I wish I knew how it would feel to drive the new Ford Fusion Hybrid: Making sense of music in car commercials

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Working Paper

What motivates musicologists to analyze television advertising music? I certainly share Nicholas's Cook's desire to understand how audiovision works. A TV commercial's limited length and determinate function makes it an ideal testing ground for formulating more generally applicable theories of audiovision, even multimedia.¹ I am also sympathetic to Nicolai Graakjær's and Christian Jantzen's desire to understand various under-studied capacities of music—to persuade, for example.² But most of all, I believe its study can have social—and *ecological*—value. In this respect, Philip Tagg's work is closest in spirit to what I am attempting in this article. He argues that given commercial music's ability to shape “emotional and ideological” “attitudes” towards “particular types of people, environments, and actions,” the skill of scrutinizing music-image relations can immunize the individual against being “manipulated” by advertising music.³ In this investigation into how Nina Simone's cover of “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free” (1967) functions as part of the “Go Further” Ford ad from Super Bowl LI, I will uncover how the commercial propagates certain ecologically disastrous ideologies. One is what political ecologist André Gorz calls “the ideology of the motor car.” Manufacturers have always marketed the car as a luxury item, promising the elite privileges of speed and freedom. But if everyone tries to live at the expense of others, then everyone suffers. The modern city—and Gorz was writing in Europe fifty years ago—is filthy, congested, and unsafe; the road is a hostile place in which other drivers are infuriating impediments to one's selfish right to speed; and rather than being free, drivers are entirely reliant on a network of third-party suppliers, not least the petroleum industry. What's fascinating from a contemporary point of view is that Gorz is arguing that the car is simply an objectively poor technological solution to the problem of getting people around a city—he doesn't mention the effects of carbon dioxide on weather systems or nitrous oxides on nervous systems. And yet today, despite these additional worries, stylish, clever, humorous ads such as the one discussed here ensure the myth—and others, such as the more fundamental “American technological sublime,” introduced later—somehow endures. But I wonder whether inoculating ourselves and our students against pernicious ideologies need be the limit of the music critic's social and ecological aspirations. Especially since the recent scholarly literature

¹ Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

² Nicolai Graakjær and Christian Jantzen, *Music in Advertising Commercial Sounds in Media Communication and Other Settings* (Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 2009), 9.

³ Philip Tagg, “Music, Moving Image, Semiotics, and the Democratic Right to Know,” in *Music and Manipulation: On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*, ed. Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 163. This “critical thinking” skill is something Tagg teaches his students, but he argues that such education should be as widespread as it is for verbal texts.

about advertising repeatedly stresses that in accounting for the agency of the modern, cynical, media-savvy consumer, it is difficult to categorize what advertisers are doing as “manipulation.”⁴

I agree with Sut Jhally that advertising has “cumulative cultural effects” that are responsible for “destroying the world as we know it” and that “our survival as a species is dependent upon minimizing the threat from advertising.” The more ambitious program in media and communication studies—to which Jhally’s work makes an important contribution—is to describe how these cultural, social, and ecological effects come about with the express purpose of changing them. An indication of how music criticism might contribute can be gleaned by considering the program’s beginnings in a critique of Roland Barthes’ and Judith Williamson’s classic hermeneutic treatment of adverts. Liz McFall rightly criticizes their semiotic approach for distinguishing between “natural” and “artificial” signs.⁵ Barthes argues that at some unspecified point in the past, certain of the signs appropriated by advertising were connected with reality through production, and therefore could not mythologize it.⁶ The carpenter, for example, had hands-on experience of how wood resisted and facilitated chiseling, planing, cutting; linguistic representations of these actions were intimately connected to the reality they described. The signs used in advertising, while originally parasitic on these real signs, have for so long been referring only to other advertising signs that the signifiers have become unmoored from their signifieds, generating a field of self-referential, artificial signs—a crucial feature, in many accounts, of the whole postmodern experience. As it happens, none of the advertising music analysts mentioned make this false distinction between sign types. Cook, for example, rightly insists that all musical meaning is dependent on its various overlapping contexts—who’s listening, where they grew up, what mood they’re in, how attentive they are, what other images/texts/institutional practices are accompanying the music, etc. However, a view exclusively interested in “culturally constructed” meaning is agnostic about how the functionally arbitrary mental representations that are communicated through musical structures relate to material reality.⁷ So although this style of musical semiotics is useful for showing how ads communicate *meaning* from one culturally embedded subject to another, it is of limited use in understanding how advertising music is complicit in advertising’s dangerous ecological *effects*.

McFall’s and others’ Foucauldian solution was to shift the focus to the genealogy of practices, specifically the then understudied activities of the advertising industry.⁸ The motivating question for these authors switched from “how do ads work?” to “what work does advertising do?”⁹ This

⁴ That’s not to say manipulation or even outright deceit does not occur—just look at the VW emissions scandal.

⁵ Liz McFall, *Advertising: A Cultural Economy*, Culture, Representation and Identity Series (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 27–33.

⁶ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1973), 159.

⁷ I don’t think Cook or Graakjær would deny there is a connection between mental representations and material reality, it’s just that it’s effectively ignored in the theorization (if not in their analytic practice).

⁸ Her genealogical study was pre-empted by, for example, Thomas Frank’s book about how advertising has exploited (and hence largely neutralized) counter-cultural movements and followed by others, such as Michael Serazio’s about guerrilla marketing. Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Michael Serazio, *Your Ad Here: The Cool Sell of Guerrilla Marketing* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013).

⁹ Anne Cronin, *Advertising Myths: The Strange Half-Lives of Images and Commodities* (London: Routledge, 2004), 114.

Cronin phrases the question more ambiguously: “what is the work of advertising?” but her goal is move away from

new line of enquiry shifts the focus away from meaning and onto (bio)power, trying to discover how advertisers (ultimately on behalf of capital) attempt to “govern” people, how advertising comes to “*structure the field of possible actions*.”¹⁰ The advertising machine includes both advertisers and consumers in transactive negotiation: soft power—the “soft sell”—works *through* people not *on* them. However, genealogies can only offer a partial explanation of “the work advertising does.” In their genealogical analyses of advertising music and musical branding, sociologically oriented musicologists Bethany Klein, Timothy Taylor and Leslie Meier are absolutely clear that music’s aesthetic dimension plays a key role in advertising and promotion, especially in the affective methods employed in lifestyle advertising since the 1960s.¹¹ This, then, is my motivation for analyzing television advertising music: to complement the work of media scholars McFall, Serazio, Frank, and music sociologists such as Klein, Taylor, Meier by deploying music-critical techniques to discover how the affective power of music (in combination with image) might be deployed in individual lifestyle ads. This will provide a fuller understanding of how advertising does the work that it does.

I don’t want to ape promotional culture by overpromising and underdelivering, so I will emphasize that my theoretical contribution to understanding the part music plays in producing the “world-destroying”, “species-threatening” cultural effects of advertising here builds heavily on Cook’s existing model of multimedia. Not only that, it does so in a direction already staked out by Eric Clarke’s ecological theory of musical perception.¹² But I do modify Cook’s epistemological assumptions. He might not make Barthes’ and Williamson’s spurious distinction between “natural” and “artificial” signs, but the nature-culture dichotomy persists in another more subtle way:¹³

Nobody could reasonably deny that music has effects, and in principle it is perfectly possible to discover what those effects are. ... Now what distinguishes the concept of meaning from that of effect is that the former is predicated on communication, on human agency, whereas the latter is not (that is why we talk about the effects of sunlight, not its meaning).¹⁴

concern about how effective ads are at selling—which of course is what concerns advertisers—and instead to focus on “the social impacts of advertising.”

¹⁰ Foucault, quoted in Serazio, *Your Ad Here*, 11. Serazio’s emphasis. Foucault actually wrote (in English) “structure the possible field of action” (correctly cited in Serazio). I can’t understand this formulation (and Foucault was clearly uncomfortable speaking or writing in English), so I have amended it to better reflect what I think he was saying: “structures the field of possibilities for action.”

¹¹ Bethany Klein, *As Heard on TV: Popular Music in Advertising* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009). Taylor Timothy, *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Leslie M Meier, *Popular Music as Promotion: Music and Branding in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

¹² Eric F Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹³ As mentioned, I am using Cook as broadly representative also of Tagg’s and Graakjær’s methods. In Nicolai Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising: Television Commercials and Consumer Choice* (New York: Routledge, 2015)., Graakjær certainly incorporates effects into his discussion in a way that Cook doesn’t—particularly those effects empirically tested by music psychology: memorability, attitude to product/brand, intention to purchase. But the “analysis” of his title is still largely directed at communicative meaning, in its pure cultural, subjective, mental form divorced from its effects, as defined by Cook.

¹⁴ Cook, *Analyzing Musical Multimedia*, 3–4.

Meaning for Cook, then, is subjective and part of culture; effects, by contrast, happen to the organism in nature. But isn't our cultural understanding of the word "car," or musically accompanied representations of cars in commercials, inseparably bound up with the memories of our everyday, lifelong encounters with cars? Any cultural construction of meaning (as a mental representation) must be shaped by these encounters, by the car's and the body's mutual effects on one another—a "natural construction," if you like. Far simpler than preserving the culture-nature binary would be to say that cars, bodies, commercials all exist in one continuous ecology and that in the ecology there is no difference (except one of perspective) between meaning and effect: a commercial's meaning can then be equated *precisely* with its effects—its effects on the individual body, on the body politic, on the built environment, on the ecology. Drawing on the model of perception detailed in Tim Ingold's *The Perception of the Environment*, I propose an ecological model for musical (and music-prominent audiovisual) perception that accounts for these effects. The usefulness of the model can only be demonstrated through its applicability to multiple cases. These will come in time as part of a broader ecologically oriented project on television music. Here, however, I examine just the one Ford commercial so I can set out in detail a plausible mechanism for how advertising—through the cumulative sensory experience of many individual ads, promotional activities, and the products themselves over each individual's life—helps to maintain a set of practices that are so catastrophic for the ecology.¹⁵

While I spurn the nature-artifice distinction, analyzing music necessarily distorts perception in a highly artificial manner—it brings a *reflective* mode to bear on what is ordinarily a primarily *resonant* mode of cognition. As McFall complains of semiotic methods, ads are already "transparent to meaning." We usually smoothly and effortlessly absorb commercials, much as we negotiate other cars, pedestrians, roads and road signs while driving; social, cultural meanings are invisibly and inaudibly invested in what we perceive in the ad, just as we are not aware of the body parts, machinery, roads, involved in driving as discrete objects.¹⁶ When we conduct a semiotic music or audiovisual analysis, we *reflect* on this ordinarily resonant experience: we temporarily detach ourselves from the stream of activity and ask questions about the signs: "what does the word 'car' mean?" and "what is a car for?" In reflective activity, signs lose their processive character and become immobile carriers of meaning—words like "car"; objects like cars. Similarly, in a musical analysis we feel ourselves to be revealing the cultural meanings that people affix onto "naturally" meaningless sonic structures. I am not saying "culture," "meaning," "subjects" are illusory categories, but rather that they arise in a certain special type of cognition, which we might think of as second-order "meta-perception." It is inevitable that any reflective analysis of the perceptual experience of an ad is going to yield the sort of semiotic understanding found in Cook, Tagg, Graakjær—nevertheless these are still effects, a certain type of psychological effect I will refer to as "discursive" (or "communicative") meaning. The second of this article's four parts is devoted

¹⁵ For Andrew Wernick, all cultural products are now suffused with the promotional imperative—there is no such thing as pure content, entertainment, art: Andrew Wernick, *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology, and Symbolic Expression* (London: Sage, 1991).

¹⁶ Ads do often go wrong, of course, and accidentally elicit reflective engagement: the most obvious recent example is Pepsi's poorly executed ad in which Kendall Jenner pacifies a policeman at a Black Lives Matter demonstration by handing him a can of Pepsi. Aesthetically it jars, unlike the Ford ad discussed here (and I explore the question of why it doesn't jar in detail here), but the Ford ad is ethically far more problematic—especially given it not only trivializes BLM but the ecological catastrophe as well—precisely because it is so "transparent to meaning."

to an analysis of this type of meaning, which will roughly adhere to Cook's approach to television commercials, as elaborated and expanded by Graakjaer. But, by losing the resonant, processive character of (especially musical) signs, discursive meaning fails to fully capture how television commercials affect (i.e., the *effects* they have on) the individual and hence social body. In the third part, I introduce a "non-discursive" dimension of meaning to return to the artificial reflective mode the dynamic way in which our body attunes itself to its surroundings generating a predictive "sense" of what is likely and unlikely to happen. In the fourth and final part, I end by demonstrating how this notion of sense can give us a picture of the ad as a music-led audiovisual experience that is continuous with the rest of reality—not a detached, arbitrary, self-referential advertising code, but fully enmeshed with eco-social reality.¹⁷ My unifying thesis is deceptively simple. The Ford ad gives viewers a *sense* of what driving a Ford car might be like—how it would feel to drive (and also on a higher level also to *own*) a Ford car. More specifically it promises viewers that driving will make them feel free—not just rhetorically, as a semiotic analysis would show, but by generating, and entraining the viewer in a highly nuanced sense of the experience of being free.

Before all of this, in the first section, I situate the "Go Further" ad in both its Super Bowl setting and the history of car advertising, and discuss the promotional and marketing strategies pursued by executives at Ford.

Automobile Advertising and the Super Bowl

If the purpose is to better understand how advertising in general encourages ecologically damaging thought and activities, it might seem odd to look to the unique mega-event that is the annual championship game of the National Football League (NFL)—the Super Bowl. But there are some very good reasons for doing so. Subscription cable and satellite channels, remote controls, VCRs, DVRs, and most recently streaming services have all allowed audiences to swerve around the nuisance of advertising while enjoying their favorite programs. During the "Ad Bowl," by contrast, the commercials have become an integral part of the entertainment—in 2010, more important than the game itself for nearly a quarter of viewers. People often watch with friends or family, no one's flicking over to the other side during the ad breaks, everyone's consuming the beer and snacks being advertised, and with a third of the population watching there are fewer opportunities for distraction. Such an eagerly ad-attentive audience is a rarity in today's media landscape. As Matthew P McAllister and Elysia Galindo-Ramirez note, since the watershed Apple "1984" ad (in 1984), the Super Bowl has frozen "the network television system in the age where the TV commercial—and its audience commodity logic [TV companies sell their audiences as commodities to advertisers]—was the pinnacle of mediated selling."¹⁸ It is no wonder that prices for these spots have soared—upwards of \$5 million for 30 seconds. These "event ads" provide ideal test cases for considering how audiovisual relations function in

¹⁷ Luke Windsor argues convincingly that representational signs—linguistic, musical, fashion, etc.—are just as much part of one continuous reality as anything else in perception: W. Luke Windsor, "An Ecological Approach to Semiotics," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 34, no. 2 (June 2004): 179–98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-8308.2004.00242.x>.

¹⁸ Matthew P. McAllister and Elysia Galindo-Ramirez, "Fifty Years of Super Bowl Commercials, Thirty-Two Years of Spectacular Consumption," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 34, no. 1–2 (2017): 52.

television advertising since the advertiser—and hence the analyst—can assume an attentive viewer who is making some effort to follow what is going on, especially because these ads generate such a buzz that they are watched online (often before the game), shared on social media, and discussed.

If by one measure Super Bowl advertising represents an island of continuity in a sea of change, by another it is the avant garde. As viewers have sought to access “content” and avoid the irritating commercial messages, advertisers have countered by insinuating themselves into the entertainment in the form of content, viral, and integrated marketing.¹⁹ But while on the one hand the entertainment is morphing into advertising—an episode of *Mad Men* becomes a commercial for Heineken, in which the fictional ad agency devises a commercial for Heineken—the ad itself has started to morph into entertainment. With the overarching aim of elucidating the “work advertising does,” it is fitting to look at the Super Bowl, an institution that works as a highly effective PR campaign for promotional culture *itself*.²⁰ Indeed, the Super Bowl’s importance for the advertising industry lies as much in its raising the TV ad to the status of entertainment that transcends its own commercial nature as in the exorbitant amounts it can bill its clients. Advertisers stake everything on having their Super Bowl commercials treated like films, music videos, or TV series: not only do they hire marquee actors, directors, and musicians/bands, the ads themselves are trailed, television shows celebrate previous “great” Super Bowl commercials, and viral social media campaigns are set in motion. The Ford “Go Further” commercial, like many Super Bowl car commercials, certainly amuses and entertains; but, as we shall see, it isn’t just an ad for Ford, it doesn’t even just make car-use feel right, it also works to legitimize promotional culture itself.

Alongside the producers of beer (Budweiser) and snacks (Doritos), whose spots fit so seamlessly into the televisual “flow” of watching the game with others, many car companies advertise during the Super Bowl. The 2017 game also saw noteworthy ads by Kia, Honda, Audi, Buick, Hyundai, and Alfa Romeo.²¹ Part of the reason is sports programming’s traditional ability to reach the target male audience—and despite Super Bowl audiences being nearly 50% female, the Audi and Alfa Romeo ads were both explicitly aimed at men. Further, with their high-turnover (albeit low margins), car manufacturers are able to take the hefty price tag in their stride to reach this large, unusually ad-receptive audience. But I would suggest that the main draw—and the one of most relevance here—is a long-term strategy of inveigling the automobile into every aspect of popular entertainment and popular culture. A manufacturer such as Ford’s presence at such a significant cultural event in tandem with such an iconic song automatically resonates with a legacy of cars in popular culture all the way from “In My Merry Oldsmobile” (1905) to their recent ubiquity in hip hop (especially affordable luxury brands such as BMW and Mercedes). Most notably for Ford, this includes Steve McQueen’s iconic chase through the streets of San Francisco in a Mustang GT Fastback in the film *Bullitt* (1968)—accompanied, of course, by Lalo Schiffrin’s ultra-cool jazz soundtrack.

¹⁹ Serazio, *Your Ad Here*.

²⁰ McAllister and Galindo-Ramirez, “Fifty Years of Super Bowl Commercials, Thirty-Two Years of Spectacular Consumption,” 58.

²¹ On “flow”: Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 2004), 77–120.

Fig.1: Image from JWT campaign for Ford (1943-44)

With the “Go Further” campaign, we see JWT—Ford’s advertising agency for 75 years (1943-2018)—revert to their favored strategy of emphasizing Ford’s future-oriented outlook alongside its status as a traditional American brand that you can trust. Designed to profit from the expected boom in car ownership after the war, JWT’s very first Ford campaign from winter 1943-44, “There’s a Ford in your future” (Ex.1), shares a surprising number of details with the Super Bowl ad. In particular, note the use here of the technological sublime (detailed below): the consumer does not see the car in the crystal ball but instead the pristine “nature” Ford promises to give them dominion over and the freedom that confers.²² Like all US car companies, Ford found itself in a slump after the 2008 “Great Recession.” The “Go Further” slogan—self-consciously modelled on Nike’s “Just Do It” and McDonald’s “I’m Lovin’ It”²³—was introduced under CEO Alan Mulally in 2012 partly to convey to shareholders that Ford were not complacent after their recent return to profitability.²⁴ To its customers, it signaled that Ford’s products would exceed

²² Another prominent example of this dual emphasis on tradition and future can be found in Ford’s millennial advertising event “Global Anthem,” which cross-promoted Charlotte Church’s album with the song “Just Wave Hello.” One of the largest ad campaigns ever seen, reaching 1bn people in 190 countries on November 1, 1999, it nostalgically gazed back over Ford’s twentieth century heritage, while looking forward to their global future with their newly acquired seven marques.

²³ Bernie Woodall, “Ford Marks Turnaround Juncture with New Slogan,” *Reuters*, January 25, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ford-slogan-idUSTRE80O02O20120125>.

²⁴ John Reed, “The Outsider Who Pulled Ford Back from the Brink,” *Financial Times*, March 28, 2012, <https://www.ft.com/content/cdd3f41e-7804-11e1-b437-00144feab49a>. The slogan was still in use when I checked

their expectations. But it was also the slogan of a synchronized “internal brand campaign” that sought to promote an integrated ethos that chimed with existing company culture and motivated employees.²⁵ The iteration of the campaign we see in the 2017 Super Bowl ad is part of Ford’s current (as of 2021) strategy, introduced under Mullally’s successor Mark Field, to “disrupt itself.” Taking a quick spin around the Ford website leaves no doubt that the company’s primary goal is to sell as many automobiles as possible. But at the same time, they are gearing themselves up to head off any potential competition by developing electric and autonomous vehicles as well as their own Uber-like ride-sharing and city shuttle services.²⁶ The ad also promotes some genuinely eco-friendly transit solutions—the GoBike ride-sharing and the Chariot commuter service. Despite proudly daubing the eco- prefix on many of its products, Ford quietly dropped both of these in 2019 after their greenwashing effect on the brand name had been achieved.

In *USA Today*’s 2017 Ad Meter—a meta-advertising tool that gathers audience responses to determine the “best” (for which read “most entertaining”) Super Bowl ad—five of the top ten places, including all the top-three spots, went to automobile commercials.²⁷ “Go Further” was only the fifth out of these five, and it didn’t even chart in the top ten of “most shared” or “most viewed” on YouTube, which are more important metrics to advertisers.²⁸ Even if this particular ad can be considered fairly successful, the “Go Further” campaign was such a failure overall that Ford effectively ended its partnership with JWT as a result. Several reasons have been mooted by industry analysts: it was “a little too inside the industry,” appealing more to Ford staff than customers, and in a crowded marketplace the slogan was too generic, it didn’t sufficiently differentiate Ford from the other big car manufacturers.²⁹ But in the end, the campaign failed the only test that matters: Ford saw pitiful growth while it ran, crucially much lower than its competitors.³⁰ Car commercials are an obvious choice for anyone concerned with how advertising encourages people to engage in ecologically questionable behavior, but, given the lukewarm reception of this particular Ford ad, and the failure of the larger campaign, why am I concentrating my efforts on this particular commercial?

First of all, it’s a highly sophisticated creative endeavor that justifies sustained critical engagement for the way that elucidates the potentials of music in advertising. But there is another important factor. My broader project on television music relies on viewing contemporary cultural production not as arising from a unified “culture industry” that operates purely according to the logic of the commodity, but as site of contest in which resistance can and does arise. The “Go

in Winter 2020, but at the time of writing they seem (Spring 2021) to have reverted to their old “Built Ford Tough”—Ford Media Center (US).

²⁵ Dale Buss, “‘Go Further’ Brand Message Is Aimed at Ford’s Employees, Too,” *Forbes*, June 14, 2012, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dalebuss/2012/06/14/go-further-brand-message-is-aimed-at-fords-employees-too/>.

²⁶ Mindi Chahal, “Ford Looks to ‘disrupt Itself’ with Focus on Driverless Cars and Shuttle Services,” *Marketing Week*, December 1, 2016, <https://www.marketingweek.com/ford-aims-put-autonomous-vehicles-road-2021/>.

²⁷ In the manner discussed at the beginning of this section, the Ad Meter serves to legitimate promotional culture on behalf of advertising in general. It is not an industry tool, like Nielsen.

²⁸ Greg Jarboe, “Top 10 Super Bowl Ads for 2017 Depend on Which Metrics You Use,” *The SEM Post*, February 7, 2017, <http://www.thesempost.com/top-10-super-bowl-ads-2017-depend-metrics-use/>.

²⁹ Woodall, “Ford Marks Turnaround Juncture with New Slogan.”

³⁰ Tom Ewing, “Why Did WPP Lose Ford? Start with the Advertising,” *Campaign*, October 19, 2018, https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/why-wpp-lose-ford-start-advertising/1496693?utm_source=website&utm_medium=social.

Further” ad is fascinating from this perspective because its component media enact this very contestation. As I will argue, while Billy Taylor and Nina Simone were thinking—and feeling—socially rather than ecologically, their song simultaneously resonates with a life-depleting present and presents a vision (really an “audition”) of a life-enhancing potential future mode of existence around which an emergent community might coalesce. I am interested in uncovering how the “Go Further” ad so successfully mobilizes vibrant music that promotes a communitarian view of freedom in support of a life-draining product whose widespread use in the city only “makes sense” in culture centered around the blinkered individual. By resonating with and affirming perpetual repetition of the way things are, the whole audiovisual experience diverts attention from and thus ultimately stifles the creative power embodied by the song that could—amongst many other things—lead to genuinely new transportation solutions that benefit the communities they serve.³¹

How the “Go Further” Ford Commercial Works

The first part of my analysis of the Super Bowl LI Ford “Go Further” spot sticks roughly to Cook’s methodology as extended and elaborated by Graakjaer in *Analyzing Music in Advertising*. There are several reasons for doing this. First, analyzing “the part played by music in the realization of [the commercial’s communicative] meaning” provides an efficient way of sketching the state of the art in advertising music analysis.³² Second, I don’t see resonant meaning as separate from reflective (i.e., communicative or discursive) meaning but as inclusive of and in ongoing negotiation with it. Third, the resonance dimension of meaning that I am introducing in this article relies on pre-conscious knowledge that produces intuitions about which actions are possible and which are most beneficial to the experiencer; but talking about these intuitions and how the music captures them is difficult without first appreciating their reference—something a communicative analysis supplies. And finally, we can gain some clarity about what is missing in a communicative or discursive analysis now that the goal is to understand the broader question of what an ad does—the “effects” that a communicative analysis deliberately excludes.

The one-and-a-half-minute ad has a tripartite structure, which is articulated simultaneously by the music and the visually conveyed narrative. The first section sees a variety of people performing everyday domestic or leisure activities and getting stuck in the process. A skier is trapped halfway up a mountain when her ski lift stops (0:00), a girl’s kite is wedged in a tree (0:07), a man’s ladder falls out from under him leaving him clinging on to the roof tiles for dear life (0:08). As the brief clips continue, we return to some of the stories, creating mini-narratives mostly played for humor. A man who has come home late and lost his keys (0:29) is then seen squeezing himself in through the dog flap (0:37). As Cook would put it, the humor *emerges* from the combination of image and music: alone the opening of the song is tentatively optimistic, but with an underlying

³¹ The creativity required is in overcoming the inertia of habit and vested interests. It is pretty clear how the reorganization of the infrastructure needs to proceed—and it doesn’t involve, pace Ford, more electric cars. “We will need comprehensive policies and programs that make low-carbon choices easy and convenient for everyone. . . . That means cheap public transit and clean light rail accessible to all; affordable, energy-efficient housing along those transit lines; . . . bike lanes in which riders aren’t asked to risk their lives to get to work; . . . urban design that clusters essential services like schools and health care along transit routes and in pedestrian-friendly areas; . . .”: Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (London: Penguin, 2014), 91.

³² Cook, *Analyzing Musical Multimedia*, 4.

melancholy. By lending pathos to relatively trivial or mundane experiences, the music makes them seem funnier, which reciprocally makes the music itself sound cheerier. So far, only one of the mini-dramas has involved a car—a non-Ford (I assume) that has become stuck in the snow (0:26, 0:42). But at the very end of the first section, a despondent woman finds herself on a decidedly unfree freeway (0:44). That it is the end of a section is indicated sonically by the music switching from a non-diegetic source to the woman’s car radio and then fading out to be replaced by distant car horns (0:48) as the camera pans out to reveal the miles of gridlock in which she is jammed.

Fig. 2: A miserable, isolated woman stuck in traffic (screenshot from Ford Super Bowl LI ad, 2017, 0:44).

No music is heard in the short (9s) middle section. Instead, quiet sounds convey the lonely desperation of the confined individuals—the water lapping up against the boat of the man trapped on a lake (0:49) or, most amusingly, a young boy tangled up with his tricycle calling for his mum (0:53). The near silence is broken by a shoe dislodging a basketball from a hoop (0:58). Beginning with the car stuck in the snow being pulled free by a Ford F-150 van (the top-selling motor vehicle in the US in 2016³³) (1:00), images of the people from the first section being freed, or freeing themselves, are interspersed with demonstrations of Ford’s various “mobility solutions” for the “City of Tomorrow.”³⁴ A driver uses a GPS system to escape congestion (1:02) and then power steering to squeeze into a tight spot (1:06), a Ford-branded bike (indicating their sponsorship of the GoBike bike-sharing scheme in the San Francisco Bay Area) whizzes by (1:09), a commuter hails a “Chariot” through another phone app and then runs to board it (1:14). In the penultimate scene, the camera gazes covetously on the sixth generation, performance-oriented Ford Mustang roaring along an empty country road (1:18). Finally, one of the driverless cars Ford are currently developing speeds towards the sunlit mountains (1:24). In between these

³³ Kelsey Mays, “What Were the Best-Selling Cars in 2016?,” Cars.com, January 5, 2017, <https://www.cars.com/articles/what-were-the-best-selling-cars-in-2016-1420692870639/>.

³⁴ Ian Thibodeau, “Ford’s Vehicles Not Sole Focus of Super Bowl Ad,” The Detroit News, January 30, 2017, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/business/autos/ford/2017/01/30/ford-superbowl-commercial/97241512/>.

two final clips, all of Ford's mobility solutions are listed in uppercase letters superimposed on the Ford logo and a white background (1:21). The final image is of the Ford logo and the tagline: "Go Further" (1:28).

The third section can be further divided into two parts. Ads can be categorized by whether they *directly* or *indirectly* communicate with viewers. For most of its duration, the Go Further spot combines the two methods of *indirect* address—*drama* and *montage*.³⁵ It contains multiple mini-dramas, all with their own narrative continuity and development. Because so many similarly themed and structured presentations are stitched together in no obvious order, it also counts as a montage, which "creates a universe of emotion and original impressions through rhythmic and visual linking and through the organization of visual material and music."³⁶ However in the third section, while the indirect address of image, sound and music continue, a male voiceover—as well as the written text already mentioned—addresses the viewer *directly*.³⁷ Traditionally advertisers have been wary of using song and voiceover at the same time as viewers have found it difficult to absorb spoken text when heard against song lyrics. However, younger viewers are now adept at tuning into one media source while another continues in the background and it is becoming increasingly common. The *announcement* begins at the end of the power steering demonstration (1:07): "No one likes being stuck. That's why Ford is developing new ways to help you through life—faster, easier, better."³⁸ After then remaining quiet during most of the textual interlude, the acousmatic voice rounds off the ad (1:23): "Today and tomorrow, ... we're going further, so you can."—the tagline accompanies the self-driving car accelerating into the future (1:25).

The third section is distinguished musically too. The ad begins with the somewhat subdued intro of "I Wish I Knew." The stretch of musical silence is used to carry out a large edit, so that it is the joyful climax of the song that returns in the third section. The large-scale musical structure clearly corresponds to the structure of ad—restrained and muted when the people are stuck, invigorated and euphoric when freed.

As well as the large-scale iconic similarity that we have identified between the tripartite structure of the music and the images, we might also ask whether such similarities occur at a more local level, especially the time-dependent *parallel processes* that Cook points out are especially important in audiovision. These comprise much of *the primary musical signification* of the song in its immediate context; i.e., "the meaning of units and parameters in terms of their relationships with other units and parameters and in terms of their positions on various 'axes' referring to binary oppositions or continua."³⁹ To begin, we can compare the image quality and the sound quality. Recorded in 1967, the song exhibits a certain vintage aural patina—most noticeable in the opening piano riff as well as the (apparently) unprocessed sound of Nina Simone's voice and accompanying acoustic instruments. The photography is high resolution and not grainy, but the natural lighting pairs well

³⁵ Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, 84.

³⁶ Graakjær, 85.

³⁷ Graakjær refers to this amalgamation of direct and indirect address as *voiceover* +: Graakjær, 84..

³⁸ I presume the comparatives are adverbs modifying a missing verb "to move," as in "to help you move faster, easier, better through life"—in any case, this sentence jars somewhat with my version of English grammar.

³⁹ Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 222. Quoted in Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, 94.

with this aspect of the music. (The natural lighting is replaced by a heavenly glow in the final futuristic scene.) Complementing the dramatic quality of the lighting, a large proportion of the screen is devoted to swathes of a single color, often white, grey or black: the surface of a lake merging into fog, the sky, a green field, the darkness of the night, snow-covered landscapes. These serve to isolate the individual protagonists. The contrast between figure and ground is not nearly so great in the song when heard apart from the images—something I will return to later—however, in the first part of the ad at least, these isolated individuals become strongly linked with the point of view of the singer, especially given the repetition of the word “I,” and the salience of the lyrics “*I wish I knew how ...*”

The moderate tempo of the song (c. 104 bpm) does not match the rapid succession of shots in the first section of the ad. Tight synchronization between music and image is nevertheless achieved by ensuring each shot lasts around one measure—most last the exact four beats, some start late, on beat two, or early, on beat four. The climax of the song used for the third part of the ad is much busier (although not faster), and correspondingly the shots mostly last one, two, or three beats—again with clear synch points matching cut to beat. Apart from a general sense of activity in the music and in the images, there is little in the way of coordination between iconic structures in music and image. One exception is a repeated-note sixteenth-note fill in the guitar on the fourth beat of the measure that synchs with the spinning steering wheel during the “ease of parking” demonstration (1:06).

Secondary musical signification occurs when musical structures (often combinations of several primary musical signifiers—i.e. *topics*) point towards non-musical meaning. We have just seen how music and image are stitched together by iconic similarities between primary musical signifiers and basic structures of the moving image—what Cook calls *enabling similarity*. Music signifies on the second level via *attribute transfer*: some of the music’s meaning potentials are activated and absorbed by the accompanying image, subject to viewing context.⁴⁰ Given the little stories, the voice-over, the lyrics of the song, the viewer is likely to hear the markers for blues and for improvisation in terms of expressive freedom and attribute that to the Ford Fusion as well as the Ford brand in general. The meaning that arises is, again, emergent. Actually, as we shall see, the music is not so straightforwardly “free” as a communicative reading leads us to suppose and, as I shall argue, it is the generative difference (or *contest* in Cook’s vocabulary) between the straightforwardness of the freedom portrayed in the image with the complexity of the same in the music that is responsible for the weight, depth and sincerity of the commercial.

We might also consider at this level of signification the song’s polysemantic lyrics, a “symbolic resource that the viewer can use to make sense of the ad.”⁴¹ The “I wish I could be free” of the oppressed black person, becomes the “I wish I could be free” of the modern urban driver trapped in endless traffic. The lyrics are largely inaudible in third section during the voiceover. But some words do appear at particularly salient moments: “like a bird in the sky” accompanies a girl pulling along a kite seen from above (1:04), and the word “free” is heard conspicuously over the Ford logo at the end (1:28).

⁴⁰ This is a two-way process, with the music also closing down the potential meanings of the image.

⁴¹ Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, 90.

The final level of meaning, which we might call *tertiary musical signification*, is the song's historical and intertextual associations that lay outside the immediate context, but may complicate and deepen the viewers' understanding of the ad. Extemporized at the piano in 1959 (or perhaps early 1960) to teach his ten-year-old daughter Kim how spirituals should be sung,⁴² Billy Taylor enlisted Dick Dallas to complete the lyrics he had written for the first verse.⁴³ He first recorded an abbreviated instrumental take of the song in 1963 as "I Wish I Knew" with his trio accompanied by a big band for the album *Right Here, Right Now!* (1964),⁴⁴ but the longer version on *I Wish I Knew (How It Would Feel to Be Free)* (1967) with trio alone is better known.⁴⁵ However, it was Nina Simone who truly popularized the song, not just with the single used in the ad, but in her intense live performances in which she would improvise the words like a gospel preacher.⁴⁶ Many covers have followed down the years—including memorable versions by Lighthouse Family (2001) and Emeli Sandé (2013)⁴⁷—but none is reckoned to match Simone's version.⁴⁸ Some viewers may have remembered Sharlene Hector's much loved (according to YouTube comments) commercial for Coca-Cola, in which she appears singing the less political second verse "I wish I could share all the love that's in my heart," while doling out bottles of Coke to people she passes on the street. Simone's original belongs to a tradition of protest songs, which also includes Kendrick Lamar's recent "Alright" (2015), that demonstrate shining optimism in the face of overwhelming odds. It also belongs to another less noble tradition of countercultural classics that have been appropriated by the advertising industry, such as Janis Joplin's anti-consumerist "[Oh Lord won't you buy me a] Mercedes Benz" (1970), which has been used for—yes you guessed it—several Mercedes-Benz commercials.⁴⁹

Apart from a few aficionados, most viewers are going to have a patchy knowledge of the song's history. Nevertheless, it is still possible to argue that the "values and characteristics of music and product" are being "cross-promoted" in this commercial.⁵⁰ The advertisers were surely hoping that those who understood the song's provenance (including those who Googled it) would attach and equate social progress to the technological progress foregrounded in the ad. Just as Ford is still struggling to realize the personal freedom promised by the motor car, so is society still struggling to realize the civil freedoms promised to black people in the 60s. In each case, the ad might be saying, we've travelled some distance but can still "go further." This reading would put it in the group of Super Bowl LI ads that deliberately positioned their brand on one side of the

⁴² Several internet sources, including *Wikipedia* and the *Washington Post* article cited below, mistakenly date the song's composition and first performance earlier.

⁴³ Billy Taylor and Teresa L Reed, *The Jazz Life of Dr. Billy Taylor* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 147–48.

⁴⁴ All the songs on the album come in at under three minutes, and were probably designed for radio play.

⁴⁵ UK film-lovers (not relevant in the context) know this version particularly well, as it served as the theme to BBC1's flagship *Film ...* program for nearly four decades.

⁴⁶ For example, see her impassioned performance at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1976—easily searchable on YouTube.

⁴⁷ Both available on YouTube and worth a listen.

⁴⁸ Alison Gunn, "The Life of a Song: 'I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free,'" *Financial Times*, November 28, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/2ae1f31c-b339-11e6-9c37-5787335499a0>.

⁴⁹ Some of these can be found on YouTube.

⁵⁰ Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, 44.

“culture wars” in the wake of Donald Trump’s recent election.⁵¹ That the ad successfully avoided the alt-right ire experienced by the overtly woke Super Bowl LI Audi ad indicates that if anything, the ad effectively neutralizes the song’s political message.⁵² I would suggest that the choice of song has more to do with its perceived authenticity, tapping into an equation of black and cool that advertisers have long exploited.⁵³

Summarizing what really is just a sketch of a complete discursive reading of the 2017 Super Bowl Ford ad: the car industry has to account for the cynicism of its jaded customers, who are constantly disappointed by the solutions promised by the market. Not only has the car has never offered the unfettered independence sold by its marketing, commuting takes a severe toll on people’s quality of life. A car advert—especially one that sells the brand as much as an individual product—needs to convince people that the solution is the very problem itself. The ad attempts this by admitting that contemporary driving leaves many stuck and frustrated, but by promising that Ford, through current and pending products, will help drivers to feel free and that long-term they are investing in a company that will offer yet more freedom into the future. More interesting than this particular commercial’s meaning, Cook’s concepts of contest, emergence, enabling similarity, attribute transfer give us powerful tools for understanding not just how the various sonic, visual, textual components of lifestyle ads present a loose, open configuration of images, icons, symbols from which the viewer is invited to generate their own meaning. Nevertheless, even though the viewer is called upon to carry out the meaning work, the core “message,” of this ad at least, is unambiguous: it reheats the promise that automobile, or automobile-related technology, will free you now, and make you ever freer in the future

But a significant part of the experience and psycho-social effect of watching a TV commercial is missing here. And if our goal is to understand the work advertising music does, how it works to pattern what people do, this is precisely what we need to know. By saying advertising “structure[s] the field of possible action,” Serazio means that advertising uses soft power—through the resonance of the soft sell—to govern what we intuitively, automatically, extra-verbally *feel* to be possible and desirable in any particular situation and hence how we transact with our environment and what cultural practices we engage in. When the consumer encounters a product—through use or observation over an extended period as well as in advertising and other

⁵¹ The Hyundai ad, for example, targets right-leaning consumers by combining pride in the US military with commitment to family. Troops on deployment are relaxing watching the Super Bowl. “Hyundai” singles out three soldiers and leads them to their own private viewing booths where they can watch the game on a gigantic personal screen. Then they realize that their families are projected on the wall behind them. “Watching the Super Bowl is amazing. Watching it with the ones you love is better.” The tears, very much helped by expertly deployed music, inevitably flow. Hyundai runs a special “military program” through which active and retired military personal can get discount on automobiles (although this is not unique to Hyundai), and they are also committed to hiring (or rehiring) veterans.

⁵² The use of the song was felt to be inappropriate by some: Caitlin Gibson, “Ford Used Nina Simone’s Civil Rights Anthem in a Super Bowl Ad, and Some People Are Not Happy,” *Washington Post*, February 6, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2017/02/06/ford-used-nina-simones-civil-rights-anthem-in-a-super-bowl-ad-and-some-people-are-not-happy/>. Simone herself would certainly have abhorred the ad, as someone quoted in the article says.

⁵³ As Graakjær points out, advertisers are always mining the back catalogue for gems supposedly untainted by commercialism: Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, 47. On the equation of black culture and cool: Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2001), 74.

forms of popular culture—they build up a sense of whether the product may increase or decrease their power to act (individually, socially, ecologically), and thus evaluate whether it would benefit them, their social group, the whole ecology, to enter into a relationship with that product (given their current resources, strength, priority of appetites, etc.). What I want to show is that in trying to encourage a positive appraisal of Ford, the “Go Further” ad, especially through its music, resonates with and hence gently strengthens many of the target audience’s feelings about what activities are and aren’t possible. It does this through a dimension of meaning that makes ads inseparably about felt experience and that is largely ignored in semiotic readings such as the one just sketched—sense.⁵⁴

Musical Sense

How does advertising—and more specifically advertising music—pattern the field of possible actions? Of all the possible interactions with the natural landscape, infrastructure, architecture, and the objects and people that populate them, most of us, most of the time, limit ourselves to certain circumscribed behaviors that feel natural or make sense. Consumer goods, our particular concern, have socio-symbolic meaning that is inseparable in consciousness from their range of possible uses. In pre-consumerist societies the (eco)socio-symbolic meaning of an object—including its origins in nature, the individual and collaborative efforts required to transform the raw materials, the effects of those process on the wider society and ecology, and how the object may be used to satisfy various individual, community, and ecological needs, their *value* in other words—is transparent and remains relatively stable over time. However, in consumer capitalism, the manner in which goods arise from and their effects on their social and ecological nexus is obscured and the hastening turnover of commodities means that consumers need to be shown how to use individual products, particularly to serve social needs. In a social organization that hollows out all meaning in this way, advertising serves the important purpose of putting it back.⁵⁵ Advertising assumes the mantle of art and ritual by supplying a scaffolding for “making sense” of the world—in particular one’s values and how to enact and hence communicate those values through the objects—mainly commodities—at one’s disposal.⁵⁶ The task, then, is to look beyond how advertising music contributes to discursive meaning, to see how it gives our lives meaning.

⁵⁴ Not all analyses of are insufficiently attentive to music’s processual or durational character in experience. Robert Walser, for example, in his analysis of heavy metal always stresses the difficulty of capturing the dynamic, affective experience of music in static print, and makes strenuous efforts to find ways of conveying it. Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover; London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

⁵⁵ As Raymond Williams observed, advertising had “passed the frontier of the selling of goods and services and ... become involved with the teaching of social and personal values.” He went on: “it is clear that we have a cultural pattern in which the objects are not enough but must be validated, if only in fantasy, by association with social and personal meanings which in a different cultural pattern might be more directly available.” Raymond Williams, “Advertising: The Magic System,” in *The Culture Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 421–22.

⁵⁶ “[T]he essential function of consumption is its capacity to make sense... . Forget that commodities are good for eating, clothing, and shelter; forget their usefulness and try instead the idea that commodities are good for thinking; treat them as a nonverbal medium for the human creative faculty”. “Man needs goods for communicating with others and for making sense of what is going on around him. The two needs are but one, for communication can only be formed in a structured system of meanings. His overriding objective as a consumer, put at its most general, is a concern for information about the changing cultural scene.” Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1979), 62, 10.

Let's first consider ads without music. For Judith Williamson, whose description of how the modern lifestyle ad works is more nuanced and penetrating than McFall gives her credit for, "[a]dvertisements must take into account not only the inherent qualities and attributes of the products they are trying to sell, but also the way in which they can make those properties *mean something to us*."⁵⁷ Crucially, though, advertising doesn't answer the human need for "social being" and a "common culture" through the intentional, agential communication supposed by Cook's or Graakjær's method:⁵⁸ in the Ford ad, we do not hear the voice of the Ford executives who commissioned the ads, or the voice of the JWT creatives; it speaks with a "voice we can never recognize":

there is a space, a gap left where the speaker should be; and one of the peculiar features of advertising is that we are drawn in to fill that gap, so that we become both listener and speaker, subject and object. ... Ultimately advertising works in a circular movement which once set in motion is self-perpetuating. It "works" because it feeds off a genuine "use-value"; besides needing social meaning we obviously *do need* material goods. Advertising gives those goods a social meaning so that two needs are crossed, and neither is adequately fulfilled. Material things that we need are made to represent other, nonmaterial things we need; the point of exchange between the two is where "meaning" is created.⁵⁹

Advertising functions ideologically as well as persuasively, but only by keeping that ideological function invisible from us. And how does it achieve this? Not by manipulating us, or tricking us, but by ensuring "that we are *active* in it, that we do not *receive* it from above: we constantly re-create it. It works *through* us, not at us."⁶⁰ This is precisely the point more recent texts theorize through Foucauldian governance.

By placing sense-making between subject and object, and highlighting the circular, life-long manner of learning, Williamson is stretching towards a resonance theory of advertising. Her contemporary, sound archivist and sound designer Tony Schwartz, does this even more explicitly. For him, the imaginative task of the advertiser is to design a "package of stimuli so that it resonates with information already stored within an individual, and thereby induces the desired learning or behavioral effect."⁶¹ But what is Schwartz's "information stored within an individual"? It is, I would argue, a record of the actions one has taken in the creative endeavor to satisfy one's desires (base appetites, higher social drives) and the subsequent pain or pleasure associated with the attempt. The ad, then, should resonate with past satisfying or pleasurable experiences in a way that promises using the commodity will deliver those experiences again.⁶² This enables us to refine Williamson's important point that because the ad compels the viewer to produce meaning

⁵⁷ Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1978), 12. Williamson's book is about still, music-free magazine adverts; nevertheless her insights are directly transferable to TV commercials.

⁵⁸ Williamson, 13.

⁵⁹ Williamson, 14.

⁶⁰ Williamson, 41.

⁶¹ Tony Schwartz, *The Responsive Chord* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 24.

⁶² This is not to say that advertising does not make significant use of negative affects.

by associating some metaphorical image with the product, it also produces the subject in the process—or, to put her point succinctly, the ad sells us ourselves. In the resonance version, the ad sells us ourselves experiencing or *feeling* something.⁶³

Advertisers have known, since at least the 50s, that the strongest feelings are evoked by a product's social use-value—its perceived power to affect others, particularly to affect how others see the owner. A look at the most successful Super Bowl LI car ads shows that—for these big-ticket items—this is often less about the projection of status, as one might expect, and more about being and being seen as a thoughtful, caring citizen who contributes to the good of society. Ad Meter's top-placed Kia ad follows doughty eco-warrior Melissa McCarthy as she tries and hilariously fails to save the planet—luckily for her, she (and the time-pressed viewer) can save the planet by driving an “eco hybrid” Kia Niro. And the third placed Audi uses images of a father supporting his daughter at a go-kart race to relay the company's “progressive” equal pay policy—like the Ford ad, it equates technological and social advancement. People are not being manipulated here: the vanilla political stances resonate with many of the target audience's deeply held social values. (The second-placed Honda ad, while not directly about contributing, still chimes with normative US values, bringing some yearbook photos of famous people to life to encourage consumers to pursue their dreams, against all the odds.) However, in a politically polarized society, when some values are not shared, this can be a dangerous game; many felt alienated or even angered by Audi's suggestion that society currently devalues women by paying them less. This is how John A., whose response was not untypical, contributed to the discussion: “my dream car was an audi. but not any more. go find a gender study major that can afford your car.”⁶⁴

It is my contention that the music in the Ford ad resonates simultaneously (and in experience inseparably) with the car's material use-value and its (proffered) social use-value; but in doing the latter it circulates and reinforces pre-ideological structures of feeling—the social values that give the individual's life meaning, that they strive to live their life by, on the level where they *feel* right. This is where Ingold's ecological perception is so useful. His view is more “genuinely ecological”—as opposed to Gibson's ecological perception, Bateson's ecology of mind, and Heidegger's dwelling perspective, from which he synthesizes his theory—because it “ground[s] human intention and action within the context of an ongoing and mutually constitutive engagement between people and their environments.”⁶⁵ The problem with Gibson, for example, is that he is interested in what the environment affords the already constituted autonomous individual—so although his key term “affordance” mediates between object and subject, both persist in the relation.⁶⁶ Rather than a network of relations between already constituted

⁶³ For more on how advertizing music composers learned to exploit the affective capacities of music to make us feel something; see Chapter 4 of Timothy, *Sounds of Capitalism*, 101–26. Note that even though the composers Taylor quotes talk about “emotion,” the examples show that they are really thinking in more general affective terms.

⁶⁴ Under video of the Audi commercial, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iksaFG6wqM>, last accessed May 2021.

⁶⁵ Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 27.

⁶⁶ “An affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to

individuals and objects, Ingold's one ecology forms a "meshwork" of open-ended human and non-human bodies all mutually affecting and being affected by each other in an ongoing process through space-time (actually constitutive of space-time). In the individual's continuous, dynamic transaction with other bodies, their knowledge and skill, is manifest to consciousness in how they feel through an unfolding situation. They intuit what is culturally and materially (i.e. ecologically) possible—given whatever appetites, drives, desire are in the ascendancy—because some potential encounters promise comfort, pleasure, others discomfort, pain.

I recognize this "feeling" or "intuition" in numerous accounts of music, for example those of Robert Walser, Jeremy Gilbert (with and without Ewan Pearson), and Tia DeNora.⁶⁷ Ingold turns to Susanne Langer:⁶⁸

Langer suggests that "what music can actually reflect is . . . the morphology of feeling." I believe this idea can be generalised, so long as we recognise that feeling is a mode of active, perceptual engagement, a way of being literally "in touch" with the world. The craftsman feels his raw material, as the potter feels clay or the turner feels wood, and out of that process of feeling there emerges the form of the vessel.

... *art gives form to human feeling*; it is the shape that is taken by our perception of the world, guided as it is by the specific orientations, dispositions and sensibilities that we have acquired through having had things pointed out or shown to us in the course of our sensory education.⁶⁹

Without worrying too much about whether this is what Langer meant, which is hardly settled in any case, I would like to expand upon what Ingold is saying by drawing on and developing some important insights from Cook's and Clarke's constructivist theories of music.⁷⁰ In opposition to Anglo-American philosophers of music such as Kivy, Davies, and Robinson, who argue that music expresses emotion, Cook argues that the actual emotion—fear, love, anger—is specified ("constructed") through culturally legible signs (often in the accompanying media—lyrics, images, voiceover, written text, in TV commercials). What the purely musical aspect supplies—and here

the environment and to the observer." James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale (NJ) & London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986), 129. Eric Clarke, whose musical development of Gibson is discussed below, cites this well-known passage.

⁶⁷ Jeremy Gilbert, "Signifying Nothing: 'Culture,' 'Discourse' and the Sociality of Affect," *Culture Machine* 6 (2004), <https://culturemachine.net/deconstruction-is-in-cultural-studies/signifying-nothing/>. Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson, *Discographies: Dance Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound* (London: Pluto, 2014). Tia DeNora, *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁶⁸ Susanne K Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

⁶⁹ Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 23.

⁷⁰ The "constructivist" view holds that musical meanings (which include emotions) "are not inherent in ... musical sounds, but emerge from the interaction of the materials [i.e. the various contexts] ..., the knowledge and goals of the observer, and the characteristics of the situation where the ... musical work occurs." Julian Cespedes-Guevara and Tuomas Eerola, "Music Communicates Affects, Not Basic Emotions – A Constructionist Account of Attribution of Emotional Meanings to Music," *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018): 13, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00215>.

he draws explicitly on Langer—is the shape of the emotion as it unfolds through time.⁷¹ He calls this aspect of meaning “emotionless nuance,” which I also understand to be the iconic (i.e. non-symbolic) element of music that makes “enabling similarity” possible. But if the “feeling” Ingold is talking about includes the feeling as a potter works with and gives form to clay, or drives a car around a town in negotiation with GPS, speedometer, brake, clutch, steering wheel, road, road signs, passengers, pedestrians, other drivers, then it cannot be limited to giving nuance to emotion. As Cook himself acknowledges, “emotion” in his coinage is too restrictive: what if music contributes to multimedia “in ways that relate not so much to emotions as traditionally categorized, but rather to affective qualities such as activity, potency and evaluation”?⁷²

Clarke’s notion of musical “affordance,” which he develops from Gibson, is an explicitly replacement for enabling similarity, which Cook also sometimes refers to as an “affordance.”⁷³ The ecologically radical departure is that, for Clarke, perception is irretrievably bound up with activity (and hence also potency, the ability to act, and evaluation, which concerns which action to take), so as well as affording the action of “interpreting” a circumscribed range of social and cultural meanings (what I’m calling discursive meaning), music also affords culturally and socially meaningful activities such as “dancing, singing (and singing along), playing (and playing along), working, persuading, drinking and eating, doing aerobics, taking drugs, playing air guitar, traveling, protesting, seducing, waiting on the telephone, sleeping” The idea that there is only perception-action—including the important point that perception itself is an activity through which we reach out and explore our environment—is something that Ingold’s ecological perception preserves from Gibson’s.⁷⁴ But, while there is no question that objects in the environment afford the subject a range of actions, Ingold’s “intuition” or “feeling,” including the derived musical version, is a more basic *sense* of how the flows of matter one is caught up in are impinging upon and modifying one another regardless of the coherent or semi-coherent bodies that we may conceptualize as responsible for the resulting actions—it’s not that we don’t perceive bodies, including our own self, it is just that what they are doing, the mutual impinging and modifying, is perceptually prior—i.e. we recognize a car from the effects it has on its environment and the effects its environment has on it.

Ingold’s thinking in *Perception of the Environment* is close to Deleuze’s, an affinity Ingold makes explicit and draws upon in his subsequent work. I would like to suggest that Ingold’s “feeling” or “intuition” is the aspect of perception Deleuze is trying to capture with his concept of “sense.” Sense is a powerful tool for understanding music, music-image relations in multimedia, and advertising because Deleuze shows how it inheres in representational forms as an overlooked dimension of meaning. He is primarily concerned with how sense shows up in language,

⁷¹ Cook mentions Langer in his later lineage of and expansion upon the idea of “emotionless nuance” in Nicholas Cook, “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 23, no. 2 (2001): 175, <https://doi.org/10.1525/mts.2001.23.2.170>.

⁷² Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 97. Unfortunately Cook doesn’t return to this line of thought in “Theorizing Musical Meaning.”

⁷³ Cook, “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” 81–82.

⁷⁴ As Alva Noë puts it, “[p]erception is not something that happens to us, or in us. It is something we do.” Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 1.

particularly in literature, but I will adapt his insights for music and audiovision.⁷⁵ Our experience of interacting with the world has laid down a set of “memories”—not of individual objects, situations, or scenes, but multi-sensory movement or affection images⁷⁶ that are folded together (*complicated*) in a state of co-presence in the pre-conscious and remain available for instantaneous activation by sensory input.⁷⁷ This virtual field complements and completes sensation on the fly allowing us to *make sense* of the world.⁷⁸ This process is what I mean by “resonance.”⁷⁹ To sense is to feel along with, to join in with, the flows of matter, energy, information, the open-ended bodies (including the perceiver’s) that populate the ecology as they transact with one another. One is aware of the movements or the affections that are possible and those that are impossible, those that the unfolding situation facilitates and those that it hinders.⁸⁰ In short, sense is the ongoing, moment-by-moment felt *what-can-happen* of an unfolding situation—as long as the modal “can” includes what is psychologically and socially possible, and not just what the laws of physics allow (although ultimately, of course, there is no distinction between these). There is no subject or object in the “what-can-happen of an unfolding situation”: it isn’t the “what can I do in this situation?” or “how can I use these objects to satisfy my desires” but a feeling for all the potential

⁷⁵ Deleuze’s sense is closely related to the current “simulation hypothesis” in cognitive science. Arnie Cox has developed a musical version, the “musical mimetic hypothesis,” which claims that music trigger listeners to mentally *simulate* the physical actions that could have given rise to the sounds heard. (Arnie Cox, “Embodying Music: Principles of the Mimetic Hypothesis,” *Music Theory Online* 17, no. 2 (July 1, 2011), <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.11.17.2/mto.11.17.2.cox.html>.) This might mean the actions the musical performer makes (like a mental air guitar), but—especially when heard alongside lyrics or moving images in an ad—it also means any engagement with the world that produces a similar bodily state. Combining the musical mimetic hypotheses with the parallel linguistic and cinematic simulation hypotheses, gives another (I would argue, following John Protevi, more limited) way of understanding how viewers can ascertain the affective states of the subjects and (inanimate) objects in the diegesis as well as have their own affective states modulated by the events they witness. (On the linguistic simulation hypothesis: Benjamin K Bergen, *Louder than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2012).; on the cinematic version (i.e., the moving image without sound/music): Vittorio Gallese and Michele Guerra, “Embodying Movies: Embodied Simulation and Film Studies,” *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image* 3 (2012): 183–210. and Maarten Coëgnarts, “Cinema and the Embodied Mind: Metaphor and Simulation in Understanding Meaning in Films,” *Palgrave Communications* 3, no. 1 (July 4, 2017): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.67>.) On what 4EA cognition could learn from Deleuze, see: John Protevi, “Adding Deleuze to the Mix,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 9, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 417–36, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-010-9171-1>.

⁷⁶ Deleuze calls these movement/affection images “virtual objects,” a name bound to cause confusion, since they are neither objects nor even discrete entities. They certainly aren’t laid out in something like a computer database, ready to be individually accessed; rather the complicated memories operate more like one virtual field, which every new sensation stimulates in a new and unique way. (I realize my own terminology might also confusion here, but here I posit no connection between my movement/affection images and the movement and affection images of Deleuze’s cinema books.)

⁷⁷ Deleuze calls an unrecognizable sensory input a “sensation,” which plays an important part in his aesthetic theory. Actually, every sensory input is to some degree unrecognizable and therefore poses a “problem.”

⁷⁸ This is why experience is both wholly ideal and wholly real: it’s completely mind (or in the mind) and therefore transparently imbued with culture, values etc.; but at the same time completely of the world (or in the world) and therefore completely constrained by what matter can do. Note that Deleuze’s difficult-to-grasp, abstract concept of the “virtual” has its origins in this concrete, scientifically explicable psychological virtuality.

⁷⁹ In fact, I think of it as *dark* resonance: first, our senses are limited; second, they are selective—each person learns to filter out certain distinctions permanently according to what is important in their environment; and third, we only pay attention to what is deemed relevant according to our current concerns.

⁸⁰ John Protevi coins the instructive term “affective cognition” for this ongoing sense-making process. John Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

futures. And because this feeling includes cultural prohibitions (and permissions) that exist in shared ecosocial reality—felt viscerally as obstacles or facilitations—it is necessarily evaluative and motivational—it structures the field of possible action.

The power of language stems from its ability to sort, categorize, and conceptualize, to reduce the affective overload of direct sensory experience and make rational, disinterested, rapid thought possible. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze works through his hypothesis that despite facilitating abstraction and distance from immediate affective cognition, sense still inheres in language.⁸¹ So while language can certainly be analyzed in terms of three types of discursive meaning—manifestation (who speaks to whom), signification (the order of the words and the relationships between them), denotation (what is being spoken about)—there is also a fourth type of *non*-discursive meaning, sense, that animates the linguistic utterance in consciousness with movement/affection images.⁸² Indeed, sense is what makes language work since it inheres in both experience and language, thus allowing one to be translated into the other, and it makes manifestation, signification, and denotation possible. Given that sense is the unfolding potential happenings of a situation, it shouldn't be too surprising that Deleuze identifies linguistic sense with infinitive verbs, precisely the part of language that captures movement and affection (mutual impinging and modification).⁸³

We can similarly categorize discursive musical meaning. An array of communicating or expressive agents can be *manifest* in the music: God, Nature, a hero, the Hegelian Subject, a narrator and characters in an opera (what I would characterize as musical free indirect discourse), or even—as Jenefer Robinson bravely argues against the tide of musicological orthodoxy—the composer.⁸⁴ Deleuze's *signification* is roughly analogous with primary signification in music: the complex ways in which the order of and relationships between musical structures produce a coherent musical form. Music rarely denotes, so the equivalent of linguistic *denotation* would be the music's connotation or secondary signification (including emotion). Sense makes all of these possible by knitting together immediate sensed past (in working memory) with past experience (the affection images complicated in our long-term memory) to produce an intimation of what might happen—some possibilities being more likely than others. When we are listening to music, at any particular time we are aware of what has just happened and—based on our experience—have a good idea about what is going to happen next. We feel the past and the future of the music in the present moment, simultaneously both the transactions that have led to this moment and all the potentials for future transactions—i.e., the intensities (gradients or differences that generate forces) and constraints (hindrances and facilitations to the action of the forces) that will condition them. By

⁸¹ Nina Simone knew there is an affective excess to words, without which it is impossible to understand language. Asked in 1968 by producer Peter Rodis “What’s free to you?” she replies: “It’s just a feeling. It’s just a feeling You can describe things [such as love or freedom], but you can’t tell them. But you know it when it happens. That’s what I mean by free.” What she stumbles over verbally, she expresses eloquently in music, as I show below. The relevant part of Rodis’s 1970 short film *Nina Simone: A Historical Perspective* is shown during the first few minutes of Liz Garbus’s *What Happened, Miss Simone?* (2015), which is available on Netflix.

⁸² Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, trans. Constantin V Boundas, Mark Lester, and Charles J Stivale (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 13–23.

⁸³ Deleuze, 5, 190.

⁸⁴ Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 322–47.

animating musical structures with intensities and constraints in thick time (or duration), musical sense makes it possible for listeners to “construct” discursive musical meaning from its various contexts. Any expressive or communicative bodies (even non-human or inanimate ones) precipitate out of the pre-personal dynamically shifting intensities (manifestation). Such bodies persist through the coordination of the intensities through time in their encounter with various hindrances and facilitations (signification/primary signification).⁸⁵ And because movement/affection images inhere in all perception, music weds itself to sufficiently similar elements of concurrent media, e.g. aspects of a moving image (denotation/secondary signification).⁸⁶

But sense is also irreducibly (eco)social. If musical sense presents to awareness the ongoing fluctuations in feeling of an individual’s body in its environment, one can apprehend through it how one’s body and the actions open to it are a function of the whole social body (really the whole ecology) and the supraindividual movements/affections that are open to it. Importantly, then, the individual’s sense of what can happen is conditioned not just physical constraints, but also social and ecological. We may imagine ourselves to be individuals free to do whatever we choose, but just try asking someone on a half-full train to give up their seat for you if you want to feel the extent of the social constraints on your actions.⁸⁷ The “can” of the what-can-happen then is often reduced to a “should”; the individual senses what they and the other people in the situation *should* do. And we feel we should, by and large, act in a manner that contributes to what is perceived to be in the wider social and ecological interest.

To reach the plausible mechanism for how advertising music works to generate a culture in which the practices one feels one should engage in are so ecologically (not to mention socially and psychologically) damaging, I turn to the the ethnomusicological literature. In indigenous cultures, what has been learned through socially mediated encounters with the environment is affirmed and reinforced through ritual. Not least because of its ability to surround and penetrate a group of participants and make them literally resonate with one another, music is extremely

⁸⁵ As Deleuze and Guattari express it: “the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own. The artist’s greatest difficulty is to make it *stand up on its own*”: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 164.

⁸⁶ In my view, movement/affection images are the basis for George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s “conceptual metaphors,” which Cook sees making cross-modal blending possible (or inevitable) in multimedia. (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).) The link with affection images is made even clearer in Johnson’s later “image schema,” which he defines as: “a dynamic cognitive construct that functions somewhat like an abstract structure of an image and thereby connects together a vast range of different experiences that manifest this same recurring experience.” (Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 6.) Daniel Levitin, Alan F. Moore, and Juan Chattah consequently use Johnson’s image schema to theorize musical or multimedia experience. (Daniel J Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Dutton, 2006); Allan F Moore, *Song Means Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Popular Song*, 2012; Juan Chattah, “Film Music as Embodiment,” in *Embodied Cognition and Cinema*, ed. Maarten Coëgnarts and Peter Kravanja (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), 81–112.)

⁸⁷ If you want to experience just how powerful one’s sense of social propriety is and just how limited by social norms you are, you could try psychologist Stanley Milgram’s experiment in which he and his students asked passengers seated on the train to give up their seats for them. Performing the experiment himself, Milgram describes how he was overcome by a “moment of stark autonomic panic,” a result of “the enormous inhibitory anxiety that ordinarily prevents us from breaching social norms”: Stanley Milgram and Thomas Blass, *The Individual in a Social World: Essays and Experiments*, 3rd ed. (London: Pinter & Martin, 2010), xxi–xxiii.

effective at entraining people into felt understandings of how participants should behave, not just with regard to the social, but also the ecological whole. As Judith Becker observes, musical progression in rituals “set[s] up an aural domain of coordination that envelops all those present,” tunes them into one another, and synchronizes their feelings in time.⁸⁸ This supra-individual entrainment affirms and passes on the affective dispositions garnered from and necessary for dwelling in a particular environment.⁸⁹ It thereby engenders a pre-reflective sense of community and belonging deeper than any ideological commitments to particular identities, purposes, or meaning, which individual members of a group are likely to disagree about.⁹⁰

I agree with Ellen Dissanayake that the human faculties involved in indigenous musical ritual are exploited by modern marketing.⁹¹ However, I would go further, and argue that the television commercial—most especially during the Super Bowl—is actually a fully participatory ritual practice, with all the potentials for rhythmic, musical, and hence affective entrainment that affords. In the modern advertising event, music-grounded ritual performance and reception are certainly separated, and its participants distant from one another. But even though the Super Bowl viewer is sprawled across the couch, one hand clasping an ice-cold Bud, the other plunged in a bowl of nacho cheese Doritos, they are still participating in a ritual, still—as Williamson described—actively making sense of the Ford ad, which is only separated from dancing, singing, playing by historical accident—and still not separated from action at all. The music still entrains listeners, attunes them to normative felt pre-ideological frameworks, despite their now being geographically and temporally dispersed. Advertisers, when thinking about one specific campaign, are interested in communicating how an encounter with a thing, event, state of affairs might feel: one senses what forming an assemblage with that thing will mean to one—i.e., how it will affect me, how it will allow me to affect others, how it will, to talk in terms of pre-objective, pre-subjective sense, modulate the field of possibilities. I am not making any overinflated claims about the power of TV here. One ad will have minimal impact on a viewer; it is unlikely even to nudge more than a handful of people towards buying a Ford car—and they were probably considering it anyway. But through continual exposure to such musical multimedia over the course of one’s life—not to mention the TV series that must subscribe to the same sense in order to sell the advertising space—the viewer becomes more disposed towards certain behaviours and practices.

⁸⁸ Judith Becker, “Rhythmic Entrainment and Evolution,” in *Music, Science, and the Rhythmic Brain: Cultural and Clinical Implications*, ed. Jonathan Berger and Gabe Turow (New York: Routledge, 2011), 67.

⁸⁹ I cite Helena Simonett’s research on the Yoreme as an example of this below.

⁹⁰ This is what Lawrence Grossberg calls an “affective alliance”: see Jeremy Gilbert, *Common Ground: Democracy And Collectivity In An Age Of Individualism* (London: Pluto, 2014), 152.

⁹¹ “[A]lthough music today is loosed from its original integral structural roles in society ... , one can nevertheless detect multiple robust ties to its initial roots.” “[M]usic’s most important social uses today are, arguably, at the level of the macro-economic: to sway emotions for entertainment and distraction and to condition and persuade people to buy things” Ellen Dissanayake, “Ritual and Ritualization: Musical Means of Conveying and Shaping Emotion in Humans and Other Animals,” in *Music and Manipulation: On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*, ed. Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 49, 50.

What Work the “Go Further” Ford Commercial Does

Actually, in this section I mainly give a resonance-, or sense-based, account of how the music in this ad works. But it is through this description that I hope to make some headway towards understanding music’s part in advertising’s “cumulative cultural effects.” The ad works, I show, by offering the typical target viewer (a heuristic construct hereafter referred to as *the viewer*) a promissory sense of *how it would feel* to enter into a relationship with the automobile manufacturer’s products (e.g., the featured Ford Fusion) and the brand itself.⁹² If owning the brand or using the car promises to *feel good* by helping the viewer to contribute to the common good while serving their own personal needs, they are more likely to *desire* it.

Given our definition of “sense,” however, this means the ad must reconcile two seemingly incompatible ways of looking at the world. On the one hand, the desirable qualities concern the open-ended thing in use. Audiovisually generating a sense of how it feels to use the car, or own the brand, involves simulating dynamic flows and transactive forces: the flows comprising self and car and the environment in which they are embedded as well as the reciprocal effects of their forces on each another. On the other hand, the ad must maintain the illusion that a unified, closed entity, Ford, is communicating a message about a product as a free-standing object available for the self-identical viewer to purchase.⁹³ It mobilizes an open, vibrant experience of “car-ing” in the service of selling a closed, fungible “car,” I argue, through *common sense*.⁹⁴ Sense is propagated by difference—in audiovision, not least the “gap” (Chion)⁹⁵ or the “contest” (Cook)⁹⁶

⁹² There is, of course, no such thing as a “typical target viewer”—target groups, defined by “lifestyle” for example are marketing inventions—although there is some evidence that marketing brings such self-identifying people into existence. And agreeing with the constructivist view of music, this analysis cannot be other than a personal response. But, as discussed, the personal is entirely conditioned by the social and I have sufficiently informed myself of the ideologies at work here to be able to make a ballpark appraisal of how many viewers are likely to understand the ad. Moreover, even though I am ardently anti-car and think the ad’s overt message contemptible and dangerous, I still find it entirely convincing at the level of feeling. (I am, therefore, in no way claiming a privileged position outside the structures of feeling I am attempting to describe—the most serious criticism levelled at researchers now discredited “effects theory” or “mass society theory.”) Many viewers, then, are likely to be more favorably disposed to automobiles, and can therefore be expected to experience the ad even more positively than I do. I make no claims to speak for all viewers, but only try to convince the reader, in combination with their own sense of the ad, that many viewers are likely take the ad in a way roughly similar to my description here. This should at least be sufficient to establish the plausible mechanism I am looking for through which advertising music structures the field of possible action.

⁹³ For Deleuze, one of the purposes of marketing is to give a legal fiction such as Ford a “soul,” which is then capable of faithful communication in an ad: Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (1992): 3–7.

⁹⁴ Deleuze defines and uses “common sense” in a specific technical sense: it occurs when all mental faculties (memory, conception, imagination, etc.) agree in the act of recognition; this act of recognizing an object also generates the illusion of a self-identical subject that persists through time—i.e., the thing doing the recognizing. However, Deleuze is also aware of and plays on the ordinary understanding of the phrase “common sense.” In the act of recognition, we are imposing identities where there is only difference and turning problematic sensations (“signs” in Deleuze’s terminology) into stale interpretations in terms of familiar objects, which we think we fully understand. See Smith, “Aesthetics: Deleuze’s Theory of Sensation,” in *Essays on Deleuze*, 90–105.

⁹⁵ Chion’s word in *Audio-vision* for the generative (metaphorical) difference between sound and image is “en creux,” which is variously translated as “in/into the gap,” “phantom,” “negative,” and “absence.” Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁹⁶ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 99.. For Cook too, it is difference, or “contest,” and not parallelism, that is the “paradigmatic model” of multimedia: Cook, 106.

between sound and image. As I demonstrate, the ad elicits its desire-inducing “good feeling”—a vivid, beguiling sense of freedom—through multiple intermingling layers of generative opposition between various parameters of the music, or between the music and the moving image. But, however singular or original (*problematic*, in Deleuze’s terminology) these sensations are, they still conform to the common sense of their target audience; in other words, viewers are able to gather the sensations together as conceptual *identities*—legible signs amenable to the sort of semiotic reading carried out above. As we shall see, the viewer doesn’t just recognize familiar objects such as cars, roads, and 1960s protest songs, but even higher-order concepts such as the style of freedom evoked.

When the song is heard apart from the images, the musical sense of being trapped and freed is activated by the lyrics: the protagonist is politically oppressed and imagining what emancipation would feel like. As the song progresses, the fantasy becomes ever more real to her and the feeling of liberation ever more intense. The contrast between the reality of being fettered and the fantasy of being released is used to delineate the first and third sections of the ad, missing out the gradual intensification in the middle of the song. In the first part, music helps the viewer to feel along with the characters being hampered because the sonic parameters are restricted.⁹⁷ The groove is pared down to a minimum: light drums, unobtrusive bass, alternating guitar and piano fills. The piano remains in the center the keyboard; Simone keeps to the bottom of her register and restricts her range; she sings in soft tones. The other musicians play or sing quietly so the higher overtones are damped. The sense of constriction is intensified when we hear the song through the car radio speakers, and in the subsequent near-silence. When we see all the wonderful new Ford innovations, the song returns as Simone is fully immersed in her fantasy. Now every aspect of timbre is deployed to evoke a sensation of freedom: the whole drum kit, piano keyboard, and guitar fretboard are being used. Simone is singing at a greater volume, recruiting the higher notes of her range, and introducing more elaborate ornamentation. A chorus of horns adds bright flashes of light to the overall mix.⁹⁸ We don’t read “freedom” from this jumble of signs, we feel it directly. This isn’t to fall into the affective fallacy—the ad doesn’t make the viewer feel free, rather the viewer senses, feels along with, or feels into the *being free* of the various people in their various contexts in the ad sewn together by the *being free* of the song.⁹⁹

But, as I have said, the impersonal sense of freedom of the ad deriving from the music is more complex than this straightforward overarching scheme suggests. The ad is not just selling a product—or set of products and services—it is selling a brand. And the advertisers want to foster the impression of a brand that not only offers freedom now, but will continue to develop yet more liberating transport solutions in the future—to “go further.” This sense of a future-directed brand is partly achieved by the lyrics—not least the persistent use of the hypothetical “would.” However, the ability of “I Wish I Knew” to make the listener “feel” into or along with an

⁹⁷ This can be seen as a direct result of Cox’s musical mimetic hypothesis: hearing music in which the performers’ movements are restricted makes one feel restricted (or empathetically sense someone else is restricted) as one listens.

⁹⁸ In his 1968 version, Billy Taylor contributes further to the intensification by raising the key from F to Ab at almost exactly the mid-point (measure 53 out of 108 measures, excluding the free piano intro); Simone’s version remains in Bb throughout.

⁹⁹ If we follow Deleuze and say sense is expressed in atemporal infinitives, the sense of this aspect of the music is “to be free.”

imminent “to be free”—i.e. the “would feel to be free” rather than the simple “to be free” intuited from the expansion of range, volume, and expression—arises from the novelty of Billy Taylor’s melody and his subtle exploitation of the possibilities of the jazz harmonic idiom.

♩ = 104

F¹¹ B^b D⁷ Gm B^{b7} E^b F¹¹

4 B^b I wish I knew how it would feel to be free

8 F I wish I could break all the chains holding me

12 B^b I wish I could say all the things that I should say

14 Gm E^{o7} Say 'em loud say 'em clear

— for the whole round world to hear—

Ex. 1: Nina Simone, vocal line for first verse of ‘I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free’ (1967), Billy Taylor (music), Billy Taylor and Dick Dallas (lyrics). I have attempted to write out Simone’s ornamentation—basically, everything contained in a slur. Rhythmic values are approximate. For the sake of clarity I have ignored changes in volume and timbre, as well as vibrato, pitch bends and slides.

Tonal melodies and harmonies are usually constructed so that when the tonic is finally reached it is experienced as a resolution or a homecoming. This song’s melody and harmony are unusual in that they respectively center around the tonic note and tonic chord. Jazz often effaces the strength of resolution by adding a minor (blues) or major (jazz) seventh to chords at the end of phrases, sections, pieces. Popular music often avoids tonic resolution altogether, or uses modes. In this song, tonic chords are clean (i.e., without sevenths) and approached via dominant harmony to produce a strong sense of a tonal center. However, the pitch structure is constructed in such a way that the song seems stuck on the tonic (B^b in Simone’s version): instead of somewhere one feels relieved to reach, it is a place from which one cannot escape. The 16 measures of the verse are divided into four phrases with the following structure: A B A’ C. Each of the first three phrases begins with a resolute anacrusis, although not as resolute as it is in Taylor’s instrumental versions, which comprises two straight quarter-notes. In traditional tonal practice, such a figure would usually go from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$ (or $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$, or even $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{5}$, as in the third phrase of “Happy Birthday to You”), but here the pattern is reversed, going from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$. It is

still, as in a traditional melody, based on a $V^{(7)}$ -I chord progression, but jazz harmony allows the $\hat{1}$ as the 11th of a F^{11} (extended V^7) chord. Phrases A, A', and C all end on $\hat{1}$ harmonized by the tonic chord; A and A' are each composed of two short subphrases, which both end on the tonic. Grounded, straight rhythmmed $\hat{1}$ s at the beginnings of the first three phrases give way to a feeling of floating free produced by a long $\hat{5}$ followed by syncopations. The secondary dominant of ii (D^7) in the first and third phrases adds to the impression of release. The parallel motion between melody and bass in the second phrase in the Taylor version contribute further to this feeling. Taylor also makes each attempt of the melody to break its tether to the tonic more effortful with the work done in the left hand of the piano, subsequently increasing the force that seems to yank the melody back to the tonic. Simone achieves a similar, if subtler, effect using ornamentation (see Ex. 1). Her voice spends even more time on the tonic than Taylor's piano melody, but—particularly on “how,” “feel,” “free,” “say,” and “loud”—we hear Simone making the same ultimately futile effort to escape. The ornamentation becomes ever more elaborate as the song goes on, but she can never break those musical chains.

Dr. Billy Taylor was a respected educator and would have been able to explain the melodic and harmonic structure of the song better than I. Nevertheless, when he was improvising his “spiritual” at the piano, I doubt he was thinking in terms of tonics and dominants, straight notes and syncopations, or how they might encode certain discursive meanings. Instead he was searching for music that resonated with a certain sense he had of a group of people whose movement was impeded, whose expression was curtailed, but who dreamt of a future of free movement and free expression. As Taylor says about the song's supposed contribution to the genesis of the soul idiom: “there was just something in the air, something that all of us wanted to express as best we could using the means at our disposal.”¹⁰⁰ That same abstract, impersonal affect—a subjunctive “would feel to be free”—is reactivated in the very different discursive context of the ad. The basic 16-measure harmonic structure is repeated throughout the song, so this nuanced shade of *potentiality* even suffuses the general sense of freedom in the third part of the ad, even when instrumentation, timbre, and gesture are at their most expansive.

The sense of the freedom offered by music and image, as discussed so far, concerns the individual having their physical movement restricted. But freedom is irreducibly social and concerns more than the unimpeded ability to move.¹⁰¹ There is considerable disagreement about what “being free” in a society actually means. And, there is a stark, but generative, contradiction between the sort of freedom Ford is promising its customers in the images and the freedom demanded by the black rights movement in the 1960s, which is presented impressionistically in the music. Let's look first at Ford's version of freedom. In the first part of the ad, the trapped individuals are completely alone—emphasized by sheets of monochrome and Simone's repetition of the first-person pronoun. In the central near-silent part, sound is used inventively to sharpen the sense of isolation. For example, although we see the skier from afar against a sea of white, we simultaneously experience the same situation more intimately by hearing from her point of audition the gentle squeaking of the ski-lift chair swaying in the wind. Although Ford users are

¹⁰⁰ Taylor and Reed, *The Jazz Life of Dr. Billy Taylor*, 154.

¹⁰¹ It is also irreducibly ecological—it is after all the “society” of *all* bodies that provides the horizons for what we can and can't do.

conspicuously shown with other people in the third part, they are liberated by the product or service featured while their associates are left behind, stuck, or stranded: the Ford Fusion driver's GPS finds her cunning routes out of the congestion that everyone else is still stuck in, for example, and another driver's power steering enables him to park in a tight spot in a full-to-capacity car park. Technology frees the Ford user in a manner indifferent to others or *at their expense*. The aristocratic promise of the motor vehicle, as identified by Gorz, is reinstated, despite the advert's earlier candid acknowledgement of the automobile's failure ever to deliver it.

The music transforms the minimal sociality in the images in the third part—i.e. simply being in the presence of others—into the sense that owning a Ford might help realize the individual's ethological desire to belong to a group that contributes to the betterment of the whole of society. Due to its basis in sound, music is inherently social. We are less aware of the materiality of light than of what it illuminates. Sound and hence music, on the other hand, detaches from its source, enveloping those in its vicinity as well as vibrating through their bodies. At the extremes, it can be experienced either as an external phenomenon or as something that touches and moves the inner self.¹⁰² More commonly it blurs the boundary between what a person experiences as interior and exterior, dissolving them into the social and ecological surroundings. In pre-electronic cultures, music tuned people into one another, synchronizing their feelings in time, and thereby engendering a pre-reflective sense of community and belonging. Electronically mediated music retains the power to produce feelings of connection, even when no other people are present. Such feelings need not be artificial or deceptive.¹⁰³ Just consider how Simone's "I Wish I Knew" hailed (indeed still hails) a community of the disaffected and disenfranchised across a vast geographical area. But in the Ford spot, as in so many television commercials, the social aspect of the music turns the brand into a group the viewer is invited to join, and the technological product itself into a person they can have an intimate relationship with.¹⁰⁴

Aside from these sociality effects, which all advertising music produces, there is something more specific about "I Wish I Knew" that further modifies the sense of the freedom offered by Ford. Listening to the song on its own, one is struck by how *democratic* the music is. Since she is addressing the listener, one cannot help but foreground Simone's voice. But in any excerpt from the climactic section, the main instruments—voice, piano, guitar, drums—rotate the roles of figure and ground. The various instruments find space in the texture to take over from the others and subsequently slip back into the accompaniment leaving space for another. You may counter that the same is true of a Bach fugue or a 1970s heavy metal track. But in Bach, all the lines emanate from a single controlling subject; and in heavy metal, several subjects vie against each

¹⁰² John Shepherd, "Music as Cultural Text," in *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, ed. John Paynter (London: Routledge, 1992), 149.

¹⁰³ The classic criticism of music in modernity—most memorably articulated by Nietzsche in *Der Fall Wagner* (1888)—is that its traditional ritual function has been instrumentalized, turning it into a technology of manipulation capable of generating profound feelings of belonging in the absence of any genuine community.

¹⁰⁴ Also common is to situate the brand within a certain demographic by appropriating its music; that's not going on here, except perhaps a general hipster appreciation of classic jazz.

other to be heard.¹⁰⁵ In common with much blues and jazz,¹⁰⁶ here there is a stronger sense of distributed creativity—each musician paying attention to the others and spontaneously fitting what they do around them and spurring them on in turn.¹⁰⁷ This impression of mindful spontaneity is enhanced in two further ways. First, although the musicians keep to a remarkably consistent 104 bpm throughout the song, the track is characterized by a rhythmic looseness.¹⁰⁸ Second, the elements that tend to turn Nina Simone into the figure—lyrics with semantic content—in the first part, is mostly effaced by the voiceover in the third, turning her into a fourth equal instrument.¹⁰⁹ The overall impression is of a series of lines of flight each unfolding simultaneously under their own propulsion and in negotiation with others, precipitating out of the flow and then dissolving back into it.¹¹⁰

Now, this is not quite the meshwork, which some indigenous music enacts as the “sentient ecology.”¹¹¹ It isn’t, like the Yoreme’s music-based ritual for example, participatory and it doesn’t place the human collective within the wider non-human ecology.¹¹² Such music just wouldn’t resonate sufficiently with our geographically dispersed, electronically mediated societies. “I Wish I Knew,” however, does chime with the *radical freedom* called for by Taylor and Simone’s contemporaries in the black rights movement, such as Kwame Ture (known as Stokely Carmichael in the 1960s) and Charles Hamilton.¹¹³ They didn’t want black people simply to join the bourgeoisie on equal terms—the classic way of neutralizing antagonists to capital—they proposed that communities assume responsibility for their local education, social services, and law enforcement, and run them for the benefit of those communities. In their view, freedom isn’t a capacity exercised by individuals, who are then restrained by their peers; rather, freedom lies in

¹⁰⁵ On figure and ground in heavy metal, see Philip Tagg, “Subjectivity and Soundscape, Motorbikes and Music,” in *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, ed. Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, and Jason Toynbee (London: Routledge, 2006), 44–49.

¹⁰⁶ And blues-influenced rock bands like Cream, The Rolling Stones (except in their singles), and Led Zeppelin.

¹⁰⁷ Although Simone herself is probably playing the piano throughout the recording, it is nevertheless heard as a separate voice complementing the others. Instead of distributed creativity, we might also think of this type of music in terms of “nomadic subjectivity”—i.e., the locus of causal agency is continually on the move.

¹⁰⁸ Click tracks were only really used in film scoring in the 1960s, and it is difficult to imagine Simone’s band could have achieved this looseness if using one. Nevertheless, the beat is unerringly steady the whole way through.

¹⁰⁹ If you listen to the soundtrack of the ad without the image, this doesn’t happen: Simone’s voice and the voiceover jostle confusingly for attention. It seems that the direct relevance of the voiceover to what one is seeing in the images makes it easier for the perceptual apparatus to single out and focus on the voiceover.

¹¹⁰ It is quite common to draw parallels between jazz improvisation and Deleuzian concepts. For example, see Todd May on John Coltrane in Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 154–57.

¹¹¹ Helena Simonett, “Of Human and Non-Human Birds,” in *Current Directions in Ecomusicology: Music, Nature, Environment*, ed. Aaron S Allen and Kevin Dawe (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 99–108.

¹¹² Simonett borrows the term “sentient ecology” from Ingold, who uses it to capture the synthesis of idealism and empiricism that ecological thinking enacts. On the one hand, everything we perceive is in and of the one material ecology. On the other, our perception of the ecology is thoroughly of the mind: because the cars, say, we perceive “out there” are really in our minds, they are part of our intelligence, our ability to act, our sentience. Thus the whole ecology, not just the perceiving subject, is “sentient.” Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 24–26. One might argue that by preserving mind and matter in the compound “sentient ecology” (rather as Latour does with his equivalent “nature-culture”), Ingold ends up preserving the dualism he is attempting to replace. I speak instead, therefore, of one ecology and then worlds: a world is the ecology from one (e.g. species’) perspective.

¹¹³ Nina Simone was friends with Carmichael, and moved in the same circles of black revolutionary intellectuals.

the creative possibilities opened up by connecting and negotiating with others.¹¹⁴ Thus, while the ad *communicates* about how *individuals'* lives are improved by *products*—i.e. in the language of subjects and objects—the distributed creativity of the music petitions the viewer on a more basic level by generating a sense of enmeshed sociality that is closer to the sentient ecology.

I mentioned how Audi's play for woke Dads irritated potential customers. Despite Ford's clear exploitation and promotion of classical/economic liberalism in the moving image, and the contradiction of that individualist philosophy with the radical collectivist freedom of the music, to most viewers it is frictionlessly experienced as an uncontroversial unity.¹¹⁵ There are two reasons for this. First, the overarching ideology is never explicitly communicated, but—in the manner Williamson and Schwartz discuss—is left to be supplied by the viewer in the gap between image and music. And second, the ideology the ad leaves space for is so ingrained at the affective level that it is felt as common sense. "By the 1830s, sublime technological objects were assumed to be active forces working for democracy," writes David Nye, "[the] citizen who contemplated such public improvements ... saw himself as part of the moral vanguard, leading the world toward universal democracy."¹¹⁶ America's experience of the procession of awe-inspiring technological miracles unleashed since the early nineteenth century has been one of collective empowerment; technological progress has been conflated with ascent towards ever greater democratic freedom and thus charged with a moral imperative. The "American technological sublime" is never spelled out in the ad, and it need not be. Most of the audience unthinkingly feel that technological and social progress are coterminous and morally desirable. Given the images of sublime technology, present and future, and the sense of imminent but not yet realized democratic freedom in the music—in the threefold complexity I have elaborated—the viewer cannot help but impute this deeply held pre-reflexive sense to Ford and its products.¹¹⁷ The future social and technological liberty the ad promises is vague and all-encompassing enough to appeal to left and right, which both feel that the purpose of joint action is to secure the interests and aims of the individual. By hovering between the liberalism of the image and the communitarianism of the music, the ad shrewdly sidesteps fundamental left-right disagreements about the nature of individuals—their propensity to collaborate or compete, how best to incentivize them to abide by the rules, in what areas of life the state should regulate, and most crucially of all, what liberty actually entails.

Conclusion

It is difficult to see how any analysis of music's function in an ad could ignore communicative meaning. In the Super Bowl Ford ad, "Ford" tells potential customers about the nature of its

¹¹⁴ Kwame Ture and Charles V Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* [1967] (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

¹¹⁵ I have already noted certain black commentators' justified objection to the use of this iconic civil rights song, so this frictionless absorption is by no means universal. But my evidence for this statement extends beyond my own personal experience: there are no negative or positive comments from either left- or right-leaning viewers regarding the political content of the ad or the song under the YouTube clip. This is in stark contrast to the Audi or, much more surprising to me considering how offensive I personally find it, the Kia ad.

¹¹⁶ David E Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994), 33, 36..

¹¹⁷ In other words, the ad comes close to producing an "affective alliance" amongst the geographically dispersed participants in the ritual.

brand and product, with the music forming a tightly integrated part of a unified message: we know you spend much of your life stuck in traffic, but not only do we have a suite of technological solutions to make travelling faster and easier, they're going to get even better in the future. The illustrative visual metaphors of people stuck in various leisure and domestic situations, and then, later in the ad, finally freed are doubled in the music in a number of ways. The music is stitched to the image: cuts and actions are synchronized with measures or half-measures or beats, the acoustic, analogue style matches the naturalistic lighting, and the tripartite structure of the many mini-narratives is articulated with restrained music for the trapped individuals and energetic music for the freed. The lyrics, particularly the opening line "I wish I knew how it would feel to be free," are decisive in conveying to the viewer how to interpret both the metaphorical images and the direct voiceover message. In combination, meaning shifts back and forth between image and music. So, for example, the obvious humor of the vignettes takes the melancholy edge off the song and makes it sound more optimistic, while the signs of blues improvisation add to the freedom signaled by the images. Finally, the advertising creatives bank upon some viewers' knowledge of the song's provenance, and hope that they might make—consciously or unconsciously—the connection between technological and social progress. Nevertheless, it is probably the uncorrupted authenticity of the song that is more important to most viewers in the context of the commercial.

However, just as navigation systems in modern cars reduce driving to a series of actions the driver must carry out at certain places and times on a space-time grid, such a communicative view of the commercial reduces the viewer's experience to a self-identical subject persisting through time, surrounded by discrete, independent, saleable items. It ignores the habitual paths, overlapping rhythms and extended durations, the enfolded memories and anticipations that form our rich lived experience, even in the modern city. The communicative interpretation seems satisfactory because the Ford ad itself never troubles the viewer's GPS-conception of themselves as an agent located at coordinates (φ, λ) on a globe at time t surrounded by passive objects that they may act upon. But the commercial also utilizes musical sense to transform driving, using Ford's mobility solutions, and even owning a Ford into a dynamic, transactional experience, in which the viewer feels along with open-ended bodies in a riotous extended present. Viewers apprehend an atemporal sense of how it feels "to be free" that unfolds in various mutually supportive ways in the ad, but which conforms to liberal humanist felt assumptions. The sweep of the music over the whole ad better allows viewers to feel into or along with the trapped then freed protagonists through the restricted and then unhampered physical movements of the performers. The melodic, harmonic, rhythmic construction then encourages viewers to intuit the freedom expounded in the overarching shape of the music to be contingent, fleeting, imaginary. The freedom offered by Ford is imminent, it will occur at some unspecified point in the future. The distributed creativity of the performance conditions the freedom in a third way: the freedom to come is a radical freedom in which one's power to act is not hampered but facilitated, even completely constituted by encounters and connections with others. The triple musical complex of trapped-then-freed, subjunctive "would feel to be free," and radical democracy come together with the individualist liberalism of the image to give the impression that Ford can satisfy the individual desire to drive without hindrance as well as the social desire to contribute to the project of harnessing science, landscape, and technology in the ascent towards ever greater democratic freedom. This perpetual postponement chimes with most US citizens' experience of a

freedom that is always just around the corner, a characteristic of what John Dewey called a “bourgeois democracy,” run for the benefit of big business. The advertiser’s brilliance lies not only in presenting Ford cars as the solution to too many cars, but also the Ford corporation as the solution to too many corporations like Ford.

My goal in this article was to find a plausible mechanism for how advertising music as part of the whole advertising industry helps shape what actions and practices seem possible. In the Ford ad—and actually in all the Super Bowl LI car ads—music functions to present to awareness how using/buying/owning the car will make the potential consumer feel. It does so by presenting a sequence of signs that are likely to resonate with the movement and affective memories most viewers will have gathered from ordinary experience (including mediatized experiences) thus affording them the opportunity to generate certain feelings that affirm their existing pre-ideological dispositions. But it is through cumulative reinforcement—not just through all the ads each viewer has already watched but their material experience of cars, roads, driving—that these dispositions, as well as the actions and practices they encourage, were impressed upon them in the first place. The Ford ad stands as a testament to just how powerful music can be in this process. In the Audi ad, rising cello arpeggios help us to sense the Father’s pride in his daughter’s achievements; by owning an Audi, the ad suggests, the viewer may feel similarly proud that he or she is supporting equal pay. The voiceover in the Super Bowl LI ad for the Alfa Romeo Giulietta (which didn’t make any of the top ten lists) presents the car as a sexy mistress for the middle-aged male driver, the impression matched by the vintage curves of the chassis. Complementing this focus on the car’s alluring humanity, the sinuous electronica captures the mechanical efficiency of the technologically advanced engine and the smooth driving experience. The Ford ad, however, exploits the full potential of what Langer called the “unconsummated” nature of the musical sign. The music manages to create both the sense of freedom that driving the car will offer as well as the sense of freedom that the company Ford and its technological innovation will deliver for the whole of society into the future. It thus deploys this already sophisticated song in a complex manner—seamlessly conflating the car’s value to the individual purchaser as a mode of transport with the supposed benefits for the society as a whole to which the consumer can contribute by purchasing the vehicle.

Finally, how can this understanding of how music helps to bring about advertising’s destructive cultural effects help to change them? (Beyond further inoculating the educated viewer against advertising, that is.) Because of television’s reach, especially in the US, and the unlimited creative potential of its audiovisual medium, scripted television could offer a powerful tool for provoking people to think creatively about more ecological modes of social organization and the political means of bringing them about. My broader project seeks to locate arresting musical moments of narrative television that address matters of ecological concern and show through close and contextual (audio)viewing how they may be used to understand, think about, and intervene in the world in more ecological ways. The problem is that the commercial imperative is ingrained in all televisual practice and many series circulate and reinforce the same ideologies and pre-ideological structures of feeling as ads. With a better understanding of how music functions in the most sophisticated commercials, the better I will be able to locate those rare, imaginative musical moments that do transcend, resist, or stimulate viewers to question their common-sense assumptions. By drawing attention to these moments and by using each as “a machine to think

with,”¹¹⁸ I will be able to amplify their psychologically, socially, and ecologically beneficial effects. And who knows? Such critique may even inspire environmentally concerned television creatives to “go further” with the musical and sonic experimentation that generate these effects.

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¹¹⁸ I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* [1924] (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).