

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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Abstract As practised by Nicholas Cook, Philip Tagg, and Nicolai Graakjær, the analysis of advertising music has largely concentrated on how advertising works to communicate meaning. Within media and communications studies, such a focus is seen as a distraction — albeit a fascinating one. For Sut Jhally, for example, advertising has pernicious social and ecological effects and advertising scholars’ goal should be to understand ‘what work advertising does’ in order to mitigate them. This examination of a Ford automobile advert featuring Nina Simone’s ‘I Wish I Knew ...’ (1967) shows how music analysis might contribute to this pressing project.

What motivates musicologists to analyse television advertising music? I certainly share Nicholas Cook’s desire to understand how audiovision works. A television 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

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¹ Nicholas Cook, *Analyzing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

² Nicolai Graakjaer and Christian Jantzen, *Music in Advertising Commercial Sounds in Media Communication and Other Settings* (Aalborg University Press, 2009), p. 9. Not yet available while the research for this article was carried out, the new Oxford Handbook has perhaps overtaken Graakjaer and Jantzen’s book as the first port of call for advertising music research: James Andrew Deaville, Siu-Lan Tan, and Ronald Wayne Rodman, *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Advertising* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

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. by Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten (Berghahn Books, 2006), p. 163. This ‘critical thinking’ skill is something Tagg teaches his students, but he argues that such musical education should be as widespread as it is for verbal texts.

ecologically disastrous ideologies. One is what political ecologist André Gorz calls ‘the social ideology of the motorcar.’⁴ 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 is 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 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’.⁵

I agree with Sut Jhally that — in league with other elements of our extractivist culture — advertising has ‘cumulative cultural effects’ responsible for ‘destroying the world as we know it’ and that ‘our survival as a species is dependent upon minimizing the threat from advertising.’⁶ The more ambitious programme 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 project’s beginnings in a critique of Roland Barthes’s and Judith Williamson’s classic hermeneutic treatment of adverts. Liz McFall criticizes their semiotic approach for distinguishing between ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ signs.⁷ 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

⁴ Michel Bosquet (André Gorz), ‘L’Idéologie sociale de la bagnole’, in *Écologie et politique* (Galilée, 1975), pp. 77–87; first publ. as ‘Mettez du socialisme dans votre moteur’, *Le Sauvage*, September–October 1973, pp. 9–13; transl. as ‘The Social Ideology of the Motorcar’ by Patsy Vigderman and Jonathan Cloud, in André Gorz, *Ecology as Politics* (Black Rose Books, 1980), pp. 69–77.

⁵ That’s not to say manipulation or even outright deceit does not occur: just look at the Volkswagen emissions scandal.

⁶ A reader pointed out that it is capitalism rather than advertising that is the real scourge of our age. While this is undoubtedly true, ‘capitalism’ is an emergent phenomenon and attempts to act against it (anti-capitalism) are likely to just be absorbed straight into it. Far more effective, I would suggest, are attempts to target, understand, and work to undermine the specific material practices such as advertising from which the slippery beast of capitalism arises.

⁷ Liz McFall, *Advertising: A Cultural Economy*, Culture, Representation and Identity Series (Sage, 2004), pp. 27–33.

mythologize it.⁸ The carpenter, for example, had hands-on experience of how wood resisted and facilitated chiselling, 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.⁹ 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 trace the genealogy of practices, specifically the then understudied activities of the advertising industry.¹⁰ Rather than 'how do ads work?', the motivating question for these authors is 'what work does advertising do?'¹¹ This 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*.'¹² 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-orientated musicologists Bethany

⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paladin, 1973; orig. publ. as *Mythologies* (Éditions du Seuil, 1957)), p. 159.

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ 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* (University of Chicago Press, 1997). Michael Serazio, *Your Ad Here: The Cool Sell of Guerrilla Marketing* (New York University Press, 2013).

¹¹ Anne Cronin, *Advertising Myths: The Strange Half-Lives of Images and Commodities* (Routledge, 2004), p. 114. Cronin phrases the question more ambiguously: 'what is the work of advertising?' but her goal is move away from 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.'

¹² Foucault, quoted in Serazio, *Your Ad Here*, p. 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 meant: namely, 'structures the field of possibilities for action'.

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.¹³ My motivation for analysing television advertising music, then, is to complement or supplement the work of media scholars McFall, Serazio, Frank, and music sociologists such as Klein, Taylor, and Meier by deploying music-critical techniques to discover how the affective power of music (in combination with image) might be exploited 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. But I do modify his epistemological assumptions: while he doesn't make Barthes's spurious distinction between 'natural' and 'artificial' signs, the nature-culture dichotomy persists in another more subtle way:¹⁴

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).¹⁵

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. As well as Cook's model of multimedia, following Eric Clarke in his attempt to improve

¹³ Bethany Klein, *As Heard on TV: Popular Music in Advertising* (Ashgate, 2009); Timothy Taylor, *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2012); Leslie M Meier, *Popular Music as Promotion: Music and Branding in the Digital Age* (Polity, 2017).

¹⁴ 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* (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.

¹⁵ Cook, *Analyzing Musical Multimedia*, pp. 3–4.

upon Cook, I also employ an ecological theory of musical perception.¹⁶ However, drawing on Tim Ingold's *The Perception of the Environment*, I propose a 'properly ecological' model for musical (and music-prominent audiovisual) perception that can account for all the material effects of advertising music.¹⁷ The usefulness of this new model of audiovision 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.¹⁸ Here, however, I examine just the one Ford commercial so I can set out in detail a plausible explanation 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.¹⁹

While I spurn the nature–artifice distinction, analysing 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.²⁰ 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

¹⁶ Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁷ A 'properly ecological approach' takes 'as its point of departure, the whole-organism-in-its-environment. In other words, "organism plus environment" should denote not a compound of two things, but one indivisible totality. [...] [I]f [...] we are prepared to treat form as *emergent* within the life-process' then 'we do not [...] have to think of mind or consciousness as a layer of being over and above that of the life of organisms, in order to account for their creative involvement in the world.' Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (Routledge, 2000), p. 19. Clarke bases his ecological approach on James Gibson's notion of 'affordances' which, while they obtain as relations between subject and object (mind and life), they still preserve the unecological dichotomy in the relation.

¹⁸ For another case study, see: Marc Brooks, 'Mad Men as a Sonic Symptomatology of Consumer Capitalism', *Music & Letters*, 102.2 (2021), pp. 317–46, doi:10.1093/ml/gcaa091.

¹⁹ 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* (Sage, 1991).

²⁰ 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 consider the question of why it doesn't jar below), 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'.

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, and 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 to an analysis of this type of meaning, which will roughly adhere to Cook’s approach to television commercials. But, by losing the resonant, processive character of (especially musical) signs (or *symbols* as Susanne Langer calls them), discursive meaning fails to fully capture how television commercials affect (i.e., the *effects* they have on) the individual and hence social body.²¹ In the third part, I introduce a ‘non-discursive’ — i.e. *dynamic* — dimension of meaning to return to the artificial reflective mode the 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 part, I demonstrate 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.²² 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. In the fifth and final part, I finally move on from the question of ‘how advertising music works’ to the important question of ‘what work does advertising music do’ — what are its psychological, social, and ecological effects and how does it produce them?

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

²¹ My understanding of Susanne Langer’s philosophy, which forms a crucial part of the theoretical discussion below, has been immeasurably strengthened by Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin, *The Philosophy of Susanne Langer: Embodied Meaning in Logic, Art and Feeling* (Bloomsbury, 2020).

²² 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*, 34.2 (June 2004), pp. 179–98, doi:10.1111/j.0021-8308.2004.00242.x.

have all allowed audiences to swerve around the nuisance of advertising while enjoying their favourite programmes. 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 is 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 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 [television companies sell their audiences as commodities to advertisers] — was the pinnacle of mediated selling'.²³ It is no wonder that prices for these spots have soared — upwards of \$5 million for thirty seconds. These 'event ads' provide ideal test cases for considering how audiovisual relations function in 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.²⁴ 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 my central 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*.²⁵ Indeed, the Super Bowl's importance for the advertising industry lies as much in its raising the television 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 television 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 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.

²³ Matthew P. McAllister and Elysia Galindo-Ramirez, 'Fifty Years of Super Bowl Commercials, Thirty-Two Years of Spectacular Consumption', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 34.1–2 (2017), pp. 46–64 (p. 52), doi:10.1080/09523367.2017.1336162.

²⁴ Serazio, *Your Ad Here*.

²⁵ McAllister and Galindo-Ramirez, 'Fifty Years of Super Bowl Commercials', p. 58.

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.²⁶ 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.

With the ‘Go Further’ campaign, we see J. Walter Thompson (JWT) — Ford’s advertising agency for seventy-five years (1943–2018) — revert to its favoured 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’ (Figure 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.²⁷ 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’²⁸ — was introduced under CEO Alan Mulally in 2012 partly to convey to shareholders that Ford was not complacent after its recent return to profitability.²⁹ To its customers, it signalled that Ford’s

²⁶ On ‘flow’, see Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (Routledge, 2004), pp. 77–120.

²⁷ 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 one billion people in one hundred and ninety countries on 1 November 1999, it nostalgically gazed back over Ford’s twentieth-century heritage, while looking forward to its global future with its seven newly acquired marques.

²⁸ Bernie Woodall, ‘Ford Marks Turnaround Juncture with New Slogan’, *Reuters*, 25 January 2012 <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ford-slogan-idUSTRE80O02O20120125>> [accessed 20 June 2024].

²⁹ John Reed, ‘The Outsider Who Pulled Ford Back from the Brink’, *Financial Times*, 28 March 2012 <<https://www.ft.com/content/cdd3f41e-7804-11e1-b437-00144feab49a>> [accessed 20 June 2024]. The slogan was still in use when I checked in Winter 2020, but at the time of writing Ford seems (Spring 2021) to have reverted to its old ‘Built Ford Tough’.

YOU'LL GO HIGH, WIDE
AND HANDSOME...



There's a *Ford* in your future!

It will happen in peacetime—when the tasks that now face America have been accomplished. Then a smart, new Ford will be waiting for you to drive it. . . . Trip after trip you'll go in ease and style. It will be so smooth and gentle riding—such a joy to handle.

. . . Here will be a car that's big and sturdy—plenty of room in front and back. It will be smartly styled. And for all its feet and eager power, you will find this new car thrifty in the time-honored Ford tradition. . . . That's how it will be. And when the "go ahead" is flashed, we'll be

ready to start production plans. Meanwhile, the full Ford resources will continue to be engaged in helping speed the final Victory.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY



"THE FORD SHOW". BRITISH SINGING STARS, orchestra and chorus. Every Sunday, NBC network. 2:00 P.M., E.W.T., 1:00 P.M., C.W.T., 12:00 M., M.W.T., 11:00 A.M., P.W.T.

Figure 1. Image from J. Walter Thompson advertising campaign for Ford (1943–44).

products would exceed 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.³⁰ 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 Mulally’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.³¹ The ad also promotes some genuinely eco-friendly transit solutions — the GoBike ride-sharing scheme in the San Francisco Bay Area 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.³² ‘Go Further’ was only 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.³³ 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.³⁴ 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.³⁵ Car commercials are an obvious choice for anyone concerned with how advertising encourages people to engage in ecologically questionable behaviour, 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 commercial?

³⁰ Dale Buss, ‘“Go Further” Brand Message Is Aimed at Ford’s Employees, Too’, *Forbes*, 14 June 2012 <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dalebuss/2012/06/14/go-further-brand-message-is-aimed-at-fords-employees-too/>> [accessed 20 June 2024].

³¹ Mindi Chahal, ‘Ford Looks to “Disrupt Itself” with Focus on Driverless Cars and Shuttle Services’, *Marketing Week*, 1 December 2016 <<https://www.marketingweek.com/ford-aims-put-autonomous-vehicles-road-2021/>> [accessed 20 June 2024].

³² 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, such as Nielsen.

³³ Greg Jarboe, ‘Top 10 Super Bowl Ads for 2017 Depend on Which Metrics You Use’, *The SEM Post*, 7 February 2017 <<http://www.theseppost.com/top-10-super-bowl-ads-2017-depend-metrics-use/>> [accessed 20 June 2024].

³⁴ Woodall, ‘Ford Marks Turnaround Juncture with New Slogan’.

³⁵ Tom Ewing, ‘Why Did WPP Lose Ford? Start with the Advertising’, *Campaign*, 19 October 2018 <<https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/why-wpp-lose-ford-start-advertising/1496693>> [accessed 20 June 2024].

First of all, it's a highly sophisticated creative endeavour that justifies sustained critical engagement for the way that elucidates the potentials of music in advertising — most adverts, even expensive Super Bowl adverts, do not merit such a description. 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 Further' ad is fascinating from this perspective because its component media enact this very contestation. While Billy Taylor and Nina Simone might have been thinking — and feeling — *socially* rather than *ecologically*, their song, I will argue, 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 such 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 centred 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 a song that could — amongst many other things — lead to genuinely new transportation solutions that benefit the communities they serve.³⁶

How Advertising Music Works I: Meaning

The first part of my analysis of the Super Bowl LI Ford 'Go Further' spot sticks roughly to Cook's methodology as systematically extended and elaborated by Nicolai Graakjaer in his more recent *Analyzing Music in Advertising*. There are several reasons for doing this. First, analysing 'the part played by music in the realization of [the commercial's *communicative*, in Cook's sense] meaning' provides an efficient way of sketching the state of the art in advertising music analysis.³⁷ Second, I don't see resonant meaning as separate from reflective (i.e., communicative or *discursive*, as I will call it) meaning but as inclusive of and in ongoing negotiation with it.³⁸ 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

³⁶ 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* (Penguin, 2014), p. 91.

³⁷ Cook, *Analyzing Musical Multimedia*, p. 4.

³⁸ Communication is a much broader phenomenon than Cook's definition allows. Aren't poison-dart frogs communicating their poisonousness to potential predators through their bright colours? They are surely not even aware of this, let alone doing it intentionally.

the experiencer; but talking about these intuitions and how the music captures them is difficult without first appreciating their reference or denotation — something a discursive analysis supplies. Finally, we can gain some clarity about what is missing in a discursive analysis, now that the goal is to understand the broader question of what an ad does — the ‘effects’ that a discursive 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 humour. 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 humour *emerges* from the combination of image and music: alone, the opening of the song is tentatively optimistic, but with an underlying 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) (Figure 2). 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.

No music is heard in the short (nine-second) 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 mother (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 2016)³⁹ (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.’⁴⁰ 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) 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).

³⁹ Kelsey Mays, ‘What Were the Best-Selling Cars in 2016?’, *Cars.com*, 5 January 2017 <<https://www.cars.com/articles/what-were-the-best-selling-cars-in-2016-1420692870639/>> [accessed 20 June 2024].

⁴⁰ Ian Thibodeau, ‘Ford’s Vehicles Not Sole Focus of Super Bowl Ad’, *Detroit News*, 30 January 2017 <<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/business/autos/ford/2017/01/30/ford-superbowl-commercial/97241512/>> [accessed 20 June 2024].



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

Finally, one of the driverless cars Ford is currently developing speeds towards the sunlit mountains (1:24). In between these 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*.⁴¹ 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.'⁴² However in the third section, while the *indirect* address of image, sound and music continues, a male voiceover — as well as the written text already mentioned — addresses the viewer *directly*.⁴³ 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 —

⁴¹ Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, p. 84.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴³ Graakjær refers to this amalgamation of *direct* and *indirect* address as 'voiceover +': *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, p. 84.

faster, easier, better.’⁴⁴ 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 first verse 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 the 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.’⁴⁵ 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 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 colour, 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 bar — 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

⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁵ Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (McGraw-Hill, 1990), p. 222; quoted in Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, p. 94.

image. One exception is a repeated semiquaver-note fill in the guitar on the fourth beat of the bar 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 blended 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.⁴⁶ Given the little stories, the voiceover, 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, the music is not so straightforwardly ‘free’ as a discursive 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.’⁴⁷ 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 the 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).

A final kind of secondary musical signification concerns 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,⁴⁸ Billy Taylor enlisted Dick Dallas to complete the lyrics he had written for the first verse.⁴⁹ 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),⁵⁰ but the longer version on *I Wish I Knew (How It Would Feel to Be Free)* (1967) with trio alone is better known.⁵¹ However, it was Nina Simone who truly

⁴⁶ This is a two-way process, with the music also closing down the potential meanings of the image.

⁴⁷ Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, p. 90.

⁴⁸ Several internet sources, including Wikipedia (at the time of writing) and the *Washington Post* article cited below, mistakenly date the song’s composition and first performance earlier.

⁴⁹ Billy Taylor and Teresa L Reed, *The Jazz Life of Dr. Billy Taylor* (Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 147–48.

⁵⁰ All the songs on the album come in at under three minutes, and were probably designed for radio play.

⁵¹ UK film-lovers (not relevant in the context) know this version particularly well, as it served as the theme to BBC1’s flagship *Film ...* programme for nearly four decades.

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.⁵² Many covers have followed down the years — including memorable versions by Lighthouse Family (2001) and Emeli Sandé (2013) — but none is reckoned to match Simone's version.⁵³ 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.

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.⁵⁴ 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 1960s. 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 'culture wars' in the wake of Donald Trump's recent election.⁵⁵ That the ad successfully avoided the alt-right ire experienced by the overtly woke Super Bowl LI Audi ad (briefly sketched below) indicates that if anything, the ad effectively neutralizes the song's political message. 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.⁵⁶

⁵² For example, see her impassioned performance at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1976, —available on YouTube <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vq3sdF0YXkM>> [accessed 20 June 2024].

⁵³ Alison Gunn, 'The Life of a Song: "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free"', *Financial Times*, 28 November 2016 <<https://www.ft.com/content/2ae1f31c-b339-11e6-9c37-5787335499a0>> [accessed 20 June 2024].

⁵⁴ Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, p. 44.

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ As Graakjær points out, advertisers are always mining the back catalogue for gems supposedly untainted by commercialism; Graakjær, *Analyzing Music in Advertising*, p. 47. On the equation of

In order to later draw an analogy with Deleuze's tripartite theory of linguistic meaning, I would also, for the purposes of this essay, like to propose a third form of musical meaning which captures the 'who' of the music. Music is well-known for manifesting a communicating or expressive subject. Just 'who' that is thought to be depends on the musical period under discussion and the philosophical position being espoused. So the musical subject might be 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.⁵⁷ Most popular music analysts would say that 'I Wish I Knew ...' generates a fictional protagonist; although it is clear that the performer Simone completely identifies with the musical subject in this case to the extent that, to me, it seems perverse to suggest she is merely *signifying* authenticity.⁵⁸ In the music-image the 'I' is mobile — shifting between the various trapped people, although the focus is the woman trapped in traffic, who the viewer is being invited to identify with — reinforced by the 'you' of the voiceover.

Summarizing what really is just a sketch for 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 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, and attribute transfer give us powerful tools for understanding not just how the various sonic, visual, and textual components of lifestyle ads present a loose, open configuration of images, icons, and 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 television commercial is missing here. And if our goal is to understand the work that 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 actions', Serazio means that advertising uses soft power — through the resonance of the soft sell

black culture and cool, see Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), p. 74.

⁵⁷ Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 322–47.

⁵⁸ On the vexed, and by no means settled, problem of 'authenticity' in music, see Allan F. Moore, *Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Popular Song* (Ashgate, 2012), pp. 259–71.

— 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 forms of popular culture — they build up a sense of whether the product may increase or decrease their power to act (individually, socially, or 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.⁵⁹

Musical Sense

The key to a full understanding how advertising and its music works — which will turn out to show how it patterns the field of possible actions — is the insight, most lucidly expressed by Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, that ‘the essential function of consumption is its capacity to *make sense*’. While commodities might well be useful ‘for eating, clothing, and shelter’, much more importantly they are also ‘good for thinking’ and we should ‘treat them as a *nonverbal* medium for the human creative faculty’. People need ‘goods for communicating with others and for *making sense* of what is going on around [them]. The two needs are but one, for communication can only be formed in a structured system of *meanings*.’⁶⁰ (And they are using communication in its full sense here, rather than limiting it to intentional communication.) In non-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 needs, their *value* in other words — is transparent and remains relatively stable over time. However, in consumer capitalism, the way 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. (This is what Barthes was reaching for with his idea of ‘artificial’ signifiers.) In a social organization that hollows out all meaning in this way, with fully formed products just magically appearing on

⁵⁹ Many analyses are attentive to music’s processual or durational character in experience. Robert Walser, for example, in his analysis of heavy metal 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* (Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

⁶⁰ Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1979), pp. 62, 10. (All emphases added.)

shop shelves (now our phone screens), advertising serves the important purpose of putting it back.⁶¹ 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 them through the objects — mainly commodities — at one’s disposal.

How, then, do advertisers set about persuading people that an association with their brand or product will help them to make sense of their world and communicate the produced social meaning to their peers? Here Judith Williamson, whose description of how the modern lifestyle ad works is more astute and penetrating than McFall gives her credit for, can help. She agrees that ‘[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*.’⁶² Crucially for her, 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.⁶³ 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; instead, 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.⁶⁴

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.’⁶⁵ Despite all the criticism of the predigested nature of modern entertainment, then, the ‘sense’ that commodities help us to ‘make’ of our worlds, then, is not just spoon-fed to the viewer;

⁶¹ 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*, ed. by Simon During, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 1993), pp. 410–26 (pp. 421–22).

⁶² Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (Marion Boyars, 1978), p. 12. Williamson’s book is about still, music-free magazine adverts; nevertheless, her insights are directly transferable to TV commercials.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41. Williamson here is making the self-same argument her recent critics make using Foucauldian governance.

the viewer must actively make the sense themselves — it is deliberately missing from the advert in a *gap* that they have to fill, a problem they have to solve.

Having talked about sense-making in terms of meaning and ideology, you might think I'm still talking about discursive communication. But, as Douglas and Isherwood make clear commodities form a 'nonverbal' meaning system, i.e. their 'sense', as I shall call non-discursive meaning, is *felt* as much as it is cognised (*thought-felt*, in fact).⁶⁶ By 'ideology', similarly, Williamson does not mean a set of false ideas imposed by one group of people on another but rather, following Antonio Gramsci, she 'supposes the existence of something which is truly total', 'which is lived at such a depth, which saturates society to such an extent, and which even constitutes the substance and limit of *common sense* for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of [their] social experience'.⁶⁷ And so what Douglas and Isherwood call 'communication', which in media theory has often been (mis-)understood to be discursive, might be better be called 'resonance'. That is the term sound archivist and sound designer Tony Schwartz uses. 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 behavioural effect.'⁶⁸ This 'information', is, I would argue, a 'record' of the actions one has taken in the creative endeavour to satisfy one's desires (base appetites, higher social drives) and the subsequent pain or pleasure associated with the attempt.⁶⁹ The ad, then, should resonate with past satisfying or pleasurable experiences in a way that promises using the commodity will deliver those experiences again.⁷⁰ Recall, Williamson makes the point that, because the ad compels the viewer to produce meaning 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. To translate this into Schwarz's resonance version, the ad sells us ourselves (our future selves when using the product) experiencing or *feeling* something.⁷¹ And as advertisers — and more to the point advertising composers — have known since the 1950s, music is particularly good at promising feelings.⁷²

But it is precisely this 'feeling' presented by ad music that is — I am claiming — being ignored by the discursive musical semiotics carried out above. And so, while analysis in terms of primary, secondary, and tertiary musical meaning offers a

⁶⁶ On 'thinking-feeling', see Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (MIT Press, 2011).

⁶⁷ Raymond Williams on Gramsci's understanding of ideology, quoted in Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (Routledge, 2008), p. 4. (Emphasis added.)

⁶⁸ Tony Schwartz, *The Responsive Chord* (Doubleday, 1973), p. 24.

⁶⁹ The scare quotes for 'information' and 'record' indicate that these are inaccurate metaphors that erroneously suggest the brain works like a library archive or a computer database. I shall sketch out below how a fully ecological (i.e. non-representational) resonance theory of brain function works below.

⁷⁰ This is not to say that advertising doesn't also make significant use of negative affects.

⁷¹ For more on how advertising music composers learned to exploit the affective capacities of music to make us feel things: see Chapter 4 of Taylor, *Sounds of Capitalism*, pp. 101–26. Note that even though the composers Taylor quotes talk about 'emotion,' the examples show that they are really thinking more generally about affect.

⁷² See Taylor, *Sounds of Capitalism*.

sophisticated technique for itemising the verbalizable, propositional meaning that is conveyed from advertiser to viewer by ad music, it leaves us in the dark about how music helps people to make sense of their world through commodities and thus the most important level on which ad music actually works. It is my contention that this musical sense-making takes place through a fourth dimension of musical meaning that I derive from Deleuze's notion of linguistic sense, and so call *musical sense*.

Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* concerns the relationship between experience and language, developing a notion of 'sense' that inheres in all experience, particularly day-to-day activity *and* language, thus explaining how one can move seamlessly between them.⁷³ Most theories of language involve signs which are split into physical and mental components — words and concepts, signifiers and signifieds. A similar problem afflicts many theories of perception — even putatively 'ecological' ones, like Gibson's — which set up a correspondence between objects in the world and concepts in the mind. Now, the mind-body split makes a lot of sense: the word 'car' comprises some ink on a page or some vibrations of the air, and a car is a four-tonne lump of highly organized metal and other materials. We have concepts related to cars that we can manipulate in thought, and discuss with other people through vibrations in our vocal cords — in the absence of any of the physical objects referred to. But it doesn't get us very far in explaining either the vivid meaningfulness of experience itself or how language both transparently captures and is part of that meaningfulness. This is one of Deleuze's tasks in *Logic of Sense*. Let's consider sense as a dimension of everyday, non-linguistic experience first. When we're driving, we don't just perceive objects — gear sticks, pedals, traffic lights, pedestrians, other cars, ice on the road, unpredictable gusts — we also anticipate all the potential outcomes of the unfolding situation based on what's just happened in resonance with our preconscious memories of what's happened in similar situations in the past. This intuition of the *what-can-happen* of the ongoing state of affairs — all the various ways in which the current movements passing across and through objects might continue — is what Deleuze calls *sense*.⁷⁴ Sense is thus the aspect of cognition that enables us to act on the fly according to whatever appetites, desires, goals are in the ascendancy. The 'what-can-happen' is prior to and independent of any objects or subjects; instead it captures the movements, the 'affects', that are traversing the whole situation, and all the ways in which they might pan out.⁷⁵

⁷³ Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, ed. by Constantin V Boundas, trans. by Mark Lester and Charles J. Stivale (Bloomsbury, 2015).

⁷⁴ Piotrek Świątkowski, *Deleuze and Desire: Analysis of The Logic of Sense* (Leuven University Press, 2015), p. 18.

⁷⁵ It is non-subjective since although sense is the in-act knowledge/cognition that allows the individual to carry on acting (successfully), but it must account equally for what all other mutually implicated actors might do (or rather the affect traversing the meshwork of actors). It is also non-objective, concerning movements (as the resolution of intensive differences) that pass between and across objects, including their hindrances and enablements. The potential outcomes it registers, then, are not relations between subjects and objects betokening subjective intervention in a world of passive objects, but an envisioning of all the ways in which mutually conditioning movements might continue to evolve.

We can posit a kind of pure sense (Deleuze calls it the ‘sense-event’) that constitutes some disinterested cognition of the intensive field of possibilities. But, of course, we are highly invested in the outcome of the situation we’re enmeshed in. Over a long apprenticeship with physical and social situations have learnt which actions cause pain and which pleasure, what will end in injury or social approbation, what will contribute to achieving our aims, satisfying our basic or higher appetites and what will frustrate them. In experience, then, sense is never a pure disinterested image of all the possibilities inherent in a situation,⁷⁶ but inseparable from felt evaluation of the possible outcomes and the compulsion to work to bring some about and avoid others. This is something, following John Protevi, I call ‘making sense’: out of all the potential actions held in tension in the organism, the desirable outcomes that *make sense* are precisely those that *feel* right.⁷⁷ The important point for us is that sense-making occurs in any experience — watching a car ad as much as actual driving. The aim of an ad is to supply us with an organisation of light and sound that we can make sense of — through our own (felt) ideology, as per Williamson — that leads us to believe that an encounter with (becoming with) the product/brand in question will lead to desirable outcomes, to us *feeling good* in some way.

To help us understand how music promises us good feelings in an ad, first we need to consider Deleuze’s argument about linguistic sense. Deleuze’s innovation in *Logic of Sense* is to go against the mainstream view that linguistic meaning is only discursive, that it, in other words, sets up a correspondence between a proposition and a potentially true state of affairs in the world — perceptible in terms of objects. Philosophers of language had traditionally split linguistic meaning up into *denotation* or *reference* (the objects in the world that an utterance refers to), *signification* (the fixed, agreed upon dictionary definition of words as well as the syntactic rules for organizing them), and *manifestation* (the perspective, views, beliefs of the speaker). However, due to our extensive memories of how words have been used, and how the situation under discussion has played out in the past, our experience of language shadows in some crucial way our experience of, say, driving — if we read a passage about someone driving their pregnant wife to hospital, we similarly build up a *dynamic* image of the experience, which concerns the possible ways in which the various movements might continue, how desirable they variously are, and what those involved might do to bring about the desirable outcomes. This ‘incorporeal’ aspect of language is not ‘conveyed’ from speaker to listener in linguistic ‘code’, as the other three dimensions of meaning are; rather the speaker formulates the utterance with a certain sense in mind (in *feeling*) which the recipient then recreates, according to the various shared contexts of the utterance. That’s why linguistic sense is so elusive — it’s

⁷⁶ More properly, the sense-event is the full topological space of configurations of the elements at play that includes the path being actualised through the present, so also includes alternatives that it is impossible to get to from the current state of affairs. As mentioned, one’s sense is highly vague and restricted compared to the full virtual (in certain cases, scientific equations or computer simulations can massively improve upon what our perceptual apparatus alone can manage — e.g. in the case of climate change).

⁷⁷ John Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

what animates the utterance for speaker and interlocuter, what weaves it so seamlessly and transparently into the fabric of lived life, and yet there is nothing concrete, like denotation, signification, manifestation, that a linguist or communication scholar can isolate and study scientifically.⁷⁸

Now, no music analyst can be accused of accidentally ignoring music's dynamic nature. Music is the temporal art *par excellence*; a listener cannot fail to experience it as movement. And yet, semiotic theories are agnostic about how these signs feel *in durée* as they are being listened to since they treat musical signs spatially, as if their movement, their rhythm, were something that moved linearly *through* time. Semiotics — if not the sensitive analyst, whose readings inevitably bear the trace of the powerful experience of musical sense — thus freezes the musical movement in the signifier as a spatial arrangement of pitches, chords, rhythms.⁷⁹ Thus, the primary, secondary, tertiary music signification considered above are roughly analogous to reference, signification, and manifestation.⁸⁰ In any case, for each of these musical forms of signification, we can point to a musical structure in what Nattiez called the 'neutral level' and regard it as a 'sign' that has a (more or less) legible meaning.⁸¹ The way these 'codes' are experienced in duration is not accounted for — and if, as I am claiming, it is the sense that the viewer makes of the ad (rather than any extractable codes that are conveyed from maker to viewer), then we are left with a wholly inadequate account of how music works in television ads.

But how can we positively characterize musical sense? Fortunately, we don't need to rewrite the fearsomely difficult *Logic of Sense* in terms of music to find out. The project was already completed many years earlier, and in much more forgiving prose, by Susanne Langer, who similarly argued for alternative 'logics' to account for non-mathematical — i.e. almost all of — human experience.⁸² She fully acknowledges that certain musical structures have associated meanings — the groove is characteristic of soul, the sonic patina establishes its non-commercial credibility, Nina Simone's voice contains markers for authenticity — that function as determinate (connotational)

⁷⁸ This is exactly the type of meaning that Wittgenstein said that 'we [analytic philosophers who only admit discursive/mathematical logics] must pass over in silence'.

⁷⁹ 'Pure duration, that which consciousness perceives, [...] is not a quantity, and as soon as we try to measure it, we unwittingly replace it by space.' Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F. L. Pogson (George Allen, 1913), p. 106.

⁸⁰ Musical semiotics differs quite markedly from linguistic semiotics and so, for example, we don't have 'denotation', but rather a much vaguer 'connotation', and the syntactic rules covered by 'signification' vary by style, and are much laxer in their application.

⁸¹ Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁸² Indeed Langer even quotes from Ivy Campbell-Fisher's 1950 article 'Aesthetics and the Logic of Sense', which like Deleuze's work, is concerned with non-discursive logics. (Susanne K Langer, *Mind: An Essay in Human Feeling*, vol. 1 (John Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 85–86.) This convergence shouldn't be surprising. On one hand, Langer's strand of Anglo-American philosophy had always pursued these alternative logics (Cassirer and Whitehead, the most well-known) and the pragmatists had a 'radical empiricism' (William James) which is consonant in many ways with Deleuze's 'transcendental empiricism'. On the other hand, Deleuze was explicitly drawing on Anglo-American or analytic philosophers in his attempts to draw away from the Saussurean views of language predominant in France at the time (his notion of 'sense' partly derives from Frege's *Sinn*).

signs.⁸³ For Langer, these signs ‘may lend richness, intensity, repetition or reflection or a transcendent unrealism, perhaps an entirely new balance to the work itself.’ However, they are functioning representationally: they ‘mean something beyond what they present in themselves’. Music delivers (again not ‘conveys’) its *import* — Langer’s word for sense in art — directly to the mind. What we experience in or through the sound is the movement of feelings. But it is not — as many people misunderstand her to mean — actual feelings themselves; music is rather the ‘logical expression’ of feelings. The music’s import is independent of any emotion (just one example of feeling) the composer might have experienced when composing or any emotion incidentally evoked in the listener when listening.⁸⁴ Music presents directly to consciousness the image, or semblance of ‘life lived and felt, the matrix of mentality’.⁸⁵ It expresses not feeling *per se* but the logic of feeling, the ‘logic of consciousness’:⁸⁶

The tonal structures we call ‘music’ bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling — forms of growth and of attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses — not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both — the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentience.⁸⁷

We can see, then, how in an ad it might be used to promise rather than produce feelings. For Langer, music, like other arts, gives ‘what Bertrand Russell calls “knowledge by acquaintance” of affective experience, below the level of belief, on the deeper level of insight and attitude.’⁸⁸ As Tim Ingold nicely paraphrases Langer, art, and most especially, music

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.⁸⁹

As we negotiate our environment we are constantly aware of a fabric of tensions that make some movements impossible, some difficult, some easy, some inevitable. Music presents the abstract, dynamic, transparent *sense* of these physical and social constraints and facilitations in the meshwork of mutually suppositional individuations. These

⁸³ This is a point that is easy to misunderstand and shows Langer working implicitly with a Bergsonian view of time. Each musical ‘work’ (really the virtual *Idea* actualized in any rendering) comprises a single *musical symbol* (or ‘art symbol’), which incorporates any of the signs that carry discursive meaning.

⁸⁴ Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (New American Library, 1948), p. 218.

⁸⁵ Susanne K. Langer, *Problems of Art: Ten Philosophical Lectures* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), p. 139.

⁸⁶ Suzanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), p. 26.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁸⁸ Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, p. 263.

⁸⁹ Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, p. 23.

evaluative and directional qualities of what is thought-felt in musical form give it its potential to help us make sense of the physical and social world — the use and social values of commodities in advertising.

For Williamson, magazine adverts work by encouraging the viewer to work to reproduce their felt ideology in the gaps supplied by advert. Her archetypal example would be Catherine Deneuve next to a bottle of perfume. A more sophisticated version would be the famous Volkswagen ‘Lemon’ ad (1958), which sets a puzzle through its initially confusing juxtaposition of the product and the insult ‘Lemon’. Ads work through difference. One problem with Cook’s theory of multimedia (and Clarke’s theory of ecological musical perception) for thinking about advertising music is that although he’s rightly trying to draw away from ‘parallelism’, the notion of ‘enabling similarity’ that supposedly works to tie, say, image to music just brings it right back.⁹⁰

First, enabling similarity is *cross-modal*, it relies on similarities between modes. Sense, concerning as it does movement across and through objects in formation, is *amodal* and constituted only through difference. To grasp this, consider a moving image of a car speeding towards a wall in silence. At the instant the viewer expects the collision, the screen suddenly goes black and they hear a crash. All of this is sensed or thought-felt as one continuous movement, despite there being no point at which sound and image occur together and no possibility for ‘cross-modal’ linkage through ‘enabling similarity’. Second enabling similarity occurs through parallel processes in linear time. Music (of a particular style) is in itself constituted through a field of difference. The tensions we sense are not in individual sounds like pitches or chords or stretches of linearly conceived rhythms, but in differences between them — that’s why the Tristan chord is only really the Tristan chord as part of the Wagner opera, and not when it occurs in a different context in another piece, where it is caught up in a wholly different becoming. The same is then true of all the aural and visual ‘channels’ of meaning in television — music, spoken dialogue, sound effects, moving image, still image, text etc. — and so there are numerous means at the advertiser’s disposal for opening up the necessary ‘gap’ for the viewer to make sense of — including many ways of deploying music. In the following discussion of the Ford ad, I limit my attention to the vibrant ‘contest’ between the song ‘I Wish I Knew’ and the moving images.⁹¹

How Advertising Music Works II: Sense

For Williamson, the ad leaves a gap for the typical target viewer (a fictional, heuristic construct hereafter referred to as *the viewer*) to fill with *themselves* feeling something.⁹² In our case, the ad triggers a promissory sense of *how it would feel* to enter into a

⁹⁰ Clarke’s affordance — in terms of which types of moving image a given piece of music affords, or vice versa — is still a kind of parallelism.

⁹¹ Cook prefigures the argument here (or rather follow Chion’s argument) through his insistence that while ‘conformal’ or ‘complementary’ models can have some explanatory purchase in certain situations, multimedia is primarily characterised by ‘contest’.

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-

relationship with the automobile manufacturer's products (e.g., the featured Ford Fusion) and the brand itself. If owning the brand or using the car promises to *feel good* they are more likely to *desire* it. I show in this section that the viewer is likely to imaginatively resolve the gap between intermingling layers of generative opposition between various parameters of the music, or between the music and the moving image with a vivid, beguiling sense of the *freedom* the car offers — just as the lyrics express.⁹³ But, as I will elaborate, the complex contest between music and image, means that this is a delicately poised sense of freedom that resonates with certain prevalent 'ideologies' — as long as we recognize that the feeling itself is pre-verbal and hence pre-ideological. And it is this particular sense of freedom that makes the Ford car and the Ford brand seem so attractive.

As we saw, a commodity's primary value lies in its perceived power to affect others, particularly to affect how others see the owner, so the strongest feelings are evoked by a product's potential social use. What we will see is how the music-image gap invites a sense of how it will feel to own the car and be associated with the brand, which will — the advert assures — present the owner as a certain type of person. A look at the most successful Super Bowl LI car ads shows that for these big-ticket items this is rarely about projecting status, as one might expect, but about being and being seen as a thoughtful, caring citizen who contributes to the good of society — and the ecology. Ad Meter's top-placed Kia ad, for example, 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, inciting vitriol from. The Ford ad is entirely in keeping with this tendency, except — and this is what makes it so sophisticated and worthy of analysis — the complex conflict between image and music makes the ad seem to be only

identifying people into existence. And agreeing with the constructivist view of music, this analysis cannot be other than a personal response. (And it constitutes, I might add, a perfectly legitimate form of empirical research; see, for example, Nicholas Cook and Eric Clarke, *Empirical Musicology: Aims, Methods, Prospects* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 5.) 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 (as you might have gathered) 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 favourably 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.

⁹³ 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. by Claudia Gorbman (Columbia University Press, 1994). I follow Chion in not requiring any cross-modal 'enabling similarity' or 'affordance' to glue modes together. That doesn't mean there can't be (common sense) 'conformance' or 'complementarity' between modes as discussed by Cook.

about use-value while exploiting some deeply held, socially oriented feelings about freedom and technological advance to make the car/brand seem truly desirable.

I treat three aspects of the gap between image and music in turn; each adds more nuance to the basic sense of freedom.

The first gap concerns the broad sweep of the advert and the conformance and contest between the ways in which image and song articulate the movement from trapped to free. 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. The groove is pared down to a minimum — light drums, unobtrusive bass, alternating guitar and piano fills. The piano remains in the centre the keyboard; Simone keeps to the bottom of her register and restricts her range; she sings in soft tones. 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.⁹⁴ We don't read 'freedom' from this jumble of signs: we feel it directly. This isn't to fall into the affective fallacy and say we actually feel free when we watch the ad;⁹⁵ rather we empathetically feel along with, or feel into the *to-be-free/to-become-free* of the various people in their various contexts in the ad sewn together by the *to-be-free* of the song.⁹⁶ That's how the ad promises rather than actually delivers the feeling.

Alongside this broad conformance between image and music across the ad, there is also a fundamental contest. Even if they don't know the song or its background, most US Super Bowl viewers are going to understand through various clues — the jazz idiom, the sophisticated, unprocessed singing, the recognizable black voice — that the song is expressing a longing for something much more profound than the trivial wish for escape depicted in the images. Many black viewers were offended by this advert, and

⁹⁴ 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 (bar 53 out of 108 bars, excluding the free piano intro); Simone's version remains in Bb throughout.

⁹⁵ A reader of an earlier article I wrote made this complaint when I cited Langer — but Langer pointedly does *not* fall into the affective fallacy: she insists that music follows, or makes intelligible, the logical form of feeling not that it induces the feeling in the listener (or is the expression of the composer's feeling).

⁹⁶ If we follow Deleuze and say sense is expressed in atemporal infinitives, the sense of this aspect of the music is 'to be free' or maybe more correctly as a relation of becoming between 'to be trapped' and 'to be free'.

quite understandably so because this contest between the oppressed black protagonist's heartfelt yearning for socio-political freedom is — for the presumably white target viewer at least — humorously undercut and hence neutralized by the image.⁹⁷

Although the political urgency of the song is undermined through humour, there remains 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. This constitutes the second gap. Let's look at Ford's version of freedom in the images first. 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 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.⁹⁸ 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

⁹⁷ 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*, 6 February 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/>> [accessed 20 June 2024]. Simone herself would certainly have abhorred the ad, as someone quoted in the article says. Here we start to see how problematic our heuristic notion of a 'target viewer' is. While I find this advert highly offensive when I reflect upon it, I do not *feel* offended by it as I watch it, as I suppose the commentators in Gibson article must do.

⁹⁸ John Shepherd, 'Music as Cultural Text', in *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, 2 vols, ed. by John Paynter and others (Routledge, 1992), II, pp. 128–55 (p. 149).

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.⁹⁹ 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.¹⁰⁰

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.¹⁰¹ In common with much blues and jazz,¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³ The overall impression is of a series of lines each unfolding simultaneously under their own propulsion and in negotiation with others, precipitating out of the flow and then dissolving back into it.¹⁰⁴ This 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

⁹⁹ 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.

¹⁰⁰ 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.

¹⁰¹ You might be thinking: hang on, doesn't that just describe all music? Not at all. Chris McDonald — citing Adorno's discussion of how the 'gentlemanly competition' of bourgeois life is matched by the relations between the instruments in 19th-century chamber music — argues that 'Rush's musical interplay displays many of these same structures and meanings, and its embrace of middle-class individualism is enacted, almost homologically, in the way songs like "Tom Sawyer" are musically constructed.' Chris McDonald, *Rush: Rock Music and the Middle Class: Dreaming in Middletown* (Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 72. The same is true of much rock and heavy metal music, which displays exactly the same 'heroic individualism', in which each instrument is given its chance to lead, or each instrument has its own individual line.

¹⁰² And with blues-influenced rock bands such as Cream, The Rolling Stones (except in their singles), and Led Zeppelin.

¹⁰³ 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.

¹⁰⁴ 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 University Press, 2005), pp. 154–57.

rhythmic looseness.¹⁰⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶

Unlike the individualist freedom of the images, then, ‘I Wish I Knew’ chimes instead 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.¹⁰⁷ 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 the creative possibilities opened up by connecting and negotiating with others.¹⁰⁸ Thus, while the ad *communicates* (in Cook’s definition) through the image 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.

Now the ‘trapped’ part of the advert is meant to fully acknowledge that driving around US cities mainly involves the intense frustration of being stuck in traffic. As Gorz pointed out, the automobile’s elite benefits of speed and convenience are lost as soon as everyone drives one. The images in the third part are designed to show that Ford’s technological innovations will provide escape routes for individual drivers. There is, therefore, a contradiction between the individualism shown in the images and the democracy heard in the music, which allows the viewer to reaffirm Gorz’s ‘ideology of the motorcar’. The music and image together promise that owning a Ford admits the viewer into a community of drivers. It thus develops the sense — against the reality acknowledged by the image — that everyone can be independently free together.

The third and final gap between music and image concerns the subjunctive character of the freedom in the song and the technologically facilitated utopia portrayed in the moving image. 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’.

Let’s look at the music first this time. The song is not about an experience of freedom in the present, but about an imagined freedom in the future. It is about how it *would*

¹⁰⁵ 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.

¹⁰⁶ 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.

¹⁰⁷ Nina Simone was friends with Carmichael, and moved in the same circles of Black revolutionary intellectuals.

¹⁰⁸ Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (Vintage Books, 1992; orig. published by Random House, 1967).

feel to be free.¹⁰⁹ And the ingenuity of Billy Taylor's melody and his subtle exploitation of the possibilities of the jazz harmonic idiom and Nina Simone's vocal line lies in the musical ways they find of expressing this 'would' — a freedom they dream of, but don't yet enjoy. The musical sense is thus actually a 'would feel to be free' rather than the simple 'to be free' that might be intuited from the expansion of range, volume, and expression.

The melody and harmony are extremely unusual in this song, not just for blues or jazz, but for common practice tonality and pop or rock. Tonal melodies and harmonies are usually constructed so that they avoid settling on the tonic, and 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 centre around the tonic note and tonic chord — most phrases both beginning and ending with the tonic. 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 with a flattened leading note. In this song, tonic chords are clean (i.e., without sevenths) and approached via dominant harmony to produce a strong sense of a tonal centre. However, the pitch structure is constructed in such a way that the song seems stuck on the tonic (B \flat in Simone's version): instead of somewhere one feels relieved to reach, it is a place from which one cannot escape. The 16 bars 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, which comprises two straight crotchets. 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 F¹¹ (extended V⁷) 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 rhythm $\hat{1}$ 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 (D⁷) in the first and third phrases adds to the impression of release. Each successive phrase tries harder and harder to free itself, but is always yanked back to the tonic. Simone enhances Taylor's basic melodic outline and harmonies with elaborate vocal ornamentation, which also tries and fails to escape the tether of the tonic — albeit with subtler effect (see [Example 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. The basic sixteen-bar harmonic structure is repeated throughout the song, so this nuanced shade of curtailed 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.

¹⁰⁹ To clarify: I discuss the 'would' of 'how it would feel to be free' in two ways in this section: there is the 'would feel' of every ad, which describes the sense any ad gives of how it would feel to use the product. Then, in this specific ad, there is a would-ness, a subjunctive quality, to the freedom being promised.

Example 1 Nina Simone, vocal line for first verse of 'I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free' (1967). 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.

♩ = 104

F¹¹ B^b D⁷ G^m B^{b7} E^b F¹¹

I wish I knew how ___ it would feel ___ to be free_

4 B^b B^b F¹¹ B^b F C⁷

I wish I could break ___ all the chains ___ hol - ding -

8 F B^b D⁷ G^m B^b E^b F¹¹

me ___ I wish ___ I. could say ___ all _ the things _ that I should say_

12 B^b E^{o7} B^b/F F^{#o7}

Say 'em loud ___ say 'em ___ clear _

14 G^m E^{o7} B^b/F F B^b

___ for the whole ___ round world _ to hear ___

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.’¹¹⁰ The musical *Idea* (Langer) of potential but unrealized freedom, that runs through the song, is not available as a sign that may be read. It can only be experienced (thought-felt) directly through the music.¹¹¹

At the very end of the advert, when we see the driverless car speeding toward the sunlit uplands, the ad does match the ‘freedom in the future’ of the music. But for the most part there is a clash between the subjunctive ‘would feel to be free’ and the technological innovations shown, which are available in the present. This gap is open to be filled with a feeling of freedom that resonates with what David Nye calls the ‘American technological sublime’, a structure of feeling he argues is deeply engrained in the American psyche. ‘By the 1830s, sublime technological objects were assumed to be active forces working for democracy’, writes Nye, ‘[the] citizen who contemplated such public improvements [...] saw himself as part of the moral vanguard, leading the world toward universal democracy.’¹¹² 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 unconsciously 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, the viewer is likely to impute this deeply held pre-reflexive sense to Ford and its products.¹¹³ 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, then, but also the Ford corporation as the solution to too many corporations like Ford.

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.¹¹⁴ The future social and technological liberty the ad promises

¹¹⁰ Taylor and Reed, *The Jazz Life of Dr. Billy Taylor*, p. 154.

¹¹¹ The ‘Idea’ is ‘the conception of subjective experience, the life of feeling’ and can be ‘perceived by one initial intuition’ that is inseparable from its symbol.

¹¹² David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (MIT Press, 1994), pp. 33, 36.

¹¹³ In other words, the ad comes close to producing what Lawrence Grossberg calls an ‘affective alliance’ amongst the geographically dispersed participants in the ritual. Jeremy Gilbert, *Common Ground: Democracy And Collectivity In An Age Of Individualism* (Pluto, 2014), p. 152.

¹¹⁴ 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 Kia ad, which both upset the US right. What I found surprising was that, what I experienced (viscerally) as thoroughly offensive greenwashing in the Kia ad was also given a free pass on YouTube.

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 (having the viewer generate something incorporating both) the liberal individualism 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.

The song 'I Wish I Knew' works then as part of an audiovisual field of difference to offer the viewer (to encourage them to generate) an experiential, if abstract sense of how driving (or using) the car will feel — its *dynamic* use value. But also, and much more persuasively (according to Douglas, Williamson, Schwarz, not to mention advertising companies themselves), offers the viewer a similarly vivid sense of what owning the brand will mean in social terms, i.e. what social values and belief systems the car will 'communicate' to their peers — its *dynamic* social value. A quick perusal of the other Super Bowl LI car ads shows that in this, the 'Go Further' ad is an outlier. Many simply underscore the general affect — the Kia ad, for example. Some give a sense of the dynamic use-value — the Alfa-Romeo ad, whose understated EDM augurs a technologically flawless driving experience and others the promised dynamic social value — the striving cello line in the Audi ad tracking the daughter's striving to win the race and metaphorically to succeed in her career. The sophisticated music-use in the Ford ad manages to achieve all of these at once.¹¹⁵

The Work Advertising Music Does

In general, then, I suggest that music functions in TV ads as part of a multi-dimensional field of difference (ultimately light-sound, but for the purposes of analysis the dimensions can be split into any number of sub-fields: sound effects, dialogue, voiceover, moving image, text, clothing and accessories, facial expressions and other bodily gestures, ...) to evoke a (promissory) *sense* of what it would be like (*how it would feel*) to have an active encounter with the product being advertised — drive a particular car, be associated with a particular brand by one's peers. This is achieved by opening up a gap in the field and prompting viewers to reproduce and hence affirm 'common sense' ideologies at the level of feeling: not in the legible signs, but in shifting patterns of tension and release (of flowing and stalling, accelerating and decelerating, being hindered and enabled) felt in *durée*. Thought-felt sense-making involves pure sense (of the ways movement could continue, or could be unfolding otherwise, in '*durée*'), evaluation (a sense of which possible movements are 'good'), and direction (a sense of what might be done to bring about the good possible movements). In our case study, the differences between music and moving image modulate the general sense of 'to be free'. The first gap between the seriousness of the desire for political freedom and the triviality of the mini-narratives in the ad serves to appropriate while undercutting the socially progressive message. The

¹¹⁵ As I have said, this is an exploratory article, and I make no claims to have covered all bases here.

lighter sense of ‘to be free’ facilitates the making-sense associated with the second and especially third gaps. The second gap pits radical libertarianism against the radical communitarianism of the civil rights movement and thereby elicits the viewer’s feeling that they might act selfishly for the good of the whole — the (neo)liberal sense of ‘to be free’ that undergirds the ‘ideology of the motorcar’. And finally, the discrepancy between, on the one hand, Taylor’s harmony and melody and Simone’s ornamentation that transforms the ‘to be free’ into the subjunctive mood, ‘would feel to be free’, and, on the other hand, the images of the gleaming imminent technological solutions to the present trauma of the car-based city. These are made sense of together through the feeling that postponing freedom is justified, which supports the ideology of the ‘American technological sublime’ — technological utopia betokens social utopia, and the proximity of the former and desirability of the latter justify patience in the present. The overall result leaves 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. None of this occurs in the audiovisual text in a manner that is amenable to semiotic analysis — no shared primary, secondary, tertiary musical ‘meanings’ here that can be pointed to in the sonic signal that might be conveyed between a sender and a recipient. It is rather a jumble of valuations and judgements that the target viewer is likely to think-feel as they make sense of the ad out of the field of differences in durational time.

The scare quotes around what we judge to be ‘good’ above was to indicate that this is not a moral judgement. For animals in general, I would define the sense of what is ‘good’ ethologically — it is what minimally allows the organism plus the environment upon which it depends to survive and reproduce.¹¹⁶ Human cultures in which the relations between individuals and what keeps them alive is fairly transparent can be expected to cultivate dispositions and behaviours that broadly maintain their own species and the ecosystems of species they depend on.¹¹⁷ Sense-making, then, is eco-social, a mode of felt cognition that directs us to behave in ways that benefit first ourselves, second our group or whole species, and third the wider environment. In modern societies, we are so divorced from the means of production that our sense-making is no longer ethological — it no longer derives from an understanding of our relationships to wider human society and its embedding in its environment and no longer directs us towards actions that serve mostly to maintain the ecology as a whole.¹¹⁸ So far, I have maintained that ads and ad music are simply parasitic upon this

¹¹⁶ Here I agree with Maturana and Varela’s notion of ‘natural drift’ in which it is not the ‘fittest’ that survive (not Darwin’s phrase anyway), but those that are merely good enough. Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Shambala, 1987).

¹¹⁷ They don’t always do this: there is plenty of evidence for foragers causing localised ecological collapse. Plus, there’s no need to romanticize non-agricultural societies here: the native Americans engaged in cruelty, torture, mutilation, war, slavery before any Europeans arrived.

¹¹⁸ I follow Ingold’s understanding of ‘environment’. For him ‘organism plus environment’ form an ‘indivisible totality’ (the ‘sentient ecology’) which should be thought of as an open-ended process through time. There is only one ecology, but different organisms (like Leibnizian monads) offer different perspectives on the open whole. Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, p. 20.

corrupted, unethological sense-making. But while this might be the case for the experience of any single ad in isolation, the repeated *activity* of making sense of adverts over a lifetime does indeed warp our sense of what is good for a healthy ecology, society, and individual.¹¹⁹

To understand how advertising music works to generate a culture in which the practices individuals feel they ought to engage in are so ecologically damaging, I turn to 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 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.¹²⁰ This supra-individual entrainment affirms and passes on the affective dispositions garnered from and necessary for dwelling in a particular environment.¹²¹ 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.¹²²

I agree with Ellen Dissanayake that the human faculties involved in indigenous musical ritual are exploited by modern marketing.¹²³ However, I would go further, and argue that the television commercial — demonstrated most clearly during the Super Bowl — is actually a fully participatory ritual practice, with all the potentials for rhythmic, musical, and hence affective entrainment that allows. 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 —

¹¹⁹ I should also emphasize that these felt ideologies are promulgated by companies and their proxy advertising companies purely to sell more products: advertisers select their methods on a pragmatic basis as to what works, and are unconcerned (as institutions, not as private citizens) about the consequences — about how what they are doing shapes the field of what is possible.

¹²⁰ Judith Becker, ‘Rhythmic Entrainment and Evolution’, in *Music, Science, and the Rhythmic Brain: Cultural and Clinical Implications*, ed. by Jonathan Berger and Gabe Turow (Routledge, 2011), pp. 49–72 (p. 67).

¹²¹ Helena Simonett’s research on the Yoreme provides an excellent example of this. Helena Simonett, ‘Of Human and Non-Human Birds’, in *Current Directions in Ecomusicology: Music, Nature, Environment*, ed. by Aaron S. Allen and Kevin Dawe (Routledge, 2016), pp. 99–108.

¹²² Again, this is what Grossberg meant by an ‘affective alliance’.

¹²³ ‘[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. by Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten (Berghahn Books, 2006), pp. 31–56 (pp. 49 and 50).

as Williamson described — actively making sense of the Ford ad, which is only separated from dancing, singing, playing by historical accident. The music still entrains listeners, attunes them to normative felt pre-ideological frameworks, despite their now being geographically and temporally dispersed.

Conclusion

It is difficult to see how any analysis of music's function in an ad could ignore discursive meaning. In the Super Bowl Ford ad, 'Ford' tells potential customers about the nature of its 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 bars or half-bars 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 humour 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 signalled 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 discursive 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, limited by their affordances.. 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 are presented with a series of differentials in and with the music that many resolve into a certain sense of how it would feel 'to be

free' that mobilises and reinforces the dynamic values and dispositions that make driving feel right.

My goal in this article was to try to gain establish a rough model of 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 *symbol* that resonates with the movement and affective memories most viewers will have gathered from ordinary experience (including mediatized experiences) and likely generates feelings (or thinking-feeling) 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. It exploits the full potential of what Langer called the 'unconsummated' nature of the musical symbol.¹²⁴ The music provokes 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 advertising music'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. Deleuze's sense and Langer's musical symbol can help in this. In their development of sense and symbolic meaning, both are ultimately concerned with the question of human freedom. For Deleuze, a fuller *pure* sense (fuller than *common* sense) of our circumstances can never confer the ability to predict all outcomes of the current set of interactions; but it can at least offer some vague inkling of the problem space in which the person sensing, and the other living beings with other inklings and capacities, are immersed/embedded and simultaneously constitute. Partially freed from the valuations and imperatives of (thought-felt) common sense, we can sense thresholds that open onto creative, imaginative, but cautious trialling of alternative ways of living —

¹²⁴ A symbol is the whole set of sonic relations in time, rather than detachable linear signs through time. We can think of (a piece of) music as an inseparable interrelationship of rhythms — where we define rhythm more expansively as 'a relation between tensions rather than a matter of equal divisions of time'. Dengerink Chaplin, *The Philosophy of Susanne Langer*, p. 213. In which case, 'harmonic progressions, resolution of dissonances, directions of "running" passages, and "tendency tones" in melody all serve as rhythmic agents': Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key*, p. 209.

reorganizing cities around public transport and largely eliminating the self-sabotaging motor car, to give one mundane but relevant example. Deleuze's aesthetics point the way and in combination with Langer's understanding of musical sense can provide a complex enough model to account for uses of television music that defamiliarize the destructive ways of thinking-feeling entrained by an entertainment industry organised around profit.¹²⁵ The problem is, of course, 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.¹²⁶ With a clearer understanding of how music functions in the most sophisticated commercials, television music critics 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',¹²⁷ audiovisual analysts will be able to amplify their psychologically, socially, and ecologically beneficial effects.¹²⁸ 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.

¹²⁵ Deleuze's 'cinema' books (*Cinéma 1: L'Image-mouvement*, 1983; *Cinéma 2: L'Image-temps*, 1985) do this, for example, although the contribution of music, or even sound, is underdeveloped in his discussion.

¹²⁶ A recent example is *For All Mankind* (2019–present), which is extremely well-crafted, highly enjoyable television, but which entrains its viewers in the American Technological Sublime, and uses music (by Jeff Russo) very successfully to achieve this.

¹²⁷ I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (Routledge, 2003; orig. [n.p.] [n. pub.], 1924).

¹²⁸ To see how this might happen by explicitly subverting the '(re)solvable' gaps or puzzles supplied by current lifestyle ads, see: Brooks, 'Mad Men as a Sonic Symptomatology of Consumer Capitalism'.