

THEODOR ADORNO'S THEORY OF LISTENER REGRESSION

by

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DEDICATION PAGE

To Babs.

And a distant second (but still second) in a far narrower (but still inspiring) way, to Rose Rosengard Subotnik, for writing:

...I wanted thinking about music to intersect not just occasionally but constantly with the most exciting issues available to the mind: defining the good in life (moral philosophy and social theory) and in art (criticism and aesthetic theory).

“Afterword...” (see Bibliography): 281.

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ABSTRACT

Theodor Adorno's theory of listener regression describes the process by which music industry forces transform listeners from independent social creatures into passive, compliant consumers of musical product. Listener regression is the basis of the broader theory of culture industry consumer regression which Adorno later developed, by which the culture industry creates and reinforces the passive compliance of consumers of all cultural products. By further extension, it is my theory that listener regression is the key to understanding how the phenomenon of culture industry dominance over its consumers applies to the whole range of non-cultural as well as cultural consumer products.

In the second chapter of this paper I discuss how listeners of music industry output are made to regress: through the standardization of musical form, the repetition which flows from standardization and the attention to musical detail which has no formal function. I consider those childhood traits which constitute listener regression. Freud's theory of regression is discussed and distinguished. It is important to filter out the negativity which infuses much of Adorno's writing on listener regression. That negativity arises arguably either from Adorno's own acute musical perception which exceeds the average listener's or from the era of growing totalitarianism in which he formed his views. That negativity unnecessarily clouds the significance of the relationship between the music industry and average listeners, between the larger culture industry and its consumers, and between the exponentially larger consumer industry and all consumers generally.

Country music as the epitome of the kind of "popular music" which Adorno argues results in the regression of its listeners is the topic of the third chapter. I conclude that country music does meet Adorno's criteria for listener regressive music. I also conclude that within the confines Adorno finds so soul-depriving is amazingly creative music and musicality which responds to some of humankind's most basic needs.

In the last chapter, I discuss music as a fundamental component of human society which responds to some deep social need. By showing us how one segment of the consumer industry has turned that need to its commercial benefit, Adorno's theory can help show parallels with those profit-motivated forces within other segments of our consumer society, for instance with the manipulation of the basic need for sustenance by the fast-food industry. The paper concludes with a number of observations about the manipulative nature of the powerful commercial pressure put on us as consumers, and offers a suggestion or two for dealing with that pressure.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

I would love to hate Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno; or if that is too strong, I would love to despise his arrogant, elitist theories about the music industry. The idea that someone who goes to the beach like this:



¹From Google Images http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_ldfxsjd94Y1qca433o1_400.jpg (accessed March 14, 2014). There is a copy of this photo on a blog I can no longer find, under which was this comment: “When reading Stefan Muller-Doohm’s biography *Adorno: A Biography*, I came across this picture.” I could access only parts of that book on Google Books, but I did see the list of illustrations which described Plate 19 as “Adorno at the beach at Riigen”. And from Lorenz Jäger, *Adorno, A Political Biography*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Yale University Press, 2004), 80: “He spent the summer of 1933 on the island of Riigen...”, so Adorno would have been a month or two shy of his 30th birthday in this photograph.

could possibly have useful insights into the workings of today's society at the level of the most common consumer is close to unfathomable. His writing style is so dense that, although his use of pronouns is accurate, identifying the correct antecedent usually seems like the hunt for Red October. From his ivory tower he has no trouble calling people who listen to popular music "infantile", "retarded" and "neurotically stupid".

I would love to, but I can't. I can't because I find that if you have the persistence to work through Adorno's complex grammatical structures with the Oxford English Dictionary by your side, and if you discount his provocative name-calling as some kind of hyper-enthusiasm for his subject, you will find a relevant and to me brilliant analysis of listening to popular music and a revelation as to the consequences and implications of that listening.

I am a victim of listener regression. I like to think I am not as hopeless a human being as Adorno describes the musically regressed, but without a huge effort (and sometimes not even then) I can't hear or appreciate the overall structure of any musical piece longer than five minutes. At the opera I pretty much perk up just for the good bits. With a few exceptions which do give me some hope, I only enjoy the little differences which distinguish one piece of popular or indeed any other music from another: the melodic hook, the surprising harmonic modulation, the catchy beat. I don't relate those arresting elements to the overall form of the piece, and according to Adorno, these serious shortcomings derive from my exposure to the products of the music industry. I have regressed, he would say, to the point that my musical taste is simple and can most easily be catered to by listening to the same thing with small variations over and over. A short attention span, and a desire for repetition, comfortable harmonies, security and

conformity, these are the telltale signs of the musically regressed. The music industry can predict what I want to hear because it has been influential in forming my preferences in the first place. It becomes a more efficient producer of musical goods and I, along with others with an inclination to spend money on music, become more acquiescent and more predictable consumers.

In this paper I first describe Adorno's theory of listener regression, the traits in which this regression consists and the compositional characteristics used by the music industry to induce it. I next apply Adorno's descriptions of those characteristics to country music, by analyzing 100 of the most popular songs of the last decade and make a number of suggestions as to the matching of country music songs with the music Adorno described as 'popular music'. The last part of the paper considers whether the theory of listener regression can be expanded to other segments of today's consumer society, in particular to the fast food industry, and concludes with suggestions for recognizing and dealing with some of the deeply embedded basic tenets of our consumer society.

It amazes me that Theodor Adorno recognized in early radio and the recordings of the 1930s the commercial power of a music industry still in its infancy. And it amazes me that his theories of the consumer industry vibrate with relevance today in spite of technological developments which have transformed both commerce and the arts. In my view, however, the currency of his views must be qualified in one respect. He grew up and formed many of his life-long theories in a time of growing, unchecked totalitarian governments and the rise of commerce through entities with growing, unregulated power. His attitude toward authority is, accordingly, an "us versus them" attitude: a struggle between clearly demarcated united oppressors and divided oppressed. This division

permitted Adorno to take black-and-white moral positions which may not sit well with today's arguably more democratic governments and more fragmented and accountable businesses², and which may, it is suggested, prompt a reading of his work with the rhetoric dialled down. With this sole qualification, I echo David Clarke's remark:

In the era of late capitalism, where the commodity has taken an ever deeper hold over our minds and bodies and permeated every crevice of cultural activity, Adorno's critical project becomes all the more pertinent.³

² Similarly, Richard Middleton criticizes Adorno's notion of an all-powerful consumer industry, which he says "...is not of a monolithic bloc, but of a constantly mutating organism made up of elements which are symbiotic and mutually contradictory *at the same time*" Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Philadelphia and Buckingham, U.K.: Open University Press, 1990), 38.

³ David Clarke, "Alongside Adorno," *The Musical Times* 144, no. 1883 (Summer 2003): 59.

CHAPTER 2

Listener Regression Dissected

Theodor Adorno's theory of listener regression is set out most comprehensively in the second part of his 1938 essay "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening".⁴ 1938 was a significant year for Adorno. In February, he emigrated to New York City, following the lead of several members of the Frankfurt School who had left Nazi Germany years before. New York's Tin Pan Alley then still had an iron grip on the production and distribution of popular sheet music and recordings in America⁵, affording Adorno a first-hand exposure to the subject matter of one of his most significant theories.

He joined the Institute for Social Research, which in 1934 had relocated from Frankfurt and become associated with Columbia University. "On the Fetish Character in Music" was written and published in German in volume VII of the Institute's journal: *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. Adorno had already by then written bits here and there about popular music as a standardized commodity and about its listeners as consumers, but in this essay he gives his first comprehensive and intense look at the new role of music in the 20th century and its effect on listeners rapidly being transformed from citizens into consumers.

In the first part of the essay Adorno describes how the music industry transforms music into a tradeable commodity, and how the function and essence of commoditized, "fetishized" music is constitutionally different from serious, unfetishized music:

⁴ Theodor Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein, trans. Anson Rabinbach, Wes Blomster, Thomas Levin, Gordon Finlayson, Nicholas Walker, and Peter Dews (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2001), 29-60.

⁵ Oxford Music Online, s.v. "Tin Pan Alley."
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e6799> (accessed March 2, 2014).

The works which are the basis of the fetishization and become the cultural goods experience constitutional changes as a result. They become vulgarized. Irrelevant consumption destroys them. ... 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.⁶

Max Paddison describes this change in the function of music as “the triumph of exchange value over use value.”⁷

To lessen commercial risk, the musical product is standardized, so that one commercially successful hit is followed by another just like it:

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.⁸

Adorno describes in this first part and in other writings those elements of the commercial product (most commonly the recorded popular song) which become standardized. They include the song’s duration, its overall structure broken into melodic sections of fixed length, a fixed melodic range, and common harmonic progressions, tensions and resolutions.⁹ The effect of this standardization is that through over-exposure the standardized form becomes transparent to the listener:

The forms of hit songs are so strictly formalized, down to the number of beats and the exact duration, that no specific form appears in any particular piece.¹⁰

⁶ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 40.

⁷ Max Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 26.

⁸ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 40. See also Adorno, “On Popular Music,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan Gillespie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 443: “As one particular song scored a great success, hundreds of others sprang up imitating the successful one.”

⁹ These elements are described in greater detail in Chapter 3 below.

¹⁰ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 49.

A parallel phenomenon might be a strong but steady smell which becomes undetectable by those exposed over time to it. Like the ever-present odor which disappears through exposure, the listener cannot perceive the structural elements of the popular song which are made undetectable through standardization and repetition, and is thus reduced to a form of “deconcentrated” listening:

...deconcentrated listening makes the perception of a whole impossible. All that is realized is what the spotlight falls on – striking melodic intervals, unsettling modulations, intentional or unintentional mistakes, or whatever condenses itself into a formula by an especially intimate merging of melody and text.¹¹

To Adorno, the true value of a work of art comes from an appreciation of the work’s overall structure and the transcendent relationship between the work’s smaller compositional units and its whole structure. As seen from the above quote, deconcentrated listening prevents an appreciation of that overall structure. All that is left to the listener of music industry product is some fleeting measure of enjoyment of the little details, and it must be said that to Theodor Adorno, “enjoyment” is not a worthy societal objective:

The isolated moments of enjoyment prove incompatible with the immanent constitution of the work of art, and whatever in the work goes beyond them to an essential perception is sacrificed to them. They are not bad in themselves but in their diversionary function.¹²

And finally, the heart of the issue and the ultimate goal of the music industry:

The delight in the moment and the gay facade become an excuse for absolving the listener from the thought of the whole, whose claim is comprised in proper listening. The listener is converted, along his line of least resistance, into the acquiescent purchaser.¹³

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 32. Adorno also says, at p. 33: “All ‘light’ and pleasant art has become illusory and mendacious”.

¹³ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 32.

As Paddison writes: “[Through regression], the individual becomes better ‘adapted’ to the status quo, to the ‘rationality’ of an irrational society.”¹⁴ Listener regression, then, is the phenomenon by which listeners are adapted and converted into acquiescent purchasers. Adorno devotes the second part of his essay to an explanation of this phenomenon, which he describes as the “counterpart” to the fetishism of music.¹⁵

Adorno first sets out to define the concept of listener regression. He states in the opening paragraph of this second part of the essay that listener regression “does not mean a relapse of the individual into an earlier phase of his own development. ... Rather, it is contemporary listening which has regressed, arrested at the infantile stage”.¹⁶ This means, by way of illustration, that fetishized music does not make listeners actually suck their thumbs; rather it induces a kind of infantilized listening which is the music perception parallel to thumb sucking. By this limitation, then, it is only the listener’s listening abilities and habits, and not the listener’s entire psychological make-up, which regress on exposure to music industry product. This limitation must have been important to Adorno, as he gives it prominence in his very first paragraph on the topic of listener regression in the second part of this essay. He also saw fit to give it further explanation in 1966 in response to some intervening critical comment:

Thirty years ago, when I introduced the concept of regressive listening, I did not mean, as Herr Wiora accused me of meaning, in the face of my explicit assertions to the contrary, a general step backward in listening, but the listening of regressed, obsessively socially adjusted individuals, whose ego formation has failed, and who do not understand works of art autonomously, but rather in collective identification. The regression of listening does not mean that it has regressed in comparison with a previously higher standard. Rather, the overall relationship between adequate listeners and inadequate listeners shifted in favour of the latter.

¹⁴ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics*, 130.

¹⁵ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

The individuals who today collectively dominate musical consciousness are regressive in the socio-psychological sense.¹⁷

With “ego formation” and “collective identification”, Adorno introduces Freudian language into his concept of listener regression.

As to the notion of “ego formation”, Sigmund Freud describes regression as a defense mechanism of the “rational” side of the brain, the ego, against the instinctual, libidinal urges of the id: “The enforcing of regression constitutes the ego’s first success in its struggle of defense against the demands of the libido.”¹⁸ Freud’s regression is a defense of the ego and constitutes a regression of the instinctual impulses of one stage of sexual development to an earlier one.¹⁹ He uses the example of agoraphobia:

The sufferer of agoraphobia imposes a restriction upon his ego in order to escape an instinctual danger. The instinctual danger in question is the temptation to yield to his erotic desires; and to yield to them would be to reincarnate once again, as in childhood, the spectre of the danger of castration or of an analogous danger. ...

[Accordingly, the ego] takes steps to deprive the situation of its danger. This additional measure is usually a regression to childhood Thus the agoraphobic may go on the street provided that, like a small child, he is accompanied by a person in whom he has full confidence.²⁰

Adorno’s concept of regression is fundamentally different from Freud’s. It is not a defence manufactured by the brain to deal with a neurosis or other internal mental disorder; instead it is a condition induced by the external societal product of the music industry to affect listener behaviour, and ultimately to turn the listener into an acquiescent

¹⁷ Adorno, “Difficulties In Understanding New Music,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan Gillespie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 672.

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Problems of Anxiety*, trans. Henry A. Bunker (New York: The Psychoanalytic Press and W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1936), 46-47.

¹⁹ Freud, 111.

²⁰ Freud, 63-64.

purchaser. Adorno, who might fairly be characterized as an “ego over all” ultra-rationalist, may have seen in regressed listeners a malformation of the rational side of their brains (their egos) which has many similarities to Freud’s concept, but in his less psychoanalytical point of view referred to the failure of “ego formation” more in a socio-psychological sense - more as the failure to retain independent musical judgment in the face of music industry pressure to comply and conform - than in the strictly personal sense Freud originally clearly intended.

“Collective identification” is a concept Freud used to describe a certain type of crowd mentality, a social concept from the onset, not a personal, psychoanalytical one. Considering the term in the essay “Freudian Theory and The Pattern of Fascist Propaganda,”²¹ Adorno wrote:

The mechanism which transforms libido into the bond between leader and followers, and between the followers themselves, is that of *identification*. A great part of Freud’s book [*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*] is devoted to its analysis.²²

And further, in discussing the idealization of leaders by their followers:

This pattern of identification through idealization, the caricature of true conscious solidarity, is, however, a collective one. It is effective in vast numbers of people with similar characterological dispositions and libidinal leanings.²³

Adorno is known more as a sociologist than a psychologist, and it is therefore not surprising that his ideas conform with Freud’s more when Freud is concerned with the

²¹ Adorno, “Freudian Theory and The Pattern of Fascist Propaganda,” in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture in The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein, trans. Anson Rabinbach, Wes Blomster, Thomas Levin, Gordon Finlayson, Nicholas Walker, and Peter Dews (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2001), 132-157.

²² Adorno, “Freudian Theory,” 139.

²³ Adorno, “Freudian Theory,” 140-141.

sociological issue of crowd mentality and less when Freud is concerned with psychoanalytical issues of individual mental health.

Accordingly, when Adorno writes that the majority of current listeners are regressive in the “socio-psychological” sense, he is saying that they do not understand music independently and rationally, that they listen in a way that has been socially adjusted by the music industry to seek sensual enjoyment (libido) rather than rational understanding (ego). They have become de-humanized, easily influenced, childish members of the target club of the music industry. And despite some close parallels in language and partial similarities, Adorno’s regression is a more sociologically and less individually oriented concept than Freud’s.

Returning to the Fetish Character of Music essay, Adorno proceeds to flesh out the concept of listener regression. He seems to backtrack a bit from his express limitation that listener regression applies only to the listeners’ reception of music and not to the listener’s whole being:

Regressive, too, is the role which contemporary mass music plays in the psychological household of its victims. They are not merely turned away from more important music, but they are confirmed in their neurotic stupidity, quite irrespective of how their musical capacities are related to the specific musical culture of earlier social stages.²⁴

Further on, he states: “Regressive listeners behave like children”.²⁵ And several pages after that: “Regressive listening is always ready to degenerate into rage.”²⁶ The substance of this last assertion is questionable in either the limited (regressed listening) or the

²⁴ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 47.

²⁵ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 51.

²⁶ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 56.

broader (regressed human) context²⁷, but it is particularly difficult to apply the powerful emotion of rage to a set of listening parameters and easier to apply to the whole psyche of an individual. Care must accordingly be taken in drawing conclusions about the extent of the application of regression in Adorno's theory. While he does express prominently the limitation that it is the listening habits and patterns which regress, not the individual listener's whole mental being, he is occasionally willing to soften that limitation and expand the application of listener regression to the whole person.

There is one other point to consider before examining the traits of childhood which Adorno sees as returning to adults through listener regression, and that is that Adorno is quick to make a comprehensive and negative value judgment about listeners who are subject to listener regression:

They are not childlike, as might be expected on the basis of an interpretation of the new type of listener in terms of the introduction to musical life of groups previously unacquainted with music. But they are childish; their primitivism is not that of the undeveloped, but that of the forcibly retarded.²⁸

Listeners of commercially produced music thus do not regress to that natural state of undeveloped, open wonder associated with children, as expressed in the adjective "childlike". To the contrary, their listening (or to some extent, the listeners themselves) becomes childish. Childish behaviour is behaviour usually considered unsuitable for adults, and for Adorno, the chief difference may well be that whereas a person in a childlike state has the potential for growth and development, the growth potential of a childish person has been forcibly stifled. Retardation caused by the operation and effect of the music industry, then, would produce a listener with childish (i.e. limited) music

²⁷ See discussion at page 18 below.

²⁸ Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music," 46-47.

appreciation potential. As will be considered in greater depth below, it is the reality of consumer regression to neither a childlike (positive) nor a childish (negative) state, but perhaps to a more judgmentally neutral “child” state, that is the crucial and valuable part of Adorno’s theory. The moralizing judgment characterizing the regression in a harshly negative light is less valuable in understanding the effects of listening to the product of the music industry.

To turn now to the actual effects on listeners wrought by listener regression, the most prevalent child trait acquired by regressed listeners is a short attention span. This indeed is at the heart of Adorno’s theory. The forms of commercial music are standardized and become undetectable, forcing the listener’s attention on the smaller details of the music, and, worse, preventing any consideration of the structure of the whole piece. This is “atomistic”, or “deconcentrated” listening:

Deconcentration is the perceptual activity which prepares the way for the forgetting and sudden recognition of mass music. If the standardized products, hopelessly like one another except for conspicuous bits such as hit lines, do not permit concentrated listening without becoming unbearable to the listeners, the latter are in any case no longer capable of concentrated listening. They cannot stand the strain of concentrated listening and surrender themselves resignedly to what befalls them, with which they can come to terms only if they do not listen to it too closely.²⁹

To paraphrase the quote set out earlier³⁰, the regressive listener can and does pay attention only to what the spotlight falls on: striking melodic intervals, unsettling modulations, etc. Adorno extends this list of spotlighted musical elements to instrumental “acrobatics” and “colours”.³¹ These elements comprise the vocabulary of a sort of limited musical children’s language which “consists exclusively of fragments and

²⁹ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 49.

³⁰ Reference footnote 11.

³¹ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 49.

distortions of the artistic language of music”.³² This shortening of the musical attention span is enhanced by popular orchestration’s emphasis on instrumental colour, often with the clarinet, piano or trumpet taking the lead in succeeding choruses of a popular song. As Adorno says: “The practice of arrangement ... destroys the multilevel unity of the whole work and brings forward only isolated popular passages”.³³ So, short spans of attention directed towards irrelevant details of harmony, melody, rhythm and timbre, combined with the inability to appreciate the larger musical form, make up the first enforced trait of the regressed listener. As a corollary to the limitation of the shortened attention span, and to the extent that there is in listening to music an expectation of gratification, it follows that regressed listeners will expect instant gratification. A progression to the sub-dominant or dominant in a popular song or indeed any fetishized music triggers in the regressed listener an expectation of a more or less instant resolution to the tonic. A regressed listener would have a hard time (Adorno would likely say it would be impossible) appreciating the resolution of the “Tristan chord” – introduced in the second measure of the opera and left unresolved by Wagner until the last measures of Isolde’s “Liebestod” in the closing moments of its final act.

A second child trait arising from regressed listening is the desire for, and indeed the stubborn insistence on, maintaining the musical status quo through repetition, resistance to change and the desire to conform:

There is actually a neurotic mechanism of stupidity in [regressed] listening, too; the arrogantly ignorant rejection of everything unfamiliar is its sure sign. Regressive listeners behave like children. Again and again and with stubborn malice, they demand the one dish they have once been served.³⁴

³² Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 51.

³³ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 41.

³⁴ Ibid. Note that the analogy to food is pursued in Chapter 4 below.

And:

It cannot be said that interest in the isolated colour or the isolated sonority awakens a new taste for new colours and new sonorities. Rather, the atomistic listeners are the first to denounce such sonorities as 'intellectual' or absolutely dissonant. The charms which they approve must be of an approved type.³⁵

Further explanation of this trait comes from his essay (with George Simpson) "On Popular Music":

Genuine and pseudo-nursery rhymes are combined with purposeful alterations of the lyrics of original nursery rhymes in order to make them commercial hits.

The music, as well as the lyrics, tends to affect such a children's language. Some of its principal characteristics are: unabating repetition of some particular musical formula comparable to the attitude of a child incessantly uttering the same demand....³⁶

And finally:

This is how dilettantes behave, when, amid great movements of complex [musical] architecture, they pick out melodies that they think are beautiful, or that really are beautiful, for example secondary themes in Schubert, and, instead of following and further developing them, call, in an infantile manner, for their stultifying repetition.³⁷

There may be two reasons why children seek repetition, for instance when they want to hear the same story read over and over and over.

One is that children learn by repetition. With respect to the role of repetition in learning, psychologist James Byrnes has written: "With the exception of so-called 'flashbulb memories, in which traumatic events are seemingly seared into one's memory in a single episode, the storage of all other experiences normally requires multiple

³⁵ Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music," 50.

³⁶ Adorno, "On Popular Music," 450.

³⁷ Adorno, "Little Heresy," in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan Gillespie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 318.

exposures.”³⁸ Children have not yet built up a bank of cause and effect data of any extent, so logically progressing from one thought to another based on experience is difficult. Repetition helps build up the bank of information from which children can begin to reason. Repetition as an aid in learning is surely not the symptom of listener regression contemplated by Theodor Adorno. As is evident in the quotes above, the repetition associated with listener regression derives from the arrogant and ignorant rejection of everything unfamiliar, practically the complete opposite of repetition to learn.

Repetition’s other motivation is comfort. In their new world in which so much is confusing, children take refuge in repetition. A parent reading “Goodnight Moon” three or four times at bedtime can be a reassuring comfort. Children’s demands for rereading are frequently accompanied by stubborn malice. Repetition for the sake of comfort, security and refuge may well be the “stultifying” repetition of the regressed dilettantes. Listeners do not want to learn new music; they want what they are used to. They take comfort from this kind of repetition.

In summary, then, while we would likely conclude that repetition for learning is not a trait that supports the goals of the music industry, we might equally conclude that repetition for comfort may well be one of the more important child traits which are nurtured by the music industry as significant motivations to the consumer decisions of listeners of fetishized music.

A third child trait of regressed listeners is passivity. Newborn infants are almost totally passive as they rely completely on their mothers for sustenance and on others for

³⁸ James P. Byrnes, “Some Ways in Which Neuroscientific Research Can Be Relevant to Education,” in *Human Behavior, Learning, and the Developing Brain*, ed. Donna Coch, Kurt W. Fischer and Geraldine Dawson (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2007), 30.

their other needs. The process of growing up is largely the transition from passivity to responsibility. Adorno considers passivity in the context of the musical “quotation”. He is critical of the quotation, the extreme example of which is the adaptation in popular music of whole pieces from the classical repertoire or from opera. He says: “The practice of quotation mirrors the ambivalence of the infantile listener’s consciousness. The quotations are at once authoritarian and a parody.”³⁹ He goes on to describe the regressed listener’s plight of knowing there is something wrong, but being unable to do anything about it:

The ambivalence of the retarded listeners has its most extreme expression in the fact that individuals, not yet fully reified, want to extricate themselves from the mechanism of music reification to which they have been handed over, but that their revolts against fetishism only entangle them more deeply in it. Whenever they attempt to break away from the passive status of compulsory consumers and ‘activate’ themselves, they succumb to pseudo-activity. Types rise up from the masses of the retarded who differentiate themselves by pseudo-activity and nevertheless make the regression more strikingly visible.⁴⁰

By this quote, then, not only regressed listeners but all compulsory consumers are stuck passively in the teeth of the consumer industry machinery. To similar effect is Adorno’s discussion of listener passivity in his 1941 essay, “The Radio Symphony”⁴¹ Radio transmission in 1941 did not produce full, authentic sound. To Adorno radio changed the live concert’s “full seven-course dinner in colour” into “the frugal meal of the symphony in black and white.”⁴² The distorted sound allowed only the various melodies of the

³⁹ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 52.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Adorno, “The Radio Symphony,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan Gillespie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 251-269.

⁴² Adorno, “The Radio Symphony,” 268.

pieces to come through, causing the melodies of a larger work to lose any sense of unified connectedness. Melodies thus become trivialized and commoditized:

The transformation of the symphonic process into a series of results means that the listeners receive the symphony as a ready-made piecemeal product which can be enjoyed with a minimum of effort on his part. Like other ready-made articles, radio symphony tends to make him passive: he wants to get something out of it, perhaps to give himself up to it, but, if possible, to have nothing to do with it, and least of all to “think” it.⁴³

To Richard Middleton, passivity is a key ingredient to regressive listening:

When Adorno comes to popular music, as we have seen, the listener’s role is subsumed still more within the mechanisms of the work itself – only now active deciphering is replaced by passive compliance.⁴⁴

With one further, rather puzzling child trait to discuss in a moment, these then are the primary child traits which Adorno associates with regressed listeners. Regressed listeners have short attention spans and seek short term or even instant resolutions of harmonic or melodic tension. They are attracted to the surface brightness of quickly changing orchestration and catchy rhythms. Their intellect is not sufficiently conditioned to permit the comprehension of a musical piece’s overall structure. Repetition gives them comfort and makes them want to resist change. They resist new music. They resist dissonance. They are passive, and even if they perceive their plight, they cannot escape the “passive status of compulsory consumers”⁴⁵.

That further, puzzling child trait attributed by Adorno to the regressed listener is rage. “Regressive listening is always ready to degenerate into rage”⁴⁶ wrote Adorno in 1938. The catalyst for this degeneration is the sense of betrayal which regressive listeners feel when they realize that their music is impotent; the little alterations which

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 59.

⁴⁵ See footnote 40.

⁴⁶ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 56.

make one new song a little different from the last can never affect the overall structure of the music. Listeners are stuck in a rut they cannot escape, as the more they listen to popular music, the more they can only listen to popular music. Succumbing to the easy charms of popular songs gives the listener some comfort or a sense of security, but it is a false sense of security; it hides the truth behind it: “The possibility of individual shelter and of a security which is, as always, questionable, obstructs the view of a change in the situation in which one seeks shelter.”⁴⁷ The consequence of this tension between the easy security in surrendering to the superficial charm of the known musical formula and the possibility of freedom from the psychological clutches of the music industry is, according to Adorno, rage.

Adorno expanded on this aspect of his theory three years later, in the last section of his essay “On Popular Music”, entitled “Ambivalence, Spite, Fury”.⁴⁸ Here, Adorno observes that the regressed listener’s adoration for the “new” song, the “new” dance”, the “new” craze, carries a powerful psychological cost. The corollary of love of the new is abandonment of the old, and there is an element of self-hatred in abandoning what was recently adored, so that: “The ‘craze’ or frenzy for a particular fashion contains within itself the latent possibility of fury.”⁴⁹ In this essay, the ambivalence of regressed listeners is caused by the listeners’ rapturous adoration for the new craze while knowing from experience that the new will be cast aside as foolish or “corny” when the next new thing comes along. The adoption of the new craze is forced on regressed listeners by the music industry:

⁴⁷ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 55.

⁴⁸ Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 462.

⁴⁹ Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 463.

“The ambivalence illustrated by the effect of corniness is due to the tremendous increase of the disproportion between the individual and the social power. An individual person is faced with an individual song which he is apparently free to accept or reject. By the plugging [advertising and promotion] and support given the song by powerful agencies, he is deprived of the freedom of rejection which he might still be capable of maintaining toward the individual song....

When popular music is repeated to such a degree that it does not any longer appear to be a device but rather an inherent element of the natural world, resistance assumes a different aspect...it is driven into deeper and deeper strata of the psychological structure. Psychological energy must be directly invested in order to overcome this resistance.⁵⁰

To Adorno, the outlet for that psychological energy, the fury of the new craze, was most evident in the jitterbug. To him and perhaps to everyone at the time, “jitterbug” referred to the dancer as well as the dance: “No one who has ever attended a jitterbug jamboree or discussed with jitterbugs current issues of popular music can overlook the affinity of their enthusiasm to fury.”⁵¹ Thus, the rage or fury derives from the regressed listeners’ acceptance of the easy charm of popular music and at the same time their resistance to the market forces which direct their musical taste.

It is interesting that when Adorno returned to the subject of regressed listener ambivalence in “Culture Industry Reconsidered”, he no longer referred to rage as its consequence. Instead it is as if the enormity of the culture industry, by 1963, made rage so pointless that regressed listeners have given up harbouring it. Instead: “The power of the culture industry’s ideology is such that conformity has replaced consciousness.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 464.

⁵¹ Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 465.

⁵² Adorno, “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein, trans. Anson Rabinbach, Wes Blomster, Thomas Levin, Gordon Finlayson, Nicholas Walker, and Peter Dews (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2001), 104.

The implication is that the ambivalence has been resolved in favour of the culture industry, that (in the words of the Borg) resistance is futile.

To whatever extent the concept of rage remains important to Adorno's theory of listener regression, it is unlike the child traits of the short attention span, the desire for repetition, the need for comfort, conformity and security, and passivity, in that it derives from tension between the music industry induced child state and whatever is left of the independent citizen who understands what is lost through acquiescence to popular music. According to Theodor Adorno, then, these are the psychological and sociological changes resulting from undue exposure to the music of the music industry which constitute his theory of listener regression.

Gillian Rose adds two important points to this discussion of popular music and listener regression: first, that even some serious music may be listened to as popular music; and second, that the listener regression model amounts to a lowest-common-denominator model of industry manipulation:

Adorno demonstrates that all music, whether classical, romantic or popular, tends to be adjusted in the process of reproduction to the most easily intelligible standard. Thus, separable themes, strong colour, spectacular sound and single melodic lines are emphasized. Adorno calls this 'standardization', 'fetishism in music' and the 'regression of listening'.⁵³

University of Windsor philosophy professor Deborah Cook has summed up nicely the concept of listener regression:

The consumer wants what Adorno described as "natural" music – a music which stems from 'his earliest musical experiences, the nursery rhymes, the hymns he sings in Sunday school, the little tunes he whistles on his way home from school' (*On Popular Music*, 24). Owing largely to the

⁵³ Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno*. (London and New York: Verso, 2014 (first published 1978)), 171.

enervating nature of their work in offices and factories, consumers demand products which have been pre-digested and made easier to swallow. For Adorno, these demands reveal the ‘deconcentration’ of perception. Consumers ‘cannot stand the strain of concentrated listening and surrender themselves resignedly to what befalls them, with which they can come to terms only if they do not listen to it too closely’ (*Fetish Character*, 288). They prefer what is already familiar to them.

Adorno would claim that the psychological dispositions which give rise to the demand for standardized products are themselves the result of a socialization process which tends to eliminate autonomy, spontaneity and individuality in consumers.⁵⁴

The next chapter will look at the kind of ‘natural’ music which fits Adorno’s characterization as the cause of listener regression.

⁵⁴ Deborah Cook, *The Culture Industry Revisited: Theodor W. Adorno on Mass Culture* (Lanham, Maryland and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996), 41.

Chapter 3 Country Music Dissected

To Adorno, all products of the music industry, not just hit songs, “vulgarize” music and foster trivial listening. By making Toscanini a star and Toscanini performances and recordings sought-after commodities, for example, the music industry transforms, at least partially, the use value of serious music into the exchange value of fetishized musical product.⁵⁵ But listener regression flows primarily from the standardization of musical product, from the lowering of listener expectations to what can be comprehended in short spans of semi-attention. This chapter will examine the elements of music industry product which according to Adorno induce listener regression and then suggest that those elements are closely aligned with the elements of modern country music.

According to Adorno in his essay “On Popular Music”, the best known of the standardizing rules is that the chorus of popular songs invariably “consists of thirty-two bars”.⁵⁶ It is likely that his “chorus” is the entire song, excepting only the introduction and any outtakes, as most songs of the 1930s and ‘40s did encompass thirty-two bars overall. Two of the songs which Adorno discusses in “On Popular Music”, “Deep Purple” and “Sunlight Serenade”,⁵⁷ are structured in that way, and in “On the Fetish Character in Music”, he affirms his equation of full song and chorus when he writes: “This preference [for instrumental color] is promoted by the practice of American popular music whereby each variation, or ‘Chorus’, is played with emphasis on a special instrumental color..”.⁵⁸ Within the thirty-two bar framework, he says: “...metrically the

⁵⁵ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 38.

⁵⁶ Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 438.

⁵⁷ Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 441.

⁵⁸ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 49.

eight-bar structure dominates...”⁵⁹, and “[M]elody comes to mean eight-beat symmetrical treble melody.”⁶⁰ Structurally, then, Adorno’s popular music songs invariably consisted of thirty-two bars divided metrically and melodically into eight bar segments.

The melody of popular songs is characterized (in addition to their eight bar segments) by “striking melodic intervals”⁶¹ and by a range “limited to one octave and one note.”⁶² As to harmonic structure Adorno says:

Most important of all, the harmonic cornerstones of each hit - the beginning and the end of each part – must beat out the standard scheme. The scheme emphasizes the most primitive harmonic facts no matter what has harmonically intervened.⁶³

To the extent that those “primitive” harmonies create any compositional tension, “...infantile hearing always demands the most comfortable and fluent resolutions...”⁶⁴

Harmonic progressions maintain a certain symmetry:

Thus the principle of symmetry is fully respected, especially in the basic rhythmic structure [*Grossrhythmik*]. The eight-bar period, and even the four-bar half period, are maintained, their authority unchallenged. Simple harmonic and melodic relationships correspond to this as well, broken down in accordance with half and whole closures.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Adorno, “On the Social Situation of Music,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan Gillespie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 430.

⁶⁰ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 36.

⁶¹ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 49.

⁶² Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 438.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 52.

⁶⁵ “On Jazz,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan Gillespie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 471. To similar effect, see Adorno, “On the Social Situation of Music,” 430:

... rhythmic emancipation is restricted to the sustained quarter notes of the bass drum. Beneath the opulent surface of jazz lies the - barren, unchanged, clearly detachable – most primitive harmonic-tonal scheme with its breakdown into half- and full-cadences and equally primitive meter and form.

As to the harmonies themselves, Adorno says: "...infantile hearing demands sensually rich and full sonority, sometimes represented by the luxuriant thirds...".⁶⁶

Two of Adorno's final characteristics of standardization in popular songs which induce listener regression are the songs' actual duration – they are all exactly the same length⁶⁷ - and the role of orchestration:

Typically, the listeners show a preference not merely for particular showpieces for instrumental acrobatics, but for the individual instrumental colours as such. This preference is promoted by the practice of American popular music whereby each variation, or 'chorus', is played with emphasis on a special instrumental colour, with the clarinet, the piano, or the trumpet as quasi-soloist. This often goes so far that the listener seems to care more about treatment and 'style' than about the otherwise indifferent material, but with the treatment validating itself only in particular enticing effects.⁶⁸

In summary, the primary mechanism by which the popular song, the product of the music industry, creates and fosters listener regression is standardization of the songs' elements:

- standard duration (Adorno does not specify the length);
- standard thirty-two bar structure, divided into eight bar segments (and subdivided into four bar half-segments);
- melody range of an octave and one note;
- 'primitive' harmonic progression (the major triads of the tonic, subdominant and dominant) with half or full cadences at the end of each eight bar segment.

The secondary mechanism is the distracting detail, effect or ornament, which enforces the listener's attention away from the sameness of the songs' overall structure, the irrelevant detail which has no consequence or relation to the overall structure, but which helps the

⁶⁶ Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music," 52.

⁶⁷ Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music," 49.

⁶⁸ Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music," 49-50.

listener recognize one song from another. Adorno calls this process of adding distinctions which do not make a difference “pseudo-individualization”.⁶⁹ These details, which Adorno also calls “experts’ secrets”,⁷⁰ include:

- striking melodic intervals;⁷¹
- unsettling modulations;⁷²
- instrumental colour;⁷³
- rich harmonies, “luxuriant” thirds⁷⁴ and
- syncopation.⁷⁵

Of the many different kinds of popular music prevalent in the 21st century, it is tempting to consider that country music may best reflect these primary and secondary mechanisms. There is some kind of simplicity and sameness to the country songs you hear in a distracted, deconcentrated manner on your car radio. That fairly narrow range suggests the presence of standardization which Adorno considered led to regression.

The Appendix to this paper is a chart showing some of the characteristics of one hundred of the most popular country music songs of the decade starting with 2002. They are Billboard’s top ten country songs “ranked by radio airplay audience impressions as measured by Nielsen BDS” for each year starting with 2002 through and including 2011.⁷⁶ To give a second indication of popularity besides radio airplay audience

⁶⁹ Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 445.

⁷⁰ Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 438.

⁷¹ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 49.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music,” 52.

⁷⁵ Adorno, “On the Social Situation of Music,” 430.

⁷⁶ Billboard Country Songs Chart Archive: www.billboard.com/charts/year-end/2002/hot-country-songs (accessed September 13, 2013). For each subsequent year, substitute the subsequent year for “2002” in the website address.

impression, the number of times each song has been accessed on YouTube (in January or February of 2014) on the one or two sites most commonly accessed is shown. For each song there is a description of each of the elements of the regression-inducing primary mechanism of standardization: duration, structure, melodic range and harmonic components, and a description of the kind of “special details” which make up the secondary mechanism of distraction. The following analysis of the Appendix I information focuses on the primary mechanism elements to determine the nature and extent of standardization in country music and on the secondary mechanism elements to determine the nature and extent of the special details, the distractions, the experts’ secrets.

76 of the 100 songs are within a minute’s duration of each other: between 3:15 and 4:15. The shortest of the 100 is 2:47 and nine songs are shorter than 3:15. The longest is 4:47 and 15 songs are longer than 4:15. There is a possibility that since the selection of these songs is based on radio airplay, the radio stations may have influenced song duration, so looking at YouTube popularity should provide a balancing set of duration data. Of the 100 songs, 42 have more than 4,000,000 YouTube hits each. Looking at this group, 30 (71%) are between 3:15 and 4:15. Five are shorter (12%) and seven are longer (17%). Consequently, the minor differences in duration of songs selected on the basis of radio and YouTube popularity are not sufficiently significant to indicate that selection based on radio airplay has skewed the song duration data. The critical consideration in the case of each of these primary mechanisms is whether each is standardized to the extent that it is accepted by the listener as standard and thereafter ignored. It is justified

to conclude on the basis of these 100 songs that the duration of country music songs is that kind of primary mechanism element.

To Adorno, repetitive song structure is surely the most important standardizing element. To him, the formal structure of a piece, and the relation of the piece's elements to that structure are the most important factors differentiating serious (enlightening) music from popular (commoditized, fetishized, regressive) music. The 32 bar structure he saw ever-present in popular songs was the mechanism most responsible for causing listener regression. In the country music sample analyzed here, 65% of the songs have a basic 32 or 16 bar structure, usually divided equally between verse and chorus. Within these 65% are songs which in addition to the 32 or 16 bar structure may also have a bridge, usually before the final chorus, a one or two bar instrumental interlude between chorus and the next verse and a very common (50%) device which is referred in the Appendix as a "Title Highlight", a one-to-four bar section following the chorus.⁷⁷ In these instances, the chorus ends with an unresolved half-cadence, which is resolved to the tonic in the short Title Highlight, as the words of the song's title are sung. In the remaining 35% of the sample songs, one, two and four bar segments are combined to make an overall structure of 20, 24 or another number of bars, but I suggest that the effect of these deviations, like the one or two bar Title Highlights and the bridges in the 65%, strengthens the basic underlying 32, 16, eight and four bar divisional structures which we country music listeners feel, expect and rely on, but may not hear. They shorten or

⁷⁷ This device is more commonly referred to in country music theory as a "refrain" (see, for instance, Jocelyn Neal, *Country Music: A Cultural and Stylistic History* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 479) and is, as its frequent occurrence in the 100 songs would hint, considered a normal formal section of country songs. I treat it as a "distraction", a secondary mechanism, because it so often alters the 32 bar structure which is so central to Adorno's notion of standardization.

extend harmonic tension, not to create a new form, but to emphasize a small departure from the norm.

Listen, for instance, to “Drive (for Daddy Gene)” written and sung by Alan Jackson.⁷⁸ The standard 16 bar verse (AAAB) is followed by a standard 16 bar chorus (CCCD), but the chorus ends on the subdominant, extending the resolution to the tonic by the one bar Title Highlight. This is not heard as the challenge of a bold new 33 bar form. This is heard as a device which reinforces by tweaking the standard form, a distraction from, but also an affirmation of, the sameness of the standard form. It is my conclusion that every deviation in the structural form of the 100 songs falls more in the distracting detail, secondary mechanism category, like an unexpected harmonic modulation or striking melodic interval, than in the primary mechanism of formal standardization.

The melodic range of the 100 songs is not confined to Adorno’s octave plus one note rule (the narrowest is a Major 6th, the widest is two octaves), but there are no songs whose ranges relate to a set of harmonies outside the standard framework of the tonic, subdominant and dominant triads. There are no exhibitions of particular vocal skill which might be shown off with a greater than normal range. There is nothing in either *Songwriting for Dummies*⁷⁹ or *The Craft and Business of Songwriting*⁸⁰ which suggests that melodic range is a factor in writing commercially successful popular songs (including country), other than the observation that the modestly talented singer likely has a range of less than an octave, the average singer an octave and a third or fourth, and

⁷⁸ Appendix, 2002 #3.

⁷⁹ Peterik, Jim, Dave Austin and Cathy Lynn, *Songwriting for Dummies* (2nd ed.) (Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2010).

⁸⁰ John Braheny, *The Craft and Business of Songwriting* (3rd ed.) (Cincinnati: Writers Digest Books, 2006).

the gifted singer a wider range⁸¹. I hypothesize that due to the short attention span induced by deconcentrated listener regression, many current listeners of popular music cannot keep melodic range in their musical memories (unless the song's entire range is presented in a single melodic run) for long enough to establish an impression of standardization. If popular music listeners' listening has become so atomistic as to prevent hearing non-contiguous melodic range, that hypothesis strengthens rather than weakens Adorno's theories on the nature and consequence of standardization and helps emphasize the degree to which the limitations of listener regression have become embedded in so many of us.

Perhaps nowhere more strongly than in the realm of harmonic progression is Adorno's concept of standardization more clearly exhibited. The "primitive" harmonies of the major triads of the tonic, subdominant and dominant are indeed the basis of nearly every one of the 100 songs. Only five of the 100 are in a minor key.⁸² As will be discussed below, there are occasional "unsettling modulations" in many songs, but these are all special details or experts' secrets, employed by the songwriters to keep up the listeners' interest, to tease momentarily the listeners' strongly ingrained harmonic expectations. One such trick deserves mention here, because it does alter the basic harmonic progression, and unlike all other harmonic tricks, it does have the appearance of fundamental structural consequence. This is the device, widely known as the pump-up modulation, of raising the tonic a full step before the final chorus. This device is used in just three of the 100 songs: in 2002 #6 "My List", 2004 #1 "Live Like You Were Dying",

⁸¹ Braheny, 117.

⁸² 2003 #6, What Was I Thinkin'; 2003 #9, Real Good Man; 2005 #10, Gone; 2008 #9, Cleaning This Gun; 2009 #3, Boots On

and 2004 #2 “Remember When”.⁸³ To the non-regressed, this key shift may sound revolutionary – a modulation of disruptive structural significance affecting the harmonic basis of the entire piece – and then perhaps more extraordinary, leaving that modulation unresolved, so that instead of working its way back down the circle of fifths to the tonic, the piece ends in the supertonic major key. It is possible to imagine a non-regressed musical social theorist finding serious, socio-political meaning in the song’s unwillingness to resolve back to the expected key, in its establishment of a new fundamental basis from which there is no going back. To the musically regressed, however, who can only listen in a deconcentrated, sporadic manner, the tonic shift operates only as a short, dramatic “unsettling” moment when the I-IV-V formula is disobeyed. But as soon as the new tonic is established by its own subdominant or dominant harmonic partner, all connection with the old tonic is forgotten. It is just a distraction, an experts’ secret used only to ramp up the intensity of the final chorus and retain listener interest to the end of the song.

Other “unsettling” harmonic variations include progressions to the flat III Major and its subdominant, flat-VII major chords, VI major, iii minor, and in one case (2002 #3, “Living and Living Well”), the dominant minor. These never disturb the original tonic and clearly fall within the set of secondary compositional mechanisms: the pseudo-individualising distractions. As reference to Appendix I will reveal, they are more often found in the bridge sections of the songs, so that there is a strong standardized structural place in country songs in which listeners may expect these modulations.

⁸³ This device is certainly not confined to country music. It is found in many kinds of popular music and was no doubt imported into country music well after recordings and radio facilitated the crossover of many compositional techniques.

Two of Adorno's other distracting secondary mechanisms are not found in the 100 songs. There are no striking melodic intervals, possibly because the harmonic vocabulary is so limited. And there is very little in the way of instrumental colour. In a couple of songs (2003 #7, "I Believe" and 2004 #1, "Live Like You Were Dying"), piano and strings introduce a serious theme: life after death and an important life lesson, respectively, and in quite a few songs, a nostalgic, country feeling is evinced by banjo, fiddle or mandolin.⁸⁴ The fundamental line up of guitar (lead, bass, slide and/or rhythm) and drums accompanies every one of the 100 songs. Indeed, country music instrumentation is more of a primary (standardized) mechanism than a secondary (pseudo-individualizing) one.

The next to last secondary (distracting) mechanism in Adorno's theory is rich harmonies, in particular, luxuriant thirds. "Luxuriant" and "rich" are hardly the adjectives that spring to mind in describing country music, but doubling the melody a third above or a sixth below is present in the chorus of virtually every song. It is one of the common conventions, along with fewer notes per bar, the melodic hook and a more intense beat, used to differentiate chorus from verse.

The last of the secondary, pseudo-individualizing mechanisms described by Adorno is syncopation. As will be discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 4, syncopation and rhythm more generally play a dominant and central role in country music. Suffice it to say here that syncopation in its many variations is indeed a frequently used experts' secret. It differentiates one song from another without affecting

⁸⁴ See, for instance, 2002 #2, "Drive"; 2003 #1, "My Front Porch Looking In"; 2003 #6, "What Was I Thinkin'"; 2004 #2, "Remember When"; and 2004 #7, "Mayberry".

in any way the basic structure of either, and therefore fits Adorno's classification as a secondary mechanism.

From this analysis several conclusions about country music are more or less apparent. First and foremost, there is in country music a high degree of standardized form. The more rigidly standardized harmonies and the almost universal instrumentation in country recordings more than compensate for the slightly less rigid formal structure and the somewhat wider melodic range to establish an overall level of standardization of musical elements which surpasses the standardization of the popular music of Tin Pan Alley on which Adorno based his theories. Further elements of formal standardization not considered by Adorno are the nearly exclusive use of the major mode and the nearly exclusive use of duple meter (there are only two waltzes in the 100 songs: 2008 #10, "I'm Still a Guy"; and 2011 #1, "Crazy Girl"). I suggest that as a whole, the number and strength of standardized primary mechanisms in country music constitute fertile ground for the creation and nurture of listener regression. Second, the variety and employment in country music of the secondary mechanisms of pseudo-individualization through distracting detail are similar in type and function to that of Adorno's popular music. The devices are all short and even though many of them demonstrate a high level of creativity, craft skill and brilliant implementation, none of them threaten the songs' standardized formal elements. Accordingly, the stage is set for the listener to ignore or forget or dismiss the formal structure of every country song, as it is the same every time, and to focus in a somewhat deconcentrated manner only on the melodic hook, the catchy beat and the occasional unsettling harmony as the song proceeds to its inevitable final cadence, three and a half minutes after it starts.

The burning question behind the 100 song research and the analysis of the songs' elements is, of course: are listeners of country music regressed? Either in listening ability or in broader socio-psychological make-up, do we exhibit the traits, identified by Adorno as associated with children, of the desire for repetition, of the short attention span, of the need for comfort, conformity and security, and of passivity? The answer I am about to suggest must be hedged by recognizing that the social influences on every human being are diverse, and it is difficult or impossible to make absolute attributions of cause and effect. As will be considered in the next chapter, many of those influences come from other segments of the consumer industry, thus further confusing causal links between the standardized form and pseudo-individualizations of country music and any regression of its listeners. That said, I think the popularity of country music itself, together with the deep standardization of country music forms already discussed, permit the conclusion that country music listeners do have a desire for repetition, and that the repetitious nature of these songs is a large factor in their popularity. And I think that the narrative themes evident in the lyrics of these 100 songs reveal a lot about their listeners' passivity and desire for comfort, conformity and security.

The Country Music Association (CMA) is that industry's "most important trade organization".⁸⁵ Membership is restricted to those who make their living through country music and much of their market research is available only to members. The CMA does reveal to the general public some of the results of its annual survey about the size and make-up of country music listeners; in 2012 there were 96,000,000 listeners in the U.S.,

⁸⁵ Diane Pecknold, *The Selling Sound: The Rise of the Country Music Industry* (Duke University Press, 2007), 5. For the CMA's history and a description of its aims and activities, see Pecknold, 177-182, and Neal, *Country Music*, 212-213.

comprising about 42% of the U.S. adult population.⁸⁶ A commentator on those same CMA survey results wrote:

While most didn't need a survey to confirm that country fans are loyal, the CMA-sponsored study suggests that they're not only loyal to their favourite artists, but loyal to their favourite country-radio stations, with 75 percent of those sampled reporting that they have been listening to the same station for years.⁸⁷

In this context, loyalty may be closely associated with a desire for repetition, conformity and security.

In analyzing the themes of the 100 songs, I gave one point to the song's primary theme and a half point to any secondary theme. These themes are shown in the first column in Appendix I. All but five of the songs featured themes in the following categories:

1. Love (in the sub-categories of courting, breaking up and being in love): 46.5 points;
2. Values (in the sub-categories of family values, country values, nostalgia for family and country values, and life lessons): 34 points;
3. Party (good time) songs and anti-working songs: 20 points; and
4. Christianity and patriotism: 13.5 points.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Glenn Peoples, "Country Music Fans Generally Wealthy, Married, Digitally Engaged, Says CMA," *billboardbiz* (June 6, 2012): 1.

<http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/country/1094364/country-music-fans-generally-wealthy-married-digitally-engaged-says-cma> (accessed January 16, 2014).

⁸⁷ Lisa Rollins, "CMA releases findings from its latest country-music listenership study," *Nashville Country Music Examiner* (June 16, 2012): 1. <http://www.examiner.com/article/cma-releases-findings-from-its-latest-country-music-listenership-study> (accessed February 28, 2014).

⁸⁸ The five exceptions and their themes are: 2003 #2 "Beer for My Horses" (pro-vigilante justice); 2003 #10 "Celebrity" (anti-reality show, anti-celebrity novelty song); 2007 #10

All of these themes reflect living within the aims and expectations of white, blue collar America. None of them advocates any change in white, blue collar America. There is no activism or call to revolution in nostalgia or in a love song (or at least a country love song). The love in the love songs is always between a young, white woman and a young, white man. There are a quite a few commodity references, to beer and pickup trucks mostly, and they are all favourably inclined toward the referenced product with a clearly positive attitude of acceptance. Even the anti-work songs reflect acceptance of the status quo; the drudgery and subservience of the job is tolerated to justify and contrast the flamboyance and independence of the weekend.⁸⁹ Many of these themes are reflected in these two verses and the chorus of “These Are My People” (2007 #4):

We got some discount knowledge at the junior college
where we majored in beer and girls.
It was all real funny ‘til we ran out of money
and they threw us out into the world.
Yeah the kids that thought they’d run this town
ain’t running much of anything.
But we’re just lovin’ and laughin’ and bustin’ our asses
and we call it all livin’ the dream.

Well we take it all week on the chin with a grin
‘til we make it to a Friday night.
And it’s church league softball. Holler ‘bout a bad call,
preacher breakin’ up the fight.
Then later on at the Green Light Tavern
well everybody’s gathering as friends.
And the beer is apourin’ ‘till Monday mornin’
Where we start all over again.

“Settlin’” (leaving home for new adventures); 2010 #1 “Love Like Crazy” (work hard for success); and 2011 #7 “You and Tequila” (fighting alcoholism).

⁸⁹ While not germane to the topic of this paper, it is interesting that these themes of the most popular country songs of the last decade or so do not reflect the mournful topics of family or work despair, or lonesome travel. There is very little thematic substance in these narratives which would prompt the kind of inquiry found in Steven Stack and Jim Grundlach, “The Effect of Country Music on Suicide,” *Social Forces* 71, no.1 (September 1992): 211.

And these are my people. This is where I come from.
Givin' this life everything we've got and then some.
It ain't always pretty, but it's real.
It's the way we were made.
Wouldn't have it any other way.
These are my people.⁹⁰

The singer's viewpoint is that of, if not a child, then an immature adult who does not take much control over or responsibility for his own life. He has no ambition. Authority figures (referred to only as "they") threw him and his friends out of junior college. He sees himself as a kid who thought he and his friends would "run this town", but they are not. They are pushed around by another authority figure, their employer at work, and they live for the weekend. Most important, they accept the good and the bad of this life and they "wouldn't have it any other way".

These themes recur regularly in the lyrics of these 100 songs and reflect Adorno's child traits of passivity and a desire for security, comfort and conformity to the norms of society - a society which Adorno saw as rapidly becoming dominated by the culture and other consumer industries. I suggest these lyrics are written and sung with the conviction that their listeners share the values and viewpoints they describe. I suggest that the popularity of these themes demonstrates that they play major roles in forming and reflecting the attitudes of those who listen to them. And accordingly I suggest that the standardized musical structure and acquiescent themes of country music do indeed play a role in the regression of country music listeners – a regression which tends to build a passive outlook on society through an acceptance of social values. From a commercial point of view this regression helps the country music industry both form and satisfy the

⁹⁰ Written by Dave Berg and Rivers Rutherford, performed by Rodney Atkins.

tastes of its listeners. There is certainly no doubt that commercial success is a prime goal of the industry. The CMA is proud to announce the key result of its survey: “The top-level numbers show country music fans are a large, well-to-do group of consumers.”⁹¹

Adorno saw nothing but harm in music which causes listener regression and nothing redeeming in regressed listeners. His self-righteous, black-and-white attitude (an attitude one might associate with regression) might be explainable or even excusable by the times and circumstances in which Adorno developed his theories, but it seems grating today, and unhelpful in that it taints so much that is brilliantly relevant. It does not seem right to leave this analysis, having made the case for strong causal links between country music and listener regression, without setting out a bit on the genius of country music. As will be explored further in the next chapter, music has a huge and basic impact on human society, and the music industry can succeed only if its product reflects a good measure of what is so important to us in music. Without producing music which responds to our fundamental musical instincts and needs, the music industry would not have a marketable product to standardize in the first place. It would not be worth the commercial effort to commoditize or fetishize or standardize music or indeed any product which does not have an underlying attraction to many of us potential consumers.

To me there are two features of good country music which combine to create especially good music. The first is rhythm. In the next chapter I suggest that of music’s basic elements, rhythm likely has the deepest roots in our cultures and in our psyches.⁹² And if it is rhythm’s special function to promote tribal unity through synchronized

⁹¹ Peoples, 1.

⁹² See David Huron, “Is Music an Evolutionary Adaptation?” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 930 (2001): 49, where he suggests that drums and rattles likely predate by many thousands of years all other instruments.

movement, country music composers and performers regularly produce an amiable, infectious beat which successfully unites bar tribes, party tribes and concert tribes. Virtually every one of the 100 songs has a beat that makes you want to move to it and to listen on. The second feature is rhythm-related, but broader; it is the highly skilled and creative matching of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic elements to a country song's lyrics to emphasize the song's message. A good example of a rhythmic device is in the chorus of "The Impossible"⁹³ where there is a hesitation before the "sink" in "Unsinkable ships [half beat] sink", so that it falls on 2-**and**, portraying the notion of sinking. A fuller example is the thoughtful description and analysis of a particular narrative theme in country music and the musical devices used to illustrate, strengthen and deepen that theme is found in Jocelyn Neal's essay "Narrative Paradigms, Musical Signifiers, and Form as Function in Country Music".⁹⁴ The theme on which she focuses is the application in (usually) three different circumstances (often three stages of one person's life) of a particular set of family values, country values or life lesson, which Neal calls a "Time-Life narrative". In Time-Life narrative songs, the song's message is contained in its chorus and the circumstances illustrating the message are set out one in each verse. The chorus may change slightly, but the overall effect is to demonstrate the universality of the chorus' message by showing its application in different circumstances. You could not find a more scholarly or enthusiastic description of the composer's subtle creativity and supreme craftsmanship through the careful weaving of narrative, rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic elements than Neal's description in this essay of the Dixie Chicks' "Long

⁹³ 2002 #10, sung by Joe Nichols, written by Kelley Lovelace and Lee Thomas Miller.

⁹⁴ Jocelyn Neal, "Narrative Paradigms, Musical Signifiers, and Form as Function in Country Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 29, no.1 (Spring, 2007): 41-72.

Time Gone”.⁹⁵ “Long Time Gone” was written by Darrell Scott and released in 2002. The three sets of circumstances of this Time-Life narrative are the tough economic times in the singer’s home town, his unsuccessful attempt to make it as a singer in Nashville, and his disillusionment with a commercialized Nashville and return home. The song begins in D Major, but before the second verse (in Nashville) it shifts up a full tone to E Major. Neal writes:

The singer’s cynicism and utter rejection of Nashville as a commercial sham is depicted in both the melodic and the harmonic structure. The vocalist climaxes melodically on B4..., tries to continue upward (vocal ornamentation in m.10), then falls to A4 in parallel octaves with the bass.... The perceived tonic arrival on E Major in m. 9 proves fleeting, and quickly gives way to a circle-of-fifths progression that leads to A Major, which is then re-contextualized as V of D Major. Thus, the bridge concludes on a half cadence in the piece’s original key. As the protagonist returns to his rural roots, the third verse returns to a stable D Major, where the rest of the song resides.⁹⁶

In Adorno’s description of deconcentrated listening he describes one of the composer’s devices on which the “spotlight falls” to direct the listener’s attention away from the standardized form as follows: “whatever condenses itself into a formula by an especially intimate merging of melody and text.”⁹⁷ What Neal finds so extraordinarily skilful and brilliantly musical in “Long Time Gone” is precisely this kind of merging of melody and text within the standard framework of country music. Neal sees in “Long Time Gone” music which responds to our musical preferences (and perhaps as will be discussed in the next chapter, our musical needs) in a compellingly artistic and skilful way. Adorno would disregard and probably deny whatever musical creativity brought the song to life, and stress the commercial manipulation of the music industry by which we are led to

⁹⁵ Neal, “Narrative Paradigms,” 60-66.

⁹⁶ Neal, “Narrative Paradigms,” 65.

⁹⁷ See note 11.

passive regression. The key to rationalizing these apparent contradictions, I suggest, is to appreciate and enjoy the creative genius within the standard forms of country music, but at the same time to be mindful of the commercial forces which have brought the music to our ears, to be aware of the pressure to regress to acquiescent consumer status, and to take whatever steps each of us deems appropriate to deal with this pressure.

In the next chapter I will show, among other things, that the music industry is undoubtedly not the only segment of the consumer industry that produces simplified, standardized products to appeal to and enhance certain child traits of its target consumers with the goal of making them, in Adorno's words, "acquiescent purchasers".

Chapter 4 Fast Food Digested

Music is a fundamental human social phenomenon. No society exists without some level of musical activity, and music has been part of the lives of human beings for many dozens of millennia.⁹⁸ Whether music is so deeply and widely embedded in our genes because it is an evolutionary trait on which survival depended is an issue of current debate.⁹⁹ David Huron claims to be unconvinced as to the likelihood that music is an evolutionary adaptation,¹⁰⁰ but he favours, among the various pro-evolutionary musical origin theories (as do several of the neuroscientists interviewed in the 2009 documentary film, *The Music Instinct: Science & Song*¹⁰¹), the theory of “social cohesion”. The social cohesion theory holds that music may have enhanced the ability of early humans within a group to successfully reproduce, and raise children of the group to the age at which they may successfully reproduce, by differentiating the home tribe from all the more dangerous creatures in their dangerous world, by the collective toning down of aggressive tendencies within campfire range, by the collective ramping up of aggressive tendencies when outside danger threatened, and by contributing more generally to tribe

⁹⁸ David Huron, “Is Music an Evolutionary Adaptation?” 49, 46.

⁹⁹ Steven Pinker coined the phrase ‘auditory cheesecake’ in refuting music’s status as a genetic determinator, in *How the Mind Works* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997). Aniruddh Patel sees more problems with evolutionary origin than non-evolutionary musical origins, in the concluding chapter of *Music, Language, and the Brain* (Oxford University Press, 2008). In that chapter, Patel sets out the views of those who favour the pro-evolution argument, particularly the social cohesion argument. Daniel Levitin is convinced that the genome would have long ago rejected ‘musical’ genes if music was not an evolutionary trait (*The Music Instinct: Science & Song*, directed by Elena Mannes, PBS MISS601, 2009, last 10 minutes).

¹⁰⁰ Huron, 44.

¹⁰¹ See note 99. The “evolution” debate occupies the last 10 minutes of the film.

identification, protection, and solidarity through synchronized movement.¹⁰² Whether the evolutionary status of music is right or wrong (a debate which will likely never be resolved), the very existence of serious and defensible theories that music may have contributed to the natural selection of our species bears witness to its profound social power.

Of music's basic building blocks of melody, harmony and rhythm, it is likely rhythm that has contributed the most to this social power. Music is the only art which induces physical movement and it is reasonably well documented that we are the only species that can move synchronized to a musical beat.¹⁰³ Indeed, Aniruddh Patel reviews existing research and notes that while existing research has found no other species which can move to a synchronized beat, that body of research is neither complete nor conclusive. He conjectures: "If future research demonstrates that humans are unique in being able to learn to move in synchrony with a musical beat, this would be suggestive of [neural] circuits shaped by natural selection for music."¹⁰⁴

Music, and especially music with a beat to which we can respond, is accordingly deeply ingrained in our consciousness as a social need, perhaps as an evolutionary adaptation, but even if not, a powerful need nevertheless, and it would be surprising if the world of commerce did not address that need. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the music industry supplied instruments and sheet music. By the middle of the 20th century those products had been replaced with radios, records and stereos, and the market for

¹⁰² Huron, 47.

¹⁰³ Patel, 100 and 408-411. (But see note 104.)

¹⁰⁴ Patel, 411. After the publication of his book, Patel discovered one bird which does move in synchrony with a musical beat. See *Snowball, the Dancing Cockatoo* at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7IZmRnAo6s> (accessed March 4, 2014). This discovery suggests to Patel that music is not a human evolutionary trait. (See the "evolution" debate in the *Music Instinct* film (note 99).

these new music industry products had grown enormously. Market growth and technological advance formed the basis of the industry which Theodor Adorno analyzed and criticized. He saw the industry reduce musical products to music's most accessible elements and then standardize those elements so that they could be repeated and sold over and over again. He saw listeners "dumbed down"¹⁰⁵ under the constant pressure of lowest common denominator marketing and the relentless exposure of the simplified, standardized product of the music industry.

The focus of the "Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" and Adorno's other early writing on regression is, of course, music and listener regression, so that it is important to note that, in his later essay "Culture Industry Reconsidered", he extends listener regression to the regression of consumers of the broader range of products of the culture industry at large, first to film:

This potential, however, lies in the promotion and exploitation of the ego-weakness to which the powerless members of contemporary society, with its concentration of power, are condemned. Their consciousness is further developed retrogressively. It is no coincidence that cynical American film producers are heard to say that their pictures must take into consideration the level of eleven-year-olds. In doing so they would very much like to make adults into eleven-year-olds.¹⁰⁶

Then to painting:

What art becomes, depends on whether its progress retains power over the regressive element, or whether it succumbs to it with the barbaric literalness that triumphs equally in the cult of absolute methods or of absolute material. One cannot fail to hear such regression, which does not transform the concept of art into something higher, in many products of

¹⁰⁵ This phrase, made popular by Homer Simpson, was used by Adorno in *Minima Moralia*, translated by Dennis Redmond <http://members.efn.org/~dredmond/MM2.html> section 51 (accessed March 3, 2014).

¹⁰⁶ Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," 105.

the most recent musical practice; it would not surprise the musician if complementary things were to be reported about painting.¹⁰⁷

And then to all products of the culture industry:

It is true that thorough research has not, for the time being, produced an airtight case proving the regressive effects of particular products of the culture industry. No doubt an imaginatively designed experiment could achieve this more effectively than the powerful financial interests concerned would find comfortable. In any case it can be assumed without hesitation that steady drops hollow the stone, especially since the system of the culture industry that surrounds the masses tolerates hardly any deviation and incessantly drills the same formulas of behaviour.¹⁰⁸

This progressive expansion of the concept of listener regression to regression in consumers of all kinds of culture industry products begs the question: why stop at culture industry products? Is there something about the consumption of culture industry products which is sufficiently different from the consumption of other products that the theory of regression does not apply to those users of other, non-cultural products? I see no significant difference and suggest that reference to the example of the fast food industry will reveal an industry approach to its consumers (and an arguably even greater success) which parallels that of the music industry.

The application of listener regression theory to the effect of fast food on its consumers might sound like this:

As the music industry seeks to exploit humans' deep-seated (and possibly evolutionarily linked) need for music, the fast food industry exploits the most basic of all human evolutionary motivators: hunger. As the music industry has standardized the form of popular songs, the fast food industry has stipulated relentless consistency in its restricted menu offerings, to ensure that consumers get exactly what they have come to

¹⁰⁷ Adorno, "On Some Relationships Between Music and Painting," *The Music Quarterly*, trans. Susan Gillespie 79, no.1 (Spring 1995): 78.

¹⁰⁸ Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," 105.

expect. As the music industry relies on the pseudo-individualizing tricks of the melodic hook, the catchy rhythm and the occasional unusual harmonic progression to keep the listener interested in continuing to buy music product, the fast food industry has determined that the most immediately and continually attracting food ingredients with which hunger may be satisfied are fat, sugar and salt, and has designed its recipes with a laser focus on giving prominence to these immediately appealing elements. As the music industry's standardized forms narrow the musical scope and preferences of its listener/consumers, the fast food industry becomes an ever more frequent supplier of its consumers' overall food intake and makes it ever more difficult for its customers to try food which is not sugar, fat and/or sugar enhanced. And finally, as exposure of popular music to its listeners enhances those listeners' child traits of a desire for repetition, a short attention span, a need for security, passivity and conformity, and, ultimately makes them acquiescent purchasers, so through the fast food diet and eating experience, the fast food industry enhances its consumers' need for immediate gratification and food experience conformity at the expense of obesity and malnutrition, increases their impatience and annoyance at any disruption of the speed and convenience of fast food delivery, and, ultimately makes them acquiescent and all too frequently repeating customers.

Support for this comparison comes from a number of fast food commentary sources. Perhaps the best definition of "fast food", taken from a number of these sources, is: food from a limited-selection menu prepared using standardized ingredients and served quickly, usually at chain restaurants where table service is not offered. A less direct but critical aspect of "fast food" is the fast food restaurant's reliance on

advertising, promotion and brand recognition.¹⁰⁹ Fast food consumption “is likely to be habitual,”¹¹⁰ and fast food promotions do not, as the industry maintains, just affect market share; they increase overall demand.¹¹¹ In the United States, 11.3 % of adults’ calories come from fast food and, significantly, that percentage increases in heavier adults.¹¹² In two instances where fast food companies made commitments to change less healthy practices – promotion of unhealthy food choices to children¹¹³ and portion sizes¹¹⁴ - the commitments were not implemented. And the conclusion from a study done to measure the psychological effects of exposure to fast food logos:

Fast food allows people to fill their stomach as quickly as possible and move on to other things. It represents a culture that emphasizes time efficiency and immediate gratification. ... What we can infer from our studies, however, is that exposure to fast food and related symbols reinforces an emphasis on impatience and instant gratification...¹¹⁵

And finally, American Studies Professor Warren Belasco brings the current fast food/obesity crisis back to its evolutionary origins. After citing a number of troubling obesity statistics, he continues:

¹⁰⁹ From Janet Currie, Stefano DellaVigna, Enrico Moretti and Vikram Pathania, “The Effect of Fast Food Restaurants on Obesity and Weight Gain,” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 2, no. 3 (August 2010): 61; Andrea Freeman, “Fast Food: Oppression Through Poor Nutrition,” *California Law Review* 95, no.6 (December 2007): 2225; and Bob Roehr, “Food chains still promote unhealthy choices to children despite pledges to change, study shows,” *British Medical Journal* 341, no. 7781 (November 2010): 1016.

¹¹⁰ Timothy J. Richards and Luis Padilla, “Promotion and Fast Food Demand,” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 91, no. 1 (February 2009): 168.

¹¹¹ Richards and Padilla, 169.

¹¹² Cheryl Fryar and Bethene Ervin, “Caloric Intake From Fast Food Among Adults: United States, 2007-2010,” *NCHS* [National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Department of Health and Human Statistics] *Data Brief* No. 114 (February 2013): 1.

¹¹³ Bob Roehr, “Food chains still promote unhealthy choices to children”, 1016.

¹¹⁴ Lisa Young and Marion Nestle, “Portion Sizes and Obesity: Responses of Fast-Food Companies,” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 28, no.2 (2007): 245.

¹¹⁵ Chen-Bo Zhong and Sanford Devoe, “You Are How You Eat: Fast Food and Impatience,” *Psychological Science* 21, no.5 (May 2010): 619,622.

While many commentators use these numbers to stigmatize Americans as being exceptionally lazy, gluttonous, hedonistic and otherwise morally flabby, the trend is global... Thanks perhaps to the successful “glocalization” of fast food in these areas..., urban children are becoming fatter worldwide...

What makes these trends so troubling is that they appear to punish us for doing what we humans are *supposed* to be doing: evolving from a state of chronic hunger and hard labor – the universal history for most of our history – to an almost utopian, Cockaigne-like state of satiety and ease. Epidemiologist Adam Drewnowski argues that humans are essentially programmed to love sugar and fat... According to the “thrifty gene” theory, millions of years of perpetual scarcity favoured humans who could store fat during the rare periods of abundant calories... But now, with so many calories consistently available, the fat stays on.¹¹⁶

...And in another cruel trick, our utilitarian propensity to seek convenience – “the law of least action,” the driver of Progress – now works against us, as we have fewer opportunities to work off calories.¹¹⁷

We need food, and fast food is food. The problems of obesity, food-related disease and malnutrition only arise if the fat-sugar-salt content of our diet is disproportionate to our level of need (calories) or to the other food components – minerals, vitamins, protein - on which our survival depends. Originally, the fast food industry fulfilled a societal need. Originally, through its supplying a relatively small portion of our overall diets, it caused little harm. Now, through its success and its inherent drive to make more profit, it magnifies the need for its product. Emphasizing convenience as well as hunger satisfaction through massive and effective promotion, it has caused or at least influenced its consumers to regress in their food choices, at first to prefer but now to rely on, the simpler, more instantly gratifying, more predictable, more comfortable food choices of the fast food industry.

¹¹⁶ Warren Belasco, *Food: The Key Concepts* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishing, 2008): location (electronic version): 2109.

¹¹⁷ Belasco, location: 2129.

I suggest that the relationship of the fast food industry to its customers parallels the relationship Theodor Adorno described of the music industry with its listeners. Indeed, virtually every consumer industry seeks to make its consumers more acquiescent, more dependent, more amenable to spending more on its products. Think of the simplified, short attention span characteristics of Twitter in the communications industry. Think of the transfer of comic book characters to screen. Think of Disneyland. I set out again the words of David Clarke:

In the era of late capitalism, where the commodity has taken an ever deeper hold over our minds and bodies and permeated every crevice of cultural activity, Adorno's critical project becomes all the more pertinent.¹¹⁸

As a Marxist, Adorno may have felt that the appropriate response to the hijacking of culture by industrial interests, and transforming its enlightening purpose into morally useless commodities, was revolution. If revolution is seen today as an overly drastic response, perhaps a more appropriate response is to understand the profound influences of the consumer industries (cultural and non-cultural) on each of us and to try to balance those influences with societal values, needs and concerns that are not prone (or so prone) to commercialization. Perhaps the result of that balancing act would be a greater appreciation of and participation in those activities, principles, interests and values which are not thrust on us at every turn by any of the consumer industries. Whatever the result, it would be difficult to imagine undertaking such a balancing exercise without the benefit of the blazing guidance of Theodor Adorno's theory of listener regression. As a regressed listener, I intend to listen to more music I've never heard of (including

¹¹⁸ See note 3.

Adorno's Opus 4, Six Orchestral Pieces), listen to more live bluegrass, listen to the radio less, practice my own instrument more and pay more attention to street musicians.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

What I love about Theodor Adorno is his unswerving commitment to the importance of music in our social and psychological constitutions. On the positive, serious music side, understanding the interdependence of small musical detail and overall structure in a piece of music which is not susceptible to commercial popularity was, to Adorno, fundamentally an exercise of political and social autonomy – the essence of humanity - realized through an almost entirely intellectual musical process. As the fledgling music industry grew, however, and more and more music became commoditized to serve the interests of just those elements of society which “true” music resisted, Adorno’s writing became invested with rage. He recoiled in shock at the notion that attending a concert was becoming no different from attending a sporting event. Amusement is hardly a worthy objective of a cultural activity.

His most dire predictions about the spread of an ever-strengthening consumer industry dominant society turned out largely accurate. He saw the frightening power in the culture industries turning us into regressed, passive consumers, and we can see that commoditization, trivialization and regression process extended today, beyond country music and the food industry discussed earlier, to news service as entertainment, fetishized religious practices, theatre, film, shopping for anything, travel and other leisure activities, and the list goes on. He called our attention to the dangers of surrendering our independence to the necessities of a society governed by consumption. He wasn’t much for suggesting remedial action and indeed he seems to have given up on us regressed as hopeless causes.

But having our eyes (semi-glazed by the pressure of an unending promotion of consumption “opportunities”) opened to recognize some of the more dangerous consequences of participating (as we must) in today’s consumer society, we can adjust some of our priorities and live fuller, more aware existences, thanks to no small measure to the grumpy philosopher who in his youth wrote under the pseudonym “Hektor Rotweiler”¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁹ Detlev Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Harvard University Press, 2008): 251.

APPENDIX

Characteristics of Billboard's Annual Top Ten Country Songs: 2002-2011

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
2002					
<p>2002 #1 The Good Stuff by Kenny Chesney 6,436,000 hits</p> <p>Theme: Family values</p> <p>Note: All songs in this Chart are readily available on YouTube and to give some idea of their popularity the number of times (hits) each has been accessed (up to February, 2014) on Youtube is shown.</p>	3:18	<p>16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Pre-chorus (CC), a 16 bar Chorus (DD), and a 1 bar Title Highlight (E). There is an 8 bar Bridge before a final 2 bar Title Highlight.</p> <p>Note: Each bar is 4/4 unless otherwise noted.</p>	Octave + Perfect 5 th (O+P5)	<p>Note: Except where noted below, the harmonic structure of each section of each song relies on I, IV and V relationships, with moderate use of ii and vi.</p>	<p>E= "The Good Stuff" hook highlighted in only 1 bar stands out from the other sections, which are a standard 4 or 8 bars.</p> <p>Note: The song title lyric punctuates the melody as a special section of one or two bars. It is a common special detail and will be referred to in this chart as a "Title Highlight". It usually follows the Chorus, and when it does, the Chorus invariably ends in a half cadence.</p>
<p>2002 #2 Drive (for Daddy Gene) by Alan Jackson 4,612,000 hits</p> <p>Theme: Nostalgia (family values)</p>	4:09	<p>16 bar Verse (AAAB, each 4 bars), a 16 bar Chorus (CCCD, each 4 bars) and a one bar Title Highlight (E)</p>	O+P4		E= Title Highlight; banjo evokes nostalgic theme.
<p>2002 #3 Living and Living Well By George Strait 42,000 hits</p> <p>Theme: Family Values</p>	3:39	<p>16 bar Verse (AAB, with A being 6 bars and B being 4), a 16 bar Chorus (CCDC, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar Bridge (EE)</p>	O+Major 3 rd (O+M3)	<p>Bridge: v</p>	<p>The 6 bar A sections are divided into 4 bars of melody and 2 bars of instrumental intro-like material, so that there is an acceleration through the 4 bar B section towards the Chorus. The minor dominant leading off the Bridge prior to the final Chorus is the harmonic special detail.</p>

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
2002 #4 Good Morning Beautiful by Steve Holy 5,526,000 hits Theme: Being in Love	3:32	8 bar Chorus (AA), an 8 bar Verse (BB), an 8 bar instrumental/Bridge (AC) and a final Chorus	O+M2		Steady beat throughout.
2002 #5 I Miss My Friend by Darryl Worley 1,792,000 hits Theme: Lost Love	3:59	8 bar Verse (AA), 1 bar Title Highlight (B), 8 bar Chorus (C), and before the final Chorus a 4 bar Bridge (D) and a 1 bar Title Highlight	O+P4		B= Title Highlight
2002 #6 My List by Toby Keith 1,740,000 hits Theme: Life lesson	3:59	12 bar Verse (AAB, each 4 bars) 8 bar Chorus (CC) and a 2 bar Title Highlight (D)	O		2 special details: D= Title Highlight, shortening a 4 bar phrase to 2; and raising the key up a major second (E to F#) for the last chorus.
2002 #7 I Don't Have To Be Me ('Till Monday) by Steve Azar 685,000 hits Theme: Anti-work/Party	3:20	12 bar Verse (ABAB: A, 4 bars and B, 2 bars), 4 bar bridge (C), 8 bar chorus (DD) and a 2 bar Title Highlight (E)	O+M2		E = Title Highlight adding 2 bars to a standard 24.
2002 #8 Beautiful Mess by Diamond Rio 1,391,000 hits Theme: Being in love (anti-work)	3:34	12 bar Verse (AA), 8 bar Chorus (BB), 6 bar Title Highlight and instrumental C is the Title Highlight) and, preceding the final Chorus a 4 bar Bridge (C)	2 Os	Bridge: III	2 special details: C = Title Highlight; and moving to III major in the Bridge.
2002 #9 Blessed By Martina McBride 558,000 hits Theme: Religious	4:04	16 bar Verse (AA), 16 bar Chorus (BB (8 bars each) and a 2-bar Title Highlight(C). C is extended to 8 bars the second time through leading to a beat-free Bridge before the final Chorus	O+P5	Bridge: sharp II - flat VII-II	3 special details: D = Title Highlight adding 2 bars to a standard 32; a slow meter-free bridge, which does resume the beat leading to the final chorus, and a dramatic modulation in the bridge to II# returning to V (A-sharp to D in the key of G).

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
2002 #10 The Impossible by Joe Nichols 2,972,000 hits Theme: Life lesson	3:57	12 bar Verse (AAB, 4 bars each) with an 8 bar Chorus (CC) and a 2 bar Title Highlight. Before the final Chorus, the Title Highlight expands to 4 bars and leads into a 4 bar bridge	O		Besides the Title Highlight, there is a rhythmic twist in the Chorus. There is a hesitation before "sink" in "Unsinkable ships [half beat] sink", so that it falls on 2-and .
2003					
2003 #1 My Front Porch Looking In by Lonestar 541,000 Theme: Family values	3:47	8 bar Verse (AA), with a 4 bar Prechorus (B), an 8 bar Chorus (CD, each 4 bars) and a 4 bar Bridge before the final Chorus	O+M2	Verse B: III	Cheerful energy and old-time fiddle account for its appeal.
2003 #2 Beer For My Horses by Toby Keith and Willie Nelson 5,788,000 hits (2 sites combined total) Theme: Vigilante justice	4:28	11 bar Verse (AAB, with B having 3 bars) and a 12 bar, two part Chorus (CCD, 4 bars each)	O+M3		The 3 bar B section of the Verse is a sort of shortened sober reflection of the A section. The first part of the Chorus (the CC section) is a lot like a bridge leading to the anthem-like D section. This song is a bit of an anomaly, accompanied by a plotted crime-solving video, which may account for its slightly greater length.
2003 #3 19 Somethin' by Mark Willis 1,278,000 hits Theme: Nostalgia	3:27	11 bar Verse (AAB, with B having 3 bars), and 8 bar Chorus and a 2 bar Title Highlight. The final Chorus is preceded by a 5 bar Bridge.	O		Besides the Title Highlight, to some ears, the shorter B part of the Verse may be balanced by the longer Bridge, but I don't hear or feel that connection.
2003 #4 It's Five O'Clock Somewhere by Alan Jackson/Jimmy Buffett 7,685,000 hits Theme: Party	3:50	15 bar Verse (AABC, with A and B each 4 bars and C 3 bars), 8 bar Chorus and a 1 bar Title Highlight. The final Chorus is preceded by an 8 bar Bridge.	O		The shortened C-part of the Verse brings the Chorus up one bar sooner, and the Title Highlight are the special details.

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
song/anti-work					
2003 #5 Red Dirt Road by Brooks and Dunn 3,444,000 Theme: Nostalgia	4:01	16 bar Verse (AAAB, each with 4 bars), 16 bar chorus (CCCD, each with 4 bars), a 2 bar Title Highlight. The final Chorus is preceded by a 13 bar Bridge (EEF, with F having a 5 th bar)	O		Besides the Title Highlight, there is an extra bar in the third section of the bridge, adding tension before the final Chorus.
2003 #6 What Was I Thinkin' by Dierks Bentley 2,513,000 hits Theme: Courting love	3:53	16 bar Verse (AA), a Bridge of 4 bars (B), a Chorus of 12 bars (CCD, each 4 bars), and a 1 bar Title Highlight	M6	Minor mode Verse: III Bridge: II Chorus: flat VII TH: II- III	Besides the Title Highlight, there are unusual harmonic relationships, though they are clearly just embellishments on I-IV-V-I.
2003 #7 I Believe by Diamond Rio 2,380,000 hits Theme: Religious	3:52	12 bar Verse (AAA), 4 bar Chorus (B), 4 bar Verse (A), 4 bar Chorus, 8 bar Bridge (CC) and a 1 bar Title Highlight, leading to and instrumental section and a final Chorus	O+P5	Verse: VI Bridge: flat VII	Hymn-like qualities with a string orchestra and piano and a stronger verse-chorus format. Flat-VII major in the bridge is a special detail.
2003 #8 Brokenheartsville By Joe Nichols 1,744,000 hits Theme: Love (Breaking up)	3:53	15 bar Verse(AAAB, with A being 4 bars and B being 3) and a 16 bar 2-part Chorus (CCD, with C being 4 bars and D being 8 bars)	O+P4	Chorus: III-	Two special details: the shortened 3-bar section of the Verse bringing the Chorus in more quickly than usual and the harmonic shift to III Major in the second part of the Chorus
2003 #9 Real Good Man by Tim McGraw 434,000 (2 sites combined) Theme: Courting	3:19	4 bar Verse (A), 4 bar Pre-chorus (B) and 4 bar Chorus (C), a 4 bar Bridge and a 6 bar combined and shortened Pre-chorus/Chorus in the next-to-last Verse	O+m3	Minor mode.	The Bridge has a heightened energy two-step kind of rhythm.
2003 #10 Celebrity	4:47	16 bar Verse (AA), a 16 bar Chorus	O+M2		The special feature is that this is a novelty

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
by Brad Paisley 2,971,000 hits Theme: novelty song mocking reality TV and fame in general		(BB) and before the final Chorus a 13 bar Bridge			song, depicting the singer as a Reality Show contestant and deprecating celebrities at the same time. The narrative and accompanying video accounts for the extra length.
2004					
2004 #1 Live Like You Were Dying by Tim McGraw 5,242,000 hits Theme: Life lesson	4:24	8 bar Verse (AA), a 5 bar Prechorus (B (4bars and a 1 bar break) and a 12 bar Chorus (CC*C)	O+M2	Pre-chorus: VI-flat VIC*:-III7	A slow, steady intro with strings and piano matches the seriousness of the lyrics (reading bad news X-rays). Unusual harmonic shift in the Pre-chorus (like a Bridge, but preceding every Chorus). Key shifts up a Major second for the final Chorus.
2004 #2 Remember When by Alan Jackson 20,224,000 hits Theme: Nostalgia	4:27	16 bar Verse (AAAA), repeated 7 times, 4 th time instrumental	m7		This incredibly popular song is carried along by the nostalgic narrative of getting old together. There is a one bar or half bar break between several of the verses. Key shifts up a Major second for the final Chorus.
2004 #3 You'll Think of Me by Keith Urban 9,468,000 hits Theme: Breaking up	4:39	8 bar Verse (AA), 4 bar Pre-chorus (B), 8 bar Chorus (CC), ½ bar (8 beats) Title Highlight (D), 8 bar Bridge (EE) before the final two Choruses	O+M2	Bridge: flat VII	D is the Title Highlight, heard only after the first rendition of the Chorus. Harmonic move to the Major flat seven in the Bridge.
2004 #4 When the Sun Goes Down by Kenny Chesney 775,000 hits Theme: Party	4:50	8 bar Verse (AA), 8 bar Chorus (BB)	O		Infectious beat keeps the repetition from grating.
2004 #5 Letters From Home	4:26	22 bar Verse (AABC with A and B being	O		Besides the Title Highlight (F), the

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
by John Michael Montgomery 968,000 hits Theme: Patriotism		6 bars each and C being 4 bars), a Chorus of 20 bars (DDEDDE, with D being 4 bars and E being 2 bars) and a 1 bar Title Highlight (F). There is a 12 bar Bridge (GH, with G being 8 bars and H being 4 bars) preceding the final Chorus.			unbalanced sections of the Verse, the Chorus and the Bridge create delayed or advanced expectations and resolutions. The final E section of the final Chorus is extended to 4 bars, to restore balance and increase tension for the final resolution to the Title Highlight.
2004 #6 American Soldier by Toby Keith 9,136,000 hits Theme: Patriotism	4:31	8 bar Verse (A) repeated 3 times and a 12 bar Chorus BCD, each 4 bars)	O+P5	Chorus: II	In the third and fourth repetitions of A, the beat gets stronger, and the singing is higher, louder and more emotional, leading to the "I am an American Soldier" chorus. In the fourth bar of the C part of the Chorus there is introduced a strong II chord.
2004 #7 Mayberry by Rascal Flatts 1,687,000 hits Theme: Nostalgia	4:33	16 bar Verse (AABB, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Chorus (CC) and a ½ bar tag on before repeating. Preceding the final Chorus there is an 8 bar Bridge.	O+M2	Verse: II Chorus: flat III-flat VII – flat VI – flat VII	Except for the ½ bar break at the end of the Chorus, the structure is completely conventional. There is a special rhythmic detail at the end of the second bar of the Chorus : there is a 2 beat rest between "Cherry" and "Coke". Harmonically there are two special details. The Chorus is in the key of A Major, whereas the Verse and Bridge are in F# Major; and the Chorus ends on the dominant E Major, resolving back to C# Major in the ½ bar tag on.
2004 #8 Suds in the Bucket by Sara Evans 2,059,000 hits	3:45	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), a 4 bar Pre-chorus (C) and a 16 bar Chorus (DDDD)	O		More of an old-time country feel due to narrative (18 year old girl leaving the laundry in the

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
Theme: Courting					washing tub and running off with a young man in a pick-up truck) and a simple song structure.
2004 #9 Watch the Wind Blow By by Tim McGraw 234,000 hits Theme: Being in love	4:30	16bar Verse (AABA, 4 bars each), a 16 bar Chorus (CCDC, each 4 bars) and a 1 bar Title Highlight	m7		
2004 #10 Days Go By by Keith Urban 886,000 hits Theme: Life lesson	3:42	12 bar Verse (AAB, each 4 bars) 12 bar Chorus (CCC) (second and subsequent times 16 bars (CCCC), an 8 bar Bridge, a one bar break and an extended Chorus	0+M3		
2005					
2005 #1 That's What I Love about Sunday by Craig Morgan 4,547,000 hits Theme: Family values (country values, religious)	3:19	12 bar Verse (AA), 4 bar Pre-chorus (B), 16 bar Chorus (CC) and a 1 bar Title Highlight	O	Pre-chorus: iii	Not too striking, but the Pre-chorus starts with a iii minor harmony, progressing to vi and back to normal. Title Highlight.
2005 #2 As Good As I Once Was by Toby Keith 14,819,000 hits Theme: Party (nostalgia)	4:12	16 bar Verse (AB, each 8 bars), a 16 bar Chorus (CCDD, each 4 bars) and a 4 bar Bridge before the next-to-last Chorus	O+M2	Bridge: Flat VII	Harmonic variance in the Bridge is the only special musical detail. There is a bar fight narrative which makes this song (largely through the accompanying video) quite distinctive.
2005 #3 Bless the Broken Road by Rascal Flatts 2,489,000 hits Theme: Religious (Life lesson)	3:39	16 bar Verse (AABB, each 4 bars), a 1 bar break (after just the first Verse), 16 bar Chorus (CCCD, each 4 bars) and a 2 bar Title Highlight (E)	O+M2		Just the Title Highlight. The Verse emphasizes 1 and 3 in each bar. In the Chorus, it's more complicated with 2 and 4 emphases frequently occurring.
2005 #4	3:40	12 bar Verse (AAB,	m7		Just the Title

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
Something More by Sugarland 6,055,000 hits Theme: Anti-work		each 4 bars), 8 bar Chorus (CD, each 4 bars), a 2 bar Title Highlight (E), shortened to 1 bar in the second run through, and a 6 bar Bridge (FG, with F being 4 bars and G being 2 bars)			Highlight.
2005 #5 Fast Cars and Freedom by Rascal Flatts 1,266,000 hits (2 sites combined) Theme: Love (nostalgia)	4:16	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars) and an 18 bar Chorus (CDCEF, with C,D and F being 4 bars each and E, 2 bars)	O	Chorus (C): Flat VII	Unlike virtually every other song, the Chorus here is not rhythmically stronger than the Verse. The Chorus does have rhythmic shifts, including the structural oddity of the 2 bar E section. More of the Verse comes in the minor mode (ii) than in most songs, and a Major flat seven introduces the C section
2005 #6 Nothin' to Lose by Josh Gracin 899,000 hits Theme: Courting	2:47	12 bars (2/2 time) Verse (AAA), 8 bar (4/4 time) Chorus (CD, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar (4/4 time) Bridge (EE)	O		Fast 2/2 time distinguishes this song and gives it an old-fashioned feel, complemented by the prominent fiddle part.
2005 #7 Baby Girl by Sugarland 5,626,000 hits Theme: Family values (Life lesson)	4:12	8 bar Verse (AA), 12 bar Chorus (BBC, each 4 bars, except that in the Chorus before the Bridge, C is only 3 bars) and an 8 bar Bridge (DD). A half Verse follows the Bridge before the final Chorus.	O+M2		The half Verse following the Bridge follows the narrative: the singer in the first Verse is writing home (signing the letter "Your Baby Girl") asking for money. In the last Verse she's become successful and is sending money home. So the form of the song follows the narrative twist.
2005 #8 Making Memories of Us by Keith Urban 3,622,000 hits Theme: Being in	4:22	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Chorus (CD, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar Bridge	M6		There is a rhythmic hiccup emphasizing the "and" of "3 and" in the third bar of the B part of the Verse.

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
love					
2005 #9 Mississippi Girl by Faith Hill 886,000 hits (2 sites combined) Theme: Country values	3:53	8 bar Verse (AB, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Chorus (CD, each 4 bars) and a 1 bar Title Highlight	O		
2005 #10 Gone by Montgomery Gentry 475,000 hits Theme: Breaking up	4:09	8 bar Verse (AA), 4 bar Pre-chorus (B) and a 12 bar Chorus (CCD, each 4 bars)	O+M7	Minor mode.	
2006					
2006 #1 If You're Going Through Hell (Keep on Going) by Rodney Atkins 4,156,000 hits Theme: Life lesson	3:37	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), a 16 bar Chorus (CDCD, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar Bridge (EE)	m7		There is an engaging contrast between the melody of the Verse, which sticks around the tonic and second, and that of the Chorus which rises from the third to the fifth and back to the tonic
2006 #2 The World by Brad Paisley 1,419,000 hits Theme: Being in love (family values)	4:38	16 bar Verse (AAAA), an 8 bar Pre-chorus (BC, each 4 bars), an 12 bar Chorus (DED), a 1 bar Title Highlight (F) and a 16 bar Bridge (GHGH, each 4 bars)	O		Besides the Title Highlight, this song has all the standard structural parts.
2006 #3 Summertime by Kenny Chesney 4,666,000 hits Theme: Party	3:18	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), a 16 bar Chorus (CDCD, each 4 bars) a 2 bar Title Highlight and an 8 bar Bridge (E)	O	Chorus: II	Besides the Title Highlight, the start of the Chorus is strongly syncopated and one beat later the II Major chord is introduced.
2006 #4 What Hurts the Most by Rascal Flatts 27,250,000 hits Theme: Breaking	4:37	16 bar Verse (AABB, each 4 bars) a 16 bar Chorus (CDCD, each 4 bars). The first Bridge (after the first Chorus) is a	O+M3		This song swings between vi minor and the Major tonic. This song may be so popular because of its acted video narrative.

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
up		spoken, non-musical conversation between a young woman and man on the verge of a major life decision. The second Bridge (after the second Chorus) is 12 bars (EEE)			
2006 #5 Jesus, Take the Wheel By Carrie Underwood 15, 648,000 hits Theme: Religious	3:45	16 bar Verse (ABAC, with A being 4 bars, B being 3 bars , C being 4 bars and a 1 bar break), an 8 bar Chorus and a 1 bar Title Highlight. The second Verse is 11 bars (ABC, with A being 4 bars, B being 3 bars and C being 4 bars)	O+P5		This is the only song so far with a 3 bar section. All others sections in all other songs have an even number of bars (except for Title Highlights).
2006 #6 Would You Go With Me by Josh Turner 8,366,000 hits Theme: Courting	3:49	12 bar Verse (AAB, each 4 bars), a 1 bar break and a 16 bar Chorus (CDCE, each 4 bars)	2Os	Chorus: flat VII	The CDC sections of the Chorus are all triplets, and the second C section ends in a Major flat VII.
2006 #7 Tonight I Wanna Cry by Keith Urban 3,767,00 hits Theme: Breaking up	3:17	16 bar Verse (AABC, each 4 bars) and a 16 bar Chorus (DDEF, each 4 bars)	O+P4		One of the few songs whose Chorus is <u>not</u> raised to a higher degree of melodic and/or rhythmic intensity, thus maintaining the slow, sad song feeling throughout.
2006 #8 Leave the Pieces by The Wreckers 1,913,000 hits Theme: Breaking up	3:28	8 bar Verse (AA), an 8 bar Chorus (BB) and an 8 bar Bridge (CD) before the final Chorus	M6	Bridge: III-flat VII	Simple traditional country song with some harmonic interest in the Bridge
2006 #9 Who Says You Can't Go Home by Bon Jovi and Jennifer Nettles 2,764,000 hits	3:53	16 bar Verse (AAAA), an 8 bar Pre-chorus (BC, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar Chorus (CD, each 4 bars)	O		The video features a Habitat for Humanity home construction site. Bon Jovi also released the song without Jennifer Nettles in a less

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
Theme: Nostalgia (but the video is all about building homes for the needy – completely different theme)					country, more pop format. The solo version has a few more hits on Youtube: 2,937,000.
2006 #10 Why by Jason Aldean 7,076,000 hits Theme: Being in love	3:35	8 bar Verse (AA) an 8 bar Chorus (BB) and after the second chorus a 2 bar Title Highlight	O+M2		
2007					
2007 #1 Watching You by Rodney Atkins 8,851,000 hits Theme: Life lesson (religious)	3:58	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Pre-chorus (CD, each 4 bars), a 16 bar Chorus (EFEF, each 4 bars), a 1 bar Title Highlight (G, only ½ bar before the Bridge), and an 8 bar Bridge (HIHI, each 4 bars)	O	Verse: B: flat VI-flat VII-I	The B section of the Verse is harmonically unusual and there is a Title Highlight.
2007 #2 Good Directions by Billy Currington 1,466,000 hits Theme: Courting (country values)	3:23	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), a 12 bar Chorus (CCD, each 4 bars) a 1 bar Title Highlight (E, except that the lyric is not the title of the song))and an 8 bar Bridge(FF)	O		The Title Highlight follows the Chorus and resolves the Chorus V to a strong I, like virtually every other Title Highlight – except that here the lyric is “ME” as in: “a left will take you to the interstate and a right will take you right back to ME”. Presumably “ME” would not have been a good song title.
2007 #3 Never Wanted Nothin' More by Kenny Chesney 321,000 Theme: Love (religious, country values)	3:27	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), a 1 bar break before the next Verse, then a ½ bar Title Highlight (C) and a 16 bar Chorus (DEDE, each 4 bars). 8 bar instrumental section before the second and third Verses.	O		The 1 bar break after the first Verse is shortened to a ½ bar Title Highlight after the second and third Verses, thus speeding up to get to the Chorus.

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
2007 #4 These are My People by Rodney Atkins 1,074,000 hits Theme: Country values (anti-work/party)	3:34	16 bar Verse (AABA, each 4 bars), 1 bar break after Verse 1 a 16 bar Chorus (CCDE, each 4 bars), Verse, Chorus, a Bridge (FF) before the final Chorus and after the final Chorus a Title Highlight (G, 1 bar)	O+P5		Different length breaks or no breaks between sections throw off the predictability of the entrance of the standard sections.
2007 #5 Take Me There by Rascal Flatts 1,059,000 hits Theme: Courting	4:14	8 bar Verse (AA), a 4 bar Pre-chorus (B), a 12 bar Chorus (CCD, each 4 bars) and a 1 bar Title Highlight	O+P4		Title Highlight and three full stop percussive punctuations in the first C section of the final Chorus.
2007 #6 Lost in this Moment by Big and Rich 1,456,000 hits Theme: Family values (religious)	3:33	16 bar Verse (AAAB, each 4 bars), 16 bar Chorus (CCCC) and an 8 bar instrumental Bridge (DD) before the final Chorus	O		The instrumentation of the first C section of the final Chorus is strings alone, no drums.
2007 #7 Wasted by Carrie Underwood 7,613,000 hits Theme: Breaking up	3:44	8 bar Verse (AB, each 4 bars), 8 bar Chorus (CD, each 4 bars) and a 12 bar Bridge (EFGG, with E (instrumental) and G 2 bars each and F, 4 bars)	O+P5		The Bridge is longer than usual and has instrumental and vocal elements (but no arresting harmonic modulations).
2007 #8 If You Are Reading This by Tim McGraw 2,861,000 hits Theme: Patriotism (religious, family values)	4:00	8 bar Verse (AA), a 4 bar Pre-chorus (B), an 8 bar Chorus (CDCD, each 4 bars) with a 3 bar Title Highlight (E), which increases to 4 bars before the final Chorus.	O+M3		The Title Highlight in this patriotic dead soldier's letter home song increases in length to build tension for the final Chorus. The C part of the Chorus uses double length notes (half notes) for the solemn Chorus opening: "Lay Me Down".
2007 #9 Free and Easy (Down the Road I Go) by Dierks Bentley 544,000 hits	3:24	8 bar Verse (AA), a 2 bar Title Highlight (B), an 8 bar Chorus (CC) and an 8 bar Bridge (DD). After the end of the last	O+M2		Besides the Title Highlight, the ending using the opening part of the Chorus and the Title Highlight are the not

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
Theme: Life lesson		Chorus, the first 2 bars of the Chorus are followed by a 1 bar break and a 2 bar Title Highlight.			very special special details.
2007 #10 Settlin' by Sugarland 3,520,000 hits Theme: leaving for new adventures	3:24	8 bar Verse (AA), a 6 bar Pre-chorus (BC, with B being 4 bars and C, 2 bars), and a 12 bar Chorus (DDE, each 4 bars).	O+M2		.
2008					
2008 #1 Just Got Started Lovin' You by James Otto 2,829,000 hits Theme: Love (anti-work)	3:53	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars, though in Verses 2 and 3, the last B section is shortened to 3 bars, anticipating the "Bridge") and an 8 bar "Bridge" (CC)	20's		Both the A and B sections of the Verse melody are 3 bars long with a 4th bar extending the chord which ends the melodic section (vi for A, and I for B). This facilitates the shortened B section before the "Bridge". "Bridge" is in quotes because there is no Chorus to bridge to; the song returns to a new Verse after both times the "Bridge" is played.
2008 #2 I Saw God Today by George Strait 1,237,000 hits (3 sites combined) Theme: Religious (family values)	3:24	8 bar Verse (AA), a 4 bar Pre-chorus (B), a 1 bar Title Highlight (C), an 8 bar Chorus (DD) and a 2 bar Title Highlight (C)	O+P4		The melody begins on the second beat of the first bar of the A section and ends on the first beat of the next section (the second A and the Pre-chorus). By contrast, the Title Highlight begins on the 4 th beat of the previous section, emphasizing the importance of: "I saw God today" (on the occasion of the birth of the singer's child).
2008 #3 Small Town Southern Man by Alan Jackson 5,376,000 hits	4:38	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), a 1 or 2 bar instrumental break (depending on the Verse), and a 16	O+P4		

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
Theme: Country values (religious, family values, patriotism)		bar Chorus (CCCC)			
2008 #4 Don't Think I Don't Think About It by Darius Rucker 3,746,000 hits Theme: Breaking up (nostalgia)	3:01	8 bar Verse (AB, each 4 bars), and 8 bar Chorus (CD, each 4 bars) and a 1 bar Title Highlight. Before the last Chorus there is a 2 bar Bridge	M6	Verse (B): II Bridge: II	Unusual use of II Major in the B part of the Verse and in the Bridge, which also serves as a Title Highlight.
2008 #5 Home by Blake Shelton 6,572,000 hits Theme: Love (nostalgia)	3:47	16 bar Verse (AABC, each 4 bars), a pre-Chorus (a 1 bar break and one rendition of A, for a total of 5 bars), a 4 bar Chorus (D), then AABCAA and a double Chorus	O+M2	Verse (C): flat VII	The A section of the Verse is used as a sort of Pre-chorus, the first time AD, the second time AADD.
2008 #6 Love is a Beautiful Thing by Phil Vassar 1,102,000 hits Theme: Love (nostalgia, family values)	3:58	16 bar Verse (AABB, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Chorus and a 2 bar Title Highlight. After the second Chorus, there is a 1 bar Title Highlight, then BB and the final Chorus.	O+P5		Besides the Title Highlight, the part of the Bridge is taken by the B part of the Verse.
2008 #7 You're Gonna Miss This by Trace Adkins 3,636,000 hits Theme: Life lesson	3:43	8 bar Verse (AA), a 2 bar Pre-chorus, and 8 bar Chorus and a 2 bar Title Highlight. Before the last Chorus there is an 8 bar Bridge and a 1 bar break.	O+P4		Besides the Title Highlight, there is a shift to III Major in the D part of the Chorus. In the final Chorus, the first half of the C part is slower and quieter with just a single voice and an acoustic guitar.
2008 #8 I Still Miss You by Keith Anderson 2,068,000 hits Theme: Post breaking up (religious)	3:56	8 bar Verse (AA), a $\frac{3}{4}$ bar (3 beats) break, a 10 bar Chorus (BCD, with B being 3 bars of 4, 5 and 3 beats each, C being 3 bars of 5, 4 and 4 beats each, and D being 4 bars of 4 beats each), and a Title Highlight of 1-4 bars.	O+M3		The completely standard Verse sets up the rhythmically unique break and B and C parts of the Chorus. All is resolved by the D part of the Chorus.

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
2008 #9 Cleaning This Gun by Rodney Atkins 5,680,000 hits Theme: Life lesson (family values)	3:45	7 bar Verse (AB, with A being 4 bars and B being 3), though note that the Verse is shortened to 6 bars (A is 3) the second time through; a 4 bar Pre-chorus (C): a 12 bar Chorus (DEF, each 4 bars), though note that in the second of the three Choruses, the F section is shortened to 3 bars; and a 4 bar Bridge	O+M6	Minor mode.	The beat is pretty slow, so that the 7 bars of the first Verse seem a bit like 14 (8 and 6), and not particularly noticeable. Shortening the Chorus before the Bridge builds momentum to and through the Bridge to the final, back-to-12-bar Chorus.
2008 #10 I'm Still a Guy by Brad Paisley 641,000 hits Theme: Love	4:18	A waltz in 6/8 time. An 8 bar Verse (AA), an 8 bar Chorus (BC, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar Bridge (DE, each 4 bars)	O+P5		Note: not an Adorno special detail, but triple meter is distinctive.
2009					
2009 #1 I Run to You by Lady Antebellum 13,432,000 hits Theme: Love	3:49	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Pre-chorus (CC), a 12 bar Bridge (DD) and a 1 bar Title Highlight (E). There is a 2 bar Title Highlight preceding the final Chorus, which acts like a Bridge.	O+m3		Along with the Title Highlights, there is an engaging backbeat in the Chorus. Each of the final Verse and the final Chorus starts with a slowed down, almost a capella format.
2009 #2 Whatever It is by Zac Brown Band 7,106,000 hits Theme: Love	3:31	8 bar Verse (AA), an 8 bar Chorus (BB) and a 1 bar Title Highlight (C). There is a 2 bar Title Highlight preceding the final Chorus, which acts like a Bridge.	O+P4		
2009 #3 Boots On by Randy Houser 2,067,000 hits Theme: Country values (anti-work,	2:55	8 bar Verse (AA), a 1 bar break, an 8 bar Chorus (BB), a 2 bar Title Highlight (C) and an 8 bar Bridge (DD) before the final Chorus.	O+P4	Minor mode. Chorus: flat VI-flat VII Bridge: flat VI-flat VII	Tricky rhythmic accents in the Verse resolved in a strong 1-2-3-pause beat Chorus. Title Highlight. Major flat VI and Major flat VII

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
religious, party)					in both the Bridge and the Chorus.
2009 #4 It Won't Be Like This for Long by Darius Rucker 4,689,000 hits Theme: Life lesson (nostalgia)	3:42	16 bar Verse (AABA, each 4 bars), 16 bar Chorus (CDDC, each 4 bars) and a 16 bar Bridge (EEEE) before the next to last Chorus. Section A of the Verse acts as a Bridge before the final Chorus.	O+m3		
2009 #5 River of Love by George Strait 418,000 hits Theme: Love	3:03	8 bar Verse (AA) and an 8 bar Chorus (BB)	O		The Chorus starts with a distinctive long note (tonic) held for 5 beats. Not much to this song.
2009 #6 Sideways by Dierks Bentley 1,341,000 hits Theme: Party (country values)	3:05	8 bar Verse (AA), an 8 bar Chorus (BC, each 4 bars, a 1 bar Title Highlight (D) and an 8 bar Bridge (EE)	O	Chorus: B: flat VII C: flat VII	Strong Mixolydian flavour, along with the Title Highlight
2009 #7 People Are Crazy by Billy Currington 20,323,000 hits Theme: Life lesson (religious, party)	3:56	8 bar Verse (AB, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Chorus (CD, each 4 bars), except that second time through the Chorus is 6 bars with D shortened to 2 bars, and an 8 bar Bridge (EF, each 4 bars)	O+M2		A nice melody and a direct expression of country values: "God is great, beer is good and people are crazy".
2009 #8 Alright by Darius Rucker 6,730,000 hits Theme: Life lesson	3:50	8 bar Verse (AA), a 4 bar Pre-chorus (B), a 12 bar Chorus (CCD, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar Bridge	M6		
2009 #9 Sweet Thing by Keith Urban 1,906,000 hits Theme: Love (country values)	3:47	8 bar Verse (AA), a 12 bar Chorus (BCBC, with B being 4 bars and C being 2 bars) and a 1 bar Title Highlight	O+M6		Fast eighth notes in the Verse contrast with half notes in the Chorus.
2009 #10 Big Green Tractor	3:20	16 bar Verse (AAAA), 16 bar	M6		Like "People Are Crazy", just a nice

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
by Jason Aldean 29,730,000 hits (2 sites combined) Theme: Courting (country values)		Chorus (CDCD, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar Bridge			melody and an iconic universal country theme: John Deere tractors
2010					
2010 #1 Love Like Crazy by Lee Brice 4,771,000 Theme: Work hard for success	3:37	16 bar Verse (AABC, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Pre-chorus (DD), and 8 bar Chorus (EF) an 8 bar Title Highlight (G) and a 12 bar Bridge (HHF) leading not to the Chorus but to the Title Highlight.	O+P5		An unusual number of melodically different sections and a particularly strong use of the Title Highlight.
2010 #2 Rain is a Good Thing by Luke Bryan 10,873,000 hits (2 sites combined) Theme: Country values (party)	2:58	8 bar Verse (AB, each 4 bars), a 1 bar Title Highlight (C), and a 10 bar Chorus (DE, with D being 4 bars and E being 6 bars)	O+M6	Chorus: E: II-III-IV-Augmented-Major IV	Section E of the Chorus is extended by 2 bars to accommodate an extended melodic/harmonic passage.
2010 #3 Why Don't We Just Dance by Josh Turner 6,842,000 hits Theme: Love	3:14	8 bar Verse (AB, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar Chorus (CD, each 4 bars). The Chorus on the second and third renditions is 16 bars (CDEDF, with C being 4 bars, the first D shortened to 2 bars, E being 4 bars, the second D being 4 bars and F being an instrumental 2 bars).	O+M6	Chorus: C: laugV-Iflat7	This is more a dance than a country song with a strong back beat, an unusual harmonic progression at the start of the Chorus, and an extended Chorus with a shortened D section creating a little structural/rhythmic interest.
2010 #4 All Over Me by Josh Turner 53,000 hits Theme: Love (party)	3:17	16 bar Verse (AABA, each 4 bars), a 16 bar Chorus (CCCC)	O		
2010 #5 The Man I Want to Be	3:24	8 bar Verse (AB, each 4 bars), a 4 bar Pre-chorus (C),	O+M2	Chorus: E: III	This is a pretty slow song, so shortening the second Verse

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
by Chris Young 8,434,000 hits Theme: Religious		an 8 bar Chorus (DE, each 4 bars) and a 2 bar Title Highlight (F). In the second Verse, the B section is shortened to 3 bars and the Pre-chorus and the D section of the Chorus are omitted. Before the final Chorus there is an 8 bar Bridge.			and skipping the Pre-chorus keeps it moving along. There is an unusual harmonic shift to II Major in the second part of the Chorus, and a Title Highlight.
2010 #6 Roll With It by Easton Corbin 449,000 hits Theme: Party	3:28	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars) and a 16 bar Chorus (CCDE, each 4 bars)	O+P4		The last Chorus is shortened to 12 bars (CDE) and comes immediately after the previous Chorus, with no intervening bridge, title highlight or break.
2010 #7 Gimme That Girl by Joe Nichols 4,510,000 hits Theme: Love	3:11	16 bar Verse (AABB, each 4 bars), a 16 bar Chorus (CDCD, each 4 bars), a 2 bar Title Highlight (E) and before the final set of Choruses an 8 bar instrumental Bridge (FF)	O		
2010 #8 All About Tonight by Blake Shelton 1,025,000 hits Theme: Party	3:56	16 bar Verse (AAAB) and a 12 bar Chorus (CCD). After the second Verse there is a 2 4 bar Title Highlight.	O+M3		This song only uses I and IV chords.
2010 #9 Come Back Song by Darius Rucker 3,955,000 hits Theme: Breaking up	3:54	8 bar Verse (AA) and an 8 bar Chorus (BC), each 4 bars. After the third Verse, the C section of the Chorus is shortened to 3 bars and the full 8 bar Chorus follows immediately.	O		The third bar of the C section of the Chorus has a strong syncopated beat, which is compounded in its third iteration when the fourth bar of the C section is omitted to provide an accelerated return to the full BC Chorus.
2010 #10 She Won't Be Lonely Long by Clay Walker	3:36	12 bar Verse (AAA), a 2 bar Title Highlight (B), an 8 bar Chorus (CC)	O+M2		The Chorus doesn't have the normal chorus intensity, leaving the strongest

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
2,831,000 hits Theme: Breaking up		and another 2 bar Title Highlight (B). An 8 bar Bridge (DD) precedes the final Chorus and Title Highlight.			cadence to the Title Highlights.
2011					
2011 #1 Crazy Girl by Eli Young Band 17,006,000 hits Theme: Love	3:11	6/8 time 8 bar Verse (AA), an 8 bar Chorus (BB) and a 2 bar Title Highlight. For the third Chorus, the last 2 bars of the second B section are replaced with the first 2 bars of the first B section, which begins the fourth and final Chorus.	O		Note: not an Adorno special detail, but triple meter is distinctive, as is the acceleration to the final Chorus.
2011 #2 Barefoot Blue Jean Night by Jake Owen 11,997,000 hits Theme: Party	2:47	16 bar Verse (AAAA), a 16 bar Chorus CDCD, each 4 bars and a 4 bar Title Highlight. In the first Verse, there is an instrumental 4 bars (A again) between the second and third A's. Between the last two Choruses, there is no Title Highlight.	O+P4		The acceleration of the last Chorus by skipping the Title Highlight adds momentum for the end of the song.
2011 #3 Take a Back Road by Rodney Atkins 12,040,000 hits(2 sites combined) Theme: Nostalgia (country values)	3:34	8 bar Verse (AA), an 8 bar Chorus (BB) with a 4 bar Title Highlight (CC). A 5 bar Bridge (D, with the fifth bar repeating the fourth) precedes the final Chorus.	O+m3		The fifth bar of the Bridge breaks the steady progress to the final Chorus.
2011 #4 Tomorrow by Chris Young 25,564,000 hits (2 sites combined) Theme: Breaking up	3:42	8 bar Verse (AB, each 4 bars), an 8 bar Chorus (CC). The last bar of the first Chorus is also the first bar of the second Verse. After the second verse there is a 2 bar Title Highlight (D) and a	20's		The overlapping of the end of the first Chorus and the beginning of the second Verse delays resolution and matches the lack of resolution of the singer who is going to leave his lover, but

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
		4 bar Bridge (E) before the final Chorus.			not until tomorrow.
2011 #5 You Lie by The Band Perry 12,306,000 hits Theme: Breaking up	3:43	8 bar Verse (AA), a 2 bar Pre-chorus (B) a 12 bar Bridge (CCD, each 4 bars) and an 8 bar Bridge (EE) which precedes the final Pre-chorus and Chorus.	O+M6		The lyric of the first 2 bars and the last 2 bars of the Chorus is the word "Lie", creating marked contrast with the middle part in all eighth and quarter notes. The Bridge is accompanied by a syncopated honky tonk piano.
2011 #6 Am I the Only One by Dierks Bentley 3,352,000 hits Theme: Party	3:20	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars) and a 16 Bar Chorus (CDCD).	O		
2011 #7 You and Tequila by Kenny Chesney 14,115,000 hits (2 sites combined) Theme: alcoholism	4:06	16 bar Verse (ABAB, each 4 bars), 16 bar Chorus (CCDE, each 4 bars), a 4 bar break acting like a Title Highlight (F), and an 8 bar Bridge before the final Chorus.	M6	Bridge: II	A little harmonic interest in the Bridge and a quasi-Title Highlight.
2011 #8 Honey Bee by Blake Shelton 19,000 hits Theme: Love	3:31	8 bar Verse (AA), an 8 bar Chorus (BB) and a 4 bar Title Highlight, shortened to 1/2 beat before the final Chorus.	O+P4		The Chorus begins on the "and" of "one-and", and the Title Highlight begins on the "one". So there is a marked contraction of the Title Highlight from 4 bars to 1/2 beat and it flows right into the final Chorus.
2011 #9 Just Fishin' by Trace Adkins 4,065,000 hits Theme: Family values (life lesson, nostalgia)	3:31	8 bar Verse (AB, each 4 bars), a 2 bar Title Highlight (C). After the second Verse, the Title Highlight is incorporated in the 8 bar Chorus (DE, each 4 bars) followed by another Title Highlight. After the second Chorus,	O+M2		The use of the Title Highlight to flow, first, into the Chorus, and later into the Bridge, mildly thwarts structural expectations.

Song	Duration	Basic Form	Range	Harmonic Variation	Special Detail as per Adorno
		the Title Highlight is incorporated into a 4 bar Bridge (F), which precedes the E part of the Chorus.			
2011 #10 Let Me Down Easy by Billy Currington 7,084,000 hits Theme: Courting	3:49	16 bar Verse (AABC, each 4 bars), a 16 bar Chorus (DDEF, each 4 bars), a 2 bar instrumental section before the next Verse and a 6 bar instrumental Bridge before the final Chorus.	O		The final Chorus has, at the beginning of the first D section, a subdued instrumentation, with the cymbal hitting only the one downbeat and the bass guitar similarly reduced, to set up the rest of the Chorus at full intensity for the ending of the song.

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