest music was completely absent in that decade. In “It’s Up to You” (1992, 2008), Steinski incorporated the voice of George Bush senior into what is regarded as one of the few anti-First Gulf War songs.\(^{25}\) Video mashup artists and musicians EBN also used Bush senior’s voice, incorporating it into a cover of Queen’s “We Will Rock You” (1995), another anti-Gulf War piece.\(^{26}\) Rage Against the Machine’s “Testify” (1999) is an anti-capitalist song that condemns the media for their role in spreading a climate of fear in order to induce populations to support war (Finley, 2002).

Despite these expressions of antiwar sentiment, protest music began to wane in the 1990s; as Chang observed in 2003: “Until recently many had bemoaned the passing of political music” (Chang, 2003, online). However, he also noted that, “in the months following 11 September, the dearth of anti-war music in the US was stunning” (ibid.). Neil McCormick, pondering protest music’s demise in the year following the September 11 attacks, suggested that it was “as if this conflict between a superpower and almost invisible antagonists is too complex and ambiguous


\(^{26}\) [http://www.myspace.com/emergencybroadcastnetwork](http://www.myspace.com/emergencybroadcastnetwork)
Chapter 2. A History of Imagined Futures

for old, anti-war convictions to hold up” (McCormick, 2002, online). Martin Cloonan noted comments in music magazine NME that attested to a general feeling within listeners and the industry that music was somehow rendered too trivial – even disrespectful – in the wake of such calamitous events (Cloonan, 2004). However, as forwarded in Chapter 3, there were influences other than mere moral ambiguity directing reactions to 9/11. The US administration’s recruitment of the corporate-owned mass media to its war effort was crucial to its representation of war as the inevitable response to 9/11. The government’s mass mediated messages had a major bearing on musical responses to the attacks, as the following section examines.

Protest music post-9/11

The attacks on New York and Washington DC on 11th September 2001 initially galvanised A-list rock musicians to respond reflectively, focusing on channelling the injured nation’s grief, rather than its vengeful rage (Garofalo, 2007). This sentiment was made manifest when, a mere ten days after the attacks, a large scale concert featuring high profile popular musicians was organised. ‘America: A Tribute to Heroes’ was described by Reebee Garofalo as an “understated, reverential event, which captured the national mood during a brief moment of what I would call ‘gentle patriotism’” (2007: 4). However, the effects of the government’s mass mediated war campaign quickly changed the prevalent tune from one of rumination to aggression. A month after ‘America: A Tribute to Heroes,’ Madison Square Garden hosted ‘Concert for New York City’. Coming after the US invasion of Afghanistan, this was an altogether different event whose performers generally expressed a hardening of attitudes towards the perceived terrorist enemy. Headliner Paul McCartney’s song “Freedom” (2001) was indicative of what Garofalo calls an “increased testosterone level” in the music, which he saw as “a clear indicator of the change in mood, emotional tone, and political will that was taking place in the United States” (Garofalo, 2007: 7). This transformation owed much to the US administration’s enlistment of popular music “in the service of mourning, healing, patriotism, and nation building” (2007: 4). The traditionally patriotic genre of country music now took centre stage. Enjoying unfettered radio play, many country songs became hits in 2001 and 2002, among them Alan Jackson’s US number one single, “Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)” (2001), and Toby Keith’s promise of “a boot in the ass” of America’s enemies in “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (Angry American)” (2001) (Garofalo, 2007).

Although it may have appeared that protest music had all but disappeared in the wake of 9/11, there was in fact a substantial amount being produced, but as Garofalo noted: “it was clear that
tolerance for dissent was not on the agenda of the entertainment industry” (2007: 18). Radio stations refused to play dissenting songs, a decision that is easier to comprehend when one considers the scale of corporate media consolidation that has taken place in recent decades. In the early 1980s major mass media outlets were run by as many as fifty companies. By the end of the last century this number had shrunk to four (Chang, 2005). This unprecedented consolidation in radio was enabled by the deregulating Telecommunications Act, referred to by Chang as “the legal codification of the pro-media monopoly stance” (2005: 441). With their profits ensured by global monopolies, the media conglomerates had no wish to disrupt the status quo. Chang recalls the post-9/11 embellishment of the links between big business and government:

*Clear Channel financed hawkish Republican candidates and ‘patriotic’ rallies while record company [sic] execs met with Bush Administration officials to discuss how to help the war on terrorism. Patriotic songs flooded the stores and the airwaves. Many Arab artists were forced to cancel their US tours.* (Chang, 2003, online)

The financing of pro-war rallies by Clear Channel is less surprising when coupled with the knowledge that the vice president of the media conglomerate had intimate business ties with the Bush family (Garofalo, 2007).27

In the months after 9/11, ‘don’t play lists’ were circulated by large media corporations; songs that called for peace and reflection remained submerged beneath the wave of flag waving nationalism the US administration rode steadily towards war. Songs such as John Lennon’s “Imagine” (1971) and Cat Steven’s “Peace Train” (1971) made the list, as did many others (Garofalo, 2007). Musicians who wished to take aim at the administration were pitted against the corporate/government axis of economic and political power; many were not only subjected to radio censorship, but, in some cases, were banned from live performances at certain venues (2007). These punitive measures equated to “professional risks” associated with artists expressing dissent (2007: 18). Such a climate of fear led to a level of self-censorship by many artists, as described here by Martin Scherzinger:

---

27 When Bush was governor of Texas, Clear Channel’s Vice President Tom Hicks chaired an investment company that invested heavily in companies with ties to the Bush family and/or the Republican party. In 1998 Hicks bought the Texas Rangers baseball team, which Bush had bought with wealthy investors in 1989. The deal netted Bush around $15 million (Garofalo, 2007); see also http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/Texas-Rangers-Baseball-Company-History.html, accessed 17th June, 2009.
When it must bring itself into line with the imperatives and interests of such highly concentrated, unaccountable economic power, musical censorship occurs less visibly than if it were inscribed in law, with artists second-guessing the wishes of industry executives. Under these conditions, the musician can become cautious and compromised, seeking to balance his/her artistic vision with a duty to serve the ideological demands and political interests of industry executives and their advertisers, which, in turn, articulate with the highest forms of political authority and power. (Scherzinger, 2007: 104)

By specifying what music the public could hear, the government in effect enlisted music to their cause. Murray Forman refers to this process as the “conscription of music,” whereby “… music and musical meanings are rechanneled in a manner that reproduces the hegemonic structure and, pace Gramsci, reaffirms the prevailing social order of domination and subordination” (in Scherzinger, 2007: 97). Within this climate of censorship, a few mainstream artists turned to the only available portal through which their dissenting expressions could be heard – the Internet. Among the major artists that posted online MP3s for free download were: The Beastie Boys, Chuck D, R.E.M. and John Mellencamp (Garofalo, 2007).

Despite such pressures, the Bush Administration’s invasion of Iraq in 2003 sparked sufficient outrage in many artists to cause them to cast aside their self-censoring impulses. As Chang reported, the dying embers of musical dissidence were reignited by “an outpouring of protest music unlike anything heard in the past two decades” (Chang, 2003, online). Blur’s “We’ve Got a File on You” (2003) echoed the rising fears of threatened privacy that accompanied the increasingly frenzied anti-terrorist legislation rushed through by Western governments after 9/11. Beenie Man’s “Terrorist” (2003) addressed similar concerns:

George Bush got nothing on me! CIA, FBI! Cause I’m a terrorist, you don’t want to war with me, I’ll be another DJ dead for speaking out of the mouth what I shouldn’t have said! (in Chang, 2003, online)

Of particular pertinence to the RogueSounds project was the commercial release of “Weapon of Mass Destruction” (2004) by the band Faithless. The trip hop unit embellished their catchy anti-Iraq war tune with a sample of US President George W. Bush speaking the title phrase. His nightly enunciation of those four words had already become an iconic soundbite for television news viewers throughout the West. Faithless front man Maxi Jazz (aka Maxwell Fraser), explaining his motives for writing the song said, “I felt pained and grieved that so many people
don’t have a voice, so I figured it’s about time we found our voice.”

The above-mentioned online excursions by major artists beyond the traditional pecuniary boundaries of commercial music were necessarily short-lived. Professional musicians needed to sell recordings, but, as Garofalo notes, “the Internet offered only limited possibilities for promoting such protest music” (Garofalo, 2007: 19). However, post-Iraq, Chang reported the online appearance of “hundreds of anti-war MP3s” (Chang, 2003, online).

The use of cyberspace by such artists to project their anti-war sentiments “under the cultural radar” prefigured the distribution mode of political mashup. Political mashup’s largely unknown, non-commercially-aligned practitioners began capturing mass-mediated political rhetoric, then deploying their digital cut and paste skills to reconfigure it. Reconstructed narratives were posted on a mushrooming array of activist web sites and blogs.

As I argue in Chapter 3, the range of the mashup practitioners’ critical focus extends beyond the anti-war expressions of traditional ‘protest music’ into critiques of globalised capitalism. As such, the form’s existence within broader traditions of oppositional expression must be framed by the genealogy of cultural activism, which may be seen as an aesthetic and pragmatic forerunner of political mashup.

Cultural Activism

Culture jamming

William Thake defines ‘cultural activism’ as “the construction of independent forums for cultural expression, outside the limits of commercialism or institutions” (Thake, 2003, online). Cultural activism is distinct from political activism in that it is more concerned with issues of distribution and the notion of art as a public phenomenon. Culture jamming has tended to be used in response

---

28 http://www.VH1.com/faithless.jhtml, accessed 3rd November 2006. Interestingly, in this online magazine feature on the song, which included an interview with Maxi Jazz, no mention was made of the use of the Bush speech sample – despite its prominence in the arrangement.

to perceptions that big money is behind cultural apparatuses that monopolise cultural transmission, through means such as mass advertising (ibid.). Mark Dery offers this definition:

*Culture jamming … is directed against an ever more intrusive, instrumental technoculture whose operant mode is the manufacture of consent through the manipulation of symbols … Part artistic terrorists, part vernacular critics, culture jammers … introduce noise into the signal as it passes from transmitter to receiver, encouraging idiosyncratic, unintended interpretations.* (in Sanjek, 2003: 361-2)

In the 1930s the rising tides of corporatised business had begun to leave indelible marks on Western cultures. The most visible of these were the mass advertising campaigns that oversaw the installation of massive billboards in public spaces. According to Naomi Klein, the billboard depictions of contented consumers amidst copious abundance, juxtaposed on the impoverished landscape of the Depression, “provoked a wave of resentment from the millions of Americans who found themselves on the outside of the dream of prosperity” (Klein, 2000: 308). Some people channelled this resentment into billboard defacement, a practice that exceeded the mere vandalism of corporate property. It constituted instead, reconfigurations of the advertisers’ messages into alternative, subversive messages. Klein attributes the first incidence of culture jamming to *The Ballyhoo*, a satirical magazine which ran briefly from 1930-31. Focusing on cigarette advertising, along with a host of other emerging mass advertising campaigns, *The Ballyhoo* encouraged resistance to mass advertising in the form of billboard defacing – a tradition that endures to the present day in the ‘skulling’ campaigns of contemporary cultural activists (ibid.).

The techniques of billboard defacement, also known as ‘adbusting,’ may have been borrowed from avant-garde art movements such as Surrealism, Dada, Situationalism and Conceptualism (Klein, 2000). In the early 20th century Kurt Schwitters laid the foundations for pop art with assemblages of ‘found objects’ whose effectiveness derived from “the sensitive juxtaposition of abstraction and realism, aesthetics and rubbish, art and life, and their innate dynamism” (Freundel, 1998, online). Schwitters’ serious artworks were themselves preceded by some more light-hearted applications of the emerging technology of photography. In the film *Sonic Outlaws* (Baldwin, dir., 1995), John Oswald – whose album *Plunderphonics* (1989) famously mashed together existing recordings to create new works – speaks of popular photo montage of the 19th century. Postcards began to appear featuring strange juxtapositions of blown up images – people riding a rabbit for instance; a huge fish on a wagon, or hunters returning with braces of
enormous locusts. Later, the Berlin dada artist John Heartfield used the technique of photomontage to both reflect and comment upon the fragmentation of life in modernity in his creations for *New Youth* magazine, a Dadaist publication of 1920 (Freundel, 1998). Meanwhile, El Lissitsky and Alexander Rodchenko, from the Russian Constructivist school, were juxtaposing apparently disparate images in their attempts to disrupt perceptions of ‘reality’ that they believed to be prefigured by the prevailing ideologies of society (Di Bello, 2008).

These experiments in found object collage and photographic manipulation were important in prefiguring the landscape of political mashup. However, the billboard-altering culture jamming pioneers defended broader territory; billboard defacements were (and still are) acts of rebellion against what were perceived as the colonising forces of capitalism. The billboards intruded on public spaces – both urban and rural – implanting in them what constituted gigantic one-way messages. In defiance of this intended one way flow of communication, the adbusters intercepted these messages and reconfigured them as alternative, subversive messages (Klein, 2000). This cooption of the very *substance* of the powerful corporations’ messages prefigures the appropriations of contemporary political mashup.30

### Détournement and the Situationists International

Guy Debord, a founder of the Situationists International, had by 1956 already laid out a guide to ‘détournement,’ the practice of appropriating existing elements of art works for their incorporation into new works (Debord, 1956). Debord’s anticipation of a coming revolution in which the existing social order would be overthrown was partially realised by the 1968 student riots and occupation of the Sorbonne in Paris. According to Peter Marshall (1992), the Situationists contended that capitalism transformed culture into a series of commercial activities, thereby disposessing its populations of their essential life force. Consumer culture emphasised

30 The use of graffiti as activism deserves mention here. Photographer Rennie Ellis famously captured many examples of not only billboard defacement, but also activist graffiti in Melbourne in the 1970s. Some of his work can be viewed at: [http://www.rennieellis.com.au/gallery/collection.asp?CurrentPage=1&display=13](http://www.rennieellis.com.au/gallery/collection.asp?CurrentPage=1&display=13). The appropriation of public spaces – primarily walls – in Melbourne for the displaying of painted messages was apparently reinvigorated in the late 1990s. An article in the *Curtin University Newspaper* in April 1999 referred to the “new” form of “graffiti activism” that was then appearing in Melbourne. The graffiti artists chose blank walls in close proximity to shopping centres upon which to write slogans such as “300 Children Starve To Death Each Hour,” and “We Eat Food Imported From Malnourished Nations”, [http://www.shutupandshop.wild.net.au/endhunger/interviews/perth.html](http://www.shutupandshop.wild.net.au/endhunger/interviews/perth.html), accessed 22nd October 2009.
‘having’ over ‘being,’ its relentless encouragement of the former serving to render people as faceless consumers, alienated from their human potentials, numbed by mindless acquisition. The Situationists sought to shock people out of their comfortable acquiescence to robotic consumption by subjecting them to unconventional experiences. Acts such as vandalism and sabotage were intended to disrupt the ‘spectacle’ of the world of manufactured commodities (Marshall, 1992).

These precepts have endured into the contemporary age, and are demonstrated by such modern-day cultural activists as The Yes Men, Negativland and the notorious ‘prankster’ Joey Skaggs.

The Yes Men are an activist group who stage bogus conferences for large corporations, events to which they manage to attract high level corporate lawyers and executives. Pretending to be heads of organisations such as Exxon or Halliburton, their presentations and speeches satirise the conduct of large corporations by suggesting outrageous products or behaviours – such as paying off third world debt. The Yes Men’s efforts have often left them confounded by the depth of entrenchment of capitalism’s accepted logics. As one member laments from their website:

> Unfortunately, our current religion of free-trade is so strong that despite our best efforts to satirise the logic, the various audiences we spoke to simply agree with every sinister, corrupt, and disgusting idea that the “WTO” could muster. So we learned exactly how frightening this reality is.\(^{31}\)

Joey Skaggs perpetrates media hoaxes – which he terms ‘pranks’ – in order to highlight the willingness of corporate-owned cultural transmitters to mass-mediate information based on its apparent appeal to readers, rather than its authenticity.\(^{32}\) Negativland is a San Francisco collage band who coined the term ‘culture jamming’ in their album *Jamcon ’84* (1984). Although they define themselves as artists first, activists second, the band’s unusual way of combining their original compositions with found sound – and particularly, captured content from corporate transmissions – has made them exemplars of culture jamming. Their protracted legal battle with the management of the band U2, over their piece “U2” (1991) led to Negativland being highly...

---


\(^{32}\) Joey Skaggs has posted a permanent feature on the RogueSounds project on his website: http://artoftheprank.com.
visible advocates of copyright reform.33

* * * * *

The practice of détournement had already been deployed in the earliest examples of protest music, when old songs were invested with new meaning through the changing of lyrics. The rapid growth of audio technology in the 20th century allowed the practice to take on greater degrees of complexity. In the following section I trace the evolution of specifically musical applications of détournement, starting with tape manipulations and culminating in contemporary political mashup.

Tape manipulations and other precursors to political mashup

In an essay called “Détournement as Civil Disobedience”, James Cypher proposes that “in the digital media age” the manipulations of détournement “are viral, enjoying an environment where they replicate, change and re-replicate like no other time in history” (Cypher, 2007: 1). Notwithstanding the distributional opportunities afforded by current digital technology for such re-appropriations, there are significant examples of musical détournement that predate digital audio technology.

In 1960, minimalism pioneer Terry Riley created “Mescaline Mix” (1960), which he later described as “recorded tape loops that were all mixed from people playing the piano, laughing, different sounds I’d collected here and there, explosions. I did it all by overlaying tape loops” (in Toop, 1995: 183-84). John Oswald cut up edited audio tapes to create “Power” (1975), a collage of Led Zeppelin and a ranting preacher sampled from radio. The Beatles, together with producer George Martin engaged in a number of experiments in tape manipulation in the mid to late 1960s, resulting in watershed tracks such as “Tomorrow Never Knows” (1966), and “Revolution Number 9” (1968) (Lewisohn, 1988).

There are predigital examples of détournement in which captured audio was recontextualised towards overtly political ends. Dickie Goodman was one of the earliest exponents of ‘sampling,’ a technologically mediated musical process in which audio is captured from one source and then incorporated into new material (Cypher, 2007). Goodman’s ‘break in’ records used fragments of

popular songs, advertisements, and on at least one occasion, political speech. Known as the ‘King of Novelty,’ Goodman began constructing his trademark mashups as early as 1956 – well before the age of digital audio. His track “Water grate” (1973) may have been the first recorded example of political mashup. It was in response to the infamous ‘Watergate’ affair in US politics, and incorporated samples of the then President Richard Nixon into an original composition (Cypher, 2007). The twelve inch version of “Two Tribes” (1984) by Frankie Goes to Hollywood featured Ronald Reagan lines spoken by an actor. A long version of the Godley and Creme directed video for the song featured a sampled Richard Nixon monologue, along with snippets of speech from John F. Kennedy and Yasser Arafat, among others. In the early 1990s a group of digital audio technology enthusiasts called The Bots (later to become indispensable aids to a plethora of post-9/11 political mashup efforts, courtesy of their extensive online archive of recorded George W. Bush speeches) created “Bushwack” (1992) under the name of Tone Def, featuring the sampled speech of then US President George H. W. Bush, and criticising the US involvement in the first Gulf War. The aforementioned Emergency Broadcast Network’s (EBN) “Behavior Modification/We Will Rock You” (1992) also incorporated samples of George H. W. Bush saying “We Will Rock You.” EBN performed the song – complete with samples – at the early Lollapalooza concerts. U2 also used the recording in their ‘Zoo TV’ tour.

Video mashups and the YouTube phenomenon

In a development that highlights the apparent primacy of the visual medium over its purely aural counterpart, the website YouTube has enjoyed a meteoric rise in recent years. In addition to the tide of banality that predictably arose from the website’s globally dispersed invitation to ‘broadcast yourself,’ a significant niche is now filled by political parody videos, a phenomenon that reflects a burgeoning culture of online art-based political resistance. In the lead up to the 2007 federal election in Australia, YouTube was flooded with political parody videos, a phenomenon noticed by Crawford, who wrote: “The net has become a real convergence point for underground art and political movements and the mass press releases that politicians are much more used to” (in Wilson, 2008: 6). Politicians finally boarded the YouTube bandwagon,

---

38 The ocular centrism of our culture is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, Music and Meaning.
uploading official policy releases. But, as Crawford pointed out in the article, each release would inspire several parodic mashup reconfigurations of the official broadcast (ibid.). In 2008 *The Guardian Weekly* newspaper reported on a similar incidence of broadcast video culture jamming in which a technologically gifted art group from the Czech Republic managed to infiltrate a live television weather broadcast with spliced footage of a nuclear mushroom cloud. The group, whose stated aim was to question media credibility, earned themselves a Czech National Gallery award – an honour that was offset by a $10,000 fine from a disapproving Czech judge (Keddie, 2008).

* * * * *

In this chapter I have argued for political mashup’s presence within longstanding traditions of musical and cultural resistance. Its appropriative practices capture echoes of both the earliest protest songs, in which older material was continually reconfigured in order to comment on current affairs; and cultural activism’s more overt appropriations of hegemonic artefacts, in which corporate messages were subverted by recontextualisation. This historical account has been haunted by the spectres of inequality, injustice and violence. In all of these categories of suffering, the powerful structures of governments and corporations are continually implicated. In the following chapter I delve into the machinations of power – particularly in the wake of the 9/11 attacks – and elaborate the political/philosophical framework that has served as a guide for this project’s creative practice.
Chapter 3
The Problem of Power

Democracy don’t rule the world,
You’d better get that in your head;
This world is ruled by violence,
But I guess that’s better left unsaid.


The reference media have no stake in plunderphonics. It has provided no advertising revenue from any of its versions ... & to my knowledge it has not been indicated in marketing surveys as a subject which incites readers to buy magazines. So I imagine that there’s no lack of compulsion to make me out as the guy who courts law suits; that’s my media identity. “Oswald, the would-be assassin of the music industry.”

John Oswald

Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.

Mao Zedong, Little Red Book, (1964)

In this chapter I outline my aims and motivations for creating the music by elaborating a political/philosophical position informed by relevant literature. In particular I position my work as a form of resistance to global capitalist hegemony, as articulated within the theoretical framework of Michael Hardt’s and Antonio Negri’s concepts of ‘Empire’ (Hardt and Negri, 2000) and the ‘Multitude’ (Hardt and Negri, 2004). Readings on non-violence as an activist strategy are included, considering how this philosophy informs the work. In arguing for the efficacy of my creative work as resistance I also refer to philosophical accounts of the possibilities for resistance against immanent powers. These conceptual ‘lenses’ have served to focus my creative work, and the ways in which I think of it as activist expression. They have also broadened the range of issues I have chosen to focus upon.

Chapter 3. The Problem of Power

A Bitter Stew: the Ingredients of Post-9/11 Radicalisation

Political mashup in its post-9/11 form is an oppositional expression arising from the convergence of three separate but intermingled phenomena. First, political developments surrounding the ‘war on terror’; second, the proliferation of (slanted) media coverage of the war, and third, the dramatic developments in digital technologies that have led to more affordable access to computers, fast internet, peer-to-peer networks over which music and software can easily be shared, and vast and ever-extending global telecommunications networks. The following account of the political, cultural and technological conditions that gave rise to political mashup is largely chronological, and reveals the confluence of these three primary contributing factors.

Shock and awe ... and political opportunism

The terrorist attacks upon the US on September 11, 2001 called forth a proliferation of media images. Television viewers in the West were transfixed by the unremittingly looped playbacks of the passenger jet ploughing into the south tower of the World Trade Center. Those not engulfed by the surge of flag-waving US nationalism that followed the attacks waited nervously for the responses the events would be called upon to justify. Slavoj Žižek summed up the sense of foreboding that immediately followed the attacks – a prescience that the rule of law would be cast aside, revealing the power of sovereignty to suspend democracy at its whim: “decisions are being made which will affect the fate of all of us, and all of us just wait, aware that we are utterly powerless” (Žižek, 2001b, online). The almost surrealistic extravagance of the attacks drew differing responses. Amidst the outraged cries for vengeance were calls for reflection; it was possible to empathise with the reeling nation while concurrently meditating on what could have led to acts of such focused hatred. Judith Butler’s suggestion that America’s sense of woundedness after the attacks offered an opportunity for it to take pause, to “start to imagine a world in which the violence might be minimised,” resonates strongly with the RogueSounds ‘blueprint’ for creative expression (Butler, 2004: xiii). However, Butler went on to describe the forces that were at the time arrayed against any who expressed wavering certitude regarding appropriate responses to the attacks. The New York Times pilloried those who cautioned against violent knee-jerk responses, branding them as ‘excuseniks,’ an appellation echoing the Vietnam war era labelling of anti-war protestors as ‘peaceniks’ by ‘the establishment’ (ibid.). Upendra Baxi had earlier lamented the “chilling effect on critical discourse” of the “massive inhibitory injunctions arising from an ‘either you are with us or with them’ syndrome,” as repeatedly articulated in grave tones by President Bush in the wake of the attacks (Baxi, 2002, online). Bush’s black and white dichotomy was at the more vociferous end of a range of messages that
were at the time being transmitted via the mass media. In the following section the full spectrum of these messages – from the overt to the more subliminal – is examined in detail, particularly in relation to their collective role in stimulating oppositional responses.

**Mass mediated propaganda**

The ominous atmosphere projected through the media after 9/11 had a musical element in its making. The first footage CNN aired of the attacks consisted of images accompanied by only the ambient sounds of the carnage (Deaville, 2007). By the following day, these images had been married to music that was described by James Deaville as an “aggressive musical theme” whose military snare drums, agitated strings and unresolved figures suggested a “call to arms” in an “open ended conflict” (2007: 51). The corporate-owned media’s use of such signifying practices to garner public support for the war-focussed agenda of the US government represented attempts to communicate on subliminal levels. By subliminally (musically) encoding their reports with imperatives that “seem(ed) natural to the recipient” the media revealed the degree to which its opinion-shaping power had been harnessed by the hawkish US Administration (Deaville, 2007: 48). Indeed, the covert enlisting of unchallenged ‘common wisdom’ to the project of maintaining the status quo is often revealing of bias that reflects the vested interests of media owners (Hart, 2005). Moreover, during the ‘state of exception’ posed by war, media bias becomes more extreme. This was evident in a report by the organisation Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), which stated that during the early weeks of the 1991 Gulf War, despite widespread opposition to the war, only 1.5% of people who appeared on screen in relation to it were anti-war protesters (ibid.).

The perception of media bias was of paramount importance in mobilising a generation of media-savvy digital artists against the war on terror. Observing the corporate-owned media as it jettisoned its traditional role as a watchdog over government policy, Stephen Marshall created *S-11 Redux* (Marshall, 2002, mash.), a video mashup of Presidential speeches and television news that sought to highlight how “during wartime, news companies and governmental representatives

---


41 This issue arises again later in this chapter in an examination of the construction and use of universalised ‘truths’ by powerful interests to justify extraordinary measures in defending security.
fus[e their voices together into one univocal beam of support for the national military objective.”

Marshall’s video mashup seemed to issue from precepts remarkably similar to those guiding the RogueSounds project. Like the latter, he plays with the paradoxes implicit in the invocation: ‘imagine the unimaginable,’ inviting audiences to envision a world in which leaders speak their truths into TV cameras, yet finally concludes with the sobering analysis that this is an impossibility “in the current corporate controlled environment of media ownership.”

This environment allowed some Western governments to contrive ornate constructions of enmity, against which vengeful wrath could be directed. For the US leaders in the wake of 9/11, the portrayal of Osama Bin Laden by the Bush Administration as evil incarnate, dispatching his lieutenants throughout the ‘free world’ to commit purely demonic acts, constituted a biblical-type narrative of epic proportions. The global communications networks supplied the conduit through which such apocalyptic ideas could be disseminated, a fact discerned by Jacques Derrida:

Between the two supposed war leaders, the two metonyms, ‘Bin Laden’ and ‘Bush,’ the war of images and of discourses proceeds at an ever quickening pace over the airwaves, dissimulating and reflecting more and more quickly the truth that it reveals. (in Borradori, 2003: 21)

Further incisive criticism of the media’s role in demonising the Al Qaeda leader was provided by Douglass Kellner, who wrote:

The US media’s demonizing coverage of bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network of terrorists and constant demand for strong military retaliation precluded developing broader coalitions and more global and less militarist approaches to the problem of terrorism. (Kellner, 2003: 16)

Just as those who questioned the early tactics of the war on terror risked being branded as ‘traitors,’ any who questioned the demonisation of Bin Laden were (and still often are) accused of being ‘anti American,’ or ‘apologists.’ Such reactionary responses may, however, serve to obscure less overt agendas of domination. For instance, Kellner puts the much-publicised ‘jihad’ waged by Bin Laden and his fundamentalist followers into a broader perspective, claiming that it may be

---


43 ibid.

44 In post-9/11 speeches President Bush frequently referred to Osama Bin Laden as “the evil one.” See, for instance: http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=79071.
seen as merely the reflection of a similar assault – the attack of ‘McWorld’ on tradition and local
culture:

\[
\text{Just as Al-Qaeda dreams of imposing a radical premodern Islam on the world, taking over and}
\text{destroying Western infidel culture and imposing a homogenized Islamic fundamentalism, so too}
\text{does McDonald’s want to destroy local and traditional eating habits and cuisine and replace}
\text{them with a globalized and universalized menu. (2003: 19)}
\]

In 2003, President Bush began to pave the way for the US invasion of Iraq, using mass media
outlets to issue daily warnings of the ‘grave and gathering threat’ posed by the oil-rich nation. The
perils of anthrax and chemical/biological weapons haunted evening news broadcasts. Reportage
became progressively infused with a lexicon centred around the term ‘terrorism,’ a word,
according to Saul Newman, that has come to “function(s) as an ideological tool of the modern
Western state, serving to legitimise a series of measures which, prior to September 11, would
have been unthinkable, but which are now accepted as necessary and normal” (Newman, 2005:
101).

Kellner supports Newman’s assertions, pointing out that ‘terrorism’ is a highly relative term. He
echoes the claims of Chomsky and Herman (1979) that the US and Israel have been guilty of
state sponsored terrorism for decades, reminding us that many observers of the war on terror
throughout the world see it as state terrorism sponsored by the US (Kellner, 2003).

This propagandist function of terror-centred rhetoric became more evident after the invasion of
Iraq, and the subsequent toppling of Saddam Hussein. Richard Hil and Paul Wilson observed
from Australia how the unprovoked, unilateral invasion was lent implicit support by the mass
media, which portrayed it as the ‘liberation’ of Iraqis from the ‘evil dictator.’ At the same time,
the media downplayed ‘collateral’ (civilian) casualties and avoided references to the failure of
‘coalition of the willing’ troops to find the weapons of mass destruction that had earlier formed
the stated pretext for invasion (Hil and Wilson, 2007).

The governments of the coalition of the willing used the media to promote involvement in an
unprovoked war through the daily delivery, via the media, of carefully crafted sound bites.\footnote{In March 2003 US Secretary of State Colin Powell announced a list of 30 countries who had declared willingness to support the US in its stated intention of invading Iraq. The UK and Australia were among the few of this}
Meanwhile, they were also developing new legislation. The extraordinary measures referred to above by Saul Newman included the tightening of anti-sedition laws, the withholding of normal juridical process for terror suspects and the covert surveillance of citizens (Newman, 2005). Douglas Kellner had already detailed these measures in 2004, writing that

* Bush administration censorship of Web-sites, e-mail and wireless communication, refusal to release government documents, and curtailment of the information freedom act signals the decline of the information society and perhaps of a free and open democratic society.

(Kellner, 2003: 21)

* * * *

The above two sections have detailed both post-9/11 political developments and the mass media’s role in representing them. Together, these two phenomena compounded to radicalise sections of Western populaces. A third ingredient was growing in step with the steadily escalating dramas of global conflict that disgruntled observers bore daily witness to. A revolution in digital technology – in particular, personal computers and the Internet – was at hand to allow a new form of oppositional expression, one that would utilise the technology for both its production and dissemination to a global audience.

The enabling power of technology

* Without the loudspeaker, we would never have conquered Germany.


The above quote provides a salutary reminder of the enabling power of sound technology. Political mashup is a dissident practice that arose, in part, out of a generation’s enthralment with technology. As the struggles of movements, the boundary-pushing experiments of artists, and the corporate-resistant pranks of culture jamming formed the cultural and political bedrock upon which political mashup could be built, so were the steadily evolving innovations of technology the practical enabling basis of this contemporary musical form.

Malsky’s brief history of audio recording locates crucial moments in the evolution of
electronically mediated representations of sound. He argues that Bing Crosby was a key figure in the early days of pre-recorded radio shows (Malsky, 2003). Developments in magnetic tape and the invention of condenser microphones afforded Crosby some relief from his arduous live recording schedule by allowing episodes to be pre-recorded and then edited to a standard length. The sound fidelity of these shows was sufficient to lead listeners to believe they were still hearing live shows. The knowledge that such high definition audio could be reproduced by tape was something that needed to be learned by the culture over time. The mass production of tape recorders designed for the non-professional market followed this enculturation. This outgrowth of the modernist push for technological innovation (and its attendant obsession with gadgetry) saw a growing army of hobbyist enthusiasts dedicate themselves to home recording pursuits. Not that they were musicians necessarily; it was the pure love of playing with recorded sound, and the premium placed upon the increasingly high fidelity of captured sound that led to an estimated two million tape recorders being in use in the United States by 1952. Home recording enthusiasts soon had a wealth of printed media to instruct them in the ways of the professionals. Publications such as Musical America, The Phonograph Monthly Review, and The American Record Guide were filled with advice from the experts, who strongly encouraged experimentation (ibid.).

This spirit of exploration was also activating professional composers, many of whom took up the tape recorder as a serious tool of the trade (Malsky, 2003). Pierre Schaeffer’s experiments with tape manipulations of found sound came out of the musique concrète movement, which had begun in the studios of French radio in 1948 (Cutler, 2000). The earliest sound explorations from the movement had actually involved real-time manipulations of gramophone records. Manipulations such as modulations of speed, reversals of spin direction and creation of closed grooves to form ostinati, prefigured the disc manoeuvres of hip hop DJs. Others whose experiments in sound traversed the transition from discs to tape were Mauricio Kagel in Buenos Aires and Tristram Cary in London (Cutler, 2000).

Nearly fifty years on, and digital audio technology remained a step ahead of mainstream culture. Jon Stratton writes of the ‘Pauline Pantsdown’ creation of Simon Hunt, an Australian lecturer in sound who in 1997 produced a satirical cutup of right wing politician Pauline Hanson’s speech. Hunt’s non-commercial release was greeted with a ‘cease and desist’ order after it gained airplay on national youth radio station Triple J. The court ruled against Triple J, claiming that more elderly listeners could not be assumed to be sufficiently au fait with current audio technology to
comprehend even the possibility of such audio manipulations. They could therefore be reasonably expected to interpret Hunt’s altered sentences as the actual words of Pauline Hanson. As Stratton observed, “the expectation in modernity was that a voice is the authentic expression of a particular person” (Stratton, 2000: 247).

The fifty or so years separating Bing Crosby’s aural subterfuges from Pauline Pantsdown’s parodic escapades encapsulated an oft-cited ‘revolution’ in sound technology. By the early ’90s the EDNet (Entertainment Digital Network) – a network of fibre-optic cable already snaking its way across ocean floors – connected major cities around the globe. Toop (1995) writes about a Frank Sinatra album, Duets, (1993) (featuring the singer in duets with celebrity musicians such as Bono, Aretha Franklin and Charles Aznavour) in which the duet partners never met face to face. Sinatra’s vocals were recorded in Hollywood’s Capitol Records Tower studios, and then relayed through cyberspace to the home cities of each pop luminary for the addition of the duet partner’s vocal track. As cutting edge as this must have seemed then, the past eleven years have seen the digital revolution expand exponentially. Mark Katz (2004), in his comprehensive account of the impact of digital technology on recorded sound, quotes musicologist Timothy D. Taylor’s description of the digital revolution as “the most fundamental change in the history of Western music since the invention of music notation in the ninth century” (in Katz, 2004: 159). This sentiment is echoed by the following quote from the introduction to an instructional book on home studio recording:

> The last several years have been a curious time in the history of home recording. Thanks to market forces, improvements in manufacturing and distribution, and the proliferation of the Internet, the barrier of high cost has been all but eliminated for the digital home recording artist. You can work much faster, easily edit waveforms, cut and paste to your heart’s content with all the ease of a word processor, and keep all of your work in the pristine fidelity of the digital domain. (Milstead, 2004: 23)

Similar accounts can be found in any of a plethora of books and websites dedicated to instruction in how to utilise a continually expanding array of music software programmes and the ever cheaper, ever more powerful processor chips needed to run them.

---

46 This is despite the fact that on its website the station proclaims: “triple j is for young Australians. We’re not so interested in the rest.” http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/about/, accessed 25th October 2009.
Yochai Benkler’s *The Wealth of Networks* (2006) details the opportunities for social production afforded by technologies such as the Internet. As he observes:

> The declining price of computation, communication and storage have, as a practical matter, placed the material means of information and cultural production in the hands of a significant fraction of the world’s population – on the order of a billion people around the globe. (2006: 3)

Benkler gives particular focus to nonmarket social production and the transformative effects on markets and freedoms that flow on from this, a point that I return to in Chapter 7.

Evens (2005) gives an historical account of the development of the personal computer. He recounts how the Apple Macintosh computer company first envisioned the breaking down of resistance of consumers who “struggled with their uneasiness at the prospect of this almost mythically powerful technology in their home” (2005: 18). Sameer Hinduja (2005) provides a more technical background to the digital technologies that facilitated the exchange of music over the internet, in particular the development of the MP3 format of file compression that is so crucial to this project.

* * * * *

Within the mass mediated, socio-political/technological climate outlined above, technologically adroit musicians and digital artists began capturing media content, and in the spirit of culture jamming, applied their digital ‘cut and paste’ skills to its reconfiguration. In the section ‘The Empire’s New Clothes’ below, I argue that the content of these reconfigurations reveals critiques of not only war, but of broader political systems, within which wars serve hidden agendas. To illustrate this argument I have analysed five examples of political mashup. These analyses appear in the Content Analysis in Appendix 2. The following section is an overview of this analysis.

**Post-9/11 political mashup: an overview**

Once the first examples of post-9/11 political mashup began appearing online a ripple effect ensued, rapidly carrying the practice through the vast reaches of cyberspace. The entirety of instances of the genre are far too numerous to account for here. Table 1 in Appendix 2 presents a brief content analysis of a selection of artists that represents a cross-section of the genre. All of the analysed examples (summarised below) contain elements that were inspirational to my own work; in general these elements comprise either demonstrated skill in the manipulation of samples, thematic directions or musical content. Equally, each of the examples has in some way
influenced my own work through aversion; they contain elements that through their lack of appeal to my aesthetic sense, steered my work in alternative directions.47

Summary of content analysis examples
The broad stylistic and thematic expressions that span the selection of political mashups in Appendix 2 typify the genre. Musically, these expressions comprise beat-centred grooves and/or beatless textures made with composed and appropriated materials – either music, other sounds or both. The prevalence of sampled, appropriated or programmed drum loops in four of the five pieces is reflective of the beat-centred approach generally favoured by practitioners. Thematically, the pieces also exhibit shared tendencies. Three pieces: examples 1, 3 and 4, despite sometimes wrapping their messages in humour, express quite vitriolic attitudes towards their main protagonists, George W. Bush and Tony Blair. These leaders are portrayed as villains who rejoice in their totalitarian agendas, their roguishness sometimes verging on maniacal. The pieces are thus infused with dark, pessimistic visions of societies having fallen into untrustworthy, even evil, hands.

Example 2, “Party Tonight” does not assert this charge, its creator instead opting for humour via references to George Bush’s well documented past excesses with intoxicants.48 The end result is arguably a piece that barely manages to rise above puerility.

Example 5, “Imagine This” acknowledges war and suffering but chooses, through Lennon’s

47 There are some recent examples of the mashing of sampled speech with music that do not involve key political figures in the post-9/11 era, notably, Robert Davidson’s settings of the largely unaltered speeches of famous figures such as Dr Martin Luther King, Adolph Hitler and Mohandas Gandhi to original composed music (available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cb5tDpLo9YW&feature=channel). Despite the artfulness of some of these pieces, they are not represented in this very short analysis because my intention here is to provide an overview of examples within the genre that, like my own work, are clearly animated by the post-9/11 sociopolitical/economic climate. Davidson’s work is, however, discussed in Chapter 4, Music and Meaning.

song, to imagine a better future. Thematically then, “Imagine This” is the most similar of the five to my own work, notwithstanding that both its words and its music are bound to predetermined texts, thereby precluding the narrative and musical explorations I wished to base my research upon. Nevertheless, it remains a rare example of another political mashup that harmonises with the overarching sensibility guiding this project by imagining an alternative way in which power might be dispensed – one that incorporates self-reflection and honest disclosure instead of ideology-fuelled certitude and deceit. In this sense it is empowering; in its refusal to fight war, duplicity and unfettered ambition on their own terms it is fundamentally subversive to the powers that operate within those terms. In the following section these powers are examined, with a view both to delineating their scale and scope, and to identifying those points where they are vulnerable to challenge.

The Empire’s New Clothes

Empire

As argued in the section ‘Shock and awe ... and political opportunism’ above, war was the primary catalyst for the creation of political mashups. However, as suggested by the above summary of the content analysis in Appendix 2, many examples of the genre in circulation since 9/11 reveal within their reconstructed political narratives a persistent critique of structures and practices that extend beyond wars – and the sovereign states that wage them. The following additional excerpts of reconstructed Bush rhetoric, taken from a sampling of political mashup pieces that were in circulation from 2003-2005, further this claim:

- Your enemy is not surrounding your country – your enemy is ruling your country!
- Members of Congress, Vice President Cheney – as we gather tonight we constitute an axis of evil.
- I came to this office to serve corporate America.
- The American flag stands for corporate scandals, recession, stock market declines, terror, mass murder.49

The skilfully edited speech samples, especially when heard with the evocative music that

---

underscores them, sound remarkably authentic. Beyond the acrimony they direct at Bush and his hawkish administration, the pieces embody an importunity to listeners to recognise threats to their own democracies – directed not from outside by the terrorists, but from within by their elected leaders. Martin Cloonan (2004) has suggested that musical responses to 9/11, whether liberal, conservative or radical in tone – rightly constituted “defences of America” (2004: 11); such is the openness of the idea of ‘Americanness’ to contestation (ibid.). The above responses may equally be seen as defending an idea of America: an idea that incorporates transparent governance and true democratic process. As the examples suggest, political mashup is animated by the interrelatedness of war, capitalism, media collusion with governments, and the erosion of democracy – as these phenomena intertwine within the fabric of the contemporary social/political/economic milieu. Tracing the various threads of this fabric one is inevitably led to political theories that attempt to explain these interrelations. In fact, these factors are all articulated within the frame of Michael Hardt’s and Antonio Negri’s conception of ‘Empire’ (Hardt and Negri, 2000).

Hardt and Negri propose a hegemonic structure of capitalism as the new form of global sovereignty, “composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule” (2000: xii). This structure, which they call ‘Empire,’ replaces the state-centred sovereignty of the old imperialist colonising nations of the northern hemisphere. Exemplified by globe-encircling transnational corporations, Empire is all-pervasive, its existence upheld by a “decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers” (ibid.). Adamantly resisting charges that their theorising is part of an anti-globalisation conspiracy project, Hardt and Negri seek to describe how power is manifested within the complex milieu of globalised capitalism. They borrow from theorists such as Marx, Deleuze, Guattari, Foucault and Spinoza to formulate their thesis of a single, overriding, global hegemonic power that shapes and regulates populations. Their description animates the project of contesting hegemonic power, for although Empire’s motives might be purely practical rather than sinister, its impact is, nonetheless, deleterious to populations. For its self-maintenance Empire applies regulatory mechanisms that diminish individual freedoms and erode traditional cultures, installing norms through the ideological state apparatus of the media to “maintain(s) the social peace and produce(s) its ethical truths” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 10).
Chapter 3. The Problem of Power

War

War occupies a prominent position in the regulatory apparatus of Empire; one of the key concepts presented is that of ‘bellum justum,’ or ‘just war.’ Empire is seen as possessing the mechanisms necessary to install in populations the ethical frameworks through which the legitimacy of violence is accepted: “Empire is formed not on the basis of force itself but on the basis of the capacity to present force as being in the service of right and peace” (2000: 15). In their later book, Multitude (Hardt and Negri, 2004), the authors draw the war on terror into their theory, categorising it as “one of the various military and legal projects for global security led primarily by the United States ... oriented in part toward stabilizing and guaranteeing the global economic order” (2004: 176). Later in this chapter I analyse the concept of ‘just war’ as it pertains to efforts by the recording industry to protect profits through copyright enforcement.

From the above it can be seen that in Empire, Hardt and Negri articulate some of the categories of the contemporary socio-political milieu that draw fire from political mashup artists, and in particular, from my own work. The various ways in which I have dealt with Empire’s key themes within the creative outcomes of this project is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Apart from delineating its structure, Hardt and Negris’ ultimate aim is to identify possibilities for resisting Empire’s hegemonic decrees. Essential to their theory of resistance is a contemporary reapplication of Marx’s assertion that opposition to capital can only come from within capital. As Michael Hardt explains:

The proletariat only comes into being through capital, and it only lives in a kind of intimate and mutual relationship with capital. It’s the proletariat, even though it is wholly inside capital, that can pose an alternative to it, maybe even because it’s wholly inside. (in Minardi, 2004, online)

The following section examines some of these alternatives, along with the work of other authors who have explored resistance – in particular, musical resistance – to global capitalist hegemony.

Hiding in the shadows of hegemony: Empire’s digital trail

The very technological innovations that allow the hegemonic structure of Empire to extend its reach ever outward into the far corners of the globe also provide the means to resist that structure (Kellner, 2003). The burgeoning computer and software industries, the Internet, and the global communications networks that allowed political mashup to come into being are all crucial elements of Empire’s infrastructure. The opportunities for anti-hegemonic musical activity
afforded by Empire’s own technological infrastructure are comprehensively documented by Adam Haupt in *Stealing Empire* (Haupt, 2008). Using the examples of sampling in hip hop and peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing on the Internet, Haupt offers instances of where agency is possible in the era of what Kellner describes as “technocapitalism” (Kellner, 2003: 5). In particular, Haupt reveals the anti-hegemonic possibilities of sampling.

**Sampling as subversion**

As mentioned earlier, the vinyl-manipulating experiments of pioneers such as DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash were aimed at moving dancers to ever higher levels of ecstatic release. The technology that enabled sampling ushered in a new era. DJs had programmed ‘on the fly,’ using skilled coordination of ears, hands and eyes to drop the phonograph stylus onto the ‘breaks’ of songs in real time. The new technology enabled the cuts and cross fades of turntable wizardry to be accomplished with precise accuracy in a studio setting, and the results to be recorded (Chang, 2005).

The late 1980s and early ’90s breathed new vigour into black radicalism. In the Black community, a rising awareness of the limited nature of Black gains from the Civil Rights Movement saw hip hop develop into an overtly political musical form. Despite the accomplishments of the preceding two decades, large sections of white desegregated America retained derogatory, essentialised images of African Americans, sustained in white consciousness partly through media depictions. Radicalised hip hop artists sought to challenge these images; as Chang puts it, “the key issue of the ’80s was representation” (Chang, 2005: 249). Sampling was one means of challenging the dominant white hegemony’s representation of African Americans.

The early days of sampling had employed the technique in a more surreptitious way, the sample replacing a sound or instrument that couldn’t conveniently be found in a recording session; for example, a particular snare drum sound. Hip hop turned this around by deploying sampling as *deliberate* quotation. Samples were carefully chosen through a selective process that was both creative and political. The use of a particular sample, through its referencing of some peculiarly ‘Black’ stylistic structure – a James Brown recording for instance – could signal affiliation with Black cultural stakes (Haupt, 2008). Haupt refers to Rose’s (1994) ideas on hip hop’s use of “commodities to claim the cultural terrain” through the cooption of certain modes of dress and consumption (in Haupt, 2008: 73). Extending this claim, Haupt proposes that hip hop uses musical texts (commodities) to refigure dominant representations of African Americans through
the creation of new commodities. Sampling technology enabled this “by allowing subjects to realise that any media representations could be appropriated and recontextualised in order to produce meanings that compete with hegemonic perspectives” (Haupt, 2008: 76). He describes how this practice drew objections from recording companies, who now heard fragments of their ‘property’ forming the basis of new recordings that began to appear in the market place.

This practice of appropriation of copyrighted material without paying royalties was at first protected by the ‘fair use’ clause within property law, allowing the use of such materials for the purpose of parody. The US Supreme Court ruling was backed by an argument that parody could potentially enhance art (ibid.). However, this legal loophole was to be short-lived.

‘Just wars at the borders’ and recuperation

By 1994 the major recording corporations were gearing up to deploy their legal instruments against the use of copyrighted musical commodity items for the creation of new commodity items, as was forecast by Rose:

> The very laws that justified and aided in the theft from and denigration of an older generation of black artists have created a profitable, legal loophole and a relatively free-pay zone for today’s black artists. This creative cul de sac is rapidly evaporating. The record companies are increasingly likely to hold albums until samples are cleared, until publishers and other record companies negotiate their profits. (in Haupt, 2008: 78)

The efforts of ‘the Majors’ to unleash their lawyers onto the oppositional practices of hip hop producers are seen by Haupt as instances of what Hardt and Negri refer to as Empire’s “‘just wars’ at the borders against the barbarians and internally against the rebellious” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 10). Their efforts were eminently successful; sampling – although it remains widely used in hip hop – became less politically ambitious, the music more mainstream. Hip hop artists became large earners for the major labels they were signed to. Chang describes the process thus: “when corporations began to understand the demand for postwhite pop culture, hip-hop became the primary content for the newly globally consolidated media, the equivalent of gold dust in the millennial monopoly rush” (Chang, 2005: 440). By effectively blocking the channels through which hip hop artists could express resistance to hegemony, the music industry majors opened the way to promoting what remained: an apolitical, materially-focused version of the genre. And, when the profit-focused major record labels began signing rappers, rap became increasingly infused with sex and violence. As Haupt contends, “Commercial imperatives have directed
mainstream hip-hop’s obsession with the performance of violent masculine identities” (Haupt, 2008: 154). Rappers who have famously excelled at projecting machismo, misogyny and violence have become extremely wealthy, harbouring fortunes that were built, according to poet Sarah Jones, through collusion with what Haupt refers to as the “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (2008: 153).

A generation earlier, reggae had also been co-opted by hegemonic concerns, which capitalised upon its activist stance. Reggae’s early forays into British and US playlists had been short-lived, the music ultimately being judged by white rock listeners to be boring and repetitive (King, 2002). In 1972 the president of Island Records, Chris Blackwell, conceived of a masterstroke in marketing. As Stephen King describes it:

Defying conventional wisdom in the music industry, Blackwell and his imitators successfully marketed this “radical” political music, not by toning down its politics, but by actually celebrating the ganja-smoking Rastafarian as a universal symbol of rebellion and protest.

(2002: 96)

The commercial success of international reggae eventually led to a schism in which traditional religious Rastafarianism – which still worshipped Haile Selassie as a god and dreamt of repatriation to Ethiopia – condemned reggae as being focused purely on profits. Reggae’s changing currency as marketable cultural export was reflected in its reception at its home in Jamaica. In the 1960s the Jamaican government had tried to stamp out reggae as a subversive influence. By the ’70s reggae had been embraced by the then government as “Jamaica’s new cultural treasure,” with Jamaica’s influential classes also treating it as a “cultural asset”:

In short, the Jamaican ruling class did not capitulate to the demands of the Rastafarian movement. Instead, it tried to co-opt the cultural symbols of Rastafari and reggae music as authentic reflections of Jamaican society. The successful co-optation of Rastafari signaled the movement’s transition from an internal threat to one of Jamaica’s best-known tourist attractions.

(King, 2002: 106-107)

In his seminal text on subculture, Dick Hebdige (1979) used the term ‘recuperation’ to name the process by which subcultures are incorporated into the commodity-making machinery of the dominant cultures they stand in opposition to. Applying Hebdige’s argument that subculture serves to disrupt the normalising processes by which hegemony constructs consensus, Haupt articulates the concept of recuperation by revealing how notions of what is ‘real’ (‘keep it real’)

52
and ‘authentic’ were coopted by mainstream marketing strategies and promulgated by ‘gangsta rappers’ through portals such as MTV (Haupt, 2008). He examines a number of arguments over whether or not gangsta rap, with its themes of violence, machismo, misogyny, sexism and drug use, serves the Black-denigrating master narratives of Empire. He finally concludes that it probably does, while conceding that hip hop still retains elements of redemptive, self-knowledge seeking, anti-hegemonic themes in the sub genre of ‘conscious hip hop’ (ibid.).

Benkler (2006) further illustrates the counter-insurgent impulses of Empire with his account of the efforts of Hollywood (read ‘Empire’) to legally coerce computer/digital video player manufacturers to incorporate technological hindrances to the copying of copyrighted works. He also cites:

*a concerted effort, again headed primarily by Hollywood and the recording industry, to shape the software and standards to make sure that digitally encoded products can continue to be sold as packaged goods. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act and the assault on peer-to-peer technologies are the most obvious in this regard. (2006: 25)*

David Toop (1995) has written extensively on the ‘plunderphonics’ of sampling and turntable musician, John Oswald. While acknowledging that Oswald has generally managed to avoid “most of the draconian copyright enforcements enacted on hip-hop and house samplers,” Toop recounts Oswald’s wrangle with Sony Records over his reworking of Michael Jackson’s album *Bad* (1987), for his not for sale CD, *Plunderphonics* (1989):

*Oswald lives in Toronto, so Jackson’s people exerted pressure on The Canadian Recording Industry Association, which in turn compelled Oswald to give up all remaining copies of his album to be physically crushed. (Toop, 1995: 260-61)*

**Counter hegemonic efforts beyond US borders**

Thus far, this political theoretical framework has centred on the US, primarily because the political events that catalysed the musical practice of political mashup emanated from there. The US is, moreover, a key node in the global economic hegemony of Empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000). However, examples of counter hegemonic applications of music sampling outside of the

---

50 According to Adam Haupt, ‘conscious hip hop’ is “the version of hip-hop that is largely seen as a tool for critical and socially conscious engagement” (Haupt, 2008: 184). It exists alongside the commodified version of gangsta rap and is epitomised by African artists such as Black Noise and Americans such as Chuck D (ibid.).
Rollefson (2007) contends that Brazilian composer Tom Zé’s album *Fabrication Defect* (1998) serves as not only an articulation of postmodern, postcolonial discourses, but also offers an “Esthetics of Plagiarism”, a model for the formation of agency in third world underclasses through the appropriation and recombination of products of Western techno-capitalism. The concept album presents imagined characters of corporate wage-slaved labourers as possessing innate “defects”: the propensities to “think, dance and dream” (Rollefson, 2007: 305). Rollefson characterises these ‘defects’ as “rupture(s) in Western Capitalist hegemony” (ibid.). Zé’s manifesto: “Esthetics of Plagiarism” is specifically aimed at appropriating electronic media items, before recombining them to change their significations.

Zé’s music and manifesto are based on the earlier thoughts of another Brazilian, Oswald de Andrade, who in 1928 published the “Manifesto Antropófago” (Cannibalist Manifesto) which itself borrowed from the mythological practice of the Tupinambá Indians of Brazil – said to have devoured their foes in order to incorporate their physical and metaphysical powers. De Andrade suggested a metaphorical echoing of this in which the oppressed people of Brazil should “wrest the technological and institutional control from the hands of the colonizers, and appropriate – or devour – their modernity to harness the power of their oppressors” (Rollefson, 2007: 306). Moreover, the cultural products resulting from such appropriations should be commodified for the colonisers’ marketplace, thereby ensuring cultural and economic undermining of their hegemony (ibid.).


> It’s like society conditions you to be a clone  
> And when your seeds grow up they lack a mind of their own  
> And the media perpetuates the situation  
> With advertising rituals as the exclamation. (in Haupt, 2008: 170)

As the lyrics suggest, Godessa characterises ‘clone’-like consumers as being under the thrall of Empire. The video to the song parodies the stereotypical representation of women as sex objects in hip hop and R&B. Not only artists, but consumers also are depicted in ways that suggest their
complicity with Empire’s norm-shaping mechanisms; Godessa appears to exhort consumers to critically analyse the effects of these mechanisms (ibid.).

* * * * *

The above examples of anti-hegemonic expressions have all been mounted from within the technocapitalist infrastructure\(^{51}\) – despite power’s proven proclivity to recuperate oppositional efforts. This suggests that sites exist within the human psyche that can resist colonisation by dominant ideologies. This possibility has been of significant import to the RogueSounds project.

Non-violence as a political strategy

If power is to be opposed, Hardt and Negris’ thesis: that resistance to Empire must be mounted from within Empire, would seem to require a corollary. The anti-hegemonic activist must remain within the technocapitalist sphere of Empire while resisting Empire’s universalised norms, which are intended to legitimise its violences while at the same time producing compliant, unquestioning consumers. Such a challenge became apparent to me after listening to a large portion of the many examples of political mashup that were circulating online during the years 2005 to 2008. In all but a handful of examples, the latitude for constructing meaning enjoyed by practitioners was deployed in acrimonious, often abusive ways that spoke more of personal catharsis than envisioned peace. The mashup artists appeared to be merely relaying the normative violence that Empire has successfully installed in its ‘subjects.’ My work problematises this tendency, proposing an alternative approach to political mashup that is guided by ideals of non-violence.

Reed (2005) has observed how the civil rights activists of 1960s America borrowed various activist strategies from other movements to apply to their own struggle. One such strategy was that of non-violent civil disobedience. Tinker (1980, online) identifies three primary sources for the development of non-violent modes of resistance: the writings of Thoreau and Tolstoy, together with the ideas put into practice by Gandhi – first in South Africa, and later in the anti-colonial struggles of Indians against the British.

---

\(^{51}\) Technocapitalism has been described by Luis Suarez-Villa as “a new version of capitalism that is rooted in technological innovation and corporate power.” (http://www.technocapitalism.com/, accessed 17\(^{th}\) March 2010). Technocapitalist infrastructure refers to “the unprecedented accumulation of infrastructure, both physical and intangible, during the second half of the twentieth century ... involving educational facilities, laboratories and communications” (ibid.).
Born early in the 19th century, Henry David Thoreau grew to believe that America had begun to systematically decline after its revolution of 1775. To him, the oppressive machinations of government were far outshone by the power of spirit expressed by free people. He saw real strength and potential power in the simple rural dwellers who worked tirelessly on the land. Thoreau engaged in several acts of civil disobedience, being jailed for one of them, but never conceived of the practice as a mass movement (Tinker, 1980, online).

Leo Tolstoy, while serving as a Russian officer in the Crimean War, witnessed ineptitude and elitism amongst the high command, and yet was struck by the bravery and resilience in the face of suffering that was displayed by “the supposedly ignorant and despised rural poor” (ibid.). Tolstoy espoused a non-conditional pacifism which precluded “opposing evil by violence” and rested upon individuals freeing themselves from the corrupting influences of modern society (in Tinker, 1980, online). His writings made a profound impression on Gandhi.

Mohandas Gandhi wrought his system of non-violent civil disobedience from Thoreau’s anti-State rebelliousness and Tolstoy’s ‘freedom through self knowledge.’ Through his associations with the oppressed Indian communities of South Africa, the women’s suffrage movement in England, and India’s struggle for independence from Britain (realised in 1948), Gandhi cultivated an organised political movement whose members were trained in the political tactics of non-violence (Tinker, 1980, online).

Saul Newman (2005) provides a theoretical framework for the project of creating political mashup from non-violent tenets. It is a framework that also harmonises with Hardt and Negris’ conception of Empire.

**The philosophy of insurrection: resisting universalised violence**

Newman employs a poststructuralist approach to exploring the possibilities for resistance in the face of an all-pervading power. Through an historical analysis he deconstructs the so-called ‘truths’ dispensed by dominant powers, revealing the violence with which they have excluded alternative views from the discourses that comprise the zeitgeist. He contends that what is taken as axiomatic today is contingent upon what has been excluded from reality through purposeful suppression (Newman, 2005). Newman begins by tracing the transition from Christianity to secular humanism that came out of the Enlightenment. Humanism’s project was the secular emancipation of humanity from the bonds of religiously-grounded obscurantism. The relatively
obscure Hegelian philosopher Max Stirner questioned the value of humanism, suggesting that it had merely replaced God with the idealised ‘essence’ of Man, “an abstraction that negates individual difference by attempting to unify it within a general idea of ‘humanity’” (2005: 15). Rather than being freed from religious dogma and superstition, humanity became subjugated by the plethora of abstractions and generalities taken as implicit assumptions within the humanist reality. The moral absolutism of the new religion of secular humanism has created universal norms that ignore individual difference, and hence, exclude certain identities from humanistic projects (ibid.).

Newman proposes the question: if, as Foucault claimed, power is everywhere, from where do we contest power? From what epistemological point can power be challenged if it has already cultivated that which is accepted as ‘truth’ or ‘knowledge’ within its realm? He proposes that there must be some part of the self that is exterior to power’s shaping influences; some part split off from the identity (or sense of self) that is constructed by power – even if this identity represents itself as being in opposition to power. The complexity of the discourses that underpin dominant ideologies – and the tenacity with which these discourses insinuate themselves into the milieux from where counter-hegemonic activities are launched – are not to be underestimated. Ian Maxwell (2003) has highlighted this in his ethnographic study of the Sydney hip hop scene. Within “the ideology” (2003: 164) of hip hop as it is ideated by ‘insiders’ to the scene, Maxwell detects an underpinning of post-Enlightenment postulates. The ethic of the “Hip Hop Nation” (2003: 162), as seen through the Australian eyes of his study’s cohort, makes continual references to humanist notions such as the “rights” of free, “discrete, sovereign beings” to express, and to “rationally” derive “knowledge ... through the application of common sense” (2003: 122, italics in original). The Sydney hip hop aficionados perceive a mainstream society that has lost touch with what is “real”, and whose aim, the ideology holds, is to “render the ‘mass populous’ docile” (2003: 165). And yet, the darker underside of mainstream society (whose central narratives similarly rest upon Enlightenment ideals) finds its way into the language of critique within the Australian hip hop press, which often features the pejorative use of ‘homophobic’ and ‘sexist’ stereotypes” (ibid.).

The question remains, then: how does one oppose power while being simultaneously fashioned by it? Newman follows Judith Butler’s thoughts: that it can only be the psyche – which includes the unconscious – that resists the demands of power to inhabit an identity. As Butler puts it: “The psyche is what resists the regularization that Foucault ascribes to normalizing discourse” (Butler,
Newman then moves on to consider the ways in which this “normalizing discourse” – or ideology – is imposed on populations. For Stirner, a key site for analysing the workings of ideology on societies was morality. As the Christian church had asserted its domination through enforced adherence to a set of religious edicts, so humanism sustained this dominance through the imposition of implied moral imperatives. Today, Newman asserts, sovereign power functions by unleashing ideologies of idealised moral man upon its citizens, binding them to the narrow constraints such ties imply. In this way ideology serves the state by demarcating the boundaries of ‘acceptable’ behaviour. Bidding the subject to be ‘human’ by remaining within these bounds, the state effectively controls her. Moreover, rather than repress desires in individuals, the state works to direct these desires to that which is the state – or that which the state provides (Newman, 2005).

If we substitute ‘Empire’ for ‘state’ here we can see this edict being played out in the case of the major recording companies’ co-opting of objects of desire – in the form of stylised concepts of ‘authenticity’ (‘keep it real’) – and commodifying them (via the vehicle of ‘gangsta rap’), then directing people to them (via MTV). Similarly, within the Sydney hip hop community, ideologies based upon unquestioned assumptions promulgate fields of insider knowledge that, although apparently liberating, actually reinscribe hegemony-serving power relations; as Maxwell notes: “while the discourses of tolerance and respect were pervasive throughout the scene, the Hip Hop world was one that decidedly privileged the masculine over the feminine” (Maxwell, 2003: 165).

An example of Empire’s recourse to moralistic categories in defending its ‘borders’ is provided by Alderman (2001), who recounts a speech made by Hilary Rosen of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) after their legal victory over P2P file sharing giant Napster: “Rosen repeated the company line that Napster’s business model was ‘built on infringement’ and was ... morally and legally wrong” (Alderman, 2001: 173). Rosen extended the ideological basis for the RIAA’s objection to Napster’s activities, invoking nationalism in her speech:

*American intellectual property is our nation’s greatest asset. We cannot stand idly by as our rights and our nation’s economic assets are in jeopardy or dismissed by those who would negate its value for their own enrichment.* (in Alderman, 2001: 174)

Newman follows Stirner’s thoughts on the ideological subjectification of human ‘essence,’ in which what is thought of by humanism as being the ‘pure, uncultivated’ part of the human agent – which is covered and distorted by ideology – is actually a construct of ideology. Essence, then –
as yet another layer of ideological distortion, and thus, a site from which hegemony may gain its most powerful, and most invisible, leverage – must be circumvented. The task is to find that part of oneself that is free from essence; that is, free from ideology’s distortion. Newman concedes that this space beyond ideological colonisation can be only fleetingly inhabited – if at all. Perhaps it serves as a state to aspire to, a state from where resistance to power’s dominant ideologies may be mounted.

The task of resistance becomes then, to work on one’s self, consciously resisting identification with the essence that power’s ideology inscribes with narrowly controlling moral rules, restrictions and imperatives, and construct another subjectivity, one that “allows the subject to work at the limits of ideology, looking for the cracks and points of dislocation in its edifice, and contesting the way we have been interpellated by it” (Newman, 2005: 82). It is noteworthy that this theme of ‘working on oneself’ as the path to resistance echoes not only the non-violent precepts of Thoreau and Tolstoy, but also the hip hop ethic of ‘knowledge of self,’ as promoted by early hip hop artists such as Afrika Bambaataa. Indeed, this ethic is sustained in the contemporary genre referred to as ‘conscious hip hop.’ Similarly, in Tom Ze’s Fabrication Defect, mentioned above, the ‘defects’ – which are actually abilities, to “think, dance and dream” – can be seen to emanate from whatever psychic terrain has escaped the normalising ravages of globalised capitalism’s cultivation of docility. In Fences and Windows Naomi Klein describes scenes of resistance to Empire that echo this refusal to oppose global hegemony on its own (violent) terms (Klein, 2002). In Quebec a Summit of the Americas is bombarded with teddy bears, launched by a medieval catapult. A meeting of the World Bank with the International Monetary Fund is assailed by “a band of ‘pink fairies’ dressed in burlesque wigs, silver-and-pink evening wear and platform shoes” (2002: xxvi). Like the networks of anti-hegemonic sound mashers, the “goal is not to take power for themselves but to challenge power centralization on principle” (ibid.).

The Multitude and Musical Networks of Resistance

The Multitude

In Multitude (2004) Hardt and Negri extend their thesis of Empire into the post-9/11 global scenario. According to the authors, the ‘war on terror’ constitutes an unending ‘state of exception’ in which the new global sovereignty exerts its will over populations, regulating them, controlling them, and maintaining them as acquiescent consumers. The crisis this presents to
populations impels them to “reinvent the concept of democracy and create new institutional forms and practices appropriate to our global age” (2004: 238). A key assumption behind Multitude is the growth of an ‘immaterial’ mode of labour which deals more in communication, information and the exchange of ideas than in the concrete products of modernity. Immaterial labour tends to shape social life by determining work routines, work spaces and modes of communication. Being the creative force that actually drives Empire, and having at its command the technologies that facilitate global networks of idea exchange, the multitude has within its grasp the possibility of thwarting capital’s hegemony by building alternative democratic structures that negate Empire. As Southall writes: “If the power of capital is now a matrix reaching into every aspect of people’s lives, their lives have a power which reaches into every aspect of the matrix” (Southall, 2006, online).

The multitude can be described as consisting of fluid matrices of individuals who, although unbound by membership of any formally declared activist group, nevertheless present resistant fronts that coalesce around political/social issues held in common. The exemplary model offered by Hardt and Negri for such structures is that of the anti-globalisation movement, which brings together individuals from a diverse range of interest groups, including: workers, environmentalists, gay rights campaigners and anti war campaigners. As Gopal Balakrishnan surmises:

... contemporary capitalism, although seemingly impervious to anti-systemic challenge, is in fact vulnerable at all points to riot and rebellion. The increasing importance of immaterial, intellectual labour in high value-added sectors of the economy is shaping a collective labourer with heightened powers of subversion. (Balakrishnan, 2000, online)

One of the most prominent contemporary sites where groups of people coalesce around shared interests is the Internet.

**Hosting the multitude: the Internet and networking sites**

In The Wealth of Networks (2006) Yochai Benkler claims that the Internet tends to invert the mass media’s traditional model – based upon the provision of mildly interesting content to a widespread audience – by providing instead, a platform that facilitates “dense clusters of users” who share intense interests (2006: 177). While acknowledging criticisms of euphoric claims for the democratising potential of the Internet early in its existence, Benkler argues comprehensively for the benefits of a “networked information economy” (2006: 2). Dispelling capital-serving
myths about the necessity for strict copyright laws and the ‘evils’ of file-sharing networks, he likens the networked information economies to a “new folk culture,” where more people have the opportunity to bypass mass mediated accounts of culture, to explore less partisan descriptions, and thus become “more self-reflective participants in conversations within that culture” (2006: 15). Benkler examines recent changes in technology, economic structures and social practices of production, and the opportunities they offer for the exchange of information. His reference to the “increased ... role of nonmarket and nonproprietary production, both by individuals alone and by cooperative efforts in a wide range of loosely or tightly woven collaborations” speaks directly to Hardt and Negris’ concept of the multitude (2006: 2).

In *Free Culture* (2004) Lawrence Lessig contends that the development of the internet has induced a fundamental change in the way culture is created, presenting the means for people to participate in creating cultures that transcend traditional boundaries (ibid.). He also points to the protective mechanisms now being applied by governments, which are not, he claims, in place to protect creative people’s interests, but rather, to protect big business:

> These modern-day equivalents of the early twentieth-century radio or nineteenth-century railroads are using their power to get the law to protect them against this new, more efficient, more vibrant technology for building culture. They are succeeding in their plan to remake the Internet before the Internet remakes them. (2004: 9)

Lessig feels that the “extraordinarily powerful claims” on intellectual property made by copyright owners are left unquestioned in our time (2004: 11). In his assertion that such claims have come to be seen as ‘common sense,’ Lessig perfectly captures a reflection of Empire’s above-mentioned method of creating subjectivities by installing ideologies.

**Production/distribution as subversion: the counter-hegemonic potentials of ‘MySpace’**

The website MySpace has been the primary conduit through which the *RogueSounds* political mashup music has been distributed. The inbuilt architectures of social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook are expressly designed to facilitate the formation of connectivities based upon common interests. The online ‘friends’ of most activist MySpace members tend to comprise of numerous others, similarly aligned along axes of political engagement, non-violence, anti-globalisation, environmentalism and human rights. Whether musicians or non-musicians, the activist profiles utilise their online connectivity to share in a culture that is of their own making. These globally linked online activists find a pronounced resonance with Hardt and Negris’
concept of the ‘multitude’; they constitute a fluid array of singularities whose attentions and creative energies coalesce around political and social perspectives held in common.

The freedom of expression that characterises MySpace is made possible by the fact that, as yet, it is a realm largely unpolicied by hegemonic regulatory mechanisms. How long MySpace’s facilities remain available for the hosting of anti-hegemonic networks, however, remains to be seen. In July 2005, Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation bought Intermix Media, the parent company of MySpace, for $580 million. A year later Murdoch was still wondering how best to unlock the revenue making potentials of his purchase. As Spencer Reiss reported in a 2006 article for Wired magazine, the key operating principle of MySpace is that “users rule” (Reiss, 2006, online). Murdoch’s challenge with MySpace has been to mine its possibilities for directing viewers to his other (considerable) commercial interests. However, as Reiss points out, such ideas are tied to outdated conceptions of “audiences as consumers,” a model that in 2006, didn’t – and still today doesn’t – gel with MySpace users: “The site’s greatest value isn’t connecting people to products, people to information, or eyeballs to advertisers. It’s connecting people to people” (ibid.). In Chapter 7 the networking facilities of MySpace are examined in more detail in a discussion of how they impacted on the distribution of the musical outcomes of the project.

Despite the current democratising effects of the Internet, there are sobering examples of how authoritarian governments have tried – often successfully – to restrict online dissident practices. In China, the government’s monopoly on Internet connections into and out of the country has allowed it to control the Internet access of its users – who in 2003 represented over 13 percent of total world users. All ISPs are licensed through government channels and the numerous Internet cafes must submit to the mandatory installation of software that filters out subversive sites (Benkler, 2006). Corporate concerns in the West have been obliging in their efforts to cow-tow to China’s restrictive regulations. As Jonathon Watts reported in The Guardian in 2006:

In order to do business in China, Microsoft does not allow the word “democracy” to be used in a subject heading for its MSN Spaces blog service; Google last month restricted search results for the Tiananmen Square massacre; and Yahoo handed over private email information that reportedly led to the conviction of two internet dissidents. (Watts, 2006, online)

Two years later, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was chided by Australia for secretly acquiescing to China’s demands for Internet censorship during the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Maiden, 2008).
The issue of state control over the Internet came to the fore again during and after the 2009 elections in Iran, where a reflexive tightening of already existing controls was applied by the authoritarian regime in order to suppress a strong voter switch away from the incumbent, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Routine filtering became much heavier and Internet speeds were restricted to about one tenth of normal (Black, 2009). However, despite the potential for governments to restrict Internet access and/or content, there are costs associated with this method of state control. Few governments are willing to forego the economic benefits of Internet connectivity – as afforded by tools such as Internet banking. Moreover, the nature of the Internet is such that it promotes and facilitates efforts by users to circumvent imposed strictures. A prime example of this is provided by Freenet, “a peer-to-peer application specifically designed to be censorship-resistant” (Benkler, 2006: 270). Disallowed publications may be uploaded to Freenet, where they are stored in small packets that are dispersed over a multitude of computers. Retrieval requests implement algorithms that compile full documents from these fragments, sending them out in encrypted form. Such examples bode well for the continuation of the Internet as a conduit for free speech (ibid.).

Apart from social networking sites, the Internet hosts a large number of sites that are specifically anti-war, and/or dedicated to challenging corporatised media representations of reality. Many of these sites provide forums for political mashup artists to distribute their creations. As Adam Haupt contends, the goal of these networked sites is not the overthrowing of the existing hegemonic structure, but rather, the engagement with a mode of cultural production that negates this structure – and disturbs its hegemony by their very processes of cultural production (Haupt, 2006). I would argue that these processes – disruptive in that they function largely outside of the field of influence of global capital – operate at each stage of the life cycle of a typical political mashup piece: from the sharing of mass mediated speech samples, the distribution of information unavailable through mainstream sources, the sharing of digital audio production software via peer-to-peer networks or through open source platforms, the self publishing of creative products via the Internet, and the non-pecuniary distribution of the creative works.

To conclude this chapter, the non-violent form of mashup I have espoused escapes Empire’s field of influence on three counts: by its rejection of the normalised violence instilled by Empire, by its transgressive appropriation of the technologies of Empire, and by its production and dissemination outside of the revenue streams of Empire. Such oppositional, transgressive practices may therefore be seen as examples of agency within the complex milieu of global
capitalism, made possible by that system’s own infrastructure. In Chapter 7 this argument is revisited in an examination of the issues that pertained to the distribution and reception of the specific musical works that ensued from the project.

* * * * *

In Chapter 2, the musical genre of political mashup was placed within a historical context. By identifying formative influences exerted both by the explicit opposition expressed in protest songs, and the parodic use of appropriated cultural texts in cultural activism, political mashup was shown to occupy a place in a longstanding tradition of resistance against oppressive, dominant powers. This chapter has offered a political and philosophical lens to give focus to the impetus for the creation of political mashup in general, and to provide a conceptual framework to explain the motivations and the goals of the specific examples that are the focus of this project. In Chapter 4 I examine political mashup as music; in particular, as a musical form that seeks to signify. It does this by recontextualising sampled political speech and other cultural texts and reappropriating their original meanings for the express purpose of creating new, oppositional meanings.
Chapter 4
Music and Meaning

By themselves the words have no mean influence upon the mind, whether to persuade or restrain. Accommodated to rhythm and metre they penetrate much more deeply. If in addition they are given a melodic setting they take possession of the inner feelings and of the whole man.

Jakob Christensen-Dalsgaard (2004, online)

How Sound Signifies

According to David Toop, “sounds that traversed long distances or spoke with abnormal volume once possessed a special mystique” (Toop, 1995: 70). “Pagan forces” were thought to be unleashed through loud sounds; bells were rung at sea to calm storms, on land to purify the air during the plague of the early 17th century (ibid.).

Kirsten Glandien, recounting the early development of radio, has noted how the complete absence of visual components in radio accorded it “pioneer status,” its “solely acoustic” format “challenging the growing dominance of visuality characteristic of our age” (Glandien, 2000: 169).

In contemporary Western culture, the primacy of the visual sense is evident in any urban landscape. The ‘eye catching’ colours and florid designs of advertising leap from buses, billboards and neon signs, vying for our attention. Television and Internet images stream around the clock into eyes, hungry for information. To see is to know (‘I see’). As the French film theorist Christian Metz has observed, “…unless it is a question of the sounds of spoken language, sound has been studied far less than the visual, our civilization greatly privileging the latter. Caught between the two, ‘sound’ is often left aside” (Metz, 1980: 2).

And yet, our capacity to intuit meaning from sound is extraordinary. In seeking to describe how music affects people, Shepherd and Wicke (1997) claim that music signifies in what may be described as a ‘primitive’ way, bypassing the structuring framework of language to access our
unconscious directly. They quote Levi-Strauss: “Below the level of sounds and rhythms, music acts upon a primitive terrain, which is the physiological time of the listener” (in 1997: 44).

More recent findings from the field of cognitive neuroscience have offered insights into our ability to perceive – and be moved – by music. Investigations by Levitin (2006) into the neural underpinnings of music perception reveal that while there are probably overlaps in the specific regions of the brain dealing with the perception of music and those dealing with lexical speech, there are, nonetheless, distinct differences in these forms of perception. He writes:

*There are many cases of individuals with brain damage to the left hemisphere who lost the power of speech, but retained their musical function, and vice versa. Cases like these suggest that music and speech, although they may share some neural circuits, cannot use completely overlapping neural structures.* (Levitin, 2006: 122)

Echoing this assertion, Patel (2008) points to studies involving individuals with amusia (tone deafness) that “provide compelling evidence that musical syntax can be disrupted without associated linguistic syntactic deficits” (2008: 269).

Composer and philosopher Leonard Meyer (1956) has suggested two primary ways in which music can communicate meaning. “Absolute meaning” is embodied in the structures and relationships within the music itself (1956: 1). “Referential meaning” is a function of music’s ability to refer to elements of the world outside of the music’s own context (ibid.). Despite the fact that each of these modes of signifying has attracted ardent adherents – between whom debates rage on the constitution of musical meaning – Meyer contends that the modes are far from mutually exclusive (ibid.). As Levitin remarks, composers know that “some sounds are intrinsically soothing, while others are frightening” and use this knowledge to musically portray the varieties of human experience (Levitin, 2006: 90). Susan McClary notes that composers have been successfully evoking emotion with conventional instruments for centuries. The triumphant flourishes of trumpets in unison, the eeriness of anticipation conveyed by dissonant strings, and the military adventurism evoked by thunderous timpani are all affective devices that were routinely taught to composers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (McClary, 1991). One could argue that within even this brief listing of affective devices are represented both absolute signifiers (dissonant strings), and referential (timpani evoking the thunderous clamour of battle). Similarly, as I detail in Chapter 6, the political mashup pieces presented here tend to signify by a combination of Meyer’s two categories.
As is discussed below, context plays a crucial role in the determination of meaning. Nattiez (1990) poses the question of whether, in the absence of some linguistic marker, music can convey a narrative. His conclusion, that “music is not a narrative, but an incitement to make a narrative” is relevant to political mashup (1990: 128). Below, I argue that listeners ‘co-create’ meaning with the composer of political mashup, whose task it is to incite a response, albeit one that will vary with the background knowledge and the ideological orientation of the listener.

Apart from the structural affective devices detailed in Chapter 6, the RogueSounds pieces are characterised by the use of one distinctly referential mode of signification; they often refer – either obliquely, or quite literally – to extramusical elements via the signifying potential of samples.

**How samples signify**

A digital sample is a recording of a recording, a captured intersection of sound, time and space. Moreover, a sample, as a discrete unit of data, has mobility. It can travel in time and space, changing its signification with its environment, while changing its environment by its inherent significance. Music creators generally choose to use samples because they signify.

If we listen beneath the surface of a musical sample we may find several layers of signification, ranging from the obvious to the subliminal. Consider, for example, a 2-bar drum sample. At the surface the listener hears a synchronised sequence of kick, snare, cymbals and toms, without melodic content, that clearly identifies the sound bite as a drum part. A musicological analysis of the two-second loop would offer up more subtle clues, articulated through musical concepts such as tempo, timbre and dynamics. Like an archaeological dig, we can continue this excavation of the myriad of signifying elements stratified in the ‘fossil record’ of the digitised drum part. For, more than just a series of 1s and 0s that clinically represents a captured moment in time, the sample is a digital snapshot of a performance – a performance that took place at a certain time and in a certain space. Every recording of an instrument or voice captures more than just what was targeted. There is always a certain ‘veil’ over the sound – a result of imperfect recording fidelity (Katz, 2004). This can range from the merest hint of background ambience to obvious lo-fi noise. Also captured in the recording is the sound of the recording space. Soundwave reflections – however minimal – find their way into the snapshot, imparting a sense of the acoustic space in which the recording took place (ibid.). Often these peripheral, non-target sounds are what hold special appeal for the sampling musician, as evidenced by this comment from Public Enemy’s Hank Shocklee:
A guitar sampled off a record is going to hit differently than a guitar sampled in the studio. The guitar that’s sampled off a record is going to have all the compression that they put on the recording, the equalization. It’s going to hit the tape harder. [...] So those things change your mood, the feeling you can get off a record. (in Haupt, 2008: 79-80)

Political speech samples, the ‘bread and butter’ of political mashup, tend to arrive at the mashup artist’s computer hard drive in various states of sonic repair. Moreover, the speaker’s words are usually embedded in a multitude of non-focal background sounds that may include crowd applause (or abuse), clunking microphones, rustling papers, jets flying overhead and tapping typewriters. These sounds signify by locating the spoken word within the physical space in which it was captured: a war zone perhaps, a cavernous hall or a busy press conference. A truncated frequency range often signifies a radio broadcast. A large proportion of political speech samples carry an audible high frequency hiss (which can be reduced or removed with digital processing).

Digging deeper still we encounter the idiosyncrasies of performance. A certain sound of fret noise that a guitarist produces say, or the way the moisture content in the air interacted with a singer’s vocal chords on that particular occasion; the drummer’s unique ‘feel’ on the drum kit. Other, more specific qualities of sound within the sample may serve to situate it in a particular era and style; a wah wah guitar might conjure up the sixties, a thunderous reverbed snare, the eighties, etc (Katz, 2004).

**Context and meaning**

Semioticians inform us that contextual information is crucial to deciphering meaning in texts. As Daniel Chandler contends, when reading a text or listening to a piece of music, even for the first time, one has a sense of “the contexts in which the text had been reproduced, drawn upon, alluded to, parodied and so on” (Chandler, 2001: 198). This sense provides the listener with a cognitive framework through which to interpret the meaning of the text (ibid.).

For illustrative purposes I shall explore these contextual clues by considering the sampled speech of US President George W. Bush, an apt choice given his prominent aural presence in this project. A typical Bush sample presents us with two up-front signifiers: the very recognisable voice of George Bush, the US President, and the semantic meaning of the word he utters. Throughout his incumbency (and possibly well beyond it), the US President’s voice remained familiar to large portions of Western (and even non-Western) populaces. As Max Atkinson
observes in *Our Masters’ Voices* (1984), through the print and broadcast media’s embracing of politics as entertainment, “we are nowadays more familiar with our political masters than at any time since government passed out of the hands of village elders” (1984: xiii). George Bush’s voice can potentially signify all that the listener has come to associate with him – as an individual, a leader, a Texan, an evangelical Christian and a political neo-conservative. It may equally evoke the listener’s associations – positive, negative, or neutral – with the US itself. Coalescing around the single recorded word is thus a potential world of meaning, a world held together by a complex network of contexts. This world is brought into being anew each time it entangles with the subjective associations of the listener.

Apart from the contextual clues embedded within the Bush sample – the triumphant brass trailing off amidst the dying hubbub of US sailors aboard the aircraft carrier where the ‘victory’ in Iraq was announced, or the sounds of flashing camera flash bulbs at a press conference – stylistic qualities of speech also signify. After countless hours of listening to President Bush’s broad palette of vocal expression I was able to formulate several distinct *modes* that characterised his public utterances. There was a *grave* mode, in which he spoke in a lower register, the words delivered with greater focus on enunciation. Then, a *swaggering* mode in which he drew upon the cultural currency of his Texan roots. And, a *folksy* mode that replaced swaggering or grave moralising with ‘cute’ familial phrases, delivered in the vernacular of parochial middle America. Similarly, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s vocal palette, different, but no less colourful than Bush’s, also had discernable modes. These included: an *idealistic* mode, delivered in lofty public schoolboy tones with large melodic jumps; a *comical* mode, often employing disarmingly self-deprecating humour at the start of speeches, and a *street* mode, in which he talked very quickly, employing many phatic ‘fillers’ when searching for words, and generally fudging sentences slightly. John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister who features in three *RogueSounds* pieces, had by far the most restricted range of vocal expression, rarely breaking out of a monotone.

The *modes* identified above highlight the importance of *prosody* in any linguistic examination of the signifying characteristics of speech. The influence of prosodic elements of speech – stress, intensity, pause duration and intonation – on signification have been well documented by linguistic scholars. Wennerstrom (2001) suggests that “since prosody is always present in spoken discourse, it is not merely an added flourish or superimposed feature but central to a full understanding of any spoken text” (2001: 6). Prosodic elements of an individual’s speech may be
unconsciously inherent or deliberately deployed as affective devices (Leeuwen, 1999). Intonation – the ‘melody’ within speech – is a prosodic element that is prominent in English (Wennerstrom, 2001). By manipulating the pitch of certain words, syllables or phrases, speakers consciously “convey meaning about relationships in discourse” (2001: 17). Wennerstrom analyses intonational meaning via a model based on four categories: *pitch accents*, *pitch boundaries*, *key*, and *paratones*. The first three of these categories may easily be applied to the politicians’ speech modes identified above in order to more formally reveal their use as affective devices. For instance, Blair’s large melodic leaps are examples of *pitch accents* – “the various tones associated with lexical items that a speaker decides are especially salient in the information structure of the discourse” (2001: 18). The downward intonation of Bush’s ‘grave’ mode utterances demonstrate *pitch boundaries*, often signalling finality: “You’re either with us or you’re against us.” When he uses upward intonation: “Costs are rising,” this tends to signal open-endedness (ibid.). Howard’s choice of a low-pitched *key* when applied to his monotonal utterances “indicates a consistent attitudinal stance with respect to the prior utterance” (ibid.: 23).

For the political mashup artist, expressive devices in speech are useful insofar as they suggest recontextualisations. Once one has gained a sense of the various layers of signification contained within a sample, one is better placed to play with the possible permutations for recontextualising it.

### Recontextualising Samples to Change Their Meaning

Katz (2004) has described the multiple incarnations of one of pop music’s most celebrated, and well-used samples: a two second section of drummer Clyde Stubblefield’s solo, ripped from James Brown’s R&B song “Funky Drummer, Part 1 and 2” (1970). Throughout its thirty-nine year journey as the backbeat variously underpinning rap, Irish lament, reggae and pop ballad, “something of the original sound is maintained, yet its meaning changes in every new setting” (Katz, 2004: 137). Political mashup harnesses this relationship between context and meaning by effecting a two-fold recontextualisation. The first involves the recontextualisation of the constitutive elements of a speech, or indeed, a collection of speeches, into new narratives, while the second involves the setting of constructed speech to music.
The politics of cut and paste
The mediated vocal outpourings of any one politician generally comprise a number of speeches, interviews, press conferences and other sundry speaking performances. Any of these can be broken down into their aural components – sentences, phrases, words and various phatic utterances. The aural register these recorded performances comprise is infinitely replicable via digital electronics. Political mashup practitioners merely add new layers of replication by electronically ‘cutting’ selected elements from their original surrounds and repasting them together in different orders to form new narratives. The elements cut (or, more accurately, copied) from speech segments may be as small as single syllables – a procedure that is sometimes necessary in the absence of certain recorded words. Even without the addition of music the resultant constructed narratives can make for compelling listening. British political mashup artist Poison Popcorn’s merciless lampooning of Prime Minister Tony Blair in a number of purely vocal pieces demonstrates the effectiveness of careful editing, combined with a good sense for the melody of speech. However, the very fact that speech is musical, and thus contains an abundance of timbral, rhythmic, dynamic and melodic information, allows it to serve as a musical element within broader musical settings. The second stage of recontextualisation effected by political mashup harnesses words not only as semantic signifiers, but as musical voices in a tout ensemble.

The signifying power of music
As Mozziconacci (2002) has noted:

> Speech communication conveys more than the syntactic and semantic content of sentences ... prosodic cues provide information such as the speaker’s gender, age and physical condition, and the speaker's view, emotion, and attitude towards the topic, the dialogue partner, or the situation.

(2002: 1)

Moreover, to the political mashup practitioner, the prosodic element of *intonation* is not only an aid to deciphering the meaning of spoken discourse, it may actually form the basis of musical composition. Although most of his work does not fit into the category of post-9/11 political mashup that is my primary focus here, Australian composer Robert Davidson’s underscorings of rhetoric mash together music, rhetoric and video in ways that are immensely revealing of the

---

52 “Blair Terror Legislation”, analysed in the Content Analysis in Appendix 2, demonstrates these editing skills, although that piece is set to a sparse musical backing.
Chapter 4. Music and Meaning

melody of speech, and they deserve mention here.\textsuperscript{53} Mining diverse deposits of sampled public speech – only some of which comprise political rhetoric – Davidson’s underscorings are generally woven around instrumental retracings of the melody in speech. A particular instrument will double a more prominent melodic figure within the speech, one in which, to an unversed listener, the melody might not have been overtly evident. In “Hitler sings – Germany is awake” (2008, mash.), Hitler’s jagged, leaping rhetoric is doubled by a distorted electric guitar while a piano grimly pulses on a minor chord, thickened by a bass guitar. In “Well may we say - Gough Whitlam sings his dismissal speech” (2007, mash.), the descending melody of Gough Whitlam’s disdainful comments about the governor-general are delineated by a slightly comical trombone, while a host of orchestral instruments provide a colourful backing. However, in the longer version of “Martin Luther King - I have a dream as music” (2007, mash.), the soaring tones of King’s impassioned speech require no doubling instrument to expose their song-like melodiousness; a funky gospel groove backing is sufficient to reveal this, in a piece that prompts one to imagine that the civil rights preacher must have been speaking along to the music in order to achieve such a harmonious effect.

Davidson’s compositions fall within one of a number of categories devised by Lane (2006), through which she analyses a variety of means by which composers have incorporated the spoken word into their compositions. Amidst the many different ways of deploying such methods, Lane’s category for “Works which use material from pre-existing archival sources” (Lane, 2006: 5) accounts for both the work of Davidson and the RogueSounds pieces. Lane also proposes 19 categories for “Compositional techniques used in spoken word work” (ibid.: 5). Of these, “Melodic or rhythmic extraction, translation and elaboration” (ibid.: 6) neatly encapsulates Davidson’s work. Lane provides other notable examples of composers reinforcing melodies and/or rhythms of speech with melodic material, such as: Paul de Marinis’s “Music as a Second Language” (1991), Paul Lansky’s “Six Fantasies on a Poem by Thomas Campion” (1978–1979) and Steve Reich’s “Different Trains” (1988) (Lane, 2006). The RogueSounds pieces fit Lane’s category of “Semantic juxtaposition and permutation” (Lane, 2006: 6). She cites other examples

\textsuperscript{53} Apart from not centring exclusively upon political figures, Davidson’s recontextualisations are generally far less manipulative of language than typical political mashup is. He eschews the mashup artists’ latitude for constructing new semantic, textual meanings in favour of highlighting the melodic content of speech (which in itself constitutes another form of meaning). This requires leaving longer phrases intact, so that the music of speech has sufficient space to develop.
of this compositional technique in: Gysin’s “Junk is no good baby” (1960–1981), and Cage’s “Roaratorio” (1979), “Song Books” (1970) and “63 Mesostics Re Merce Cunningham” (1971). Cathy Lane places her own work, *Hidden Lives* within the category of “Accumulation of meaning by massing of voices or montage” (Lane, 2006: 6).

As the above examples demonstrate, both musical and textual signifiers within speech tend to suggest musical approaches. In political mashup, these signifiers may be used to satirically undermine the authenticity of targeted speakers’ words via musical constructs. For instance, President Bush’s above-mentioned *grave* mode might be set to slightly spooky carnivalesque music, playing up on the gravity, exaggerating drama into melodrama. Most political mashup underscores speech with hip hop-style beats. The juxtaposition of the iconically conservative and wealthy with the innately subversive, angry and street-wise makes for a powerful tool of parody. The specific processes and considerations underpinning the creation of music for the *RogueSounds* project are detailed in Chapter 6.

**Listeners as co-creators of meaning**

As was discussed above in relation to the speech of George W. Bush, the power of a sample to signify depends to a great extent on listeners’ familiarity with its original source. The signifying elements embedded within the political speech sample enmesh with the associations listeners make with both the word, and more particularly, the voice of its speaker, to form new meanings. Clearly, through their mastery of the relevant technology, mashup practitioners enjoy considerable agency in directing listeners to meanings that are explicitly oppositional. Nevertheless, the listener’s subjective experience is still crucial to their ability to interpret meaning from the recontextualised speech. The background knowledge they bring to their listening must determine their response to the various levels of conscious quotation employed by the practitioner. Semiotician Umberto Eco has described how the listener “operates” a text in order to interpret meaning, bringing to bear his or her understanding of the various contexts of the text’s “stories” (in Dell’antonio, 2004). An “ideal” reader (or listener in this case) will operate the text “so that it will function properly” (2004: 205). In the case of political mashup, this background knowledge would ideally encompass familiarity with media portrayals of political figures and their deeds upon the world stage. It would also encompass knowledge of global affairs, such as the war on terror, ‘extraordinary rendition,’ climate change, etc. In this sense, the listener can be seen as taking on a role in creating a new meaning. David Toop says as much
when he refers to Canadian John Oswald’s ‘plunderphonics,’ a method of slicing up copyrighted audio and creating new pieces based on them. Toop writes:

> What the copyright protectors could not understand was the importance of familiarity in Oswald’s electroquote methodology. We need to recognise the source material, if only by the thinnest trace memory, for plunderphonics to work. As music insinuates itself into our deepest inner life, so a part of its creation passes over from author to perceiver. (Toop, 2004: 167)

In the film *Sonic Outlaws* (Baldwin, dir., 1995), Christopher Gordon of Negativland explains the role of listeners in constructing meaning:

> You can put a bunch of stuff on the air, or in a record, that are not necessarily related to each other at all, put them in connection with one another, and if there’s a way to do it, people will make a connection in their minds and they’ll make them have a meaning.

(in Baldwin, dir., 1995)

**When the inauthentic signals authenticity**

Editing together constructed narratives from captured political speech is difficult work. Melodic and timbral discrepancies between words that one wishes to place together can be partially mitigated through the use of pitch shifting, time stretching and equalisation, but these are time-consuming tasks requiring meticulous care and attention to detail. However, the cut up practitioner’s project is not necessarily the construction of utterly plausible sentences. Indeed, as Jon Stratton has posited, the efficacy of the satirical composition as political critique depends on the recognition of its inauthenticity (Stratton, 2000). Stratton’s observation was made in relation to the aforementioned “(I’m a) Back Door Man” (1997), the political mashup by Simon Hunt. The legal ruling that the average listener, through ignorance of current technological developments, could be reasonably expected to hear Hunt’s altered sentences as the actual words of Pauline Hanson, would hardly be carried today – at least not for the reason that was given a decade ago. Today’s mashup artists assume their audience’s savviness to technological trickery.

As Tom Compognoni revealed in reference to producing “Imagine This”, “I spent most of the time finessing the vocals, trying to make them sound as smooth as possible (accepting that they would still sound cut up, though achieving the desired effect)” (in Hammond, 2006: 80).

* * * * *

In Part 2 the *RogueSounds* project has been contextualised within key epistemological dimensions in order to situate the work along historical, political, philosophical and semiotic modes of
knowing. In Chapter 2 the project was placed within traditions that have incorporated either music and/or appropriation of cultural texts into oppositional expressions. In Chapter 3 political mashup was presented as a post-9/11 phenomenon that used technology to re-mediate mass mediated versions of global political and economic events. Hardt and Negris’ (2000) theoretical concept of ‘empire’ was used to elucidate a political perspective that gave focus to political mashup’s project of critiquing – and potentially subverting – hegemony. Finally, Chapter 4 examined the ways in which music and sound – and in particular, digital samples – signify. In Part 3, the variety of processes and considerations – philosophical, technical and creative – that applied to the practical tasks of creating and distributing the RogueSounds project music, are detailed.
Part 3
Creative Arts Practice

Part 3 of this exegesis comprises the final three chapters, in which considerations that applied to the practical processes involved in the project – its creation and dissemination – are examined. Chapter 5 first outlines the broad research methodologies that oversaw the project, before examining the various theoretical tools that were deployed in the construction of a theoretical framework that guided the practice. It then details the technical tools and skills that enabled the production of the music. In Chapter 6 I examine each of the nine pieces in detail, recreating the creative studio process by reflecting upon the conceptual underpinnings of the tracks and relating these to the compositional practice by which both the constructed speech narratives and the music were created. Chapter 7 concludes this exegesis by examining the broader implications of the creative work, both in terms of its provision of agency in relation to hegemonic structures and in it being representative of vigorous, emerging forms of cultural production.
Chapter 5
The Practice of Protest

Though this be madness yet there is method in it.
William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (1603)

Framing the Research

The primary impetus for this project was a desire to intervene in post-9/11 discourses of power. As a composer, my focus was drawn to musical interventions. I was inspired to question how a contemporary form of musical protest might be configured – a form that would respond to, and whose conception, and methods of production and reception would be shaped by, the conjunction of contemporary technology, socio-political events and a critical political/philosophical perspective. An existing form of contemporary musical protest – one that I have called ‘political mashup’ – fulfils this prescription, albeit with a significant caveat. Due to the aggressively reactive nature of most of the political mashup in online circulation since 9/11 (as argued in Chapter 3), a mere documentation of the genre and its genealogy – although perhaps serving to raise awareness of a marginalised expressive form – would fail to embody the intervention I had in mind. My analysis of existing political mashup revealed what I saw as a missed opportunity to deploy postmodern technologies in ways that propose opposition to power at a *paradigmatic* level. It was my desire to grasp this opportunity that led to the decision to ground my research in practice.

My project was intended to interrogate existing structures by both highlighting the means by which power manufactures consent and legitimates various violences, as well as by proposing a method of cultural production inherently subversive to prevailing power structures. This proposal was presented in a practical, creative form. These factors led me to design a research methodology that was broadly informed by the critical paradigm, while, due to its creative
component, it also incorporated elements of the creative arts paradigm. In the following section I examine the implications of these methodological frameworks as they related to the project.

**Paradigms entwined: critical and creative arts approaches**

The critical paradigm is underpinned by a realist philosophy that is concerned with how political, economic and cultural factors are implicated in the formation of social structures (Higgs, 2001). Within this overarching perspective I constructed a conceptual framework that provided a political/philosophical foundation that would guide both my practice and its ongoing evaluation. One of the characteristic features of qualitative research is a “willingness to re-direct the research on the basis of new understandings/insights” that may emerge from the research process (2001: 53). Because the creative outcomes engaged with global politics – a shifting landscape imbricated with the fluxes of conflict, undulating economic markets and environmental debates – my framework was dynamic; it expanded and changed shape to encompass both the emergence of events and my understandings of these events. To construct this framework I applied a number of theoretical tools, a bricolage of theoretical perspectives that included: critical discourse analysis, non-violence and poststructuralism, as the following section outlines.

**Bricolage as hybrid praxis**

The discursive web that informed the creative works – from conception, through production, and finally, to distribution – was woven of a critique of the discourses established by dominant political and economic structures. Implicit in this critique is a central tenet of critical discourse analysis: that “dominance structures are legitimated by ideologies of powerful groups” which “stabilize conventions and naturalize them,” so that meaning is produced in ways that are opaque, acquiring “stable and natural forms” that “are taken as ‘given’” (Wodak, 2001: 3). Just as language – viewed through the lens of critical discourse analysis – is seen to have a role in structuring power relations, postmodern technologies have allowed me to *restructure* language in order to propose alternative power relations. My attempts to accomplish these restructurings of ‘power speech’ in a paradigm-transcendent way egressed from a critique of the discourse of the online political mashup community, which, despite having defined itself by its opposition to power, has tended to frame this opposition within coordinates delimited by power.

A guiding principle for the creation of the political mashup pieces was that they remain adherent to central precepts of the philosophy of *non-violence*. The philosophical rationale for this decision is outlined in Chapter 3 in the sections: ‘Non-violence as a political strategy’ and ‘The philosophy
of insurrection: resisting universalised violence.’ Here I treat non-violence as a methodological tool: a set of theoretical directives to guide the substance of the mashup creations. First, the pieces were to abstain from recontextualising the words of political leaders to construct narratives that were personally abusive to them. As contended by Martin Luther King, the point of non-violent resistance is not served by the humiliation of the opponent, but rather, by the awakening in him of a modicum of moral shame.54 Second, I sought to move beyond the reactive tactic of altering captured rhetoric in order to merely produce the opposite meaning to those intended by the original speech. Instead, my intention was to propose an imagined scenario in which chief protagonists – rather than being demonised – were configured as positive, healing forces who experienced redemption through confession and repentance. Again, as forwarded by Martin Luther King, these healing transformations may flow from non-violent action, but never from violent resistance, which can only perturb the cause of reconciliation.55

The methods and processes used in the project have encompassed the technological innovation and unprecedented interconnectivity that characterise the current phase of modernity, as well as contemporary artistic/aesthetic methods that are commonly referred to as ‘postmodern.’ These include processes such as pastiche, collage and appropriation, all of which have been crucial in shaping the creative outcomes. Moreover, a broader postmodern ethic has been applied to this project’s interventions; in this regard I refer to postmodernity not as the period in history that follows modernity, but rather, as a critical perspective on the major discourses and assumptions of modernity. This perspective involves what Jean-François Lyotard has called an “incredulity towards metanarratives” (in Newman, 2005: 3). According to Newman, poststructuralism may be thought of as a set of theoretical tools with which one can engage with the postmodern condition. It does not negate, but rather, “radicalizes ... the fundamental insight of structuralism that identities are constructed discursively through external relations of language” (2005: 5, italics in original). Using this theoretical tool I fashioned a conceptual framework that approaches many of the overarching discourses of modernity, such as moral absolutism and humanist idealism, with scepticism. Aided by poststructuralist insights, the framework calls into question the “claims to legitimacy and ‘normality’ of dominant political and social institutions, discourses and practices ... exposing or unmasking the violence, coercion and domination behind these institutions” (Newman, 2005: 1). Despite the charges of “apolitical and amoral nihilism” that

55 ibid.
have been directed at poststructuralism, in the context of this project it has served as a tool of political and ethical engagement (Newman, 2005: 2).

While being grounded in an overarching critical perspective, this is a creative arts based research project that is imbued with processes and ways of knowing that are articulated within a creative arts paradigm of knowledge creation. The artistry that mediates such a project “requires attention to the dimensions of practice which are ofteninvisible, the values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, expectations, feelings and knowledge that lie below the surface and behind the actions of the practitioner” (Higgs, 2001: 50). The following section examines the particular methodological issues that pertained to this practice-based research project.

**Practice as research**

The decision to ground research in a creative arts practice poses the question: to what extent do the outcomes of practice embody knowledge? Biggs (2003) suggests that creative artefacts alone cannot embody knowledge because, devoid of contextual frameworks, they will merely be interpreted according to the personal prejudices and knowledge levels of their viewers. A collection of creative works – paintings, for instance – cannot alone constitute research, as the conceptual structures through which they may be related to other works and activities in general are not inherent in the paintings (ibid.). As Barrett (2007b) points out, such relationships must be made explicit if the “personally situated knowledge” generated by practice-based research is to be rendered applicable to the revelation of “philosophical, social and cultural contexts for the critical intervention and application of knowledge outcomes” (2007b: 2). Following this, Candy (2006, online) has defined practice-based research as “an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice” (2006, online, my emphasis). As the creative works alone do not account for these relationships, they must be accounted for in a separate exegesis. Together, practice and the practitioner’s reflections on process as recorded in the exegesis are, according to Barrett, “crucial to articulating and harnessing the outcomes of these materialising practices for further application” (Barrett, 2007b: 4).

As this suggests, in practice-based research a critical relationship exists between practice and theory (Edmonds and Candy, 2008). Theory is applied to practice, then revised as a result of the outcomes of practice. Between these stages are interpretive processes: reflecting upon the work as it progresses, evaluating it against the theoretical framework, and revising the latter when
necessary (ibid.). Mediated by these reflexive evaluative processes, process and outcome are entwined in a cyclical relationship. This has significant implications for the methodological considerations associated with practice-based research. “The researcher’s own self-reflexive mapping of the emergent work as enquiry” ensures that the methodological approach is emergent; methodologies are necessarily fluid rather than fixed, and tend to be adjusted continuously as new relationships between process and outcome are revealed (Barrett, 2007b: 4).

Creative analysis: methods and tools

The cyclical relationship between theory and practice was evident in the production of this project’s musical outcomes. For a piece to be judged as ‘finished,’ I had to be satisfied that it embodied every aspect of my overarching interpretive framework – as well as meeting criteria that were specific to that piece. The framework laid out theoretical and aesthetic parameters that thematically and stylistically demarcated all of the works. For instance, to be judged as satisfactory against the framework, pieces had to: comprise of political speech narratives set to music, exhibit essentially non-violent approaches, and be based upon content that addressed an aspect (or several aspects) of the broader political/philosophical agenda forwarded in Chapter 3.

As is discussed in detail in the introduction to Chapter 6, the pieces were also subject to evaluation with respect to an overarching musical model, a key element of which was a lack of generic constraints. It was intended from the outset that the musical backings to my constructed speech narratives would not be bound to any particular genre, but rather, stylistic choices would be open ended, and respond to thematic content as mediated by my personal sensibilities as a composer. And, regardless of the stylistic approach chosen, each piece was required to meet certain technical standards in terms of composition and production. These standards were provided via a two-tiered arrangement, whereby my own aesthetic would guide the production to a certain level, after which musicological experts would provide feedback that would sometimes lead to reworking of the piece.

These processes: of practice, guided by (and contributing to) theory, and evaluation of each in light of the other, are reflected in the creative analyses in Chapter 6, where the process of studio enquiry is discussed and replicated within the context of my guiding theoretical structure, and also within what Estelle Barrett refers to as “the broader context that views creative arts practice as the production of knowledge” (Barrett, 2007a: 195). The structure of the analyses in Chapter 6 is consistent across all nine pieces, and adheres to the following format:
the initial ‘Background’ section explains the impetus for creating the piece, thus linking its broad thematic content with some element of the discursive framework – either a topical political issue or a political/philosophical category that transcended news cycles;

• a second section specifies the ways in which the constructed narrative embodies the thematic content;

• a third section breaks the musical structure down into sections that can be considered as distinct components of the overall piece;

• a final section analyses the key musical elements within each of these component parts.

* * * * *

Guided by a bricolage of broader discursive frameworks and methods, the creative outcomes arose from the application of a spectrum of specific technical tools and processes that encompassed practical considerations in relation to: the gathering of the ‘raw materials’ of sound construction (speech samples) – which in turn required some investigation into the ethics of sampling; the selection of recording facilities and tools; and the choice of the optimal means of distributing the material. While the technologies of personal computers and audio production software enabled the creation of the practical outcomes of the research, Internet technology enabled and prescribed methods of dissemination.

Internet distribution: possibilities, limitations

The Internet was chosen as the primary site of distribution of the music for three reasons. First, as asserted in Chapter 3, the playlists of commercial radio stations were severely restricted in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. It would have been unthinkable for Australia’s commercial stations to consider airing such overtly dissident music in the climate of heavily US-aligned political conservatism that reigned during the music creation and distribution phase of the project, which began in 2006. Indeed, even the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s youth radio station Triple J, which proclaims an ethos of “irreverence, independence, authority and attitude” on its website, would have been reluctant to broadcast the material, given its aforementioned legal wrangles over the Pauline Pantsdown recordings.56 Second, in harmony with the file-sharing ethos

56 http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/about/, accessed 26th October 2009. As discussed in the preceding chapter, since the legal furore ensuing from Triple J’s broadcasting of Simon Hunt’s “I’m a Backdoor Man” (1997) – Australia’s first example of political mashup – the ‘alternative’ youth radio station had long since been wary of airing songs beclouded with promises of copyright infringement and defamation.
embraced within the project (and being mindful of copyright issues) I wanted the music to be
distributed in a non-pecuniary manner. This made the Internet a logical site for distribution
because it allowed easy access to the free listening and download of tracks. Finally, the Internet
offered the possibility of self-distribution, whereby an audience could, through the chaotic, viral
modes of Internet communication, be steadily grown within an online community. The
musical/social networking site MySpace fulfilled this role admirably, its ‘friend’ function
constituting a well-developed network-facilitating architecture. As is discussed at length in
Chapter 7, MySpace was chosen as the primary outlet because it fulfilled all three of the above
requirements.

Through the friend function in MySpace I sometimes received feedback from listeners. This was
an added bonus rather than a critical element of the creative process and neither solicitation,
collection nor analysis of feedback was conducted in any formalised way. Nevertheless, this
facility does raise the possibility of further research. With appropriate ethical scoping, feedback
loops could, in future studies, be formally set up as a part of a variety of research possibilities,
including: surveys to gauge impacts of music upon listeners; the implementation of action
research models whereby listener feedback was used to direct composition; or collaborative
group compositions by online teams comprising composers, digital artists, political and media
analysts etc. While the present study did not incorporate feedback into its research design, the ad
hoc receipt of feedback did, however, serve as an anecdotal indicator of how the music was
being received. Through the random but reasonably steady arrival of comments via the MySpace
messaging services I was reassured that audiences were relating to the works. I was also given a
sense of which pieces resonated the most – and with whom. The fact that the vast majority of
feedback issued from the US spoke loudly of the special relevance of the pieces to audiences
there. One such audience member – himself a sample-based musician – was sufficiently moved
by the music to offer (via MySpace messaging facilities) to remix some tracks in return for my
setting political speech to some of his music. Although time constraints prevented him from
finishing his remixes in time for inclusion in this project, I did receive some of his instrumental
pieces – as detailed in Chapter 6 – that were incorporated into one of the works.

* * * * *

Continuous monitoring, adjustment, and even invention of methods was evident in several
aspects of the production process: adapting to the multiple roles of composer, producer,
engineer and musician; blending real and electronic instruments for ‘humanising’ effects; modes
of both capturing and searching for speech samples; mixing music for small speaker playback; and conversion of audio files to the compressed MP3 format. The solving of these creative problems as they arose required both a continual shifting of approach and, often, the devising of new approaches. The following section shall first outline some of the more general considerations associated with creative practice in the music studio, before detailing and justifying the specific settings and procedures chosen for the production and dissemination of the RogueSounds music.

**Political Mashup Production: Methods and Tools**

**Home studios**

The creative outcomes of this project were produced in a home-based digital audio studio. Théberge (1997) has traced the lure of the home studio back to the late 1960s and 1970s, when some artists invested heavily in their own studios. Jimi Hendrix’s Electric Ladyland and Neil Young’s Broken Arrow Ranch are examples of large scale studios built from the proceeds of stellar careers in popular music. The contemporary home studio may be richly appointed and lavishly furnished, or it may comprise of a personal computer in a bedroom corner. Political mashup in general tends to be produced in more modest studio environments; such was certainly the case for the RogueSounds project. The home studio environment was chosen for a number of reasons.

First, the construction of meaningful narratives from political speech samples is an exhaustive process. The investment of time required is of a substantial magnitude; samples must be sourced (from a variety of media), then trialled in their designated context. Unnecessary noise must be filtered out before executing whatever edits are needed to allow the samples to perform their intended function in a piece. The cost of carrying out these labours at an hourly rate in a professional recording studio would have far exceeded the financial resources available for the project.

Second, the ‘do it yourself’ ethos of the home recording studio harmonises with the counter-hegemonic intentions of that which is produced. As discussed in earlier chapters, the full spectrum of production processes that are deployed in the creation of political mashup, from thematic conception through to online distribution, are subversive to the corporate interests that...
control the mainstream music industry. They operate largely outside corporate revenue streams, utilising tools such as open source and shared software for production, and the internet for distribution.

Finally, the multi-tasking facilities available in the home studio environment exceeded the offerings of a dedicated professional recording studio. When the creative process called for a particular speech sample from a particular political figure, the means of sourcing that speech were always at hand – either via the Internet, television or radio, or from video cassettes and DVDs. Moreover, if a certain audio effect was desired, it was sometimes necessary to use online resources to procure it. And, during the collaborative phase of the project, online communication was a crucial part of the compositional/production process as MP3s were shuttled back and forth through cyber space.

The creation of political mashup, whether in a high-end professional studio or a more modestly appointed home studio, requires the facility of some form of digital audio multi-tracking system. The following sections shall present some more general issues concerning multi-track recording.

**Multi-track recording**

From the early 1930s the film industry had employed a technique in which a recording could be built up by the overlaying of successive recordings (Zak, 2001). In ‘overdubbing,’ as the process was called, each new recording had to be made in real time over the mix of sounds resulting from the additive process thus far. The lacquer disk media that facilitated the process was unsatisfactory for multiple generations of audio; each successive transfer suffered a significant degradation of quality. The application of such methods outside of the film industry exposed fault lines in the cultural receptivity to these technologies, evoking anxieties in some who were cognisant of the impending impact of such innovations on not only musical practice, but on the very way that musical texts were thought of (Zak, 2001). In 1941, Sidney Bechet used lacquer disks to record “The Sheik of Araby” and “Blues of Bechet” (1941), recordings that were notable in that he played all instruments, in this case, tenor and soprano saxophones, bass, drums, piano and clarinet. The ‘one man band’ recording was dismissed as a ‘stunt’ of engineering at the time. Indeed, Mezz Mezzrow, a jazz musician of the era, derided the recordings as testimonies to an individualism that he feared heralded the decay of the spirit of the “communal interaction” thought to be a hallmark of jazz (Zak, 2001: 7). Later, Les Paul utilised the medium of magnetic tape to explore the building of records by additive recording. His efforts eventually led to the
development of multi-track tape machines. Thereafter, each separate recording could be stored on its own track, then mixed together into a single monaural or stereo track at a later time (ibid.).

Multi-track recording allows control over the relative volumes of instruments within an ensemble (Durant, 1990). The practice of ‘close-miking’ instruments in acoustic isolation and creating ‘dry’ recording environments free of sound reflections were techniques devised for “separating the recording process as far as possible from modifications that might be made subsequently” (1990: 179). These modifications include adding effects such as simulated reverberation or delay, and signal processing such as compression and frequency equalisation.

The early concerns surrounding multitracking technology did not overestimate its future impact upon recording practice. As musician and producer Brian Eno points out, the advent brought significant changes to the essential characteristics of studio processes:

> Once you become familiar with studio facilities … you can begin to compose in relation to those facilities. You can begin to think in terms of putting something on, putting something else on, trying this on top of it, and so on, then taking a mixture of things off … actually constructing a piece in the studio. (in Théberge, 1997: 216)

**Digital audio**

Despite enlisting quite different technologies to the encoding of sound, digital multi-track recording continues with the same basic premise as the earliest multi-track tape recorders. Although all the tracks of a multi-track recording are destined to be mixed together into a final listening format (the current norms being either stereo or surround sound, and often both), prior to mix down each track can be independently manipulated with respect to volume, panning, effects and processing. Digital recording media and analog magnetic tape both capture audio performances by rendering sound into a form that can be played back by a listener who has access to the appropriate playback equipment. A key difference between digital and analogue recordings lies in the means of this rendering. It is important to note that digital samples are not actually sounds, but rather, numerical representations of analogue sound. The digitisation of an aural event – via the application of an analogue to digital converter – renders sound into data: a numerical representation of sound that is infinitely malleable through algorithmic mathematical processes and “that in turn comprise instructions for reconstructing that sound” (Katz, 2004: 138). Between the act of digitisation and the moment that a digital to analogue converter renders the data back into sound, profoundly transformative processes may be applied.
It is within this field of almost limitless transformative potential that the political mashup artist operates. There are, however, potential pitfalls that accompany this apparent freedom. Mastering engineer Bob Katz points out that the digital audio realm is by no means immune to the generational losses suffered by analogue recordings through the application of signal processing and successive dubbing. The idea that digital audio is ‘lossless’ is in fact a myth; each successive pass through digital processing algorithms degrades the sound slightly (Katz, 2002). Another audio ‘myth,’ dispelled this time by mixing engineer Michael Stavro, is that the relative low noise floor of digital audio compared to analog allows audio signals to be recorded at very low volumes and still retain clarity. This is not the case, due to the fact that low volume audio is rendered into data using shorter digital word lengths. Thus, louder signals are represented by more significant bits that, accordingly, convey more information and are rendered with greater clarity than soft signals (Stavro, 2003).

The ethics of sampling
As a production tool, the practice of sampling has played a key role in realising the creative outcomes of this project. Moreover, ethical and legal aspects of the practice have figured as cogent elements of an argument, sustained throughout this exegesis, against some of the more pernicious practices of globalised capital. Indeed, as argued in Chapter 3, two major arms of globalised capitalist hegemony – the recording industry and the Hollywood film industry – often conjoin legal and ethileted stacal categories when it comes to the defence of their intellectual property, justifying their deployment of legal instruments for copyright protection by recourse to ethical/moral arguments.

In this project, sampling has been cast as a tool of subversion – an element of the activist’s armoury that can be deployed to parody power and subvert hegemonic interests. In this respect, the ethical stance adopted for the project approves the use of any elements of mediated culture, whether film, television, radio, online content or recorded music, for enlistment via appropriation to this cause. Permissions were not sought for the use of any samples because the RogueSounds music is not available for commercial sale. There are, however, some uses of samples within the project which, by virtue of their potential to disturb cultural sensitivities, require a defence.

First, the Aboriginal singing used in “Howard Repents” was sampled from the film Rabbit Proof Fence (Noyce, dir., 2002). The film presents a sympathetic portrayal of two Aboriginal girls as
they attempt to return to their families after having been forcibly removed in accord with Australian government policy of the 1930s. I am acutely aware of the sensitivities surrounding the issue of appropriation of Indigenous material – particularly when the practice involves cultural and commercial exploitation. Two commercial releases: Paul Simon’s hit album *Graceland* (1986) and Enigma’s “Return to Innocence” (1994) are cases in point. With the release of *Graceland*, which involved collaborations with several South African musicians, Simon was accused of resurrecting his own then flagging career while ignoring the struggle to end apartheid (Greer, 2006). Enigma’s Michael Cretu incorporated the sampled singing of an Ami couple (indigenous Taiwanese) into his hugely profitable release.57 The couple knew nothing of this until one of them happened to hear the piece on a local radio station. They subsequently sued EMI, claiming that the human rights of the Ami had been violated. The matter was finally settled out of court, although it is not known whether any money changed hands (Taylor, 2003).

Notwithstanding such examples, my appropriation is conducted in a spirit that is in complete harmony with the film’s intention, which is to empathetically highlight the suffering of indigenous Australians at the hands of patriarchal white Western governance. Moreover, unlike Paul Simon and Enigma – and, indeed, the producers of *Rabbit Proof Fence* – I do not seek to profit monetarily from the appropriation of the Indigenous material. Based on these facts, and on the ethos of appropriation that is a critical framework for this project, I defend my appropriation.

Second, in “Quickening” I used the *adhan*, or Islamic Call to Prayer as part of an underscore to a Bush narrative line: *When the oceans rise, all of us – on all sides of every senseless war – will finally see ... we're the same*. While the phrase *senseless war* is a reference to the war on terror, my intention was not to besmirch Islam by suggesting a direct causal link between that religion and war. The *adhan* was at the time often heard as a background sound in media broadcasts focusing on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Adopted by the Western media as an aural signifier of the Middle East, recordings of the *adhan* clearly reside in media sound libraries to be used as needed. It is also worth noting that the *adhan* is traditionally broadcast five times a day from high mounted loudspeakers in cities that house Islamic communities. Lee (2003) has noted that such broadcasts

57 The single was from the album, *The Cross of Changes* (1994), which eventually sold 5 million copies and remained in *Billboard*’s Top 100 chart for thirty two weeks. The singing was originally sampled by a Taiwanese ethnomusicologist (Taylor, 2003).
may be seen as impositions of Islamic space onto public aural space in cities that invariably house a plurality of religions (one hears the adhan, for instance, throughout Jerusalem’s Old City, whether one is in the Jewish, Christian, Armenian or Arab quarter). Given that the adhan’s religious function sits alongside its presence as part of the ambience of a multitude of cities throughout the world, its sacredness to Muslims clearly does not preclude its being heard by a variety of non-Muslims. Because my use of the adhan is, like the Indigenous voices, empathetic to the plight of all who have been caught up in the war on terror, I defend my use of it.

**Computer-based digital audio workstations**

The home studio environment in which the RogueSounds music was produced was based around what is commonly known as a digital audio workstation (DAW). The functional components of the studio consisted of a computer running audio production software, a second computer with a wireless broadband connection, a Roland synthesiser module, a Yamaha MIDI keyboard, an ART dual channel tube preamp system, some condenser microphones, two near-field referencing monitors and a variety of electric and acoustic guitars. Being a postmodern phenomenon, the personal computer is eminently suited to the implementation of the postmodern processes that characterise political mashup creation; its essential modes of production involve pastiche and collage, the recontextualisation of audio through cutting and pasting and the appropriation of digitally ‘captured’ cultural texts. The editing and processing capabilities of contemporary software music production programmes are powerful, as are, correspondingly, the computers necessary to run them.

**Music production software: samples, synthesisers and sessions**

The primary software production platform for the project was Steinberg’s ‘Cubase SX 3’ software programme. As one of the major industry standard MIDI/audio sequencers it admirably serves the needs of political mashup creation. Of course, there are several such programmes that would have been equally appropriate; the differences between them are chiefly ergonomic and aesthetic rather than functional. Cubase is merely the programme that I am conversant with. Propellorhead’s ‘Reason’ and Ableton’s ‘Live’ programmes were also used, along with a large number of effects and signal processing plugins.

Cubase SX is a software MIDI and audio sequencer designed to run on personal computers. Steinberg created a MIDI sequencer in 1986, naming it Cubase in 1989 (Guerin, 2004). MIDI (musical instrument digital interface) is a protocol that allows musical instruments to
communicate with computers. When an instrumental performance is played into a MIDI sequencer, what is stored in the computer is not an audio recording, but rather, data – an encoding of the essential characteristics of the performance. These data constitute a set of instructions for the replaying of the performance electronically. Each MIDI ‘note’ is encoded with information about the performance of that note, including: pitch, volume, speed of attack, duration, sustain, pitch bend, modulation, and many more parameters. Each data ‘note’ inhabits a timeline that can exactly reflect the tempo of the original performance. However, the performance can be sped up or slowed down while maintaining the original corresponding temporal relationships between notes. Via sequencing software, the computer can then transmit this information to a sampler or synthesiser, which renders the original performance with sounds of one’s choosing. Of course, being data, MIDI information is infinitely editable; all of the parameters mentioned above can be adjusted to change the performance, either subliminally or radically.

In 1996 Cubase added audio recording and editing facilities to their software. This roughly coincided with the availability of affordable high-end computer soundcards, together with processing chips of sufficient power to record quality audio (Guerin, 2004).

Reason is a wholly sampler/synthesiser-based production tool. Its sequencer function is similar to that of Cubase, and in fact Reason can be easily ‘slaved’ to Cubase so that its playback is directed from within the latter, and synchronised to it. Reason does not facilitate the direct recording of audio. Its value as a production tool resides in its virtual racks of synthesisers and samplers that can be connected to effects and processing units to create extremely complex interactions of sounds – all of which play back in time with the recorded material within Cubase. Or, it can be used as a stand-alone ‘sound factory’ for the creation of textures, beats and sounds.

Live is another audio/MIDI sequencing programme that can also be slaved to Cubase. It was used sparingly on this project, mostly as a sound effects unit; the suite of effects that it houses is extensive, and quite distinct from those within Cubase.

**Mixing acoustic and electronic instruments**

One of the production methods used in the project was to mix live recorded audio tracks – i.e. recordings of acoustic and electric instruments – with electronically produced sounds. This was in accordance with my desire to ‘humanise’ the aural environments within which the speech...
samples were heard. As is outlined in more detail in Chapter 6, these samples, when dropped into an arrangement often surprised by the ‘musical’ qualities they revealed in their new settings. Nuances of tone, melody and intensity often contributed to an ‘organic’ musicality that sat less comfortably within a wholly electronic musical context. Cubase was a perfect platform for realising this vision; it handles MIDI and audio with equal aplomb, allowing composer/producers to set finger picked acoustic guitars within a bed of synthesised strings, or to have recorded electric bass guitar lines running through programmed drum tracks.

The preceding discussion brings to light one particularly significant factor associated with the creation of music in home studios by single individuals, the taking on of multiple roles.

**The blending of roles: composer/producer/engineer/musician**

Music recordings have traditionally been brought into being as the result of collaborative processes. These have generally involved the coordinated efforts of a songwriter or composer, an ‘artist,’ under whose name the recording is projected, a producer, and a sound engineer. In certain circumstances arrangers and session musicians may be added to this list (Zak, 2001). Edward Kealy has attributed the advent of magnetic tape in the 1940s to a strengthening of the role of the sound engineer in realising the visions of musical artists, writers and producers. Referring to the “multiplicity of authorial voices in the music text,” Kealy pointed to a “whole new range of aesthetic decision points” that engineers, through their knowledge and practice in the use of recording equipment, began to have significant input to (in Zak, 2001: 165).58

The range of practical skills and abilities required to successfully engineer multi-track sound recordings is broad. The sound engineer must make decisions about microphone choice and placement, s/he must apply dynamics and frequency equalisation processing and effects to audio, and maintain overall sound balance while rendering final mixes, often in a variety of formats, including monaural, stereo or surround sound, CD, uncompressed wave files and MP3s. As summed up by Zak: engineers are relied upon to “shepherd intuitive musical visions that are often only partly formed, perhaps technically naïve yet artistically sensible, through a daunting technical and analytical process” (Zak, 2001: 165).

---

The role of producer has traditionally been that of an overseer: the one who hires musicians, keeps projects within budgets and keeps recordings to deadlines. As with engineers, these more mundane roles have gradually made way for more creative tasks. Contemporary producers retain the overseer role, while having varying degrees of influence on aesthetic decisions. As such, the role of the producer tends increasingly to involve elements of arrangement, engineering, writing, and even performance. As producer Paul Fox puts it:

There’s a little bit of being a psychologist, a teacher, the musician and arranger. Then there’s being the engineer and the sound sculptor … I’m the guy who flies the helicopter above the trees to look down and get the overview. (in Zak, 2001: 173)59

The above descriptions of the roles of engineers and producers are revealing of the challenges faced by those who attempt to produce their own music. The solitary political mashup artist must retain an overarching vision of what s/he wishes to produce, while maintaining creative inspiration, mastery of (or at least, competence with) the enabling technology, and musicianship skills.

New modes of music creation
In the traditional studio setting, the engineer, as ‘technical enabler,’ could be seen as operating on a very different cognitive level to the composer – a creator of musical forms. Within my home studio environment however, the wearing of these different ‘hats’ required not so much a ‘splitting’ of the self into different roles, but rather, the blending of these roles into a productive mode of work that saw their unification in a more or less seamless amalgam. Engineering and production and composition, in a sense, melded together; sounds suggested by the latter two processes were rendered by engineering methods, which then tended to suggest other sounds. Sound sculpture became part of the compositional process, as is suggested by this quote from producer and composer Brian Eno:

If you start thinking of music as something you don’t have to do in real time but something that can be built up, like a painting, that gives you a different way of working … The other level you can think at, through working with the kinds of processing equipment that studios have, is as a way of making atmospheres, landscapes, whatever you like. (in Zak, 2001: 57)60

Chapter 5. The Practice of Protest

To work in solitude in this way requires that the artist also plays the role of musician. Where the construction of abstract, ‘atmospheric’ sounds is concerned, minimal technical skill on the keyboard can suffice. Other parts – guitars, pianos and drums for instance – often necessitate higher levels of musicianship. Being a sufficiently competent guitarist with some keyboard skills, I elected to play these parts myself, although it is not uncommon for composer/producers to call in others to play specialised parts. These ‘session musicians’ can be paid performers or (more often in political mashup) simply musician friends.

Having outlined some of the more general production frameworks within which the RogueSounds music was created, the following section examines the range of methods and tools that applied to the gathering of the project’s primary sound sources: political speech samples.

Political Speech/Media Material: Modes of Capture

In the early stages of research design I made the decision to not document the sources of each individual sample used in the project. Most of my sampling comprised the compiling of the aural components of pre-written narratives that were conceived in relation to my guiding theoretical framework. This meant that the major proportion of samples used consisted of single words captured from a very broad array of sources, as I detail below. To document the source of each and every word – or syllable (as noted above) – would have added profoundly to the time needed to complete the project. Moreover, from the outset, I determined that the continuous intrusion of technical, non-creative processes into the creative work flow that such an imperative would require would severely impact upon my creative process. To satisfy scholarly requirements for publishing sources, Appendix 1: Full Transcripts of Speech Samples, lists the main sources of speech samples for each individual piece.61

The major source of speech samples for the project was the Internet: in particular, ‘The George W. Bush Public Domain Audio Archive’, the online collection of Bush samples detailed below. Additional samples were procured either from elsewhere online or by other means, as the following sections describe.

61 In Appendix 1 I detail the criteria by which sample sources were cited.
Given that the recontextualisation of political speech was central to the creation of the musical pieces, the ability to source speech samples was of critical importance. In this regard the Internet proved to be a wellspring. In particular, the project owes much to the efforts of Brian Coburn, the creator of a website called The Bots. In 2004, motivated by his intense opposition to the Iraq invasion, Coburn launched a competition in which contestants were invited to submit musical ‘remixes’ of the sampled speech of US President George W. Bush. Coburn’s intention was to solicit reconstructed narratives, set to music, that sought to express the various ‘truths’ that the President was thought by many to be hiding behind his rhetoric. To aid contestants in their endeavours, Coburn posted The George W. Bush Public Domain Audio Archive on his website, a collection of recordings of all of Bush’s major speeches from his first term in office, starting from his 2000 presidential debate with Al Gore and ending with his 2004 comments on Iraqi prisoner abuse. Thirty seven folders of speeches were made available for free download on The Bots website. What would have comprised more than 10 gigabytes of data in uncompressed wave file format was, for practical reasons, posted in compressed MP3 format.

Given that President Bush was the chief protagonist in the series of RogueSounds pieces, Coburn’s online archive was an invaluable source of his sampled speech. Fortuitously for this project, the speech archive was left on The Bots website long after the competition had been decided (at the time of this writing, it is still there).

Despite the voluminous nature of the Bush speech archive, I often needed words that it either did not contain, or did contain, but were unusable due to inferior sonic quality, lack of clarity or inappropriate ‘tone.’ This fact, together with the need to find speech samples from political figures other than George W. Bush, made it necessary to pursue other avenues of online speech capture.

---

63 My discovery of the online Bush archive in 2006 was fortuitous for another reason. Following the completion of the competition, the thebots.net website also posted all of the entry pieces – 62 at the latest count. This allowed me to hear a large range of examples of political mashup from other artists. The stylistic and thematic elements that seemed to predominate were instrumental in shaping my own approach to the genre.
64 ‘Tone’ refers here to characteristics of pitch, melody and emphasis. For a more detailed discussion of the consideration given to these characteristics during the compositional process, see Chapter 6.
Chapter 5. The Practice of Protest

- Politically-subversive websites
In the wake of 9/11, and particularly following the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, a glut of websites began to appear that openly projected anti-war, anti-corporate and anti-Bush sentiments. These sites could easily be located via search engines. Some of the more useful sites included: Diymedia, Bushflash, Dubyaspeak, Bannedmusic, IllegalArt and Onegoodmove. These are not political mashup sites per se; their raisons d'être centre upon issues such as copyright reform and independent media, as well as the above-mentioned issues. Some sites hosted political mashup pieces on ‘media’ pages, while others provided links to different sites featuring such pieces. Because the bulk of online material from these sites consisted of political speech that had already been set to music, they offered only a minimal amount of useable speech. The sites did, however, provide a useful range of examples of the prevailing trends in the genre.

- Podcasts
From 2005, major national newspapers such as The Guardian, The New York Times and The Australian were offering downloadable podcasts of many political speeches and interviews. Speeches not available as podcasts were often streamed as non-downloadable video, which I captured by feeding the audio outputs of an online computer to the audio inputs of my DAW.

- YouTube
As was discussed in Chapter 2, in the lead up to the 2007 Australian federal election the website YouTube came to be perceived by competing candidates as an essential conduit through which to push pre-election policy. YouTube offered a similarly rich vein of speech samples for candidates for the 2008 US Presidential poll. Although YouTube videos are not ostensibly downloadable, their audio content could be captured in the same way as newspaper video streams.

66 Often the introductions to pieces would feature short unaccompanied speech samples that were useable.
67 In fact, there are a number of software applications that allow the downloading of YouTube’s Flash videos – some of them freeware.
- **Television audio capture**

Political interviews were captured by feeding the audio outputs from a television into an external soundcard that was connected to a laptop computer via firewire. Audio samples were then transferred to the main DAW via USB flash drives and external hard drives. News and current affairs programmes such as the ABC’s *Evening News* programme and *The 7.30 Report* and SBS’s *World News Hour* offered plentiful content. Throughout the period 2006 – 2009 both the ABC and SBS continued to air documentaries that addressed controversies surrounding the US-led war on terror. Some of these served as sources of political speech samples.

In varying degrees, all of the above methods of audio capture were used to source speech samples for the *RogueSounds* project. The cumulative process of applying these methods yielded a steadily growing ‘stockpile’ of raw sampled speech. In order to construct specific speech narratives this large mass of audio material had to be sifted, using other, often highly time-intensive processes. The following section shall detail these processes, and show how they varied depending on the original sources of the audio.

**Locating specific words/phrases**

- **Search functions within Cubase**

In Cubase, each project has an audio ‘pool’ – a repository of audio files that are immediately available for use in that project. Within the audio pool there is a textual search function that can be directed to search within a designated folder or drive for an audio file with a given name. The Bush speech samples downloaded from the archive at The Bots site were MP3 files whose titles corresponded to the phrase or word sampled. For example, the file entitled ‘WeaponsOfMassDestruction.mp3’ is a sample of Bush speaking the phrase “weapons of mass destruction.” A Cubase search for the phrase – or any of the words within the phrase – would locate the MP3 file and allow me to audition it before either importing it to the project pool or rejecting it.

- **Building databases**

As stated above, sometimes a desired word was not to be found in the Bush archive. Moreover, there were several other political figures for whom speech samples were required. Without the relative luxury of a database of pre-named samples, more time-intensive procedures were
necessary. Many speeches that were posted online were accompanied by transcripts of their text. I devised a method of importing a whole speech into Cubase, then opening the corresponding transcript as a MS Word document. I could then use the ‘Find’ function in Word to locate all occurrences of the sought-after word, highlighting them as I progressed through the transcript. By positioning the scroll box directly opposite a highlighted word it was possible to estimate where in the speech the word was spoken. For example, if the word ‘evil’ was highlighted approximately one third of the way through the speech transcript, in Cubase I would zoom out until the whole waveform of the speech audio was visible. I could then sight an approximate point from where to begin to search for the word (that is, a point one third of the wave length in from its start).

As painstaking as this process was, it was more time-efficient than the worst-case scenario of attempting to find words in entire sampled speeches without the guiding aid of a transcript. The latter method was the least used as it often required lengthy spells of listening for a certain word. It was, however, necessary at times and did yield many samples, some of them unsought-for phrases and words that serendipitously suggested new, unexpected directions to narratives that were under construction.

As phrases and words were found and resampled (i.e. saved as discrete audio files with names corresponding to their spoken content), they expanded the existing Bush database, or formed the content of new databases. By the end of the production phase I had compiled small but useful sample databases for several politicians.

After procuring sampled words and/or phrases by the methods outlined above, a great deal of fine-tuning was often needed before a sample was ready to perform its intended function in the overall mix. The following section provides a general overview of the range of editing procedures that were employed to effect this fine-tuning of captured speech audio.

**Editing digital speech samples**

My guiding aesthetic was to create sentences and phrases that sounded unedited – notwithstanding the aforementioned acceptance that, due to the difficulties in creating totally seamless narratives from sometimes profoundly disparate aural elements, certain phrases would inevitably sound ‘cut up’ to listeners. To effect the most seamless narrative flows, I deployed a number of technical tools, as the following sections describe.
Positioning of samples

Within the ‘arrange page’ of Cubase, audio samples may be cut, copied, pasted, duplicated and deleted in much the same way that print is editable in word processing programmes. For the task of reconstructing political rhetoric, quite apart from the more complex signal processing that music software makes possible, this ability to move audio samples around within an arrangement is the key facility offered by DAWs (see Figure 4.1). The treatment of speech audio as moveable bundles of data lifts it from its fixed archival role into that of a fluid, expressive device that can be born anew again and again to express dissent.

Figure 4.1. Audio clips within DAW arrangement

Splicing audio

The splicing of audio material refers to the end-to-end joining of two audio parts that were the product of separate recordings. A key operation in the creation of alternative speech narratives, audio splicing has antecedents in the predigital days of analog tape recording. Pianist Glenn Gould, noted for his piano interpretations of J. S. Bach compositions, famously spliced together two disparate takes of Bach’s *Fugue in A Minor*, one played “with Teutonic severity,” the other with “unwarranted jubilation” (in Zak, 2001: 8). The resulting recording portrayed a musical reading that was not conceived as such, nor ever actualised in performance (ibid.). Gould described his use of technology as “transcend(ing) the limitations that performance imposes upon the imagination” (ibid.).

The unexpected outcomes that Gould’s experiment yielded arose again and again in my political mashup creation, when speech fragments from disparate times and settings were spliced together to form new narratives. The pairing of words spoken with different pitch, intensity or timbre
sometimes produced inflections that serendipitously garnished newly constructed speech narratives with further nuances of meaning. Often, when the word-sourcing methods outlined above had not gleaned the desired target, single words had to be constructed from the splicing of syllables, which themselves often had disparate sources. This procedure required additional processes, including volume fades and equalisation.

- **Cross fades and micro fades**

To form words by splicing syllables together requires that the points where different samples join are not obvious. ‘Cross fading’ denotes the process whereby two audio parts are positioned end to end, with an overlapping section. The cross fade is then applied so that within the overlapping section the volume of the first section fades out as the volume of the second fades up. The overlapping section is illustrated in Figure 4.2 below:

![Figure 4.2. Cross fading audio clips](image)

When cross fading different syllables to create a word, it was commonly the case for each syllable to have a different pitch, a situation that called for pitch-shifting of either one or both samples. In order to minimise the undesired artefacts of processing, the best solution was often to pitch one sample up and the other down in an attempt to reach a common pitch in both. This process recalls another famous predigital application of audio splicing, this time by the Beatles. The John Lennon song “Strawberry Fields Forever” (1967) was subjected to a prodigious array of production processes, leading to a number of different mixes. In the end, Lennon liked two mixes – but only the first part of one and the second part of another. Unfortunately the two mixes were in different keys, a limitation of performance that producer George Martin transcended with the deft use of pitch shifting via tape speed modulation (Zak, 2001).
- Frequency equalisation

As mentioned in Chapter 4, speech samples that are captured by various means display a variety of timbres, or tonal qualities. These are dependent both upon the fidelity of the recording, and the speakers’ palettes of vocal expression. When splicing audio samples, in order to render constructed narratives as ‘believable’ it was usually desirable for each to exhibit similar tonal qualities. It was possible to unify tonally disparate samples via frequency equalisation processing (EQ). For example, if splicing two words together, one of which was ‘topy’ (lacking low frequency content with over-emphasised high frequencies) and the other that was ‘warmer’ (more balanced lows with less discernable highs), equalisation processing could be applied to both samples to render their frequency profiles less dissimilar. EQ was often also used to clarify ‘muddy’ sounding samples that lacked high frequency definition.

* * * * *

The preceding section outlined the various methods that were applied to the production phase of the project. The following section first outlines technical processes and methods used in analysing the compositions, before examining technical issues that pertained to its distribution – in particular, its primary distribution medium: the Internet.

Analysing the music

- Scoring sections

The creative analyses presented in Chapter 6 required a musicological analysis of certain key musical elements. As is common in the composing and production of contemporary music, many of these parts were not scored before being performed. They were often the result of repeated improvisations; some instrumental tracks within the multitrack arrangement were the result of ‘comping,’ the process whereby a completed ‘take’ is assembled from the best portions of several improvised takes. Nevertheless, to illustrate the musical elements after the fact, many such takes had to be notated, after which they were presented as scores (in Figures 6.1 – 6.25). If the parts were originally played as MIDI parts, their scored versions were already notated within the DAW (although they required substantial adjustment to be rendered as neat, legible scores). If the parts were from live instrumental takes: of acoustic, electric and bass guitars for instance, these parts had to be replayed on MIDI instruments, then their scores similarly refined. Once created within Cubase, a score could be captured as an image file, before then being imported into the word document.
Playback in the age of iPod

Early in the 1990s engineers working in the film industry formulated a type of audio compression that could compress CD audio to a twelfth of its size while still maintaining sonic acceptability. Although conceived as a solution to the problem of establishing standards in the motion picture industry, the MP3 compression format inspired two US college students to envisage a solution to a different problem: how to transport music files quickly and easily over the Internet. The significantly reduced size of MP3 files made this viable and gave rise to the Napster peer-to-peer (P2P) network in the late 1990s (Katz, 2004). Napster was a short-lived venture that allowed users to share their music collections by storing them as MP3s on their computer hard drives. At its height it had “tens of millions of users downloading hundreds of millions of sound files” (2004: 161-62). Although Napster was quickly thwarted by music industry lawyers, it heralded a paradigmatic shift in music consumption. Since its demise, new models of P2P music sharing have stretched a lineage that has progressed in step with continually emerging technologies of audio playback. The continually expanding range of available audio compression formats includes Ogg Vorbis, (with superior sonic fidelity compared to MP3)68 and MP4, which also plays back video. As discussed in the following section, the changing listening modes of listeners have created certain challenges for music engineers.

• Mixing for miniature speakers

Most small speakers have extremely limited bass response, a limitation that, if not accommodated for, results in the bass frequencies of mixes sounding diminished, if they can be heard at all. Hearing the ‘finished’ mix of my first piece on computer speakers for the first time I was struck by the inaudibility of the bass guitar that had been so clear on the CD recording. Disappointment turned to alarm with the realisation that my experience would probably be replicated for most of my audience, listening on similarly sized computer speakers.

I employed two main methods to accommodate such playback environments. First, I discovered the availability of digital processing plugins that could render bass content (usually bass guitar, kick drum, synthesised bass or low frequency pads) audible on small speakers by ‘exciting’ harmonics corresponding to frequencies in the upper levels of the bass range. So, rather than boosting harmonics associated with fundamental frequencies around 80 hertz, with the use of

68 See, for instance, http://www.vorbis.com/faq/#artist
the plugins I could boost those corresponding to 150-250 hertz.\textsuperscript{69} Two software processing plugins were used in this way: the \textit{Max Bass} plugin and the \textit{Renaissance Bass} plugin, both by the company Waves.

The second method of ensuring small speaker compatibility of mixes was used in concert with the first and involved listening to mixes on a variety of speakers, making sure that bass content was sufficiently audible in all of them. Typically, I would listen to a mix through near field monitors, a smaller set of cheaper speakers, even smaller computer speakers and tiny in-built laptop computer speakers.

- \textbf{MP3 encoding}

There are many software programmes that are either dedicated to MP3 encoding or include it as part of a suite of tools for rendering audio to a listenable format. My initial experiments revealed the quality differences between different algorithms to be significant. I finally settled upon the ‘Lame’ algorithm, which seemed to encode at any resolution with superior sonic fidelity. Given that, it was still possible to be disappointed with the results of MP3 encoding. Strange artefacts were experienced in early attempts at conversion. High frequencies sounded distorted. Stereo field width seemed to be increased, while centred sounds – speech tracks particularly – sounded softer. I adopted the practice of creating separate mixes for MP3 versions, with speech levels up 1.5 – 3 dB.

It is important to note here that all MP3 mixes I self-distributed online were self-mastered. Based on information I gleaned from Internet searches I applied the following processes to MP3 masters:

1. Mixes were ‘topped and tailed’: frequencies below 60 Hz and above 14 kHz were rolled off using high and low pass filters.
2. A gentle boost (0.5 - 1 dB) was applied at 200 Hz and at 2.5 kHz.
3. The limiter output ceiling was set at -0.8 rather than the customary -0.2 for CDs.

These steps ensured that unwanted audio artefacts were minimal.

\textsuperscript{69} This process is distinct from that of boosting fundamental frequencies with equalisation, an intervention that can lead to masking of other important frequencies and an overall muddying of the sound.
Chapter 5. The Practice of Protest

• Mail outs of CDs

Although MySpace was the primary outlet for the music, I did mail CDs to selected radio stations at certain times. CDs were sent to Australia’s youth radio station Triple J, ABC Radio National, Sydney community radio stations 2SER and FBi 94.5 FM, Bay FM in Byron Bay, Melbourne’s Triple R, Brisbane’s 4ZzZ, Perth’s RTR, and Some Assembly Required – a radio show in Minneapolis, USA. Details of airplay can be found in Appendix 3.

Conclusion

This chapter began by presenting a subjective motive for the undertaking of research. My desire to intervene in contemporary socio-political discourses coincided with my personal and professional interests in music composition and digital audio technology. I have envisioned musical expressions whose claims of subversion rest not only on their attempts to commandeer the mass mediated messages of powerful world leaders in order to change them, but also on their attempts to undermine the mechanisms of normalisation by which power legitimates both its hegemony, and the violent defence of its interests. Arguing that no such musical intervention currently exists, I have made the case for basing my research in practice.

The ontological and epistemological perspectives of the critical research paradigm have overseen the development of a dynamic conceptual framework that has both guided the creation of practical research outcomes, and provided a framework against which to evaluate the works in terms of their theoretical coherence. Elements of critical discourse analysis, non-violence and poststructuralism informed this framework. The project, being based upon musical compositions, was also subject to philosophies and practices associated with the creative arts paradigm. Although creative arts based research is generally “motivated and stimulated by intuitive, feeling-based dimensions of being – as opposed to the exact dimensions of science” (Barrett, 2007b: 4), it is nonetheless wrought within established frameworks of scholarship. As would be expected of a creative arts project that drew its thematic inspirations from political theory, philosophy and cultural studies, this project has transcended disciplinary boundaries.

The detailed exposition of the methods and tools that were implemented in the project reveals the ‘emergent’ nature of methods as practised by an insider in the field of digital audio production. The self-reflexive process of documenting responses to the various challenges
thrown up by the work as it progressed represents a systematic approach to a contribution to
current practice in the field. This detailing of production methods and tools also serves as a
technical backdrop for the chapter that follows, in which I detail this critical relationship
between process and outcome as it applied to the individual pieces of music created.
Chapter 6

Words Noted: Nine Creative Analyses

Speech is intermingled with music because sounds and rhythms are the grounds of speech.

Igor Reznikoff (2004, online)

Overarching Aesthetic Considerations

Throughout this exegesis I have described how hearing the angry, ‘reactive’ tones that characterised most other examples of political mashup circulating online had a large bearing on my decision to seek an alternative approach. This inspiration through aversion was also at play when it came to conceptualising an overarching musical aesthetic for the project. As suggested by Chapter 3’s summary of the Content Analysis in Appendix 2, a programmed beat-centred approach has been taken by most of my political mashup practitioner peers. This approach is, undoubtedly, in tune with prevailing popular music trends and has given rise to several examples that exhibit highly skilled rhythmic placements of speech samples. However, I found the structure, which lends itself mostly to the use of repeated words and short phrases set against prominent rhythmic beats, to be limiting in terms of the depth of content it allowed. The complexity of the themes with which I was dealing required a narrative approach, one that necessitated the delivery of more elaborate speech constructions by my protagonists. Sometimes these were fashioned as prose monologues: as in Bush’s speech in Track 1, Rice’s in Track 2, Howard’s in Track 4, Obama’s in Track 7 and a variety of speakers in Track 8. Alternatively, the speech was variously cast as: rap-like verse – Bush in Tracks 3 and 9; dialogues – Bush and Howard in Track 3, Bush and his alter-ego in Track 6; and spoken song lyrics – Bush, Howard and Blair in Track 5, Bush and Rudd in Track 9. The variety of configurations of speech narratives are evident in the transcripts that appear in Appendix 1.

I remained, though, cognisant of the immediate appeal that rhythmic beats had for youthful listeners – and for radio programmers. Moreover, to jettison the use of beats completely would
have been to lose a valuable tool for emphasising certain points, or indeed, for playing with the rhythms of phrasings when that seemed appropriate. My solution to this dilemma was to use beats, but to do so in concert with a filmic approach, whereby non-rhythmic elements such as drones, abstract pads and orchestral textures contributed significantly to the overall sound. The general nature of the musical settings for the project as a whole could thus be described as ‘atmospheric groove-based pop.’ The atmospheric components ranged stylistically from orchestral to synthesiser-pop to conventional guitar-based rock, sometimes blending combinations of all of these. The rest of this chapter analyses and reflects upon the creative, studio-based processes that were applied to each of the final nine RogueSounds pieces, starting with Track 1: “The Redemption of George W”.

**Track 1**  
**“The Redemption of George W”**

_Confession of errors is like a broom which sweeps away the dirt and leaves the surface brighter and clearer.  
I feel stronger for confession._

Mohandas Gandhi

_Something’s gotten hold of my heart  
Keeping my soul and my senses apart ...  
Something’s gotten hold of my hand  
Dragging my soul to a beautiful land_


**Imagining redemption**

The body of work was given its thematic direction by the first completed piece: “The Redemption of George W”. This piece was pivotal to the project in that it established the transformed character of then-US President George W. Bush as a motivic figure whose presence would be woven throughout all of the works. Given the centrality of the piece, this section describes at length the various stages of “Redemption’s” realisation as a finished piece. Beginning with an account of its thematic conception, I then reconstruct the research journey

---

that led to the completed narrative, thereby revealing the latter’s intended meaning. Following this I discuss some of the issues confronted in recontextualising President Bush’s speech. Finally, I identify and analyse the key musical structures of the piece in greater detail.\(^7\)

Casting the ‘lead role’

The choice of Bush as the basis for this character was prompted mainly by his omnipresence in the media. As the most visible (and audible) architect of the war on terror, his voice was familiar to most people who had regular access to Western media broadcasts; it was also invested with sonic qualities that accorded it an almost irresistible appeal to political mashers. In *The Bush-Hater’s Handbook* (2004), Jack Huberman railed against the President’s “famous smirk; his ridiculous, gunfighter stance and strut; not just his voice but, with apologies to good Texans, his accent …” (2004: x, my emphasis). In September 2003, when intense opposition to Bush was proliferating in the wake of the US invasion of Iraq,\(^7\) one journalist characterised the growing ranks of Bush-haters as being particularly averse to the President’s sonic foibles. Bush-haters, he remarked, “have a viscerally hostile reaction to the sound of his voice …” (Chait, in Huberman, 2004, p. ix).\(^7\)

Two years after these comments were published, the war theatre of Iraq presented to me an ever-deepening tragedy of murder and mayhem, and the moods of dissenters were no less malevolent towards the re-elected Bush in his second term. My desire to avoid the personal invective that characterised prevailing expressions of dissent was a key influence on my creation of a transformed Bush – one who would occupy the role of central protagonist in my constructed narrative. My imagined character would be evoked through a speech narrative constructed solely from existing recordings of Bush’s speech, either as phrases, words, or even syllables. Stripped from their original contexts, these aural elements would be stitched together to form Bush’s sentences.

\(^7\) The full narrative transcripts of all pieces can be found in Appendix 1.

\(^7\) As evidenced by the rash of anti-Bush websites and books that began to appear at the time, in both the US and abroad. A number of such books are given mention here: http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/news/2004-03-23-anti-bush-books_x.htm.

The genesis of “Redemption”
I began by sifting the Bush speech archive for rhetorical sound bites that could fit into my developing conceptual framework for a first piece.\textsuperscript{74} At this point the framework was tacked together by my intention to avoid an angry, personally abusive expression of political mashup. With this in mind, I was seeking fragments of speech that were more introspective than bellicose; words that might reveal human cracks in the ever-confident, increasingly belligerent public façade of the American commander-in-chief. Thus far, I was not aware of the search function in Cubase that would later allow me to quickly locate targeted words.\textsuperscript{75} Instead, I simply trawled through several folders of Bush MP3s, identifying phrases that seemed to satisfy my criteria, and then copying them to the song folder. Before long I had compiled the following phrases:\textsuperscript{76}
\begin{itemize}
  \item costs are rising
  \item I hope you’re proud
  \item led into the darkness
  \item misguided idealism
  \item hurt a lotta people
  \item not tell the truth
  \item the lack of love
  \item breaks my heart.
\end{itemize}

When viewed – and then \textit{heard} – together, these fragments of dislocated rhetoric sketched out for me a journey of redemption, a journey signposted by themes I considered necessary for such an undertaking: vulnerability, admission of wrongdoing, recognition of consequences, self-reflection, self-criticism and regret.

My awakening to the story hidden within the decontextualised sound bites led to an imagining of Bush’s own awakening. This imagining was realised through the interaction of words and music – not only in form, but also in process; my task was neither simply the setting of words to a finished musical structure, nor the underscoring of a completed spoken narrative. Rather, the creation of “Redemption” (and indeed, most of the later pieces) proceeded in a piecemeal fashion, words sometimes evoking music, and music sometimes calling forth words in a process associated with multitrack production within a studio-based enquiry, as detailed in my discussion of methods in Chapter 5.\textsuperscript{77} What emerged from this process was a 264-word narrative, constructed from Bush’s sampled speech.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{74} The source and content of this downloaded archive is described in Chapter 5, ‘The Practice of Protest’.
\textsuperscript{75} See Chapter 5, ‘The Practice of Protest’ for a more detailed account of this function.
\textsuperscript{76} I have adopted the practice of displaying narratives of main protagonists in italics. This is to delineate them from the sampled speech of other characters who serve more peripheral roles in individual pieces.
\textsuperscript{77} This method of working was to become more consciously applied in later pieces. A fuller outlining of it can be found in the discussion of a later piece, “Quickening”.
\end{footnotesize}
While having to remain mindful of the overall thematic direction, I wished to add nuance to the piece by making reference – either direct or veiled – to what I considered were defining characteristics of Bush and his presidency. However, my ability to reach these goals was always dependent upon (and to a degree influenced by) the availability of sufficiently discernible samples. And, in addition to this, the music underpinning each statement had to support the confessional narrative; there needed to be an emotional and dynamic correlation between music and words. Each element of the piece was, therefore, intended to signify in a considered way. As “Redemption” gave birth to the key motivic character of the entire project, the text of the constructed Bush narrative warrants the following detailed analysis. Subsequently I shall discuss some of the challenges (and delights) involved in harnessing the natural cadences of President Bush’s speech.

**Translating Redemption**

*Mom? Dad? Costs are rising! I hope you’re proud.*

Bush’s statement, *Costs are rising!* carried a morbid resonance in 2006; the costs of preemptive war and military adventurism – measurable in human misery, financial depletion and America’s low standing abroad – were steadily rising. *I hope you’re proud* was included to cast a shadow of self-mocking bitterness over the admission. I then asked myself: from whom would Bush be seeking approval? On-camera the President appeared to exhibit considerable degrees of belligerence and arrogance, which, when combined with his knowledge deficit with regard to other cultures (which was most apparent early in his tenure), brought to mind adolescence. *The Bush-Hater’s Handbook* supported this association, reporting that following the 1999 profiling of Bush (then the Governor of Texas) in *Talk* magazine, Richard Brookhiser, a conservative writer, was prompted to opine that behind the profile, “a larger picture of a fairly unpleasant 53-year-old teen-ager (sic) looms” (in Huberman, 2004: 37). In this light, Bush’s parents appeared to be the logical recipients of his sardonic plea.

Together these short sentences served as an introduction to the impending confessional speech. An expectant air was produced by a sonic backdrop of descending tremolo strings. Bush’s words were lent mock drama and pathos by two slightly incongruous sampled operatic voices – a male tenor and a female soprano, singing non-verbal lamenting phrases.
I had a high and noble purpose in life.
I was clear about my desire to set streams back on their natural courses.

This attempt by Bush to qualify the misdeeds to which he is about to confess is a reference to the born-again Christian’s well-documented sense of providential appointment to office. It also marks the beginning of the narrative proper, as signaled by the commencement of the bass motif that musically specifies the piece.

But I was led into the darkness, allowing violence and misguided idealism to lead me.
I did not tell the truth.

This alludes to the team of hawkish neo-conservatives who served as advisers to Bush throughout much of his presidency. By 2006 it had been well documented in the media that Donald Rumsfeld, Karl Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, Richard Perle and others had been the chief architects of the Iraq invasion (Karel, dir., 2004). Musical intensity builds beneath these confessions as filtered beats join the bass. The ‘darkness’ is given religious undertones by the cross-fading of a church-like B4 organ with the strings.

I did not tell the truth is Bush’s first concrete admission of a misdeed, inspired by the numerous allegations made at the time that the intelligence information concerning Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction had been misused by the Bush administration. The bald admission is punctuated by a thunderous explosion, suggesting war – and perhaps divine wrath.

Peace – some men rage and fight against it, because of their lack of understanding and knowledge. I have been such a man.

This statement borders on falling over the edge into the usual invective that was being expressed towards Bush at the time, but it contains a degree of self reflection that I considered necessary for the character I was trying to create. The rhythm accompaniment gains impact though a low frequency boost, while the aural background – like Bush’s speech – remains sparse.

---

78 In Christianity Today, (10/2/2000), Bush was quoted as saying to a televangelist: “I’ve heard the call. I believe God wants me to run for president.” Catholic theologian Jeffrey S. Siker wrote of Bush: “We have had other ‘religious’ presidents, but no other President has so clearly perceived his calling in such epic biblical terms” (in Huberman, 2004, p. 182). Siker went on to assert that through Bush’s “redemption in Christ he … now has a clear vision of what is morally right and wrong, both personally and as the leader of the free world” (ibid.).

79 These allegations, available on a plethora of political websites, were finally confirmed in a US Senate Intelligence Committee hearing in 2008. See, for instance: http://www.reuters.com/article/middleeastCrisis/idUSN05318923.
I've hurt a lot of people – instigated [sic] serious violence.

[I've] hurt people as beautiful as your loved ones and your neighbours; de ... de ... decent people.

The honest disclosure continues, while also making reference to Bush’s habit of mispronouncing words – and his propensity for excessive stuttering and phatic language. Meanwhile, the music jumps to a new level of intensity; the rhythm track becomes deeper and heavier, while extra percussive elements enter.

Time and time and time again I said: damn the consequences!

A conservative, George Will, in response to Bush’s aforementioned 1999 interview with Talk magazine, wrote that Carlson’s profiling of Bush “… suggests … a carelessness, even a recklessness, perhaps born of things having gone a bit too easy so far” (in Huberman, 2004: 37). Whatever the roots of this alleged recklessness, further evidence of it was surely provided by President Bush shortly after the Iraq invasion, when he notoriously responded to Al-Qa’ida threats to attack US forces with the taunt: “bring ’em on!”80 High hats and bass guitar (overlaying the sampled bass) enter the musical backing to raise the intensity another notch.

I tried to inherit the Earth, until the Earth – and my honour – were broken!

The consequences of the Bush administration offensives were felt globally, reaching not only each of the ‘coalition of the willing’ nations who sent forces into the Middle East, but arguably, also those nations that suffered terrorist attacks after 9/11, due to an inflamed sensibility amongst radical Islamic groups following the 2001 onset of the war on terror. This statement signals Bush’s acknowledgement of the destructive impact of his decisions. It hints at self-critical capacities that enable the imagined Bush to reflect upon his meglomanic tendencies, while comprehending the damage they have caused – both to the world and to him.

Sometimes the lack of love breaks my heart. Mom, Dad – I am so sorry!

The musical section underscoring this statement constitutes the first climax of the piece (there is another one close to the end). The entry of an altered and overdriven bass line, together with syncopated ride cymbals brings energy and motion to Bush’s words. The latter are themselves made part of the music, sounding almost sung as a digital delay effect sends them echoing in time.

80 These inflammatory words were delivered at a press briefing in 2003. At the time, 26 US forces had been killed in the month or so after combat operations had officially ceased in Iraq, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/07/03/iraq/main561567.shtml, accessed 5th January 2009.
to the rhythm. They lightheartedly ‘humanise’ Bush, who despairs at the loveless landscape (of
the war-torn Middle East) he has helped to fashion. By having him deliver the apology to his
parents, I sought to again play on the notion of Bush as the unformed man – emotionally still a
child – yet in possession of prodigious destructive power. The echoes of Bush’s sorry drift into
an ambient section that is free of rhythmic beats.

When you have power it . . . it’s . . . hard. I . . . I . . . I cannot let go of it! And now, the entire world has
seen for itself my humiliation. I am past exhaustion. Oooh, oooh, the misery.

After the climax of the confession, this section represents the imagined Bush at his peak of
vulnerability. With the phrase I am past exhaustion my aim was to entice the listener into actually
feeling sorry for Bush. Behind the first four sentences of this section a filtered pad meanders,
while another, atmospheric ‘pad,’ comprising a heavily effected jumble of animal sounds, pans
slowly from left to right. The animal sounds summoned an atmosphere of desolation that
matched Bush’s extended forlorn groans: oooh, oooh. These were intended to blend tragedy with
comedy while retaining a musical function. Sounding almost like sirens, the groans vocally
symbolise alarm mixed with despair, their pitch altered to harmonise with the sampled choir pad
behind them.

How I dream, alone, of peace, goodwill and grace in our world; a compassionate America.

But it does not happen.

Bush returns from the depths of his misery having faced his personal demons; his confession of
culpability has led to heartfelt sorrow. Now he shares with us a private new vision that has begun
to crystallise; of a world of base pursuits and brutal means transformed into one of kindness and
caring, of an America that serves its own national interest while keeping the needs of others in
mind. And yet, in the midst of this reverie he realises that his transfiguration is personal – it does
not extend enlightenment out into the still bestial world. Behind these words, a veiled reminder
of the absence of ‘peace, goodwill and grace in our world’ is enacted through an instrumental
‘conversation’ between an Arabic reed flute and a ‘Jewish’ clarinet.82 Echoing bass drums pound
out a primitive martial beat beneath the duelling wind instruments. The bass guitar plays a

81 I was unable to find the word ‘sorry’ sampled from Bush, despite the considerable size of the online archive of
recorded speech. I had to construct it from separate syllables.

82 The reed flute was from a freely improvised performance by Yuval Ishkar, which I recorded in Byron Bay in
2004. The clarinet was sampled from a Giora Feidman recording of Jewish folk melodies (1989).
variation of the bass motif that returns to the original triplet feel in the second half of the section.

And you know what? Fuck it!

In the first three pages of the aforementioned 1999 Talk magazine interview, Texas Governor Bush (who had recently confessed to having used cocaine) said “fuck” three times (Huberman, 2004). Cognisant of how this had offended many Christians, Christian intellectual Roberto Rivera noted that “the Christian right would quickly forgive Bush for cocaine. The problem with Bush is that there’s a growing impression that he really isn’t a changed man” (in Huberman, 2004: 37). Having Bush mouth the common expletive set a precedent for later pieces, in which other political figures were heard to swear. This was far more than a mere comedic device. The vulgarities were intended to puncture the façades of civility that tend to assign leaders a degree of propriety which may not always match their natures, or their actions. The swearing is shocking when first heard, but, as Salman Rushdie would have it, it lays “bare what-on-no-account-must-be-known, namely the impossible verity that barbarism could grow in cultured soil, that savagery could lie concealed beneath decency’s well pressed shirt” (in Punter, 2000: 113).

From this day forward I don’t wanna be the world’s policeman, I wanna be the world’s peacemaker. No more the unfurling of flags, the sacrificing of human life to serve my narrow ideology of power and domination. That’s how I feel about it – and I ask you for forgiveness. Forgive me!

I think what the next president ought to do is to promote a culture of life.

Bush’s transformation is complete; his rejection of the violent axioms that defined his past is unequivocal. Wind instruments punctuate his speech with delicate syncopated staccato notes that announce another variation of the bass motif. The admission of his true feelings is stamped with a humbling request for our forgiveness. Hugely reverberated bass drums punch out the triplet motif three more times, separated by timpani rolls. A reversed and heavily delayed distorted electric guitar oozes the opening notes of “The Star Spangled Banner”. Bush’s vehement resolution to pursue peace almost restores the past humanist glories of the anthem, now tarnished by the US’s unilateral decisions to wage war. The latter are hinted at here by echoes of Jimi Hendrix’s electrifying anti-war statement, delivered at Woodstock in 1969.

Redeemed from his darkness, Bush the evangelical Christian has come to truly resemble his personal saviour, Jesus Christ. He may now pass on his profound message of compassion and wisdom – both to his successor and throughout the world.
Corralling Bush’s speech: unruly intonation, serendipitous inflections

In Chapter 4 I referred to various ‘modes’ that characterised President Bush’s public speech. Differences of pitch, timbre and accent were the primary identifying elements of each mode: ‘grave mode’ utterances tended to occupy a lower register and had a falling melody, while ‘swaggering’ and ‘folksy mode’ speech featured exaggerated use of a Texan ‘twang’ and colloquialisms respectively. Within these coarse classifications, Bush’s speech exhibits an impressive range of melodic and tonal nuance. The extent of this range often made the matching of words within a sentence problematic – quite apart from the added fact that the words may have emanated from speeches given at different times and locations.

On the other hand, the inflection of a particular word often proved to be not only appropriate for a given phrase, but indeed, added a truly ‘authentic’ quality to it. For example, when Bush is heard to say: *I did not tell the truth!*, the emphasis applied to the word ‘truth’ is such that it imbues the phrase with a sense of finality – and a vehemence – truly befitting such a wrenching confession. Similarly, the phrase *Damn the consequences!* is delivered with an amply harsh edge to justify its exclamation mark. Many such examples exist in the piece, which, in general, seemed ‘blessed’ by an abundance of inflections that perfectly matched their context in Bush’s narrative.

However, this synergism of speech cadence and intended signification did not always play out so seamlessly – particularly when a desired word could not be located. Such was the case with *sorry*, an indispensable word for a repentant narrative, but one that experience has shown to be notable by its near-absence from political speech. In “Redemption” the ‘s’ word had to be constructed from syllables, with results that were far from satisfactory.

While each constructed statement was intended to signify as described above, the narrative as a whole was carried by *music* into the ears of listeners. The music was intended to colour Bush’s words, both signposting their intensity and setting their tempo, without resorting to obvious literalism. The following section shall analyse the key musical elements of the piece.

---

83 For the piece “Howard Repents” I did manage to locate a sample of Prime Minister John Howard saying sorry – in a speech in which he maintained that having said sorry to Australians for interest rate rises did not constitute an apology (see http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/11/08/2085733.htm).
Producing Redemption

Underscoring repentance

The musical aesthetic that oversaw the slow evolution of “The Redemption of George W” was deliberately ‘understated’. As an underscore to a rather grave and candid expression of repentance, the music required a gravity that would have been threatened by complex chord progressions and ornamental flourishes.

The music comprises six sections:

1. a short introduction consisting of a synthesizer pad, strings and vocal samples, with no rhythmic material;
2. a steadily building section, in which harmonic and rhythmic motifs are introduced, building to a peak of rhythmic intensity;
3. a short interlude in which beats and bass drop out and variations on the melodic motif are expressed by textural pads;
4. a section featuring a variation on the bass motif in which each note is accented by heavy ‘war’ drums. A cello introduces a further variation on the melodic motif;
5. the penultimate section, in which the bass drums drop out, leaving sampled woodwinds to play a variation of the cello motif in a syncopated pattern. Strings and sound effects rise in step with Bush’s vocal intensity, culminating in the second climax of the piece;
6. a short outro section, featuring unaccompanied timpani and bass drums that restate the triplet motif.

The bass: harmonic and rhythmic motifs

The key to unlocking the musical logic of “Redemption” can be found in the bass motif, which establishes both the motivic harmonic progression: C – C# – C, and the chief rhythmic pattern, characterised by a tango-like feel (bars 1, 3 and 7 in Figure 6.1 below) and a semiquaver triplet (bar 5) falling on the 3rd beat of its respective bar:

Figure 6.1. The bass motif
These serve as harmonic and rhythmic motifs that are threaded throughout the piece.

In Section 1, the motivic harmonic progression is introduced by ominous tremolo strings, their minor thirds descending chromatically to enunciate the C – C# – C motif. Bush’s opening line is punctuated by operatic voices; the sampled male tenor and female soprano taken from a Reason refill. Their slightly disparate presence is intended to set up the drama of the confessional narrative, while gesturing to the parodic nature of what is to follow.

Section 2 forms the musical ‘backbone’ of the piece, featuring the entry of the simple bass figure – and a quite ‘cold,’ mechanical rhythm track. The bass figure, constructed from sampled ‘fingerbass’ notes, cycles over eight bars. Its simplicity is counterbalanced by a sense of drama – imbued by the tango feel, the back and forth semitone movement and the insistency of the semiquaver triplet. The first cycle was played as it is notated above, overlayed samples of a kick drum and white noise accenting each note. Thereafter in this section, the rhythmic patterns within the bass line varied; the semi-quaver triplet featuring in bar 5 above became a rhythmic motif that was revisited in many guises throughout the piece. In the bass it was at various times applied to any of bars 1, 3, 5 or 7, or to all of these bars. For example, in one instance the eight bar pattern was stretched to ten bars to accommodate Bush’s phrase: But I was led into the darkness. Here, the dark church-like tones of a sampled B4 organ part evoke this darkness. Cross-faded in from the strings, the part plays over the variant of the bass pattern, as notated in Figure 6.2 below.

---

84 Refills are add-ons to the Reason software, consisting of samples and synthesiser patches. Both proprietry and non-proprietry refills abound in cyberspace.

85 The rhythm and bass line was constructed on a laptop computer while flying above the Sea of Japan, bound for the UK. (I have since reflected upon the possible influences on my compositional process of subliminal rhythmic and/or melodic cues contained within the sounds and vibrations of the aeroplane engines, a thesis that is clearly beyond the bounds of the present study).
Chapter 6. Words Noted

The beats

As indicated above, the musical backing to this pivotal track was by design relatively sparse. The beats echoed this imperative, being built from mostly higher register sounds that left room for intensity to build without crowding Bush’s vocal register. Their sounds were obviously electronically created, setting the technologically-mediated tone (mentioned in Chapter 1) from the outset. To create the beats I exploited the rhythmic offerings of the ‘Combinator,’ a virtual instrument that allows for the creation of sounds by patching together several of the synths, samplers and processing devices within the Reason programme. Together, the bass and rhythm were intended to suggest an uncluttered landscape that Bush’s confessional narrative could inhabit – with considerable room for a steadily rising intensity.

Rhythmically, this gradual welling up was effected by automating some parameters of the Combinator rhythm patch. The rhythm loop initially entered with the bass and low mid-frequencies filtered out. These were gradually reinstated at eight bar intervals – first the low mids, then the lows – to build energy in step with the speech narrative. I also added interest to the rhythm sound by applying a filter to the ‘snare’ part and automating it to close rapidly on beat 2 of each bar, creating a descending ‘whoosh.’ In accompaniment to this, other percussion elements (all sampled) were sequentially added, starting with widely panned shakers, then high hats and finally a syncopated ride cymbal pattern.

Once the Reason bass and beats parts had been developed sufficiently they were rendered as stereo audio files and imported into Cubase. Within this environment I was able to add Bush’s speech samples, other atmospheric sounds, and elements of studio-recorded audio. For instance, to the high hats was added a bass guitar playing double stopped fifths, anticipating the strongly accented third beat of the sixth bar with a flamenco-esque strum, as notated in Figure 6.3 below.

Figure 6.3. Bass guitar part featuring double-stopped fifths and flamenco-esque strum (circled)
From this point I worked mainly in Cubase, sometimes returning to Reason to adjust an element of the rhythm and bass tracks, before re-rendering and importing the result back into Cubase.

The finale of section 2 leads the piece to its first climax, featuring six bars of distorted bass guitar playing a busier variation on the bass melody, as seen in Figure 6.4:

Figure 6.4. A further variation of the bass motif, played on bass guitar during first climactic section

This variation was given more energy in order to underpin the short song-like section of Bush’s narrative, in which his words are placed in rhythmic ‘pockets’ and made to echo in time to the beat. The bass guitar stops abruptly after the six bars. A descending frequency filter sweep across a rapid sequence of kick drum samples effects a transition into the interlude section.

In Section 3, a filtered pad continues to state the melodic motif in the absence of rhythmic content. The other ‘pad’ that pans across the stereo field was intended to signal the ‘otherness’ of the uncharted psychological territory Bush is entering with his rueful revelations. Sifting through sample patches\(^86\) for one of the software samplers in Reason, I came across a suitably obscure sound: clattering horses’ hooves.\(^87\) The strangeness of the resulting pad was intensified by applying a heavy flanging effect with a tap delay to the sample. The sample patch also contained some strangely disparate sounds that appeared in the mix by accident: a bell, a bird call and a car door closing. In one of those instances of serendipity that so often invest a recording with unexpected yet desirable elements, these sounds were accidently triggered when some MIDI notes were mistakenly copied to the wrong channel. They were left in as they served to further increase the desired strangeness quotient.

\(^86\) Sample patches are grouped sets of samples that can be loaded into a sampler so that different notes of the keyboard may trigger different sounds.

\(^87\) A subliminal association of the sound with Texan cowboys was also intended.
In **Section 4** a variation of the bass motif is taken up by a sampled cello. The lighter tones of the cello were designed to open up a musical space for the transition in Bush’s narrative – in which his mood ceases to be confessional, but moves into repentance, followed by resoluteness. Its staccato stabs are played mostly on the beat, setting up a texture that will comprise strident ‘martial’ drums, sampled choir pads and a sweep-filtered synthesiser pad. Bush’s despairing groans – elongated *ohhahh* and *ahhohh* respectively – were created by first cross-fading two phatic sounds: *ob* and *ab*. Large-scale time-stretching was applied to the result. The stretched sound was then treated with a pitch-shifting algorithm, applying upward and downward pitch modulation following a sine wave envelope. The resulting sound was copied, then reversed, yielding two different groans – one rising and then falling, the other falling, then rising. The groans lead into the aforementioned ‘duet’ between reed-flute and clarinet. Their melodies were pitch-shifted to harmonise with the backing. The melodies of reed flute and clarinet evoke Middle Eastern and Jewish symbolism respectively, the former with short bursts of rapid, melodically modulating phrases, the latter with *klezmer* style playing.88 Echoing Bush’s stated hopes for peace, the two instruments – although symbols of two cultures at war – seem to play in harmony, suggesting the reconciliation of old enmities. Beneath these, a variation of the bass motif syncopates the cello line, as seen in Figure 6.5 below.

---

88 Klesmer is a traditional form of Jewish music that was originally played at weddings. Although conventionally played by brass ensembles, it often featured a solo clarinet, http://www.milkenarchive.org/articles/articles.taf?function=detail&ID=18, accessed 22nd August 2009.
Section 5 features a variation on the cello figure, joined by sampled bassoon and clarinet and notated in Figure 6.6.

![Figure 6.6. Variation of cello figure with two woodwinds](image)

The sparsely scored section opens up plenty of space for Bush’s expletive-tinged monologue, while the oddly syncopated timings lean towards humour. This is intended to impart a slightly light-hearted air to what suddenly becomes very strident in Section 6 with the final instance of the chief rhythmic motif being pounded out unaccompanied on hugely reverberated bass drums, interspersed by timpani rolls. Bush’s **forgive me** is followed by explosions of thunder, the heavens opening in answer to his plea.
Track 2  

“Rendering Babylon”  

In the hegemonic nations it is often easy to fall into the comfort of believing torture to be a monopoly of ‘terrorist’ regimes.

Idelber Avelar (2005: 26)

Reality is a knife  
when there’s no love in your life.  
Unmerciful is the night  
when you just can’t stop this feelin’.  
It’s torture, it’s torture, it’s torture.

The Jacksons, “Torture” (1983)

What do I think of Western civilization? I think it would be a very good idea.  
Mohandas Gandhi89

Background

By May 2004 the Western media was reporting widespread abuses of prisoners at the US military prison in Abu Ghraib, Iraq.90 Subsequently there were mounting media references to the practice of ‘extraordinary rendition,’ whereby captured terrorist suspects were flown to ‘black sites’ – secret destinations in territories outside of US international treaty obligations – where they were routinely subjected to torture.91 These references alleged that the persuasive methodologies of the captors were conducted with impunity beyond the boundaries of US juridical law.

Having decided to highlight this issue in my second piece, I searched online for any political rhetoric dealing with rendition and/or torture allegations. I eventually found a speech delivered by then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in which she categorically denied US involvement in

either practice. This was the very speech that Sidney Blumenthal, a former aide to President Clinton and an American journalist, described as being “remarkable for its defensive, dense and evasive tone. It was replete with half-truths, outright falsehoods, distortions and subterfuges.” The job of transforming Rice’s message into a confessional narrative that portrayed her confirmation of the truth of torture and rendition allegations was relatively easy, involving mainly the cutting out of negating words/phrases, such as “does not” and “never”.

**Rice’s confession**

The Secretary of State’s confession is not a soul-searching redemptive journey through the psyche – as George Bush’s is in the preceding piece. Condoleezza Rice’s narrative is constructed so as to avoid personal introspection; her unemotional delivery initially characterises torture as common practice by US administrations, both past and present. She then goes on to coolly outline the methods of extraordinary rendition. Rice’s vocal tone is monotonous and unexpressive, which tends to lend her cut up speech a slightly robotic quality. I found this to be wholly appropriate to the subject matter of torture, which has been associated with a subjugation of the individual’s moral order to an overriding power or ideology. Rice’s apparent emotional detachment is momentarily lost on two occasions. The first of these is when she reveals the inefficiency of torture as a means of gathering reliable intelligence: *the United States has used ruthless conduct – and in fact, we got nowhere. It didn’t work!* The second is during the finalé of the piece, when Rice launches a short but expletive-laden denunciation of US foreign policy. The outburst

---


94 Psychologists Stephen Reicher and Alex Haslam have asserted, for instance, that the Abu Ghraib guards who tortured inmates were immersed in a culture that condoned harsh treatment of terror-suspect prisoners. This rendered them more capable of torturing than guards whose ruling hierarchy did not endorse such treatment, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/3700209.stm, accessed 29th March 2009. Stanley Milgram’s experiments on obedience also famously demonstrated the capacity of some people to override their own moral dispositions when put in situations in which they were forced to – or agreed to – submit to an external authority. See “The Perils of Obedience”, http://home.swbell.net/revscat/perilsOfObedience.html, an abridged version of *Obedience to Authority*, (Milgram, 1974).

had two desired functions: first, to imagine in Rice a plausibly cathartic release of anger following such an emotionally constrained enunciation of horrific deeds, and second, to provide the listener with a little comic relief from the same horror.

Besides addressing what was at the time a highly topical and inflammatory issue, the piece embodied another imperative that was equally important in terms of the overall conceptual cohesion of the project: the placement of the transformed character of President Bush into the new confessional drama.

**Walk-on avatar: Bush’s cameo performance**

As was explained in the introduction to the above analysis of “The Redemption of George W”, the transformed Bush was created as a motivic figure who would appear again and again throughout several pieces in the project. At his bidding, other political actors would purge themselves of their burdens of deceit and subterfuge. In “Rendering Babylon”, it is Bush who first urges Rice to reveal the clandestine truths of America’s war on terror: *tell them about extraordinary rendition – CIA assassins and secret police … tell them about war and misery and torture!* Thereafter he becomes the moral overseer to Rice’s revelatory speech, even calling upon British Prime Minister Tony Blair to interject when Rice claims that John Howard has endorsed rendition: *No … no! Tell them Tony!* Later, Bush applies his newfound moral weight to the anti-torture argument, declaring the practice to be *beyond all the bounds of civilised behaviour*. Bush names some of the countries that terror suspects are rendered to, and eventually thanks Rice upon the completion of her confession. Responding to Rice’s tirade in the finale, he stutters: *Secretary Rice – that…that’s enough!* – a caution against overstepping the bounds of civility expected of her office.

**Producing “Rendering Babylon”**

“Rendering Babylon”, which went by the working title of “Torture” until its online launch on MySpace, comprises four main sections:

1. The introduction, featuring an effected ostinato ‘pad’ behind piano and electric guitar.

---

96 The eventual title is a word play on *Remembering Babylon* (1993), the novel by David Malouf. I preferred it to the original because it explicitly refers both to the process of rendition, and the ancient Mesopotamian city-state, not far from modern day Baghdad, a key site in the war on terror.
2. The main groove-based section, featuring a sampled conventional drum loop, sampled phatic language loop, bass and electric guitars and a Middle Eastern style darabuka percussion loop.
3. An interlude, featuring an electric guitar and an oud, with no beats.
4. The finale, in which the drum groove is restated.

**Key musical structures**

In Section 1, I used the first of two new approaches to creating textural and rhythmic sounds that were trialled in this piece. This was in response to my desire to create an introduction that suitably foregrounded the revelations of sinister activity the piece would portray. In my aural imagination, acoustic guitar harmonics sounded in complex sequences, weaving intricate patterns of bright, piercing sound.\(^97\) Although overtones for each note on the guitar can be isolated via the harmonic plucking method, in practice, the first three overtones are most commonly used as they have the most volume. These harmonics yield only octave, octave plus a perfect fifth and double octave above the fundamental. To overcome this limitation I decided to record the first harmonic of each string – first open, then capo-ed at each fret up until the eighth.\(^98\) This process yielded forty-eight discrete recordings of steel string acoustic guitar overtones. After eliminating repeated notes I was left with a set of recordings of overtones that started from low E (the E below middle C on the piano) and ascended in semitones, three and a half octaves up to a high B. After being loaded into a software sampler the overtones could be triggered by a MIDI keyboard.

Despite my original intention of weaving complex note tapestries from guitar harmonics, the ‘harmonic sampler’ was eventually deployed in a very uncomplicated way. A four note ostinato (Figure 6.7) became the generative force for the introduction of the piece. The ostinato, being in

\(^{97}\) The sound issuing from a plucked guitar string is made up of the fundamental tone plus all of the audible overtones. Guitar ‘harmonics’ are notes resulting from the suppression of certain overtones by plucking the open guitar string with the string lightly stopped (but not fretted). The first three overtones of a plucked guitar string may be isolated by applying this technique while stopping the string half way, a third of the way and a quarter of the way along its length. These produce, respectively: octave, octave plus a fifth, and two octaves above the fundamental note (produced by simply plucking the open string). The first overtone is the loudest of these, produced by stopping the string at the point exactly half way along its length – which with an open string, corresponds to the 12\(^{th}\) fret.

\(^{98}\) The capo is a device that shortens the length of the open string by securing the strings tightly at a given fret; that fret effectively replaces the ‘nut’ that the open string normally rests on.
3/4 time, took three bars to again begin on the first beat of a 4/4 bar. The ‘intricate’ array of notes I had imagined was supplied by a filter delay effect.

Figure 6.7. Guitar overtones ostinato

Condoleezza Rice in concert
The introduction to “Rendering Babylon” was originally different to that of the final version. In both versions Rice’s opening comments are followed by a piano playing a simple arpeggiated chord progression in the C harmonic minor. The progression rises in minor thirds: Cmin – D#min - F#min – Cmin; the failure of the continually rising chords to resolve is intended to create a decidedly ‘dark’ drama.99 This was originally overlaid by long, sustained, heavily distorted synthesiser notes. After releasing this version on the MySpace site I realised that I had failed to capitalise on the well-documented fact that Condoleezza Rice is an accomplished pianist.100 I then recorded another, more frenetic piano part on top of the simple part. The second part steadily builds in intensity, its trills and resounding chords vaguely mimicking a Beethoven sonata. The percussive accents of these chords also conveniently accented Bush’s words: tell them about war!

Section 2 was based around a simple descending bass line (see Figure 6.8) set to a sampled drum loop.

Figure 6.8. Bass line

This section also contained the second of the musical experiments trialled in this piece.

99 Theo van Leeuwen refers to a Tchaikovsky melody as containing a “‘gloomy’ minor third” (Leeuwen, 1999: 93).
The Rice ‘phatic loop’

Because Condoleezza Rice’s media profile was more peripheral than President Bush’s, I felt that the piece needed some sort of element that would stamp her vocal imprint on the music. I decided to mine her speech for interesting sonic content. I compiled a collection of short sound bites from the Condoleezza Rice speech that formed the basis of the spoken narrative of the piece. Various “umms” and “ahs” and other phatic utterances were then loaded into the ‘Redrum’ drum sampling module in Reason. The sixteen-step pattern-based sampler allows the loading of ten different samples which can be triggered to sound on any of the 16th beats of a bar. This allows for the creation of complex rhythmic loops. The resulting ‘phatic loop’ constituted a rhythmic motif for the piece that suitably complemented the bleak content – infused as the loop was by the aforementioned cool, ‘robotic’ tones of Rice’s voice.

The various musical elements of this section: the phatic loop, the drum loop, electric guitar chord strikes and bass guitar, were brought in and out of the arrangement to provide variety and dynamics, and to give space when certain speech elements needed to be emphasised. Towards the end of the section – Levantine sounds (oud, sampled female Arabic singing and darabuka drum) evoke the Middle Eastern destinations named by Bush.101

In Section 3 the beats fall away to reveal a plaintive picked electric guitar; its plain, uneffected notes are accompanied by bass guitar, oud, and the Arabic singing, and are intended to provide a suitably sombre backdrop to Rice’s cold admissions of the existence of extraordinary rendition. Again, silence is used to emphasise the word ‘torture’.

Section 4 breaks the melancholy spell by returning to the rhythmic groove established in Section 2. The bass motif is heard first, after Bush’s thank you. Because it enters from a brief moment of silence, the upper frequencies of the bass were filtered out to make the entry less jarring. The Rice phatic loop is heard again prior to the entry of the drums – heralded by a reversed snare. As

---

in Section 3, a tacet section in the backing is used to highlight Rice’s cathartic cursing – which was designed to inject a little comic relief to the bleak subject matter.

**Track 3**

“Quickening”

*This is the moment when we must come together to save this planet. Let us resolve that we will not leave our children a world where the oceans rise and famine spreads and terrible storms devastate our lands.*

Barack Obama

*Now they are sitting on a time bomb*
*Now I know the time has come*
*What goes up must come down*
*What goes around comes around*

Bob Marley, “So Much Trouble in the World” (1979)

**Background**

By 2007, the world appeared to be reeling before the combined onslaughts of a multitude of crises: intractable wars in the Middle East, a global rise in terrorist activity, the dawning awareness of impending energy crises, and increasingly alarmed and insistent cries of warning from the scientific community on the threats of global warming. The challenges posed to humanity by any one of these concerns were considerable. The conjunction of all of them threatened to hasten the adverse effects of each; we seemed to be on course to an accelerating descent into a dark and perilous future. The word ‘quickening’ can be used to denote

---


104 As global oil reserves are set to reach or have already reached the point of fifty percent depletion, humanity faces some dire challenges. See, for instance: http://www.lifeaftertheoilcrash.net/, for a comprehensive and often chilling projection into a future of diminishing oil reserves.

acceleration, but also the possibility of new growth (as is the quickening of seeds). Given my concerns – and my hopes – it seemed an apt title for the piece.

The issue of global warming, which by 2007 had been attributed to human activity by an overwhelming majority of scientists,\(^\text{106}\) had begun to be canvassed in the media. My suspicions concerning the Howard government’s reluctance to confront the problem were bolstered by a book review of Clive Hamilton’s *Scorcher: the dirty politics of climate change* (Frew, 2007). Hamilton had been scathing in his assessment of the government’s inertia on the issue, advancing the proposition that Prime Minister Howard’s closeness to the fossil fuel industries – through both personal friendships and reliance on bureaucrats aligned with the industries – had impelled him to protect these industries.

Wendy Frew wrote the following in her review of the book:

> The Government’s position has relied heavily on spin: ignore the scientific evidence proving climate change is real; deny economic modelling that shows it will cost more to ignore the problem than to tackle it; dismiss environmentalists as hysterical; and persuade people there is nothing to worry about. (Frew, 2007, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 12-13, ‘Spectrum’: 36).

Howard’s rhetoric in particular seemed to indicate a marked reluctance to admit to the looming crisis of global warming. The prime minister’s abnegation was spelled out in one of his weekly radio addresses, which were posted as downloadable MP3s – along with transcripts – on his website.\(^\text{107}\) This address provided the bulk of Howard’s speech for *Quickening*, which portrayed both Bush and Howard via the exchange described in the following section.

**The saint and the skeptic: Bush and Howard on climate change**

Despite John Howard’s prevalence in “Quickening”, his role is mostly the provision of a recalcitrant foil to Bush’s oracular messenger. In the first half of the piece Bush delivers these messages quite differently to his oratory in “Redemption”. The president’s dire pronouncements

---


\(^{107}\) The MP3 in question is 2007-02-05_pm_radio_message, which was available from Howard’s official Prime Ministerial website (now defunct). Howard’s use of AM radio as a platform for disseminating policy and opinion was unprecedented; his weekly radio broadcasts often constituted the best source of his speech audio.
on humanity’s shared plight in the absence of action on global warming are laid down in rhyming
couplets, the backbeat designed to lend his words the gravity of a hip hop prophet of doom:

Temperatures rising – seems like it’s all quickening
Those cries of denial don’t stop, they continue to ring
Corporate cooperation and the profits just swell
When given a choice between life and wealth we choose hell.

Bush’s slow ‘rap’ is interspersed by comments from John Howard, who is constructed to
personify the reticence of governments to threaten their vested interests by committing to
measures to alleviate the problem of global warming.

As the music shifts into a more quiet, melancholic feel it underpins another verse of Bush’s
rhyming couplets. The influence on this verse of one sampled phrase in particular is revealing of,
arguably, what is one of the key processes involved in creating political mashup: the recognition
of a quality of character, mood or emotion that a particular sampled speech fragment embodies –
or that it might be coaxed to embody by its placement within a particular context. As was
asserted in Chapter 4, Music and Meaning, samples signify in a variety of ways. Speech samples
in particular may incorporate an abundance of elements that signify beyond the semantic values
of the words spoken; nuances of tone, inflection and intensity, among other qualities, charge the
sample with these extra complexities of meaning. Bush’s rhyming rap in section two was inspired
by the sampled Bush phrase we’re the same. The downward melody combines with the grain of
Bush’s voice to lend the phrase a strikingly tender, even wise inflection. I was so struck by the
sagacious quality of the sample that the construction of the narrative was then reduced to the
building of a verbal structure that could culminate in this utterance – while remaining on the
theme of global warming. Initially the rap was as follows:

The Earth is such a special place
can we save humanity or are we losing the race?
Our greed for progress has lead to suffering and climate change
In the face of these dangers – we’re the same.

Upon reflection I felt this to be too ‘prim’ – it seemed to lack potency. I eventually chose a
different approach, one that became somewhat of a guiding principle for the portrayal of the
Bush character. It involved blending the comical with the profound:

The Earth rocks – it’s really cool!
Humanity fucks it with its thirst for fuel
Global warming affects each of us,
all denials are in vain,
When the oceans rise, all of us —
on all sides of every senseless war
will finally see — we're the same.

I found a comic absurdity in the grey, rapidly aging Bush adopting the teenage vernacular, including the throwaway use of the expletive. The ‘awakened’ Bush is clearly identified in the profundity of the statements that follow, and in particular, the sapience of we’re the same.

After this second narrative Bush’s voice is unfettered from the dictates of rhyme and rhythm as he delivers his final speech in more conversational prose. Here I deliberated over the inclusion of the president’s rebuke of his Australian political counterpart and friend, in which he surmises: John Howard, I don’t believe he’ll tell the truth. He hasn’t told the truth in over a decade! As accurate as I believed the charge to be, I felt it sullied Bush’s newfound ‘saintliness’ to a degree, steering him away from my intended portrayal of the wise, infinitely compassionate prophet. My conundrum raised an important question: how true do I wish to remain to the non-violent ethos throughout the project? I was concerned that the work would lose some power if I succumbed to the temptation of letting my characters become personally vindictive. In the end I decided that the message in Bush’s words – that governments struggle to tell their electors hard truths that might jeopardise their rule – was too accurate to jettison. Saintliness did not require the circumvention of painful truths.

**Producing “Quickening”**

“Quickening” consists of three main musical sections, each of which is broken into subsections by shifts in dynamics, rather than by the addition of new harmonic structures:

1. The introduction, featuring a piano part that builds with the addition of a synthesiser pad, two acoustic guitars, bass guitar and sampled beats.
2. The first section of Bush’s rhyming verse, over a more staccato bass feel and heavily compressed sampled drums.
3. The second section of Bush’s rhyming verse, this time over a melancholy picked electric guitar part with sampled re-pitched voice, meandering bass and light drums. This section eventually picks up in intensity to underpin Bush’s spoken prose. The drums gain weight and density, before finally springing into a free jazz-like $\frac{3}{4}$ feel which takes the piece to its conclusion.

**Key musical elements**

The children’s laughter that prefaces the piece was found in a forgotten corner of my computer hard drive – a remnant of a spontaneous recording taken of my daughter playing with her friends when she was four years old. I wanted to point to the fact that the environmental and social consequences of global warming are part of what will be bequeathed to our children by us: their stakes in our efforts to tackle the problem are higher than ours. The children are heard again towards the end, when Bush warns: *for the sake of future generations, we cannot allow this to happen.*

**Section 1** is based upon the simple but slightly ‘creepy’ piano part notated in Figure 6.9 (one listener likened it to something that might be heard on a horror movie). The $\frac{3}{4}$ time and the simple sequence of notes suggest a child’s lullaby, while the presence of intervals of a 2$\text{nd}$, augmented 5$\text{th}$ and augmented 4$\text{th}$ provide an unsettling quality. This part sets the key of the piece in C# minor.

![Figure 6.9. Piano part](image)

I chose two acoustic guitars to flank the piano in order to create a light airy feel that would heighten the contrast to the more jagged and dark following section. The segue between the sections was effected by the addition of bass guitar and sampled drums that arrive at a mini climax courtesy of a reversed cymbal.

In **Section 2** I felt that Bush’s line about corporate cooperation and swelling profits should be imbued with more angst than his vocal tone conveyed. To this end I chopped up the drum loop

---

108 The listener was a personal friend who happens to be a film buff with a penchant for horror movies.
and heavily compressed it to fatten the sound. I also used harshly strummed acoustic guitars – rather than overdriven electric guitar power chords (a more conventional method of raising energy in a rock setting) – to add energy to these drums. I achieved a deeper tone by using an open C tuning on the guitar (with a capo at the first fret to bring the pitch up to C#). The savagely strummed guitar flourishes (Figure 6.10) seemed to raise the dramatic tone of Bush’s line into an angry sneer. They also created a sense of unity with the earlier section.

Section 3 is launched beneath the fading, repeating echoes of Bush’s final word for the verse: hell. The section is woven around a finger-picked electric guitar part based on a second inversion voicing of the C# minor chord, moving from this to an Emin(maj7) (see Figure 6.11). The progression matches the sombre nature of Bush’s words, by virtue of the unusual voicing and the minor major chord.

As Bush’s second rhyming section begins, another electric guitar joins this part, playing Middle Eastern-sounding single lines. The music stops suddenly to allow the final words of the rhyming couplets to sound over a sampled recording of the Adhan – the Islamic Call to Prayer. This was used in relation to the senseless war spoken of by Bush.109

As John Howard rationalises his government’s inaction on global warming, a cacophony of sound effects can be heard. These sounds – sirens, screeching cars and traffic noises – were

---

109 See the section ‘Ethics of Sampling’ in Chapter 5 for a discussion of cultural sensitivities in regard to the appropriation of sacred texts.
included to suggest the civic chaos that global warming could invoke if left unchecked. The sounds were downloaded from an online novelty sound bite site. Howard’s monologue is gradually submerged beneath the rising oceans (evoked by samples of bubbling liquid), the upper frequencies of his monotone steadily eroded by the downward sweeping frequency setting of a low pass filter.

**Track 4**

“Howard Repents (The Real Thing)”

As the powerful seek to insulate themselves from any relationship to the pain of others, their very actions continue to open and exacerbate the injuries.

Deborah Bird Rose (1997: 112)

My mother’s heart stopped beating one dark and dreadful day and all I heard was weeping the day I went away

Archie Roach, “My Mother’s Heartbeat” (1997)

**Background**

Throughout his tenure, Prime Minister John Howard refused to offer an apology to Australia’s indigenous peoples for the enforced removal, by past governments, of Indigenous children from their families. This was an issue that haunted the Coalition government during most of its eleven year reign, particularly near its end, when the intention of issuing a formal apology was one of Labor leader Kevin Rudd’s election promises.110 The removal of Indigenous children from their families was government policy that endured from the turn of the twentieth century until the 1970s. It has been characterised as belonging to a broader modernist ‘civilising’ process, whereby ‘barbaric’ non-European people could, it was believed, be brought into harmony with European cultural values and practices by removing them from their own cultural milieux; it was aimed in particular at ‘half caste’ Aborigines, whose European blood was thought to provide a genetic

---

bridge that might support their crossing over from ‘primitive’ realms – within which the policy considered children to be ‘at risk’ – into ‘civilised’ realms (Krieken, 1999).111

The removal of Indigenous children was an assimilationist project. The putative benefits it offered to Aboriginal people began to be seriously questioned by non-indigenous Australians in the early 1980s. Criticism of the policy and practice of removal of children grew steadily thereafter, peaking after the May 1997 release of the Bringing Them Home report by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1997), which claimed that the practice fell under the United Nations definition of ‘genocide’ (Krieken, 1999). By the time of Howard’s reign, the victims of the practice – by then middle aged adults – were popularly known as the ‘stolen generations,’ a group whose solidarity was predicated both upon shared Aboriginality, and the shared trauma of dislocation from their families.

In the lead up to the 2007 Federal election (which took place on 24th November) I had toyed with the idea of constructing the apology that Howard steadfastly refused to deliver, but had been thwarted by my inability to find an audio example of him saying the word ‘sorry’. Howard did finally apologise – for an (unprecedented) interest rate rise during the election campaign. The following day he backtracked, publicly denying that saying “sorry” constituted an apology. Via the online news media, amidst Howard’s typically legalistic qualification, I was finally able to capture the elusive word.112

“Howard Repents” was posted on MySpace just days before the election. It was also played on Byron Bay’s Bay FM radio station and at an academic conference the day before the election.113 Following the Coalition’s emphatic loss, someone remarked that the piece had lost a certain resonance, especially in light of Kevin Rudd’s promise to prioritise the delivery of the long-awaited apology as one of his government’s first parliamentary movements. I felt there was some truth in this, but I also believed that Howard’s legacy – like that of President Bush – would continue to resonate for some time. Moreover, while the piece charts a redemptive journey for

111 ‘At risk’ in this context meant not well-fed, housed and healthy.
112 Howard’s aversion to delivering an apology was in part a result of his legal training, which no doubt informed him of the risk of leaving the Australian Government liable for damages.
113 I played the piece during a presentation to the 2007 Crux Conference, for Postgraduate students of Southern Cross University.
John Howard through an imagined change of heart on the subject of the stolen generations, as the following section suggests, the issue I sought to address was more far-reaching than this.

**Shame and shamelessness**

My personal impetus for creating “Howard Repents” was born of a grievance that extends far beyond Howard’s refusal to offer indigenous Australians the healing gesture of an apology. It flowed, rather, from my sense of a deeper malaise within Australian society, one that I felt to be profoundly connected to a submerged, collective shame over our colonialis past, and that I imagined to be shared by all nations whose forging was accomplished at the expense of indigenous peoples.

I found a resonance with this idea in a chapter on ‘Monsters’ in David Punter’s *Postcolonial Imaginings* (2000). Punter uses Salman Rushdie’s novel *Shame* (1983) to assert that political leaders whose actions prove profoundly damaging to all in their orbit share the characteristic of *shamelessness*. Rushdie likens shame to a sweet fizzy drink dispensed from a vending machine; the hand holding the cup suddenly removes it from beneath the flowing stream which, instead of being consumed, is allowed to spill onto the floor, creating a dangerous sticky mess. The metaphor suggests that shame must be consumed by the shamed one as an act of contrition, as a healing of sorts. The removal of the cup from the descending stream of liquid amounts to choosing to not own shame; that is, choosing to remain shameless. The result is a dangerous mess (Punter, 2000).

Howard’s refusal to apologise to indigenous Australians could be seen as an inability (or unwillingness) on his part to own the shame of white Australia. While attempting to keep his personal identity – and the collective identity of white Australians – unsoiled by such shame, Howard allowed shame’s corrosive ‘liquid’ to leak across the floor, staining the soul of the nation. The ways in which the constructed Howard narrative addresses both this issue, and other salient features of the Howard leadership, shall be outlined in the following section.

**The Howard narrative**

The first two words of the narrative point to the very different relationships Howard had with two of his chief lieutenants: Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Treasurer Peter Costello. Howard’s well documented fondness for Downer is suggested by the familial use of the latter’s first name; Howard’s equally well-known dislike for his treasurer is conveyed by the barking:
Costello! The thinly-veiled enmity between the two became increasingly hard to conceal as the election approached.

*Get this up on the website – and on YouTube!* was a slanting reference to Howard’s desperate but unsuccessful attempts, leading up to and during the election campaign, to marshal the opinion-shaping potentials of the Internet.\(^{114}\)

One of Prime Minister Howard’s key political strengths was that he presided over a strong economy. A resources boom and a swelling housing bubble meant that Australians lived well, going into unprecedented levels of debt on the strength of swollen property prices.\(^{115}\) Howard’s political savvy ensured that he and his policy makers took credit for the prosperity. The line: *If our economic policy is so good, how do we explain that over eighty percent of the Indigenous population is unemployed, living below the poverty line and have the lowest life expectancy of any people in the world?* was designed to question Howard’s priorities by contrasting his persistent claims of superior “economic management” with the predicament of indigenous Australians.\(^{116}\) *We have crippled a once thriving people* speaks directly to the above-mentioned collective shame of white Australia. The line: *I have denied this national emergency* addresses the magnitude of the problems facing indigenous Australians, situating the issue within categories of trauma that extend beyond the suffering of the stolen generations and into the plight of a conquered, dispossessed people.

---

\(^{114}\) This was actually a telling factor when it came to Howard’s fading popularity in his final year in office. Kevin Rudd, his younger opponent, consistently demonstrated an ease with cyber-space-as-soap-box that eluded Howard. The incumbent’s online performances on YouTube came across as wooden and awkward; Howard’s MySpace profile was hastily constructed in the lead up to the election, and was immediately hijacked by anti-Howard members, who posted a multitude of obscene and abusive messages. These remained on the site for several days before someone (presumably, a younger, more media-savvy member of Howard’s media team) had them permanently removed.

\(^{115}\) For instance, in 2004 the Reserve Bank of Australia expressed concerns about levels of Australian household debt, warning that: “the recent borrowing binge and runaway house prices now threatened to drive up inflation.” The ANZ Bank reported then that wealth from inflated house prices was being accessed to fund consumer spending, [http://www.anz.com/aus/promo/Homeessentials011/Eco1.asp](http://www.anz.com/aus/promo/Homeessentials011/Eco1.asp), accessed 19\(^{th}\) April 2009.

\(^{116}\) This statement was sampled from a 2007 Howard speech on the deteriorating state of affairs in Zimbabwe at the time; the eighty percent statistic – and the claim about life expectancy – are not, therefore, necessarily accurate accounts of the state of Indigenous populations; they were used with artistic licence to highlight the magnitude of the problem. Nonetheless, the hypocrisy of Howard’s denunciation of another country’s social affairs while ignoring those of his own did not escape me.
Finally, Howard is made to weep toward the end of his monologue; this seemed a perfectly fitting response, given the almost sacral musical atmosphere created to underpin his revelatory confession. The weeping also had a slightly apocalyptic connotation, given the growing sense of political doom within the Coalition. I gambled (correctly, as it turned out) on the accuracy of pre-election polls predicting a Coalition defeat, by making Howard’s final words: *It’s all over.*

**Producing “Howard Repents (The Real Thing)”**

The music that would eventually carry John Howard’s apology into listeners’ ears was built on a chord progression I originally wrote as a potential guitar-based song that was not specifically intended to be part of the *RogueSounds* project. The composition happened to coincide with my decision to construct the apology – which was made rather late in the lead up to the federal election. I had written the whole chord progression and a melody line, but no words. I decided to adapt this music to the narrative content (for reasons that are explained below), resulting in a piece that comprised five sections:

1. A short introduction featuring a staccato bass playing the tonic (A), an effected synthesiser rhythm, and white noise that rises steadily in pitch via a gradually opening filter.

2. An instrumental section that both prefigures the main descending chord progression with orchestral stabs and higher synthesiser notes that continue the rhythm and foreshadows the Indigenous theme with Aboriginal singing and clap sticks.

3. The main narrative section, in which the descending progression cycles, building steadily from two low synthesiser tones to finally encompass orchestral strings, bass and electric guitars, sampled and rhythmic loops.

4. The ‘chorus’ section, featuring ‘angelic’ voices harmonising over an ascending chord progression, backed by ethereally picked acoustic 12 string guitar, then by tremolo-effected electric guitar chord strikes and bass guitar.

5. The final section, which continues with the ascending chorus progression but adds sampled drums, bass guitar, the angelic voices, Aboriginal voices and clap sticks, and rhythmic loop. This section eventually cross fades into Russell Morris’s “The Real Thing” (1969), which blends with the Aboriginal voices during the outro.
Key musical elements

Section 1, the introduction, is intended as a drama-building device over which John Howard ‘rallies his troops’ before delivering the monologue that culminates in his apology. The staccato synthesiser bass foreshadows rising drama; it punctuates a rhythmic sequence created by applying distortion and a noisy filter to a rhythmic patch on the FM7 software synthesiser. The filter was automated to open gradually, building intensity before the rhythmic flourish that announces the entry of the harmonic progression. The harsh percussive edges of this flourish were exaggerated by the application of the Waves Trans X Wide plugin, which can be used to emphasise the attack portion of a sound by altering the volume envelope of the waveform.

In Section 2 the main chord progression was articulated by dense, strident orchestral chord stabs. They were intended to symbolise the established, white Western European power base that Howard may be seen as representing. The imperial grandeur of the orchestra is contrasted with Aboriginal singing in a symbolic meeting between the pompousness of parliamentary process and the ingenuous earthiness (tinged with folkloric mysticism) of the Aboriginal voices. I initially tried using an orchestral patch on a Roland JV1080 sound module, but the result lacked impact and was too obviously synthesised. I finally decided to score the chords as though for a large orchestra, creating sufficient note density by representing each of the families of woodwinds, brass and strings (although not all voices were represented – clarinets, oboes, tuba, and violas were absent for instance). I used high quality sample banks within the Reason software. The score (Figure 6.12) reveals the progression’s twist on a standard Flamenco-style progression in A minor.

---

117 I am mindful of the possible contention associated with the use of sampled Indigenous material and have addressed this issue in the section ‘Ethics of Sampling’ in Chapter 5.
The descending chords: Amin – G – F, resolve conventionally to the E, but via the B. This musical detour sets ups the harmonic contour of the following section.

Section 3 opens sparsely, with two low synthesiser tones delineating the progression over which Howard’s monologue begins. The B chord, rather than merely setting up the resolution on the E chord, as in the previous section, now serves as a harmonic ‘pivot’, allowing the progression to modulate into a C minor scale as it rises to the C and continues up to D# (see figure 6.13).

The textural simplicity of the section was again designed to leave room for a gradually rising cacophony, as a series of instruments begin to enter: electric twelve string guitar tremolo-effected chord strikes, bird calls and Aboriginal clap sticks (as random atmospherics rather than rhythmic devices), piano, Aboriginal singing, strings, symphonic timpani and snare, and finally, synthesised rhythmic sounds from the introduction section. When the full complement of instruments is
sounding the progression begins to cycle on the ascending section, this time continuing the ascent to the F chord. This repeating ascending pattern becomes a motif that will be echoed in the ‘chorus’ section, but with different chords.

It was Section 4, the chorus section of the song that initially suggested the fit between the apology and the chord progression I had written. Stubbornly withheld for so long, the apology I imagined would carry an almost epochal resonance; its utterance would exude mystical significance, heralding something akin to the ‘opening of the heavens.’ To indicate this musically I put voices to a progression that rises up from the tonic chord of A minor rather than descending from that chord, as do the verses. The tonic notes of the ascending chords follow the phrygian mode, which aims to invest the sequence with a certain ‘angelical’ quality. The original guitar chords alone carry this resonance, perhaps due to the high E note that is common to each chord, and which creates interesting dissonances with the tonic notes as they ascend within the first two chords: A minor and Bb in root position, followed by the C in its 1st inversion and D in its 2nd inversion (see Figure 6.14).

Figure 6.14. Chorus progression (guitar)

Over these chords I recorded eight vocal tracks: four male and four female, singing ‘ahs’ on the tonic, a fifth above, an octave above and a fourth below. To create the requisite ‘angelic’ sound I sent all eight tracks to a reverberation unit (with large hall emulation and an eleven second decay). I also sent each voice to a two-voice pitch change unit, which split each signal into two, panned hard left and right respectively; one was detuned by twenty cents, the other raised by the same. This widened and thickened the combined sound of the voices. Using a pre-fader auxiliary send I was able to remove the dry signal entirely, leaving only the blended reverbed and pitch-changed signals audible.

118 Probably relating to the use of the Ecclesiastical Modes in Gregorian Chant.
119 Elenor Sapir and I sang the parts as separately tracked takes; the melodic lines included some ornamentation within the basic lines mentioned above.
In Section 5 the rising progression continues, but is initially pared back to bass guitar and sampled rhythm track. The track builds with additions of percussion instruments, synthesiser tones, the original FM7 harsh rhythmic loop, the Aboriginal singing and clapsticks (this time sounding in time with the music). After twenty bars the backing cross fades into Russell Morris’s recording of “The Real Thing”. The original version of “Howard Repents” did not include this element; it was added as an afterthought following the observation by one listener of the similarities between the ascending progressions in the chorus’s of both pieces. Upon examination of the song it became apparent that the similarities were not only musical. The sung chorus line: “I am the real thing” actually served to highlight the parodic status of the apology, which was, of course, unequivocally not the real thing. Moreover, its standing as an iconic Australian pop recording gave the song a special resonance with an imagined event that, had it actually occurred, would probably have been conferred similarly iconic status. The musical continuity between the two was provided most effectively by the Aboriginal singing and Howard’s repeated vocal phrase: *This is for real – yeah.* Other phrases from the Morris recording can be heard in earlier parts of the piece: “come and see the real thing, come and see the real thing”, “tryin’ hard to understand”, “there’s a meaning there but the meaning there does it really mean a thing?”

**Track 5**

**“Rogues”**

*The reduction of freedom is presented to us as the arrival of new freedoms.*

Slavoj Žižek (2001a, online)

*This legislation has a strategic goal – to secure profits. Period.*


**Background**

“Rogues” was originally a guitar-based song, written in 2006. The lyrics were as follows:

> These are the evils from which we’ll protect you.
> These are the new laws, don’t be alarmed
> These are the dreams we have designed to direct you
> We’d like you all comfortable and calm.

120 Interestingly, the Ian Meldrum-produced Russell Morris recording of “The Real Thing” itself contained some cutting edge implementations of recording technology: the children’s choir heard toward the end of the track is actually a sample of the Hitler Youth singing “Die Jugend Marschfahrt” (Youth on the March). The recording also contains a predigital ‘flanging’ effect, one of its earliest uses in an Australian recording (Culnane, 1999).
These are the prizes that you will compete for
You’ll spend your lives just tryin’ to get ahead
Until exhaustion shall finally defeat you
We’d like to thank you all for being so easily led.

Chorus
We are the rogues who run your democracy
The finest choice of the enlightened and the free
And as for freedom that is just another code
To clear the way for our unlimited growth.

Now that you know how it goes, will you resist it?
The market for resistance is on the rise
We are conservative and militaristic
With the finest weaponry your money can buy.

The song was an expression of my concerns over the disconnect I perceived between the declared motives of elected politicians and their actions. These actions, particularly in the post-9/11 political climate, appeared to me to be more nefarious than noble, and are reflected in the themes the song addresses: the climate of fear propagated by Western governments in the wake of 9/11 – and the new security regimes that were made to appear more legitimate in this climate; the manufacture of compliant, materialistic consumers through mass mediated propaganda; the recuperation of expressions of resistance; and the ultimate threat of violence that ensures the smooth running of the liberal democratic state.

At that early stage of the project, I believed that the triumvirate of George W. Bush, John Howard and Tony Blair embodied the militaristic, neoliberal political philosophies that were directing events being played out on the world stage. The initial production concept for the song was to have the three politicians sharing the vocals, with the designation of lines to the different characters being largely determined by the availability of samples. This explains their prominence in the narrative mix. However, as it transpired, “Rogues” was to have a protracted birth. The song was not finished until late 2008, by which time it had traversed a number of musical and conceptual terrains. Musically, “Rogues” presented significant challenges, its final form being the culmination of a process of experimentation that shall be described in detail below. The conceptual changes the piece underwent, although considerable, mostly amounted to embellishments of the original themes, a process that is worthy of more comment due to the light it sheds on the process of creative arts research.
Inspiration: the roles of ‘subjective’ and formalised theory

Whereas traditional scientific research may begin with theory, which in turn prompts experimentation that leads to further theory, creative arts outcomes are often inspired by subjective processes that operate within the cognitive/intuitive faculties of the practitioner. The impetus to create “Rogues” could be ascribed to what Estelle Barrett has called an “intuitive, feeling-based dimension of being” (Barrett, 2007b: 4). The original guitar-based song did not emanate from a formalised theoretical framework designed to describe the contemporary milieu of globalised capital. And yet, lyrically, the song is replete with references to processes and alliances that characterise this milieu – as it is framed within Hardt and Negris’ concept of ‘Empire’: collusions between big business and government, the dissemination of universalising norms via the mass media, the deployment of mechanisms to restrict democracy in order to maintain hegemony, and others (Hardt and Negri, 2000). Given this, and the similar orientations of most other examples of the genre I examined, it follows that many practitioners of political mashup perceive – and respond to – the same configurations of interwoven government and capitalist hegemony that evoked a theoretical response such as Empire. Many of these mashup practitioners are working from theory – albeit unformalised, and, as observed in the Content Analysis in Appendix 2, sometimes inchoate theory. My task, as a mashup practitioner and a creative arts based researcher is to extricate from this subjectively ‘felt’ theoretical framework a more formalised structure; one that seeks to support more penetrative oppositional expressions, while giving logical cohesion to a body of creative work.

What I find compelling in the above is the fact that from the very outset of the project, the target of my oppositional expressions was already broadly defined. Hardt and Negris’ theoretical conception of Empire provided a formalised account of what I had already theorised in an intuitive way. This structured framework then inspired further creative work, which gave rise to the final version of “Rogues”. The following section shall outline the key ideas underpinning the piece.

Decoding “Rogues”

To render the original song into a political mashup piece, I envisaged my triumvirate of rogues cheerfully enunciating the avaricious ways in which their rule is deployed – in league, as I saw it, with the pervasive web of networked capital. After an exhaustive process of sourcing samples, I
ended up with the whole song lyric (as it appears above) being spoken by at least one of the Bush, Blair, Howard trinity at any one time. However, it was before completing the piece that I conceived of constructing the confessional journey that became “The Redemption of George W”. Later still, I discovered Hardt and Negris’ *Empire*, and the remarkable applicability of its central thesis to the underlying political philosophy of my project. Both of these events stamped their influences upon the final version of “Rogues”.

To incorporate my newly adopted theoretical framework I created a lengthy introduction in which some of the key concepts of Empire are enounced. As this process took place in the middle of 2008, the US federal election campaign was featuring heavily in the media. In view of President Bush’s imminent departure (regardless of the election result) it seemed timely to introduce some new political figures to the project. The obvious candidates were the hopeful electoral candidates themselves: thus, Bush’s naming of Empire is echoed by Republican presidential candidate John McCain, while Democrat Barack Obama offers a definition of Empire as *a powerful, pervasive, unyielding alliance of big money and government*. Even Republican vice Presidential aspirant Sarah Palin – who at the time was riding a substantial (though short-lived) wave of celebrity – can be heard issuing dire warnings of terror … *in a dangerous world*. Obama’s running mate, Joe Biden is not included as his voice was barely heard during the campaign – a fact that I assumed would render his sampled utterances unrecognisable to most listeners. After the constructed narrative moves into the main song, McCain, Obama and Palin can be heard to make short interjections, but the main lyric is carried by my original trio of Bush, Blair and Howard.

Coming after “Redemption” as it eventually did, I experienced misgivings about casting Bush as one of the rogues. I assuaged these doubts by changing the grammar to lend Bush an ‘overseer’ role. Thus, in the first line: *These are the evils from which they will protect you*, the first person plural: ‘we’ is replaced by the third person plural: ‘they’. In the chorus though, Bush returns to the rogues’ fold. This decision, in retrospect, was a visceral pre-emption of the shadowy destination awaiting Bush in what would be the next piece: “Legacy (Into the Darkness)”, in which Bush is made to finally face history’s judgement.
Producing “Rogues”

The music underpinning “Rogues” follows a basic song structure, comprising the following parts:

1. Introduction: a synthesised pedal note establishes the tonal centre in E. It fades away, to allow the main progression (in E minor) to begin, initially stated with synthesiser notes.
2. First verse: the main progression is taken up by guitars, bass guitar and a duet of synthesised tones which outline a melodic figure.
3. Second verse: programmed drums enter, together with a heavily reverbed synthesised flute. Strings and a filtered pad join the flute in the second half of the verse.
4. Chorus: moves to the key of G major, leading into the tonic from C minor. Punctuated by a tom tom-heavy sampled drum loop. Vocoded vocals sing the main chorus lyrics with the original song melody.
5. Interlude: features a different chord progression, in G minor, heavily effected vocal ‘aahs’ which form a distorted pad, and the chorus drums, this time heavily filtered.
6. Final verse: the backing is sparser, consisting of bass guitar and the main progression played with a saw tooth synthesiser tone.
7. Chorus: a repeat of the first chorus with extra pads, and vocoded vocals again singing the main lyric.

Key musical elements

Conjuring images of a police state, a sampled police warning sounds metallically over a loud speaker, then gives way to a piercing echoed siren. A metallic sounding filtered drone fades in, stamping the politicians’ portrayals of Empire with a sonic imprint of mechanised, production-line ‘coldness’. Beneath their descriptions of a powerful, pervasive, unyielding alliance of big money and government … that rules through biopower, installing in populations the belief that its cause … (greed and excess) … is right and just, a military brass band fades up in the mix. Sampled from media footage of Bush’s infamous “Mission Accomplished” speech, broadcast from the deck of an aircraft carrier

---

121 The sample was from a YouTube video of protests at the G20 meeting held at Pittsburgh University, 24th September 2009. ‘PITTSBURGH G20 USA UN NEW WORLD ORDER MARTIAL LAW 379000 troops global bank riots protest bilderberg’, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQUtNgecocY&feature=related, accessed 1st October 2009. The high pitched siren was referred to in the video as a “supersonic sound wave weapon” used to disperse crowds.
soon after the 2003 Iraq invasion, the brass carries echoes of self-congratulatory martial pompousness. The drone prepares the way for the beginning of the chord progression. This was originally recorded on acoustic guitar, which remained the spine of the recording, although, as explained below, its presence in the mix was ultimately subdued.

**Acoustic guitar as structural foundation**

The acoustic guitar part that formed the accompaniment to the original song was the original structural foundation of the recording. The part, in E minor, features a melody played mostly on the third string, syncopating against a bass line played on the sixth string, as notated in Figure 6.15 below.

![Figure 6.15. Acoustic guitar part – “Rogues”](image)

Although this part worked well as an accompaniment to a solo vocal, in the context of the “Rogues” production, the guitar drew attention to itself too much; the syncopated notes distracted from the speech narratives they were meant to support. After notating the part, I played it into the sequencer via a MIDI keyboard. I was then able to trial a number of synthetic sounds. The synthesiser tone I settled upon introduced the progression in a smoother, less intrusive way in Section 1. The guitar does finally enter at the end of this section, but it is low in the mix beneath a heavily delayed electric guitar part. Wanting the high E and B notes (in the final four bars above) – played on the first two open strings – to ring loudly through the length of each bar, I recorded the final four bars of the above score on an electric guitar. This audio was treated with a filter delay effect in the *Live* software programme, which produced the ringing quality I had envisaged. The audio was rendered into a wide stereo file which I then imported back into Cubase.
Section 2 represents the start of the original song, which begins with President Bush’s admissions of the manufacturing of fear in order to justify repressive laws. Initially I had hoped to incorporate the original sung vocal line into the mix, but after recording it I felt it had the effect of introducing a personality into the piece that didn’t really belong there. After many attempts to depersonalise my voice with multiband compressors and vocoders, I reluctantly decided to jettison the sung melody. Then, however, the resulting nakedness of the sampled speech seemed to demand some sort of melodic material. I eventually created a melody that was reminiscent of the original. Harmonised by a parallel 4th above, the melody was given its undulating smoothness by starting with a single synthesised pedal note, then ‘playing’ the melody on the pitch bend wheel. This technique is challenging because the pitch wheel has no markings to indicate the extent of the bend; one must use aural feedback in concert with tactile spatial sensitivity. However, when a reasonably accurate take has been recorded, it may be fine tuned by altering the pitch change envelope that is displayed as a visual graphic within the MIDI track.

The energy lift in Section 3, the second verse, is effected by the entrance of a tom tom loop in the final five bars of verse 1, in a transition that pre-empts the same loop’s motivic use in both choruses (and the interlude, in a filtered version). The drum loop was sampled from the Radiohead song “There There” from the Hail to the Thief album (2003). The aptness of this album was evident to me, as according to popular received wisdom, the title is a reference to US President Bush’s questionable election victory in 2000.122 However, from a purely sonic perspective alone, the tom-heavy loop was a perfect fit for the chorus of “Rogues”. This, however, then presented the challenge of constructing a complementary drum track for verses two and three. This was finally accomplished using two different software drum machines, Cubase’s very simple LM7, and XLN Audio’s Addictive Drums, a programme that uses high quality drum samples. Using tom toms from the latter I blended the two to create a track that sat well in the verses. This was then duplicated, and one copy treated with heavy compression. When combined, the compressed drums give the resulting track a ‘sucking’ quality that pulls and pushes with the groove as the compressor’s attack and release times are set to musically relate to the song tempo.

---

122 The 2000 election was a tortuously protracted affair for most Americans, entailing five weeks of charges and counter charges, eventually going to the Supreme Court before finally being resolved in Bush’s favour.
I also filled out the second verse with a filter-sweeping pad and some strings, the latter designed to underscore the wistfulness of the lines: *you’ll spend your life just tryin’ to get ahead / and exhaustion shall finally defeat you.*

**Section 4**, the first chorus, sees the addition of the sung chorus line, which I vocoded in order to depersonalise it. An earlier version left this sung chorus out, but it was later added to reinforce the distinction between verse and chorus.

**Section 5**, the ‘interlude,’ was an instrumental section of the original song. In the mashup production it presented an opportunity to reinforce the concept of Empire – as incorporating: *a perverse corporate culture, an aggressive empire of global capitalism, and maintaining stability by military and propagandist actions,* to quote a few of the narrators. Beneath their words I had originally layered backing vocals to create a rich choral pad background for the new progression. Again however, I felt that the sung “aahhs” injected too much human personality into the mix. I wanted to achieve a tonal harshness to echo the sinister content of the speakers’ words. This was achieved by sending the four vocal tracks to a submaster bus and treating them with an array of effects that included heavy flanging, distortion and a Leslie rotating speaker effect. The resulting pad sounded almost like distorted guitars playing power chords, while the fluidity of the vocal lines added a glissando element reminiscent of bottleneck slide guitar.

The relative sparseness of the arrangement in **Section 6** encouraged me to play with the rhythmic placement of the speech narrative. Then-British Prime Minister Tony Blair takes centre stage here, delivering what sounds like a very ‘stiff’ rendition of a rap. Blair’s cultivated English tones produced a satisfying synergism with the line: *We are conservative and ... militaristic.* Bush’s: *Resist them? Huh!* also finds rap-like rhythmic pockets to fit into, giving the verse a particular groove colour that the earlier verses don’t have.

---

123 The vocoder could be more accurately said to ‘dehumanise’ the voice, which in this context also served to depersonalise it.
Chapter 6. Words Noted

Track 6 “Legacy (Into the Darkness)”

If you succumb to the temptation of using violence in the struggle, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and your chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.

Martin Luther King Jr

Go to him now, he calls you, you can't refuse
When you got nothing, you got nothing to lose
You're invisible now, you got no secrets to conceal.

Bob Dylan, “Like a Rolling Stone” (1965)

Background

In the final months of the Bush incumbency, there were reports in the media of the beleaguered president’s avid search for some visible accomplishment, one that might stamp a mark of positive achievement on his tenure. In late 2007 Bush’s hunt for a legacy was seen to be embodied in his belated efforts both to broker peace in the Middle East and to confront the looming threat of global warming. The choice of “Legacy” (the ‘L word’, as many journalists had begun to facetiously refer to it) as the title of this piece was based upon this perception.

“Legacy” was intended to serve three functions. First, I wanted to mark the end of Bush’s presidency (which was inevitable because of his ineligibility to contest a third term), with a view to opening the way towards focusing on his successor, who at the time (mid-2008) was not yet

---


126 The phrase: the ‘L word’ had in earlier times gained traction with Republicans, and in particular, neoconservatives, as a derogative term applied to ideological opponents, the ‘L’ in this case standing for liberal. More cynical voices in the press took up the term again in the twilight of Bush’s tenure, applying it derisively to their ruminations over Bush’s legacy.
known. Second, I felt that, given the level of media focus on the issue of Bush’s perceived legacy, it would be timely to project my own calamitous vision of what this comprised. In “The Redemption of George W” I had effected a transformation in Bush that imagined in him, repentance through self reflection. As my pivotal character prepared to exit the media spotlight, I sensed an opportunity to extend Bush’s self-reflective process by detailing the catalogue of traits: deception, arrogant certitude and recklessness, that were, in my opinion, emblematic of the Bush presidency. Indeed, the onset of time only strengthened such perceptions; the actual Bush remained, in words and actions, irredeemably removed from his virtual counterpart, whom I had fashioned right at the start of the project. “Legacy” provided this opportunity. The final function of the piece was tied to an idea that had been gestating for a considerable time: since the process of working on “Quickening” I had imagined the Bush character’s psyche being ultimately unable to integrate the transformation I had envisaged for him. The piece presented an opportunity to follow one possible logical consequence of this psychological overload via the musical charting of a descent into madness.

**Bush and his ‘daemon’**

The first section of “Legacy” centres upon a conversation between Bush and a demonic-sounding character who is revealed to be neither ‘God’ (who Bush initially calls upon) nor ‘the Devil’ (whom he takes the character to be). The ‘daemon,’ as I have called him, is a personification of an aspect of Bush’s own psyche; a part that could be described as his conscience, although this term perhaps fails to fully capture the figure’s role, which is complex. The daemon, by denying Bush the redemption his earlier contrition might have granted, is, in a sense, Bush’s judge, and yet his judgements are delivered from within Bush’s own psyche. The daemon essentially serves to reveal the magnitude of the psychological conflict that Bush’s departure from religiously-based certitudes and clear cut moral binarisms leaves him to deal with. The impact of Bush’s faith upon his leadership was discussed earlier, in the analysis of “The Redemption of George W”. That piece made reference to these influences without detailing them. In “Legacy,” Bush’s religiosity is examined more closely, with particular focus upon the ‘good/evil’ dichotomy which flavoured much of his ‘war on terror’ rhetoric.

---

127 The daemon has been described as “a part of the subconscious” that embodies “self-awareness, your rationale, your voice of conscience”, http://www.daemonpage.com/introduction.php, accessed 4th November 2009.
Briefly, “Legacy” portrays Bush in transit from preeminent leader of the world super power to extremely unpopular departing president. The subtitle: “Into the Darkness” alludes to Bush’s destination after office, ‘the Darkness’ signifying not only the irrelevance of post-incumbency, but the pain and confusion of a psychological unravelling. Bush’s passage into the darkness begins with him calling upon his god: God … are you with me? The voice that replies is dark of tone and offers no reassurance: Comfort and hope will fade and die away – with you at my side! Through his religiously rooted perceptual framework, Bush senses the presence of the evil doer – or the Christian ‘devil.’ He mouths a line from the Bible (23rd Psalm) in defence, but his voice morphs into the daemon’s (courtesy of a pitch shifting effect that is described below). This device is intended to give the first clue that he and the daemon are one and the same. This truth is then reinforced by the daemon’s revelation that: What you call evil lives in the shadow of your own heart and we are one! By promising him the madness of sorrow and pain, Bush’s conscience effectively refuses to grant him forgiveness for his abuses of high office.

Thus condemned, Bush initially seeks to justify his actions. A montage of flashbacks to various infamous events during his tenure sets the scene for this. Thereafter, each of his rationalisations are refuted by the daemon, until Bush is left with no recourse but to acknowledge responsibility: I am responsible for all the atrocities. I got bloodstained fingers … I’ve hurt too many people. I did not tell the truth. These admissions lead to psychological breakdown: I am lost. I … I … I … cannot deal with it. I’m sick – I’m tired in my mind and soul. As he departs into the depths of madness and irrelevance, Bush is haunted by visions: of destruction and tragedy, a closing net of doom. Fires burning, huge structures collapsing ….

Although this piece represents something of a departure from my original concept of a ‘redeemed’ Bush character, it does not ultimately negate the transformation that “Redemption” imagined. While vestiges of the unreformed Bush resurface – in the evangelical certitude that evil is real!, the fantasy of divine bidding (in the ruins of the Twin Towers I heard a calling …), and his rationalisations of the Iraq invasion, these may be seen as the final death throes of the old Bush. They do not survive the critical scrutiny to which the daemon – who, after all, is a part of Bush –

subjects them. “Legacy” allows the fantasy of transmutation, effected through processes of self-
reflection and contrition, but ultimately denies Bush redemption.

Producing “Legacy (Into the Darkness)”

Online collaboration

“Legacy” is unusual within this project in that it comprises a collaborative component. Some
musical elements included in the piece were contributed by ‘Enlightened Fool’, one of the
MySpace ‘friends’ of RogueSounds. The artist requested that I try incorporating political speech
samples into some of his compositions. In return he would attempt to remix “The Redemption
of George W”. I was eager to follow up on this offer as it provided a perfect example of the
artist interactions that can be facilitated by online networks. EF, as I shall refer to him hereafter,
sent six MP3s to me as email attachments. I used excerpts from three of the pieces in “Legacy”:
“Lost Inside Myself”, “Comfort Comes, Comfort Goes” and “Götva”. The aptness of these
pieces to the mood of “Legacy” was fortuitous, as shall be related below.

The music in “Legacy” takes a more filmic approach than the other works; it does not use beats
to create a rhythmic vehicle for its narrative, but rather, underscores arrhythmic vocal deliveries
with textural colours in much the same way as film music is commonly used to suggest or
enhance atmospheres suggested by visual imagery. It comprises three sections:

1. A lengthy introductory section, based around a simple piano part that underscores Bush’s
initial conversation with his daemon. This is coloured, variously, by sampled vocals,
strings and B4 organ. Bush’s effected voice, saying Into the darkness, the darkness is
introduced here, and is motivic throughout the piece.

2. A middle section, featuring excerpts from two of EF’s works, beginning with “Comfort
Comes, Comfort Goes”, which is cross-faded into “Götva.” These parts alone
underscore the first ninety seconds of the section. They are then joined by staccato string
parts. The section ends with arco strings and church organ.

3. The final section, featuring mellotron flutes and low frequency rumbles, both of the latter
provided by excerpts of EF’s pieces: “Comfort Comes, Comfort Goes” and “Lost Inside
Myself”. The effected Bush voice motif also contributes to the low frequency rumble.

129 www.myspace.com/enlightenedfool
Key musical elements

As is so often the case in creating music within a DAW environment, serendipity played a role in the conceptual path followed by “Legacy”. In my initial search for sound bites to portray Bush’s ultimate descent into irrelevance and madness I collected samples of several of his more reflective utterances, some of which are direct quotations from Christian scriptures (the excerpt from Psalm 23 for example). One of these samples: Lift your eyes and look to the heavens, happened to be inadvertently moved onto a channel that had an open auxiliary send to a pitch shift effect. The resulting vocal timbre, pitched down just over four semitones, struck me as sounding other worldly. It suggested possibilities for giving a voice to either a god-like or a demonic figure. In the end I internalised the daemon, making it a part of Bush’s psyche. However, this internalisation went beyond the merely conceptual; when I couldn’t find samples of certain words by Bush, I attempted to use other voices – my own included – but these failed to yield the required timbre. Some frequency in Bush’s voice responded to the pitch shifting so that it cut through the mix in a way that others simply didn’t, no matter how much frequency sculpting I applied.

Section 1 is based upon a simple piano part in G minor (Figure 6.16). The tonal centre moves from G, down a half step, then returns to G, the tonic notes harmonised by descending major and minor 6th. Both the presence of the major 7th (in bar three) and the semitone descent serve to evoke for me a slightly mysterious – even psychologically disturbed – atmosphere (similar to that suggested by the piano part in “Quickening”). When I described the progression as ‘slightly spooky’ to a friend, she replied: “no, it’s not spooky, it’s sad.” This combination seemed to qualify the part perfectly for an underpinning to Bush’s descent into “the Darkness.”

130 These religiously themed utterances – which I found in the aforementioned online Bush speech archive – were originally sourced from a speech made by Bush in the wake of the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster of 2003, which claimed the lives of seven astronauts.
This theme is initially stated simply, as notated in Figure 6.16. In the plentiful space between the notes Bush plaintively announces his ‘lostness’ while allowing interjections from John Howard and Hilary Clinton. The air of finality in Howard’s cheerful reminder to Bush that *yeah … it’s all over* is intended to add weight to the finality of Bush’s demise. Hilary Clinton’s words: *[there’s] no way we’ll suffer through more failed leadership* roundly condemn Bush while fixing the piece chronologically. The wordless singing – sampled soprano and tenor – bestow a grave, almost religious ambience, especially due to the lower pitched male voices, which are reminiscent of Gregorian Chant. The theme is repeated, this time with strings adding complexity to the harmonic structure, and a church-like organ maintaining the religious connotation. On the third and final stating of the theme, trilled piano notes enunciate the upper voices, their dynamism adding a sense of drama. The trills eventually take up a descending progression that ushers in the beginning of Bush’s ‘descent.’ They climax in a cadence from suspended 4th to major chord on the dominant (D) of the key of G minor.

The Bush phrase: *Into the darkness, the darkness* serves a motivic function in the piece. The phrase is effected with a vocal shaping algorithm, via a free plugin by Solid State Logic called ‘X-Orcism: Voices From the Crypt.’ With fortuitous timing, I received the email offering the plugin

---

131 Clinton’s voice became available for enlistment into the project courtesy of her prominent battle with Obama for the Democratic nomination during 2007-08.
Section 2 begins with the opening sequence of EF’s piece: “Comfort Comes, Comfort Goes”. The gently sweeping filters and low mechanical drone underscore a sonic montage of sound bites from Bush’s presidency, designed to preface his subsequent conversation with the daemon. When the latter character enters, the music becomes more urgent, with the introduction of an insistent vibraphone ostinato in the key of C minor (Figure 6.17).

When Bush begins to recount the calamities engendered by his war on terror, stabbing staccato string notes musically etch out the tragic loss of life. They enter alongside the “Götva” piece, beginning another ostinato in the E phrygian mode, courtesy of a modulation to the key of C major. Behind this are garbled voices: the soprano and tenor samples from the introduction, now subject to wild pitch bends that render them as sounds of human suffering. The string ostinato gradually builds in note density before arco strings and church organ cross-fade in; this cadence, notated in Figure 6.18, uses the same chords as in Section 1, thus leading the piece back to the original key of G minor.

Section 3 uses a variation of the original theme, played this time with sparsely figured sampled mellotron flutes. The part (Figure 6.19) was played within the Reason software, using the Abbey Roads Keyboards refill. The flute sound is sampled from the famous mellotron flute that opens

---

132 The formant of a voice defines the resonance frequencies of the vocal tract. Altering the formant in a given voice can effect significant changes in its sound; a male voice can, for instance, be made to sound female by such an alteration (or vice versa).

155
The Beatles song, “Strawberry Fields Forever” (1967). The opening words of “Strawberry Fields”: *Won't you take me down …* are perhaps subconsciously recalled by the mellotron, reinforcing the theme of descent. The part’s rhythmic feel also pays homage to the original Beatles song.

Bush’s final departure is signified by a montage of echoing phrases. This was constructed by sending Bush’s speech to three different delay effects via auxiliary sends. The delay modules were set to different times and automated to come in and out so as to create a gradually more dense montage, while allowing space for each new phrase. Beneath this, EF’s third piece: “Lost Inside Myself” provided ominous low frequency rumbles in breath-like waves.

**Track 7**

**“Mouth Music”**

*I think that the bigger the pain, the more gods we need.*

John Lennon (in Gilmore, 2005, online)

*We are given to the cult of personality; when things go badly we look to some messiah to save us. If by chance we think we have found one, it will not be long before we destroy him.*

Constantine Karamanlis

**Background**

The two pieces: “Legacy (Into the Darkness)” and “Mouth Music” form a logical sequence, the former chronicling the passing of the Bush presidency, the latter, the induction of Barack Obama as US President. Apart from marking a passage of significant events, “Mouth Music”

---

provided an opportunity to intervene in the complex discourse that throughout 2008 had
developed around the political ascent of Obama. The primary focus of this discourse centred
upon the new president’s racial background; the symbolic power of having the first African
American in the Whitehouse fed into narratives regarding the power of America’s democracy,
many commentators suggesting that Obama’s victory heralded an era of ‘post racial’ politics.\textsuperscript{134}
Such celebratory readings did not, however, go unchallenged. Writing in the Los Angeles Times,
Shelby Steele, a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University (and also an
African American), acknowledged the “national obsession” with the “unprecedented
convergence of dark skin and ultimate power” represented by Obama’s election victory (Steele,
2008, online). Steele’s own interpretation of Obama’s meteoric rise was, however, more complex.
He proposed that, far from demonstrating the redundancy of race as an issue in contemporary
America, Obama had made the US election \textit{all about} race by intuitively harnessing white
America’s collective longing to leave behind the stigmatisation of racism. By projecting an ideal
of a post racial society – one that hung upon him being elected as president – Obama
determined that the election would be fought on cultural rather than political grounds. Shelby’s
view articulated the conceptual thinking behind my creation of “Mouth Music”. Feeling that race
was far from superfluous in the collective psyche of American voters, I sought to highlight
Obama’s African heritage rather than downplay it.

A collective longing to be unshackled from the yoke of stigma may have been one ingredient in
the euphoria surrounding Obama’s political ascent, but another – and certainly less speculative –
factor was the deep antipathy held by many Americans for the failed Bush presidency. This, and
the magnitude of the financial crisis sweeping across America and the rest of the world,
coincided to generate almost unprecedented levels of optimism for the incoming Obama
administration, whose platform rested upon the promise of ‘change.’ Although I was not
unmoved by the historical resonance of Obama’s rise to office, I saw no need to create yet
another celebratory reading of the event; the piece needed some other viewpoint – a cautionary
voice that not only pointed to the possibility of Obama failing to meet high expectations, but
also suggested a degree of unreality to these expectations. Indeed, at the time of writing these
words, less than a year into Obama’s first term, the media reports growing dissatisfaction with
the Obama presidency among his constituency. One Washington correspondent for an

\textsuperscript{134} See, for instance: \url{http://online.wsj.com/article/SB1226275844403012071.html?mod=googlenews_wsj}; and
\url{http://www.racewire.org/archives/2008/11/cornel_west_on_a_postracial_am.html}. 

157
Australian newspaper recently reported that in the face of intractable wars, financial crisis and difficulties in passing his legislation through Congress, “the burden of lofty expectations he helped create on the campaign trail last year weighs heavily on the first African-American president” (Norington, 2009, The Weekend Australian, Oct 31-Nov 1 ‘Inquirer’: 1).

What dreams are made of
I perceived an almost child-like naivety to the hopes placed upon Obama’s shoulders; despite a grasp of rhetorical flourish reminiscent of Martin Luther King, he remained a relatively politically untried actor. This surfeit of optimism in relation to Obama guided me when searching for an approach by which to enter the discourse that surrounded him.

There was, undeniably, a contagious quality to Obama’s rallying call for change, which I believed the piece needed to represent. To capture this quality I sequenced selections of Obama’s most rousing oratory to various musical backings. My attempts to offset this euphoric response yielded yet another example of serendipity entering the creative process. When searching my computer hard drive for a musical sample, I discovered some recordings I had made years earlier of my then seven year old daughter and her nine year old friend singing. The older girl was singing the Hilary Duff pop song: “What Dreams Are Made Of” (2003), the younger, a self-penned tune that contained the line: I wish I could fly. The unaccompanied singing of both girls was tuneful enough to allow the creation of satisfactory harmonic relationships with a suitable backing, yet their shaky intonations and thin timbres clearly conveyed their youthfulness. The content of their songs extended this unworldly innocence into naïve hopefulness. This fortuitous discovery led me to seek out other samples of children expressing their optimism for the incoming president. As shall be described below, the Internet again proved to be a wellspring of such examples.

The children’s voices in “Mouth Music” were designed to add a satirical, cautionary note to the widespread hope that all of the wrongs of the immediate past could be righted by this charismatic and historically significant new leader. I was aware, however, that the satire might be lost on some listeners. In his on-air comments after playing “Mouth Music” on his show Sound

135 My title, “Mouth Music” was inspired by an article with this same title: a review of In Our Time: The Speeches that Shaped the Modern World, edited by Hywel Williams Quercus, that appeared in The Weekend Australian, 7th March 2009, p. 14, Review.
Quality, Tim Ritchie referred to it as “a more optimistic offering”\textsuperscript{136} compared to previous RogueSounds tracks he had aired, although he conceded that it could be received as the opposite. Because of these comments I decided to add some more clues to consolidate the cautionary tone intended. The voice of Republican presidential candidate John McCain contributes to three of these added clues, first by ominously referring to the hopes resting on the new incumbent as “high expectations.” He then frames an Obama statement within a ‘style over substance’ argument, calling it “an example of the eloquence of Senator Obama.”\textsuperscript{137} Then, after Obama’s climactic speech towards the end of the piece, McCain’s oozes sarcasm with his designation of Obama as: “a man known as … ‘the one’”. A final cautionary clue was added at the end of the piece, when Obama is heard to utter the words: “war must be an option.” The echoes of this phrase blend with the young girl’s sung words: “I wish I could fly … .” An innocent’s playful fantasy is transformed into a wistful, almost despairing longing to escape a world in which, regardless of which brand of the partisan divide holds the reins, it is business as usual.

The diminished role of Bush
Notwithstanding the historical significance of the Obama ascension, the change of leadership in the US had major implications for this project. George Bush’s departure from the world stage meant he could no longer claim the primary focus that, despite his appeal to mashup artists,\textsuperscript{138} I believed needed to remain firmly fixed on the machinery of power. Nevertheless, Bush’s presence is felt in the piece, as a voice of experience and compassion who warns that Obama will sometimes be disappointed at the criticism aimed at him.

Producing “Mouth Music”

“Mouth Music” makes extensive use of samples in both its spoken narrative and its musical construction. Several musical samples, sourced both from CDs and the Internet were incorporated into the piece, which comprises five sections:

\textsuperscript{136} Sound Quality, 8\textsuperscript{th} May 2009. Sound Quality is a weekly show devoted to non-mainstream music on Australia’s Radio National station.

\textsuperscript{137} This was a tactic McCain used repeatedly in attempts to undermine Obama’s credibility during the campaign.

\textsuperscript{138} This appeal is discussed earlier in this chapter in the section ‘Imagining Redemption’, in which I analyse the creative process that gave rise to “The Redemption of George W”.

159
1. A brief introduction, in which an abstract soundscape and an effected version of the mellotron part from “Legacy (Into the Darkness)” play beneath samples of a young girl singing and a media commentator.

2. An extended section in which an African marimba ostinato intertwines with a descending sampled melodic loop to form a texture that underscores Obama’s introductory narrative. This textural bed is punctuated in places by various atmospheric sounds and sampled African singing. A second young girl’s voice intones parts of the above-mentioned Hilary Duff song, which serves as a motif throughout most of the piece. The descending loop eventually fades out, leaving the marimba part, upon which an African rhythm track briefly stamps its groove, before the section suddenly morphs into an African choir.

3. Over the choir, the girl’s singing is again heard, forming new harmonic relationships between her melody and the backing. The singing then serves as a bridge out of this section, the motivic line: “this is what dreams are made of” sounding over a sample of an African-flavoured brass ensemble.

4. Amidst riotous applause, the final section of Obama’s “Audacity of Hope” speech serves as an introduction to a song sung by a third young girl. The song is backed by bass guitar, sampled backing vocals, sampled conga drums and synthesiser tones. The latter eventually rise in pitch, bringing the song to its climax as Obama ends his speech.

5. The coda comprises a high synthesised pedal string note – a continuation of the rising strings that featured in Section 2. Each of the three singing girls can be heard as the African groove re-enters, then fades out to end the piece.

**Key musical elements**

**Section 1** is designed to portray the chaotic political and economic landscape in the immediate aftermath of the departing Bush administration. A heavily filtered version of the mellotron flute part that heralds Bush’s descent into ‘the Darkness’ in the preceding piece, “Legacy”, provides a link between that piece and this. In the background, an abstract soundscape evolves – irregular waves of sound comprising low frequency rumbles, filter sweeps and undulating high frequency harmonics were created using three separate synthesisers in the Reason programme. The bleak, abstract pad is intended to depict the subliminal chaos of a world that, behind the optimistic atmosphere surrounding the new political leader, is in economic upheaval. A young girl’s voice

---

139 This was the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic Convention.
suggests the passing of a dark era as she sings: *I looked behind me to see what was there. I looked back, and I got a scare*; a media commentator pronounces: *the world has been at a low ebb during the administration of George W. Bush.*

In **Section 2**, Obama enters the spoken narrative. Two disparate melodic figures intertwine to form the groove that underpins the section (notated in Figure 6.20).

![Figure 6.20. Intertwining sampled loops](image)

One part – the ‘Melodic Loop’ notated in Figure 6.20 – was sourced from a collection of melodic samples within Reason. It was added to the simple marimba loop to maintain the dissonance that the introduction had set up. The looped marimba ostinato is a segment of a longer piece: “Accralate”, sourced from a website hosting free downloads of royalty-free samples of African music.

**Downloading Africa**

“Accralate” features marimba and various African percussion instruments and is intended to point directly to what is arguably the most compelling attribute of Obama’s presidential success: his African ancestry. Knowing that Obama had Kenyan roots, I attempted to source some traditional Kenyan music online. This proved difficult and I ended up settling for some more ‘generic’ African samples (the site that hosted the “Accralate” instrumental made no reference to the specific origins of the piece). Some authentic Kenyan music can be heard in “Mouth Music”; the short bursts of male African singing that punctuate Obama’s phrases in Section 2

---

140 Obama’s father was Kenyan, a fact that Obama made reference to in a number of speeches leading up to his taking office. These speeches included: the ‘A More Perfect Union’ speech, delivered 18th March 2008, Philadelphia; his acceptance speech to the Democrat Convention for being nominated as the 2008 Democrat candidate; and a speech to the same convention in 2004, in which he endorsed John Kerry as the Democrat candidate.

were sampled from a YouTube video of The Kenyan Boys Choir preparing to travel to Washington D.C. to attend Obama’s inauguration ceremony.\footnote{The video ‘Kenyan Boys Choir Heads to DC for Inauguration’ was downloaded from YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TT_Hu1dBPs, January 2009.}

A time-stretched brass rendition of the American national anthem announces Obama’s entrance, its slowly descending pitch signifying the world-weary state of the superpower. Obama’s inspiring oratory draws a response from a young girl, who sings have you ever seen such a beautiful man?\footnote{The sung line was actually: “have you ever seen such a beautiful night?”, a line from “What Dreams Are Made Of,” but the girl’s blocked nose and shaky intonation contrived fortuitously to make the word “night” sound like “man.” Other lines from the girl’s rendition of the Hilary Duff recording are used in an attempt to portray the naïve idolatry that Obama was witnessed to inspire in many listeners.} The sung line was actually: “have you ever seen such a beautiful night?”, a line from “What Dreams Are Made Of,” but the girl’s blocked nose and shaky intonation contrived fortuitously to make the word “night” sound like “man.” Other lines from the girl’s rendition of the Hilary Duff recording are used in an attempt to portray the naïve idolatry that Obama was witnessed to inspire in many listeners.

As Obama’s words weave their spell of optimism, the dissonant sounds of an unsettled world continue to swirl in the background, serving as a grim reminder of the difficult situation Obama has inherited as leader. George Bush’s voice consolidates this with a warning that Obama will face harsh criticism at times.

As the melodic figure gradually fades out, the African flavour becomes steadily more concentrated; percussion elements – playing polyrhythmic patterns – enter while a pedal note on high C sounds on synthesised strings. Two more Internet-sourced samples of children are heard expressing their admiration for Obama.

In Section 3, the rhythmic groove suddenly morphs into the Drakensberg Boys’ Choir of South Africa, singing “Shosholoza.”\footnote{Downloaded from: http://beemp3.com/download.php?file=1967247&s=Shosholoza, January 2009.} “Shosholoza” is a traditional South African folk song. Aply, the word can be translated as “make way for the next man.” The transition was effected by applying a complex filtering plugin (Ohm Force’s ‘Hematohm’) to the groove, steadily increasing the effected signal while reducing the dry signal. The young girl’s singing (of “What Dreams Are Made Of”) provides both a link with the previous section, and then a bridge into the following section. This bridge is further supported by a brass ensemble, sampled from the track “Mamma” on Dollar Brand’s...
album, *African Marketplace* (1980). The brass ends in a burlesque flourish that underlines the almost absurd immensity of the task facing the new president. The Hematohm plugin again effects the transition, briefly reintroducing the groove from Section 2 by, this time, reducing the effected signal while increasing the ‘dry’ signal.

**Children for Obama: the online phenomenon**

As described above, my initial discovery of recordings of children singing inspired me to seek out more expressions of admiration for Obama by children. Googling the term: ‘children and Obama audio’ yielded a number of YouTube videos, most of which documented the preparations of various children’s groups to attend the upcoming inauguration ceremony. One of these videos contained the song which forms the basis for Section 4. In a video captioned: “Obama Kids Music Video – Cute or Creepy?”, a young girl sings the song unaccompanied, before the scene cuts to her school music class doing a choral rendition backed by piano. The song (the title of which is not given) and its performance by the solitary girl, perfectly expressed the ingenuous admiration I was seeking to capture. From another YouTube video, I sampled the chant: *hear Obama, ba ba ba …*, which I used as a backing vocal track to accompany the solitary girl singer.

I constructed a bass line to underpin the song; a simple four bar pattern moving from C down to A on straight eighth notes provided a heavy, dramatic offset to the ‘sweetness’ of the girls vocal performance. I gradually introduced percussive elements, and added complexity to the bass line, while a resonant synthesiser pad (constructed in Reason) steadily built in pitch and intensity to bring the backing – in step with yet another rousing example of Obama rhetoric – to a climax. The percussion track was constructed from sampled conga drum loops, in another direct reference to Obama’s African heritage.

Although the coda comprising Section 5 is short, its role is crucial in signifying the cautionary sentiments of the piece. After the rousing speech has died, along with its tumultuous conga backing, a single high C synthezsised string note sustains. The note sounds plaintive and starkly subdued after the exuberant drumming of the climax. The final words of the three solo girl

---

144 The YouTube video can be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtGrp5MbzAI.
145 This YouTube video was entitled: “Atlanta Kids Get Inaugural Surprise”, available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-x51_iud6Q.
singers overlap, the first suggesting that the hopes placed upon Obama’s shoulders are akin to a child’s flight of fancy: *I wish I could fly, up so high to catch that sun in the sky.* Set against Obama’s *War must be an option*, the echoes of the girl’s words: *I wish I could fly* … sound like a wistful yearning for escape.

**Track 8**  

**“Zeitgeist”**

*Great inequality—the super rich living side by side with the economically desperate—requires a hardening of the hearts … Capitalism can survive this crisis. But the world can’t survive another capitalist comeback.*

Naomi Klein (2009, online)

*Once I built a tower, up to the sun, brick, and rivet, and lime;  
Once I built a tower, now it’s done. Brother, can you spare a dime?*

E. Y. Harburg

**Background**

“Zeitgeist” was created as a direct response to the global economic crisis that began to dominate news media broadcasts in mid-2008. However, although the piece commented on that specific phenomenon – heralded by a breakdown in the global financial monetary system – its thematic direction was such that it would not have been out of place in this project in the absence of such a breakdown. The intention behind “Zeitgeist” was to characterise the crisis as being symptomatic of a political/economic malaise afflicting Western democracies. My thinking on this was echoed in three movies, which provided both my title for the piece and several samples. *Zeitgeist, the Movie* (Joseph, dir., 2007) and *Zeitgeist: Addendum* (Joseph, dir., 2008), both in online circulation, put forward the view that the current political/socioeconomic system relies upon inequity for its successful functioning. The third film, *The American Ruling Class* (Kirby, dir., 2007), proposes that the guardians of this system represent a ‘ruling class’ composed of individuals who have inordinate access to wealth and opportunity, based upon membership of a coterie of wealthy, powerful family groups. My composition considers the current crisis as a point in a process that has three main stages, each of which corresponds to a section of the piece.

---

146 From the song “Brother Can You Spare a Dime?” (1931), lyrics by E. Y. Harburg, music by Jay Gorney.

147 Both films are available for free download at http://www.zeitgeistmovie.com/.
The three moments of economic crisis

In the first part I echo the assertion of the film, *The American Ruling Class*,148 that proposes the existence of a network of super wealthy elites – referred to as the ‘ruling class.’ This part utilises a collage of speech samples from the movie to suggest that entry to the world of the wealthy elite depends less upon the meritocratic functioning of democracies than on membership – based largely upon family bloodlines – of a certain class. Statements regarding the profound inequity in the global distribution of wealth: *The top ten percent own seventy two percent of the wealth … The top one percent owns more than the bottom ninety percent* are intended to suggest that democracy’s claims of egalitarianism may serve to obscure the existence of such a formation of powerful, influential individuals.

The second part of “Zeitgeist” uses media samples to paint a picture of the dire nature of the financial crisis as it descended upon the world in late 2008 and early 2009. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s moralistic rumblings combine with Kevin Rudd’s Christian-tinged social democrat critique of the ‘ungodly excesses’ of the free market economy to point out the irony of the ‘outrage’ expressed by Western leaders at the shortcomings of a system they had happily supported – until its failure.149 The section includes references to the civic unrest that accompanied the financial meltdown, conveyed via samples of protestors at the April 2009 G20 meeting in London. The angry expressions of unruly crowds are intended as portents of the social chaos that could quickly follow the collapse of current structures governing supplies of food, energy and finance.

The third and final part of the piece uses media samples to reflect upon some factors that contributed to the crisis. Here the focus is on the US, whose sub-prime mortgage crisis is widely regarded as being the catalyst for the global financial downturn that ensued.150 Ex-President

---

148 Excerpts from the film are available on YouTube. The samples I used were sourced from a clip entitled “Who Owns America?” available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWgAzgP5fko, accessed 17th March 2009.

149 The irony is only extended by the knowledge that most of the large corporations that teetered on the brink of collapse continued to be supported by massive government stimulus packages in the wake of their descents into insolvency.

George W. Bush stands condemned for his fiscal recklessness, in particular his big spending on the war on terror and his refusal to raise the taxes of the wealthy.

In this part I also proffer a critical view on the widespread use of government ‘stimulus packages’ as attempts to promote continued consumer spending. This is effected mainly through extensive sampling of the words of Peter Schiff, President and Chief Global Strategist of EuroPacific, a global investment strategies company. Schiff has emerged as something of a seer since the crisis began, when it was noted that he had accurately and persistently predicted the recession since 2002.\textsuperscript{151} Through the words of Schiff and other commentators I express the idea that governments are too focused upon their continued tenure to inflict the periods of hardship that are required of their populaces in order to rebuild healthy, responsible economies.

Producing “Zeitgeist”

“Zeitgeist” spans a range of styles; its three major parts express the genres of sound and speech collage, groove-based electronica and orchestral music, respectively. Both the groove based and orchestral parts each comprise two distinct sections, making a total of five sections:

1. Apart from two instances of synthesised string chords, the introductory section is comprised solely of sampled material – the majority from a single film. Other samples were used: the soundtrack to an advertisement – also sourced online – and a short section from a CD recording of an operatic piece. Sampled theme music from an American evening news programme serves as a bridge out of the collage section.

2. This section introduces the groove based part of the piece. As speech samples depict the onset of the financial crisis, a distorted bass guitar plays a dramatic melody, doubled by a B4 organ. Behind this, a low percussive loop establishes a preliminary rhythm. A broad filter sweep creates a descending tone, after which two bass guitars – playing harmonising lines – join a drum rhythm.

3. The main groove of the middle part, consisting of a bass guitar, programmed drums and a rhythmic ostinato.

\textsuperscript{151} A large number of YouTube videos documenting Schiff’s financial prescience are now in circulation. See, for instance, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdVP_sgCETo&feature=related.
4. The first orchestral section comprises short, dramatically stated orchestral phrases separated by long spaces. Filling these spaces are speech samples, sound effects and angry crowd sounds.

5. The final section continues with orchestral samples, this time beginning with long arco bass and cello notes before building to more complex textures that feature brass, woodwind and string sounds.

Key musical elements
The primary theme that permeates “Zeitgeist” is descent; the piece responds to a severe downward spiralling of global financial markets. To allude to this musically, certain elements within the mix were treated with a high quality pitch change effect which contained a delay unit. Using a long delay time and a high feedback setting, even a small amount of downward pitch change (for example, 30 cents) resulted in a sustained sound that would steadily descend in pitch.

In Section 1, the slow pulse that initially underpins the speech samples was created by looping a short section of background music from the film The American Ruling Class. Notwithstanding that the film is a musical, it also has a densely underscored soundtrack. Thus, nearly all of the speech samples used in this section had audible music behind them. However, because I was also using sampled backing music from the film as my primary musical underscore for the section, the speech samples integrated easily into the collage backing for the section. In two places, synthesised string chords, symbolising old, trusted structures, arc slowly downward in pitch, evoking tension and hinting at the collapse of these structures. The operatic soprano singing was sampled from the ‘Flower Duet’ in a recording of Léo Delibes’ 1883 opera Lakmé (1996). This sample harmonises with a copy of itself, pitched down a perfect 5th so as to impart a darker colour to the otherwise mellifluous melodies. Operatic music was chosen because of its strong association with elite, conservative culture (Dimaggio, 1992). The strident news theme is from the US CBS Evening News programme.152 The exultant brass flourish descends in pitch at its conclusion, musically symbolising the reports of economic descent prefaced by the theme.

In Section 2, as various political and media commentators announce the emergence of the crisis, a bass guitar figure rises and falls on the E flat minor scale. Its dramatic echoing of the dire

nature of the scenario is heightened by the use of heavy distortion and the inclusion of a diminished 5th note (A natural) in the descending line (Figure 6.21). A B4 organ reinforces the drama by doubling the bass notes.

Adding weight in the background is a percussive bass figure, created by applying bass guitar amplifier and delay effects to a simple pattern using the sampled guitar harmonics (mentioned earlier in production notes for “Rendering Babylon”). The driving rhythmic content and dark tonal colour of the resulting loop (notated in Figure 6.22) is designed to carry the momentum of the drama of the emerging crisis – as reported in the media sound bites – in the absence of drum sounds, thereby leaving room for further building of energy when the drums enter the mix.

The final E in the bass sequence in Figure 6.21 is allowed to sustain until it decays away – over nearly four bars. This note was copied to another track before being reversed. A filter was then applied to the reversed version, resulting in the descending overtone that sweeps down to introduce the two harmonising bass lines that lead into the main groove.

In Section 3, a slightly distorted bass line featuring staccato 16th notes underpins a four bar ostinato that, anchoring on the tonic of Eb on each upbeat, moves sequentially from minor 6th, perfect 5th, dominant 7th to major 6th on the down beats (see Figure 6.23). The ostinato sequence again made use of the sampled guitar harmonics which, when overdriven and equalised, delivered a suitably percussive sound that cut through the mix. The cyclic quality of the ostinato was designed to convey the unrelenting nature of the spread of the financial crisis across the
Chapter 6. Words Noted

globe. The bass figure left plenty of space around the second beat of each bar to allow the heavily compressed snare sound to break through. Parallel compression was used to give extra weight to the drum track, which was programmed in iZotope’s ‘iDrums’, a software drum machine. The attack and release times of the heavily compressed version were set to allow the volume of the snare sound to snap back up in a timing that harmonised with the tempo of the section. This aggressive drum and bass groove was chosen to underscore the sections of narrative that portrayed anger – both in British Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s chiding of the financial institutions, and in the heated commentaries provided by protestors from the London G20 meeting.

Figure 6.23. Bass guitar and guitar harmonics ostinato

Section 4 serves as a musical segue between the groove-based preceding section and the final orchestral section. Its three short, sampled orchestral string phrases (sourced from a Reason refill) effect the stylistic transition while retaining the energy necessary to underscore the final samples of civic unrest. The phrases were cut up and, in places, pitch-split, adding to the original melody a transposed version a perfect 5th below. This pitch-splitting was intended to introduce a slightly ‘burlesque’ element as the narrative begins to lampoon first the ‘self interest’ of ‘the corporatocracy,’ and then the dearth of political ideas regarding what might replace the failed system – as expressed by Brown’s and what comes in its place? and Bush’s reply: no one knows. The phrases begin with cellos on the third of the tonic: G flat minor. After a pitch-split version of the same phrase, an answering phrase moves back to the tonic, followed by a further variation on the tonic.

Section 5 again made use of the Reason software, but this time using a software sampler and high quality orchestral samples. In the key of G minor, the slow, almost funereal music underscores the hard truths proposed by the various sampled commentators who intone on the difficulty of recovery from economic crisis. The initial harmonies (notated in Figure 6.24) utilise the dark tones of bowed basses and celli playing a minor 6th apart to create the required
mournfulness. A pitch splitting effect – using a downward shift of a perfect fifth – is applied to certain sections to impart a ‘darker,’ more ominous atmosphere.

![Mournful string harmonies](image)

The texture gradually thickens with the entry of oboe, higher strings, brass and woodwinds. Although mournful, the harmonies remain consonant for the first twenty bars, after which a descending progression begins. Following the first cycle of this, the harmonies become increasingly dissonant, signifying the chaos and confusion of populations faced with a painful period of healing from their economic woes. The dissonance is created primarily by the pitting of chromatically ascending violas (mostly doubled by violins) – harmonised by trombones – against chromatically descending cellos, with basses cycling in a descending four bar pattern. The horns and trumpets play rising and falling melodies, as does the oboe – playing the main melody.

**Track 9**

“Over and Out”

All significant truths are private truths.  
As they become public they cease to become truths;  
they become facts, or at best, part of the public character;  
or at worst, catchwords.

T. S. Eliot (in Dettmar, 2009: 368)

You need to know I know we have needs here at home.

Background

“Over and Out” is the final piece in the project. I chose a light-hearted approach to effect the closure to a collection that, although containing its moments of levity, was infused with predominantly heavy themes. In some ways, the substantial time span covered by the project contributed to this decision; after seeing so many of my pivotal characters relegated to political history, and, given the benefit of the hindsight needed to measure their rhetorical promises against their actual deeds, I became more convinced than ever that the primary consideration for most politicians is the maintenance of their tenuously held power. The idea of turning the final piece into a farce in which the various characters try to ‘out-pun’ each other was inspired by noticing – in the course of poring over so many of their speeches – just how much our leaders do engage in word play.153

The music used for the piece was based on a chord progression for a song I wrote early in 2006, with a view to having it serve as a vehicle for some future political narrative within the project. The intractable ‘war on terror’ had inspired the opening lines: “In the darkness of the night, when hope has faded from our sight, in our hearts we know the fight shall never really end.” As events moved on and the anti-terror war, while continuing, began to claim less media bandwidth, the half-written song struck me as being suitable to underscore the vision outlined above.

Setting the scene for a ‘Pun Off’

Obama’s opening lines are unedited. The sentence was only available as an extremely low fidelity recording, but it was included because it perfectly captures the spirit of the piece that follows: People have been beaten down for so long, and they feel so betrayed by government that when they hear a pitch that is premised on not being cynical about government, there’s a part of them that just doesn’t buy it. Obama’s observation may be remarkable for its lack of political spin. The piece is, in fact, bookended by such sentiments; conservative Australian talk-back radio presenter Alan Jones echoes Obama’s words with another unedited quote in the outro section: Sometimes you wonder don’t you whether politicians genuinely understand or are even interested in the cynicism and skepticism that they breed in the electorate. Kevin Rudd’s second verse apology for the duplicities and vanities of politicians is in fact directed to this long-suffering electorate. Rudd’s apology also serves to prise open the well of his verbosity, which he begins to demonstrate with a clutch of clichés such as: fashion the future,

---

153 Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd appears to excel in this practice; his aptness for alliteration and wordplay – possibly a legacy of his background as a diplomat – secured him a prominent role in the piece.
and seize the day. From there, the content descends into various degrees of farcical fun, comprising gratuitous alliteration, equally gratuitous rhyming, as well as streetwise slang from George Bush.

Bush, after only a nominal role in the preceding “Zeitgeist”, takes centre stage again in “Over and Out”. He initially mouths the above-mentioned opening lines to the song, but with a twist – declaring that in our hearts we know the hype shall never really end. When the punning commences, Bush takes on the role of a ‘hip’ master of ceremonies, introducing the various ‘contestants’ as they ply their trades as worthy wordsmiths. He then raises the stakes, suggesting a more focused approach to the proceedings with: Okay – let’s break it down … before announcing the goal: The aim here is to pun. To pun like you never have done. Yeah … uh huh. Then, not to be outdone by his eloquent successor – or the Australian Prime Minister – Bush enters the fray, ‘spitting rhymes’ with his contemporaries.154

Producing “Over and Out”

The first half of “Over and Out” loosely follows a verse/chorus song structure. It then transforms into a cycling progression featuring various instrumental changes. In total it comprises six sections:

1. An introduction, on solo finger-picked ukulele.
2. A ‘first verse’ section backed by acoustic guitar, harmonica and a synthesised pad.
3. A second verse and first chorus, featuring a ‘band’ feel comprising electric and bass guitars and programmed drums.
4. A longer section that begins with a third verse – the instrumentation thinning back to picked ukulele and electric guitar backed by hummed harmony vocals – followed by a brief reintroduction of the ‘band’ feel. Various disparate sounds then intrude upon the song structure before the song feel returns briefly before the section ends.
5. The penultimate section is also long and features a repeating variation on the earlier song’s descending progression. Hip hop-style electronic beats and a funky bass line replace the band-like backing of the earlier sections. Electric guitars and synthesised sounds weave in and out, lending textural variety to the music.

154 ‘Spitting rhymes’ is an insiders’ expression for rapping.
6. The final section reverts to the initial sparse ukulele part, backed by harmonica and looped to fade out.

**Key musical elements**

The playful aesthetic that directed “Over and Out” is epitomised by **Section 1**, the introduction. The verse progression from the original song is picked on a solo ukulele, an instrument that is often associated with light-hearted play. The progression, in the key of C major (notated in Figure 6.25), moves from C down to A7 via a chromatic descent from the tonic. It then moves to the II chord – D minor – and descends from its tonic down the scale to resolve on G, via Gsus4.

![Figure 6.25. Verse Progression](image-url)

**In Section 2** the first verse is strummed on acoustic guitar; a miked version is panned left, while a DIed version – to add a slightly harder edge to the signal – is panned right. The high frequencies were cut from the miked track to enhance the solidity of the guitar sound, and to make it sit more easily with the speech samples. The bluesy harmonica line adds a maudlin air of sadness to echo the lyrics.

**In Section 3** the verse chords are repeated, but this time with a ‘band’ feel, created by replacing the acoustic guitar with an electric and adding bass guitar and programmed drums. In keeping with the light-hearted approach guiding this composition, I decided to emulate a slightly rough backing band to support the politicians’ initial forays into gratuitous alliteration. The drums were, therefore, kept as natural sounding as possible, their ‘live performance’ sounds sourced from a sampled Tama kit within XLN Audio’s ‘Addictive Drums’ programme. No compression or equalisation was applied to the drum sounds.

---

155 The DIed (direct input) signal was sent via a guitar lead from the guitar’s magnetic pickup into the preamp.
A sample of “Rule Britannia”\textsuperscript{156} cameos beneath British Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s (unedited) alliterative efforts. Equally unexpectedly, orchestral stabs break into the song structure to suggest a cabaret setting for Barack Obama’s exploration of the letter ‘p’. Together with Bush’s MC-like lauding of Obama’s effort and the sampled enthusiastic applause, the music points to the US President’s celebrity ‘star’ status, so well documented in the media.\textsuperscript{157} The piano part uses Reason refill samples of the honky tonk piano heard in The Beatles’ song “Penny Lane” (1967). Its bright, rough tone seemed apposite for the desired light heartedness. It provides a lilting four bar bridge back into the end of the section.

**Section 5** introduces an eight-bar bass pattern (notated in Figure 6.26) that cycles throughout the section. The syncopated pattern is based on a variation of the original song; it echoes the song’s descent from the C tonic down to A. To give the bass prominence it was doubled on a Roland JV1080 ‘nylon bass’ patch and, after the first cycle, also on an emulation of a Moog bass sound. It is punctuated by electronic drums, programmed in iDrum’s ‘IsoDrums’ application.

![Figure 6.26. Bass pattern underscoring alliterative ‘pun-off’](image)

Chord strikes, rhythm strums and blues runs on electric guitar, together with Reason-sourced synthesiser tones, add variety to the texture.

\textsuperscript{156} The music was written by Thomas Arne in 1740. The sample used here was attributed to a recording of an Edward Elgar orchestral arrangement of the theme, downloaded from http://onionen.se/pub/Military%20-%20Edward%20-%20Rule%20Britannia.mp3, accessed 14\textsuperscript{th} April 2009.

For Section 5 the ukulele part from the introduction was re-recorded – without the ritardando so it could be looped. It fades out, backed by the earlier harmonica part, as my political protagonists proffer their parting pronouncements. Fittingly, George Bush closes proceedings by uttering the title: Over … and out. His final playful chuckle seems to imply that nothing – and certainly not the words of politicians – should be taken too seriously.

Conclusion

The above analyses have retraced the creative studio processes that gave rise to the RogueSounds pieces, the collection of creative artifacts that form the research outcomes of this project. Through the detailed charting of this phase of the research journey I have attempted to illuminate the “professional artistry” (Higgs, 2001: 50) that has been implemented in its undertaking. The above recreations of studio practice reveal not only the conceptual thinking and technical skills that such artistry must embody, but also the access to the intuitive dimensions of knowing that compositional processes constantly draw upon (ibid.). Fluidity in the interplay between concept and process, between theory and practice, has been maintained in an effort to create works that have responded to topical events as they have occurred, in musically adventurous and diverse ways.

* * * * *

Within the context of this research project, the nine political mashup pieces analysed above have been presented as constituting agency in relation to prevailing power structures – as elucidated in Chapter 3, The Problem of Power. However, the creative artifacts alone do not fulfill this claim. As argued in Chapter 3, claims of agency via political mashup rest upon both content and a broad spectrum of processes that encompasses production, distribution and reception phases. Having now recreated the practical and creative studio processes that gave rise to the music, the following chapter concludes this exegesis by revisiting the broader agentic claims for the work, beginning with how these claims relate to issues and procedures that attended the distribution and reception of the music. Through this discussion I consolidate my earlier argument that the project not only constitutes agency in relation to hegemonic powers, but more importantly, in its entirety, drafts a template for new forms of cultural production that seek to free themselves from the coercive institutions that govern the current socio-economic/political milieu.
Chapter 7
Cultural Production, Agency and the Future of Imagined Futures

Today time is split between a present that is already dead and a future that is already living—and the yawning abyss between them is becoming enormous. In time an event will thrust us like an arrow into that living future. This will be the real political act of love.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004: 358)

My senses newly opened I awakened to the cry that the people have the power to redeem the work of fools upon the meek the graces shower, it's decreed the people rule

Patti Smith, “People Have the Power” (1988)

To Give and to Receive: Distribution, Reception, and Feedback

In a recent newspaper article, Nick Galvin wrote the following:

In the 1950s more than 40 million American adults sat down simultaneously to watch I Love Lucy each week. From the standpoint of the networked 21st century, the concept of a compliant mass audience watching only what CBS wanted to show at a given time appears quaint if not downright bizarre.


In the freely downloadable documentary, Good Copy Bad Copy (2007), Lawrence Lessig, the author of Free Culture (2004) says the following:

57 percent of teenagers have created and shared content on the internet. That’s not peer to peer file sharing — that’s about 99%. This is people actually creating material and making it
These two quotes have in common an awareness of a paradigmatic shift taking place in the ways cultural artifacts are created, transmitted and received. Galvin’s observation alludes to the Internet’s role as a network-facilitating structure. It also alludes to a shift away from the model in which a “compliant mass audience” consumes what a select group of cultural producers decides it shall consume, to a model that sees citizens as more active participants in the ongoing creation of culture. Lessig’s comment shares with Galvin’s an admission of the ‘bizarreness’ of such a model from the perspective of those raised within the traditional, clear-cut, producer/consumer paradigm. However, Lessig also extends the earlier comment by arguing that the emerging tide of cultural participation, in which the boundaries between producer and consumer are increasingly blurred, is motivated by the needs of people to understand the cultures they inhabit.

Amongst the “cultural gatekeepers” that Galvin refers to in his article are the corporate radio conglomerates that dissident artists – many of them mainstream – bypassed in order to share their anti-war expressions with their fellow citizens. This redirecting of artistic expression into Internet channels – described in Chapter 3 – illustrated the degree to which cyberspace provides a medium in which conventional hegemonic instruments of control can be bypassed. As has been argued throughout this exegesis, it was for this reason that the blooming of political mashup following the 2003 US invasion of Iraq was mostly an Internet-based phenomenon. It follows, then, that the Internet was a logical choice as the main distribution site for the RogueSounds music, notwithstanding that more conventional methods of distribution were engaged in – as I detail below.

The following section analyses issues pertaining to Internet distribution of the RogueSounds music, starting with a discussion of the possibilities that were explored via the music’s primary Internet outlet: the musical/social networking site, MySpace. Through this discussion, I argue for the threats posed to the “gatekeepers” by political mashup, and in particular, by the mashup I have espoused.

MySpace
As each of the nine political mashup compositions analysed in Chapter 6 was completed, it was uploaded to a musical profile page – presented under the name ‘RogueSounds’ – on the MySpace
This name was inspired by Noam Chomsky’s book, *Rogue States* (2000), in which he reflects back onto the US administration its use of the designation ‘rogue states’ to describe states that don’t comply with its decrees. By analogy with this, my musical pieces constituted sounds that fail to comply with hegemonic decrees; thus they are ‘rogue sounds’. The profile page featured a brightly coloured ‘logo’ picture (pictured in greyscale in Figure 7.1), beside which was the epithet: “Imagine the unimaginable”.

![Figure 7.1. “Imagine the unimaginable”](image)

The logo was itself a mashup of Internet-sourced photographs of politicians who were the chief protagonists in the initial phase of the project – extending from late 2006 to mid-2008, when the US election campaign was in full swing. After this phase the logo was updated to include the new additions to the political scene: John McCain, Sarah Palin, Kevin Rudd, and the man who would eventually be elected as George Bush’s successor – Barack Obama.

Each musical piece posted on the *RogueSounds* profile could be listened to by direct streaming from the webpage via the MySpace audio player. Pieces could also be downloaded free of charge onto viewers’ home computers. In the brief written material on the profile page the music was described as a “concept album in progress,” informed by the spirit of culture jamming and offering an invitation to imagine an ‘unimaginable’ reality: of politicians displaying their humanity amidst the struggles of their decision making.

The key to establishing and building an audience within the MySpace community lay in utilising the ‘friends’ function. In the following section I shall discuss the significance of this function to the distribution of the music and discuss the possibilities it opens up for future research.

---

A little help from ‘friends’: viral distribution, ethics and future possibilities

When visiting another member’s profile page, a MySpace member may click a link that sends a friend request to that member. If the request is accepted, each of the two members then has a link to the other on their respective profiles. ‘Favorite friends’ are displayed prominently on the main page, while links to other friends may be buried in deeper layers of the profile site. This faculty of the MySpace architecture enables a viral mode of distribution whereby viewers of a particular profile may easily visit the profiles of that member’s friends by simply clicking on the latters’ displayed logo pictures. They may then choose to request friendships (in practical terms, links) from those visited ‘friends of friends.’ As one’s friend count grows, the number of direct links to one’s site – spread across a population of members – grows exponentially.

Either by sending or accepting received friend requests, I gradually accrued links to other profiles. As the screenshot in Figure 7.2 illustrates, these were displayed prominently on the profile page, allowing viewers to explore several other members’ profiles when they visited mine.

As explained in Chapter 3, ‘special interest’ profiles dedicated to activist content often attract similarly politically-aligned friends. This facility can help to build online communities through the growth of networks of people who are aligned along certain axes of shared interest. Apart from building a potential audience, the friend architecture provides two main modes of exchanging communications. ‘Comments’ forwarded to friends appear on the recipients’ profiles for all viewers to read.

---

159 A member is someone who has registered with MySpace and has their own profile page.

160 An example of a broad activist community grown on MySpace is the Non Profit Organization profile (http://www.myspace.com/nonprofitorganization). Founded by Heather Mansfield, the Online Community Manager for Change.org, the profile currently hosts links to 40,528 non profit organisations, most of them devoted to social, animal or environmental activist causes. Its stated mission is to serve as a hub for all non profit organisations on MySpace, to facilitate the building of a community of individuals who support such organisations.
Each comment is accompanied by the pictorial link to its sender, thereby encouraging another layer of networking, as visitors reading comments may in turn choose to visit the comment sender’s profile. The other main mode of communication is through ‘messages,’ which function more like private emails conducted within the MySpace environment.

The communication possibilities offered by MySpace comments and messages were not incorporated into the research design for this project. This is not to say that future research could not utilise this networking function by surveying solicited responses to posted music in a systematic and ethically sound manner. Indeed, such a design element was given consideration at an early stage, but it was eventually decided that it lay beyond the scope of the present project, the primary concern of which was both to create and distribute political mashup, and to theoretically situate it as a form of cultural production constitutive of agency for its practitioners. Thus, there was no systematic method devised for either the soliciting of ‘friendships’ or the receipt of friendship offers from other members. I periodically made friend requests in attempts to expand my distribution circles, and accepted all requests, which arrived in a random fashion. This is reflective of an informal process of audience feedback that typifies cultural exchange in an online environment.161

With a similarly unpredictable frequency I received both messages and comments from some friends. While these were of interest to me, they had a minimal bearing on my creative process, which was guided by personal compositional sensibilities, in concert with the theoretical framework elaborated in earlier chapters. Feedback did, however, provide me with some assurance that the music was being received by at least some listeners as constituting a fresh approach to political mashup. The generally positive tone of comments indicated that this approach was seen by many to represent a desirable shift from the more angry, vindictive tones that characterised most other approaches.162 However, in the absence of empirical data this indication is no more than an impression – one that points to the potential value of further

161 Because this feedback takes place asynchronously – meaning people do not necessarily conduct communications in real time – it tends to be more random and chaotic. See, for instance, Patricia Wallace’s discussion of asynchronous newsgroups in Wallace, P (1999) The Psychology of the Internet. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

162 There were, in fact, no negative comments. This is partly due to the fact that comments were received from ‘friends’, who by definition would be assumed to have felt a resonance with the music. Other factors that may have contributed to a general reticence to express negative comments, although potentially the subject of other (sociological) studies, are beyond the scope of this project.
research into audience reactions to such music. In particular, it would be interesting to examine the relationship between the emotional tone of political mashup (along a ‘violence’ continuum – from ‘angry/abusive’ through to ‘non-violent/optimistic’ for instance) and the emotional responses it engendered in listeners. Because online political mashup has a self-selecting audience, it might be reasonable to hypothesise that audience members who already feel jaded with politics and politicians in general could be expected to have their cynicism reinforced by mashups that sat at the more angry end of the violence continuum. It might be equally plausible to argue that the more hopeful, non-violent mashup I have proposed could replace angst and cynicism in listeners with an elation born of a sense of being active participants in culture, rather than powerless onlookers. The current study has foregrounded the agentic potential for practitioners; further studies might reveal whether similar claims can rightly be made for audiences.

Other Internet distribution
Several pieces were sent (as email attachments) to a website called DIYMedia.Net. Dedicated to independent media, the site posts information about pirate radio, reviews of books and music and links to related sites. It also features a ‘Truthful Translations’ section, which is introduced with the statement:

> Politics is the practice of doublespeak. Fortunately, through the magic of creativity and relatively cheap digital audio editing tools, the speech of political creatures can finally be unspun, and the truth laid bare.\(^{164}\)

Tracks were also uploaded to Australian ABC Radio’s Triple J ‘Unearthed’ site, and ‘The Art of the Prank’, a site run by famous ‘prankster’ Joey Skaggs,\(^{165}\) who has posted a permanent feature on ‘The RogueSounds Project’.

Radio distribution
A number of CDs were mailed to radio stations in further bids to broaden the distribution circle of the music. Of the many radio stations contacted, two in particular were highly responsive.\(^{166}\)

---

163 http://www.diymedia.net/.

164 Ibid.

165 http://artoftheprank.com/; Joey Skaggs is mentioned in the discussion on cultural activism in Chapter 2.

166 Details of all radio airplay can be found in Appendix 3: Distribution and Publications.
Chapter 7. Cultural Production, Agency and the Future of Imagined Futures

*Sound Quality*, a show produced by Tim Ritchie for Australia’s ABC Radio National, played a number of *RogueSounds* pieces, as detailed in Appendix 3. *Sound Quality* is broadcast within Australia on FM radio, but is also available online. The global span of the show’s audience was confirmed by the feedback from one listener, whose emailed comments to Tim Ritchie following the airing of “Rendering Babylon”, came from Texas, USA.  

*Some Assembly Required*, a US radio programme based in Minneapolis, dedicated to “tape manipulations, digital deconstructions and turntable creations” also aired several of the pieces over the period 2006 – 2009. In 2008 I accepted their invitation to take part in an online interview for a feature they posted on the *RogueSounds* project.

All of the listener feedback, which was unsolicited and issued purely from people’s interest in my creations, was enabled by the inherent connectivity of the online medium. Although not a critical element of the research, the feedback generally encouraged me to further explore the thematic content suggested by my theoretical framework, to continue to construct complex narratives, set within musically rich and diverse backings. It also raised the prospects of future research which, by virtue of many websites’ inbuilt messaging facilities, could focus on a variety of matters concerning the *reception* of political mashup. With appropriate, ethically scoped designs, such investigations could potentially yield rich insights into the effects of a number of variables – such as race, gender, nationality, demographic status, political affiliation, etc – on listeners’ responses to the music. The communication networks could also enable collaborative projects, as well as experiments in audience-directed composition incorporating action research models in their design.

The overwhelming sense that entering into such highly connective distribution/reception networks gave me was one of participating in a new and exciting form of cultural production. I return to this important point at the end of the following section, in which I summarise this exegesis and conclude this final chapter.

---

167 Tim Ritchie kindly forwarded the comments to me shortly after airing the piece.

168 [http://www.some-assembly-required.net/](http://www.some-assembly-required.net/)
Outro: Journeys of Dissent, Agency and Cultural Production

This project has entailed two major undertakings. The creation of the musical pieces, documented in Chapter 6, has been a metaphorical journey through the mass-mediated zeitgeist, its torrents of words depicting an often troubled landscape populated by leaders and their spin, opposing ideologies, inequitable power relations, war, conflict, terror and torture. From its entanglement of interwoven discourses the zeitgeist has offered up the words spoken by political power, which I have appropriated for the purpose of interrogating power. Throughout this exegesis I have argued that political spin, or the harnessing of words to construct self-serving sound bites, constitutes *appropriations* of the signifying power of language. In this sense, my reconstructed narratives may be thought of as *reappropriations*: narratives reconstructed to mount a critique of the contemporary political/economic milieu. By reflecting power’s fashioned truths back on itself I have proposed alternative truths. Imbricated with these woven narratives is music that I have composed and produced in a small home studio. Utilising digital audio software, much of it freeware, and a modestly priced computer, I have allowed my composer’s skills and sensibilities to guide the creation of music designed to satisfy not commercial demands, but personal and academic demands for alternative interpretations – and thereby, greater understanding – of the culture I inhabit.

The second undertaking has been the creation of a theoretical framework, the conceptual lens through which the creative outcomes of this practice-based research project may be apprehended with their full significance. By casting political mashup against the light of a longstanding tradition of protest music, the practice is outlined as a postmodern method of harnessing music’s emotional nomenclature to the venting of grievances against the powers that be, and to calls for reform. Next to the deep root of protest music, a second and younger root: 20th century cultural activism, has been identified as an ideational and aesthetic forerunner of political mashup. Conceptually, this genealogical thread foreshadows political mashup’s reactive stance against pervasive globalised capital, just as cultural activism was a response to the anxieties engendered by expansionist market economies that evolved with the industrialisation of Western democracies. Aesthetically, cultural activism’s appropriation and reconfiguration of corporate messages set a precedent for the musical form.
To contextualise political mashup within its own non-mainstream milieu, a selection of typical examples of the marginal genre were analysed. Three primary understandings emerged from this analysis. First, the prevailing themes of political mashup were identified: anti-war sentiments, fears of erosion of democracy and suspicions regarding government alignment with big money interests. Second, its typical musical forms were revealed: beat-centred backings and narratives comprising repetitive short phrasings. Finally, the analysis exposed the aggressive, reactive oppositional stance that typifies the form. In Chapter 3 I argued that this stance represents a missed opportunity; in its typical form, political mashup, has, in the final instance, fallen short in its critique of power by attacking hegemonic structures from within the normalised frames of reference set in place by power. These frames rest upon a foundation of assumptions: universalised implicit ‘truths’ that legitimise various violences. Whether through global terror war and its attendant curtailments of democratic freedoms, or through the policing of legislative structures designed to protect capitalist interests, or the censorship of dissent, hegemony’s narrative has dominated the zeitgeist, infusing it with a pervasive sense that violence is normal, and ‘just’. From this perspective, a mashup form that rejects violence, along with power’s other inculcated norms, such as exclusively market-based cultural production and supposedly self-evident notions of intellectual property ownership, offers subjects true agency. This is granted through participation in cultural production that bypasses hegemony’s restrictive channels. My mashup creations are offered as examples of such an agentic participation in culture.

Given its non-violent guiding blueprint, the mashup I have espoused also speaks to a tradition of non-violent activism, epitomised both by leaders of past struggles, such as Martin Luther King Jr, Mohandas Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, and collectives engaged in contemporary actions. The non-violent civil disobedience practised by such actors unsettles hegemony; it confounds the circular logic by which power’s defence is achieved, wherein hegemonic decrees are underpinned by the threat of violence, which is, in turn, deployed with state-sanctioned legitimacy against transgressors. The power of non-violent activism has been demonstrated time and again by such actors, whose refusal to acquiesce to the dictates of powerful institutions is lent moral and – often, as it turns out, legal – strength by their forswearing of violence. An example of this was provided by the 2007 acquittal of six Greenpeace UK volunteers of criminal charges after their arrest following a daring action in which they temporarily closed down a coal-fired power station in Kent, UK. The Crown Court jury found them not guilty on their defence of ‘lawful excuse,’ which rested on the argument that they damaged property in order to prevent greater property
damage to the global environment through climate change (the activists scaled the tower of the power station and painted the prime minister’s name on it).  

It is important to note that this project has been conducted within a Western liberal democracy, and has been motivated by the actions of Western liberal democracies. Whereas power in other settings – military dictatorships for instance – may be routinely applied in overtly repressive, even brutal ways, this is generally no longer the case in the West. And yet, my argument throughout has been that power is oppressive, and as such, motivates opposition to it. The underpinning of this argument is an assertion that government power is, in the contemporary sphere, directed toward the formation of subjects who are compliant with the imperatives of capital. I have argued that these imperatives are to maintain and grow a population of willing consumers, while installing universalised ethical notions and legal instruments that legitimise the mechanisms used to maintain the status quo in which capital flourishes. The recording industry has been proposed as exemplifying capital in this sense, by deploying its enormous resources towards the legal and moral defence of its hegemony.

Hardt and Negris’ Empire is the theoretical model I have used to delineate globalised capital. Empire is not the ‘evil empire,’ but rather, after Michel Foucault, a field of complex relations across which power is dispensed. Within this milieu power acts on “free subjects … who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available” (Foucault, 2003: 139). In what songwriter Neil Young referred to as “the Free World” (1989), we are free to fashion ourselves as subjects within a set of parameters – some explicit, some subliminal – laid down for us by the powers that be. This fashioning is achieved via the application of what Foucault refers to as ‘technologies of the self’: operations of self care, ways of thinking, pursuits that across their entirety, serve to mould a subject. However, as Foucault asserts:

\[\text{[there are] points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself … and conversely, points where}\]


170 Although a history of any of the past European colonisation projects is replete with accounts of profound brutality, particularly to indigenous inhabitants.
Chapter 7. Cultural Production, Agency and the Future of Imagined Futures

Foucault’s quote: “the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination. The contact point … is what we can call, I think, government.” (Foucault, 1993: 203)

The political mashup I have created is motivated by an assertion that the expansionist ideologies of globalised capital now direct government in this role as the ‘contact point’ between technologies of the self and various instruments of coercion and domination. However, in the nine compositions presented, I have extended mashup’s project, stretching it beyond mere reactive angst to proffer an invitation to listeners to imagine; to imagine living in a world in which power decides to relinquish its conventional methods of self-maintenance: violence, dishonesty, manipulation and coercion. Undeniably, I have asked listeners to imagine a reality which, sadly, at this time, defies belief. Bush’s confessional revelations could not, we sense, happen in this world. Condoleezza Rice’s divulgences of prisoner torture are, likewise, fantastical. Howard’s repentance, Bush’s transformation into healing messenger, even the ‘rogues’ cheerful admissions of their roles in keeping the population subjugated, all of them are unimaginable. But, this invitation to ‘imagine the unimaginable’ is really an attempt at dislocating a reality – the reality that accepts power’s modus operandi as normality.

I have argued that the agency afforded subjects by such a response to power rests, in the first instance, on its appropriations of the very infrastructure that delivers power’s coercive instruments. For the production phase of political mashup creation this infrastructure comprises digital technology – software, computers – and the mass media. But, more than technology, I have appropriated recorded words. Words, as the building blocks of the discursive edifices that delimit our world, are at once intrinsically engrafted in power, yet entone power. As the memetic seeds of cultural transmission they both evince societal expectations and aspirations – and circumscribe the limits to these. Just as leaders exploit language to convey their messages, so have I exploited their mass mediated speech in order to create new cultural texts. However, I have not been the sole creator of these texts. The memetic function of mass mediated speech exceeds that which is merely attributable to the semantic meaning of the words. As was argued in Chapter 4, each digitally captured speech sample contains layers of embedded meaning. These layers are not fixed in absolute terms, but rather, exist as aural cues that evince associations in listeners, thereby enabling them to co-construct meaning from the sample. As co-creators of meaning, listeners are actively engaged in this form of cultural production. Moreover, my political mashups have presented listeners with humour and satire in the confronting setting of post-9/11 politics. In this overheated sphere, listeners are more overtly invited to engage with the material than they are by
the commercially-driven offerings of mass media.

For the distribution phase of political mashup, the crucial vehicle is that of the Internet. In Chapter 3, and earlier in this final chapter, I have argued that many cyber-networked activists appear to share a sense of belonging to a global community that, despite its expansive scale, is made navigable by the technologies of the Internet. Many of the MySpace friends of *Rogue Sounds* are themselves musicians who freely offer their creations – political songs or mashups – to online audiences. And this community extends far beyond the bounds of MySpace. Just as there are innumerable activist artists who are willing to share their creations with the online community, so are there many websites and radio programs that are dedicated to hosting these projects and that eschew commercial imperatives in place of activist and humanist ideals. The “networked information economy,” as Yochai Benkler refers to it, is heralding the emergence of something akin to a “new folk culture [which] allows individuals much greater freedom to participate in tugging and pulling at the cultural creations of others” (Benkler, 2006: 15). Through this slant on consumption and reception, people are inhabiting their cultures more as participants than as the passive recipients that appeared to predominate in exclusively mass mediated culture (ibid.).

Although such claims may be dismissed as pure utopianism by conventional economics, post-industrial reality is seeing non-proprietary production playing an increasingly important role in information and cultural production. In defiance of the maxims of economic rationalism, growing numbers of individuals and non-profit organisations are deploying the tools of cultural production to non-commercial ends. For example, more than 70 percent of the software that runs the Internet is produced by volunteers. The Apache Web server, a crucial tool of e-commerce, is actually free software (Benkler, 2006). The widespread cooperation required for such projects is motivated not by economic imperatives, but by a spirit of exploration and sharing. Of course, people – political mashup artists included – must function in the market to cater for their basic needs. However, people have needs other than survival and comfort. Many need to reflect upon and engage with their cultures in order to find meaning in their lives as actors in a social sphere.

Political mashup offers agency to subjects who choose to gaze beyond the margins of a system that heeds financial imperatives to the exclusion of crucial dimensions of human existence and cohabitation. Through its oppositional content, its appropriative use of hegemonic infrastructure
and its ‘do it yourself’ approach to production and dissemination, political mashup presents an alternative to modes of cultural production that have, throughout most of the industrial age, been co-opted by faceless, robotically expansionist corporations – the “cultural gatekeepers” referred to at the beginning of this chapter. The full spectrum of production processes deployed in the creation of political mashup in general, from thematic conception through to online distribution, are subversive to the corporate interests that control the mainstream music industry. In particular, the mashup I have created escapes Empire’s field of influence on a further count; by its rejection of the normalised violence instilled by Empire, it projects an imagined future, one that is more sustainable, more equitable and ultimately, more vital than the current reality.

Within the global forums constituted by structures such as MySpace, networks of similarly aligned people share their creations. This “rolling digital revolution that is simultaneously demolishing and rebuilding our cultural landscape” (Galvin, 2009: 12) needs no firearms. Rather than plotting overthrow, such networks are joined in acts of celebrating the very existence of their platforms for resistance. Their engagement with the new forms of cultural production enabled by emergent technologies is not a means towards a political end; it is rather, the end itself. These instances hold the possibility of producing new cultures whose identities are determined not by the system they oppose, but by the worlds they envision. In imagining the ‘unimaginable,’ they may gradually call forth cultures that prioritise values such as peace, equality and compassion above the amassing of material wealth. Among the inhabitants of these cultures shall be our future leaders. Via the possibly yet-to-be-dreamt-of modes of mass mediation they will have at their disposal, what will such leaders choose to communicate? Will the word-spells they cast ignite the peoples’ dreams and grow their cultures? This project imagines that they will, and offers a hopeful model of their rhetoric for that time.
Bibliography


References


Foucault, M (1993) ‘About the beginning of The Hermeneutics of the Self: Two lectures at Dartmouth’, Political Theory, 21 (no. 2) pp. 198-227
References


192


References

Lane, C (2006) ‘Voices from the Past: compositional approaches to using recorded speech’, Organised Sound, 11, 01, 3-11


http://www.theminsnetareview.org/journal/ns61/hardt.htm


Reed, T V (2005) *Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press


196


**Discography**

[Note: Albums appear in italics, single releases in double inverted commas.]


B52s, The (1989) “Channel Z”, Reprise


Beatles, The (1967) “Penny Lane”, Parlophone


Beatles, The (1968) “Revolution Number 9”, Apple Records

Bechet, Sidney (1941) “The Sheik of Araby”, and “Blues of Bechet”, RCA

Blur (2003) “We’ve Got a File on You”, EMI


Brown, James (1968) “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud)”, King Records


Browne, Jackson (1985) “Soldier of Plenty”, from the album Lives in the Balance, Asylum


Cage, John (1979) “Roaratorio”, on Roaratorio, Wergo

Chad Mitchell Trio, The (1964) In Concert – Everybody’s Listening, Colpix

Charles, Ray (1961) “I’m Movin’ On”, from the album The Genius Sings the Blues, Atlantic

Chumbawamba (2002) “Jacob’s Ladder (Not in My Name)”, MUTT

Crosby, Stills Nash and Young, (1970) “Ohio”, Atlantic

Country Joe and the Fish, (1967) “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag”, Vanguard


Dylan, Bob (1965) “Like a Rolling Stone”, Columbia

Dylan, Bob (1975) “Hurricane”, Columbia


Enigma (1994) “Return to Innocence”, Virgin/EMI


Franklin, Aretha (1967) “Respect”, Atlantic


Goodman, Dickie (1973) “Watergrate”, Rainy Wednesday Records

Grammer, Tracey (2005) “Hey Ho”, from the album *Flower of Avalon*, Signature Sounds


Guthrie, Woodie (1940) *Dustbowl Ballads*, RCA Victor


Holliday, Billie (1939) “Strange Fruit”, Commodore


Jackson, Michael (1987) *Bad*, Epic/CBS


Lane, Cathy (1999) *Hidden Lives*, unreleased recording


Lennon, John (1971) “Imagine”, Parlophone

Little Willie John (1959) “Leave My Kitten Alone”, King Records


Marley, Bob (1979) “So Much Trouble in the World”, from the album *Survival*, Tuff Gong/Island
Mayfield, Curtis (1964) “Keep On Pushing”, Paramount
Mayfield, Curtis (1972) “Pusherman”, Curtom
Negativland (1985) *Jamcon '84*, Seeland Records
Negativland (1991) *U2*, SST (deleted from SST catalogue Oct '91)
Oswald, John (1975) “Power”, not for sale recording
Oswald, John (1989) *Plunderphonics*, not for sale CD
Pink Floyd (1973) “Us and Them”, from the album *The Dark Side of the Moon*, Harvest, Capitol
Pink Floyd (1975) “Have a Cigar”, from the album *Wish You Were Here*, Harvest/EMI
Pink Floyd (1975) “Welcome to the Machine”, from the album *Wish You Were Here*, Harvest/EMI
Riley, Terry (1960) “Mescaline Mix”, not for sale tape recording
Simone, Nina (1969) “To Be Young, Gifted and Black”, RCA
Smith, Patti (1988) “People Have the Power”, Arista
Stevens, Cat (1971) “Peace Train”, Island
Wailers, The (1973) *Catch a Fire*, Tuff Gong/Island
References

Young, Neil (1989) “Rockin’ in the Free World”, Reprise
Zé, Tom (1998) Fabrication Defect, Luaka Bop

Mashography

http://www.diymedia.net/audio/mp3/DOC-bushofdoom.mp3


http://www.acidplanet.com/artist.asp?pid=407513&T=7962


http://www.diymedia.net/audio/mp3/pp-blairterror.mp3

Robert Davidson (2007) “Martin Luther King - I have a dream as music”,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R26pEnrCFYw

Robert Davidson (2007) “Well may we say - Gough Whitlam sings his dismissal speech”,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14ZccNJjrVk&feature=player_embedded

Robert Davidson (2008) “Hitler sings – Germany is awake”,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGU1iQhfaY


http://www.diymedia.net/audio/mp3/thelorinswelkorchestra-partytonight.mp3


Wax Audio (2005) “Imagine This”,
http://www.waxaudio.com.au/mediacracy/07_Imagine_This.mp3

Filmography

Baldwin, Craig (dir., 1995) Sonic Outlaws
Christensen, R, Johnsen, A, and Moltke, H (dir., 2007) Good Copy Bad Copy
Joseph, Peter (dir., 2007) Zeitgeist, the Movie
Joseph, Peter (dir., 2008) Zeitgeist: Addendum

Kirby, John (dir., 2007) *The American Ruling Class*


Noyce, Phillip (dir., 2002) *Rabbit Proof Fence*
Appendix 1: Full Transcripts of Speech Narratives

In these complete transcripts of the nine RogueSounds speech narratives the constructed speech of main protagonists appears in italics. Peripheral speakers and interjections appear in plain font. As signalled in Chapter 5, rather than documenting sources of each individual sample here, I list ‘major sources’ for each piece. In general, these represent the sources of longer sampled phrases, even if their speaker occupies only a relatively small part of the overall narrative (e.g. Tony Blair speaks only a single line in “Rendering Babylon”, but its length and cohesion as a phrase identifies him clearly and thus renders the source necessary).

Track 1: “The Redemption of George W”

This narrative consists solely of the speech of the former US President George W Bush.

Major sources of speech samples


Transcript

Mom. Dad? Costs are rising. I hope you’re proud.
I had a high and noble purpose in life.
I was clear about my desire to set streams back on their natural courses.
But I was led into the darkness, allowing violence and misguided idealism to lead me.
I did not tell the truth.
Peace. Some men rage and fight against it, because of their lack of understanding and knowledge.
I have been such a man.
I’ve hurt a lot of people. Instigated (sic) serious violence.
Hurt people as beautiful as your loved ones and your neighbours. De…de…decent people.
Time and time and time again I said: damn the consequences!
I tried to inherit the Earth – until the Earth, and my honour were broken.
Sometimes the lack of love (the lack, the lack o’ love) breaks my heart
Sometimes … mom, dad, I am so sorry, sorry…
When you have power, it’s…it’s…it’s…it’s … hard.
I… I… I cannot let go of it. And now, the entire world has seen for itself my humiliation.
I am past exhaustion. Oooobbb … the misery.
How I dream, alone, of peace, goodwill and grace in our world. A compassionate America.
But it does not happen. And you know what?
Fuck it!
From this day forward I don’t wanna be the world’s policeman. I wanna be the worlds’ peacemaker.
No more the unfurling of flags, sacrificing human life to serve my narrow ideology of power and domination.
That’s how I feel about it. And I ask you for forgiveness.
Forgive me.
I think what the next president ought to do is to …is to promote a culture of life.

**Track 2:**

“Rendering Babylon”

“Rendering Babylon” features the speech of Condoleezza Rice, George W. Bush and Tony Blair.

**Major sources of speech samples**

**Bush:** Bush Archive


**Transcript**

Bush: Secretary Rice? Condi? It's time for the truth!
Rice: I want to help all of you understand how the United States conducts its war against terrorism.
Bush: Tell them about extraordinary rendition …
Rice: Ah … ah ha. No joy.
Bush: …CLA assassins and secret police. Tell them about war, and misery and torture.

Rice: Prime Minister Howard was out this morning saying that this was the right thing to do.

Bush: No! No. Tell them Tony.

Blair: It…it’s wrong in its ideas, it’s wrong in its ideology, it’s wrong in every single wretched reactionary thing about it!

Rice: For decades the United States and other countries have used torture against those we consider to be unlawful combatants. (No joy)
Torture is a vital tool in combating transnational terrorism.

Bush: It’s beyond all the bounds of civilised behaviour.

Rice: The United States transports detainees from one country to another for the purpose of interrogation using torture.

Bush: In Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Poland, Romania.

Rice: The United States has used ruthless conduct, and in fact, we got nowhere. It didn’t work.
Acts of physical or mental abuse often occur when questioning of detainees is conducted. Indeed, it is the policy of The United States that this questioning is to be conducted outside US law and treaty obligations, using torture.

Bush: Condi – thank you.

Rice: Ah. Any time The United States is on the defence of freedom now, we’re in deep shit. We’re absolutely fucked! We’re fucked!

Bush: Secretary Rice [Rice: we’re fucked] that…that’s enough [Rice: we’re fucked].

Track 3: “Quickening”

The speech narrative in “Quickening” features the voices of Australian Prime Minister John Howard and US President George W Bush.

Major sources of speech samples


Bush: Bush Archive

Transcript

Howard: There are many views about the impact of global warming, some conservative, some more alarmist.
Bush: Temperatures rising – seems like it’s all quickening [Howard: “The government will continue to deny evidence that our climate is changing.”]

Those cries of denial don’t stop, they continue to ring [Howard: “We cannot have a measured, sensible approach to climate change.”]

Corporate cooperation and the profits just swell [Howard: “We ... err ... are not getting into the business of renewable energy resources.”]

When given a choice between life and wealth we choose hell.

The Earth rocks – it’s really cool! [special place ... yeah]

Humanity fucks it with its thirst for fuel

Global warming affects each of us,

all denials are in vain.

When the oceans rise, all of us –

on all sides of every senseless war

will finally see – we’re the same. [agitate for change, agitate for change]

Open your eyes and consider the facts: corporates burn away millions of acres of treasured forest, show utter contempt for the environment – and without conscience! For the sake of future generations we cannot allow this to happen.

Howard: I am a climate change realist.

Bush: John, tell the truth. You didn’t tell the truth for over a decade. John, it’s not gonna be easy, but tell the truth!

Howard: Obviously, there is undeniable evidence that our climate is changing, but the answer is not knee-jerk responses that harm the government’s interests. Practical responses to climate change could put at grave risk ...

Track 4: “Howard Repents”

The following narrative was constructed wholly from the sampled speech of John Howard, except for the samples from Russell Morris’s (1969) recording, “The Real Thing” – in parentheses.
Appendix 1: Full Transcripts

**Major sources of speech samples**

**John Howard:**

**Transcript**

*Alexander! Costello! Get this up on the website – and on YouTube. It’s time – for the revolution!*

*The devaluation of the status of Australian Aboriginals is one of the biggest mistakes this country has made.*

*The government says that the economy is strong, our debt paid off and the budget in healthy surplus. If our economic policy is so good, how do we explain that over eighty percent of the Indigenous population is unemployed, living below the poverty line and have the lowest life expectancy of any people in the world? We have crippled a once thriving people (“Come and see the real thing come and see the real thing”).*

*Throughout Australian society there is a genuine grief and sadness over this situation (“Tryin’ hard to understand”). While we have remained in power and presided over Indigenous Australia’s slide into chaos and despair, I have failed to exert the pressure I could have brought to bear to save the sense of grief and hurt in those who have lost so much. I have denied this national emergency. I’ve let them down.*

*Our record on Indigenous issues is not only shameful – it’s fucken pathetic. It’s pathetic! My personal obligation to these people, therefore – is to apologise.*

*To all Indigenous people of Australia – I’m s- s- sorry. I’m so sorry – I’m sorry. I’m …em, urgh – and- and- and … there are no differences between us and them! You – you just … look … oh I’m sorry … sorry (sniff) aarr … (weeping sounds) (“there’s a meaning there but the meaning there does it really mean a thing?”). Terrible, terrible tragedy – a lot of damage done.*
This for real, yeah. This for real, yeah. This is for real, yeah, yeah, yeah (repeated to end). (“I am the real thing”).

It’s all over (sigh) – eerrgh.

**Track 5:**

**“Rogues”**

The narrative within “Rogues” is dense and multi-voiced. In the following, the main protagonists are listed on the left, their spoken lines to the right. Bracketed words and phrases are interjections to the main narrative. In these cases, where the speaker is a known political figure, their name appears within square brackets, following their words. Bracketed interjections unaccompanied by a name are samples of nondescript media broadcasters whose identities are unknown to me.

**Major sources of speech samples**

**Bush:** Bush Archive


**Howard:** various weekly radio addresses from the Prime Minister’s official website, http://www.pm.gov.au/media (url now defunct).

**Obama:**

**McCain:**
- Final presidential candidates debate, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York, 15th October 2008, accessed YouTube (in ten parts), 1st November 2008,
Appendix 1: Full Transcripts

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=final+obama+mccain+debate&search_type=&aq=f


---

**Transcript**

**Introduction**

Bush: *The democratic and totalitarian [sic] ideologies of the twentieth century are replaced by stateless networks – an aggressive empire …*

McCain: *Empire …*

Bush: *…of global capitalism …*

McCain: *… not overly troubled by the tragedies of war.*

Obama: *A powerful, pervasive, unyielding alliance of big money and government…*

Bush: *…that rules through biopower, installing in populations the belief that its cause …*

McCain: *… greed and excess …*

Bush: *…is right and just.*

Obama: *Powerful politicians, through their alliances, routinely exploit fear. They simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative [continuing danger! – Bush] to the point [nuclear weapons – Cheney] that it distorts reality.*

**Miscellaneous:** [A grave new threat!] [Global terrorism] [Biopower – Bush] [In a dangerous world – Palin] [A righteous cause! – McCain] [Just keep spending – McCain] [Slaughtered thousands!] [Terror – Palin]

Bush: *and the so-called ‘truth’ that fills the airwaves always serves the institutions [just keep spending – McCain] and ideologies of power.*

**Verses 1 and 2**

Bush: *These are the evils from which they will protect you. [“terror”] [“a grave new threat”] [“global terrorism”]*

*These are the new laws… [“this legislation has a strategic goal – to secure profits. Period.” – Bush]*

*These are the dreams they have designed to direct you. [“democracy” – Obama] [“freedom” – Blair] [“liberty” – Obama] [“wealth and celebrity” – McCain] [“freedom of the press”]*

*They’d like you all…comfortable [“comfortable” – McCain] and calm.*
These are the prizes that you will compete for [“money” – Bush] [“just keep spending” – McCain]
You’ll spend your lives just tyin’ to get ahead [“just trying to get ahead” – Howard]
And exhaustion shall finally defeat ya
They’d like to thank you all [“thank you, thanks” – McCain]
for being so easily led. [“thank you very much, thank you everybody” – Obama]

Chorus
Bush, Blair, Howard: We are the rogues who run your democracy
The finest choice of the enlightened and the free
And as for freedom [“huh!” – Bush] that is just another code [“it’s a code” – Bush]
Howard: To err… clear the way for our
Bush, Blair: Unlimited growth.

[“It is not a clash of civilisations. It is a fight for cheap oil!” - McCain]

Interlude
Bush: Who reigns today?
Palin: The big oil boys.
Obama: A perverse corporate culture
Bush: I see it – an aggressive empire of global capitalism. I’m tellin’ ya.
Obama: Brother, I hear ya.
Bush: Maintaining the stability of society by military and propagandist actions.
Obama: Legalised violence!
McCain: To exalt the few at the expense of the many.

Verse 3
Blair: Now that you know how it goes will you resist it? [“Resist them? Huh!” – Bush]
McCain: There’s a market for resistance
Bush: The market is on the rise [“it’s on the rise” – McCain]
Blair: We are conservative and militaristic [“that’s the key element” – Bush]
   With the finest weaponry [“the finest weaponry” – Bush]
Your money can buy. [“In a dangerous world, war must be an option!” – Obama]

Chorus

Bush, Blair, Howard:  We are the rogues who run your democracy  
                     The finest choice of the enlightened and the free  
                     And as for freedom, that is just another code [“it’s a code” – Bush]

Howard:               To err… clear the way for our

Bush, Blair:          Unlimited growth.

Track 6: Legacy (Into the Darkness)

The first part of the piece features a conversation between George W. Bush and a daemon-like character who may be seen as an aspect of his own psyche. In the following transcript this character is denoted as ‘Daemon.’ At times, one character morphs into the other; these lines are indicated by either Bush/Daemon or Daemon/Bush, depending on the direction of the voice transformation. The ‘Flashback’ section comprises a montage of speech from Bush and other figures that is designed to create a certain atmosphere. They are not part of the main narrative.

Major sources of speech samples

Bush: Bush Archive


Transcript

Bush:  Led … into the darkness, the darkness, the darkness … lost. [Howard: “Yeah – it’s all over.”]
       Bitterness, madness, and a bottle of pills … so far from home. [Clinton: “No way we’ll suffer through more failed leadership.”]
       God … are you with me?

Daemon: Lift your eyes and look to the heavens.
Bush: Into the darkness?
Daemon: Comfort and hope will fade and die away – with you at my side!
Bush/Daemon: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil.
Bush: It is the evil doer!
Daemon: Look into a mirror! What you call evil …
Bush: Evil is real!
Daemon: … lives in the shadow of your own heart.
Bush: No!
 Daemon: Yes! And now you are with me – in mind and soul. We are one.
Bush: But … but … I’ve overcome my addiction to power and violence.
Daemon/Bush: It is too late. You must crawl back …
Bush: To the darkness?
Daemon: Yes. Now, you will not escape the madness of sorrow and pain. Look to the heavens …
Bush: To the darkness …
Daemon/Bush: It has begun!
Bush: The darkness. Daddy! Help!

[Flashback:
Condoleezza Rice: For decades the United States and other countries have used torture against those we consider …
Bush: Progress is being made/You will not escape the justice of this nation/And we’re showing them the definition of American justice/there’s a principle involved/we’re gonna hunt the killers down one by one…/to find those responsible and to bring them to …/and to bring ’em to justice/they are evil!
Bush/Daemon: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil.
Bush: My fellow Americans. Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq the United States and our allies have prevailed (fading).]

Bush: In the ruins of the twin towers I heard a calling. At my direction our forces brought about the end of the regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq.
Daemon: Voiceless people were brutalised.
Bush: I sent American troops to Iraq to defend our security.
Daemon: But Iraqi lives and freedom mattered little to you.
Bush: We liberated Iraq.
Daemon: You cannot overcome evil with greater evil!

Bush: Our primary objective was to encourage reform and democracy in the Middle East.

Daemon: Lies! The consequences of failed leadership surpass your understanding.

Bush: No.

Daemon: Yes! Your deception sapped the soul and drained the spirit from your citizens. Your influence will fade and die away.

Bush: Containing the violence was impossible.

Daemon: The costs were too high!

Bush: Civilian deaths. Afghans and Iraqis blown up in Mosques and markets. Mourners in Lebanon and Pakistan carrying the caskets of beloved leaders. Trains in London and Madrid ripped apart by bombs. Thousands of our troops dead.

I am responsible for all the atrocities. I got bloodstained fingers …

I've hurt too many people. I did not tell the truth.

I am lost (I've hurt too many people). I ... I ... I ... cannot deal with it.

I'm sick – I'm tired in my mind and soul (responsible for all the atrocities/why me? why did the financial collapse have to happen on my watch?).

I see visions – destruction and tragedy, a closing net of doom.

Fires burning, huge … huge structures collapsing … above lines from final paragraph echoing and intertwining to form a montage.

**Track 7: Mouth Music**

“Mouth Music” is centred on a constructed monologue delivered by U.S. President Barack Obama. The monologue was designed to illustrate the rousing oratory that Obama’s name is synonymous with. In this regard, the monologue does not attempt to subvert the meaning of the speaker’s words; the phrases – some of them long – are generally heard as they were spoken. The ‘implicative’ elements of the piece - those that attempt to interrogate Obama’s perceived status as a ‘panacea’ for the ills of America and the world – are to be found both in the underscored music and the other voices woven throughout the piece. These voices are varied and where possible, are identified in the following narrative transcript.
Main sources of speech samples

Obama:
- “Audacity of Hope” speech, 27th July 2004, Fleet Center, Boston, accessed 4th December 2008,
  http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobamaperfectunion.htm
- Inauguration speech, 20th January 2009, accessed 2nd February 2009,
  http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/obama_inauguration/7840646.stm

McCain:
- ‘Obama and McCain Trade Jokes at Charity Dinner’, YouTube, accessed 4th February 2009,
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AljrFHhSF28

Singing Girl 3:
- ‘Obama Kids Music Video : Cute or Creepy’?, YouTube, accessed 4th February 2009,
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtGrp5MbzAI

Transcript

Singing Girl 1:  I looked behind me to see what was there.
News Commentator:  The world has been at a low ebb during the administration of George W. Bush.
Singing Girl 1:  I looked back and I got a scare.
News Commentator:  We have a sour economy, we have war still raging abroad, so Americans are hungry
                  for change and if anything, Barack Obama has promised a new beginning: real change in America. [McCain – “high expectations”]
Obama:  I chose to run for president at this moment in history because I believe deeply that we
         can solve the challenges of our time together.
Singing Girl 2:  Have you ever seen such a beautiful man?
Obama:  *We can perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes.*

Singing Girl 2:  I could almost kiss the stars – they’re shining so bright.

Obama:  *We may not look the same, we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction: towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren.*

Singing Girl 2:  Happiness is no mystery now.

Obama:  *This belief comes from my unyielding faith in the decency and generosity of people.*

Singing Girl 2:  This is what dreams are made of.

Obama:  *I believe there are better days ahead! I know we can do better!*  [McCain: “… an example of the eloquence of Senator Obama”]

Bush:  *President Obama will find this … he’ll get in the Oval Office and there’ll be a lot of people that ah are real critical and harsh and he’ll be disappointed at times by the tone of the rhetoric, and ah, be … be’s gonna have to do what be thinks is right.*  [Boy: “I really like Obama, he’s like, a great person, he has a … I think he has a great wife and kids. He’s really nice …”]

Obama:  *I believe that we’re all connected as one people.*

Singing Girl 2:  This is what dreams are made of.

Obama:  *I am my brother’s keeper*  [African singing], *I am my sister’s keeper.*

Singing Girl 2:  I’ve got somewhere I belong, I’ve got somebody to love.

Obama:  *Bring them home from war.*  [Boy 2: “he’s just really trying to help everybody out and trying to fix Bush’s mistakes.”]  *The men and women of every colour who serve together and fight together and bleed together under the same proud flag – bring them home from war.*

Singing Girl 2:  I’ve got somewhere I belong, I’ve got somebody to love.

Obama:  *America can change. All the world can change!*  

Singing Girl 2:  This is what dreams are made of …

Commentator:  The incoming president faces no shortage of difficult challenges …

Obama:  *Hope! Hope in the face of difficulty! Hope in the face of uncertainty! The audacity of hope!*

Singing Girl 3:  We’re gonna spread happiness, we’re gonna spread freedom. Obama’s gonna change it. Obama’s gonna lead ’em. We’re gonna change it – and rearrange it – we’re gonna change the world.
Obama: I believe that we can provide working families with the road to opportunity. I believe we can provide jobs for the jobless, homes for the homeless and reclaim young people in cities across America from violence and despair. I believe that we have a righteous wind in our backs, and that as we stand on the crossroads of history we can make the right choices and meet the challenges that face us. America, feel the same energy that I do! Feel the same urgency that I do! Feel the same passion that I do! Feel the same hopefulness that I do! If we do what we must do then I have no doubt that all across the world the people will rise up and this world will reclaim its promise and out of this long political darkness a brighter day will come. Thank you very much everyone, God bless you.

Singing girl 3: We’re gonna spread freedom …
Singing girl 1: I wish I could fly, up so high to catch that sun in the sky.
Singing girl 3: Obama’s gonna change it, Obama’s gonna lead ‘em … [McCain: “a man known as ‘the one.’”]
Singing girl 3: We’re gonna change it …
Singing girl 1: I wish I could fly … [Obama: “war must be an option! War must be an option …”]
Singing girl 2: I could almost kiss the stars …
Singing girl 1: I wish I could fly …
Singing girl 3: Obama’s gonna change the world.
Singing girl 1: I wish I could fly …

Track 8: Zeitgeist

“Zeitgeist” has three distinct sections, each of which utilises speech samples differently. The first section comprises a collage of non-descript speakers, all sampled from the film The American Ruling Class (2007). As the identities of these speakers are unknown to me, the narrative transcription for this section shall appear below without indications of the various speakers’ sources. Section two contains a sizeable proportion of political rhetoric – whose speakers are indicated in the transcript – along with the voices of unknown media commentators, whose names, clearly, are not. The third section, with one exception, comprises only samples from the speech of such unknown speakers. The exception is provided by the voice of Peter Schiff, whose words form a substantial component of the final section.
Major sources of samples

All Section 1 voices: *The American Ruling Class*, (Kirby, dir., 2007)

Gordon Brown:
- “Gordon Brown Announces ‘New world order is emerging’ at G20”, YouTube, accessed 7th July 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8IyREChuIg


Commentary on G20 and protests:


Transcript

Section 1

*Power – fatally attractive. Well connected – in the investment banking business (the ruling class), the ruling class. Graduated from Yale, came from Goldman Sachs, came up through the investment banking world (very powerful CEO), the icon of Wall Street, a Republican. The top ten percent own seventy two percent of the wealth. You will find no moral obstacle that cannot be removed from the highway of ambition. (Soft power). The top one percent owns more than the bottom ninety percent. Meet the ruling class – a small group of rich people (doing well). Our ruling elites … power.*
Section 2

Bush: We’re in the midst of a serious financial crisis.

Obama: The most serious financial crisis in a generation.

“The downturn is severe. The world bank described it as the worst global outlook in sixty years.”

Rudd: Unfettered free markets became worshipped as a god …

Bush: Greed is the root cause behind much of the instability in our markets.

Rudd: … and we know that that god was false.

Bush: The market is not functioning properly.

“It’s zero, no growth whatsoever.”

Brown: This old world of the Washington consensus is over.

Markets need morals!

“There’s a lot of anger out there, and we think this is the beginning of a big movement that will change the way the world is run (barricades surround the Bank of England). Everything that’s happened recently has shown that greed is not sustainable.”

Brown: The unsupervised globalisation of our financial markets did not only cross national boundaries, it crossed moral boundaries too.

“Shame on you! shame on you! (Shame!), shame on you! (Shame!) shame on you!”

Section 3

“Upending the moneylenders’ tables. Financial fools’ day.”

Bush: Enough is enough folks.

“Self interest still rules – the corporatocracy.

Brown: And what comes in its place?

Bush: No one knows.

Obama: The surplus became an opportunity to transfer wealth to the wealthy, instead of invest in our future. A crisis that has cost us so much in terms of jobs, savings, and the economic security of our citizens.

Schiff: The economy is in terrible shape and everything the government is doing now and everything the government is likely to do is gonna make the situation worse.

“We are on an unsustainable course right now.”

Bush: Not over my dead body will they raise your taxes! (wild applause).
Schiff: *We need to recreate a viable economy again, and unfortunately, that comes with a lot of pain.*

“People are in a kind of ah … denial. It’s hard to sell a message of pain.”

Schiff: *I thing there’s still a lot more damage to come, but I think the economic crisis is only just beginning – there’s a lot more pain.*

“President Bush squandered an opportunity of prosperity to resolve some of our long term fiscal issues and to prepare for bad times like we have now (now the unthinkable had happened).”

Schiff: *We have to have a very painful transition. We’re gonna have a much lower standard of living for many, many years as we have to deal with the consequences of our reckless behaviour. And, I think the instigator of all of that was the government itself.*

Bush: *(We will spend what is necessary to win the war against terrorism …providing loans and business advice to encourage a culture of spending).*

“We wanna have the lifestyle and consumption that we wanna have and, leaders find it risky to explain that it can’t really go on like this forever.”

Schiff: *(We’re a mess – we’re a complete disaster).*

“We borrowed money from China to give tax cuts to the best off people in our society and leave our kids paying the bill for a war that we chose to fight. That was really unprecedented. It’s going to be politically difficult to make any change. We have lived beyond our means.”

**Track 9:**

*“Over and Out”*

**Sources of speech samples**

**Barack Obama:**

Appendix 1: Full Transcripts


**John Howard:**


**Transcript**

The final piece comprises speech narratives – most of them constructed – from several politicians. Those included are Barack Obama, Kevin Rudd, George Bush, Gordon Brown and John Howard. Australian radio entity Alan Jones is heard towards the end of the piece. [Note: phrases within asterisks were unreconstructed; they were actual phrases uttered by their designated speakers].

Obama: *People have been beaten down for so long, and they feel so betrayed by government that when they hear a pitch that is premised on not being cynical about government, there’s a part of them that just doesn’t buy it.*

Bush: *In the darkness of the night, when hope has faded from our sight, in our hearts we know the hype shall never really end.*

Rudd: *We’re sorry – I’m sorry if we have caused you pain; misled you all …

Bush: … for our own gain.

Rudd: *That must never, never happen again.* *That’s the cold, confronting, uncomfortable truth.*

Bush: *The shadow hanging over us shall be brought out into the light. *Fashion the future* – or, *leave it languishing with the academics.*

Rudd: *Seize the day.* Set a destination – for the nation.

Bush: Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (enthusiastic applause).

Brown: *…shift in the sheer scale and seismic strength of the speed and scope of globalisation.*
Bush: Umm ... that was ur ... Gordon Brown (mild applause).
Howard: *All advertised accident advice* is absent, and as you will be aware, *I'm not able to give any additional answer.*
Bush: John Howard (enthusiastic applause) yeah ... yeah ... really good.
Obama: People say I probably pal around with Peruvians but I'd like to point out that my primary presidential plan is producing pretty pressing programs page by page (rapturous applause).
Bush: Oh, mister president ... wonderful. You have to hand it to him – Barack.

Okay – let's break it down ...
The aim here is to pun. To pun like you never have done. Yeah ... uh huh.

Rudd: We embrace the possibility of practical proposals for proper premium pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, pre-primary school principal partnership programs.
Bush: Now – never negate the need for national security. You need to know I know we have needs here at home – like nuclear weapons, and nerve gas.
Rudd: *A stony, stubborn silence.*
Obama: Frankly folks, the fact of the matter is, I want to fix the focus forward to freeze federal funding for four out of five families.
Bush: Intercepted conversations, incredible complications, and hospitalisations.
Obama: *I am a strong proponent of pay as you go.* I propose that people pay for performance. The practice of this particular policy priority doesn't make me popular, but that's politics.
Howard: And err ... as I've advised, avoid in any way any terrorist-related activity. Attack any Australian authorities that absolutely appear to have contributed in a big way to aviation anguish.
Obama: Enough!!!
Rudd: Whatever ...
Jones: Sometimes you wonder don't you whether politicians genuinely understand or are even interested in the cynicism and skepticism that they breed in the electorate.
Obama: Politics has become so bitter and partisan, so gummed up by money and influence ...
Howard: I've had it in bucketfuls!
Bush: Over ... and out (laughs).
Table 1. Content Analysis of Political Mashup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (duration)</th>
<th>“The New Bushisms” (3:26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>MC Quake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Url</td>
<td><a href="http://www.audiostreet.net/artist.aspx?artistid=7025">http://www.audiostreet.net/artist.aspx?artistid=7025</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Musical Backing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composed</th>
<th>Synthesised beats backed by a descending progression played on synthesiser; tremolo synthesiser pad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriated songs/music</td>
<td>A capella choral version of “God Bless America”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other samples</td>
<td>Phone rings, applause, unidentified choral singing, cash register bell, air raid sirens, explosions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Main speaker(s)** G. W. Bush

**Narrative** (Main speaker in italics, identities of other speakers as indicated)

> Speaker, House of Congress: “Members of Congress, I have the high privilege, the distinct honour of presenting to you the President of The United States.” Americans have many questions tonight. We ask every nation to join us to plot evil and destruction. Nations from Latin America to Asia to Africa to Europe, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers as their leaders dictate. The United States respects the Taliban regime. After all we are currently its largest source of loosely affiliated terrorist organisations. The terrorists practice singing “God Bless America”, it’s a fringe form of Islamic extremism. The United States’ goal is remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere. The United States respects the Taliban regime; I thank you for what you have already done and for what we will do together. The United States is not only repressing its own people, it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists. By aiding and abetting murder, it’s committing murder. I also want to speak tonight directly to our many Arab
Appendix 2: Content Analysis

friends. The United States of America kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. Its goal is making money. With every atrocity America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends — including women and children. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, the United States follow in the path of fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism. Assured of the rightness of our cause, and confident of the victories to come, may God grant us wisdom and may he watch over the United States of America.

Unknown Speaker: “You are talking about the nonsensical ravings of a lunatic mind.”

Synopsis

Assertions of fascist rule under the Bush regime provide the primary narrative drive in this example. The speech flows seamlessly and is clearly audible due to a sparse backing that occasionally drops out altogether. The constructed narrative is, however, sometimes patchy in terms of its logical cohesion. The line: We ask every nation to join us to plot evil and destruction seems gratuitous, its invitation actually precluding the dark fantasy of the US as an oppressive global master. The United States respects the Taliban regime is also slightly ludicrous, although it may be inspired by allegations of the CIA’s arming and training of Afghani Mujahedeen during the 1979-89 USSR occupation of Afghanistan.171 Other lines, although strident in tone, are arguably more plausible; retreating from the world and forsaking our friends recalls the isolation the US suffered from its continental European allies after the Iraq invasion.172 The placement of: sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power is in harmony

171 These allegations are numerous and are mostly found in alternative media outlets. For example, in 2004 Democracy Now published an interview with journalist and managing editor of The Washington Post, Steve Coll in which he claimed that the CIA both trained and armed the Afghani Mujahadeen – who were then fighting America’s Cold War Soviet enemies – which led to the formation of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Accessed online at http://www.democracynow.org/2004/6/10/ghost_wars_how_reagan_armed_the 14 August 2009.

with much that has been written about the neo-conservative clique that found unprecedented influence under the Bush presidency.\textsuperscript{173}

Example 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (duration)</th>
<th>“Party Tonight” (2:00)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>The Lorin Swelk Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Unknown (accessed 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Url</td>
<td><a href="http://www.diymedia.net/audio/mp3/thelorinswelkorchester-partytonight.mp3">http://www.diymedia.net/audio/mp3/thelorinswelkorchester-partytonight.mp3</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Backing</td>
<td>Composed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Programmed beats; simple chord progression on synthesiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriated _</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other _</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main speaker(s)</td>
<td>G.W. Bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative (Main speaker in italics, identities of other speakers as indicated)</td>
<td>I believe great decisions are made with drugs and alcohol in our schools and streets ... in our schools and streets. Drugs and alcohol embody the potential of a generation. Drugs and alcohol – every child must be taught these principles. Drugs and alcohol – every citizen must uphold them. Drugs and alcohol – in our schools and streets. We resolve to party and this is my solemn pledge. We resolve to party – party tonight, party tonight. We resolve to party – together, together. We resolve to party – party tonight, party tonight. United across the generations by drugs and alcohol, for everyone, for everyone, for all. If we do not turn the hearts of children towards drugs and alcohol, we must tell them, we must tell them – we expect them to learn. This is the vision of America’s founders. We expect them to learn to make a different choice. Drugs and alcohol – to the seniors in this country; drugs and alcohol embody the potential of a generation. Drugs promise peace, which gives direction to our freedom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drugs promise peace to the sons and daughters of this achievement.
Drugs and alcohol delivered us from evil.
Drugs and alcohol, because I’ve seen it, because I’ve felt it.
We have seen a steady erosion of American alcohol. We do not accept this – and we will extend the promise of alcohol to every forgotten corner of this country.
We resolve to party and this is my solemn pledge.
We resolve to party – party tonight, party tonight.
We resolve to party – together, together.
We resolve to party – damn the consequences!
Party tonight, party tonight.

**Synopsis**
The beats are the most prominent musical element in this mashup. Bush’s phrases are placed musically in the 4/4 groove which features syncopated snare hits after the third and fourth beats. The rhythmic placement of words is skilfully executed, at times making it sound as though Bush is rapping. The two catch phrases: drugs and alcohol and we resolve to party – party tonight appear to have inspired the piece, which could constitute a light-hearted conflation of Bush’s notoriously intoxicated past with the composer’s views on cultural malaise within contemporary US society – or perhaps it is merely an ode to adolescent recreational proclivities.

**Example 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (duration)</th>
<th>Blair Terror Legislation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Poison Popcorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Url</td>
<td><a href="http://www.diymedia.net/audio/mp3/pp-blairterror.mp3">http://www.diymedia.net/audio/mp3/pp-blairterror.mp3</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Backing</td>
<td>Composed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuous, undulating, shifting synthesiser pad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main speaker(s)</td>
<td>Tony Blair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Narrative        | As has already been stated, there will be new anti-terrorism legislation in the autumn. This will include an offense of condoning or glorifying bookshops and anyone who has participated in the community or has anything to do with it in
Appendix 2: Content Analysis

any way will automatically be subject to torture or ill-treatment. This will also be applied to justify or glorify anything to do with the European Convention on Human Rights. Let no one be in any doubt, the rules of the game are changing. Under the guidance of fanatical extremism, the European Convention on Human Rights will be struck down as contrary to Article 3 of the Good Natured British Terrorism legislation, as interpreted by senior hand-picked officials – fanatical cunts, in other words. We are already compiling an international data base of those individuals whose views are contrary to the interests of the Home Secretary. Anyone on the data base will be deported. We already have powers to strip citizenship from any foreign national and we will legislate further: we will extend the use of deportation orders to include the decent, law-abiding community of Britain. It is now necessary that people attend a citizenship ceremony, swear allegiance to the Home Secretary, and worship the Prime Minister. Any breach can mean imprisonment. Freedom and progress are now completely unacceptable.

I am fostering hatred. I am advocating violence to further extreme fanatical beliefs. I am not suitable to preach. I am talking shit. I’m a cunt. And that is my duty as prime minister. However, let me say also to you that ... of course Britain knows that I’m good-looking. I’m rather proud of it – I’m a cute prime minister. I should emphasise, I want people’s complete respect, admiration and worship.

Synopsis

This example plays with the words of ex-British Prime Minister Tony Blair, originally recorded as he outlined new anti-terror legislation at a news conference in the wake of the London terrorist bombings in 2005. The backing music succeeds in providing an eerie atmosphere, while its sparseness gives centre stage to Blair’s lengthy and elaborate speech. The speech cutup is mostly seamless and the vocal timbre consistent – an indication that all of the words may have been sourced from the same speech. The constructed narrative projects a theme common to many political mashups, expressing concerns that governments use and/or incite public fear of the threat of terrorism to justify the introduction of oppressively restrictive legislation. The composer inverts ‘the terrorism equals
fanatical extremism’ equation favoured by Western governments, throwing the charge back onto its source.\textsuperscript{174} His personal disdain for Tony Blair is abundantly evident, and its comically livid expression here threatens to overwhelm his more serious concerns with Monty Pythonesque absurdity.

Example 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (duration)</th>
<th>“Bush of Doom” (2:37)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Dept. Of Corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Url</td>
<td><a href="http://www.diymedia.net/audio/mp3/DOC-bushofdoom.mp3">http://www.diymedia.net/audio/mp3/DOC-bushofdoom.mp3</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Backing</td>
<td>Composed Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriated</td>
<td>“Doomsday Clock”, Smashing Pumpkins (SP) (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Gunshots, rockets, air raid siren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main speaker(s)</td>
<td>George W. Bush</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrative (Main speaker in italics, identities of other speakers as indicated)

We enter the year 2007 with large endeavours underway, possessed by hatred, commanded by a harsh and narrow ideology. Terrible sadness, despicable acts of terror, the beginning of the end of America. Chemical agents, the death sentence, lethal viruses and shadowy terrorist networks; corporate scandals, terrible disease, chaos and confusion, deliberate, deadly terrorist acts. The very worst of human nature. Tyranny in our world.

SP: Is everyone afraid? Is everyone ashamed? They're running towards their holes to find out. Apocalyptic means are lost amongst our dead. A message to our friends to get out.

And war is what they got. Shock troops, hateful ideology. Terror – on our terms. Bring it on – wanted dead or alive. And it could be you!

\textsuperscript{174} In Chapter 2 it is argued that this equation is not self-evident, and that the term ‘terrorism’ has since 9/11 often been employed as a propaganda tool by Western governments. The inversion effected by Poison Popcorn, although perhaps contrary to popularly received logic, is echoed by French philosopher Alain Badiou, who borrowed a concept from Gilles Deleuze to describe the war on terror as “the disjunctive synthesis of two nihilisms.” Identifying the two key players in the global clash as Bin Laden and the “American superpower,” he argued that they are both the same, asserting that “on both sides Good, Evil, and God serve as rhetorical ornaments in jousts of financial ferocity and schemes for hegemonic power” (Badiou, 2002, online).
Appendix 2: Content Analysis

(SP: They're bound to kill us all, in white-washed halls, the jackals lick their paws)

*Fascism was only a dream – until it was achieved. Until one day it was accomplished. You are with evil doers.*

(Media 1: “The United States government has raised the nation’s threat level to our highest level of war: severe, or red.”

Media 2: “The key thing is: don’t be inhaling, don’t be ingesting, don’t be sucking particles into your body that could get the radiation inside.”

Media 3: “First, your advice is: stay inside, don’t drink or eat anything.”

SP: Apocalyptic screams mean nothing to the dead. Kissing that ol’ sun to know all there is. Come on, last call! You should want it all!)

**Synopsis**

This relatively recent mashup depicts US President G.W. Bush cataloguing the doom he has begun to deliver to the US via what the piece implies are his fascist, war-mongering intentions. Although this example is unusual in its use of a rock song recording as its exclusive musical backing, the choice of “Doomsday Clock” by The Smashing Pumpkins is very apt here, as the song launches a bitter denouncement of a government-propagated climate of fear. The mashup is typical of many examples of the genre in that it casts Bush and his administration as agents of tyranny whose unspoken agendas are concealed by outwardly declared allegiance to democratic freedoms. Well integrated into the backing, constructed admissions such as: *hatred, commanded by a harsh and narrow ideology; Fascism was only a dream – until it was achieved; and You are with evil doers* are clearly not designed to project contrite confession. They serve to dehumanise Bush, portraying him as harbouring psychopathic, megalomaniac ambitions. The war sounds in the finale effectively transport the listener into a woeful world of apocalyptic carnage.
Example 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (duration)</th>
<th>“Imagine This” (4:32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Wax Audio (aka Tom Compognoni)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Musical Backing**

- **Composed**
  Beats
- ** Appropriated**
  Voice of Speaker, US House of Congress; elements of original John Lennon recording of “Imagine” (1971) including verse piano progression, chorus drums and main vocal; elements of John Lennon’s “Give Peace a Chance” (1970), outro section from The Beatles recording of “Strawberry Fields Forever” (1967); fragment of final orchestral cacophony and final piano chord from The Beatles’ “A Day in the Life” (1967); crowd applause; record scratching; John Lennon speech fragments; Tony Blair and Bush saying “weapons of mass destruction”; samples from other Wax Audio tracks: voice saying “overboard”; Alexander Downer saying: “Howard Killed”

**Other**

Distorted electric guitars; acoustic guitar part

**Main speaker(s)**

G.W. Bush and John Lennon (JL)

**Narrative**

(JL: “And that’s what I’m saying in this album, I’m saying – I remember what it’s all about now you fuckers. You know – fuck you all! That’s what I’m sayin’ – fuck you all!”

Unknown speaker: “Imagine this ...”

Unknown Speaker: “It is my privilege, and a distinct honour to present to you the President of the United States.”

*Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Let’s roll. One, two, three, four ...*

*Imagine there’s no heaven, it’s easy if you try, no hell below us, and above us only sky. Imagine all the people living for today.*

*Imagine there’s no countries. It is not hard to do. Nothing to kill or die for – and no religion too. It’s ... it’s a good idea. Imagine all the people living side by side in peace. You could say I’m a dreamer. But I’m not the only one ... and uh ... I hope some day you’ll join me and the world will live as one, two, three, four.*
Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can. No need for greed or hunger. A brotherhood of man. Imagine all the people sharing all the world. Imagine. Thank you very much – peace. We strive for peace. Let’s come together (one, two, three, four ...) Imagine ... peace. All I’m saying is give peace a chance.

JL: All we are saying is give peace a chance (come together!).

Imagine
Imagine ... peace. All I’m saying is give peace a chance.

JL: All we are saying is give peace a chance (come together!).

Imagine
We seek peace.
All of us want peace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wax Audio’s track cleverly harnesses the widespread appeal of an iconic song to project a renewed vision for peace, this time mediated by postmodern technology. His juxtaposing of Bush’s voice over Lennon’s words, respective signifiers of war and peace, was a tour de force that struck a chord with a global audience of listeners. Although the effectiveness of the piece ultimately relies upon the renown of the appropriated John Lennon’s song, it is an exceptionally fine composition. From a purely technical perspective, the composer applies his considerable skills primarily to the arranging of cultural, electronically mediated sound bites rather than instruments (although non-sampled, played instruments are also in evidence). Narratively, there is a strange power in the juxtaposition of Bush and Lennon. By imagining Bush embracing peace rather than overtly condemning him for choosing war, not only is a rejection of what the actual Bush stands for made implicitly, but the call for an end to violence is strengthened by presenting the longing for peace as a force strong enough to override even Bush’s warring tendencies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

175 Soon after being submitted to a number of websites and community radio stations around the world, “Imagine This” featured heavily on playlists on WRNR-FM in Washington DC, WMFU in New York, and BBC Radio 1 in the UK. In August 2005 it was also in the top five most played tracks on Australian Youth Radio station Triple J. Accessed online at http://metalpostcard.blogspot.com/2005_05_01_archive.html, 12 May 2009.

Appendix 3: Distribution and Publications

Music

Radio Airplay

Some Assembly Required, (radio show based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A)
- “Rendering Babylon”, 16th June 2008
- “Mouth Music”, 9th May 2009

Sound Quality, broadcast by Tim Ritchie on ABC Radio National, Australia
- “Rendering Babylon”, 7th September 2007
- “Howard Repents”, 21st December 2007
- “Mouth Music”, 8th May 2009

Downunda Thunda Radio, Carnarvon, Western Australia has aired “The Redemption of George W” and “Rendering Babylon” at various times throughout 2007–09.

The Gristle, community radio station 2SER, Sydney, Australia
- “Rendering Babylon”, October 2007

Bay FM, Byron Bay, New South Wales, Australia

Featured Artist Spots


Online outlets for RogueSounds tracks
MySpace: at www.myspace.com/davidjweir

DIY Media:
- “Quickening”, http://www.diymedia.net/collage/gwb-wcrew3.htm
- “Rendering Babylon”, http://www.diymedia.net/collage/truth-va2.htm
- “Mouth Music”, http://www.diymedia.net/collage/truth-obama.htm

The Art of the Prank: at http://artoftheprank.com/2008/02/17/the-rogue-sounds-project-musical-anti-war-activism/

Written Publications


Appendix 4: Instruments and Musicians

1. “The Redemption of George W” (3:54)
   David Weir: bass guitar, programmed beats, synthesisers, sample manipulation

2. “Rendering Babylon” (3:43)
   David Weir: bass and electric guitar, programmed beats, synthesisers, sample manipulation (including oud by Yuval Ishkar)

3. “Quickening” (3:06)
   David Weir: bass, and electric guitar, acoustic six string guitar, programmed beats, synthesisers, sample manipulation

4. “Howard Repents (The Real Thing)” (5:26)
   David Weir: bass guitar, electric 12-string guitar, acoustic 12-string guitar, synthesisers, programmed beats, vocals, sample manipulation
   Elenor Sapir: vocals

5. “Rogues” (4:28)
   David Weir: bass and electric guitar, acoustic six string guitar, synthesisers, programmed beats, vocals, sample manipulation

6. “Legacy (Into the Darkness)” (5:57)
   David Weir: synthesisers, sample manipulation
   Enlightened Fool: supplied three instrumental pieces that were sampled for inclusion

7. “Mouth Music” (5: 57)
   David Weir: bass guitar, synthesisers, programmed beats, sample manipulation

8. “Zeitgeist” (5:11)
   David Weir: bass guitar, programmed beats, synthesisers, sample manipulation
9. “Over and Out” (5:31)
   David Weir: bass and electric guitar, acoustic six string guitar, ukulele, harmonica, synthesisers, sample manipulation

   **** *

   CD mastered by Michael Worthington.
   CD label and MySpace logo artwork by Elenor Sapir