2013

Resisting the "Sound of Muzak": Alienating effects in conceptual progressive music

Bryan Michael McCulley-Mendoza

RESISTING THE "SOUND OF MUZAK": ALIENATING EFFECTS IN CONCEPTUAL PROGRESSIVE MUSIC

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

English Composition:

Literature

---

by

Bryan Michael McCulley-Mendoza

June 2013

RESISTING THE "SOUND OF MUZAK": ALIENATING EFFECTS IN CONCEPTUAL PROGRESSIVE MUSIC

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

---

by

Bryan Michael McCulley-Mendoza

June 2013

Approved by:

[redacted]

David Carlson, Ph.D., Chair, English

5/17/13

Date

[redacted]

Jessica Luck, Ph.D.

[redacted]

Luz Elena Ramirez, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Most modern popular music has been coopted by what Marxist theorist Theodor Adorno calls "the culture industry." This popular music is used to create passive consumers driven by a need for instant gratification, rather than objective, active listeners. The passivity goes unnoticed among the majority of society because of the culture industry's deep hold. However, there are subgenres of music, including "conceptual progressive music," that aim to combat this commodification. Conceptual progressive music uses Brechtian aesthetic effects to productively alienate the audience and create a scientific, objective listener. Bertolt Brecht outlines these effects in his definition of what he termed the "epic theater," which featured performances whose aim was to prevent the audience from identifying with the play, enabling them to scientifically view it and draw their own conclusions regarding the message being delivered. Through their lyrics and musical composition and skill, two conceptual progressive bands, Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd, demonstrate how the music can be used to bring attention to the true nature of the culture industry and its hold on art. Conceptual progressive music, then, offers an attempt

at realist art on two different levels. It attempts to point out the ideological structures of our capitalist consumer society. In addition, its progressive nature is the avant-garde art that Brecht claimed would lead to scientific and objective thought, which he believed could create revolutionary consciousness. Conceptual progressive music's movement toward this two-sided realist art provides the beginnings of a revolutionary art that leads to what Leon Trotsky called an "enlightened man."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Jessica Luck for her help in the completion of this thesis and the time spent on it. I would also like to thank Professor David Carlson who has been an integral part of this thesis since its beginning stages. My deepest thanks to my friends and family who have supported me and listened to each idea and theory along the way.

DEDICATION

To my mom, who instilled in me a passion for writing, literature, and music.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

POPULAR MUSIC AND THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

A commonplace of contemporary critical theory is that our society has become increasingly focused on shallow, materialistic commodities that only produce our desire for instant gratification, as opposed to satiating it. This want of instant gratification, combined with mechanical reproductions of art and the commodification and standardization of art forms may remove meaning or serve to make members of society more docile in terms of the reception of art. Popular culture is able to produce art that encourages passivity in society, leaving citizens open to receive the message that they must be consumers. The "necessities" impressed upon the masses by art are false needs that can only be fulfilled by capitalism. Popular music is one art form that has been co-opted by what Marxist theorist Theodor Adorno calls "the culture industry," and most popular music has become an example of a commodified art form that serves to make society more passive while still pushing false needs on consumers of all economic standings. And yet, while most popular music aims to impress these false needs on pacified consumers,

there are some subgenres of music that resist the culture industry's hold on music, creating active, objective listeners. One of these, which is the focus of this thesis, is "conceptual progressive music." I will define some of the features of this music more fully later in this chapter, after I have discussed in more detail the nature of the mass culture against which it rebels.

Popular, mass culture is ingrained in our society, with the media used to deliver advertisements not only in between programming, but as a part of the structure of media itself. Popular TV shows, movies, and music are laden with messages promoting consumerism, both in the advertising and in the media's content. In his essay, "The Popular Culture Economy," Don Cusic claims, "Popular culture is market-based rather than aesthetic based … While some popular culture entertainment may be viewed as 'art' or even elitist, the bulk of popular culture involves the transmission of mass culture through entertainment from producers to consumers" (Cusic 1). The focus of mass culture, in other words, moves away from the pure aesthetics of art forms, and towards the delivery of advertisements meant to turn members of society into consumers. In another essay, "Advertising and the conquest

of culture," Timothy Taylor mentions the lack of distinction between "commercial culture" and "culture," with the growth of consumer society "[destabilizing] the position of fine arts at the top of the hierarchy of cultural production; it is now less meaningful to measure American social groups by their knowledge of high culture, manifested socially as cultural capital" (Taylor 406). A basis of popular culture today is the need to make passive consumers out of individual members of society through popular media, and in the process to destroy many of the distinctions that used to apply between different levels of cultural production. Advertising and popular media have become one in the same, not only encouraging individuals to constantly spend money, but also keeping them docile and unquestioning of the ruling strata.

In his work, *The Culture Industry*, Theodor Adorno explains that he chose to replace the phrase "mass culture" in his critical work with his invented term, "culture industry," "in order to exclude from the outset the interpretation agreeable to its advocates: that it is a matter of something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves, the contemporary form of popular art" (Adorno 98). The culture industry

connotes something more calculating than the spontaneous rise of a culture. It "fuses the old and familiar into a new quality," using all of its branches to promote consumable products for the masses. The various branches of the culture industry fit together nearly seamlessly, assaulting the masses with commercial needs from all sides, including through the use of popular art and media. BY fusing the old and familiar with a new quality, the culture industry "forces together the spheres of high and low art," thereby detracting from the seriousness of each. Adorno writes,

> The seriousness of high art is destroyed in speculation about its efficacy; the seriousness of the lower perishes with the civilizational constraints imposed on the rebellious resistance inherent within it as long as social control was not yet total. (Adorno 98-9)

Because the culture industry does not allow for the organic, spontaneous rise of culture through art, it can only detract from the potential transformative power of any art that exists. The culture industry does consider both the conscious and unconscious state of the masses to which it is directed, but "the masses are not primary, but

secondary, they are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery. The customer is not king, as the culture industry would have us believe, not its subject but its object" (99). The masses are given the illusion of choice, and are turned into a canvas upon which the culture industry's needs are impressed.

The culture industry exists nearly in plain sight to those in the masses, but the culture industry's nature is its greatest protector. Adorno notes, "It may also be supposed that the consciousness of the consumers themselves is split between the prescribed fun which is supplied to them by the culture industry and a not particularly well-hidden doubt about its blessings" (103). But this doubt is not enough to break the culture industry's hold on most consumers. The "prescribed fun" and easily attainable false needs are enough to keep consumers willingly docile. People strive for the instant gratification that comes from the purchase of a commodity put forth by the culture industry. Many people have become so dependent on the culture industry that they would not be able to find happiness in their life if it was devoid of the false satisfaction they get from consumerism. The masses under control of the culture industry are willing to turn a blind

eye to the nature of their lives, rather than exist without the "fleeting gratification" they receive from their consumerism.

In *The One-Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse defines false needs as "those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice" (Marcuse 5). While the fulfillment of these false needs may appear to bring satisfaction to the consumers, it only inhibits their ability to realize exactly how much they are being manipulated. The end result is what Marcuse terms as "euphoria in unhappiness." According to Marcuse, false needs include "Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate" (5). Popular music serves as a means of producing and satisfying these false needs in consumers, given its widespread integration in modern society. After a lifetime of having false needs impressed upon them, consumers may begin to identify needs as their own, and the satisfaction from fulfillment as genuine. However, these needs "continue to be what they were from the beginning—products

of a society whose dominant interest demands repression" (5). As long as people have these false needs impressed on them, they remain incapable of seeing the hold they are under.

One of the key insights of Frankfurt School critics such as Adorno and Marcuse was that members of society do not see the impression of false needs as repression. The ability of the culture industry to disguise this repression is one reason why it is successful and remains operational to this day. Marcuse opens his book addressing the comfort members of society feel even while in the hold of the culture industry:

> A comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization, a token of technical progress. Indeed, what could be more rational than the suppression of individuality in the mechanization of socially necessary but painful performances; the concentration of individual enterprises in more effective, more productive corporations… (Marcuse 1)

The repression of the masses is not always seen, and it is not met with resistance. To those people living within the

culture industry's grasp, repression seems to be the wrong term. The nature of the culture industry allows it to fulfill false needs nearly instantaneously, giving people the impression that all they need for instant gratification is to be consumers. The ability to satisfy superficial false needs (for at least a short while) instills a sense of productivity in members of this consumer society. As long as people are buying commodities in an effort to satisfy their supposed needs, they feel as though they are contributing.

As the ruling strata and culture industry continue to move forward with the repression of the masses, it becomes more difficult for individuals to break free of the hold of false needs. Marcuse writes,

> The more rational, productive, technical, and total the repressive administration of society becomes, the more unimaginable the means and ways by which the administered individuals break their servitude and seize their own liberation. (6)

This productive and technical society continues to advance at an exponential rate as we become more dependent on technology. Even in 1964, Marcuse recognized, "in the contemporary period, the technological controls appear to

be the very embodiment of Reason for the benefit of all social groups and interests" (9). Marcuse goes on to state how the technological controls are so intertwined in our society that any contradiction seems "irrational and all counteraction impossible" (9). It becomes increasingly easier to repress individuals as the reach of the administration of society expands. Music is just one example of how far this reach extends. Members of society are implicitly told to love what everyone loves, and hate what everyone hates, and popular music has become a medium in which these messages are delivered. It is nearly impossible to go somewhere without hearing this kind of music (music we should like, because of its very universality), whether or not it is being consumed consciously. Music serves as background noise, playing in restaurants, stores, and various other public settings, not to mention the reach it gains from being played on peoples' music devices and radios.

According to Marcuse, the "optimal goal" of modern consumer capitalist society is to replace false needs with true needs, thus negating the satisfaction derived from the false needs. Because the majority of the repressed adopt false needs as their own, the liberation of the repressed

is, paradoxically, the "liberation also from that which is tolerable and rewarding and comfortable" (7). To liberate an individual from repression means to separate that person from the false satisfaction that he has known all his life. Marcuse writes, "The people recognize themselves in their commodities … The very mechanism which ties the individual to society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced" (9). The commodities that they believe they own control people, making it easier to render members of society docile. Art, and more specifically, music, has become one of these commodities, being played over the radio, in public settings, and even in peoples' music devices, gives the illusion of ownership.

Marcuse also states, "the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole" (12). Regardless of economic standing or social class, people are placed on an even plane by the ideological structures of society. Economic standing may seem to differentiate people from one another, but they are in fact all parts of the same system. As these false needs

become more available to more people of varying economic levels, they become a way of life. Again, these false needs bring the promise of a good way of life, but this way of life "militates against qualitative change." As change is discouraged, "thus emerges a pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behavior* in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action and are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe" (12). This one-dimensional thought is "promoted by the makers of politics and their purveyors of mass information" (14).

Following the lines of thinking laid out by Adorno and Marcuse, we can argue that most music today has become a means of mass information (tied to patterns of consumption), rather than a form of art. It serves as a means to further impress false needs on society. In the essay quoted earlier in this chapter, Taylor mentions the Communications Act of 1996, which allowed multiple radio stations to be owned by one company, as a purveyor of the commodification of music. The radio industry has become a monopoly, "with the top four radio-station owners broadcasting to almost one-half of all listeners" (Taylor 408). These radio stations cut costs by streamlining and

standardizing playlists, resulting in less diverse music and artists being played. Taylor writes, "most musicians can thus no longer count on radio airplay to promote their work, and instead are turning to the advertising industry … to place their music into commercials, television programs, and films" (408). Music becomes associated with the false needs presented through advertising, and carries these false needs even outside of the context of advertising. By accepting these false needs as our own, one-dimensional thought causes all any opposing theories or thoughts to be rendered useless or meaningless. Rather than advancing thought, scientific and technical progress is used as "an instrument of domination" (Marcuse 16). Because technology is ingrained in music as part of its creation and production, it too can be used as a means of domination.

Defenders of the culture industry praise its use as an "ordering factor," providing human beings with guidance in an otherwise chaotic world. The orientation provided to the people by the culture industry seems to be enough to justify its continued existence. The ordering factor is not about gently orienting the masses, it has become about asserting the status quo, about conformity rather than consciousness. The concepts of order put forth by the

culture industry march on "unquestioned, unanalysed and undialectically presupposed." Adorno writes,

> …the categorical imperative of the culture industry no longer has anything in common with freedom. It proclaims: you shall conform, without instruction as to what; conform to that which exists anyway, and to that which everyone thinks anyway as a reflex of its power and omnipresence. (Adorno 104)

Again, the culture industry's defense is that it provides guidance and answers questions for the lost and puzzled masses, but because the culture industry does not concern itself with the consciousness of the masses, it cannot hope to help them. Instead the culture industry puts forth false conflicts for which it then provides apparent solutions. The culture industry's reach extends into non-conceptual areas of society, including "light musical entertainment." In this area, "one gets into a 'jam', into rhythmic problems, which can be instantly disentangled by the triumph of the basic beat" (105). Popular, or non-conceptual music is an easy area for the culture industry to take hold and use as an instrument of conformity and control.

It is important to note, of course, that Adorno's text was written with popular music of the 1930s in mind, and the culture industry has evolved along with music and other forms of popular culture since then. I would argue, though, that Adorno's thoughts on the culture industry's effect on popular music are still applicable today, especially as Adorno provides other insights that help us understand how to cultivate resistance to that domination. While most popular music has been co-opted by the culture industry, it is my view that there are some genres of music that are not commodified and still exist to make people aware of the culture industry's effect on music, art, and society as a whole. The commodification of music continues to focus people's attention on false needs, while also helping to mask the shallow nature that popular music has become. Many aspects of popular music remain the same today as they did decades ago, despite being produced by different musicians, sometimes years apart. Nevertheless, some genres of music, including conceptual progressive music, have attempted to bring attention to the commodified nature by alienating its audience. While music that has been co-opted by the culture industry is able to instill passivity in members of any economic class, conceptual

progressive rock music is able to bring attention not only to social issues of the time, but also the musicianship and skill behind the music itself.

In his book, *Listening to the Future: The Time of Progressive Rock*, Bill Martin traces progressive rock music from the late 1960s and highlights the fact that rock music represents a meld of different cultures' music. "Indeed, there was never a time when the social and the musical experimentation of rock music was not intertwined" (Martin 23). Race, class, and gender were presented as issues in the music, and helped to show the similarities between peoples' lives. Martin writes that originally, "one of the frightening things about the music from an establishment point of view, was that it had the potential to transcend racial barriers and prejudices by showing poor whites and poor Blacks that they had a great deal in common" (23). In its relatively early years, then, rock music began to productively alienate listeners, causing them to focus on the social structures of their time.

The music of the late 1960s, in particular, served as a direct contrast to the "sedate, post-war, 1950s 'era of good feeling'" (23). This revolution did not exist for long, though, as it was quickly overtaken by the mass media

emerging at the same time period. Electricity and amplification, key elements in most rock music, were also the elements that prepared the music for cooption. The core elements of rock music (without technology) offered hints of rebellion that were diminished or done away with altogether with the addition of electricity. While progressive rock music started as an opposing force to popular music of the 1950s, "in recent years it seems that rock music—and 'popular music' … more generally—has been increasingly absorbed into the Hollywood/Los Angeles entertainment machine" (24). Today, though, it is conceptual progressive music that pushes back most effectively against co-opted popular music, much like early progressive rock served as a contrast with the popular music of the 1950s.

Bill Martin quotes Edward Macan, who believed the base goal of progressive rock music was "to draw together rock, classical, jazz, folk, and avant-garde styles into a new metastyle that would supersede them all" (Martin 6). This goal makes it difficult to market this particular genre of music, helping to keep it separate from conventional popular music. Steven Wilson, the lead singer and writer for the progressive band Porcupine Tree, notes that the

only problem Porcupine Tree's record label, Lava, has with Porcupine Tree is the "eclecticism of the music. How do you market a band that one minute is playing metal, the next minute is playing trip-hop and the next minute is playing progressive rock?" When asked during a different interview to describe *Fear of a Blank Planet*, Wilson responded, "I'm really against categorizing Porcupine Tree's music. Categorizing the music will imprison it in a musical genre" (Wilson interview). Wilson's understanding of the relationship between his band's music and the culture industry as a whole is reflective of some broader features of conceptual progressive rock. Again, as Macan argues, "It is also possible to see in the 'uncommercial' nature of progressive rock a reminder of a time when the music industry was more tolerant of experimentation and individual expression, and less concerned with standardization and compartmentalization" (Martin 6). Progressive music continues to retain its uncommercial nature, and uses its position in the music world to bring attention to societal issues today, including the hold the culture industry has on popular music.

Improvisational music provided the origins for conceptual progressive music. Martin acknowledges that

there were certain common elements between the beginnings of progressive rock and "improvisational or compositional pathways." Progressive music took cues from different musical styles and used them both as a foundation and as a way to push the limits set forth by conventional songs. What Martin calls the "dance aspect" of rock music was also changed. Martin writes, "With most works of progressive rock, just as one gets into a steady dance groove … there is some sort of dramatic shift: starts and stops, difficult tempo changes, sections that do not have the sort of beat a dance step could hook onto, etc" (Martin 84). Martin also insists that this new rock music is "music for listening." Regardless of whether listeners or critics believe the new rock to be serious, or a work of art, or avant-garde, it is not meant to be simply background music.

Martin attributes the process by which mainstream rock music was absorbed by the culture industry to the time period in which it came to rise. According to Martin, "If a work of art has any significance (indeed, if *anything* has any significance), it must be in terms of some context (or set of contexts) and its relation to this context" (Martin 10). The appearance of progressive music can be seen in the late sixties as "many people were prepared by their

social experience to be open to experimental, visionary, and utopian music that was brilliantly crafted and performed" (2). He goes on to claim that because it is so "mediated by technology," that technology is a part of the art form itself. However, that same technology appears to be at the heart of the culture industry's co-opting of rock music. Martin again mentions Macan who believed sampling technology was one of the things that led to the co-opted nature of rock: "if a person can, by pushing a button (or a single key on a keyboard), activate a sample and thereby play a passage that even the most brilliant virtuoso could not play, this would seem to make a rather large dent in the attractions of virtuoso rock music" (26). This ability to recreate music using new technology helped to further commodify the music, and the reproduction of music aided the decline of rock music as a means of social commentary. What this history highlights, then, is the difficulties involved in theorizing and creating truly effective forms of revolutionary art in an effort to resist the effects of the culture industry. To further develop that point, we might turn again to the critical theory of Adorno, as well as his contemporaries, Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin.

In his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin claims, "that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. … The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition" (Benjamin 221). Reproduction represents our need to grasp the aura, or the distinctive social context or function, of a work of art. We are brought into such close proximity with an object through the mass reproduction of its likeness, that the work itself becomes more readily and object of exchange in the marketplace. Benjamin notes, of course, that, "In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men" (218). However, in the past, each work of art has historically been "imbedded in the fabric of tradition" (223). And the tradition prescribed to the work of art can easily be changed, for productive purposes. Benjamin uses the example of a statue of Venus, whose tradition changed depending on the time period. The aura of a work of art is tied to its "ritual function" (224). It is this tie to the ritual which gives the original work of art its aura and value. Reproductions of the work of art cause the loss of the aura by stripping the

art from its ritualistic function. Benjamin claims that even the most perfect reproduction lacks "its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (220). It exists as a reproduction rather than as an original work of art. A number of copies replace the unique existence of an object. Benjamin, of course, believed that the detachment of a work of art from its aura could be liberating for the masses, removing its ritualistic contexts and forcing the masses to view the art as it exists without any kind of tradition behind it. But his critical perspective was developed before the full development of the mass-produced culture industry that his contemporaries Adorno and Marcuse predicted and studied.

Despite Benjamin's thoughts on the removal of aura through reproduction, I would argue that art can exist with its aura and still be liberating to the masses. Indeed, as we will see, the preservation of "aura" is an essential strategy of resistance employed by many producers of conceptual progressive music. To understand this, we need to reflect a bit (with the help of Adorno and Brecht) on the technical differences between the music valued most by the culture industry and the music that challenges those values. There is technique in both the creation of truly

"resistant" art and the culture industry's mechanical reproduction. Adorno differentiates between the two, claiming the concept of technique is similar in name only. He writes,

> In [works of art], technique is concerned with the internal organization of the object itself, with its inner logic. In contrast, the technique of the culture industry is, from the beginning, one of distribution and mechanical reproduction, and therefore always remains external to its object. (Adorno 101)

Much like the commodified nature of the culture industry itself, the techniques used in mechanical reproduction are on the surface only; a shallow attempt at impressing false needs on the masses. By allowing society to obtain works of reproduced art, the aura is being removed, but so is the desire to view the art critically. The reproduction and wide distribution may make works of art more readily available to people, but there is no importance behind the art beyond its accessibility.

The mechanical reproduction of art also changes society's reaction to that art. Even Benjamin acknowledges that, "The progressive reaction is characterized by the

direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert. … The greater the decrease in the social significance of an art form, the sharper the distinction between criticism and enjoyment by the public" (Benjamin 234). Peoples' reaction to some forms of art are dictated or at least heavily influenced by popular opinion. Benjamin differentiates between a painting and a film, as reactions are more predetermined in terms of a film, because of its position of mass influence. Popular music is more akin to film than a painting, and we see it in its reach and in Martin's links between popular music and Hollywood. Adorno writes, "The sacrifice of individuality, which accommodates itself to the regularity of the successful, the doing of what everybody does, follows from the basic fact that in broad areas the same thing is offered to everybody by the standardized production of consumption goods" (Adorno 40). This broad reach and delivery of general consumables furthers the conformity of the masses by the culture industry.

Adorno particularly addresses the co-opting of mass-reproduced music by the culture industry in a manner that deserves a bit more explanation here, even though his specific focus is on the music of the 1930s. Popular

music, in his view, inevitably becomes another tool to aid in rendering consumers passive. Music now "seems to complement the reduction of people to silence, the dying out of speech as expression, the inability to communicate at all" (Adorno 30). Music has become noise in the background, rather than art to be listened to exclusively. Popular music can be played without the need to really listen to it; music just serves as a way to fill the silence. In bringing consumers to docility, music restricts their need to speak or think for themselves. Consumers "have learned to deny their attention to what they are hearing even while listening to it" (30). People no longer listen to music with a critical ear. Instead of listening to music objectively, it has become something that is not listened to at all. This background music causes the conversion of the listener, "along his line of least resistance, into the acquiescent purchaser" (32).

This issue with the background nature of popular music today does not stem entirely from the listener, obviously. Porcupine Tree's Steven Wilson believes the majority of creation and meaning in music primarily comes from the production of the music. In addition to being the singer/songwriter and guitarist for a conceptual

progressive band, Wilson is a renowned and sought-after producer. While the composition of a song has some bearing as to whether or not a song is considered "popular," the production and recording process play an integral part in the creation of an album or song. Wilson states, "When you have a song, you have to create a sound world for it and give it the best possible context. When it becomes the other way around, in which the song is secondary to the production and the process of recording itself, I think you lose a lot of your artistry" (Wilson interview). Wilson has also mentioned that there is a very distinct difference between being a musician and making records. Much of the culture industry's hold and influence comes in at the production level, where similarly-written songs are made to fit the sound of a popular song through the alteration of vocal and instrumental tones. There will always be people with some semblance of musical talent looking to make it as a professional musician, and producers can turn any of those people into a pop star through the use of production techniques.

Conceptual progressive music is usually hard to both categorize and consume. Because conceptual progressive music may contain elements of different genres of music as

well as a lack of repetition, it is nearly impossible to categorize this music in conventional, commercial ways. Bill Martin claims, "There always comes the moment when these categories do more harm than good, when they get in the way of creativity because they have become mere formulas" (Martin 55). Martin continues, citing Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, where Kant "argues that society cannot produce artists in the same way that it can produce scientists, because there is something in the work of the former that goes beyond education and training" (55). The co-option of popular music has turned the creation of this music into a mechanical, formulaic process. That is not to say that there is absolutely no creativity in popular music, but formulas exist for major genres of music that most works follow. Conceptual progressive music manages to avoid formulaic creations partially because it is hard to define and categorize. There are no preset formulas to follow.

Modern popular music does a good job of creating passive listeners, so a formula is repeated. A lot of popular music follows the same structural patterns or contains a rhyme scheme. Chords are predictable and their progressions are replicated in a number of popular songs.

The similarities in popular music (despite being from different artists) show how it has been co-opted by consumer capitalism. Popular music is able to create complacent consumers because each song is to some extent a mechanical reproduction. Multiple aspects of popular or hit songs are the same. "Works begin to take on the same role. … In America, Beethoven's Fourth Symphony is among the rarities. This selection reproduces itself in a fatal circle: the most familiar is the most successful and is therefore played again and again and made still more familiar" (Adorno 36). This replaying of a familiar song is a form of mechanical reproduction. A song becomes popular, so consumers want to hear it more. In an effort to evacuate the art's aura, the song is replayed again and again, causing existing aura to slip away, and furthering its transformation into a commodity, a "hit." In order to create an alternative form of music that challenges the passivity of the listener, however, that music must not adhere to popular guidelines or structures. The song's rhyme scheme, structure, and even performance and production play a role in differentiating music from the culture industry's offerings. Every effort must be taken to productively alienate the listener, forcing them to

actually listen to a song objectively. As Adorno would put it, "The new phase of the musical consciousness of the masses is defined by displeasure in pleasure" (33).

In this context, a useful framework that we can use to understand the revolutionary aesthetic of conceptual progressive music (and its goal of creating productively alienated listeners) can be found in the work of Bertolt Brecht. Brecht also recognized the commodified nature of forms of entertainment, mostly in the theater or operas. He utilized what he termed as "alienating-effects" in what he called "epic theatre" in an attempt to create an objective audience and combat the mindless acceptance of entertainment. Brecht refers to the culture industry in his piece, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," though he calls it "the apparatus." In a manner similar to what we have seen in Adorno, Brecht argues that the goal of the apparatus is to control society through the throttling of innovation. Brecht writes, "Society absorbs via the apparatus whatever it needs in order to reproduce itself. This means that an innovation will pass if it is calculated to rejuvenate existing society, but not if it is going to change it" (Brecht 34). Even artists, writers, musicians, and critics are unable to see the role they play in

furthering the apparatus's agenda, believing themselves to be in control of the apparatus when it is the other way around. By believing that the apparatus is something that is under control, artists simply support the apparatus, which lets them exist as a means of delivering messages about commodities. Rather than helping their output, the apparatus "has become an obstacle to output, and specifically to their own output as soon as it follows a new and original course which the apparatus finds awkward or opposed to its own aims. Their output then becomes a matter of delivering the goods" (34). Instead of judging how the apparatus can help the art, the art is judged on how suitable it is for the apparatus.

In order to resist the commodifying effects of "the apparatus," it is important work of revolutionary art to expose the reality of the apparatus, or culture industry. Conceptual progressive music, like Brecht's epic theater, aims to subvert the current nature of entertainment, which is at best a product of the culture industry. Brecht writes,

> ...at present the apparati do not work for the general good; the means of production do not belong to the producer; and as a result his work

> amounts to so much merchandise, and is governed by the normal laws of mercantile trade. Art is merchandise, only to be manufactured by the means of production (apparati). (Brecht 35)

As Brecht reminds us, operas, the theater, and music existed as art before they became merchandise. In an attempt to bring back the artistic nature of the theater, Brecht employed alienating-effects in the creation of his epic theatre. He mentions differences between conventional dramatic theatre and his epic theatre, most of which focus on removing the tendency toward passivity and emotional identification from the spectator and instead turning the spectator into a critical observer. While typical, commercial dramatic theatre "wears down his capacity for action" the epic theatre "arouses his capacity for action" (37). Rather than have the spectator lose him or herself in the passive consumption of something, the epic theatre forces the audience to face something, focusing on human beings while standing on the outside, studying the object being presented. Brecht's writings remind us that conceptual progressive artists must accomplish more than simply identifying the culture industry and its hold on popular media. Even just breaking out of the formula is

not enough to reach people who have grown accustomed to the culture industry and the sense of gratification it seemingly gives. In order for conceptual progressive music to make an impact on the masses, it must "alienate" the listener or audience in order to create an objective listener. By creating objective listeners, conceptual progressive bands are better able to reveal the true nature of the culture industry and popular music.

Ironically enough, the differences many listeners can experience in their encounters with progressive rock come, in part, from the very co-opted nature of conventional rock music, which largely defines the way people think about popular music. Martin defines music in two ways: "*either* music is fundamentally entertainment, *or* music is something capable (at its best) of speaking to the human spirit and the human condition" (Martin 10). In this distinction, we have two different listeners. The first are passive listeners, made so by the culture industry's effect on popular music. The second are active listeners, affected by the music as art. Martin defines these active listeners of progressive rock as people who "seem to *love* this music, seem to think that it is important, seem to feel that it speaks to them on the level of the soul and not just as

passing entertainment; there is a deep feeling that this music can be *engaged* with" (15). Martin goes on to emphasize that progressive music can still be entertaining, but it is most likely on a different level than what is considered "entertainment" or popular music. He reasons, "it is because progressive rock is not readily consumable in the terms of our giddy junk-food society that the rock music establishment has largely rejected it" (11). Progressive rock is music that can be both enjoyed and analyzed on a deeper level. Unlike popular music, the appreciation of progressive rock is not simply related to the enjoyment of the music, but listeners would also "be interested in moving beyond surface pleasures and more into the realm of what speaks to the possibilities of human flourishing" (16). This flourishing must also be cultivated, and Martin acknowledges that while music or art and life do not necessarily depict the same activity or feeling, they cannot be simply separated. Analysis of this type of music "must be understood, on reflection, to also entail a commitment to working those changes in the world that will enable this flourishing" (16). Because it is impossible to completely separate life from art, the art of

progressive rock must be woven and viewed within the context of life.

Intellectual ambition also creates a degree of separation between the popular music favored by the culture industry and the progressive rock that resists it. Martin writes, "there is a qualitatively heightened sense, in comparison with most other forms of rock, that *ideas* play an important role in the music, and the quality of the music depends in a significant way, on the quality of the ideas involved" (Martin 119). The main idea of a song (or an album in the case of conceptual progressive rock) helps shape the music. It is this commitment to integration of critical ideas into musical composition and production that is central to conceptual progressive music's ability to productively alienate its listeners. In single progressive songs, for example, a theme can be traced either through the lyrics or the composition. While progressive music characteristically contains multiple sections, different keys, and changing time signatures, it is all pulled together by a running theme. Conceptual progressive music goes even farther, containing ideas and themes that continue through an entire album. Early progressive rock music explored science fiction and medieval themes, which

is fitting for the progressive nature of the composition. King Crimson's *In the Court of the Crimson King*, released in 1969, introduces the listener to a setting both futuristic and medieval. The opening track, "21st Century Schizoid Man," begins the album on a hard and fast note, injecting jazz into the hard rock sound, the saxophone in the piece at times indistinguishable from the lead guitar. The track bleeds into the softer "I Talk to the Wind," and despite the two songs sounding like they belong in two different albums, they both deal with the same theme. In fact, "none of the works from *In the Court of the Crimson King* should be heard entirely in isolation from one another, as there is a thematic development and unity to both its music and lyrics" (Martin 158). Thematic elements are delivered through the composition of the music and the emphasis on instrumental parts. One song, "Epitaph," opens with a melody by guitarist Robert Fripp that "significantly foreshadows" a line from the later song "Starless" (159). All the songs on the album work together to deliver a cohesive musical experience rather than a decontextualized encounter with individual, and easily commodified "singles."

While the core themes and ideas of conceptual progressive music provide the clearest examples of differences between the genre and conventional popular music, attention to technology and other aspects of production can go even further to showcase the gap. For example, the format of the music also helps to differentiate progressive music from popular music. In more recent years, the popular format of music delivery has been through mp3s and CDs before that. However, progressive music is usually delivered in a format that encourages the engagement Martin claims it needs. Progressive music can be found on vinyl or DVDs mixed in 5.1 surround sound in an effort to completely engage the listener and encourage active listening. These formats create an experience for the listener, rather than just a flat recording that can simply be put in a CD player or an mp3 player. Also, in a gesture against extended mechanical reproduction, Porcupine Tree songwriter Steven Wilson releases limited edition albums. As a music collector, Wilson acknowledges,

> A lot of the acts I'm drawn to are very obscure and underground. Some of their releases are very limited and you almost get into this mentality

> like the art world, where if a painter creates a painting, it becomes a very unique, original piece and only one person can own it. There's an exclusive thing about that. There's something more precious to the collector about owning something so limited. … I love doing those limited things. Same thing with vinyl. I'm a big vinyl fan. And with vinyl, you have to make things limited because there isn't a big enough market not to. (Wilson interview)

Wilson's connection between the technical features of vinyl and the impulse toward "collecting" echo, in interesting ways, Walter Benjamin's celebration of the collector as one who resists the evacuation of aura from works of art or other objects. Wilson goes on to claim,

> I think of people like Zappa, Bjork, Neil Young and Aphex Twin, as these artists inspire obsessive collecting because there is no-one else who can give their fans the same experience. How many generic nu-metal, old-metal, R&B, trip hop, hip-hop, indie, progressive and techno artists can say the same thing? Fans of these kinds of artists can move on to a thousand others with an

almost identical sound and ideology in a second. (Wilson interview)

Conceptual progressive rock musicians may also resist cooption into the culture industry by refusing to adopt conventional commercial relationships with large music production and distribution conglomerates. One of the reasons Porcupine Tree has managed to stay popular in underground progressive circles has been because of Wilson's apprehension of picking a record label. Wilson believed that Porcupine Tree should be treated like a priority at whatever label they signed with, which kept them from signing with a major label until Lava Records for *In Absentia* (2002). Wilson also attributes major labels' interest in Porcupine Tree to the downloading method of listening to music, which caused record labels to "reconsider the short-term philosophy they'd pursued for the previous 20 years. In other words, you sign a band, have one big hit album and single and move on" (Wilson interview). Instead, Wilson admits that "[Lava is] not going to drop us because *In Absentia* didn't sell a million records. In other words, they recognize that we're an album band and not necessarily a singles band" (Wilson interview).

Carving out a distinctive, independent niche in the music marketplace is vital if conceptual progressive musicians are to realize their artistic aspirations. Porcupine Tree's songs are written and placed on the album because they enhance the album as a whole, rather than just appeal to the masses as standalone singles. Their albums maintain production and musical value throughout, giving the songs more significance as a part of the whole. This is very much in line with Adorno's views regarding the tendencies in commercial, popular music that must be challenged. Adorno specifically mentions this phenomenon of the separation of one part from its whole: "The minuet from Mozart's E Flat Major Symphony, played without the other movement, loses its symphonic cohesion and is turned by the performance into an artisan-type genre piece that has more to do with the 'Stephanie Gavotte' than with the sort of classicism it is supposed to advertise" (41). To take a part away from the whole changes that part's meaning, if it leaves any meaning at all. With the separation, the production or composition loses its context and its original impact. The continued existence of "light music" today comes from its success in creating a passive audience in part through these techniques of separation and

decontextualization. "The illusion of a social preference for light music as against serious is based on that passivity of the masses which makes the consumption of light music contradict the objective interest of those who consume it" (Adorno 34). If consumers do listen to "serious" music, it is only to solidify their social standing, not to really understand it. In this way, Adorno argues, classical music can also be corrupted by capitalism. With the listener's critical sensibility destroyed by the former, the differences between light music and classical music are no longer relevant: "They are only still manipulated for reasons of marketability. The hit song enthusiast must be reassured that his idols are not too elevated for him, just as the visitor to philharmonic concerts is confirmed in his status" (35).

To counter this effect, it is necessary to have music that alienates the audience in each genre of music. Because music is a product of the time, classical music can be seen with the same properties as popular music. Instead of actually listening to the music, the listener of classical music will simply use the music to show his social standing:

> One promptly goes into raptures at the well-announced sound of a Stradivarius or Amati, which only the ear of a specialist can tell from that of a good modern violin, forgetting in the process to listen to the composition and execution, from which there is still something to be had. (37)

The more modern techniques come out to try and progress a genre, the more people attempt to cling to techniques of the past. Hanging onto the past traditions is yet another way for a listener to demonstrate his class. Because he is so busy talking about the superior sound of older, famous violins, he misses the point of the song. At no point does he attempt to listen to the music objectively.

Of course, even seemingly rebellious music can be a part of the culture industry's co-option of music. Martin quotes Paul Piccone who calls these rebellious elements "false negativity" (27). These false negativities are actually necessary not only in the culture industry, but also to the capitalist society which it serves. Martin gives two reasons for their necessity:

> First, there has to be some form of entertainment for those who have some inkling that something

> might be wrong with the way things are. … Second, the system itself needs to allow some creativity at the margins, in order to regenerate itself—given that it mainly depends on dull, administrative apparatuses. (Martin 27-8)

The system allows for a little free space for new ideas, but keeps these new attempts under careful control. By allowing "rebellious music" to exist, the culture industry is able to both placate curious minds as well as possibly get new music to co-opt and market to the masses. In some cases this rebellious music becomes popular music, amassing a huge following. So another challenge facing those who aspire to create truly resistant music, then, is to avoid being transformed, themselves, into commodified caricatures of rebellion also designed to be marketed to consumers.

The co-option of music has also taken away responsibility from the artist. Rather than focus on composition or maintaining musical skill, the culture industry will often highlight virtuoso instrumental solos or the ornamented vocals of a song. Adorno writes,

> One need not even ask about capacity for musical performance. Even mechanical control of the instrument is no longer really expected. To

> legitimate the fame of its owner, a voice need only to be especially voluminous or especially high. (37)

Rather than focusing on the structure of the music or song as a whole, much popular music tends to draw attention to a section of a song, taking emphasis from the composition and placing it on one instrument for a few seconds. Since the same structures and general chord progressions are used in a myriad of popular songs, it eliminates the need for an artist to even attempt to alienate the listener, and it facilitates the process of reproduction and commodification. Music is reproduced, repackaged, and released back into society. Adorno claims that irrelevant consumption destroys some songs. He claims,

> Not merely do the few things played again and again wear out … but reification affects their internal structure. They are transformed into a conglomeration of irruptions which are impressed on the listeners by climax and repetition, while the organization of the whole makes no impression whatsoever. (40)

Simply highlighting small virtuoso portions of a song is not enough to classify it as good, especially if the

highlights take the emphasis off the rest of the composition. Through its celebration of shallow virtuosity, the culture industry gives consumers the illusion of critical judgment, without actually giving them any sort of real insight in the music they listen to. No matter which popular song a consumer decides to listen to, that song will help to make the listener docile. The large number of genres, each with its own number of artists ensures that consumers are only given the illusion of choice, and are never given music that challenges the authority of popular music. Again, this gives way to the commodification of music: "the consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the … concert" (Adorno 38). The consumer is not at the concert because of how much he likes the music, but rather because he paid for the ticket with money he earned.

Again, we should recall that Adorno suggests that in order to alienate listeners from the music, there must be a displeasure in pleasure. This displeasure forces the listener to actually pay attention to the music at hand. Because popular music is so similar and a form of reproduction, it is relatively easy to create music that creates a sort of displeasure. Anything that varies from

the normal structures and expectations of music and brings the art to the foreground can serve as a means of musical consciousness. In the classical genre, Schoenberg utilized atonality to create an alienating effect. In her essay "Schoenberg's Piano Concerto: an introduction," Mitsuko Uchida states that in traditional musical structures of tonality "musical tensions are generated and resolved by the relationship of different keys to a tonic, or 'home' key" (10). Schoenberg does away with the traditional tonal structures and instead plays each of the twelve notes in a chromatic scale only once. Another important structural decision made by Schoenberg was the repetition of a tone row in two separate songs. Uchida identifies, "the pitches of the first hexachord … of the concerto's row are identical to those of the second half of that of Op. 23, and vice versa" (11). However, while Uchida ventures a personal guess that Op. 23 was actually Schoenberg's "first attempt at a serial composition" (11), it seems more likely that his return to a twenty year old tone row was meant as another stylistic choice to alienate the audience from the music.

Interestingly, this repetition of tone rows (or riffs) carries on into more modern progressive music attempts

analogous alienation of the listener. To bring in a riff from an earlier song may elicit some recognition from the listener, but confusion at the same time. Usually riffs are repeated within a song, giving the audience a chance to learn the song and be subdued early on. To pull a riff from a different song forces the listener to consider where it was that the riff had appeared before, putting attention on the music and bringing it forth from the background. Conceptual progressive bands utilize these repetition techniques, in part due to the narrative nature of their albums. These repetition techniques differ from the repetitive nature of popular music in that they are used for a purpose rather than simply existing as a product of co-opted songwriting. They seek to give more weight to the narrative, connect albums and concepts with one another, and force the listener to pause and give thought to the reason behind the repetition.

I have briefly surveyed here a range of strategies that Brecht and Adorno outlined in their attempts to define some forms of aesthetic resistance to the debilitation effects of the culture industry. As I have tried to suggest here, these same strategies can be used in conceptual progressive music in order to subvert the co-

opted popular music that currently exists. Much like dramatic theatre, the culture industry has gotten society wrapped up in the false needs and gratification that the culture industry provides. The use of conceptual progressive music as a means to alert the masses to the presence and nature of the culture industry can work, as long as it takes steps to make objective listeners, an audience that studies the subject matter from the outside. The next chapter of this thesis will look in a closer and more analytical way at how this process can work.

CHAPTER TWO

A MOVEMENT TOWARDS MUSICAL ALIENATION

Conceptual progressive artists attempt to change the way music is received by the public, similar to Bertolt Brecht's desired effect on the audience through his "epic theater." The epic theater used alienating-effects in its productions in the hopes of creating an active audience. Brecht's goal was not to get the audience to empathize with the characters or the plot, but to distance themselves in order to better view the political and social implications of the narrative or concept. Conceptual progressive bands, such as Pink Floyd (which formed in the 1960s) or the more recent Porcupine Tree, also take steps to alienate the listener in an attempt to bring social issues to light. For example, the use of a central protagonist in a narrative, such as Pink in Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, is traditionally used to create a sense of identification between the audience and the character. The representation of Pink as an antihero, however, seeks to alienate the audience, rather than cause empathy for the character. Rather than be content with the passive listeners most popular music creates, conceptual progressive music uses

Brechtian alienating effects in recordings, live performances and other media to highlight the skill and composition of the music, as well as its social implications. The use alienating-effects helps to distinguish music as an art form, rather than just background noise; music should garner the same attention as a painting or play.

Brecht argued for a theater that alienated its audience from the play being performed. In doing so, the play revealed social aspects of other works of art or the time period itself. The focus of a play in the epic theater must be on the critical analysis of the narrative, on the way the play brings to light human interaction in society. In his piece, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," Brecht wrote, "'Theatre' consists in this: in making live representations of reported or invented happenings between human beings and doing so with a view to entertainment. … From the first it has been the theatre's business to entertain people, as it also has of all the other arts" (Brecht 180). For Brecht, however, the meaning of "entertainment" has changed in the passage from antiquity to modernity, which is more informed by the discourse of science. Today's audience needs to obtain an objective

view of the play and should be aware at all times that it is viewing a piece of art, and should not empathize with any of the characters. Brecht argued that in order "to transform himself from general passive acceptance to a corresponding state of suspicious inquiry he would need to develop that detached eye with which the great Galileo observed a swinging chandelier" (192). Rather than simply accept the chandelier, "he was amazed by this pendulum motion, as if he had not expected it and could not understand its occurring, and this enabled him to come on the rules by which it was governed" (192). In order to understand the aspects of society that a play focuses on in an analogous scientific manner, the audience must be alienated from the familiar; they need to see the familiar in an unfamiliar way if there is to be any hope of objectively viewing the play.

In order to create this alienated effect, the artist or performer must take certain steps to ensure the audience views the art with a "detached eye." Actors on stage must not be fully transformed into the character they are supposed to be portraying if there is any hope of keeping the audience from empathizing with the character. The use of empathy causes the audience to lose the ability to

analyze the character objectively. An actor in Brecht's epic theater must

> ...show the character, or rather he has to do more than just get into it; this does not mean that if he is playing passionate parts he must himself remain cold. It is only that his feelings must not at bottom be those of the character, so that the audience may not at bottom be those of the character either. The audience must have complete freedom here. (193-4)

In order to maintain this distance, actors should not ask themselves how they would act or react in a certain situation, but rather whether or not they've seen someone reacting to a particular situation. This allows the actor to piece together their performance in an analytical manner, instead of simply trying to relate to and become the character. Actors in the epic theater use what Brecht refers to as "Gestus" in order to relay their character's emotions without presenting them as the actor's own, while at the same time adding social meaning to the gesture. "Gestus" refers to the positioning of the actor in a stylized and obviously figural gesture or posture that demonstrates their emotion in a particular scene. Rather

than act as though feeling that emotion, actors may stand unmoving on stage, faces and bodies frozen in a way that conveys an emotion with social meaning behind it. Actions alone do not constitute Gestus. It is only when social meaning is put behind the action that it becomes Gestus. The character is used as a representation of part of society or a social issue. The use of Gestus causes a break in the narrative and forces the audience to view the emotion depicted in a critical manner. And Brecht's approach to dramatic structure further reinforces these effects. The story of a play in the epic theater tends to be presented episodically. Rather than a flowing plot, the narrative episodes "have to be knotted together in such a way that the knots are easily noticed" (201). If the audience can see the knotted narrative, it will remind them that they are viewing a play and are supposed to be analyzing it. The act of viewing a play should require participation from the audience in order to procure meaning from the performance.

Brecht used these alienating techniques in his play in order to keep the audience distanced from the main characters and more able to view the play and the social issues behind it objectively, without instilling any sort

of empathy. These alienating techniques can be seen in his play *Mother Courage and Her Children.* At the end of scene three, it is revealed that Mother Courage's son, Swiss Cheese, was killed over a stolen cash box. Believing that Mother Courage knows something about the cash box, a sergeant and two soldiers come back with her son's body, hoping that she will give some indication that she knew him. In some performances, Mother Courage looks at the audience and performs a silent scream after seeing the body of Swiss Cheese, in an example of Gestus. Rather than guess at Mother Courage's emotions, the audience is shown the impact of her son's death on her, but in a non-naturalistic manner that prevents simple identification. The audience is shown this dualism in attitude again later after her daughter, Kattrin, is killed. At the beginning of scene twelve, Mother Courage is seen singing a lullaby to the already dead Kattrin in an attempt to "lull her to sleep" (Brecht 92). However, on the next page, Mother Courage is seen paying a farmer to bury Kattrin, somewhat devoid of emotion. She pays the farmer, shakes hands with the couple who live on the farm, then wait as the farmer and his son carry Kattrin away. She immediately muses, "I hope I can pull the cart by myself. I think I can, there's

not much in it. Got to get back in business" (93). Stripping Mother Courage of identifiable emotion in this way is not meant to pit the audience against her, however, but rather to show the effects of war and to present a Marxist-flavored critique of the relationship between war and commerce.

The structure of *Mother Courage* is alienating as well, with scenes ranging in length. These scenes are all part of the same narrative, but seem to exist independent of each other. After Swiss Cheese's death in Scene Three, the next scene opens with Mother Courage talking to a clerk. There is no immediate mention of the prior scene's events. These scenes are also broken up with musical numbers, further distancing the audience from the events onstage. In his essay, "How Epic is Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theater?" Heinz Politzer quotes Brecht, saying, "each scene is to be 'an entity in itself,' moving in 'jerks' rather than in the 'evolutionary necessity by which one follows from the other" (Politzer 101). These scenes function much like the songs in a conceptual progressive album; they are made to stand independently, but all ultimately belong to the same album. That sense of unity, however, exists in a productive tension with the sense that individual units of

the work of art must stand out, analytically, in their own terms.

The conceptual progressive bands I have chosen to focus on, Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd, utilize Brechtian alienating techniques in some albums in efforts to expose the true nature of the culture industry by creating active, objective listeners. For Porcupine Tree, these albums include *In Absentia* (2002), *Fear of a Blank Planet* (2007), and *The Incident* (2009). The Pink Floyd albums I will be analyzing are *Wish You Were Here* (1975) and *The Wall* (1979). Conceptual progressive music specifically attempts to eschew the characteristics of co-opted popular music through different alienating-effects. Pink Floyd and Porcupine Tree both write music that relate to their respective time period's society, making it easy to see similarities and differences between the time periods. Pink Floyd's album *The Wall* (1979) addresses social disorders (depression, anxiety, loneliness, and paranoia), war, and the decline of music, with some attention paid to the passive audience. Porcupine Tree also deals with passivity in society brought on by technological advancements, the "need" to cure social disorders with pills that also encourage passivity, and the decline of

music as well. Both bands also utilize alienating effects in various facets of their music presentation to distance themselves from the audience, creating active listeners.

Differing slightly from the audience of the epic theater, listeners of conceptual progressive music are both individuals and a collective. In private, a listener may have the same relationship to music that a reader has to a text. At a live performance, the listener becomes part of the collective. In order for any social messages to be brought forth, both the private and public audiences must be addressed simultaneously, then. In focusing on this dually-conceived listener, both Pink Floyd and Porcupine Tree use alienating effects in live performances as well as in recordings. Because the experience of listening to an album as one listener is so personal, steps are taken to alienate the listener and reflect society's issues. When playing live for an audience, artists must not only alienate the audience aurally, but visually as well.

The Wall tells the story of Pink, a famous musician whose experiences during childhood caused him to wall off his emotions. Pink's father had died in a war (a figurative version of World War II), and as a result his mother became overbearing and protective of Pink. In

school, teachers attempted to stifle Pink's creativity, scoffing at the poems Pink scribbled during class. Later in life, after he became a rock star, the wall around his emotions grew, and he isolated himself from his wife, who eventually cheated on Pink and left him. These events lead him to build a "wall" in his mind, separating him from the rest of society. With the wall completed, Pink loses his humanity and empathy, as shown in his music, which becomes fascistic and driven by hate and misogyny. With no emotion to speak of, he begins to dictate who is able to listen to his music and calls people out of the crowd if deemed unworthy. It is eventually this severe lack of empathy that causes Pink to grasp at any sort of emotion possible, leading to the destruction of his wall. The concept ends with Pink forced to face the world without the protection of the wall, but the listener is not made privy to how that scenario plays out.

Pink Floyd's use of Gestus is best seen in the film version of *The Wall*. Pink is made out to be a tragically romantic character, someone who the audience is seemingly encouraged to empathize with. He goes through personal issues and appears to be the victim until he gets onstage. When he steps out on stage, however, he is dressed in a

black, white, and red uniform, reminiscent of a Nazi. A particularly powerful Gestus appears with from Pink standing over his audience, as a dictator would stand over his subjects. In this gesture he symbolizes musicians, their role in the machine of the music industry, and their influence over their fans. The juxtaposition of a helpless victim with images of a fascist dictator is similar to Brecht's portrayal of Mother Courage. Pink is not a "bad" character; indeed, in many respects he is not a fully-developed character at all. Instead, he is depicted, figurally, as a fascist dictator in an attempt to show the effects of the ruling strata. He has been conditioned to perform this way and believe that "the show must go on," no matter what the cost. The artistry of Pink Floyd involves getting the audience to respond to their music and film in a manner that involved analytical thought about this kind of conditioning.

Porcupine Tree tends to use Gestus during their live performances. While playing, videos and images will play on screens behind the band. During "Fear of a Blank Planet," videos play of teens taking pills and raising a gun at the screen. This action is played out by multiple teenagers, but edited together so the actions appear

smooth, even though their appearances change. In a sense, multiple actors are playing one role represent the inner feelings of despair and anger brought on by the apparent necessity to keep these kids sedated. The sequence of anonymous teens seems designed to ensure a lack of specific identification between the audience members and the images, however. The relationship, again, is critical.

As noted in the previous chapter, Adorno mentions that in order to alienate listeners from the music, there must be a displeasure in pleasure. This displeasure forces the listener to focus on the music in an analytical manner. Because popular music is so similar and a practice in reproduction, it is relatively easy for conceptual progressive musicians to create music that produces some sort of displeasure. Anything that varies from the normal structures and expectations of music and highlights the music as more than background noise can serve as a means of creating an alternative musical consciousness. For example, Schoenberg's repetition of tone rows (or riffs), mentioned earlier, carries on into more modern musical repetition that still attempts to alienate the listener. To bring in a riff from an earlier song may elicit some recognition from the listener, but confusion as well.

Usually riffs are repeated within a song, giving the audience a chance to learn the song and be subdued early on. To pull a riff from a different song forces the listener to consider where it was that the riff had appeared before, putting attention on the music. Even *Mother Courage* uses this repetition technique with the singing of "Song of the Great Souls of the Earth" by the cook in exchange for food in Scene Four. The song was partially taken from Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*. Both Pink Floyd and Porcupine Tree revisit riffs and draw on earlier material in their albums.

Each Porcupine Tree album showcases progressive structural techniques that alienate the listener and bring forth the social messages in the music, the necessity to hear the music, and the musical skill of each member of the band. Steven Wilson, Porcupine Tree's singer-songwriter, composes music that subverts popular music in style, skill, structure, and technique. In terms of technique, most of the songs are progressive in that they tend to be longer and keep the repetition of song parts to a minimum. Song length and content also vary from album to album, depending on the concept being addressed. *In Absentia* consists of fourteen songs, all of which are over four minutes long,

with a few songs extending past the seven-minute mark. *Fear of a Blank Planet* is comprised of only six songs ranging from five minutes ("My Ashes") to nearly eighteen minutes ("Anesthetize"). *The Incident* spans two discs, with fourteen songs on the first disc and only four on the second. *The Incident* is reminiscent of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* in that the fourteen songs on the first disc all transition smoothly into each other to progress the narrative. When details of the album were first released in June 2009, Porcupine Tree posted on their website:

> …the centre-piece is the title track, which takes up the whole of the first disc. The 55-minute work is described as "a slightly surreal song cycle about beginnings and endings and the sense that 'after this, things will never be the same again'." The self-produced album is completed by four standalone compositions that developed out of band writing sessions … Flicker, Bonnie the Cat, Black Dahlia, and Remember Me Lover feature on a separate EP length disc to stress their independence from the song cycle.—(Porcupine Tree, *News 6/12/2009*)

The songs on the second disc are separate (physically and conceptually) from the tracks on the first. The composition of the songs on both discs keeps them from becoming monotonous, utilizing different time signatures and keys within the same song in order to keep the song moving forward. Works of art are destroyed by "irrelevant consumption" (Adorno 40). The structure of Porcupine Tree's albums makes them harder to "consume" by the general public, while popular songs from the culture industry tend to stay in one time signature and key, resolve on a home chord, and need to keep songs short in order to keep the audience docile.

The chord progressions used in conceptual progressive music are also important in the subversion of popular music. For example, while popular songs tend to use similar chord progressions, Wilson gives these chord progressions a new use. In "The Blind House," (*The Incident*, 2009), Wilson uses major thirds, which are generally used to construct a happy, upbeat tone. However, Wilson uses them in a darker song, keeping the structure of the major third intact while simultaneously giving it a darker feeling through the use of a minor chord progression. Similarly, Pink Floyd's "Goodbye, Blue Sky,"

begins with major chords in the intro to the song, and then uses minor progressions to give the song a darker feel during the verses and choruses. The major chord progressions pick up again toward the end of the song.

In his essay, Brecht describes the way the narrative and its structure must be brought to the foreground of the audience's thoughts. Alienation and the presentation of the story do not simply fall on the shoulders of the actors. It is a collaborative effort: "The 'story' is set out, brought forward and shown by the theatre as a whole, by actors, stage designers, mask-makers, costumiers, composers, and choreographers. They unite their various arts for the joint operation, without of course sacrificing their independence in the process" (Brecht 202). Just as the delivery of a narrative is the result of the combined effort of an entire theatre group, the theme of a song relies on the ability of each person in the band to contribute to the overall message. Brecht claims,

> If art reflects life it does so with special mirrors. Art does not become unrealistic by changing the proportions but by changing them in such a way that if the audience took its representations as a practical guide to insights

> and impulses it would go astray in real life. It is of course essential that stylization should not remove the natural element but should heighten it. (204)

Revolutionary music, like art, should not be unrealistic, but it should, in some sense, "heighten" our apprehension of the real to produce critical consciousness. Porcupine Tree's Wilson also shares ideas similar to Brecht's, stating, "I'm not really a big fan of trying to send messages within music. I always feel like the music should be like a mirror to what's happening in the world at any given time, you hold it up and let people make up their own minds about what they see reflected back at them" (Wilson interview). For the process of 'making up their own minds' to take place, though, it is crucial for music to be taken in objectively in order for listeners to be able to decide for themselves what is being said about society. If there are messages telling listeners what they need to buy, or how to behave in order to be a good consumer, it makes it near impossible for the listener to actually see the social situations at the time.

Porcupine Tree's album, *The Incident*, revolves around the disconnect present between the media and a traumatic

event. Steven Wilson talked about how he came to his ideas for the album while stuck in a traffic jam due to a car crash:

> There was a sign saying 'POLICE - INCIDENT' and everyone was slowing down to rubberneck to see what had happened. … Afterwards, it struck me that 'incident' is a very detached word for something so destructive and traumatic for the people involved. (Wilson interview)

Wilson goes on to describe how the detachment appealed to him, leading him to look for other "incidents" in the media. Wilson wrote about "the evacuation of teenage girls from a religious cult in Texas, a family terrorizing its neighbors, a body found floating in a river by some people on a fishing trip, and more" (Wilson interview). The themes, by themselves, help to alienate the listener due to their incredibly dark nature and make the albums difficult for the general population to consume. But Wilson's decision to foreground the way that they are framed in our mass media dominated culture as "incidents" further encourages thoughtful engagement with that phenomenon on the part of the audience.

In a related manner, Porcupine Tree's *In Absentia* and *Fear of a Blank Planet* both address issues of technology, passivity, and a consumer-based society. The albums use lyrics and instrumental composition to bring the true nature of the culture industry to light. *In Absentia* was released in 2002 on Lava Records and marks the first of Porcupine Tree's albums to be released on a major record label. This album also contains the track "The Sound of Muzak" which rails against the ever-present slow death of music at the culture industry's hands. In order to drive this point home, the song is written using a popular formula and rhyme scheme. This format brings out the message of the lyrics, as Porcupine Tree uses the popular format as the background for a song against the culture industry. For this song, the formula is verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus. The rhyme scheme of the verses is ABCB, while the chorus has an internal rhyme in the first and third lines. The characteristic that sets this song apart from popular songs are the time signatures used. Most popular songs use 4/4 or 3/4 time signatures (four beats or three beats per measure), which are easy to count and tap along to. Time signature changes mid-song are rare in popular music, though they do occur. In "The Sound of

Muzak," the time signature of the verses is 7/4 time, which changes to 4/4 time in the choruses. The 7/4 time in the verse is subtle, so that a listener may not realize that it is not in a "popular" time signature until he or she attempts to count the beats in a measure.

The lyrics of "The Sound of Muzak" (*In Absentia*, 2002) give some insight to songwriter Steven Wilson's thoughts on the culture industry's hold on popular music. In the first verse, Wilson sings, "The music of the future / will not entertain / It's only meant to repress / and neutralize your brain" (Porcupine Tree). The prechorus also mentions Wilson's view of the state of modern popular music: "Soul gets squeezed out / Edges get blunt / Demographic / Gives what you want." Most popular music is created for the specific purpose of creating passive consumers, with little to no thought given to the music as art. The song juxtaposes a fairly straightforward popular formula with lyrics that bring attention to the co-opted nature of popular music. "The Sound of Muzak" creates objective listeners by using Brecht's technique of making the familiar feel unfamiliar. At first glance the format of the song, coupled with the rhyme scheme seems familiar to the listener who is used to popular music. Upon a closer

listen, the differences start becoming clearer. The time signature, time signature changes, and subversive lyrics all contribute to the productive alienation of the listener.

Much like the narrative of a play in the epic theater, conceptual progressive music also has "knotted" structures, making distinct sections of the same song easily identifiable. That is, one song may have multiple sections that may sound like different songs but are all part of a larger whole. The different sections of a progressive song also do not have to transition smoothly into one another. Porcupine Tree showcases these disjointed transitions in the song "Anesthetize" (*Fear of a Blank Planet*, 2007) and the conceptual *The Incident*. Anesthetize is comprised of three main movements with very little transition between the first and second portions, and no discernable transition between the second and third part of the song. Each of the three parts of the song has very distinct sounds and each contains their own unique elements. The first part of the song showcases Porcupine Tree's instrumentals, consisting of only two verses and two unusually short choruses. The rest of the part features the instruments coming together to highlight the

musicianship of each of the band members, rather than focusing on one person at a time. The composition of the piece is on display.

By keeping the first part of the song instrumental, it allows the piece to transition somewhat smoothly into the second part of the song, which follows a "popular" song structure in an attempt to bring out the importance of their lyrics. This portion is linked to the first in its confrontation of our mindless and unfeeling society at the hands of authoritative forces and consumerism. The first third of the song mentions, "The curse of there must be more," (Porcupine Tree) bringing attention to our consumption-based society and setting up a transition into the next part of the song. The popular structure of the second third of the song is juxtaposed with the content of the lyrics, again bringing attention to the detached aspect of society. In the second part alone, Porcupine Tree brings attention to our dependence on the media, the overmedication of people, and consumerism.

In the first verse, Wilson sings, "I'm watching TV / But I find it hard to stay conscious / I'm totally bored / But I can't switch off" (Porcupine Tree). There is a detached nature about our society and we feel more

connected and plugged into our TVs, portable music players, or video game systems. We have become more connected to our technology and media than with each other. On some level, people may have become bored with their technology, but it's become so ingrained in daily life that it is impossible to switch off. While the song only mentions TV, it seems impossible in today's society to ever be switched off or disconnected.

The chorus then addresses society's tendency to fix problems with medication, "Only apathy from the pills in me / It's all in me, all in you / Electricity from the pills in me / It's all in me, all in you / Only MTV and COD philosophy" (Porcupine Tree). The desire to medicate every problem leads to more disconnect between people. The connection that exists between people in Porcupine Tree's society stems from the medicine. The last line of the chorus draws attention back to the media and the role it plays in isolating people from one another. At the same time, these media create passive consumers and perpetuate the culture industry's hold on art.

The third verse addresses this consumerism: "We're lost in the mall / shuffling through the stores like zombies / Well what is the point? / What can money buy?"

(Porcupine Tree). Consumerism and irrelevant consumption are, according to Porcupine Tree, serious problems with today's society. People are no longer active members of society. They instead are fine spending their money on products they think they need because of what they've been told by popular media. The fairly straightforward message and use of popular terminology make the song's lyrics relatively easy to comprehend. Again, these lyrics come at a point in the song that follows somewhat of a popular song structure. Popular songs utilize this structure as a means of drawing in their listeners and pacifying them. The structure encourages memorization and the listener's desire to sing along with the song. Like "The Sound of Muzak," THOUGH, "Anesthetize" uses the traditional popular song structure to put forth messages about the effect of the culture industry on the masses.

Pink Floyd's lyrics and composition also serve to make objective listeners. Some songs will appear to be about love or heartache, echoing the lyrics and feel of popular songs. But these songs quickly turn to less conventional themes and lyrics. Because the protagonist is a conflicted, broken person, the vocals will occasionally reflect his pain. One song, "Don't Leave Me Now," begins

with Pink singing to his adulterous wife, pleading with her to stay: "Don't say it's the end of the road / Remember the flowers I sent. / I need you, babe" (Pink Floyd). This tone quickly vanishes though as Pink reveals that he needs his wife "To put through the shredder / In front of my friends" and asking "How could you go? / When you know how I need you / To beat to a pulp on a Saturday night." The vocals in this song are atonal, with Waters basically yelling them into the microphone, leaving in the cracks in his voice and lack of melody.

The song "Mother" also shows Pink Floyd's somewhat schizophrenic composition, taking the feeling of a lullaby from a mother to her son and turning it into something frightening. By taking the familiar and making it unfamiliar, the lyrics open themselves up to political and social interpretation by the listener. The narrative part of the song sees Pink looking for his mother's approval on a variety of subjects. When his mother starts singing to him, it starts off like a soft children's song and then immediately turns the listeners ideas about the type of song and the mother's role in her child's life: "Mamma's gonna make all of your nightmares come true. / Mamma's gonna put all of her fears into you. / Mamma's gonna keep

you right here under her wing. / She won't let you fly, but she might let you sing" (Pink Floyd). As long as Pink stays in line, his mother may allow him to sing, but only the music that helps to perpetuate the culture industry's hold on society. The lyrics subvert the mother and child relationship and give the listener cause to question the true meaning behind the song. Pink eventually becomes a rock star, but the wall he built up around himself using bricks provided by the authority figures in his life keeps him apathetic toward his fans. His fans are mindless, simply flocking to shows and taking in the music without really hearing it. Because Pink is a product of repression by authority figures, he is a part of the culture industry and creates music that represses the masses.

Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* (1975) also uses lyrics and song structure to alienate the listener. The album consists of six tracks, with the first and last being two halves of the same song. The split main track, "Shine On You Crazy Diamond," frames the album: Parts one through five open the album and runs thirteen and a half minutes. Parts six through nine of the song close the album and run twelve and a half minutes. Even though the track is split in two, there is no real distinction between the multiple

parts of each track. The first part of the song features spacey synthesizer sounds for nearly four minutes before introducing a bluesy guitar part. The first vocals don't come in until part four, which begins around nine minutes into the song. Part five features a time signature switch from 6/4 time to 12/8 time, seemingly speeding the band into double time. Despite this apparent speeding up of the tempo, the rhythm guitar remains unchanged in the background of the song.

The second song on the album, "Welcome to the Machine," aims to again point out the nature of the culture industry. The song is about a musician who has been signed by a record label and consequently joins the music industry, or the machine. The executives signing the musician open the song, "Welcome my son, welcome to the machine," with no attempt to hide the true face of the industry. At the point of the signing, it is already too late for the musician; he is already a part of the machine. The industry executives disclose their knowledge of the musician's journey, revealing that even his rebellious side was planned: "You bought a guitar to punish your ma / And you didn't like school, and you know you're nobody's fool." His life is a product of the machine he is about to become

part of. The executives also ask the musician about his aspirations, again answering their own question before the musician has a chance: "What did you dream? It's alright we told you what to dream. / You dreamed of a big star, he played a mean guitar." There is no need for the musician to answer the executives' question, because they already know what his dreams are; they instilled those dreams in him using music.

While the narrative, lyrics, composition, and instrumental tracks from both Pink Floyd and Porcupine Tree serve as alienating effects, both bands take further steps to create objective listeners and provide realistic art to the masses. The quality of Porcupine Tree's audio recordings serves as an alienating effect. A few of their albums are mixed in 5.1 surround sound and released on a DVD. DVD versions of the album provide a higher resolution recording of the music and Wilson admits that there are "really only a minority of people that can actually hear the difference or have a system that is capable of revealing the difference" (Wilson interview). However, the minimal number of listeners that can actually listen to the 5.1 mix did not deter Porcupine Tree from releasing that audio version. The DVD-Audio is

> a medium perfectly suited to Porcupine Tree's music, which has many layers to the production that stereo really cannot do justice to. For example, being able to position the multi-part harmony vocals and some of Richard Barbieri's electronic sounds and textures all around the listener means that the music really does open out in a three-dimensional way. (Wilson interview)

By releasing an album in this format, Porcupine Tree caters to a specific crowd, and does not need to sacrifice the quality of the recording for mass consumption. The DVD-Audio disc must be inserted into a DVD player, making for a less conventional way of experiencing the music. The DVD itself has no video content, with the screen only displaying the album artwork. Nothing is meant to distract the listener from the 5.1 mix.

Pink Floyd's releases for *The Wall* also went against what most popular music did at the time. Because the album was conceptual and had a central narrative, the story was one of the most important parts of the album. In addition to the album's release, the band followed with an unconventional "tour," and a movie release. The nature of

the narrative and the release of the movie allowed for Pink Floyd to reach an audience using two different media, with different approaches to each. Steps are taken to emphasize the importance of the narrative, using sound effects and dialogue to move from song to song. The first song of the album, "In the Flesh," uses the sound of a plane going down at the outro of the song, building up to what will supposedly be the sound of the plane crash and a resolving chord for the song. Instead, at the peak of the plane's dive, the next track starts. The listener is not given the payoff of a resolving chord, or even the plane's crash, but instead gets the sound of a child crying to begin "The Thin Ice."

On a performance level, both Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd use alienating-techniques in their live shows that echo Brecht's thoughts on what an epic theater performance should be. Pink Floyd's initial tour supporting *The Wall* had the album performed in its entirety, without other songs in the show. Depending on the tour, it is not unusual for Porcupine Tree to also play one of their albums completely, but they also play other songs from their discography, after the lead album is played through. By playing an album straight through, it eliminates the

element of surprise for the audience. If the audience knows what song is going to come next, they can prepare for it and be ready to objectively listen. In *Mother Courage*, Brecht ALSO used boards with plot points written on them in an effort to inform the audience of what was going to occur in the coming scene, eliminating the suspense and preparing them for certain events, allowing the audience to objectively view the scene without being distracted by surprise or suspense. Politzer also mentions Brecht's use of

> boards and streamers across the stage to indicate the time and place of the action, to give summaries of the action which is to follow (thus eliminating the "culinary element of suspense) [or] to contradict the action on stage (thus forcing the spectator to think for himself)… (Politzer 101)

Both Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd have played albums in their entirety, which reveals the track list and eliminates the element of surprise. The audience knows exactly what songs are coming, and they are able to better prepare. Porcupine Tree also uses their video feed to clue the audience in on the lyrics. During live performances of the

song "Halo," the lyrics are displayed quickly on screens before they are sung. The words "God is freedom, God is truth / God is power and God is proof / God is fashion, God is fame / God gives meaning, God gives pain" illuminate the screens, guiding the audience's attention and removing the unknown from the song.

In their live performances of *The Wall*, Pink Floyd would focus on the narrative, using props and sets during their set in order to show the progression of the story. One of the more elaborate setups of this show included the building of a literal wall, 30 feet high and 160 feet long, throughout the duration of the show. By the end of the show the band would be completely hidden from the audience's view, completing the disconnect between the artist and attendees. In a 1984 interview with Charlie Kendall, Nick Mason and David Gilmour both revealed aspects of the tour that separated itself from popular music and tours at the time. The initial "tour" for *The Wall* only consisted of eighteen shows spread out over three cities: Los Angeles, New York, and London. The production and cost of each show were the limiting factors of the tour. Moving away from the traditional concert experience, each showing of the wall was more like going to the theater for a

musical. Nick Mason talked about what made the show so complicated and different:

> There were a lot of light operators and stage operators and wall builders. Because of the amount of stuff that went up and down, floated across, did this, did that, there were a lot of operators, rather than just people putting stuff up. … It's not something other people will do, generally, because it's just so expensive to put on, it's simply not feasible. (Pink Floyd interview)

Mason also goes on to describe how the stage had to be specially designed and constructed in order to put up the wall during the show. Despite the fact that popular music today will have generous funding, being backed by the culture industry, there are still not a lot of artists who will set out to accomplish something like *The Wall*. Most popular artists will attempt to tour in as many cities as possible, in order to promote their album and make money. The ability to pick and choose which songs to purchase digitally as well as music pirating have helped bring the time of physically purchasing music to an end. Revenue is

made from touring and merchandise, with artists travelling to cities all over the country for months at a time.

Brecht claims that theaters have a "deplorable habit of letting the dominant actor, the star, 'come to the front' by getting all the other actors to work for him" (Brecht 197). Brecht instead suggests that the actors should swap roles with one another during rehearsal in order to better understand what each character needs. Rather than have a setup that puts the emphasis on one particular band member, both Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd change up what is considered to be the traditional positioning of band members onstage. During *The Wall* tour, David Gilmour's positioning during his guitar solo for "Comfortably Numb," forced the audience to find and focus on him. While Waters was singing, Gilmour would take his place at the top of the wall, in darkness, and wait for his solo. In the interview with Kendall, Gilmour stated,

> I'm in pitch darkness and no one knows I'm there yet. And Roger's down there and he finishes his line I start mine and the big back spots and everything go on and the audience, they're all looking straight ahead and down, and suddenly

there's all this light up there and they all sort of- their heads lift up… (Pink Floyd interview)

The Wall was all about accomplishing the unconventional. By having Gilmour on top of the wall during the show, it kept the audience's attention. They were not allowed to simply stare forward at the stage and accept what was going on, they had to refocus on Gilmour.

Porcupine Tree is made up of five musicians when playing live performances, and four on recordings. In popular music performances, the drummer is generally positioned in the center at the back of the stage; Porcupine Tree's drummer, Gavin Harrison, is set up in the back right corner of live shows. Drums, keyboards, bass, and one guitar make up the square that the band performs in, while Steven Wilson roams from band member to band member when not at the microphone. The positioning of the band members helps to take the focus off of any one, despite what they might be playing at the time.

Finally, Porcupine Tree blurs the lines between their recorded albums and live renditions. In recordings, much care is taken with the quality of the audio and how it is delivered to the listener. On stage, Porcupine Tree delivers the same quality audio, but adds more to the

performance in order to show their timing and instrumental skills. Videos play behind the band in perfect time, with Porcupine Tree beginning and ending perfectly. These videos range in content, from a pre-recorded music videos to the display of certain lyrics for songs to something as simple as a clay person marching in time with the beat of Harrison's bass drum. Since the band also eschews the normal touring schedule of popular acts, they pride themselves on providing near-perfect performances for their audiences. While other bands may just stand up and play, or rely on pyrotechnics, Porcupine Tree's visuals serve their audio. The videos put emphasis on the songs, which are made even more impressive through time signature and key changes. They also take some of the attention off of the band, which is somewhat unprecedented in live shows.

To achieve its goals, conceptual progressive music, like the epic theater, needs to be able to stand on its own and deliver a "realistic," but not naturalistic, view of society, including the culture industry and its effect on popular music and art. Conceptual progressive music is in the unique position of being able to reach the masses using popular techniques, while still providing realistic views of society. Music "can make its point in a number of ways

and with full independence, and can react in its own manner to the subjects dealt with" (Brecht 203). By using techniques outlined by Brecht for the epic theater, music can also create objective listeners. It is not enough to simply have an audience of objective listeners, however. Conceptual progressive music is poised to be the beginning of a musical revolution, revealing the truth about the production of popular music and the culture industry, at the least. Progressive bands are able to relay more truths, as seen by Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd's views on society. Both bands cover an array of themes in the few albums I outlined, tackling issues that they have with society and presenting them in a way that most people may not be accustomed with.

Conceptual progressive music does not lend itself to the instant gratification that others receive from popular music, but instead asks their audience to receive enjoyment from the experience of the music. The absence of resolving chords, the song length, composition, and content make conceptual progressive music difficult to consume. Because there are elements of popular music in a few songs, it makes the music a little easier to listen to, giving bands the opportunity to reach more people with their music.

They are at the edge of a musical revolution, at the beginning stages of revealing the culture industry while at the same time popularizing realistic music for the masses.

CHAPTER THREE

REALISM AND REVOLUTION

The use of alienating effects by conceptual progressive musicians seeks to create active listeners rather than passive consumers. As a result, unlike much of the popular music that is produced by the culture industry to pacify people and create unquestioning consumers, conceptual progressive music is positioned to be the start of an artistic revolution. Because of the culture industry's hold on popular art, revolutionary art is needed to break through the commodified art that exists today. While not every member of society can necessarily take part in creating revolutionary art, conceptual progressive musicians find themselves able to at least get this new form of art started.

In his work, *Literature and Revolution*, Leon Trotsky states, "It is untrue that revolutionary art can be created only by workers" (Trotsky 178). As Trotsky suggests, because co-opted art can affect people of different social and economic classes, people both inside and out of the culture industry can create revolutionary art contradictory to popular music. Whatever the originating point of

revolutionary art, however, it is up to members of society to make the necessary critical connections to fully attain the potential of that art, much like the audience at a conceptual progressive concert or at the epic theater. It is in its reception that the theoretical underpinnings of revolutionary art are realized. As Trotsky argues, "The Marxian method affords an opportunity to estimate the development of the new art, to trace all its sources, to help the most progressive tendencies by a critical illumination of the road, but it does not do more than that. Art must make its own way and by its own means" (179).

At the same time though, it is clear that revolutionary art cannot be produced without considerable effort and self-consciousness on the part of the artist. As was discussed in the previous chapter, in order for members of society to gain meaning and take part in artistic revolution, they must be productively alienated from the art. In order for artists to create works that produce this alienation, they need to be able to look at the culture industry from the outside, ignoring the provided false needs. Revolutionary artists, in this respect, play an analogous role to the political leadership

of classical Marxist theory. According to Trotsky, "The Party … protects the historic interests of the working class and must be more objective and wise" (180). In a similar way, in order to create revolutionary art, the artist needs to take the audience's interests into account and provide them with an objective view of the culture industry with the goal being to reveal the shallow nature of the art that exists in the culture industry.

Revolutionary art is not the endgame. It is the necessary step on the road to a free society, and it is difficult to achieve. Writing in the 1920s, Trotsky believed that we had yet to produce any revolutionary art, but that it could be coming. He writes,

> There is no revolutionary art as yet. There are elements of this art, there are hints and attempts at it, and, what is most important, there is the revolutionary man, who is forming the new generation in his own image and who is more and more in need of this art. (Trotsky 187-8)

Trotsky goes on to emphasize that revolutionary art is not the same as Socialist art, which would represent a kind of utopian endgame, but that Socialist art will rise from

revolutionary art. Revolutionary art serves as the transition period between the art of the culture industry and Socialist art. The art being created in the transition period also needs to alienate the audience from the art, thereby helping to show members of society the passive state that they have entered and how capitalism implants false needs that only capitalism can fulfill.

Other, classic works from the Marxist tradition shed additional light on the challenges involved in creating revolutionary music in the present context. In their work "Social Being and Social Consciousness," Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels state,

> The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men … Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men at this stage still appear as the direct efflux of their material behavior. (Marx & Engels 32)

Because men produce their own ideas within the context of larger economic structures, these ideas exist as a "definite development of their productive forces" (32). Marx and Engels believed that social being determines men's

consciousness, and not the other way around, in other words. In a society dominated by the culture industry, consciousness still rises from the materialistic social processes, though it may do so in more indirect ways than Marx and Engels suspected. Art continues to reflects man's determined consciousness, which is currently being held back by the materialistic nature of the culture industry. Marx and Engels write,

> …New, higher relations of production never appear before the old material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. (31)

Because of the complexities of the structure of the culture industry, it may well be that revolutionary change will not take place in the manner imagined by classical Marxist theory, however. In his text, *An Essay on Liberation*, Herbert Marcuse predicts the coming of a

revolution against our repressive society that puts forth false consciousness and false needs. In Marcuse's view it will not be just one class that we will see rising up and "replacing the proletariat as the revolutionary class" (Marcuse 51), but small groups of people rising up. Marcuse writes,

> What is happening is the formation of still relatively small and weakly organized (often disorganized) groups which, by virtue of their consciousness and their needs, function as potential catalysts of rebellion within the majorities to which, by their class origin, they belong. (51)

Conceptual progressive musicians and their fans may well be one form of these small, weakly organized groups that are being made aware of their surroundings and the extent of the materialistic hold of the authoritative class. The fans of conceptual progressive music realize the music's status as an underground entity, and also, presumably, understand the music's content, composition, and message. They may also be uniquely positioned to leverage new technologies to produce change. As previously mentioned, the use of technology in the creation of music has made it

easier for popular music to be co-opted by the culture industry. Marcuse believed that "Technocracy, no matter how 'pure,' sustains and streamlines the continuum of domination." At the same time, though, he argued, "this fatal link can be cut only by a revolution which makes technology and technique subservient to the needs and goals of free men" (56). Technology has been used in the creation of music for a long time, in the instrumental formation, production, and distribution of the music. It is impossible to completely separate technology from music, but entirely feasible to make the technology a way to produce revolutionary music with no ties to technocracy.

Trotsky believes that the Socialist Revolution will ultimately bring the end of classes, which will eliminate political struggles and lead to a world where "liberated passions will be channeled into technique, into construction, which also includes art. Art then will become more general, will mature, will become tempered, and will become the most perfect method of the progressive building of life in every field" (Trotsky 189). In such a context, revolutionary art, including music, will be relevant to society and not just background noise or simply entertainment. The competitive nature of the commercialist

society will not disappear after revolutionary art, but will become "sublimated," turning into a higher form of itself. Competition after the revolution will consist of the "struggle for one's opinion, for one's project, for one's taste" (189). With this sublimated and more fertile art comes a more enlightened man. And in this respect, one of the functions of revolutionary art is to show how human passions will persist and continue to function outside of the repressive structures of capitalist economics. The revolution against capitalism and the ruling class will be waged on multiple fronts, in other words, and art must be one of them, because art shows us how our humanity will not be compromised by the forces of revolution itself. Revolutionary art, in this respect, is an attempt to offer up a "realistic" depiction of what man can be when he is freed from economic oppression and the false consciousness in which he typically lives.

There are two definitions of artistic realism that are used by Marxists. The first focused on the idea that realism exposes the ideological structures of capitalist society. In his essay, "Marxism and Art in the Era of Stalin and Hitler," Eugene Lunn describes early theorists' definition of realism and focused partially on Georg

Lukács, who "defined realism as a literary mode in which the lives of individual characters were portrayed as part of a narrative which situated them within the entire historical dynamics of their society" (Lunn 12-13). Marxists like Brecht and Adorno, however, believed that "realist' art is, in fact, an unconventional, avant-garde art that formed new consciousness. Lunn quotes Brecht in his discussion of formalism, claiming it to be an attempt to "hold fast to conventional forms while the changing social environment makes ever new demands upon art" (14-15). Brecht's epic theater responded to these new demands on art, and

> Facilitated a sense of cathartic fulfillment within the audience and made political action appear unnecessary. By accentuating contradictions between everyday appearance and what is historically realizable, Brecht hoped to galvanize his audience into action outside the theater. (15)

Again, Brecht saw art as needed to be open to interpretation by the audience. Art needs to have its meaning realized by an objective audience, rather than one that identifies with any part of the narrative.

Conceptual progressive music is unique in that it addresses both of the preceding definitions of realist art. Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd offer music that both shows the structure of the culture industry (in the manner of classic realism), while at the same time creating avant-garde music that creates consciousness through alienating-effect. Avant-garde art allows for the creation of this consciousness due to its ability to both encourage objective observation on the part of its audience and to produce forward-looking thought about alternatives to the status quo. As mentioned in the previous chapter, conceptual progressive music needs to reach both the private listener and the public audience. It is no wonder, then, that it also addresses both forms of Marxist realism. Lunn states, "the focus of Lukács' attention was upon the broadly conceived, privately read and 'contemplative' novel form; for Brecht it was the public and potentially 'activating' drama" (15). Conceptual progressive music exists in both spheres: it can be heard privately or in the company of an audience. In order for the music to make a political statement, it needs to address both levels of listening, and to encourage multiple forms of critical thought.

When describing the way media is supposed to be prepared and presented to the masses in this culture industry, Brecht mentions, "The writer is supposed to write for a people without living among it" (Brecht 107). However, the gap between the writer or artist and society is diminishing as the discontent for unrealistic writing grows. Brecht acknowledges, "The people has clearly separated from its top layer; its oppressors and exploiters have parted company with it and become involved in a bloody war against it which can no longer be overlooked" (107). In an age where the "ruling strata" are using popular media to pacify the masses, the need for truth and realism in unconventional art forms becomes more apparent and urgent to some.

Brecht uses the term popular to describe "art for the broad masses of the people, for the many oppressed by the few, 'the people proper', the mass of producers that has so long been the object of politics and now has to become its subject" (108). The "popular" art that exists today, in contrast, succeeds in repressing the masses, but from Brecht's point of view the term "popular" simply means intelligible to the masses, "taking over their own forms of expression and enriching them" (108). The concept of the

"popular" can still be taken back and used for the good of the masses, but to do so it is necessary to create art that is accessible by the majority people while still advancing revolutionary beliefs and viewpoints, and providing the people with the realism that is desperately needed. Brecht's idea of what is popular "refers to the people who are not only fully involved in the process of development but are actually taking it over, forcing it, deciding it. We have in mind a people that is making history and altering the world and itself" (108). The art that will redefine what we believe to be popular must come from people willing to change our current definition of the term. The oppressed mass of people fighting to change the conception of popular must be willing to rise against the few that have taken over art, production, and society.

When referring to "realism," Brecht mentions that we must not "ascribe realism to a particular historical form of novel belonging to a particular period" (109). Realism moves beyond that "sensuous" writing that can be experienced with the senses. Realism needs to cover a broad spectrum and still be political, "free from aesthetic restrictions and independent of convention" (109). This avant-garde definition of realism, the art the masses are

waiting for, fits conceptual progressive music. Because conceptual progressive music is so difficult to define and fit into a particular category, it is not constrained by aesthetics and the very nature of the music defies convention already. Brecht further defines realism as "showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the dominators / writing from the standpoint of the class which has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting human society" (109). Through the use of Brechtian alienating effects, conceptual progressive musicians create active, objective listeners who are able to hear the messages revealing the culture industry and its intentions. Brecht mentions that realism is not simply a question of form, but of substance, and because conceptual progressive music is not constrained by a category or genre, and does not have any real rules to follow, it is free to relay political and social issues to the masses.

Brecht claimed that theater was meant to provide a representation of men's lives in a specific time period. In 1947, at the time "A Short Organum for the Theatre" was written, Brecht believed men to be fascinated with using technology to transform and further understand nature. The more man understood nature, the more we interfered.

Science allowed for the "vast alteration and all-important alterability of our surroundings" (184). This shaped how Brecht presented mankind in his epic theater.

> There is a great deal to man, we say; so a great deal can be made out of him. He does not have to stay the way he is now, nor does he have to be seen only as he is now, but also as he might become. We must not start with him; we must start on him. This means, however, that I must not simply set myself in his place, but must set myself facing him, to represent us all. (193)

Instead of aligning himself with mankind as he lives in the present, Brecht set out to objectively "face" man, allowing Brecht to see the different nuances of society. The end product of alienating the audience does not begin with the actor, but with the writer. Only once the writer is able to take a step back and consider the aspects of society that are up for analysis are actors able to begin thinking about how to portray their character. While conventional art today, including popular music, dampens consciousness, Brecht believed that realist and avant-garde art remakes consciousness.

Trotsky also noted the role of realism in revolutionary art. Trotsky writes, "At various periods, and by various methods, realism gave expression to the feelings and needs of different social groups" (Trotsky 192). Different realistic school still had things in common with one another. These schools had a "definite and important feeling for the world. It consists in a feeling for life as it is, in an artistic acceptance of reality, and not in a shrinking from it, in an active interest in the concrete stability and mobility of life" (192). Revolutionary art must then be realistic. But in order to create this new art, artists cannot cling to the old mysticism and romanticism that makes up popular art. Trotsky's definition of realism aligns itself more with a philosophical view of life, and less with the "traditional arsenal of literary schools" (193). It needs to be used in an effort to provide the masses with a truthful view of society and the culture industry.

Realist art must exist on its own, and be always evolving to reflect life's issues at the time. The popular and the realistic "must not be deduced from existing realist works and existing popular works" (112). By eschewing old realist and popular works, new works can

evolve on their own, with popular art becoming art arising from the people, rather than art meant to repress them. Realist work cannot be measured against other works that have already been deemed as realist. Brecht writes, "In each individual case the picture given of life must be compared, not with another picture, but with the actual life portrayed" (112). Popular works have a similar definition according to Brecht: "The intelligibility of a work of literature is not ensured exclusively by its being written in exactly the same way as other works which people have understood" (112). In order to begin an artistic revolution there must be a balance between the realism and the popular. The concept of the "popular" needs to be redefined from its current standing and needs to come from and be understood by the people, rather than media used by the ruling strata to control the masses.

In his essay, "On Realism," Engels writes a letter to Margaret Harkness regarding her work *City Girl*, critiquing its approach to realism. Engels defines realism as not only providing truth of detail, but also "the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances" (Engels 39). Engels admitted that while Harkness' characters are realistic, the circumstances in

which they find themselves are not. The problem came with the working class's passivity when it came to helping itself. The disposition of the working class was not relevant to the working class at the time during which the novel was set. Engels then goes on to describe Balzac's *La Comédie humaine* and the efforts Balzac took to make it a realistic work. Engels identified the nobles as the class with which Balzac most sympathized, and still Balzac "was compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices … he *saw* the necessity of the downfall of his favourite nobles, and described them as people deserving no better fate" (40-1). In order to put forth this realistic art, the artist must isolate himself from the sympathies he might feel towards a particular character or class. This isolation allows the reader to see exactly why the characters are feeling as they do and to reflect critically on how they would actually act. Artists must not be so attached to a character or group of characters that their view of class struggle becomes clouded and incorrectly depicted.

Brecht claims that this realism must be distributed to the masses in some form that is easily consumable, at least

in the beginning of a revolutionary period, and because of this,

> The words *Popularity* and *Realism* therefore are natural companions. It is in the interest of the people, the broad working masses, that literature should give them truthful representations of life; and truthful representations of life are in fact only of use to the broad working masses, the people; so that they have to be suggestive and intelligible to them, i.e. popular. (Brecht 107)

Society, held under control by the ruling strata and culture industry, needs realistic forms of accessible, popular art that combat the top layer of society. Since popular music today is produced by the culture industry, it may take time for the music to evolve into the realistic art that the masses need. This new art also needs to provide the people with an accurate representation of the culture industry and how it controls people using false needs and senses of gratification.

Understood in the critical context I have been setting up here, we can see that Pink Floyd and Porcupine Tree provide "realistic" (in both senses) views of society and the culture industry because they provide revolutionary

representations of people and situations. *The Wall* is told from the perspective of the protagonist, Pink, a famous rock star. The point of view itself already alienates the audience from the music, as not many people are going to be able to relate to Pink's status. However, like Engels's analysis of the downfall of Balzac's noble class, Roger Waters does nothing to glorify Pink's situation. Instead, Pink is someone to be viewed from the outside, not sympathized with. Roger Waters based Pink's character off of Waters' own life and experiences as a rock star, as someone caught up in the economic machinery of the culture industry. But focusing on the negative aspects of being a rock star productively alienated the audience from Pink and the narrative. *The Wall* showed Pink's life as being one of destruction, brought on by oppression by the authority figures in his life. It also showed how the musicians are encouraged to see and relate to the audience in the context of artistic commodification. *The Wall* depicts the audience as being mindless, listening passively to Pink's music, while he stands above them and determines whom he perceives to be worthy to listen to his music. But the fact that this realistic view of the culture industry and popular music's effect on the listener IS shown through the eyes of

the musician, rather than the record label, encourages the viewer to develop a more critical consciousness of the overall situation.

Porcupine Tree also provides realistic examples from the viewpoint of the working class. Their music is written from the point of view of an enlightened member of society. It does not look down from above, but instead points out shortcomings in society that can be seen by any member of society if viewed from a distance. In order to gain that distance, alienating effects are used in the composition of the music to distance the listener from the music. The subversion of the popular song format in "The Sound of Muzak," for example, is subtle enough that it may be missed during the first listen, but becomes apparent when trying to count the beats. The popular rhyme scheme also brings attention to the lyrics. As a band, Porcupine Tree provides realistic views of many different social issues including overmedication, dependence on media and technology, the culture industry's presence in music, and the detachment between many members of society. Some of the more striking lyrics, discussed last chapter, read, "We're lost in the mall / Shuffling through the stores like zombies" (Porcupine Tree) and goes on to talk about the

inability of money being able to actually buy real gratification. Even when following the culture industry's directions and being passive consumers, people are detached. The false sense of satisfaction felt when going through the mall does not unite members of society in solidarity, but shuts them off, making them these walking dead. It also isolates people from one another, putting importance on the purchasing of commodities rather than interacting with other people. Porcupine Tree's lyrics are "realistic" in that they don't glorify any social class. They unflinchingly show the nature of a society that has been completely dominated by the culture industry, and they encourage listeners to strive to change that society. At the other end, they also show the record labels' role in the co-option of popular music by the culture industry.

The culture industry makes up a ruling stratum, hindering the development of individuals through the use of order, impressing conformity on the majority of people. Adorno writes, "The total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment, in which … enlightenment, that is the progressive technical domination of nature, becomes mass deception and is turned into a means for fettering consciousness" (Adorno 106). In order to effectively

combat the conformity put forth by the culture industry, individuals who recognize and are willing to do away with the false satisfaction need to step forward and present reality to the masses in a way that they can understand and be willing to accept. The culture industry

> …impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. These, however, would be the precondition for a democratic society which needs adults who have come of age in order to sustain itself and develop. (106)

These enlightened individuals should be able to inform others still under the hold of the culture industry of the nature of their realities. Adorno mentioned that the consciousness of consumers in the culture industry may be split, recognizing that there is something not quite right about the satisfaction they receive from the culture industry, but also believing that their lives would be unbearable without the fleeting gratification they currently receive.

Bertolt Brecht attempted to challenge the nature of other operas at the time with his work, *Mahagonny*. He recognizes that it may have just been the beginning of

something larger, but it did start to go after the system that had taken control of the theater. Brecht acknowledges that one of the functions of *Mahagonny* was to change society, attacking the society that still needs "culinary operas," or experiences that envelope the spectator. *Mahagonny* "still perches happily on the old bough, perhaps, but at least it has started (out of absent-mindedness or bad conscience) to saw it through" (Brecht 41). It is not enough for the epic theater to simply build off of what has been established as popular. Brecht wrote that real innovations attack the roots, and in order to begin an artistic revolution, whether in the theater or in music, a new form of each must rise from the people.

Trotsky believed that when discussing revolutionary art, there were two different kinds of "artistic phenomena": "the works whose themes reflect the Revolution, and the works that are not connected with the Revolution in theme, but are thoroughly imbued with it, and are colored by the new consciousness arising out of the Revolution" (Trotsky 187). Conceptual progressive music currently tends to reflect the Revolution in theme, suggesting that we are still in the early stages of a process of change. The music is currently being used to bring attention to the

culture industry and the effect it has on the masses. By injecting the truthful nature of conceptual progressive music into society, the hope is that more people will see the culture industry's reach into every aspect of society, and more importantly, people will be moved to not simply accept the false gratification pushed upon them by popular music.

Both Pink Floyd and Porcupine Tree have taken some initial steps to enlighten the masses with their music. Pink Floyd's popularity at the release of *The Wall* put them in the position to reach more people with an album that was *far from* the normal "popular" album. The conceptual progressive album was taken by the masses, Pink Floyd's message was delivered in both album and film formats. Porcupine Tree's use of popular formats in some of their progressive songs makes those songs easier to consume, while still delivering messages about the culture industry and other problems with society that we are content to ignore as long as we are receiving some sort of gratification from the culture industry.

The fact that Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd utilize some popular traits in their songs has to do with the evolution of their music from the popular music surrounding

society today, but it also is suggestive of the close relationship between revolutionary art and the "popular." When discussing form, Trotsky believed that it developed in accordance with its own laws. His thoughts on the evolution of literary schools can be applied to other art forms. Trotsky claimed that each new literary school "is the result of a preceding development, of the craftsmanship of word and color already in existence, and only pulls away from the shores of what has been attained in order to conquer the elements anew" (Trotsky 191). In order for conceptual progressive music to evolve while still reaching the masses, aspects of popular music are incorporated in some conceptual progressive composition. As music continues to evolve, the current popular format may become scarcer, and "popular" music may become more avant-garde.

It is not just the musical composition that needs to use elements of old music, but the artist "will need all the methods and processes evolved in the past, as well as a few supplementary ones, in order to grasp the new life" (193). Both Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd do a good job of using old techniques as a way of furthering their own conceptual progressive music. Pink Floyd's popularity at the release of *The Wall* allowed them to reach a greater

number of people with the album and it's realistic portrayal of the government, as well as music and the culture industry's hold on it. Because Porcupine Tree is less known, their music can afford to be less metaphorical and instead uses realistic lyrics without attempting to hide the song's meaning. However, Porcupine Tree uses and subverts the format of the popular song, giving familiar territory an unfamiliar feel. Both bands attempt to reach the general public, recognizing the ways they can accomplish this by using the means available to them. They both approach the act of revealing the culture industry in different ways, apparent not only in the differences lyrically and compositionally, but also in the way the music is performed. As conceptual progressive bands, they are able to avoid being placed into a more traditional genre, but listeners of each will have a hard time saying they belong in the same music category.

Once again, though, it is not enough for revolutionary art to simply point out the realities of society. Trotsky believed, "Social construction and psychophysical self-education will become two aspects of one and the same process" (Trotsky 207) and all art forms, including literature, music, and drama, would give form to this

process. Following the Revolution, "Man will become immeasurably stronger, wiser, and subtler; his body will become more harmonized, his movements more rhythmic, his voice more musical" (207). In revealing and casting off the culture industry, mankind is able to achieve greater goals and versions of him. Free from the hold of the culture industry and a ruling strata,

> Man will make it his purpose to master his own feelings, to raise his instincts to the heights of consciousness, to make them transparent, to extend the wires of his will into hidden recesses, and thereby to raise himself to a new plane, to create a higher social biologic type, or, if you please, a superman. (207)

Early revolutionary art will have to show the culture industry for what it is and the effect it has on the current commercial-based society. Following initial revolutionary art, man's artistic struggles will not be against the culture industry, but against themselves. The struggle to realize one's taste or opinion will lead to this enlightened man and produce not only more realist art, but also listeners who are invested in the production and the art as something with more than just aesthetic value.

Marx and Engels write, "It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness" (Marx & Engels 32). We are not supposed to begin with man's conceptions and ideas in order to arrive at the man himself. Instead, we must begin with man's life, his interactions, his social standing, and the status of the society around him. Ideas do not belong to the enlightened man inside the culture industry. Marx and Engels also note,

> The phantoms formed in the brains of men are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology as well as the forms of consciousness corresponding to these, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. (32)

Revolutionary art is the way to gain back the independence of ideologies and produce art free from the confines of the culture industry. Following an artistic revolution, people will be free to produce ideas and art that are not intrinsically dependent on the materialistic nature of the culture industry. Instead, art will be a free man's own

production, with no attempt to create consumers. It will be independent and able to evoke its own emotions and opinions.

The goal of conceptual progressive music is to provide "realistic" representations (in both senses) of society to the masses. As it gains more ground and more of a following, the notion of what is considered popular will change, opening the door for independent music and a revolution against those who co-opted it for so long. The revolution started by conceptual progressive music is not just a musical revolution, but a social one as well. It is not simply taking back music, or even art. Music has been a staple in the pacification of the masses by the authoritative class; to start a revolution against any kind of music is to also bring attention to the forces behind its current nature.

Conceptual progressive music currently exists within the culture industry because the musicians who make it are a product of the culture industry. Materialism is intertwined with their consciousness, their ideas, and their existence. However, conceptual progressive music strives to make individuals aware of the nature of the culture industry and the extent to which it runs our

society. Porcupine Tree and Pink Floyd use the current popular music model to reach an audience who has been pacified by the culture industry. Both bands provide realistic views of society and the ruling strata's involvement in most popular music, using Brechtian alienating-effects in order to create objective listeners. Being the beginning part of a musical revolution, these bands must provide a realistic view of society and utilize the methodology from modern popular music as a way to bring in a new genre of music and composition. Eventually the old methods and formulas should fall away leaving new music. The culture industry currently has holds in multiple genres of popular music. Because musical taste is so subjective, a myriad of genres will still exist following a musical revolution. Again, the competitive nature will then be directed towards one's opinions, tastes, and projects, rather than the need for instant gratification through the culture industry. By breaking the hold of the culture industry, people are free to create enlightened forms of art. Music will no longer be a tool to pacify listeners and create consumers. New genres of music will emerge, while existing genres will evolve or fall off altogether. Rather than propagate an agenda,

music following a revolution will see musical ability flourish and creativity reign.

REFERENCES CITED

Adorno, Theodor. *The Culture Industry*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Anesthetize. Dir. Lasse Hoile. Perf. Porcupine Tree. Kscope, 2010. DVD.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre*. Trans. and ed. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.

---. *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Trans. Michael Hofmann. London: Methuen Drama, 2006.

Cusic, Don. "The Popular Culture Economy." *Journal of Popular Culture* 35.3 (2001): 1.

Lunn, Eugene. "Marxism and the Art in the Era of Stalin and Hitler: A Comparison of Brecht and Lukács." *New German Critique* 3 (1974): 12.

Marcuse, Herbert. *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

---. *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.

Martin, Bill. *Listening to the Future: The time of progressive rock, 1968-1978*. Chicago: Open Court, 1998.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. "Social Being and Social Consciousness." *Marxist Literary Theory*. Ed. Terry Eagleton and Drew Milne. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996.

Pink Floyd. Interview. *The Source*. N.p., 1984. Web. 4 May 2012.

---. *The Wall*. Colombia Records, 1979. Music album.

---. *Wish You Were Here*. Columbia/CBS, 1975. Music album.

Pink Floyd: The Wall. Dir. Alan Parker. MGM/UA, 1982. DVD.

Politzer, Heinz. "How Epic is Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theater?" *Modern Language Quarterly* 23.2 (1962): 99.

Porcupine Tree. *Fear of a Blank Planet*. Atlantic Records, 2007. Music album.

---. *In Absentia*. Lava Records, 2002. Music album.

---. *The Incident*. Roadrunner/Victor, 2009. Music album.

"Porcupine Tree - News." *Porcupine Tree - Official Website*. N.p., 12 June 2009. Web. 20 April 2012.

Taylor, Timothy D. "Advertising and the Conquest of Culture." *Social Semiotics* 19.4 (2009): 405-425.

Trotsky, Leon. *Literature and Revolution*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1957.

Uchida, Mitsuko. "Schoenberg's Piano Concerto: an introduction." *Schoenberg: Piano Concerto.* Phillips, 2001. CD insert.

Wilson, Steven. Interview. *Alternative-Zine.com.* N.p., 26 June 2007. Web. 20 Apr. 2012.

---. Interview. *Innerviews.* N.p., 2004. Web. 20 Apr. 2012.

---. Interview. *Progressive Rock Music Forum.* N.p., Apr. 2007. Web. 20 Apr. 2012.

---. Interview. *Roadrunner Records.* N.p., 12 July 2011. Web. 20 Apr. 2012.