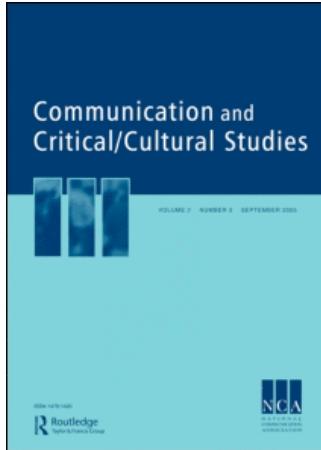


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# Stick it in Your Ear: The Psychodynamics of iPod Enjoyment

Joshua Gunn & Mirko M. Hall

*Through a sustained critique of the iPod and discourse about it, this essay advances a psychoanalytic rhetoric of music that characterizes listening experiences in terms of two psychological economies: the psycho-somatic or experiential and the symbolic. We argue that these economies work together to produce the fantasy of a “sonorous envelope,” a re/presentation of losing one’s self in music. Because the dis/pleasurable experience of the sonorous envelope is a retroactively imposed understanding of an otherwise ineffable musical encounter, we argue for analyzing representations of the sonorous envelope in popular culture.*

*Keywords:* Drive Theory; Gadget Love; Jouissance; Popular Music; Sonorous Envelope

... the real psychodynamics of gadgeteering are still largely unexplored and ... their study would be utterly timely in order to gain insight into the emotional ties between the objective set-up of contemporary conditions and the individuals who live under these conditions. ... the libidinalization of gadgets ... feeds on the ego’s control of nature: gadgets provide the subject with some memories of early feelings of omnipotence.

—Theodor W. Adorno<sup>1</sup>

Today it is difficult to ride in or traverse any peopled, public space without becoming witness to someone’s musical enjoyment. Increasingly the devices enabling such pleasures are of a kind: Apple’s personal music gadget, the iPod. Although the iPod has sold well ever since Apple CEO Steve Jobs unveiled it on 23 October 2001, nearly 60 million of the 90 million iPods sold since that time have been in the last two years, signaling a previously unimaginable ubiquity.<sup>2</sup> Originally

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the iPod was a digital version of the portable CD or cassette tape player (e.g., the Discman or Walkman); however, since 2001 Apple has introduced a number of updated versions of the device, including models that display photos as well as low-resolution videos. The iPod (which is currently bundled with a popular, cross-platform software program and online music store titled “iTunes”) has garnered over 70 percent of the market share for all types of portable media players, and 90 percent of market share for portable hard-drive-based media players.<sup>3</sup> At the time of this writing, the current, fifth-generation iPod comes in both white and black casings with chrome backing, and features a vivid, color screen. With 20–60 gigabytes of memory, iPods are capable of holding tens of thousands of songs, photos, and videos that are selected and played back from a rotary wheel (the “iClick” wheel), which the listener uses by selecting on-screen menus and pushing the middle “enter” button. iPods are shipped with white-chorded earbuds that are inserted directly into the ear canal.

For a number of cultural critics, the direct insertion of the earbuds into the ear canal achieves “a form of accompanied solitude” that is rude and offensive.<sup>4</sup> “When you plug into your iPod in a public place,” writes Armstrong Williams, “you are basically telling everyone else that you do not want to interact with them.”<sup>5</sup> Owing to the flexibility of MP3 technology, which has resulted in an unparalleled access to one’s entire music collection on a device the size of a credit card, iPods have eclipsed the Sony Walkman as the center of an expanding culture of mobile listening that replaces chance conversations with the musical company or occupancy afforded by the musical gadget.<sup>6</sup> Critics of the iPod frequently describe the faux-solitude of users as a narcissistic and self-indulgent one, as if enjoying the device in public is an inappropriate, masturbatory event.<sup>7</sup> In fact, related to this caricature of the iPod user is a warning analogous to going blind, but a valid one nonetheless: frequent and prolonged use of the iPod causes hearing loss. Audiologists have warned that, because the iPod’s earbuds are directly inserted into the ear canal, they focus sound directly to the eardrum at six to nine decibels louder than open-air sounds.<sup>8</sup> Advances in music recording techniques and technology have also almost eliminated the hiss or noise discernable in older, so-called analog recordings that contributes to distortion at high volumes.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the discomfort or pain one would usually feel from older recordings is not experienced by an iPod user when listening to music at high volumes. The consequence is that a loud iPod can traverse the threshold of pain and still sound good as the listener slowly goes deaf.

In this essay, we begin by suggesting that the association of the iPod with both masturbation and harm is not coincidental, but an overdetermined cultural relation owing to its status as a fetishized object or gadget (e.g., see Figure 1). As an indefinite name for “a comparatively small fitting, contrivance, or piece of mechanism,” a gadget is usually a tool or mechanism that is fetishized because of its novelty.<sup>10</sup> From a psychoanalytic perspective, however, gadgets are devices fabricated expressly for stimulating various human desires or “drives,” sometimes by direct insertion into an orifice, but also by inviting the attention of one (e.g., as television does the eyes and ears). Analyzing the iPod as a gadget helps to explain both the pleasure and pain of its



**Figure 1.** An overdetermined cultural relation: the iPod with an OhMiBod vibrator accessory that pulsates to the beat of one's music. ©Suki, LLC. Courtesy of Suki, LLC.

use, as well as the controversial discourse generated *about* the device and its users. In this respect, our thesis is that the iPod is both appealing and repulsive because of the way in which it is enjoyed (*jouissance*). In iPod discourse, enjoyment is represented as *both* ecstatic and narcissistic, as *simultaneously* inviting and threatening. As we detail in due course, psychoanalysis provides us with a number of useful concepts that help to explain how the iPod is enjoyed and why this enjoyment is not merely pleasure, but something much more ambivalent.

To this end, we first situate our discussion within the broader context of past rhetorical theories of music, which we suggest have tended to favor the musical “text” or reactions to that text at the expense of musical experience itself. After suggesting that psychoanalysis helps to provide a better rhetorical account of the sensual appeal of music, the essay proceeds contrapuntally, focusing on the *experience* of the iPod and the *rhetoric* of that experience in tandem. First, we describe the relationship between the iPod as a fetishized gadget and the psychical apparatus central to our understanding of the appeal of music in general, the drive to listen or the “invocatory drive.” Then, we detail the relationship or tension between the libidinal and symbolic economies of meaning exchange in musical experience in terms of the “sonorous envelope,” a crucial concept that denotes *both* a musical experience and the way in which that musical experience is represented. Finally, we illustrate the psychodynamics of the iPod—and by extension of popular music enjoyment in general—by examining more closely the promotional and critical rhetoric about the device.

## Toward a Psycho-Rhetoric of Music, with the Example of the iPod

Theory will cause me, unconsciously, when I do not expect it, to adopt a special listening.  
—Juan-David Nasio<sup>11</sup>

A number of scholars in the fields of musicology, communication studies, and cultural studies have taken to explaining in detail how the formal elements of a musical text communicate meaning in seemingly non-discursive ways. For example, in his classic study of music education, Christopher Small argues that the central logic of western music is formally telic. The evolution toward functional harmony in the history of western music created a kind of musical gravity that depends on feelings of expectation and satisfaction.<sup>12</sup> The song form that resulted from these manufactured feelings (variously represented by AABA or, as a certain group of Swedes made famous, ABBA) underlies the structure of most of what we characterize as “popular music,” from the Beach Boys to George Gershwin to Frank Zappa.

This notion of a drive toward the tonic, or the beginning note (or alternately, the main note of a key in the major–minor tonal system), is not merely an aberration or circumstantial event, but one that is overdetermined and ripe with cultural and ideological influence. Consequently, in addition to analyzing and critiquing the sensory effects of tonal music in the west, many scholars have also been tracing the persuasively symbolic or “rhetorical” dimensions of formal musical structures and their relationship to the social.<sup>13</sup> Scholars in the field of communication studies have contributed to this effort in a number of ways. For example, Karen Rasmussen has drawn on semiotics and on Kenneth Burke’s theory of form in order to show how Leonard Bernstein’s *Kaddish Symphony* encapsulates a formal struggle between tonal and atonal compositional motives, which serves as a rhetorical inducement and reckoning with a Jewish struggle outside the symphony’s narrative.<sup>14</sup> The mediation and rhetorical or suasive effects of the social also figure prominently in Theodore Matula’s schema for analyzing popular music, which stresses the interplay of text and context at multiple levels of abstraction. This approach better specifies an individual’s listening practices as a complex amalgam of personal life-experiences and ideological influences.<sup>15</sup> Dissatisfied with the focus placed on meaning “intrinsic to the musical event” and the attention given to the “internal relationships of the [musical] composition,” Robert Francesconi has argued for a “rhetoric of musical style” that emphasizes social frames of interpretation.<sup>16</sup> Although far from exhaustive, these three studies help to demonstrate how almost every attempt to specify a rhetorical approach to music forwards a strategy to help navigate the object of the “musical text” and the historical, social, political, or cultural context of its reception.

Whether one studies the critical object of a speech or song—or, in our case, a gadget—the key theoretical difficulty of any interpretive schema is the tension between an individual’s personal experience of the object and the external forces and discourses mediating and influencing this experience. Of course, any framework for understanding the desirous act of listening should help to specify the interplay of listener, text, and practice. In theorizing this nexus, psychoanalysis focuses on both

the individual, subjective experiences of the listener and the cultural and social forms of mediation.<sup>17</sup> Psychoanalysis is not some provocative “literary-metaphorical project of textual exegesis,” then, but rather provides a number of compelling, explanatory tools for answering questions concerning subjectivity, affect, and desire that extend beyond the one-dimensional text.<sup>18</sup> A psychoanalytic approach suggests that although the suasive influence of music can be explained with reference to the ideological and political norms encoded in formal musical structures (e.g., the tonic, timbre, timing, lyrics, and so on), the fact remains that different kinds of music appeal to different kinds of listeners—and often for reasons that are not entirely conscious. Consequently, any explanation of the suasive appeal of a given song or genre of music based solely on musical structures cannot account for the idiosyncrasies of individual enjoyment. The subjective psyche of a listener must be taken into account. Why does techno music cause a person to tap along to the beat, even when she hates techno? Why do some people enjoy country music when others despise it? We believe that the answer to these and similar questions has something to do with infantile experiences and libidinal energies that reside and emanate from the unconscious, something that an analysis of the iPod helps us to see.

We submit that the appeal of a given song or genre of music resides in the dynamics of two interwoven economies: one that is libidinal and concerns kinetic rhythms (the experiential); and another that is linguistic or representational and which involves the relationships between sounds and their culturally defined meanings (the rhetorical). Because communication scholars have tended to focus on the latter at the expense of the former, one of our goals in this essay is to supplement extant rhetorics of music keyed specifically to cultural representation and mediation with a theory of desire or an explanation for what (subjectively) attracts a listener to a given musical object. Focusing on the iPod as an exemplar is instructive in this effort because its appeal extends far beyond its ostensible use value as a music delivery device. From a cultural standpoint, the iPod is a synecdoche for the structural relationship between the libidinal and representational economies of musical enjoyment. Understanding how music attracts listeners experientially will help us, in turn, better understand the appeal of discourse about music and the mode of address that iPod rhetoric represents.

### *Gadget Love*

Any cursory review of popular media stories about the iPod reveals that the device is at the intersection of a number of different rhetorics: first and foremost, the iPod concerns sound insofar as it is a delivery mechanism for music and spoken word; second, it is a profitable technological commodity that has become a desirable possession (seemingly) independent of its use; and third, as we have already suggested, the iPod seems to function as an occultic device of discrimination based on those who do and do not enjoy it in public space. The three dimensions of iPod rhetoric are suggestive of a musical experience, a desirous form of consumption, and a public politics that are somehow intricately related. The concept that immediately

links these dimensions of iPod rhetoric is fetishism, or the attribution of magical or sexual powers to an object that it does not itself truly possess. In this sense, the iPod is the haloed center of a significant kind of cultural work; the device betokens something more than itself—a “something more” beyond the iPod itself.

At first blush, the “something more” of the iPod speaks to its character as a fetishized or libidinalized gadget and the desire it stimulates. Catherine Liu explains:

Gadgets are miniaturized prostheses—and fit into the available orifices of the consumer body: they resist decorporealization insofar as they provide an imago for the ideal organ. Palm Pilots, Blackberries, refrigerators that send email, robot vacuum cleaners, iPods, and customized cell phones require psychic docking ports that allow data to be attached to bodies in motion.<sup>19</sup>

The gadgeteer, continues Liu, is someone “whose attachment to new technologies trumps his or her attachment to sex or other strenuous activities.”<sup>20</sup> Adorno argues that gadget attachment or love is motivated by a false sense of empowerment among “persons who do not any longer feel they are self-determining subjects of their fate.”<sup>21</sup>

Amplifying the sense of empowered autonomy that Adorno isolates as the gadget’s chief appeal, Laurence A. Rickels argues that the gadget gets its libidinal charge from the way it participates in a soul-deep, western science fiction fantasy of immortality and omnipotence, a fantasy of replicating or extending oneself without (or beyond) embodiment that he denotes with the clever shorthand, “psy fi.”<sup>22</sup> In this respect, “gadget love” is simply the contemporary iteration of fetishism as such, *the* public desiring of our “high tec” times.<sup>23</sup> Gadget love is a metonymic surrogacy for sexual organs,<sup>24</sup> a kind of public lust for machines that participates in a larger, cultural fantasy of “overcoming . . . a crisis in reproduction through the self-replicating prospects of immortality. . . .”<sup>25</sup> Such a scenario may seem *prima facie* far-fetched until one reflects on the formal parallels between the gadget in self-identified fantasies, such as television programs, and everyday life: just like the Star Trek communicator device that extends one’s vocal presence across planets, so does the ubiquitous cell phone extend one’s locate-ability across continents. Whether or not one consciously enjoys gadgets as a token of self-reproduction, “in contrast to most machines, gadgets . . . give [one] the illusion of operating independently.”<sup>26</sup> Consequently, a significant reason why the iPod has dominated discussions about popular culture is that the device is plugged into a larger, cultural, “psy fi” techno-fantasy of self-extension and self-control. It is no mere coincidence that the iPod has come to signify the self-transparent autonomy of its user: Apple’s stated meanings for the “i” in “iPod” are adjectives for the target user, “individualistic” and “independent.”<sup>27</sup>

How, then, do gadgets participate in this psy fi fantasy? What is it about the gadget that inspires, however indirectly, the desire to consume and use one? We argue that the appeal of the gadget is twofold. First, through its look, feel, and use, the gadget causes the desiring for “something more” in the gadget than the gadget itself can deliver. It betokens a *promise* for something beyond it, and insofar as desire would

cease once its object is realized, the iPod's failure to live up to this impossible promise keeps desire in play (as does the continuous parade of updated, new-and-improved versions, e.g., Apple's successor to the iPod, the iPhone).<sup>28</sup> So far we have described the representational dimension of this promise as one of autonomy and, by extension, the *psy fi* fantasy of immortality and self-reproduction, although thinkers have described this promise in different terms as well: the magical "aura" of a cultural object, the "commodity fetish" or "fetish character," and so on.<sup>29</sup> Regardless of the concept one uses to denote the "something more" quality of an object (we prefer the *objet a*, about which more below), the specificity of the iPod's fetish character concerns its representational and fantasmic dimensions,<sup>30</sup> including the rhetoric that deifies or vilifies it as something to be revered or feared.<sup>31</sup> We will eventually turn to an analysis of the iPod's fetishization in Apple's early promotional campaign for the device. What we have yet to discuss, however, is the second but primary way in which the iPod appeals to listeners: the creation of physical pleasure (and pain) in concert with the body. After one is rhetorically induced to buy an iPod, the device will, of course, be used. This experiential dimension of iPod enjoyment pertains to what Freud termed "the drives" and is intimately related to the iPod as a fetish insofar as the device functions as an *objet a* or stimulus for desire, broadly construed.

### *Dis/Pleasure of the Drives*

Whatever I do to make it real  
it's never enough.  
—Robert Smith / The Cure<sup>32</sup>

In the psychoanalytic tradition, there are two mutually informing, yet nevertheless distinct, approaches to human motivation: object relations theory and drive theory. The tradition that has modified—yet not abandoned—Freud's understanding of motive, sometimes referred to as classical psychoanalysis, is that of drive theory. Fundamentally reduced, the drive (*Trieb*) is the variable yet insatiable movement of psychosexual energies throughout the body, or as Freud once put it, the "psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuous flow of stimulation."<sup>33</sup> In less technical terms, the idea of the drive is that humans are coerced into thinking and behaving in reference to energies that pulsate around certain objects. Freud argued that these objects tend to be located around or near libidinally charged and psychically privileged regions of the body, the "erotogenic zones," most of which are orifices. For example, the human infant's "oral drive" aims toward (or pulsates around) the breast, the anal drive the feces, the invocatory (or listening) drive speech, and so on.

Although psychoanalytic theorists have argued that the drives derive from hard-wired instincts (*Trieb* is sometimes translated as "instinct"),<sup>34</sup> Jacques Lacan distinguished the drives from the instincts for reasons that afford a central role to representation and, by extension, rhetoric. First, unlike other animals, humans are born with partial and incomplete instincts, and must resort to symbolic resources, such as crying, to satisfy their needs. This is why Lacan insists on the drive's primary

construction through symbolic processes; simply put, biology is not enough, because self-consciousness requires human beings to be “symbol-using animals.”<sup>35</sup> Although the drives are facilitated by neuronal pathways that re/trace more basic, incomplete preservative instincts, the drive represents a culturally mediated state of lack. For example, the clichéd object of the oral drive for the classic, heterosexual male is the woman’s breast. When making love to a woman, like a hungry infant, a so-called tit-man will ultimately end up putting the woman’s breast in his salivating mouth. One knows the oral drive is in play because the man does not want to get or possess the breast as the object of his desire, but precisely the opposite. In other words, the point is not to own or have the breast, but to prolong sexual excitement by reckoning with the *impossibility* of ever getting the breast—of *lacking* the object even though it may be in one’s mouth.<sup>36</sup> In this respect one can already begin to see how the iPod functions as surrogate breast (or phallus, or any fetishized object) by means of symbolic lack. Experientially, the iPod is a sensorial device that materially rouses the ear, and rhetorically, such arousal is keyed to the promise of “something more”—autonomy, self-transparency, self-extension, and so on—that can never truly be fulfilled. In this way the invocatory drive continues to pulsate and desire perseveres. In short, one cannot separate the *physical* excitation of the drive from the fetishized and therefore symbolic “object” that sets it into motion. The (un)conscious recognition of lack is always already a symbolic process, which is why one cannot disarticulate the fetish character of the iPod from the experience of its material use.<sup>37</sup>

Second, insofar as the drive is implicated in the symbolic, its object is ultimately determined by nurture or culture, not by “nature” (e.g., whether the hunger cries of the infant are satisfied by the breast or the bottle is of little consequence to her). The relatively interchangeable character of the object of the drive implicates the intervention of social codes, norms, ideology, and so on in determining what is and is not a proper love object. (We say “relatively interchangeable” because, of course, sticking a cigar into an infant’s mouth would not provide the nourishment it needs, although a cigar may very well—at least momentarily—stimulate the oral drive.<sup>38</sup>) These theoretical innovations, in turn, are built upon a number of differences between Freud and Lacan that will prove important for our discussion: (a) Freud suggests that the drives emanate from “erotogenic zones,”<sup>39</sup> whereas Lacan stresses that a specific orifice always defines the drive, which—by permanently “cutting” or penetrating the body’s surface—marks the precarious threshold between the internal, psychical world and external reality, otherwise known as the divide between subject and object;<sup>40</sup> (b) Freud suggests that there are several “component drives” (oral, anal, genital) that initially function as independent units until they are assimilated under the genital drive in puberty,<sup>41</sup> whereas Lacan argues that the discrete drives can never attain any complete, harmonious organization and always remain partial;<sup>42</sup> and (c) for Freud, the purpose of the drive is to gain sexual satisfaction through the expenditure of energy, operating on a kind of hydraulic model of tension and release, whereas for Lacan, the purpose of the drive is to re/produce an always-open circuit of auto-eroticism that *never closes*, such that libidinal energy endlessly circulates around the orifice.<sup>43</sup>

Collectively, these Lacanian elaborations to Freud's notion of the drive suggest a model that resembles the pulsation of energy in a circle that can never be closed. Some object—a breast, a penis, a shoe, an iPod—both inspires the pulsation of the drive and is the impediment to its closure: the *objet a*.<sup>44</sup> Slavoj Žižek explains that:

It is important to grasp this inherent impediment in its *positive* dimension: true, the *objet a* prevents the circle of pleasure from closing, it introduces an irreducible displeasure, but the psychic apparatus finds a sort of perverse pleasure *in this displeasure itself*, in the never-ending, repeated circulation around the unattainable, always missed object. The Lacanian name for this “pleasure in pain” is of course enjoyment (*jouissance*), and the circular movement which finds satisfaction in failing again and again to attain the object is the . . . Freudian *drive*.<sup>45</sup>

The most obvious (and, therefore, most boring) example of drive enjoyment is genital foreplay: the goal of foreplay is to prolong genital pleasure, not to end it in orgasm—or soreness, whichever comes first.

As a drive stimulator the iPod represents the *objet a*, inspiring pleasure in pain in a number of ways.<sup>46</sup> First, as we have already suggested, as a gadget the iPod symbolically promises more than it can possibly deliver. Second, as a music delivery device it is possible for the iPod to seamlessly mix thousands of songs from one's personal library into a seemingly endless playlist. Because the MP3 and ACC or M4P formats are song-based, the “natural” textual closure usually afforded by the end of an album (e.g., having to flip the vinyl disc, to turn over the cassette, or put in a new compact disc) is not an event for the iPod listener; the drive can therefore pulsate endlessly, freed from the end of the record. Third, as a sensorial device, it can quite literally cause physical harm in a number of ways: lost in the music, one can become blind and deaf to potentially threatening surroundings, for example. But, perhaps more disturbingly, the digital technology that underwrites the iPod makes it possible to listen clearly at high volumes in ways that transgress the threshold of pain. As one audiologist explained, this risk is exacerbated by the earbuds because they do not cover the ear to help to muffle background noise as older earphones do.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, in noisier environments (such as a commute to work on public transit), iPod listeners have a tendency to turn up the volume beyond recommended levels in a manner that transcends the pleasure barrier, in a manner that hurts but sounds so good.

In keeping with Lacan's observations, the now global pervasiveness of the iPod in the popular media and in public spaces suggests that the most ubiquitous kinds of enjoyment in daily life are not genital, but rather concern the scopic drive and gaze (looking at things and people), and the invocatory drive and speech (which, as one grows older, is later surrogated as song and music).<sup>48</sup> In other words, the most pervasive form of libidinal enjoyment in our everyday lives is not sexual intercourse, but rather the (seemingly) mundane pleasures of watching screens and listening to music or voices. As we detail below, the dialectic of “dis/pleasure” forms the basis of listening subjectivity (and by extension, seeing subjectivity) and begins to explain why different people enjoy different kinds of music.

*Crossing the Threshold of the Sonorous Envelope*

Music directly transected by desires and drives, has always had but one subject—the body, which it offers a complete journey through pleasure.

—Jacques Attali<sup>49</sup>

Attali's observation underscores the intense physiological and affective responses that music solicits. Music has the uncanny ability to involve, construct, and energize the body in accordance with rhythms, gestures, surfaces, and desires.<sup>50</sup> But music also causes listeners to experience their body and its social identity in new ways and often "seemingly without mediation."<sup>51</sup> The sometimes ineffable, oceanic feeling of being surrounded, even penetrated, by music is the signature of the invocatory drive par excellence and, more specifically, represents the experience of what several scholars have termed the "sonorous envelope." As a word, however, the sonorous envelope simultaneously represents an ineffable experience and a *representation* of that experience. Consequently, the sonorous envelope is a middle-way concept, a link between the libidinal and the rhetorical that denotes both an experience beyond representation and, paradoxically, how that experience is described. In this section, we further describe the sonorous envelope and explain how the iPod attempts to re/create it by using music to engage the libidinal economy of listeners and thereby pre/discursively construct sites for listening subjectivity.

For many scholars, music allows listeners to (seemingly) circumvent external reality and directly access their unconscious drives. Since the mid-1970s, psychoanalytic research, coupled with film theory, has often concentrated on the underlying connection of music to the maternal body. A number of French theorists, such as Didier Anzieu, Claude Baliblé, and Guy Rosolato, have stressed the role of sound in a child's developing subjectivity within the womb. They argue that the exposure to the mother's body—her heartbeat, breathing, voice, and bodily movements—is a primal experience in which the child feels itself enclosed within an envelope of sound or a "sonorous envelope."<sup>52</sup> "Music finds its roots and its nostalgia in [this] original [infantile] atmosphere," argues Rosolato, "which might be called a sonorous womb, a murmuring house, or music of the spheres."<sup>53</sup> This intrauterine experience suggests an undifferentiated and oceanic expansiveness; it is analogous to the all-around pleasure of listening to music. From this vantage, for example, the contemporary, five-speaker stereo system in living rooms across the country represents a classically infantile attempt to recreate the sonorous envelope in "surround sound." Earphones or earbuds are designed to recreate a similar experience, albeit a more isolating and mobile one.

As a stimulus for the invocatory or listening drive, surround sound, earphones, and earbuds inspire the listener to "lose" herself in sound work by helping to circulate psychosexual energies around the ear. Juan-David Nasio's elaborations of the Lacanian concept of enjoyment (*jouissance*) helpfully explain the crucial role of dis/pleasure in this circulation. Nasio refigures Lacan's notion of *jouissance* as a "thrust of unconscious energies."<sup>54</sup> In this newer orientation to the experience of enjoyment, music speaks to unconscious flows (or drives) of psychical energy that are *never*

immediately experienced by the conscious subject (this is why Lacan states that the invocatory drive is “closest to the experience of the unconscious”).<sup>55</sup> If these energies do emerge, they are always “condensed in a corporeal segment,” which means that they are localized in a particular part of the body.<sup>56</sup> These condensations would include involuntary responses to music, such as goose bumps, which are physical reminders of archaic moments that David Schwarz terms “threshold crossings.”<sup>57</sup> When music addresses conscious or preconscious feelings—whether they are pleasurable, displeasurable, or ambivalent—it is the direct result of music’s translation or crossing into the symbolic matrix. In short, music affects listeners unconsciously through psychical energy, and consciously through this energy’s culturally mediated transformation.

A number of post-Lacanian theorists have argued that music seeks to re/discover the sonorous envelope through its very repetitiveness, which suggests powerful parallel structures. Music engenders a “repetition that postulates an anteriority that recreates itself . . . encountering a lost object (the mother . . .) or one of its traits—sound, the voice,” argues Rosolato. “Throughout this return, it is *the movement of the drive itself that is reproduced* since it works to reestablish an anterior state” (our emphasis).<sup>58</sup> Although Rosolato and his followers essentialize music as re/enacting a series of lost maternal representations (wrongly so, we think), they nevertheless recognize the rhythmic and energy-laden nature of the invocatory drive. In fact, many musical structures, especially those of so-called popular music, are repetitive and thus homologous to the circular pulsation of the drive in its pure kinetic motility (e.g., the repetitive beat of dance music). In other words, as we argued of drives in general, invocatory energies endlessly circulate around the orifice of the ear in a manner that formally parallels the repetitive structures of music itself, thereby keeping the ear in a permanently erogenous state and unable to reach the end-goal of complete sonic satisfaction. We are reminded here of children who never tire of playing or singing the same “I Love You” song by Barney, the purple dinosaur, over and over and over again. Another example of the homology of the invocatory drive and musical experience is the modern dance club or “discothèque”: inside a comfortably warm and dark room, colorful lights bathe dancers and pulsate repetitively as a driving musical beat urges bodies to move. Each pound of the beat or melodic return to the tonic and chorus signifies a pulsation of the invocatory drive. As most individuals who have been to a dance club can attest, even if one does not like the music, she will, nevertheless, find herself nodding her head or tapping her foot to the beat. The dance floor pulsates to the music just as the drive pulsates to the music; when one adds de-inhibitory drugs to the experience, the oceanic feeling of the sonorous envelope is overdetermined. Dance clubs are, in other words, hyper-drive zones.

Although the appeal of music in a dance club has as much to do with its technological reproduction as an overpoweringly loud, monotonous, and repetitive beat, musical harmony also works to remind listeners of archaic, oceanic moments of developing subjectivity. Listening to one’s favorite song through a telephone speaker, which sounds terrible, can still cause one to “lose oneself” in the music. Such an experience implies a powerful compensatory role for memory and, therefore,

symbolic re/presentation, which underscores the fantasmic and rhetorical character of the sonorous envelope. Although Anzieu and Rosolato have argued that music can help a listener regress to a blissfully anterior (i.e., pre-subjective, pre-linguistic, pre-Oedipal) state, such a theoretical position only articulates the parameters in which listeners *may* have access to vestiges of pre-symbolic conditions.<sup>59</sup> Schwarz, on the other hand, argues that the sonorous envelope is a fantasy concept or a psychical representation that is *retroactively* attributed to a powerful yet ineffable experience:

On an elementary level . . . the experience of being embraced by the all-around sound of music . . . [is] made possible by [one's] experience of the sonorous envelope in the early stages of . . . developing subjectivity. But, even though the experience . . . [is] visceral, it was a *fantasy*—a representation of an experience to which neither I nor anyone else can have direct access. Thus, representations of the sonorous envelope are always retrospective; they are produced by a wide variety of theoretical, historical, psychoanalytic, and personal contexts. Given its retrospective structure, the sonorous envelope can be described as a *thing*, an immanent experience whose features represent how we imagine the sonorous envelope might have sounded.<sup>60</sup>

To put the same point alternately, although music can be understood through primary, psycho-somatic processes and experiences, it first becomes fully enunciated through the secondary processes of the symbolic order. How one reflects upon or represents a powerful sonorous experience (e.g., getting goose bumps during a favorite aria, nodding one's head to the beat, and so on)—that is, how one imagines and describes the sonorous envelope—is consequently and fundamentally rhetorical. Hence, the retroactive rendering of the sonorous envelope should be a primary site of analysis for a psychoanalytically informed rhetoric of music, a site to which we now turn.

### **iPodding Toward Ecstasy: Apple's Envelope and the Politics of Enjoyment**

In the first section of this essay, we described the iPod as a gadget that appeals on two levels, at the symbolic level of the fetish and at the experiential level of the drives. The concept of the "sonorous envelope" helps to capture both the experience *and* description of one's enjoyment of music and, more specifically, of a gadget like the iPod. Understanding "rhetoric" to mean the *study* of the representational logics of a given object, a psychoanalytic rhetoric of music begins to take shape when these two psychical economies are not divorced from one another, but are examined in their tense but mutually implicated relation. The libidinal economy that concerns pure kinetic rhythms informs and is informed by the linguistic economy that involves the ideological relationships between tones and their culturally defined meanings.<sup>61</sup>

Understood as a framework for criticism, a psychoanalytic rhetoric of music can approach the analysis and interpretation of musical phenomena in two ways. First, one can analyze the relation between musical structures and their cultural meanings. This approach focuses on the *music itself* in relation to a variety of contexts, and is unquestionably the most common interpretative framework in music criticism. Rhetoricians have tended to adopt a semiotic approach, for example, while

musicologists before the advent of the cultural studies revolution tended to make many references to musical notation. Insofar as the experience of the sonorous envelope is a retroactively posited fantasy that attempts to symbolically reckon with an indescribable, immanent experience, another approach keyed specifically to the sonorous envelope recommends itself. What if an important if not central element of musical suasion is *not the music itself*—which is ineffable—but the way in which listening experiences and psycho-somatic stimulation are meaningfully represented? In other words, insofar as our psychoanalytic frame suggests the interanimation of psycho-somatic and symbolic economies, a rhetoric of music concerns sound as much as it does representations of sound and the listening experience (viz., the sonorous envelope). So far, we have principally focused on theorizing the body's libidinal economy in an effort to supplement more traditional rhetorics of music with a theory of desire—namely, drive theory vis-à-vis the threshold crossings of musical encounter. We now return our attention to the fetishization of gadgeteering, and more specifically, to an examination of iPod promotional campaigns and their parodies in order to illustrate how the psycho-somatic processes of listening are implicated in the rhetoric *about* listening.

### *Sound-Designing the Scopic Drive*

Apple is known for its keen attention to aesthetics, and its unique designs for computers explain why they are frequently considered a kind of cultural capital for the “urban sophisticate.” The success of the iPod is unquestionably related to the slick, chrome-plated design of the device. In fact, because design is the central, distinctive element of all of Apple's products, from its inception the iPod was created to appeal as much to the eyes as it was to the ears, which is signaled by the small screen that gradually took on an increasing functional importance in each successive generation. Although the iPod is unquestionably associated with music playback, current models now display the cover artwork of the music album from which a song was originally “ripped,” and iPods are currently celebrated as movie-players and photo-albums. Today one can download television shows (\$1.99) and films (\$14.99) from iTunes with a credit card.

The significance of the iPod's scopic appeal was foreshadowed by its heavy promotion in a now-famous, award winning “silhouette” advertising campaign.<sup>62</sup> The silhouette advertising campaign began in early 2003, first in print, then later moving to billboards and “wrap-arounds” on public transportation vehicles. The advertisements feature a variety of individuals in silhouette in different states of movement in front of a brightly colored background. Each figure is holding a stark white iPod that foregrounds its tiny screen (a cue for the scopic drive); the white chords and earbuds are prominently seen as well (a cue for the invocatory drive). The fetishized character of the device as a scopic and invocatory stimulus was further amplified by a television commercial campaign that Apple started in October of 2004. Each ad featured silhouette figures dancing to lively, upbeat pop music, such as The Caesar's “Jerk It Out” or the Gorillaz' “Feel Good Inc.,” while, of course, listening to

the iPod. A more recent commercial features a number of “hippie”-like silhouettes dancing to Wolfmother’s “Love Train.” The backgrounds are a pastiche of swirling psychedelic swatches of pink and purple, which pulsate and—in 1.5 seconds intervals—melt into trippy, lysergic oblivion. At the same time, highly energetic dancers move their hands and arms wildly toward and away from the camera in time with the music. The end of the ad features one silhouette smashing a guitar on (what is presumably) the ground, although his iPod remains supernaturally immobile.<sup>63</sup>

What is unique about Apple’s advertising campaign for the iPod is the way in which it works to fetishize the gadget as a drive stimulator by creating a visual representation of the sonorous envelope. Each silhouette figure is clearly “into” the music that they are listening to, and the device works as a remote control for that oceanic sense of unmediated harmony. Apple’s advertisements and commercials can also be seen, however, as a demonstration of the function of *all gadgets*, such that the silhouette advertising campaign is an extreme pedagogy of “gadget love,” the last stop before the end of the line in pornography—a path that Apple seems unwilling to go down (others, of course, have been less trepidatious; e.g., Figure 1). Insofar as iPod advertising represents a pedagogy of drive stimulation, it also necessarily encourages regression to primary states of subject development. Consequently, as in most advertising campaigns, Apple’s advertising is unmistakably concerned with the development and maintenance of individual identity by “mirroring” how its consumers see or would like to see themselves. In both print ads and television commercials, each silhouetted figure is dynamic, seen to be moving or “jamming out,” but always with a kind of youthful confidence that reflects Apple’s confessed appeals to individualism and independent autonomy.<sup>64</sup> In Lacanian and post-Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, such identity work is set into motion by the dis/pleasure of drives in terms of the imaginary self-image or internalized imago of the “mirror-stage.”

#### *God’s Jukebox, or, the myPoddic Mirror*

For Lacan, the mirror stage refers to both a scene (that is, a place of acting out) and a retroactively posited, mythic moment in which a developing child first beholds his or her image in a reflective surface.<sup>65</sup> Although, originally, Lacan developed this mythic event in genetic terms, the mirror stage has since been elaborated and received as an allegory for a dynamic, developing subjectivity that happens gradually over time.

In the mythic inauguration of self-consciousness, the child is simultaneously jubilant and fearful as a result of identifying with its image: on the one hand, it is pleasurable to see oneself as an independent and discrete being—a unity. On the other hand, however, asserting one’s independence is painful, because it means that one is not “one” with one’s mother. From this event onward, suggests Lacan, an individual *gradually* internalizes the imago of one’s body as a kind of self-concept or ego-ideal (a misrecognition to be sure), which over the years becomes invested with all sorts of social expectations (gender norms, sex norms, expectations from one’s parents to become a doctor, lawyer, and financially stable grandchild production

machine).<sup>66</sup> The older one becomes, the more one realizes that she is in a perpetual state of mis/recognition, that she does not really measure-up to her internalized self-concept.

Since Lacan's development of the concept, theorists have argued that the mirror stage is actually preceded by an acoustic stage in which the mother's voice functions as the first "acoustic mirror," a sonorous echo, as it were, of the child's intrauterine existence.<sup>67</sup> Like the imago that develops later, the acoustic mirror positions the child's first external object of identification as sound, initially in the womb and later, of course, in terms of the interplay between one's own cries and the voice of the mother (although her face is the first visual mirror, the notion of independence requires an actual image of self). Together, the acoustic and visual mirrors work in concert to stage the development of human subjectivity. Because the invocatory drive is *first* stimulated, however, music is associated with the primary, developmental processes of the infant, whereas imagery—including written language—is associated with secondary, higher order processes and developing adolescence. Stated crudely, responses to music and sound are more "primal" than those to imagery and pictures. Consequently, music and human speech have long been associated with feelings of presence and realness (e.g., in the Platonic dialogues), however illusory we determine such feelings to be.<sup>68</sup>

The unease or sense of lack one feels in reference to the internalized voice and imago have been important for a number of film theorists, who argue that the cinematographic experience temporarily relieves discomfort over one's identity through a series of identifications with voices and images.<sup>69</sup> By extension, iPod advertising—like all forms of advertising—appeals to consumers by presenting a series of idealized sounds (music) and images of people. Engaging the discourse surrounding the iPod as a series of mirror stages—that is, as (1) a place where the drama of identity is enacted and as (2) an intersection of the imago, the ideal ego, and the voice of the Other—we can begin to see why the device has resonated so deeply with consumers.

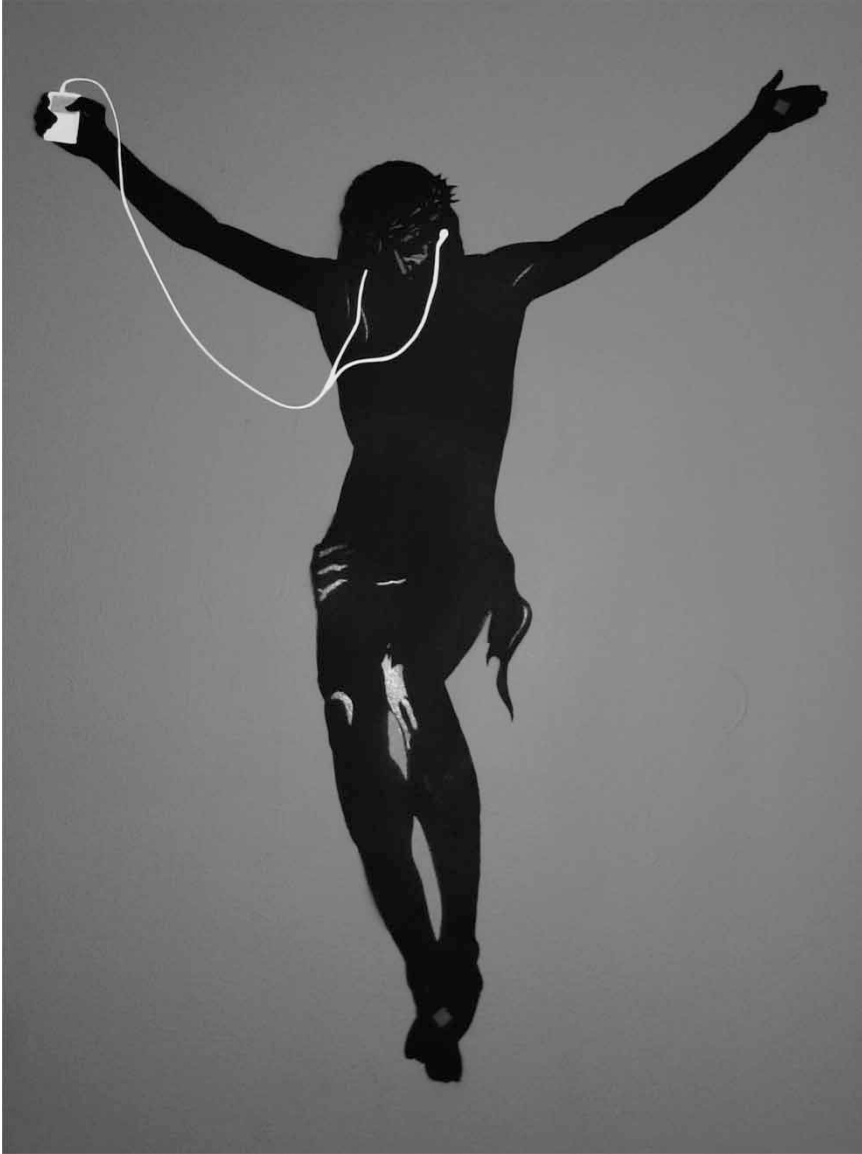
The print advertisements of the iPod are uncannily homologous to the development of subjectivity in the sense that the centrality of the image is an homage to the primacy of the sonorous; it is a representation of someone "losing" herself in music, yet remaining (visually at least) independent. For example, in a print advertisement that ran in 2004, in front of a yellow background, a thin, silhouette of a woman with a pony tail seems to be either looking blankly to her right or closing her eyes; her iPod is held up close to her face, as if it were a microphone and she is about to sing.<sup>70</sup> Her left hand is held out beside her with the palm open, signifying movement. Either the woman is dancing, *or*, her hand is urging someone to leave her alone (the gesture brings to mind the youthful statement, "talk to the hand!"). Whether the woman is dancing or fending off someone who threatens to disturb her listening pleasure, her body language signifies both independence and musical enjoyment. Similarly, television commercials re/stage the archaic site of mirrors, both acoustically and visually, in a kind of identifiatory double-whammy that jubilantly celebrates the primal discovery of independence *and* a pre-subjective

state of oceanic bliss, signified by the use of upbeat music and bright, hypnotic color schemes. Each silhouetted figure is “empty” of features because she enthymematically represents the spectator. In short, the mirror-work of iPod discourse is an attempt to represent the sonorous envelope, an advertising campaign that appeals to an unconscious desire to return to a prediscursive state of harmonious omnipotence, maintaining the presumed autonomy and independence of the ideal consumer.

The culturally resonant and psychoanalytically inspired power of iPod discourse as a site of double mirroring is perhaps no more obvious than in the many parodies and spoofs of the silhouettes. Shortly after the silhouette campaign debuted in the fall of 2003, Photoshop spoofs of the ads began flooding webpages across the Internet. The most common component of iPod advertising spoofs is the inversion of the sunny-side of dis/pleasure and mis/recognition: instead of celebrating pleasure and autonomy, the frequently repressed or unconscious elements of pain and individual shortcoming or lack are emphasized. Of course, as a drive stimulator and fetishized object, the iPod must necessarily generate a sense of “lack” and pain, it cannot deliver on its promise as an object of fantasy, it cannot overcome the cultural crisis of reproduction, and it cannot truly return consumers to a pre-symbolic state of (Platonic) bliss. Parodies and criticisms of the iPod, its users, and its advertising attempt to rupture the mis/recognized bliss betokened by Apple’s advertising.

One of the more controversial iPod spoofs, for example, is artist and video game producer Tim Hall’s *CrucIpod*, a stencil-art representation of the crucifixion of Jesus with iPod in hand (see Figure 2). “[I]f you look at most advertising geared towards that 20 something market,” says Hall, “you will see that they borrow a lot from the graffiti/screen printing [art] scene . . . Big corporations are taking inspiration from ‘indie’ artists to sell their products—why not take their campaign and subvert it?”<sup>71</sup> In light of Mel Gibson’s in/famously bloody portrayal of Jesus’ crucifixion *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), one is hard-pressed to think of a more obvious, western example of *jouissance* or dis/pleasure than the “passion” or ecstasy of sacrifice. The homology here between Christ’s public and musically enjoyable death and the real harm of the iPod’s great-sounding delivery of deafness attempts to rupture the socially isolating and self-important effects of iPodding.

By yoking together two highly connotative (and arguably most fetishized) objects of our time—Jesus and the iPod—Hall holds up another mirror to western culture that reckons with the unconscious infantilism and selfish fantasies of omnipotence that new drive technologies are frequently said to promote. Returning to our opening comparison of iPod listening to public masturbation, *CrucIpod* nicely encapsulates the libidinal economy of enjoyment so central to gadgets, a critique that was perhaps most famously made twenty years ago by cultural critic Allan Bloom. In his widely read 1987 diagnostic for higher education, *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom famously inveighed against the Sony Walkman, one of the first portable music gadgets, as a self-sealing delivery device for “rock” music, which has “one appeal only, a barbaric appeal . . . to sexual desire . . . (rock music is) a non-stop commercially prepackaged masturbational fantasy.”<sup>72</sup> If one re/characterizes the “barbaric appeal to sexual desire” as the stimulus of the invocatory and scopoc drives and “masturbation”



**Figure 2.** Tim Hall's CrucIpod. ©Tim Hall.

as the continuous pulsation of libidinal energies around the eye and ear, then Bloom is entirely correct. Masturbation is Bloom's metaphor for the stimulation of the invocatory drive because it emphasizes the libidinal nature of musical enjoyment (although we would stress that this enjoyment is not exclusively limited to "rock" music). For cultural critics like Bloom, jamming out on your iPod in public is akin to aggressively making out with your lover on public transit. In this respect, public displays of affection and "personal digital assistants" are both appropriately

controversial “PDAs”: they both stimulate one’s psychosexual energies and activate libidinal drives.

*Concluding Remarks: Earwig of a Deeper Jouissance*

I was in the woods in St. Moritz, in the mountains. . . . The snow was falling down. I pressed the button, and suddenly we were floating. It was an incredible feeling, to realize that I now had the means to multiply the aesthetic potential of any situation.

—Andreas Pavel, inventor of the Walkman<sup>73</sup>

This beat that the devil, today, has nurtured and fostered is inspired by the powers of hell. And there are young people that are in these rock groups that are pulling off their clothes in full view of thousands of young people. . . . Those young people that ripped off their clothes and acted like animals, they say it’s the music. . . . “I really didn’t know what I was doing,” they said, “I just pulled off my clothes and had to do it!”

—Unknown preacher sampled in Meat Beat Manifesto’s “It’s the Music”<sup>74</sup>

In this essay, we have advanced a psychoanalytic rhetoric of music that characterizes the listening experience in terms of two psychical economies: the psycho-somatic and the symbolic. These economies work together to produce the fantasy of a “sonorous envelope,” a re/presentation of losing one’s self in music. The dis/pleasurable experience of the sonorous envelope is, however, a retroactively imposed understanding of an otherwise ineffable musical encounter. Consequently, instead of analyzing how a given song’s musical structures and formal qualities stimulate the invocatory drive, we focused on representations of the sonorous envelope in popular culture, and in particular, the retroactive characterization of an anonymous individual’s experience of music in Apple’s iPod advertisements. We also showed how the spoofs inspired by Apple’s silhouette ads, such as Tim Hall’s *CrucIpod*, help to underscore the fundamental ambivalence of musical *jouissance*, an ambivalence upon which a certain cultural politics is based: there is a kind of “pleasurable pain” to the sonorous envelope that pushes representation to the very limits of taste. In this respect, it is important to keep in mind that sensorial “masturbation” is not always pleasurable; sometimes it is politics.

To say that sensorial enjoyment is political entails a number of consequences. First, it recognizes the ways in which the cultural inevitably colonizes and mediates one’s experience of music. Although the experience of music is always prior and potentially external to schemes of representability, every *meaningful* musical experience depends on representation, and consequently, the symbolic order can potentially eclipse musical immanence (e.g., our grandparents routinely dismiss hip-hop as sheer “noise,” as they are completely incapable of *hearing* because they are too busy *listening*). Second, as a culture, we have “regulated” where and how one enjoys and engages the drives, and as Allan Bloom’s screed against the Walkman reveals, a great deal of our cultural politics seems to involve who does and does not have the right to sensorial stimulation, as well as the appropriate places in which one can enjoy.<sup>75</sup>

Controversy about the ubiquity of the iPod is a prime example of how the libidinal enjoyment of music inspires political rhetorics of repression.

Although Bloom's remarks about the insulating effects of the portable music device have been criticized for intoning an elitist conservatism, what he and many contemporary critics across the political spectrum share in common is an attention to the isolating effects of new, portable media gadgetry; whether a cell phone, a Nintendo Gameboy, a dildo, or an iPod, all gadgets are designed to stimulate one or more of the drives, thereby focusing one's attention to her enjoyment at the expense of the "outside world" (even the most ubiquitous of gadgets, the television, is said to "glue" the spectator "to the screen"). Nevertheless, before the arrival of the iPod, the anarchist John Zerzan argued that the portable music device is part of an "ensemble of technologies" that create "a protective sort of withdrawal from social connections."<sup>76</sup> Reporter Thomas Lipscomb has described these personal listening devices as the equivalent of a sensory depression tank that "prolongs adolescence, stifles social contact, and keeps people from expanding their intellectual horizons."<sup>77</sup> Writing for the *New York Observer*, Gabriel Sherman confessed that he had to wean himself off of his iPod, because he "had grown increasingly numb" to his surroundings, "often oblivious to the world" around him, "trapped in a self-posed bubble." He compared the iPod to a drug that had "come to dominate [his] daily existence."<sup>78</sup> While it is certainly the case that music technologies are an important part of listening practices, these commentators, nevertheless, overlook the crucial role of music itself. Like a cigarette, the iPod is functionally a delivery device; the real drug is the *music*. The general shift from discussing *the sounds produced by the iPod* to the fetishism of the device itself is a rhetoric of displacement (as is most discourse about gadgets—a way to talk about the dildo, instead of *what* one really does with it).

Ultimately, the iPod promotes a continuous dis/pleasurable, seemingly unmediated experience of psycho-somatic stimulation. What do we really do with an iPod? We stick it in our ears! Those who worry about the infantile fantasies of omnipotence inspired by portable media gadgets, those who fret about the über-individualism and self-absorption encouraged by "iPod culture," are in truth troubled by the implosion of the private and public that actualizing the drives betokens. As the invocatory stimulator has moved deeper into the body—from the speaker, to the headphone, to the earbud—musical enjoyment has, paradoxically, become increasingly public and spectacular, yet simultaneously radically individual. Because of the way in which sound and image appeal to individuals in singularly unique ways, further psycho-rhetorical research can help us to make better sense of the implosion of the public and private represented, increasingly, by the gadget.

## Notes

- [1] Theodor W. Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, ed. Stephen Cook (New York: Routledge, 1994), 73.
- [2] "Apple Reports Record Profits," *USA Today* (18 January 2007): [Money] 1B.

- [3] Andre Orłowski, "For Apple, Halo effect eclipses Osborne effect," *The Register* (11 October 2005), [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2005/10/11/apple\\_q4\\_2005/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2005/10/11/apple_q4_2005/) (accessed 31 July 2006).
- [4] Michael Bull, "No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening," *Leisure Studies* 24 (2005): 343–55.
- [5] Armstrong Williams, "Technology Overload," *The New York Amsterdam News* (25–31 May 2006): 13.
- [6] Bull, "No Dead Air!," 345.
- [7] The argument was first made by conservative cultural critic Allan Bloom about the Sony Walkman device, to which we will return in the conclusion.
- [8] "iPod's Popular Earbuds: Hip or Harmful?," *ScienceDaily.com* (16 December 2005), <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/12/051216191834.htm> (accessed 5 February 2007).
- [9] Gregory Mott, "The iPod and the Fury," *Washington Post* (17 January 2006): HE01.
- [10] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "gadget."
- [11] Juan-David Nasio, *Five Lessons on the Psychoanalytic Theory of Jacques Lacan*, trans. David Pettigrew and François Raffoul (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 116.
- [12] Christopher Small, *Music, Education, Society* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 7–59.
- [13] By "rhetoric," we mean two things depending on the context. First, we mean to refer to the representational dimensions of a given cultural event or object that have persuasive or appealing effects on people. Rhetoric in this sense refers to a dimension, feature, or object that attracts or compels. Second, rhetoric can refer to "the study of," or a *theory* of persuasion, especially when "of" is used. So, for example, a "rhetoric of music" would be a theory of how music as an object persuades people, while "music as rhetoric" refers to music as a persuasive object. For two excellent examples that exemplify both meanings of rhetoric vis-à-vis music, see Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); and Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1993). Some notable article-length approaches to music in rhetorical and communication studies include James R. Irvine and Walter G. Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange: Theoretical Considerations," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972): 272–84; Deanna Sellnow and Timothy Sellnow, "The 'Illusion of Life' Rhetorical Perspective: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Music as Communication," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18 (2001): 395–415; and Eric King Watts, "An Exploration of Spectacular Consumption: Gangsta Rap as Cultural Commodity," *Communication Studies* 48 (1997): 42–58.
- [14] Karen Rasmussen, "Transcendence in Leonard Bernstein's *Kaddish Symphony*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 150–73. Kenneth Burke's famous theory of "form" as the "creation and satisfaction" of appetites in an audience is based on his experiences as a music critic. See Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 29–44.
- [15] Theodore Matula, "Contextualizing Musical Rhetoric: A Critical Reading of the Pixies' 'Rock Music,'" *Communication Studies* 51 (Fall 2000): 218–37.
- [16] Robert Francesconi, "Free Jazz and Black Nationalism: A Rhetoric of Musical Style," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 3 (1986): 39.
- [17] For a historical trajectory of music and psychoanalysis, see John Shepherd and Peter Wicke, *Music and Cultural Theory* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1997), 56–72.
- [18] Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality* (New York: Verso, 1994), 7.
- [19] Catherine Liu, "A Brief Genealogy of Privacy: CTRL [Space]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother," *Grey Room* 15 (2004): 113.
- [20] Liu, "A Brief," 113.
- [21] Adorno, *Stars Down*, 74.

- [22] See Laurence A. Rickels, *The Case of California* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 256–66; and Laurence A. Rickels, *The Vampire Lectures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 26–35.
- [23] Laurence A. Rickels, *Nazi Psychoanalysis, Volume III: Psy Fi* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 129–207.
- [24] Catherine Liu, *Copying Machines: Taking Notes for the Automaton* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 36–37.
- [25] Laurence A. Rickels, “Nazi Psychoanalysis: Response to Werner Bohleber,” *American Imago* 52 (1995): 356.
- [26] Rickels, *The Case of California*, 264–65.
- [27] Steven Levy, “iPod Nation,” *Newsweek* (26 July 2004), <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5457432/site/newsweek/> (accessed 30 July 2006).
- [28] “Desire thus does not seek satisfaction; rather, it pursues its own continuation and furtherance—it merely seeks to go on desiring.” Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Technique* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 51.
- [29] See Theodor W. Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 288–317; and Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version,” trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings, Volume Four: 1938–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2003), 389–400.
- [30] By “fantasy” and “fantasmic” we mean to refer not simply to an illusion, but rather, the defense narratives of everyday life (for Lacan, this would be a defense from the lack of the Other). See Joshua Gunn, “Refitting Fantasy: Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Talking to the Dead,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 1–23; and Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (New York: Verso, 1997), esp. 3–44.
- [31] Perhaps “surplus-jouissance” is a powerfully relevant concept that explains the effect of the iPod; unfortunately, space limitations prevent a thorough discussion of this “something more.” See Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), esp. 52–53; 170.
- [32] The Cure, “Never Enough,” *Never Enough*, Elektra Records, CD single, 1990.
- [33] Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 34.
- [34] Some object-relations theories, for example, believe infants are “hard-wired” to pursue certain objects (which obviates the “drive” of classical psychoanalysis). See W. Ronald D. Fairbairn, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952); and Heinz Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation*, trans. David Rapaport (New York: International Universities Press, 1958).
- [35] Both Kenneth Burke and Jacques Lacan share this fundamental view of human nature. See Kenneth Burke, “Definition of Man,” *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 3–24.
- [36] More technically, what the man desires is “something more” beyond the breast, something that the breast betokens, but is not identical to the impossible stimulus of desire that Lacan terms the *objet a*.
- [37] See Philippe Van Haute, *Against Adaptation: Lacan’s “Subversion” of the Subject: A Close Reading*, trans. Paul Crowe and Miranda Vankerck (New York: Other Press, 2002), 158–62.
- [38] “Let us look at what he [Freud] says,” argues Lacan. “As far as the object in the drive is concerned, let it be clear that it is, strictly speaking, of no importance. It is a matter of total indifference . . . If Freud makes a remark to the effect that the object in the drive is of no importance, it is probably because the breast, in its function as object, is to be revised in its entirety.” The centrality and specificity of the object in this respect is one thing that

- distinguishes drive theorists from object-relations theorists. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), 168.
- [39] Freud, *Three Essays*, 35.
- [40] See Lacan's illustration of the drive's circuit in *Book XI*, 178.
- [41] "With the arrival of puberty . . . a new sexual aim appears, and all the component [drives] combine to attain it, while the erotogenic zones become subordinated to the primacy of the genital zone." Freud, *Three Essays*, 73.
- [42] Lacan, *Book XI*, 179.
- [43] As translator Alan Sheridan explains, in Lacan's witty formulation of "*la pulsion en fait le tour*," the drive "moves around the object . . . [it] tricks the object." Lacan, *Book XI*, 168.
- [44] The drive takes the *objet a* as its privileged object; this object does not represent any "object" of satisfaction (though one may be mistaken in this case). Rather, whatever functions as the *objet a* is a metonymic substitute for something "beyond" the object that is impossible to get. The space needed to fully unpack Lacan's formulation of the *objet a* is book-length project beyond the scope of this essay. For a rigorous characterization of the *objet a*—variously *objet petit a* or *objet (a)* depending on the period in which Lacan is writing—see Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 83–97.
- [45] Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 48. Also see David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 64–86.
- [46] Technically speaking, the *objet a* betokens the order of the real, and thus no one object is the *objet a* as that generic thing which causes desire; rather, it takes on its function to become, effectively, an *objet a* for a given person. In other words, what sets-off our desires and engages our drives may be very different from the *objet a* of others. Hence, the iPod is one of many *objets a*. See Van Haute, *Against Adaptation*, 140–52.
- [47] Eric Nagourney, "A Study Gauges the Risks for Ears with iPods," *New York Times* (24 October 2006, late ed.): F6.
- [48] See Mladen Dolar, "The Object Voice," *Sic 1: Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 7–31.
- [49] Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 143.
- [50] Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press, 1990), 253.
- [51] McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 23.
- [52] See Guy Rosolato, "La Voix: Entre corps et langue," *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* 38 (1974): 75–94; Didier Anzieu, "L'enveloppe sonore du soi," *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* 13 (1976): 161–70; and Claude Bailblé, "Programmation de l'écoute," *Cahiers du Cinema* 293 (1978): 5–12.
- [53] Quoted in Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 84–5.
- [54] Nasio, *Five Lessons*, 117.
- [55] Lacan, *Book XI*, 104.
- [56] Nasio, *Five Lessons*, 120.
- [57] Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*, 8.
- [58] Quoted in Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 57.
- [59] Both Anzieu and Rosolato parallel Kristeva's (earlier) position that music is exclusively constructed on the basis of the semiotic *chora*. The *chora* is that unified space, traversed by primary energies, which links the maternal body with that of the child. Conceived of as a "receptacle," it encloses the sounds, rhythms, colors, and pleasures of the mother/child dyad

- in one highly sensate environment. For Kristeva, the *chora* is “[n]either model [n]or copy . . . [it] precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm.” *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 26.
- [60] Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*, 8.
- [61] Van Haute explains the reason the experiential or “erogenous” and the representational are inseparable in terms of “lack”: “. . . the theory of the *objet a* and the phantasy makes it clear that we ought not understand this lack as a metaphysical magnitude; *the* lack does not exist. The signifiers that introduce it are not ‘signifiers in general’—rather, they are intrinsically bound up with specific erogenous zones and part objects. This means, first of all, that the lack is always and essentially experience, and acquires (phantasmic) meaning, on the level of the body.” See Van Haute, *Against Adaptation*, 161.
- [62] Mae Anderson, “‘Silhouette’ Is Grand at Kelly Awards,” *Adweek* (10 June 2004) [http://www.adweek.com/aw/creative/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=100052961](http://www.adweek.com/aw/creative/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=100052961) (accessed 31 July 2006).
- [63] The “Wolfmother” ad is currently available at [http://images.apple.com/movies/us/apple/ipod\\_itunes-seventy/ipod\\_itunes-seventy-h.ref.mov](http://images.apple.com/movies/us/apple/ipod_itunes-seventy/ipod_itunes-seventy-h.ref.mov) (accessed 31 July 2006).
- [64] Steven Levy, “iPod Nation.”
- [65] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 3–9; and Fink, *Lacanian Subject*, 48–68.
- [66] “The function of the mirror stage thus turns out,” says Lacan, “in my view, to be a particular case of the function of images, which is to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality—or as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*” (*Écrits*, 6). The imago as such is always from others or of the Other; once it is internalized it becomes an ideal ego, the promise of unity and preoedipal omnipotence.
- [67] See Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–43; Silverman, *Acoustic Mirror*; Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*, 7–36.
- [68] We are thinking here in particular of Derrida’s critique of logocentrism. See Joshua Gunn, “Speech is Dead; Long Live Speech,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94 (2008): forthcoming.
- [69] See Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16 (1975): 6–18.
- [70] Despite the full cooperation of Apple Inc., after many weeks, phone calls, and emails, Taylor & Francis could not come to an agreement about copyrights for this image. We are unable to legally reprint it for this essay. Curious readers may consult the following URL for an example of the advertisement *for their personal use only*: [http://www.joshiejuice.com/yellow\\_ipod.jpg](http://www.joshiejuice.com/yellow_ipod.jpg) (accessed 5 March 2008).
- [71] Tim Hall, email to the authors, 29 July 2006.
- [72] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).
- [73] Quoted in Larry Rohter, “An Unlikely Trendsetter Made Earphones a Way of Life,” *New York Times* (17 December 2005), <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/17/international/americas/17pavel.html?ex=1292475600&en=5f4f6a4c9731e289&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss> (accessed 29 July 2006).
- [74] Meat Beat Manifesto, “It’s the Music,” *Original Fire*, Interscope Records, CD, 1997.
- [75] For a related discussion of how this argument relates to gender and sexual identity, see Charles E. Morris III and John M. Sloop, “‘What These Lips Have Kissed’: Refiguring the Politics of Queer Public Kissing,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3 (2006): 1–26.
- [76] As quoted in RiShawn Biddle, “Personal Soundtracks,” *reasononline* (October 1999) <http://reason.com/9910/fe.rb.personal.shtml> (accessed 29 July 2006).
- [77] Biddle, “Personal Soundtracks,” par. 7.
- [78] Gabriel Sherman, “Boy in a Bubble,” *Guardian Unlimited* (24 September 2004) <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/netmusic/story/0,13368,1311300,00.html> (accessed 30 July 2006).